

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 19th June, 2023.

Present:- Councillors Smith (Chair), Chahal (Vice-Chair), I. Ahmed, Bedi, Kelly, Muvvala and Wright

Also present:- Councillors Mann, Matloob, Qaseem and Hulme

Apologies for Absence:- None.

PART 1

7. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

8. Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th May 2023

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 24th May 2023 be approved as a correct record.

9. Refresh of Council's Corporate Plan

The Leader of the Council and the Executive Director, Strategy & Improvement introduced a report that set out the draft structure for a refresh of the Council's corporate plan for public consultation.

It was highlighted that the refreshed plan would be aligned to the Medium Term Financial Strategy and be the framework to guide the authority in the delivering the recovery programme and meet residents needs. The plan would come back to Cabinet and to Council in September following the consultation. It would be an update on the existing corporate plan agreed in May 2022 and take into account the new census data and progress of the Council's recovery.

The census data highlighted some of the key demographic features of Slough such as the rapid growth in population, high levels of housing density and significant levels of health inequalities. The draft priorities in the plan reflected these trends with a vision that including closing the healthy life expectancy gap, by focusing on children. Working effectively with partner agencies and voluntary and community sector would be key to successfully delivering the plan.

The Leader also highlighted the challenge the Council faced in regaining the trust and confidence of residents, as evidenced by the key findings of the survey conducted early in 2023 by the LGA, which were summarised in paragraph 2.8 of the report. For example, only 25% of Slough respondents said that they trusted SBC "a great deal or fair amount" compared to 59% of national respondents.

Councillors Mann, Hulme and Matloob asked questions of Cabinet including whether the overarching purpose of the plan should be limited to closing the health gap by focusing on children, given the wide range of other issues in the evidence base such as housing affordability and crime. Concerns were also raised about the consultation arrangements particularly whether the six-week timeframe was sufficient and how the digital divide would be addressed given that feedback was invited through the Citizen Space platform.

The Leader responded to the points raised and explained the rationale for the focus on addressing health inequalities with a focus on children and young people. It was emphasised that the document was being issued for consultation and residents were encouraged to give their feedback. The Cabinet considered that a six-week consultation was sufficient for a high level consultation and any significant service changes would be subject to their own detailed consultation. Support would be available in libraries to address the issues raised about digital access.

The Cabinet agreed that the report showed a robust, evidence based approach was being taken to develop the refreshed plan and that the consultation would draw out the key issues to be considered in the reports to Cabinet and Council seeking approval of the plan. The recommendations were therefore approved.

Resolved –

- (a) That the draft corporate plan structure (as at Appendix A to the report) be approved for the purpose of public consultation.
- (b) That it be noted that a report would be brought back to Cabinet in September for Cabinet to recommend a final version for formal approval by Council.

10. Berkshire Community Equipment Service (BCES) procurement

The Lead Member for Health, Social Care & Wellbeing introduced a report on the procurement of community equipment services which supported residents to be independent at home and reduced the need for long term, high cost care.

Cabinet authority had been given in June 2022 to continue partnership working with local authorities and health bodies in Berkshire to develop a new model for the delivery of community equipment services, led by West Berkshire Council. The Lead Member summarised the work undertaken since June 2022 and the recommendation that the joint commissioning approach continue with the current contract being extended for a period of five years with the potential for a further two one-year extensions. It was considered that the current arrangement worked well and key improvements were outlined in the report that would be explored to ensure value for money and reduce costs.

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The Cabinet asked a number of questions about how performance would be managed and was assured that robust arrangements were in place. It was stated that 12-months notice to exit the contract could be given if performance was not satisfactory, although it was emphasised that processes were in place to resolve any issues that arose during the period of the contract.

After due consideration the recommendations were agreed by Cabinet.

Resolved –

- (a) That it be agreed that West Berkshire District Council award a contract to NRS Healthcare for a period of five years plus two optional extensions of one year each, subject to satisfactory performance, through utilising the call off option from Buckinghamshire Integrated Equipment Service Single Supplier Framework.
- (b) That the continuance of the Berkshire Community Equipment Service (BCES) Section 75 Agreement be approved to allow the partnership arrangement currently in place to continue.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.06 pm)