

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 20th November, 2023.

Present:- Councillors Smith (Chair), Chahal (Vice-Chair), Bedi, Kelly and Wright

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor I. Ahmed and Muvvala

PART 1

52. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

53. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th October 2023

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16th October 2023 be approved as a correct record.

54. Slough Older People Strategy 2023-26

The Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Mental Health & Learning Disabilities introduced a report that sought approval of the Slough Older People Strategy 2023-26, including an Older People Strategy Action Plan.

The aim of the strategy was to ensure that Slough was a place where older people lived long and purposeful lives, experienced good health and achieved a desired quality of life. The strategy sought to minimise the negative impacts of social isolation and loneliness and aimed to prevent or delay, where possible, a range of long term conditions such as dementia. The Cabinet would receive reports back on an annual basis on the progress being made in delivering the action plan and on any proposed changes to the strategy.

Lead Members commented on various aspects of the report and welcomed the engagement that had taken place with partners and particularly with older people, including through the Co-Production Network. Resident engagement was a priority for the administration and the good practice in producing this plan should be taken forward in the development of future strategies. It was agreed that the strategy could make an important contribution to addressing the needs of people living in the large number of multi-generational households in Slough.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Cabinet expressed its strong support for the strategy; thanked those that had contributed to its development; and agreed the recommendations.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Slough Older People Strategy 2023-26 as set out at Appendix 2 to the report be approved.

- (b) That it be noted that a report would be brought back to Cabinet annually setting out the progress against the Action Plan and recommending any amendments to the Strategy.

55. Contract Award for the Supply and Installation of Stairlifts

The Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Mental Health & Learning Disabilities introduced a report that sought approval to award a contract for the supply and installation of stairlifts.

The Cabinet had approved a new Housing Assistance Policy (HAP) in November 2022, which followed an upheld complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) regarding the provision of a stairlift. The HAP detailed the Disabled Facilities Grant options that an individual could receive and the policy fast-tracked certain types of equipment such as stairlifts.

The contract would be for a period of three years plus two optional extensions of one year each, subject to satisfactory performance. This would be via direct award to Handicare Accessibility Limited through the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) Framework Agreement and would commence in January 2024. The contract would be funded through the Disabled Facilities Grant with a total contract value of up to £1m over the potential 5-year contract term. The proposal to have a sole provider to supply and install stairlifts to improve the service and decrease waiting times would therefore ensure compliance with the key actions to address the LGSCO public interest report.

The Cabinet agreed with the proposed approach and particularly welcomed the anticipated reduction in waiting times for eligible residents from 18 months to potentially as little as 30 days. Lead Members discussed issues such as value for money and performance monitoring and were satisfied that appropriate arrangements were in place. The recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the award of the contract to Handicare Accessibility Limited for the supply and installation of stairlifts funded through the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) for a period of three years plus two optional extensions of one year, subject to satisfactory performance through the ESPO Framework be approved. The total value of this contract would be up to £1M over the potential 5-year contract term.
- (b) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director for People (Adults) in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Lead Member for Health, Social Care and Wellbeing to enter into the contract with Handicare Accessibility Limited.

56. Children & Young People's Placements Sufficiency Strategy

The Lead Member for Education & Children's Services introduced a report on the Children & Young People's Placement Sufficiency Strategy.

The Council had a duty to ensure that its children in care had suitable accommodation within the local authority's area that met the needs of children. The strategy proposed at Appendix 1 to the report set out how the Council would seek to meet this duty. It was noted that there had been a rise across the country in the number of children being looked after and it was therefore a challenge to provide the sufficiency of accommodation required. Slough also faced significant pressure from the placement of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) and the resulting increase in care experienced young people who were entitled to support.

The Executive Director, People (Children)/Slough Children First Chief Executive highlighted that the priority was to ensure that all children were provided with a safe and loving home and to keep children as close to the local community as possible. The strategy had identified five key areas including strengthening early help and 'edge of care' support, and fostering recruitment and retention. A Sufficiency Board would be set up to oversee the delivery of the strategy. One of the longer term options was to scope the potential of creating SBC/SCFs own internal residential home for children. Lead Members expressed support for the concept but asked questions about whether such a proposal was viable in the Council's financial circumstances. It was responded that the first step would be a feasibility study and the provision of such a facility would have to be cost effective.

The Cabinet highlighted its commitment to the wellbeing of children in Slough and welcomed the contribution the strategy could play in achieving that aim. Discussion included what more could be done to recruit foster carers and make Slough a 'foster friendly authority'. At the conclusion of the discussion the strategy was approved.

Resolved – That the Children & Young People's Placement Sufficiency Strategy as at Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

57. Children & Young People's Participation Strategy

The Lead Member for Education & Children's Services introduced a report that sought approval of the Children & Young People's Participation Strategy.

The aim of the strategy was to ensure that Slough was a place where children felt they could voice their views and opinions in a safe and supported environment. It had been developed between the Council and partner agencies and would be delivered through a range of initiatives supported by a multi-agency action plan.

It was noted that the inspection of children's services by Ofsted in January 2023 identified that children and young people were not involved in the

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design, delivery or shaping of services or in their own care planning. This was therefore a key area for improvement. The Council had prioritised children and young people in the new corporate plan and recognised that services should be co-produced with them.

The Leader emphasised that the administration wanted to listen to the views of children and young people and the strategy was an important step in the right direction. The Cabinet approved the strategy.

Resolved – That the Children & Young People’s Participation Strategy as at Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

58. Development of Integrated Family Hubs in existing children's centres

The Lead Member for Education & Children's Services introduced a report on the family hub model to support families from conception to the age of 19, or 25 for young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND).

The report followed the decision of Cabinet in May 2023 to consolidate children’s centres with wider functions in three centres (Penn Road, Romsey Close and Chalvey Grove) and early years education only in the other two retained centres (Yew Tree Road and Monksfield Way). The family hub model would provide a single point of access to integrated family support services for early help. They would build on the legacy of Slough’s established children’s centres and further strengthen outcomes for children and young people which could help reduce longer term dependency on statutory services. The model was aligned with emerging national approach to children’s social care with services shifting into local community-based multi-disciplinary teams.

Lead Members welcomed the development of the model to strengthen engagement and working with families most in need of support. Questions were asked about cost and how effectiveness would be measured. The Executive Director, People (Children) highlighted that the report set out the principles and approach for the family hub model and that it would be delivered within the best value ethos. Future decisions on provision would come back to Cabinet and clearly set out the costs at that stage.

After due consideration the recommendation was approved.

Resolved – That the establishment of a Family Hub model of delivery from the Council's retained children's centres at Penn Road, Romsey Close and Chalvey Grove Children’s Centres be approved.

59. A4 Safer Roads

The Lead Member for Environment, Environmental Services, Highways, Housing & Transport introduced a report that sought approval to introduce road safety improvements on the A4 from the Huntercombe crossroads to the

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intersection of the M4 Junction 5 roundabout. The works were fully funded from the Department for Transport's (DfT) Safer Roads Fund grant.

The purpose of the funding for the scheme was to reduce the number of fatal and serious injuries for all road users on the A4. The DfT funding had been made available to upgrade 50 of England's most dangerous local A-road section following an analysis by the Road Safety Foundation in 2016. Funding of £1.7m had been made available for the A4 in Slough given its high risk profile. The road safety measures to be introduced included a 30 mph speed limit along appropriate sections of the A4, as had been approved by Cabinet in December 2022; the introduction of average speed cameras; red-light camera systems; road surface treatments; improved pedestrian and cycle crossings; removing roadside hazards; and decluttering. The proposals were aligned to the Council's Local Transport Plan 3 and Corporate Plan objectives.

Lead Members considered the safety data and the consultation responses detailed in the report. The Cabinet sought assurance that the data that would be used in the review that would be carried out after the scheme was completed would include a comparison against the 2016 baseline as well as the data collected in 2021 which would have been effected by the Covid related impact on travel patterns. This was agreed. The links to the A4 Cycle Way scheme were considered and Members agreed that it was appropriate to deliver in a cost effective way and reduce any disruption during construction. In response to concerns raised by the Cabinet about potential disruption the Executive Director responsible for transport gave assurance that the majority of works were off carriageway and would be phased and coordinated to minimise disruption.

The Cabinet agreed that the key priority was for the A4 to be as safe as possible and that scheme would help to achieve this. The importance of minimising disruption for road users during construction was emphasised. The recommendations were then agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the implementation of the road safety measures outlined in the report as part of the Safer Roads Fund scheme on the A4 be approved;
- (b) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director for Regeneration, Housing and Environment, in consultation with the Lead Member for transport, housing, highways, the environment and environmental services, to approve the revised road safety Summary of Countermeasures identified in Appendix 2 to the report;
- (c) That the procurement for services and construction associated with the Summary of Countermeasures in Appendix 2 to the report be approved; and

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- (d) That the allocation of grant funds for the installation of speed enforcement cameras on the A4 to Thames Valley Police be approved.

60. ICT & Digital Update

The Leader of the Council introduced a report that updated on the progress of the ICT & Digital modernisation and remediation work approved by Cabinet in March 2022. The report set out the work to-date, changes to the portfolio of projects based on the learning of the past year and the plan for the next year.

It was noted that the update had been considered by the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 24th October 2023 at which various aspects of the progress were tested and constructively challenged. Overall it was noted that good progress had been made, particularly in building solid foundations which would lead to new technology delivering improvements for residents in the future.

One major project that had been successfully completed recently was the data centre move. This was a significant project and the IT team had worked very long hours over the weekend to complete it to ensure services and staff were not disrupted. The Cabinet thanked the IT team for their hard work to ensure the move went smoothly.

The Chief Digital & Information Officer summarised other areas of progress set out in the report, which would in time improve customer service and the customer experience when engaging with the Council. The update and next steps were noted.

Resolved –

- (a) That the update to the modernisation and remediation activities being undertaken by the ICT & Digital Team and the next phase of work, as well as the ongoing risks, issues and challenges as the work continues be noted; and
- (b) That the next steps as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved, including the adoption of more automated processes, the upskilling of staff in the use of modern technologies and the building of a more coherent digital offer for residents.

61. Public Sector Equality Duty and Slough Borough Council Equality Objectives

The Leader of the Council introduced a report that set out the proposed 2023-2027 statutory equality objectives for the Council in line with the public sector equality duty. The objectives covered both employment and service provision.

The Council was fully committed to promoting equality in the provision of its services to Slough resident and as an employer to its workforce. The report

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set out the current position and progress made in compliance with the provisions under the Equality Act. The Council had been working closely with the Equality and Human Rights Commission who were advising a number of local authorities on their work to achieve full compliance. The draft equality objectives would be subject to consultation and come back to Cabinet, and then Council, in early 2024 to approve.

The report had been considered by the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 24th October 2023 and the comments and recommendations were contained in Appendix 3 to the report. The officer responses to the recommendations were set out in paragraphs 1.9 and 1.10 of the report, which were noted. The relevant points would be taken into account when a report was brought back to Cabinet to approve the final objectives following consultation.

After due consideration the recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the draft equality objectives attached at Appendix A to the report be approved for the purposes of consultation.
- (b) That it be agreed that a report would be brought back to Cabinet with a view to final objectives being approved by Cabinet and Full Council early in 2024.
- (c) That it be noted that the report was presented to Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee on 24 October and a letter from the Chair had been sent to the Leader including additional recommendations for consideration by Cabinet (Appendix C to the report).

62. Procurement of Temporary Labour Contract

The Leader of the Council introduced a report that sought approval to award the temporary labour contract for the supply of temporary workers to the Council following a competitive procurement process through a framework agreement. The current contract would expire in March 2024 and a replacement was required.

The proposed contract was for two years with optional extensions of a further two years subject to satisfactory performance. The Part II appendix included details of the provider and was noted in Part I of the meeting without disclosing any of the exempt information.

The Council was currently operating at a spend for temporary workers at £21.9 million for 2022-2023. The majority of the spend was for agency workers covering vacant established posts, of which £16 million was in salaries and £1.85 million were attributed to agency and provider oncosts. There was also spend on additional agency workers where there was specific

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project or skills need where the Council did not have permanent staff who could undertake this work. It was recognised that there would be a continued need for temporary workers but the Leader reiterated the administrations aim to reduce reliance on such provision. The Cabinet asked about cost savings and it was noted that whilst savings of £767k had been negotiated with the current vendor in 2022-2023, there was still an opportunity to negotiate greater cost savings through the new contract.

The recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That it be agreed to the award of the contract to Supplier 1 as set out in Appendix 1 for the supply of the Council's temporary labour needs for a period of up to four years (two-year contract plus optional extensions of up to 2 further years subject to satisfactory performance) from 25th March 2024 – 24th March 2028.
- (b) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director – Strategy and Improvement in consultation with the Leader of the Council, and the section 151 officer, to complete the final negotiations and enter into contract with Supplier 1 for the supply of the Council's temporary labour needs for a period of up to four years.

63. Disposal of Site of Former Merry Makers PH, Langley

The Lead Member for Finance, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenue & Benefits introduced a report that sought approval for the disposal of the former Merry Makers public house site in Langley.

The Part II appendix contained details of the bidder and this was considered by Cabinet during Part I of the meeting without disclosing any of the exempt information.

The proposed sale had been subject to an open competitive disposal process and reflected best consideration reasonably obtainable for the disposal of the assets in accordance with section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The sale would generate capital receipts which will, as the asset sits within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA); benefit the HRA. The Lead Member commented that there had been previous aspirations for a health facility on the site, but there had been no appetite from the NHS for this and the site had originally been acquired by the Council for housing. The site was currently empty with associated risk of fly tipping and anti-social behaviour.

After due consideration the disposal was agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Council sale of the site of Former Merry Makers PH, Langley with the bidder named in Appendix 1 to the report be agreed.

- (b) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director of Regeneration, Housing and Environment, 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 disposal consistent with the disposal report and Heads of Terms appended at Confidential Appendix 1.

64. References from Scrutiny

The comments of the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee (CISC) on the Public Sector Equality Duty and SBC Equality Objectives were considered during discussion of that item. It was also noted that the ICT & Digital Update report had been scrutinised by CISC on 24th October 2023.

There were no other references from scrutiny.

65. Exclusion of Press and Public

All business was conducted in public during Part I of the meeting without disclosing any of the exempt information contained in the Part II appendices. Therefore, it was not necessary to exclude the press and public from the meeting.

66. Contract Award for the Supply and Installation of Stairlifts - Appendix 2

Resolved – That the Part II Appendix be noted.

67. Procurement of Temporary Labour Contract - Appendix 1

Resolved – That the Part II Appendix be noted.

68. Disposal of Site of Former Merry Makers PH, Langley - Appendix

Resolved – That the Part II Appendix be noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.31 pm and closed at 7.48 pm)