

MINUTES OF COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

At a Meeting of the Council for the Borough of Slough held at the Council Chamber - Observatory House, 25 Windsor Road, SL1 2EL on Thursday, 30th November, 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present:- The Worshipful the Mayor (Councillor Abbasi), in the chair; Councillors E. Ahmed, I. Ahmed, Ajaib, Akram, Anderson, Bedi, Carter, Chahal, Dar, Dauti, Dhillon, Escott, Gahir, Gill, Hulme, Iftakhar, Instone (from 8.02pm), Kelly, Khawar, Manku, Mann, Matloob, Mohammad, Mohindra, Muvvala, Nazir, Naveed, Qaseem, W. Sabah, Satti, Shah, Shaik, Smith, Stedmond, Tomar, Wright and Zarait

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors O'Kelly, D. Parmar, Rana and J. Sabah

32. Declarations of Interest

None received.

33. To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Council held on 28th September 2023

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 28th September 2023 be approved as a correct record.

34. To receive the Mayor's Communications.

The Mayor thanked all Members who attended the events arranged throughout the Borough for Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday. The efforts made to mark these important occasions were very well received by both the organisations involved and the public.

Members were reminded of the recently launched councillor survey and encouraged Members who had yet to complete the survey to do so.

The Council noted with regret the loss of ex-councillor and past mayor, Christine Small and former councillor Roger Davis. A minute silence was observed in memory of Christine and Roger.

35. Petition - Urgent Appeal to Save Community Hub (Unit 26 Wexham Business Village, Wexham Rd, Slough)

The Mayor invited Mr Khalid, the petition organiser to address the meeting.

Following completion of the subsequent debate,

It was moved by Councillor Chahal,
Seconded by Councillor Smith,

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“That Council note

- a) Cabinet agreed an Asset Disposal Strategy at its meeting on 18 September 2023.
- b) At the same Cabinet meeting, in response to a Member question, the Leader confirmed that Unit 26 Wexham Business Village would be sold via auction to ensure that best consideration was obtained and the current occupier would be free to bid for the asset as part of this process.”

The recommendations were put to the vote and agreed with 36 votes for and 1 abstention.

Resolved - Council noted that

- a) Cabinet agreed an Asset Disposal Strategy at its meeting on 18 September 2023.
- b) At the same Cabinet meeting, in response to a Member question, the Leader confirmed that Unit 26 Wexham Business Village would be sold via auction to ensure that best consideration was obtained and the current occupier would be free to bid for the asset as part of this process.

36. Questions from Electors under Procedure Rule 9.

Three elector questions had been received. Two electors were present and asked a supplementary question.

37. Recommendations of the Cabinet from its meeting held on 16th October 2023

Quarterly Improvement and Recovery progress report

The Mayor proposed that normal procedure rules be varied to allow the Lead Commissioner, Gavin Jones to address the meeting, following which questions would be taken from Members. The meeting signified its consent to vary procedure rules.

Members received a report which provided an update on progress being made by the council against the Secretary of State Directions issued in December 2021, and the overall council recovery plan. The Mayor invited the Lead Commissioner, Gavin Jones, to address the meeting.

Mr Jones stated that council had made progress in a number of key areas and demonstrated a commitment to improvement. However, the scale of problems facing the council was significant and more demonstrable and sustained improvement was required and that there needed to be a quickening of pace in delivery of change.

The financial position of the council remained fragile, in a challenging financial environment, and the key challenge for the council was how it balanced operational recovery whilst addressing the ministerial directions against financial sustainability. Although the senior leadership team had provided some stability, successful recruitment to the new structure, to introduce new capability and

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increase capacity, was vital to the continued rebuilding of the organisation. The gap in capability was limiting the speed in which the council had made progress.

It was stated that the council had managed an all-out election very effectively resulting in a change in administration, with new and inexperienced members on board. Although member training had been provided, it was strongly encouraged that there was continuous development and learning opportunities for all members to enable them to carry out their roles effectively. Recent improvement in audit actions being completed and routinely actioned upon was noted.

A key part of financial recovery was a successful asset disposal programme to generate capital receipts and this continued to be on track. However, phase 2 of the disposals was likely to pose a greater challenge, as it transitioned to the operational estate and in view of the current market and economic conditions meant that this would be challenging.

It was highlighted that although financial recovery and sustainability was critical, the challenge for the council was that it did so in a manner that ensured it continued to provide services to meet the needs of its most vulnerable residents of the borough.

In the ensuing question and answer session, Members asked a range of questions and replies were given by the Commissioner. Questions from Members included the risks posed by un-closed accounts and outstanding audit actions from previous years; progress on the culture change programme within the council; the costs of the senior management restructure; the medium term financial outlook; and governance issues specifically regarding the council companies and the audit and corporate governance committee.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Commissioner for his attendance and providing an update to the meeting. It was noted that there would be six monthly updates to council meetings on the progress of the council's journey to recovery and improvement.

It was moved by Councillor Smith,
Seconded by Councillor Chahal,

- a) "That the progress made by the Council since the previous report in addressing the Directions of the Secretary of State be noted;
- b) Agree to the next steps to deliver improvement as set out in the action plans and other workstreams that have been developed to address the Directions;
- c) Note the resolution of Cabinet to refer recovery items to full council every six months so every member has oversight and involvement in Slough's recovery."

The recommendations were put to the vote and agreed with 37 votes for and 1 abstention.

Resolved –

- a) That the progress made by the Council since the previous report in addressing the Directions of the Secretary of State be noted;
- b) Agree to the next steps to deliver improvement as set out in the action plans and other workstreams that have been developed to address the Directions;
- c) Note the resolution of Cabinet to refer recovery items to full council every six months so every member has oversight and involvement in Slough's recovery.

Corporate Performance Report

It was moved by Councillor Smith,
Seconded by Councillor Chahal,

- (a) "That the Council's current performance and mitigating actions as measured by the key performance indicators within the corporate management information report and scorecard be noted.
- (b) Note that the Cabinet resolved that the Corporate Performance Report be referred to full Council on a six-monthly basis and to scrutiny on a quarterly basis.

The recommendations were put to the vote and agreed with 37 votes for and 1 abstention.

Resolved -

- (a) That the Council's current performance and mitigating actions as measured by the key performance indicators within the corporate management information report and scorecard be noted.
- (b) Note that the Cabinet resolved that the Corporate Performance Report be referred to full Council on a six-monthly basis and to scrutiny on a quarterly basis.

38. Appointments to Committees and Panels

It was moved by Councillor Smith,
Seconded by Councillor Chahal,

- a) "That, subject to obtaining satisfactory references, the following individuals be appointed as non-voting co-opted members to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee with effect from 1st December 2023 until the annual meeting of the Council in May 2027.
 - i) Tony Haines
 - ii) Rupa Sidpara
 - iii) Jen Simpson

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- b) That delegated authority be given to the Monitoring Officer to consider the references and decide whether to make an unconditional offer to appoint each individual named at recommendation (a).
- c) That the following changes to Committees/Panels made under Procedure Rule 1.2 (vi) of Part 4.1 of the Constitution be noted:
 - iv) Planning Committee – Councillor Stedmond has been appointed to fill the vacancy resulting from the resignation of Councillor Manku from the Committee and was subsequently elected as vice chair of the Committee.
 - v) Trustee Committee – Councillor W Sabah has been appointed to fill the vacancy resulting from the resignation of Councillor J Sabah from the Committee.
 - vi) That Mr Andrew Ramsey was appointed as a member representing Teachers (Representing Primary, Secondary & Special Schools) in Committee 3 on SACRE.
- d) That Councillor Anderson continue as Chair of the Member Panel on the Constitution for the remainder of the municipal year.
- e) That Councillor Shaik be appointed as Chair of the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee effective from 1st December 2023.
- f) That Councillor Khawar be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee effective from 1st December 2023.
- g) That Councillor Akram be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee effective from 1st December 2023
- h) That the following changes made to Cabinet portfolios and membership, taken by the Leader and effective from 1st December 2023, are noted:
 - Councillor Bedi - Lead Member for Education and Children's Services
 - Councillor Kelly - Lead Member for Highways, Housing and Transport
 - Councillor Manku - Lead Member for Environment, Environmental Services and Open Spaces."

The recommendations were put to the vote and agreed with 37 votes for and 1 abstention.

Resolved –

- a) That, subject to obtaining satisfactory references, the following individuals be appointed as non-voting co-opted members to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee with effect from 1st December 2023 until the annual meeting of the Council in May 2027.
 - i) Tony Haines
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- h) That the following changes made to Cabinet portfolios and membership, taken by the Leader and effective from 1st December 2023, are noted:
 - Councillor Bedi - Lead Member for Education and Children's Services
 - Councillor Kelly - Lead Member for Highways, Housing and Transport
 - Councillor Manku - Lead Member for Environment, Environmental Services and Open Spaces.

39. Quarterly Update on Urgent Key Decisions

It was moved by Councillor Smith,
Seconded by Councillor Chahal,

“That the use of special urgency provisions used for key decisions as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be noted.”

The recommendation was put to the vote and agreed with 37 votes for and 1 abstention.

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Resolved - That the use of special urgency provisions used for key decisions as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be noted.

40. To consider Motions submitted under procedure Rule 14.

Housing

It was moved by Councillor Ajaib,
Seconded by Councillor Escott,

“The Council recognises:

1. Housing is a pressing issue for local residents in Slough, across all sectors, tenures and housing types.
2. There is a chronic shortage of housing in Slough and nationwide.
3. Housing is a multifaceted issue, with many teams within the council involved in the delivery of housing services, from planners to housing regulation, temporary accommodation to the allocations team.
4. All of these teams hold data – however, this data is not readily available to councillors in an easily accessible, singular document.

The Council therefore resolves;

1. To request Cabinet to agree to produce an annual ‘State of Housing’ report in Slough to be published at the start of each financial year.

The report should include up-to-date information on, but not limited to, council house waiting lists, right to buys receipts, council lets, rough sleepers, temporary accommodation, housing supply, housing tenures, housing providers, conditions of housing stock, repairs and maintenance performance, voids, mould, complaints, local housing allowance rates, homelessness, overcrowding, landlord licensing, inspections, affordable housing and any other matters that are pertinent”.

It was moved by Councillor Bedi, as an amendment,
Seconded by Councillor Smith,

“The Council recognises:

1. **The pressures which the new administration inherited within the housing service, and the steps it is taking to deliver a better service for residents including the implementation of Housing Surgeries and other steps such as:**
 - a) **Successfully contracted a Mediation Service to support tenants and communities to resolve issues.**
 - b) **Improved the Resident Board, which now has a direct link to councillors and the service – so issues can be addressed collaboratively and openly.**

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- c) Changed the Housing Highlights magazine to a monthly magazine, for which the Lead Member writes an update to residents on the work undertaken by the service.
 - d) Implemented a new dedicated email address and scheme for residents to report damp and mould, allowing for quicker responses and repairs.
 - e) Installed solar panels on 12 bungalows within Slough, as part of a pilot project to support residents with the cost of living and greener energy efficiency.
 - f) Recruited two new Occupational Therapists who are specific to the Housing Department, in order for us to improve the service and reduce the backlog for those residents seeking much needed adaptations on their properties.
2. Housing is a pressing issue for local residents in Slough, across all sectors, tenures and housing types.
 3. There is a chronic shortage of housing in Slough and nationwide.
 4. Housing is a multifaceted issue, with many teams within the council involved in the delivery of housing services, from planners to housing regulation, temporary accommodation to the allocations team.
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The amendment was put to the vote and agreed with 21 votes for and 17 abstentions. The amended motion became the substantive motion.

The substantive motion was put to the vote and carried with 37 votes for and 1 abstention.

Resolved -

The Council recognises:

1. The pressures which the new administration inherited within the housing service, and the steps it is taking to deliver a better service for residents including the implementation of Housing Surgeries and other steps such as:
 - a) Successfully contracted a Mediation Service to support tenants and communities to resolve issues.
 - b) Improved the Resident Board, which now has a direct link to councillors and the service – so issues can be addressed collaboratively and openly.

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- c) Changed the Housing Highlights magazine to a monthly magazine, for which the Lead Member writes an update to residents on the work undertaken by the service.
 - d) Implemented a new dedicated email address and scheme for residents to report damp and mould, allowing for quicker responses and repairs.
 - e) Installed solar panels on 12 bungalows within Slough, as part of a pilot project to support residents with the cost of living and greener energy efficiency.
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2. Housing is a pressing issue for local residents in Slough, across all sectors, tenures and housing types.
 3. There is a chronic shortage of housing in Slough and nationwide.
 4. Housing is a multifaceted issue, with many teams within the council involved in the delivery of housing services, from planners to housing regulation, temporary accommodation to the allocations team.
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Conflict in the Middle East

It was moved by Councillor Smith,
Seconded by Councillor Naveed,

“Slough Borough Council extends and notes:

- Our deepest condolences to those who have lost their loved ones due to recent events in Israel and Palestine; and acknowledges that Slough residents have been horrified to see the horrific escalation of violence since 7th October in which thousands of innocent men, women and children have been killed, including over 4,000 Palestinian children.
- Our unequivocal condemnation of Hamas's terror attack on 7th October; of the fact that whole Palestinian communities have been driven from their homes and that the Gaza Strip has been cut off from crucial water, food, fuel and medical supplies.

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- Our belief that Israel must not be given a blank cheque to continue operating in the manner it has done, and that every effort should be made by the UK Government to ensure the stability of the region.

Slough Borough Council resolves:

That the Leader of the Council write to the Foreign Secretary outlining the following:

- The multicultural nature of Slough and the pride which Slough places in our vibrant community relations;
- Our agreement that Israel must stop extremist settler violence in the West Bank; and that we recognise the calls from charities such as Christian Aid, Oxfam and Save the Children who have called a ceasefire 'our only option to avert further loss of civilian life and humanitarian catastrophe'.
- That we call for Israel to protect Hospitals and allow food, water, electricity, medicine and fuel into Gaza; and to stop the aerial bombardment of any targets with likely civilian presence with immediate effect;
- That International law makes it clear that the intentional killing of civilians, collective punishment and hostage-taking may be deemed as war crimes; and that all members urge the Government and the Member of Parliament for Slough to work to uphold the international rules which underpins our collective human rights;
- That the United Kingdom should reaffirm its longstanding commitment to a diplomatic and political process to deliver an immediate ceasefire, and a pathway to the lasting peace of a two-state solution."

It was moved by Councillor Instone, as an amendment,
Seconded by Councillor Ajaib,

"Slough Borough Council extends and notes:

- Our deepest condolences to those who have lost their loved ones due to recent events in Israel and Palestine;
- **That all of us in Slough** and acknowledges that Slough residents have been horrified to see the horrific escalation of violence since 7th October in which ~~thousands of~~ **over 15,000** innocent **Palestinian** men, women and children have been killed, including over **5,500** ~~4,000~~ Palestinian children.
- Our unequivocal condemnation of Hamas's terror attack on 7th October, **the loss of 1,200 innocent Israeli lives, the taking of civilians as hostages, of which approximately 160 remain in captivity;**
- ~~of the fact that whole Palestinian communities have been driven from their homes and that the Gaza Strip has been cut off from crucial water, food, fuel and medical supplies.~~

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- Our belief that **the Israeli government** must not be given a blank cheque to continue operating in the manner it has done, and that **every-much more** effort should be made by the UK Government to **deliver a peaceful and just future for Palestinians and Israelis alike to help** ensure the stability of the region.

Slough Borough Council resolves:

That the Leader of the Council write to the **Prime Minister and** Foreign Secretary outlining the following:

- The multicultural nature of Slough and the pride which Slough places in our vibrant community relations, **to strongly convey the very deep concern felt by Slough residents at the ongoing conflict, alongside the deep disappointment that the UK government initially voted against, and then abstained on a UN Security Council resolution on implementing humanitarian pauses in Gaza;**
- **To lobby the UK Government to formally recognise Palestinian statehood in line with the vast majority of UN member states.**
- **To recognise the recent announcement of £30 million in aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territories, but stress that this is a drop in the ocean to what is required and urge the UK Government to play a bigger role in addressing the humanitarian catastrophe.**
- **The UK government must do more to address the expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank and to** ~~Our agreement that Israel must stop~~ extremist settler violence in the West Bank; and that **whilst welcoming the recent humanitarian truce period, we firmly call for an urgent and immediate permanent ceasefire.** ~~we recognise the calls from charities such as Christian Aid, Oxfam and Save the Children who have called a ceasefire 'our only option to avert further loss of civilian life and humanitarian catastrophe'.~~
- **The UK Government must work in partnership with our international partners to guarantee that residents in Gaza who are forced to flee during this conflict are fully able to return to their homes**
- That we call for Israel to protect Hospitals and allow food, water, electricity, medicine and fuel into Gaza; and to stop the aerial bombardment of any targets with likely civilian presence with immediate effect.
- That International law makes it clear that the intentional killing of civilians, collective punishment and hostage-taking may be deemed as war crimes; and that all members urge the Government and the Member of Parliament for Slough **to reaffirm the jurisdiction of the ICC in upholding rules based international order, international humanitarian law and to address the conduct of all parties in this conflict** ~~to work to uphold the international rules which underpins our collective human rights;~~
- That the United Kingdom should **redouble our efforts and make it a strategic priority to progress** ~~reaffirm its longstanding commitment to a~~ diplomatic and political process to deliver an immediate ceasefire, and a pathway to the lasting peace of a two-state solution.”

The amendment was put to the vote and a prior request having been made for the record of the voting -

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There voted for the amendment to the motion:

Councillors Ajaib, Akram, Anderson, Carter, Dar, Escott, Gahir, Gill, Hulme, Instone, Mann, Matloob, Mohammad, Nazir, Qaseem and W.Sabah..... 16

There voted against the amendment to the motion:

Councillors E.Ahmed, I.Ahmed, Bedi, Chahal, Dauti, Dhillon, Iftakhar, Kelly, Khawar, Manku, Mohindra, Muvvala, Naveed, Satti, Shah, Shaik, Smith, Stedmond, Wright and Zarait..... 20

There abstained from voting:

Councillors Tomar and Abbasi (The Worshipful The Mayor) 2

The amendment to the motion was not carried.

The original motion was put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

Resolved -

Slough Borough Council extends and notes:

- Our deepest condolences to those who have lost their loved ones due to recent events in Israel and Palestine; and acknowledges that Slough residents have been horrified to see the horrific escalation of violence since 7th October in which thousands of innocent men, women and children have been killed, including over 4,000 Palestinian children.
- Our unequivocal condemnation of Hamas's terror attack on 7th October; of the fact that whole Palestinian communities have been driven from their homes and that the Gaza Strip has been cut off from crucial water, food, fuel and medical supplies.
- Our belief that Israel must not be given a blank cheque to continue operating in the manner it has done, and that every effort should be made by the UK Government to ensure the stability of the region.

Slough Borough Council resolves:

That the Leader of the Council write to the Foreign Secretary outlining the following:

- The multicultural nature of Slough and the pride which Slough places in our vibrant community relations;
- Our agreement that Israel must stop extremist settler violence in the West Bank; and that we recognise the calls from charities such as Christian Aid, Oxfam and Save the Children who have called a ceasefire 'our only option to avert further loss of civilian life and humanitarian catastrophe'.

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- That we call for Israel to protect Hospitals and allow food, water, electricity, medicine and fuel into Gaza; and to stop the aerial bombardment of any targets with likely civilian presence with immediate effect;
- That International law makes it clear that the intentional killing of civilians, collective punishment and hostage-taking may be deemed as war crimes; and that all members urge the Government and the Member of Parliament for Slough to work to uphold the international rules which underpins our collective human rights;
- That the United Kingdom should reaffirm its longstanding commitment to a diplomatic and political process to deliver an immediate ceasefire, and a pathway to the lasting peace of a two-state solution.

41. To note Questions from Members under Procedure Rule 10

Details of Member questions and replies received, as set out in the supplementary agenda, were noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 7.00 pm and closed at 10.09 pm)