

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** People Scrutiny Panel  
**DATE:** 24 October 2022

**CONTACT OFFICER:** *Alexander Polak, Head of Governance and Scrutiny*  
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**WARD(S):** *all*

### **FOR DECISION**

#### **TASK AND FINISH GROUP: SCF BUSINESS PLANNING**

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

1.1 This report invites Members to set up a Task and Finish Group to review a range of recently produced documents relating to Slough Children First (eg Annual Report, Annual Review process, Mutual Ventures report, and draft business plan), in order to make informed recommendations to cabinet on approval of the business plan as part of the budget setting process.

##### **2. Recommendations:**

1. That an 'SCF Business Planning Task and Finish Group' be convened;
2. That the Panel commends to this Task and Finish Group the 'key lines of enquiry' set out at section 5.7, subject to any input from the committee in light of this report and its appendices; and
3. That this Group be made up of up to 5 members from the committee, ideally with cross-party input, and be expected to report their findings to the People Scrutiny Panel within three months, subject to the discretion of the Panel Chair.

##### **3. Commissioners' Review**

Commissioners support this proposal and the approach suggested.

##### **4. Report**

4.1 Slough Children First (SCF) is a company wholly-owned by Slough Borough Council, which provides social care and support services to children, young people and families. The recent production of a number of key documents relating to the company (ie an Annual Report, an SBC-led review of its governance, a review conducted by Mutual Ventures on behalf of DLUHC and a high level business plan) present a window of opportunity for Members to conduct an informed review into the arrangements surrounding the company and to make recommendations to Cabinet in time to influence budget setting decisions.

4.2 The attached [Cabinet report from 17 October 2022](#) sets out in detail the current circumstances for the company and the context of the various materials available. Not all of these materials are in the public domain (eg the Mutual Ventures review and the high level business plan) however the T&F group can expect to have access to these documents in the course of their work. The following key documents are appended to the cabinet report:

- [SCF Annual Report 2021-22](#)
- [Review of Governance of SCF](#)

4.3 The following recommendation is included in the report to Cabinet:

- *Note that People Scrutiny Panel is receiving a report recommending that it set up a task and finish group to review the Mutual Ventures report, Annual Review process and draft business plan to make recommendations to cabinet on approval of the business plan as part of the budget setting process.*

4.4 The proposed key lines of enquiry for the Task and Finish Group have been drawn from the Annual Review process referred to in the Cabinet report. They are very broad and best practice will be to narrow these down during the course of the T&F process in order to produce specific recommendations:

- Consider the quality of practice and the outcomes for children, young people and families in the borough of Slough;
- Is the operation of the contractual arrangement working as intended;
- To review the effectiveness of the discharge of the Council's statutory functions as delivered by SCF;
- Consider whether changes are required;
- Consider relevant factors in relation to the setting of future years' contract sums

4.5 By considering these, or similar, lines of enquiry, it is anticipated that Councillors will be able to develop recommendations for the Panel to consider recommending on to the Cabinet. In order to resolve the work in time to feed into budget setting it will be important to complete the work within swift timescales.

4.6 Officer support to this Task and Finish Group will be drawn from staff in the service who necessarily must continue to do the 'day job' during this time, facilitated by Democratic Services who will advise on best practice planning and execution of a scrutiny review and assist with the synthesis of the information gathered. Members must therefore be prepared to take an active role in shaping and leading the review. In the first meeting of the T&F, members will be assisted to confirm the scope of their review and to explore the range of information they might like to look at or witnesses they may wish to call in order to shape their ideas. This could include looking at the way in which other authorities manage the function, for example, or requesting written or verbal input from the people and organisations involved in reviews and oversight of SCF at this time.

## **5. Legal and Financial Implications**

### **5.1 Financial**

5.1.1 None – resources for the Task and Finish Group will be drawn from the existing officer corps from the Council and SCF. There may be financial implications to any recommendations resulting from this process, which will be dealt with in any report produced by the Task and Finish Group.

### **5.2 Legal Implications**

5.2.1 There are no legal implications to convening a Task and Finish Group. There may be legal implications to any recommendations resulting from this process, which will be dealt with in any report produced by the Task and Finish Group.

## **6. Conclusion**

6.1 This report invites Members to set up a Task and Finish Group to review a range of recently-produced documents relating to Slough Children First (eg Annual Report, Annual Review process, Mutual Ventures report, and draft business plan), in order to make informed recommendations to cabinet on approval of the business plan as part of the budget setting process.

## **7. Appendices Attached**

- A) [Slough Children First Limited \(SCF\) Annual Report and Governance Review](#)
- B) [SCF Annual Report 2021-22](#)
- C) [Review of governance of SCF](#)