

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 17th February, 2025.

Present:- Councillors Smith (Chair), Chahal (Vice-Chair), E. Ahmed, Manku, Shah (from 7.15pm), Shaik and Wright

Also present:- Councillor Dhillon

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Bedi and Kelly

PART 1

105. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Shah declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to agenda item 5 – Adult Social Care Fees and Charges, in that a member of her family had special needs.

106. Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th January 2025

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 20th January 2025 be approved as a correct record.

107. English Devolution White Paper Update

The Leader of the Council introduced a report that provided an update on the Government's Devolution White Paper published in December 2024.

The report presented a proposed framework of factors to be considered by the Council in discussions over the creation of a new strategic authority and potential local government reorganisation. Early and positive engagement in the both proposals would best support Slough in securing devolution and reorganisation proposals that delivered benefits for residents and sought to avoid the imposition of an unfavourable settlement.

The Leader commented that the Council was committed to engaging with all Members, residents and partners on the proposals in an open and transparent manner and the report was a first step in setting out all of the options and issues. Early discussions had taken place with a range of other authorities about the potential configuration of a strategic authority which could potentially have devolved powers in areas such as transport, infrastructure, skills, housing, economic development and health and wellbeing.

The White Paper confirmed that a programme of local government reorganisation would be put in place in two-tier areas and for unitary councils where there was evidence of failure or where their size or boundaries may hinder their ability to deliver sustainable and high-quality public services. The Government had indicated creating councils that covered a population of 500,000 or more. Slough's current population was 160,000.

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The Cabinet welcomed the update and recognised that it was a potentially significant set of changes. There were potential opportunities to improve public services and provide better value for money for local taxpayers and the proposed approach of engagement and consideration of all the options was endorsed. Slough was not part of the first phase of local government reorganisation and there would be opportunities to learn from best practice in implementing any future changes.

The Chief Executive stated that a proactive approach was being taken to shape any future changes, but also highlighted that potential devolution and reorganisation must not distract the Council from its core agenda of recovery and improvement. This view was supported by the Cabinet and the recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the summary of the proposals in the White Paper [section 3] be noted.
- (b) That the Council work positively with partners, all elected members and other stakeholders to develop proposals for devolution and local reorganisation, at pace.
- (c) That the proposed framework of key factors that the council will consider in its discussions with partners [section 5] be endorsed.

108. **Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30yr Business Plan and Medium-Term Budgets 2025/26 and setting of housing rents**

Lead Members considered a report that set out the proposed 30-year Business Plan for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for both revenue and capital. The Cabinet was being asked to recommend approval of the business plan and budgets to full Council.

The revenue plan over a 5-year period projected total income of £243m, and expenditure of £224.41m. The HRA capital programme provided for a total capital investment of £105.52m over the next five years and £746.57m over the 30-year period. The business plan demonstrated that the Council was able to fund the proposals subject to the assumptions within the plan, and that the HRA remained sustainable and viable over the 30-year period.

The report also sought Cabinet approval for the proposed increases to HRA dwelling rents, affordable housing rents, garage rents and tenant service charges from 7th April 2025. It was proposed that for 2025/26 dwelling and non-dwelling rents increase by 2.7%, which was based on the September CPI of 1.7% plus 1%, government rent formula direction and service charges increase by 12% based on phases full costs recovery. Lead Members considered the service charge increases and noted that the 12% increase was part of the previously agreed approach to recover the gap of circa £1m

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caused by the spike in energy, insurance and other inflationary costs on a phased basis over four years to ensure the charges remained affordable.

Other issues discussed included the forthcoming re-procurement of the housing repairs and maintenance contract and the actions being taken to tackle fraud and illegal sub-letting of properties. Officers highlighted there had been a significant tightening up to combat fraud, including evictions where that was necessary.

(Councillor Shah joined the meeting)

At the conclusion of the discussion the Cabinet agreed to recommend the HRA Business Plan and budgets to full Council, and approved the proposed increases to rent and service charges.

Resolved –

- (a) That social & affordable housing dwelling rent increase by 2.7% (CPI plus 1%) from 7th April 2025 in line with current national rent setting formula.
- (b) That tenant service charges increase by 12% from 7th April 2025 in line with the agreed phased recovery of additional service costs provided to and recoverable from relevant tenants.
- (c) That garage rents for council & private tenants and leaseholders increase by 2.7% from 7th April 2025 in line with the rent increase.
- (d) That the HRA 30-year Business plan as set out in Appendices A & B be noted.

Recommended to full Council –

- (e) That the HRA revenue budget for 2025/26 be approved as set out in Appendix C which reflected the annual rents & service charges increases as proposed in the report.
- (f) That the HRA 5-year Capital Programme as set out in Appendix D be approved.
- (g) That the draft 5-year HRA reserves and balances as set out in Appendix E be noted.
- (h) That the HRA 30-year Business plan as set out in Appendices A & B be approved.

109. Adult Social Care Fees and Charges

The Lead Member for Adult Social Care introduced a report that sought approval to commence a consultation on current adult social care fees and

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charges. Following consultation, a final policy would come back to Cabinet in April 2025 with a report outlining proposed changes.

There were significant pressures on adult social care budgets. The number support packages, for example homecare or a direct payment, had risen to 1,907 residents in 2023/24 with rises in costs of support and complexity of presenting issues. There had been an 8% increase in total clients accessing long term support throughout the years between 2019/20 and 2023/24, which compared to a 2% increase across England and 4% across the Southeast, in the same period. The Council had to ensure that those deemed as able to afford to pay were doing so and to recover the costs of arranging support.

Slough Borough Council was not in line with most neighbouring authorities regarding charges, particularly to people had over the savings threshold of £23,250 and paid for their own support and with regards to the minimum income guarantee amount allowed. The proposed changes that would be consulted on were summarised. They included to apply the minimum income guarantee as per national guidance; implement full cost recovery; and make changes to deferred payments and interest.

Lead Members asked a number of questions about the proposals including the number of people expected to be effected by a change to the minimum income guarantee. In response it was noted that the proposal to remove the 'buffer' would affect the 508 people currently charged and a further 602 not currently charged. It was highlighted that full financial assessments would be carried out so there would only be charges for those who were able to afford to pay. The consultation would be an important opportunity to hear peoples views and feedback carefully considered.

At the conclusion of the discussion the recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the additional costs and pressures on Adult Social Care services over the last two years and the need to address these be noted.
- (b) That it be agreed to conduct a consultation and evaluation on the impact of the changes proposed in the report led by a lead officer in Adult Social Care during February/March 2025.
- (c) That a further report be brought back to Cabinet in April 2025 for a final decision on the proposals.

110. Drug and Alcohol Treatment, Recovery and Improvement

The Cabinet considered a report that set out an update on the new Drug & Alcohol Treatment, Recovery & Improvement Grant (DATRIG) which would provide services to support rough sleepers.

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Lead Members noted Appendix 1 to the report in public without disclosing any of the exempt information it contained.

The grant would provide funding for 12 months from 1st April 2025. It was noted that the DATRIG funding for the Council in 2025/26 was expected to be £798,808. Only the Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment (RSDAT) component (£497,561) was currently confirmed, with the remaining grant indicative funding.

The report sought approval to directly award the Lot 2 Rough Sleepers Substance Misuse Community Outreach service to Turning Point, the incumbent provider, for a term of 1+1 years from 1st April 2025. The service was funded from the Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment (RSDAT) component of the DATRIG. Lead Members asked about the performance of the current contract and how outcomes would be monitored and managed in future. Officers highlighted that a range of indicators were in place to determine the success of the service including the number of people who re-entered treatment which was an important outcome measure. The Cabinet also commented on the importance of working closely with other Council departments such as the homelessness and housing teams. Assurance was provided that effective working relationships were in place.

A modification was sought to the existing Lot 1 Integrated Adult and Young people's Substance misuse service contract with Turning Point to enable expenditure of the Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment & Recovery (SSMTR) component of the DATRIG through the existing contract. The SSMTR component of the Lot 1 contract would be £178,551 to be spent through the contract in 2025/2026. The SSMTR component of the DATRIG was indicative funding. The modification was dependent on final confirmation of funding.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Cabinet welcomed the report and agreed the recommendations.

Resolved –

- (a) That the new DATRIG funding, the overall value of the RSDAT component of the grant (£497,561), the requirements of the grant and acknowledgement that it was limited to 12 months of funding only be noted.
- (b) That the direct award of the Lot 2 Rough Sleepers Substance Misuse Community Outreach service to Turning Point (Services) Limited for a term of one year from 1st April 2025 until 31st March 2026 with the option to extend for a further year until 31st March 2027 be approved. This was funded from the Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment component of the DATRIG at a value of £356,405 in 2025/26. The extension would be subject to performance and continuation of grant funding in 2026/27.

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- (c) That delegated authority be given to the Director of Public Health and Public Protection and the Corporate Director of Resources, in consultation with the Lead Member for Equalities, Public Health and Public Protection to enter into the Rough Sleepers Substance Misuse Community Outreach service contract with Turning Point (Services) Limited.
- (d) That the modification to be made to the existing Lot 1 Integrated Adult and Young people's Substance misuse service contract with Turning Point (Services) Limited with effect from 1st April 2025 until 31st March 2026 to reflect the award of the SSMTR part of the DATRIG grant be noted. This grant would fund additional capacity to the service through outreach workers and the provision of medication. The SSMTR component of the Lot 1 contact would be £178,551 for 2025/26. This funding was indicative pending ministerial approval.

111. Slough Adults Autism Strategy 2024 - 29 Annual Progress Report

The Lead Member for Adult Social Care introduced a report that updated the Cabinet on progress of the Slough Adults Autism Strategy that had been approved in February 2024.

The strategy aimed to support autistic adults and their carers to achieve positive outcomes and the report detailed the progress made during the first year of activity under the plan. An Autism Steering Group had been established with more than 40 active members meeting on a regular basis. Highlights during the first year included an event during Autism Acceptance Week Celebrations, an Autism Community Coffee Group and exploration of outreach and support group activities.

The Cabinet welcomed the report and positive progress that had been made.

The involvement of autistic adults at the centre of delivery of the strategy was particularly commended. It was recognised that the co-production model worked very well in Slough. Lead Members asked about the major challenges during the year and in response it was noted that much of activity was delivered at low cost. If additional resources were available the pace of delivery could increase. The Cabinet agreed to note the report.

Resolved – That the progress made during year 1 in the delivery of the Slough Adults Autism Strategy 2024 - 2029 Action Plan as set out within Appendix 1 to the report be noted.

112. Slough Adults Mental Health Commissioning Strategy 2024-2029

The Lead Member for Adult Social Care introduced a report that sought approval of the Slough Adults Mental Health Commissioning Strategy 2024-2029.

The overarching aim of the strategy was to ensure that all residents had timely access to high-quality, integrated mental health support and

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empowered individuals to lead fulfilling and independent lives. It included a detailed action plan to seek to improve mental health outcomes across the community. Key initiatives within the plan targeted improvements in early intervention, crisis support and the expansion of recovery services. The commissioning strategy had been shaped following extensive consultation and engagement with people with lived experience of mental health, service users, carers and key stakeholders including the Co-production network, NHS partners and the voluntary and community sector.

The Cabinet welcomed the development of the strategy and agreed it set out the right approach to improve the delivery of services in the future. Lead Members asked about how performance would be managed and measured. A steering group would oversee delivery of the action plan to provide accountability and ensure the commissioning strategy remained responsive to the evolving needs of the community. An annual report would be brought back to Cabinet outlining progress.

After due consideration the Cabinet approved the commissioning strategy.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Slough Adults Mental Health Commissioning Strategy 2024-2029 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.
- (b) That an annual report be brought to Cabinet, outlining progress against the Action Plan and any recommended updates and amendments to the commissioning strategy, to ensure the strategy remains aligned with community needs.

113. Recommendations from Cabinet Committee: Disposal of three retail parades and update to Asset Disposal Programme - surplus Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Assets

The Cabinet considered the recommendations of the Cabinet Committee from its meeting held on 13th February 2025 to dispose of the following three retail parades held in the Housing Revenue Account:

- Harrison Way and St. Andrews Way retail parade, Harrison Way, Slough
- Knolton Way retail parade, Knolton Way, Slough
- Trelawney Avenue retail parade, Trelawney Avenue, Slough

The three retail parades had been declared surplus by Cabinet in July 2024. The Council would retain the freehold for the buildings and dispose of the retail element by granting long term leases which would be subject to existing commercial leases and it was intended the units would continue to be used as shops serving the local community. The residential units would be retained by the Council.

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The Committee had considered the options for the assets and concluded that disposal was the recommended option as it would reduce the financial burden of managing the assets, generate a capital receipt and help the Council to rationalise its property portfolio and focus on core activities.

The Cabinet noted that the Committee had agreed to amend the address of the one of the assets listed in the July 2024 report to Cabinet on the Asset Disposal Programme – Surplus HRA assets.

The recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

The Cabinet noted that at its meeting on 13th February 2025 the Cabinet Committee:

- (a) Agreed to the amendment of one of the addresses of the asset within the July 2024 cabinet paper 'Asset Disposal Programme – Surplus Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Assets HRA Non-Residential Surplus Assets declared as surplus in July 2024 cabinet, correcting the error in the original report referenced above from 2 and 6 Stoneymeade to 2 & 12, 4, 6 and 8 & 20 Stoneymeade.

Cabinet agreed the following recommendations of the Cabinet Committee from its meeting held on 13th February 2025:

- (b) Agreed to the disposal by granting of a long lease and by method of auction as set out in Appendix A, of the three retail parades known as;
 - Harrison Way and St. Andrews Way retail parade, Harrison Way, Slough
 - Knolton Way retail parade, Knolton Way, Slough
 - Trelawney Avenue retail parade, Trelawney Avenue, Slough
- (c) Delegated authority to the Executive Director of Regeneration, Housing & Environment, in consultation with the Lead Member for Financial Oversight and Council Assets and the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial, to:
 - 1. determine the reserve price for each asset when it is placed at auction, which will be consistent with the value established by the independent Red Book Valuation within Appendix C,
 - 2. authorise entering into negotiations with interested parties to be regarded as a special purchaser by the Council, as an alternative option to auction, and to proceed to agree terms with such parties for the disposal of each of the three retail parades.

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114. Recommendations from Cabinet Committee: Appropriation of four residential assets from the General Fund (GF) to Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

The Cabinet considered the recommendations of the Cabinet Committee from its meeting held on 13th February 2025 regarding the appropriation of the following four residential assets from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA):

- Claycot's School House, Monksfield Way, Slough, SL2 1QX
- Wexham School House, Church Lane, Slough, SL3 6LJ
- 49 Lake Avenue Slough SL1 3BY
- 5 Hillersdon, Slough, SL2 5UF

The appropriation would allow the Council to rationalise its portfolio and provide future cost savings for both the General Fund and HRA. The Committee had considered the reasons why each of the assets had been held in the General Fund and agreed they were no longer required for the purpose they had originally been acquired for. Once transferred to the HRA the properties would be refurbished and brought back into use for much needed family housing.

After due consideration, the Cabinet agreed the recommendations of the Committee.

Resolved –

(a) That the appropriation of four residential assets from the GF to HRA, as follows, be agreed;

- Claycot's School House, Monksfield Way, Slough, SL2 1QX
- Wexham School House, Church Lane, Slough, SL3 6LJ
- 49 Lake Avenue Slough SL1 3BY
- 5 Hillersdon, Slough, SL2 5UF

(b) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director of Regeneration, Housing & Environment, in consultation with the Lead Member for Financial Oversight and Council Assets and the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial, to determine the certified value for the asset(s) to be appropriated, which would be consistent with the value established by the independent Valuation within Appendix A and internal due diligence.

115. Exclusion of Press and Public

All business was conducted during Part I of the meeting without disclosing any exempt information therefore it was not necessary to exclude the press and public.

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116. Drug and Alcohol Treatment, Recovery and Improvement - Appendix A

Resolved – That the Part II Appendix A be noted.

117. Recommendations from Cabinet Committee: Disposal of three retail parades and update to Asset Disposal Programme - surplus Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Assets - Appendices

Resolved – That the Part II Appendices be noted.

118. Recommendations from Cabinet Committee: Appropriation of four residential assets from the General Fund (GF) to Housing Revenue Account (HRA) - Appendices

Resolved – That the Part II Appendices be noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.33 pm and closed at 8.29 pm)