

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Council

**DATE:** 19 May 2022

**SUBJECT:** Slough Borough Council Corporate Plan 2022-2025 (Improvement & Recovery Plan)

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Gavin Jones, Chief Executive

**WARD(S):** All

### **PART I** **FOR DECISION**

#### **1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for Slough Borough Council's proposed new Corporate Plan for 2022-25 (Improvement & Recovery Plan).

#### **2 Recommendations:**

- 2.1 Council is recommended to: Approve SBC's new Corporate Plan, which lays out the council's new strategic priorities and approach to improvement and recovery.

#### **Commissioner Review**

The Directions require Slough Borough Council to prepare and submit an Improvement and Recovery Plan for the approval of the Commissioners within the first 6 months. This report fulfils that requirement. Commissioners' observations will be discussed at the Improvement and Recovery Board and contained in their first formal report to Ministers.

#### **3 The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment**

- 3.1 The working group that has developed the Plan has reviewed the key challenges reflected in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to ensure that the council's new strategic priorities adequately reflect them (see sections 4.5 and 6).
- 3.2 There is a particular focus on tackling health inequalities in the third priority outcome 'An environment that helps residents live more independent, healthier and safer lives'. Further detail can be found in Appendix A.

## 4. Other Implications

### 4.1 Financial implications

4.1.1 The estimated costs of this work on the transformation programme will be managed within a one off £5m over two years 2022/23 and 2023/24 which is funded within the capitalisation direction. Approval for this expenditure will follow the Council's usual business case process.

4.1.2 The council's commitment to financial prudence and providing best value is presented in the first priority of the Plan 'A council that lives within its means, balances the budget and delivers best value' (see section 6). Under this priority there is a commitment to publish our improvement plan and keep residents updated on progress.

4.1.3 There is also a dedicated recovery theme focussed on financial recovery & onward sustainability, which will bring together SBC's activity to improve its finances, including:

- The asset disposal programme
- The approach to zero-based budgeting
- Capitalisation
- A restructure of the finance department – including recruitment
- Enhancements to our systems and processes – including Agresso
- A staff training programme
- An approach for ensuring we get the basics right – covering working papers, reconciliations, management information, debtors, management

### 4.2 Legal implications

4.2.1 The Council has a duty under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

4.2.2 Local authorities are under a duty to consult representatives of a wide range of local persons, including council tax payers, service users and those appearing to have an interest in any of the local authority's functions. This should include local voluntary and community organisations and small businesses. As noted in sections 5, the council will be undertaking engagement ahead of the next iteration of the Plan.

4.2.4 On 29<sup>th</sup> March 2022, the Cabinet received a report on the outcome of the Functional Capability Assessments that had been undertaken in accordance with the directions from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities of 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022. Services have subsequently produced action plans, outlining how they will address gaps in capacity and capability identified in these assessments. These have been reflected in the seven recovery themes, laid out in Appendix A.

4.2.5 As the Plan is replacing the Council's Five Year Plan, it forms part of the Policy Framework and its approval is therefore reserved to Full Council.

### 4.3 Risk management implications

4.3.1 The risks surrounding the Plan and associated activities are being tracked via the Corporate Risk Register. As of 29<sup>th</sup> April 2022, the risks were rated as follows:

	Inherent Risk	Current Risk	Target Risk
Likelihood	6	4	3
Impact	4	3	2
Score	24	12	6

4.3.2 The proposed recovery theme 'Business planning and performance management' is intended to deliver improvements to the council's decision-making processes - including the way the council manages risk in the delivery of its business.

4.3.3 The proposed delivery of the Plan is outlined in section 8.

### 4.4 Environmental implications

4.4.1 One of the new strategic priorities for the council in the Plan is to deliver 'An environment that helps residents live more independent, healthier and safer lives' (see section 6). Under this priority there are commitments to:

- Keep our parks and environment clean
- Better co-ordinate action against littering and environmental crime
- Promote sustainable transport
- Source external funding for new cycleways and improve walking routes
- Bring down local air-pollution and greenhouse gas emissions
- Ensure Council homes and SBC buildings are energy-efficient

### 4.5 Equality implications

4.5.1 The Recovery Plan working group has sought to ensure that the council's new proposed strategic priorities, as set out in the plan, reflect the needs of its population, and has therefore examined key data sets, including:

- 2011 Census
- ONS population estimates
- Slough Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation

4.5.2 Slough has very distinctive demographic features, which have been taken into account in the drafting of the Plan:

- Slough is one of the most ethnically diverse Boroughs in England with 54% of the population coming from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) background (2011 Census). A further 11% of the population are from a White non-British background. In comparison 15% of England's population are from a BAME background and 5% from a White non-British group.

- Slough's population is significantly younger than England's, with approximately 43,650 children and young people (aged under 18) living in Slough (ONS 2022). This is 29% of Slough's total population, which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest proportion in England (average 21%).
- The borough also has comparatively high levels of deprivation, with 71% of Slough's Lower-tier Super Output Areas (LSOAs) falling below the national average in the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation.

4.5.4 The working group has also identified specific equalities challenges which have been factored into the Recovery Plan under the new strategic priorities outlined in section 3:

- SBC will seek to ensure that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can grow up happy and healthy, with a voice that is heard and the same opportunities to play, socialise and reach their full potential as other children and young people.
- SBC will aim to reduce disparities in the length of life expectancy and healthy life expectancy between our most deprived areas and the national average, which are perhaps the most serious impacts of poverty for our residents.
- Poor quality housing for some of our most deprived residents is a significant challenge that can lead to poorer health outcomes in later life – SBC will focus on making sure we create more affordable homes for residents, drive-up standards in the quality of housing and improve the service and response times for housing repairs.
- SBC will seek to provide greater support for mental wellbeing and focus on reducing social isolation affecting people of all ages, including carers and some of our most vulnerable residents.
- The Council will focus on supporting more of our residents to access better paid jobs by improving skills and reducing barriers to employment.
- Build on the borough existing digital connectivity so that our residents and tenants can access opportunities and the key personalised services that they require efficiently when and where they want to use them.

4.5.5 The council's data recording practices will be kept under review to ensure the impact of delivery on groups within our community is understood. Our corporate annual report will provide an update on the equalities impact of delivery against this recovery plan.

4.5.6 Further work needs to be undertaken over the next year. Much of the population data the council currently has access to is taken from the 2011 Census and is subsequently significantly out of date. By November 2022, the council will have received several key data sets from the 2021 Census and the plan will need to be reviewed in light of this data, to assess equality implications.

4.5.7 The council's leadership will also hold sessions with the council's own representative groups to seek views on the Plan and its potential impact:

- LGBT & Allies Network
- Race Equality and Celebrating Heritage Network
- Slough Employees with Disabilities Forum
- Employee Engagement Forum

4.5.8 The council will also use the engagement on the plan (see 5.7) to canvass views on the potential equalities impacts of the Plan.

4.5.9 The outcomes of this further work will be presented to Cabinet and Full Council with the next iteration of the plan.

#### 4.6 Procurement implications

4.6.1 There are no specific procurement implications in relation to this report.

#### 4.7 Workforce implications

4.7.1 Staffing challenges have been identified via the Functional Capability Assessment process. Proposed action to address these challenges has been included within the Recovery Plan under the 'Organisational capability, capacity and resilience' recovery theme (see section 4), detail can be found in Appendix A.

#### 4.8 Property implications

4.8.1 There are no immediate property implications to this report. The council's approach to asset disposal has been incorporated in the 'Financial recovery and onward sustainability' recovery theme (see section 7).

### **5 Background**

5.1 Slough Borough Council faces exceptionally serious leadership, cultural, financial, governance and operational challenges which have been revealed through a series of external reviews and internal investigations. The scale of the challenge the Council faces is unprecedented and will require a substantial repurposing of the organisation, secured through one of the most significant change programmes in local government.

5.2 A robust recovery plan is required to provide a focal strategy for the council's recovery and improvement journey, define the council's new strategic priorities and outline its approach to realising them. This plan helps demonstrate to residents, staff, partners, and Government that the Council is capable of, and committed to, addressing the causes of failure and delivering rapid improvement.

5.3 On 29<sup>th</sup> March 2022 Cabinet received a report laying out the approach SBC would take towards the development of a recovery plan, including a framework of seven key themes around which the plan would be structured.

- 5.4 A working group was subsequently set up to further develop these themes, and to consider new strategic priorities for the council, based on data and insight, key challenges identified from internal and external reviews, and known political priorities.
- 5.5 The Commissioners' Improvement and Recovery Board received an update on the progress of the recovery plan on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2022.
- 5.6 Appendix A presents an updated Plan, based on the input from the above groups. This will seek to develop a council that has:
- Clear, informed, realistic and achievable priorities, that are deliverable within our means
  - Sound, informed and transparent decision making that stands up well to good scrutiny
  - A positive and inclusive culture of learning and accountability
  - A motivated, diverse and capable work force that delivers
  - An organisation connected to and informed by the diverse communities it serves
  - Outward looking, networked and collaborative
  - Reliable and fit for purpose organisational systems and processes
- 5.7 The council will need to conduct public engagement on the detail that sits underneath this plan. The outcome of this engagement will be reported to the Cabinet and Full Council with the next iteration of the Plan.

## **6. Council priorities**

- 6.1 The proposed Plan replaces the previous Five Year Plan as Slough Borough Council's corporate plan. The working group has developed a proposed set of new strategic priorities for the council, that describe the outcomes that the Council is striving to deliver or what it is attempting to deliver to the communities of Slough:

*A council that lives within our means, balances the budget and delivers best value for taxpayers and service users*

*An environment that helps residents live more independent, healthier and safer lives*

*A borough for children and young people to thrive*

*Infrastructure that reflects the uniqueness of Slough's places and a new vision for the town centre*

- 6.2 These were determined by the Council's political priorities, as well as an interrogation of data on Slough including the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Index of Multiple Deprivation, Service level data on people and place, survey data and engagement feedback.
- 6.3 Resources will primarily be allocated to deliver these priorities. Resource allocation will be evidence based - there will need to be a demonstrable, evidenced link between the outcome and the actions taken by the council.

## **7. Recovery Themes**

7.1 The Plan includes an updated recovery framework of seven themes to deliver the 'Right Council for Slough'. These describe the principles guiding its operating model and how it will deliver the priorities described in section 6. In addition, the evidence that informed the priorities, they are informed by the internal and external diagnostic reviews undertaken at Slough, including those undertaken by CIPFA, Jim Taylor, the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, and the Local Government Association.

7.2 These are:

- Leadership & Culture
- Financial recovery and onward sustainability
- Business planning and performance management
- Governance
- Organisational capability, capacity and resilience
- Technological capability, capacity and resilience
- Resident engagement

7.3 Detail can be found in Appendix A.

## **8. Delivery of the Recovery Plan**

8.1 A Delivery Unit, including programme management capacity, will be created to support the delivery of the Plan. This will be supportive but challenging, acting across the whole system to enact the Council's commitment to recovery and improvement.

8.2 The programme will be delivered through a formal project management structure including risk management and performance of the programme will be overseen by Corporate Leadership Team (CLT). CLT in turn will report monthly to the Improvement and Recovery Board. There will be a quarterly monitoring report to Cabinet.

8.3 Scrutiny will have an important role to play in challenging and supporting the delivery of the Corporate Plan, this will be approached on a task and finish basis focusing on specific elements of the plan.

8.4 The Council has set aside £5m transformation reserve, over the first 2 years to deliver the recovery programme. Any call on this fund will be approved via the council's usual business case process.

## **9. Comments of other committees**

9.1 This report is yet to be seen by any other committees.

## **10. Conclusion**

10.1 This report seeks approval for the Council's proposed new Corporate Plan, as set out in Appendix A.

## **11. Appendices**

A Doing right by Slough - Corporate Plan 2022-2025

## **12. Background Papers**

Slough Functional Capability Assessments, Cabinet, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

Slough: Solid Foundations for Recovery, Cabinet, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2022.