

Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 23rd September, 2025.

Present:- Councillors Khawar (Chair), Hulme (Vice-Chair), Ajaib, Mann, Matloob, Muvvala, O'Kelly and Tomar

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Wright

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Mohindra

PART 1

12. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

13. Minutes of the last meeting - 29 July 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd July 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

14. CQC Local Authority Assessment Report - Adult Social Care Inspection

The Chair thanked all in achieving the 'good' rating. Councillor Wright introduced the item to the Committee. Councillor Wright explained the process undertaken to gather the evidence and the barriers that had been identified by Officers, which had already been known by Officers and a lot of work had already begun towards bettering these. The report also highlighted what was being achieved well too.

The Executive Director for People – Adults (DASS), presented the slides of the presentation to the Committee. These discussed some background, the partners, the timeline, which was from October 2024 till July 2025. CQC required 50 case files, ten of the 50 had deep dives. The overall CQC outcome was 'good' with a score of 64. There was still a lot of work to be done. The areas of strengths were highlighted. The area of development was shared with the Committee. The priorities from the Adult Social Care Strategy 2024-2029 were highlighted including the areas of improvement and the next steps.

The Chair invited the Members of the Co-production network and care provider representatives to share their experiences with Adult Social Care Services in Slough.

Allison Jack, Reach, congratulated Slough for their recent CQC outcome. Reach had three residential services in Slough and had been working with Slough for the last 30 years. There had been a positive change with the relationship with Slough over the last few years. There were a number of

Slough funded residents. The two recent quality assurance visits to two services had both been positive. The quality assurance assessments used were geared towards elderly support and not for adults with learning difficulties and autism. It would be useful if these could be adapted.

Caroline Tsingano, Macadamia Support, explained that they were a support living company working in Slough since 2019. Macadamia Support was more of a complex care provider in Slough. The relationship was very positive with Slough and support was always received when needed. As a provider one issue that had always been difficult to resolve were council tax exemption and housing benefit. This was eventually resolved after meeting with the Council. There had been improvements. The quality assurance assessments were in process, and it had been very helpful to understand what improvements needed to be made. The feedback option was really useful. As a care provider, it would be great to see more activities for vulnerable adults in Slough. There was also more need for training for care providers in Slough.

Andrew Chikwanha, Imperial Breeze, were a new provider in Slough. The quality assessments had been really helpful in making improvements. The relationship with Slough Borough Council was very good. Some of the issues included on exemptions and the recently introduced parking permits which was really affecting providers as not many families had blue badges as these were really difficult to get. There were no face-to-face contact and the calls took hours which was quality time that should be spent with the families. The care provider and the family had tried but had proved difficult. Some improvements with these would be very much appreciated.

Sue Benford, Co-Production Network, commented that the Network was set up for professionals to work together as equal partners to deliver services. Sue had become a member as she has a son with autism. The Network had a good mix of experiences, and they worked well with Adult Social Care. They had been involved with many projects right from the start, and not as a tick box exercise. Initially there was no autism services, but now there was a commissioner for learning difficulties and autism, an autism coffee morning once a month at the Chalvey Hub and an autism steering group.

Members made the following points and raised the following questions that were answered by Officers:

- Congratulated Officers for the good rating.
- With respect to transition from children's to adults services, that had always been an issue at the borough, what were the new plans in place and how could the Committee be assured that this would improve? Officers commented that the transition was proving to be a challenge for most local authorities. There was a Strategic Transition Group in place. This was led by the Director of Operations in Children's Services and the Director of Operations in Adult Services. The Group had representation from Adults, Children's, Education, Health and Finance. The Group would overlook the whole cohort and try to get the cohort down to the age of 11 years. The biggest challenge had been

that children turning 18 years were being considered when this was too late. An assessment should already have been completed by this point to understand the needs and whether they wanted to move into adult social care. The outcomes of the Strategic Transitions Group fed into the SEND Board. It was still early days so this would continue to develop. Other factors that still needed to be progressed was working alongside families and the young people. The legislation between children's and adults was very different so that was being looked into. The Committee requested to be kept updated on the transition.

ACTION.

- Would the savings still continue to be made as suggested or would the achievement rating of good fall due to the savings suggested? Officers commented that the savings for this year were £4.9m and they were on track to deliver against the savings, however, there was a forecast of an overspend against the balanced budget of £5.9m. There were mitigations in place and annual reviews were being carried out. The improvements would remain in place; the savings would not impact the rating.
- The issue raised by the care providers on the council tax exemptions and the difficulties with the housing benefit. Further information was requested. The care providers made the points that the care provider needed to submit evidence that they were providing support, to show that the adult was vulnerable and required an exemption but when this was submitted, it was not being accepted and therefore no exemption was being applied. With the process and delay, a court summons was being received causing a lot of stress and anxiety and putting the vulnerable adult into debt. It was difficult to get any responses from the borough on the issues. The care providers were informed that it was the Committee that scrutinised the council tax exemptions, so the information was very useful. Officers would investigate further.
- There were pressures that care providers were having to deal with respect to pay and with the Employment Rights Bill, soon to be going through Parliament and the effects of this, how was Slough going to sustain the care required in the fragile market? Officers reassured the Committee that the Team were keeping a watchful eye with the possible huge pressures. Slough had taken the approach of an open book exercise working with care providers, looking to understand the costs. The care providers commented that the one-to-one meetings and support from Slough had been really helpful. If the council tax and housing benefit issues were corrected, it would help them further.
- The grading from the CQC was discussed and the Committee was informed that the ratings had been set by CQC. Slough had achieved its statutory requirements to receive the good rating.
- A recent report suggested that the number of unpaid carers had increased. What could be done to improve the partnership between unpaid carers and social care carers? Was training or digitalisation, options? Officers reported that many carers were family members so did not consider themselves as carers so a lot of work was needed to be done around this. The Carers Forum were looking into how carers wanted to be supported. More training for the carers was being

considered. The Carers Service was still in its early phase but was progressing.

- Of the pathway of stages, only one related to a person-centred discussion. Were there plans to amend this and have more? Officers reported that there were no current plans in place but the Operational Group was looking into this and looking at who should be having the conversations. Members asked for an update directly to them. **ACTION**
- The Improvement Plan had some good metrics but there were also many actions with no measurable metrics, could these be improved so that the improvement could be clearly seen. Officers reported that the Improvement Plan was being reviewed by DLT and there was an ongoing improvement journey to make all of the actions as measurable metrics.
- Officers were asked to explain the Complaints process of complaints by residents. Officers reported that a lot of work had been done on the complaints process. The process was explained to Members. The process had significantly improved and had become more timely. The responses needed to be clearer.
- Officers were asked to explain the tender process of carers. There had been some press about untrained, illegal carers across the country that had left vulnerable residents at risk. Officers explained the uplift in fees and maintaining a sustainable market. A commissioning cycle used for the tender process followed a process that used a range of intelligence, ongoing market engagement and followed the procurement rules. The quality assurance process and audit were used to ensure that all the correct checks were completed on the carers.
- The ICB were reducing their costs by 50%, would this have an impact on Slough? The Committee noted that Frimley Health and Buckingham, Oxfordshire and Berkshire would be merging to create Thames Valley ICB. This was currently being progressed.
- It was raised that issues, concerns and complaints could be escalated to their Ward Member to assist with.
- A discussion took place on the Accommodation Strategy. It was still in progress. Many positive conversations had taken place. This would only strengthen going forwards.

Resolved: that the Committee noted and commented on the positive findings of the CQC Assessment Report and on the Adult Social Care Directorate Improvement Plan to support the ambitions of the Directorate to ensure continuous improvements.

The Committee made the following recommendations;

- To look at the council tax and housing benefits issues raised in more detail as part of the council tax support scheme.
- Adult Social Care to report back to the Committee on the discussions had during the meeting following up on the issues raised.
- Provide a written briefing to the Committee on the progress of the Strategic Transition Group.
- To provide a report to the Committee in one year on the progress.

- QA Assessments to be adapted to fit different support requirements (Autism and learning disabilities, not just elderly support).

15. Attendance Report

The attendance report was noted by the Committee.

16. Date of Next Meeting - 28 October 2025

The date of the next meeting was noted by the Members.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.00 pm)