

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 16th January, 2023.

Present:- Councillors Swindlehurst (Chair), Mann (Vice-Chair), Ajaib, Akram, Anderson, Bains, Hulme and Nazir

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillor Smith

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Pantelic

PART 1

98. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

99. Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th December 2022

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th December 2022 be approved as a correct record.

100. 2023/24 Council Tax Base Report

The Lead Member for Financial Oversight & Council Assets introduced a report on the number of properties in Slough and their categories of occupation for the purpose of determining the Council Tax base for the borough for the 2023/24 financial year.

Lead Members discussed the expected collection rate of 98.3% and also noted the position regarding Parish Councils and Council Tax Support as set out in paragraphs 2.15 to 2.17 of the report.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Cabinet agreed the recommendations.

Resolved –

(a) That the following be approved:

- i. The provision for uncollectable amounts of Council Tax for 2023/24 be agreed at 1.7% producing an expected collection rate of 98.3%;
- ii. The Council Tax base calculation for 2023/24 of 43,160.1 Band D equivalent dwellings (being 43,906.5 x 98.3%);
- iii. That no notional funding is passported to Parish Councils in respect to Council Tax Support as agreed for 2022/23.

Cabinet - 16.01.23

(b) That the following be noted:

- iv. the Council Tax base was broken down as follows between local parishes and the rest of Slough:

Area	Band D Equivalent Dwellings
Parish of Britwell	841.0
Parish of Colnbrook with Poyle	1,842.2
Parish of Wexham	1,402.4
Slough (unparished)	39,074.5
Council Tax Base	43,160.1

- v. the ongoing work to estimate the 2022/23 year-end Council Tax position.

101. Fees & Charges Review

The Lead Member for Financial Oversight & Council Assets introduced a report on the annual review of fees and charges. It was noted that the main focus of the approach was to ensure full cost recovery and ensuring charges remained in line with the cost of delivering services. A full list of fees and charges and proposed changes was set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

The review proposed a starting principle that all charges adopted an inflationary increase where appropriate. The September 2022 Consumer Price Index annual increase was 10.1%, and this had been rounded to 10% as the proposed increase in most fees and charges. There were exceptions for which a lower or higher rate applied, for example, where a directorate had reviewed a charge and recommended an above inflation increase if this was required to fully recover the costs of delivering the service. The overall income expected if the recommendations were adopted was approximately £1m. The Lead Member also highlighted that fees and charges should be kept under continuous review so that the charging regime remained reasonable and up to date.

The Cabinet agreed that the key principle was ensuring cost recovery and welcomed the thorough review that had taken place. It was recognised that the increases reflected the fact the authority was operating in a high inflationary environment and that the Council could not absorb the cost pressures of delivery services.

After due consideration, the recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the proposed fees and charges for council services (Appendix 1 to the report) be agreed, except those marked 'for noting only – non-Cabinet approval', for implementation from 1 April 2023.

Cabinet - 16.01.23

- (b) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial, following consultation with the relevant Executive Director and relevant Cabinet member, to implement any increases prior to 1 April 2023 on an exception basis.
- (c) That delegated authority be given to the relevant Executive Director(s) to amend the fees and charges if any appropriate corrections were needed, following consultation with the relevant Executive Director(s) and relevant Cabinet member.

102. Procurement of electronic document management services

The Lead Member for Customer Services, Procurement & Performance introduced a report that sought approval for the direct award of a contract to Civica Ltd for the provision of electronic document management services.

The existing contract was due to expire on 31st March 2023 and there was insufficient time to migrate to a new provider. It was proposed to award a maximum two year contract to the existing provider, Civica. The contract would have a break clause after two years. The recommended approach would allow the Council time to review future provision and undertake a competitive procurement exercise.

The Cabinet noted that the Commissioners were content with the proposed approach and agreed the importance of ensuring the work on the future provision took place in a timely manner well before the end of the contract period. The recommendation was then agreed.

Resolved – That the direct award of a contract to Civica Ltd for the provision of EDMS services for a total contract value of £284,028 and a maximum period of two years be approved. The contract would run from 1st April 2023 until the 31st March 2025 with a break clause after 18 months.

103. Procurement of Adult Social Care Shared Lives Service Contract

The Executive Director, People (Adults) introduced a report on the procurement of the Shared Lives service, which provided individuals with the opportunity to live in ordinary households of recruited, trained and approved Shared Lives Carers and their families. It was recommended that Cabinet approve a Single Supplier Shared Lives Service from January 2023 through the ASC Dynamic Purchasing System.

The decision would ensure the Council could secure a Shared Lives services that offered best value as part of the adult social care transformation programme. The Part II appendix was noted in considering the Part I, without any of the exempt information being disclosed.

After due consideration, the recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) Approved the commencement of the procurement of a Single Supplier Shared Lives Service from January 2023 through the ASC Dynamic Purchasing System for 3 years at a maximum total cost at today's prices of £467,000 which is made up of £111,000 for year 1, £178,000 for year 2 and £214,000 year 3.
- (b) Delegated authority to the Executive Director People (Adults), in consultation with Lead Member Social Care and Public Health and the Section 151 Officer, to award the contract to commence in April 2023.
- (c) Noted the pricing scenarios included at Exempt Appendix A.

104. HRA Rents and Service Charges 2023/24

The Lead Member for Housing & Planning introduced a report that set out the proposed changes in housing rents and charges for 2023/24.

The proposed increase to dwelling rents was in line with Government direction on the Rent Standard for 2023/24 which capped rent increases to no more than 7%. No such cap applied to garage rent, service and other ancillary charges, so a higher charge could have been applied, however it was recommended that they also increase by 7%. Lead Members considered the option of a higher increase, which would generate circa £150,000 of additional income to the Housing Revenue Account, but agreed the 7% increase was reasonable taking into the account the sound overall financial position of the HRA and the priority to improve the service and provide value for money to tenants for the service charges. Rising inflationary pressures, material costs and labour would need to be carefully efficiently managed.

The Cabinet agreed the recommendations.

Resolved –

- (a) That the base rent for social rent tenancies (those whose rent is set using the rent-restructuring or 'formula' rent process) for 2023/24, excluding service charges, to increase by 7% with effect from Monday 3rd April 2023.
- (b) That the rent of 'Affordable Rent' tenancies for 2023/24 to increase by 7% with effect from Monday 3rd April 2023.
- (c) That garage rents, heating, utility and ancillary charges to increase by 7% with effect from Monday 3rd April 2023.
- (d) That service charges to increase by 7% with effect from Monday 3rd April 2023.

105. Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Update on Improvement Plans

The Lead Member for Children's Services, Lifelong Learning & Skills summarised a report on the progress on the Written Statement of Action (WSOA), since it was presented to Cabinet on 21st February 2022 in response to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) local area inspection.

The report set out the progress that had been made and next steps. The report included the findings of the recent LGA Peer Challenge of SEND and the Council's response.

It was noted that DfE had expressed concern about the overall lack of rapid progress in addressing the key areas of the WSOA and the Council recognised that progress had been slow in some areas. The Council has successfully recruited to posts in the SEND service and the proportion of Education, Health & Care Plans being converted within the statutory 20-week deadline had started to improve and was currently at 30%, and the backlog had been reduced. However, it was noted that further significant improvement was needed to reach the target of being at least at the national average of 59% by March 2023.

The Cabinet noted that the Council had very recently appointed a new, permanent Director of Children's Services, Sue Butcher, and there would be handover period with the outgoing director, Andrew Fraser.

Lead Members discussed the linkages between the WSOA and other strategies and initiatives such as the Dedicated Schools Grant Management Plan, on which very good progress had been made in the past year.

The Cabinet affirmed their commitment to lead and own the improvement plans for SEND and agreed to receive bi-monthly progress updates.

Resolved –

- (a) That the update on the progress and the next steps planned on the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) be noted.
- (b) That the findings of the LGA review and the planned next steps in response to this be noted.
- (c) That Cabinet's request be noted that there would be regular bi-monthly reporting on progress against the WSOA. The incoming Director of Children Services/Chief Executive of SCF would be commencing in mid-January and would continue to work with this recommendation by providing updates on progress as well as risks and mitigations.

106. Slough School Effectiveness Strategy 2022-25

Cabinet - 16.01.23

The Lead Member for Children's Services, Lifelong Learning & Skills introduced a report that sought approval of the Slough School Effectiveness Strategy.

The strategy aimed to promote high standards in schools and foster strong relationships between schools, academies, the local authority and other partners. The Lead Member thanked schools for the collaborative work they had done with the Council in a number of areas this year, including SEND and DSG.

The Associate Director, Education & Inclusion summarised the strategy. The performance of schools in Slough was excellent and whilst the education system was fragmented there was a significant of cohesion and joint working that took place in the town. Examples of strong collaboration and engagement included the Covid response and participation in the Autumn visits programme.

The Cabinet welcomed the strong partnerships that had been built and highlighted that the Council had prioritised investment in schools over the past 20 years. The results up to GCSE level in Slough were excellent, however, the drop off in post-16 and A-level performance was discussed and identified as a priority for future improvement. Lead Members agreed the strategy as a basis for further strengthening the key relationship between schools and the local authority.

On behalf of the Cabinet, the Leader thanked schools in Slough for their support for the strategy and partnership.

Resolved – That the Slough School Effectiveness Strategy be approved.

107. Severance of the Council's leasehold interest at Greenwatt Way, Slough SL1 2ES

The Lead Member for Financial Oversight & Council Assets introduced a report that relation to the land at Greenwatt Way that had been acquired in 2020 to facilitate the proposed construction of the Chalvey Extra Care Housing Initiative. The Council had not pursued the scheme but had entered into a lease agreement which did not have provisions to protect the Council's interest in the event that it did not progress the scheme.

The report set out the proposed settlement terms and review the key lessons learned. The Cabinet noted the Part II appendices during consideration of the Part I report without disclosing any of the exempt information.

(Councillor Akram left the meeting)

The key lessons included the lack of an adequate business case; lack of a valuation to inform decision making; lack of project management; issues with the lease and overage provisions. The Cabinet reviewed and noted the lessons learned.

Cabinet - 16.01.23

In relation to the recommended settlement terms with Bharani Enterprises (UK) Limited, the Cabinet agreed that were the best outcome in the circumstances and would significantly reduce future liabilities. The recommendations were therefore agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the proposed termination of the existing 42-year lease agreement with Bharani Enterprises (UK) Limited and release of the overage on the property at 450 Bath Road, Slough where the Council was the beneficiary of the overage for the negotiated one-off payment of £1m plus VAT, be approved; and
- (b) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director Housing and Property, in consultation with the Lead Member for Financial Oversight and Council Assets, the s.151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer, to negotiate the terms of severance, and approve the associated documentation to affect the termination of the lease and release of the overage.

108. Recommendations from Cabinet Committee on Asset Disposals

The Cabinet considered the recommendation of the Cabinet Committee on Asset Disposal for its meeting held on 12th January to agree to the sale of the Adelphi site.

Details of the bidder and financial information was included in the Part II appendix which was considered in Part I without disclosing any of the exempt information.

The Cabinet noted that the Council had originally purchased the building to protect it from speculative development given its important local interest. The proposed sale was to a banqueting provider with a covenant to protect the façade and interior. The potential to apply for listed status later in 2023 was noted. The disposal would therefore be in the Council's financial interest whilst ensuring the building was preserved. The recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) Agreed to the Council sale of the Adelphi, Slough with the bidder named in Appendix 2 to the report; and
- (b) Delegated authority to the Executive Director of Property and Housing, in consultation with the Lead Member for Financial Oversight and Council Assets and the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial, to negotiate the terms of and enter into the contract and any associated documentation in connection with the

Cabinet - 16.01.23

disposal consistent with the disposal report and Heads of Terms appended at Confidential Appendices 1 and 2 to the report.

109. Exclusion of Press and Public

All matters were considered in Part I of the meeting, without disclosing any of the exempt information, therefore the press and public were not excluded at any point during the meeting.

110. Procurement of Adult Social Care Shared Lives Service Contract - Appendix

Resolved – That the Part II appendix be noted.

111. Severance of the Council's leasehold interest at Greenwatt Way, Slough SL1 2ES - Appendices

Resolved – That the Part II appendices be noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.00 pm)