

Slough Borough Council

Report To: Cabinet

Date: 15 April 2024

Subject: Recommendations from CISC, 13 March 2024

Chief Officer: Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer: Scrutiny Officer

Ward(s): All

Exempt: NO

Appendices:

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report sets out Cabinet's initial response to the recommendations arising from the [Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee's Extraordinary Meeting on 13 March](#).

Recommendation:

That the Cabinet approves the recommended responses (Table 1 Column iii) to each recommendation (Table 1, column i) with reference to the options set out in Section 2.4.

2. References from Scrutiny

Introduction

- 2.1 The key roles and functions of Scrutiny in Slough are set out in Article 6, Sections 2-6 of the constitution and include (6.2.ii):

“make reports and/or recommendations to the full Council and/or the Executive and/or any other Committee in connection with the discharge of any functions;”

- 2.2 Table 1 below sets out:

- i. The recommendations to Cabinet agreed by CISC at its most recent meeting, on 13 March 2024;
- ii. A link to the relevant source document or minutes for each recommendation.
- iii. The Cabinet's recommended response (see 2.4 below);
- iv. Notes and links to any formal report to the Cabinet (either at this meeting or expected at a future meeting) that addresses the recommendations and their implementation or otherwise.
- v. The Relevant Cabinet Member and Director.

- 2.3 The Cabinet is asked to respond accordingly, following the options set out in Section 2.4.
- 2.4 There are four response options available to Cabinet, as set out in section 17.2 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules:
- a. NOTE AND NOT AGREE the recommendation, on the grounds that [insert rationale];
 - b. NOTE AND AGREE the recommendation, or a specific part of the recommendation (noting whether action is already underway, and which named director will implement it and by what date;
 - c. REFER the matter to Full Council or a committee for action; or
 - d. REQUEST FURTHER WORK BY OFFICERS in response to the recommendation (eg to evaluate options to implement and report back to cabinet for final decision by [date]).

3. Explanatory Note on Appendix

3.1 The Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee received a report produced by the Council in December 2023 that self-assessed two years of progress against the Best Value Directions, SEND Directions, and Children's Services Directions. This report informed the members of scrutiny and is therefore it is attached to this report.

3.2 The Recovery Programme Team, supported by Senior Responsible Officers reviewed progress against those Directions and associated recovery initiatives. This report was tabled at the December 2023 Improvement and Recovery Board. The report is appended to this paper as an account of the programme review undertaken by officers at that time.

3.3 The report appended was further supported by detailed appendices on Adult Social Care Transformation, SEND Service Transformation, and the Getting to Good programme. It was further noted in the report to IRB that detailed financial updates had been provided to the December Finance Board. These further documents can also be made available on request.

3.4 Following the submission of these reports to December IRB, the Commissioner's then wrote their fourth report to the Minister, and the Minister then responded to the Council. The Council acknowledges that the Commissioners have not observed the consistency and pace they would have expected to see at this stage of recovery, albeit the Commissioners do note some areas of positive progress in their letter.

3.5 In some cases the council's assessment of progress matched that included in the Commissioner's Letter, for example in contract management and procurement, SEND and Getting to Good, and financial planning. However, in other aspects the assessments of progress differed, with the Commissioner's assessing that slower and less consistent progress had been made.

3.6 The Council has reflected on the assessment in the Commissioner's Letter and Minister's Letter and accepts the findings. The insight from those letters, alongside evidence from the recovery programme since December 2023, have been used to inform the Phase 2 Recovery Programme, which started in March 2024. The Phase 2 Recovery Programme focuses on three pillars: robust finances, organisational transformation, and children's delivery. The Council welcomes the introduction of the Commissioner-chaired Transformation Board, which means that a Commissioner-chaired Board now aligns to each pillar of the recovery programme.

Table 1. Recommendations requiring Cabinet response.

i. Scrutiny Recommendation	ii. Source of recommendation (link to CISC report/minutes)	iii. CABINET RESPONSE (from options a-e above)	iv. Explanatory notes provided by Cabinet Member	v. Name of Cabinet Member and Executive Director
<p>The Council should systematically assess and learn lessons from other councils' successes during intervention, including exploring whether we have sufficient expertise in-house to deliver a major change programme.</p>	<p>Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee, 13th March, 2024, Item 2 - The Commissioners' 4th Best Value Report and Minister's response</p>	<p>Cabinet NOTES AND AGREES the recommendation and can report that it is already underway since the beginning of the intervention in Slough e.g. Section 151 Officer Group</p>	<p>Senior leaders across the organisation have in place best practice and lessons learned group across councils in intervention, for example the s.151 officer group. This has included sharing information from authorities such as Sandwell and Liverpool.</p> <p>The Chief Executive and members of the recovery programme team have undertaken visits to authorities in intervention, including Thurrock, Croydon and Woking.</p> <p>It is important that the Council is outward focused and learns from authorities providing good services, including those who have undergone major change. For example the ICT lead has made links with London authorities with a track record of ICT transformation and the legal and procurement teams are working with London Boroughs on contract and procurement processes.</p>	<p>Cllr Smith, Leader Chief Executive</p>

<p>To review and improve the way that we [CLT and Cabinet] report to ourselves and to commissioners about plans and progress</p>	<p>Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee, 13th March, 2024, Item 2 - The Commissioners' 4th Best Value Report and Minister's response</p>	<p>Cabinet NOTES AND AGREES the recommendation and can report that it is already underway as of March 2024</p>	<p>Phase 2 changes - adopted a commissioner chaired Transformation Board alongside existing commissioner chaired Finance Board, both of which report to the commissioner chaired Improvement & Recovery Board</p> <p>Reset of recovery programme aligned to three clear pillars: finance, organisational transformation, children's delivery. Each pillar includes multiple recovery workstreams, and aligns to a Commissioner-led Board for reporting and assurance.</p> <p>Work is ongoing to ensure that CLT and lead member and director meetings are informed by effective forward planning and the new interim Chief Executive will review the reporting processes in place to ensure that there is appropriate transparency and scrutiny of plans and priorities.</p>	<p>Cllr Smith, Leader Chief Executive</p>
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<p>Directors establish demonstrable capacity to create bandwidth / be able to develop transformation as well as continue 'business as usual'</p>	<p>Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee, 13th March, 2024, Item 2 - The Commissioners' 4th Best Value Report and Minister's response</p>	<p>Cabinet NOTES AND AGREES the recommendation and can report that it is already underway as of [date]</p>	<p>As noted by the lead commissioner, transformation is not a separate activity which is started and finished. Transformation and change needs to be embedded into the culture of the organisation.</p> <p>To manage key projects within the overall recovery plans, a new Intervention Unit within new Chief Executive's Office has been created.</p> <p>Recruitment to new senior management roles at Director and Head of Service levels</p> <p>Target Operating Model project to inform ways of working and priorities</p> <p>New Heads of Service align structures, plans, budgets to deliver priorities</p>	<p>Stephen Brown, Chief Executive</p>
<p>That an Independent Review (or Race Equality Commission) be commissioned immediately into Equality and Diversity issues in Slough Borough Council.</p>	<p>Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee, 13th March, 2024, Item 2 - The Commissioners' 4th Best Value Report and Minister's response</p>	<p>The response is contained in the separate report on Equality Objectives.</p>	<p>See Equality Objectives cabinet report elsewhere on today's cabinet agenda.</p>	<p>Cllr Smith, Leader</p> <p>Stephen Brown, Chief Executive</p>

<p>That a draft HR Improvement plan is brought to CISC by the new HR Director 4 weeks following their arrival.</p>	<p>Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee, 13th March, 2024, Item 2 - The Commissioners' 4th Best Value Report and Minister's response</p>	<p>Cabinet NOTES AND AGREES the recommendation IN PART: Cabinet AGREES that a draft HR Improvement plan will be provided to CISC members by the new HR Director and requires the recommendation be implemented by a date to be agreed by the interim Chief Executive; Cabinet DOES NOT AGREE the four-week deadline for a new incoming director on the grounds that it is a matter for the new interim Chief Executive to determine the priorities for his corporate and senior leadership team and to ensure activity is appropriately prioritised. Reports on the senior leadership structure and other employment related reports are already being presented to the Employment Committee as part of the existing improvement plan.</p>	<p>Existing workforce improvement plan. Not wholly delivered, and requires a refresh, however some elements are and have progressed.</p> <p>New HR Heads of Service recruitment is underway.</p> <p>Cabinet notes the functions of the Employment Committee as being the body responsible for Council's responsibilities as an employer, including considering major changes in Human Resource Management and monitoring performance in HR.</p> <p>Guidance on scrutiny identifies the importance of scoping topics to ensure they have an impact and add value, are of high importance and reflect concern of local people, avoid work duplicated elsewhere, issue is one committee can easily influence, relate to area not performing well and relevant to all or large parts of local area. Less suitable topics would include those addressed or better addressed elsewhere, where change is imminent, too broad to make a review realistic, do not relate to executive matters or currently subject to inspection or recently undergone substantial change.</p>	<p>Cllr Smith, Leader Stephen Brown, Chief Executive</p>
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