

## Slough Borough Council

<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>Date:</b>	19.06.2023
<b>Subject:</b>	Refresh of Council's Corporate Plan
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Leader
<b>Chief Officer:</b>	Sarah Hayward, ED Strategy & Improvement
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Dean Tyler, AD Strategy
<b>Ward(s):</b>	All
<b>Key Decision:</b>	NO
<b>Exempt:</b>	NO
<b>Decision Subject To Call In:</b>	YES
<b>Appendices:</b>	A – Draft Corporate Plan Structure B – Slough Insights Pack

### 1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report sets out a draft structure for a refresh of Slough Borough Council's (SBC) corporate plan, which it is proposed be put out for public consultation. The Corporate Plan will align to the Medium Term Financial Strategy and be the framework to guide the council in delivering the recovery of the council, in order to meet resident need.

#### Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- Review and approve the draft corporate plan structure (Appendix A) for the purpose of public consultation.
- Note that a report will be brought back to Cabinet in September for Cabinet to recommend a final version for formal approval by Council.

#### Reason:

Developments in the council's recovery and improvement programme, and newly available evidence and datasets, present an opportunity to revisit the council's purpose, approach and strategic priorities, as expressed in its corporate plan published in March 2022. The council is at the start of a new 4-year period following the elections in May and having a new corporate plan setting out the council's overall vision and priorities will ensure an appropriate strategic focus throughout this term.

#### Commissioner Review

Commissioners are content with recommendations.

## 2. Report

### Introductory paragraph

2.1 The corporate plan structure (Appendix A) lays out a proposal for the council's core purpose, its approach and an updated set of strategic priorities, which develop upon those set out in the current plan *Doing right by Slough*. Conducting a public consultation will contribute towards the development of the council's evidence base for the plan, help identify possible equalities implications, and ensure the views of residents and other stakeholders are reflected in the council's corporate priorities.

### Options considered

- a) Do nothing – maintain the current corporate plan *Doing right by Slough*.
- b) Develop and expand upon *Doing right by Slough*, ahead of consultation – **recommended**.
- c) Develop an entirely new corporate plan.

### Background

2.2 In May 2022, the council approved its new corporate plan for 2022-25 – 'Doing Right by Slough', which incorporated the recovery and improvement plan the council was required to produce in accordance with the Government's Directions. The plan, in its essence, has two core components:

- Four new strategic priorities, which replaced the previous plan's priority outcomes
- Seven recovery themes, which sought to incorporate the Government directions and provide a structure for the council's improvement.

Service planning was subsequently undertaken against this framework.

2.3 There are several factors which present the council with an opportunity to produce the next iteration of this plan:

- There have been significant developments in the council's recovery and improvement programme over the past year, and changes in emphasis since the creation of the seven recovery themes, and the authority now has a far better understanding of the work needed to recover;
- A new executive leadership team is now in place;
- The council has moved to four-yearly elections, and it is common for councils to align their corporate plans to this cycle (current corporate plan covers 2022-25).

2.4 For these reasons it is necessary to revisit the corporate plan to ensure it is able to set the vision for the council, to drive recover and deliver for residents. As already stated and set out at 3.1.4 the corporate plan will align to the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

2.5 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has also released key thematic data sets from the 2021 Census. This is the first up to date population data the council has had for 10 years and presents an opportunity for SBC to review its strategic

priorities based upon the latest available evidence. This data, and further key sources of information, have been distilled into a *Slough Insights* pack (Appendix B), which provides an evidence base for the refresh of the corporate plan. Better use of evidence in decision making is also one of the Government's directions.

2.6 Highlights from the Insights Pack were shared with senior managers at a workshop on 28<sup>th</sup> February and then at staff roadshows in March. Key challenges for Slough identified from the data include:

- Health inequalities;
- A very young population;
- Comparatively high levels of deprivation;
- Increasing levels of overcrowding;
- High rates of unemployment / economic inactivity;
- High levels of homelessness;
- High numbers of Children in Need;
- A substantial income gap between residents and all those who work in Slough; and
- High levels of crime.

2.7 The workshop also reviewed emerging areas of pressure and challenge within service areas, to identify further priorities that were not included in *Doing right by Slough*, or that need greater emphasis. These included:

- Sustainability & climate change adaptation;
- Protecting and supporting vulnerable adults;
- Engaging young people in the community and on decisions affecting them;
- The affordability and quality of housing in Slough; and
- Economic development and engagement with businesses.

2.8 In January and February, the Local Government Association (LGA) conducted fieldwork on SBC's behalf with residents, using questions that were also asked in the national Residents Satisfaction Survey. This has highlighted key concerns regarding the public's confidence and trust in the council, which will need to be addressed in the corporate plan:

- 30% of Slough respondents said they were very or fairly satisfied with the way SBC runs things compared to 60% of national respondents.
- 21% of Slough respondents strongly agreed or tended to agree that SBC provides value for money compared to 46% of national respondents who strongly agreed or tended to agree that their council provides value for money.
- 28% of Slough respondents said that SBC acts on their concerns to a great deal or a fair amount compared to 52% of national respondents.
- 25% of Slough respondents said that they trust Slough Council a great deal or a fair amount compared to 59% of national respondents.

2.9 A proposed structure for the refreshed corporate plan has been developed (Appendix A), which includes three key elements:

- **Our purpose:** this section provides the overall driving focus and vision for the council: *Closing the healthy life expectancy gap, by focussing on children*. This reflects the fact that Slough has poor healthy life expectancy compared to neighbouring areas and one of the youngest populations in the country. A child's early development and experiences play a key role in determining future health and wellbeing, and the council and its partners can together influence the wider determinants of health.
- **Our approach:** this section further develops the recovery themes established in *Doing right by Slough* and picks up the issues identified from the Residents Survey. It describes the type of council we wish to be, our values, how we will work and our relationship with residents:
  - Resident focussed;
  - Providing financial sustainability;
  - Enabling residents and communities;
  - Strengthening partnerships; and
  - Building trust.
- **Our priorities:** the strategic priorities of *Doing right by Slough* have been retained, though updated to take account of the new council purpose and the further challenges that have been identified in the data and evidence (further detail included in Appendix A):
  1. A borough for children and young people to thrive;
  2. A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives; and
  3. A cleaner, healthier and more prosperous Slough.

2.10 As noted above, when the council approved *Doing right by Slough*, it committed to undertaking engagement with residents ahead of the next iteration of the corporate plan. It is proposed that a consultation be run for a period of 6 weeks using the Citizen Space platform, which is the approach that has been used for recent engagement and consultation activity, for example the consultation on Childrens Centres. The outcome of this consultation will be reported alongside the final version of the corporate plan to full council in September.

2.11 Further engagement with Cabinet will take place before the final version of the corporate plan is presented for approval.

### **3. Implications of the Recommendation**

#### *3.1 Financial implications*

3.1.1 The refreshed Corporate Plan will retain the commitments in *Doing Right by Slough* to financial prudence and providing best value.

- 3.1.2 The draft structure states that SBC will ‘build on our work to provide financial sustainability for the council and embed good practice for local government: living within our means, balancing our budget and being honest and open about the difficult decisions that we will need to make over the coming years.’
- 3.1.3 Further detail will be provided in the final version of the corporate plan that will be produced after the consultation.
- 3.1.4 Delivery against the corporate plan has to be underpinned by a sound Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and this will give the basis on which the Council’s resources will need to be prioritised over the medium term – a period of at least 3 years. The two need, therefore, to be fully aligned and so once the corporate plan is fully approved, this will provide the framework on which the MTFS will be developed. Further financial assessments will be conducted as part of the service planning process, following the approval of the corporate plan as part of that aligned process.
- 3.1.5 No additional expenditure is anticipated to be required to run the public consultation, which will be conducted via the Citizen Space platform, and the analysis undertaken by staff from the Strategic Insight team.

### 3.2 *Legal implications*

- 3.2.1 Whilst there is no legal requirement to adopt a corporate plan, it is considered good practice and Article 4 of the Council’s Constitution includes the “5 Year Plan” in its policy framework and it is therefore a function of Full Council to formally adopt the Corporate Plan.
- 3.2.2 The council has a duty under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Local authorities are under a duty to consult representatives of a wide range of local persons, including council tax payers, service users and those appearing to have an interest in any of the local authority’s functions. This should also include local voluntary and community organisations and small businesses.

### 3.3 *Risk management implications*

- 3.3.1 Not refreshing the corporate plan at this time would present a risk that the council would not have a clear strategic direction, or the framework for recovery and improvement needed to become a sustainable authority.
- 3.3.2 Not conducting a public consultation would undermine the commitments made by the council to involve residents and other key stakeholders in its decision-making process and prevent an opportunity to gather valuable insight.

### 3.4 *Environmental implications*

- 3.4.1 The proposed corporate plan structure retains and expands upon the environmental commitments in *Doing right by Slough*, with the following objective sitting under the third priority:

‘Reducing Slough’s carbon footprint, promoting active travel and sustainable forms of transport, and taking action to prevent or minimise the impact of climate change.’

### 3.5 *Equality implications*

3.5.1 The Council has a duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act to have due regard to the need to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics are:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender reassignment;
- Marriage and civil partnership;
- Pregnancy and maternity;
- Race;
- Religion or belief;
- Sex; and
- Sexual orientation.

3.5.2 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day-to-day business and to keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services. By undertaking public consultation and ensuring that the Corporate Plan is informed by data on Slough's diverse communities, the Council will be able to assess the impact of adopting a new Corporate Plan in relation to the duty above.

3.5.3 The Strategic Insight team is currently conducting analysis of further data from the 2021 Census released by the ONS in April 2023, which will enable more thorough comparison of key indicators by certain protected characteristics. This will inform the Equalities Impact Assessment that will be reported to full council alongside the final version of the corporate plan.

3.5.4 The proposed corporate plan structure includes key equalities objectives, which have been identified from the *Slough Insights* pack:

- Providing quality services for vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Improving outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people
- Working with partners to target health inequalities and promote wellbeing
- Supporting residents to be as independent as possible, whilst providing quality services for the most vulnerable adults

### 3.6 *Workforce implications*

- 3.6.1 The council's purpose and priorities – as expressed in the draft corporate plan will play a central role in shaping and setting staff members' individual objectives, against which they will be assessed in their appraisals.
- 3.6.2 Staff members will be expected to embody the values of the council – as expressed in the 'approach' section of the corporate plan.

## **4. Background Papers**

None.