

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Council
Date:	28 September 2023
Subject:	Recommendation of the Cabinet from its meeting held on 18 th September 2023: Updated Corporate Plan
Lead Member:	Leader of the Council
Chief Officer:	Sarah Hayward, ED Strategy & Improvement
Contact Officer:	Dean Tyler, AD Strategy
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	NO
Appendices:	A – Draft Corporate Plan 2023-27 B – Slough Insights Pack C – Consultation results summary D – Equality Impact Assessment

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 To consider the recommendation of the Cabinet from its meeting held on 18th September 2023 to approve an updated corporate plan (Appendix A), following the recent public consultation.

Recommendations:

Council is recommended to agree the Corporate Plan attached at Appendix A.

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 current corporate plan. The council is at the start of a new 4-year period following the elections 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 have reviewed this report and feedback has been incorporated.

2. Report

Introductory paragraph

2.1 The updated corporate plan (Appendix A) lays out proposals 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*. The consultation on the draft corporate plan concluded on 7th August, with the majority of respondents supporting the proposed council purpose, approach and priorities. Further feedback from respondents has been incorporated into the updated plan.

Options considered

- a) Do nothing – maintain the current corporate plan *Doing right by Slough* – this is not recommended as it does not take account of the most up to date insights resulting from the 2021 Census, nor was it subject to public consultation.
- b) Agree for the updated corporate plan to be sent to Full Council for consideration and approval – **recommended**. The draft updated corporate plan reflects the latest data on Slough's population and has been subject to engagement with residents and other stakeholders. It also reflects progress which has been made since the current plan was approved.

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 a new political administration is in place. It is common for councils to align their corporate plans to this cycle (current corporate plan covers 2022-25).

- 2.4 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has also released data from the 2021 Census – the first up to date population data the council has had for 10 years - which 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.
- 2.5 Highlights from the Insights Pack were shared with senior managers at a workshop on 28th 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.
- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 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.

2.8 A proposed structure for the refreshed corporate plan was then developed comprising three key elements:

- **Our purpose:** this section provided 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 developed the recovery themes established in *Doing right by Slough* and picked 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* were retained, though updated to take account of the new council purpose and the further challenges that have been identified in the data and evidence:
 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.

2.9 This draft structure was approved by Cabinet on 19th June to go out for a 6-week period of public consultation, to gather feedback on this draft structure. The consultation launched on 26th June and ran until 7th August via its online Citizen Space platform. The consultation was promoted by the council via social media, and was shared with and promoted by a number of local groups, including:

- Slough Council for Voluntary Service
- Slough Poverty Forum
- Slough Co-Production Network
- Slough Residents Board
- Aik Saath
- Slough Borough Council Staff (via Insite)

2.10 In addition to the online consultation submissions, one respondent submitted comments via the consultation email address. These comments were loaded onto the Citizen Space platform for analysis.

2.11 There were 169 responses in total. Respondents were asked to state the extent to which they agreed with the elements of the draft structure set out in section 2.8. A breakdown of the results is included in appendix C; overall there was support for all elements of the plan, with the following proportions either agreeing or strongly agreeing:

- Our purpose: Closing the life expectancy gap by focusing on children – 52.7%
- Our approach: Resident Focussed – 64.5%
- Our approach: Providing Financial Sustainability – 68.1%
- Our approach: Enabling Residents and Communities – 60.4%
- Our approach: Strengthening Partnerships – 59.17%
- Our approach: Building Trust – 64.5%
- Our priorities: 1. A borough for children and young people to thrive – 66.9%
- Our priorities: 2. A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives – 72.7%

Our priorities: 3. A cleaner, healthier and more prosperous Slough – 74.0%

2.12 Respondents also had the opportunity to comment on the plan in their own words, and express their views on what should be included. The table below shows the top 10 themes raised by respondents, sub-themes and the number of residents who raised them. A brief summary of how these themes relate to the updated corporate plan is also included.

Theme, Sub-themes	SBC Updated Corporate Plan
<p>SBC culture and behaviours - 45</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust - 22 • Being active / present in community - 17 • Customer service - 8 • Respect for residents - 4 • Greater ambition - 1 	<p>The new corporate plan builds on the previous plan's commitments to improve our culture as an organisation, and the approach section sets out the type of organisation we wish to be.</p> <p>Building trust is one of the key aspects of this approach, and this section describes how we will seek to restore confidence in SBC.</p> <p>We will be active and present in the community – and the corporate plan includes commitments to build community capacity and develop platforms that allow our community to shape Slough's future.</p> <p>A further key aspect of this new approach is being resident focussed, and the updated plan now includes further commitments to improving response times and customer service.</p>
<p>Children & young people - 39</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth centres & activities - 10 • Education and school facilities - 9 • Support for parents - 8 • Children's centres - 6 • Special Educational Needs and Disabilities - 5 • Play areas - 5 • Youth participation - 3 • Children's mental health - 3 • Children's social services - 1 	<p>Children and young people are a key focus of the new corporate plan – both in the overall purpose section and the priorities.</p> <p>The council's first strategic priority is to work towards a borough where children and young people can thrive. There are further commitments to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing quality services for vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) • Improving outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people • Tackling high rates of child obesity • Increasing children and young people's participation in decisions that affect them and in shaping the future of Slough <p>SBC will also be working with partners to develop a Children and Young People's plan, which will provide more detail on how we will work together to improve outcomes, and address the themes raised here.</p>

<p>Town image - 36</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleanliness & litter - 22 • Town centre / high street - 13 • Retail - 4 	<p>The updated corporate plan recognises the impact of the environmental quality and the quality of public spaces on a persons' health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The corporate plan includes a commitment under the third strategic priority to provide 'clean, quality public spaces and working with developers to deliver a modern town centre for future generations.</p>
<p>Crime and Community Safety - 27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drugs & alcohol misuse - 11 • Antisocial behaviour - 8 • Violence and knife crime - 2 	<p>The corporate plan includes a commitment to 'improving community safety and tackling anti-social behaviour – providing a safer town to grow-up' and recognises the impact of community safety on a person's wellbeing.</p> <p>The Slough Wellbeing Board is currently also developing a new action plan, which will include a greater focus on substance misuse and alcohol related conditions.</p> <p>The council will also be working with partners to strengthen the Safer Slough Partnership.</p>
<p>Financial management - 24</p>	<p>The new corporate plan recognises that SBC must continue to demonstrate tangible progress towards our recovery if we are able to effectively deliver for our residents and achieve our strategic objectives for the town.</p> <p>Providing financial sustainability is a key pillar of the new 'approach' for the council set out in the plan, which includes commitments to live within our means, balance our budget and be honest and open about the difficult decisions that we will need to make.</p>
<p>Health & wellbeing - 20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health centres - 8 • Obesity - 7 • Mental health - 3 	<p>Improving healthy life expectancy is central to the new purpose for the council set out in the new corporate plan and is woven throughout all three strategic priorities.</p> <p>We will be working with partners on the Slough Health & Wellbeing Board to develop a new action plan, to deliver rapid progress.</p> <p>As part of this plan, we will be seeking to co-host a summit on tackling obesity, to bring partners and the community together to tackle this important issue.</p>

<p>Waste collection - 19</p>	<p>The comments in this theme primarily related to the recent change to collecting refuse and recycling waste on alternate weeks.</p> <p>[Response to summarise response to petition on waste collection also going to Full Council on 28th September]</p> <p>Please also see above on response to comments relating to the theme of 'Town image'.</p>
<p>Vulnerable adults - 19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elderly residents - 18 • Disabled residents – 3 	<p>Given the borough's specific demographic profile, and the history of intervention in children's services in Slough, the council feels that a specific focus on children and young people is important to addressing the challenges Slough faces.</p> <p>However, the corporate plan does include a commitment to support residents to be as independent as possible, whilst providing quality services for the most vulnerable adults. Maximising independence, confidence and capacity for self-management has been demonstrated to enable people to live the life they want, stay independent at home for longer and reduce the need for emergency and statutory services.</p>
<p>Housing - 14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing availability - 10 • Housing quality - 10 • Social housing services - 3 	<p>The corporate plan recognises the important role played by housing in determining a person's health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The plan includes a commitment prioritising 'affordable, safe and healthy homes – improving the quality of council housing stock and the private rented sector'.</p> <p>SBC is currently also developing a new Housing Strategy, which will provide further detail on the action the council will be taking in this area.</p>

<p>Growth - 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment & skills - 8 • Local economy - 2 	<p>The corporate plan includes a commitment to 'engaging with businesses to create new employment opportunities for Slough families and routes to upskill'.</p> <p>Over the coming months the council will look to form new alliances with businesses to tackle skills gaps, and the council is currently developing a new economic development strategy, which will provide further detail on the action SBC will be taking in this area.</p>
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- 2.13 The updated corporate plan includes further detail on the following, compared to the version that was submitted for consultation:
- The council's recovery and improvement
 - Evidence for why the selected priorities are necessary to deliver on the council's purpose
 - The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) against which the council's performance in delivering our priorities will be determined
 - The council's equality commitments
- 2.14 Service delivery plans are currently being developed, which will capture further detail on how the council will look to implement the plan for the remainder of the 2023-24 municipal year.
- 2.15 The council's performance against the KPIs included in the plan, alongside further corporate health indicators, will be included in the council's Corporate Management Information Scorecard, which is reviewed by CLT and the council's Improvement and Recovery Board monthly.
- 2.16 The council's performance against these measures will also be presented to Cabinet on a quarterly basis, starting from October 2023, and a report on progress against the corporate plan will be presented to Full Council annually.
- 2.17 Further work to implement and measure delivery and success of the corporate plan will come through appropriate council governance.

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. The MTFs and the Council's Corporate plan have to be fully aligned and the delivery of the plan will need to be in line with approved budgets. Resources also therefore need to be prioritised and aligned with the commitments within the plan
- 3.1.2 The plan 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 24 respondents to the consultation made comments relating to the importance of good financial management – see appendix C, section 3b.

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 corporate plan as a policy which should be approved by a resolution of Full Council.
- 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. The results of the consultation should be taken into account and inform the final version of the corporate plan. The draft updated best value guidance sets out best value themes. In relation to continuous improvement, it is recommended that there is an organisational-wide approach to this, with frequent monitoring, performance reporting and updating of the corporate and improvement plans. Under Leadership, it is recommended that the corporate plan is evidence based, current, realistic and enables the whole organisation's performance to be measured and held to account. Under service delivery, it is recommended that service plans are clearly linked to a local authority's priorities and strategic plans.
- 3.2.3 The CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework – 2016, includes "Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits" as a key principle necessary for good governance. It states that the long-term nature and impact of many of local government's responsibilities mean that it should define and plan outcomes and that these should be sustainable. Decisions should further the organisation's purpose, contribute to intended benefits and outcomes, and remain within the limits of authority and resources. Input from all groups of stakeholders, including citizens, service users, and institutional stakeholders, is vital to the success of this process and in balancing competing demands when determining priorities for the finite resources available.

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.

3.4 *Environmental implications*

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

‘Improving air quality, 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.

- 3.5.3 The proposed corporate plan structure includes key equalities objectives:

- 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

3.5.3 An EQIA has been produced to accompany this report – appendix D. Further assessments will need to be conducted in the production of further key strategies and key programmes, needed to deliver the corporate plan.

3.5.4 The corporate plan is a high level strategy setting out the key priorities for the Council. It does not seek to replicate or replace existing strategies or policies on specific areas of service, but will help ensure alignment of financial resources with strategic priorities. The impact of the plan will affect all residents and service users, although key priorities will impact on particular groups more than others. It is anticipated to improve equality for in the following ways:

- The focus on children and young people is anticipated to have a particularly positive impact on this group and for those with care experience.
- The focus on tackling health inequalities between different groups is anticipated to have a positive impact on improving equality between those of different races.
- The focus on health inequalities is also expected to have a particular positive impact on those with disabilities, who suffer disproportionately from these. As noted, above it is anticipated that the plan will have a particularly positive impact for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).
- The commitment under the third strategic priority to engage with businesses to create new employment opportunities for Slough families and routes to upskill is anticipated to have a positive impact for those on low incomes, who may be more likely to come from certain ethnic groups.

3.5.5 Respondents to the consultation had the opportunity to comment in their own words, and the following equalities issues were highlighted (for further detail please see appendix C, for how these are responded to in the corporate plan please see section 2.12 of this report):

- Some respondents were concerned that the focus on children and young people would disadvantage elderly residents and other vulnerable residents, such as those with disabilities or noted a lack of reference to them in the plan.
- Five respondents raised the theme of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services.
- Eight respondents raised issues relating to support for parents.
- One respondent highlighted the need to tackle inequality, by tailoring services to meet the needs of different communities.
- One respondent commented on specific health challenges faced by those of Asian ethnicity in Slough.

3.5.6 This impact has been fed into the assessment. The perceived negative impact on older residents, including those with disabilities, due to a focus on children, has been addressed by clarification that other priorities do focus on healthy lifestyles and independence. In summary, the refreshed corporate plan is focused on advancing equality of opportunity for groups in the community who are more at risk of inequality, which will assist the Council to meet its equality duties.

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. The new service delivery planning template will require service leads to state how these values will be embedded within their areas.

4. Background Papers

None.