

## **COUNCIL – 27TH NOVEMBER 2025**

### **MEMBER QUESTIONS**

#### **Councillor Akram to the Leader of the Council:**

“Official figures on England’s most deprived areas released in October by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), rank Slough as ‘joint lowest’ out of 296 local authorities and highlights severe pockets of overall deprivation in Britwell (more than 81% of neighbourhoods), Chalvey (more than 77% of neighbourhoods), Farnham (more than 80% of neighbourhoods), Manor Park & Stoke (more than 74% of neighbourhoods) and Slough Central (more than 82% of neighbourhoods). Given these significant challenges and the notable internal disparity across different wards, what specific targeted actions is the Leader taking to address these acute pockets of deprivation and how is the effectiveness of these interventions being measured to ensure tangible improvements for our most vulnerable residents?”

#### **Reply**

The figures published by MHCLG in the 2025 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) show the proportion of a local authority’s Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that fall into the 10% most deprived nationally. LSOAs are small geographical areas of around 1,500 residents. Slough does not have any LSOAs in the most deprived 10% nationally. This places Slough joint-lowest alongside the other authorities with no LSOAs in the most deprived decile.

In the overall IMD 2025 rankings for upper-tier authorities, Slough is placed 53rd out of 153. This means Slough falls within the more deprived third of local authorities nationally, but is not among the most deprived authorities. None of Slough’s 84 LSOAs fall into the most deprived 10% on the overall IMD score.

However, deprivation remains significant and has worsened in some areas. Twenty-six of Slough’s 84 LSOAs now fall within the 30% most deprived nationally, up from 22 in 2019, and eight of these fall within the 20% most deprived nationally. When LSOA scores are averaged, the most deprived wards include Chalvey, Herschel Park, Britwell, Elliman, Manor Park and Stoke, Farnham, and Slough Central.

Health inequalities remain stark and unevenly distributed. Residents in Slough’s more affluent neighbourhoods live, on average, seven years longer than those in our most deprived areas. Women living in the most deprived areas also live eight additional years in poor health compared with women in the least deprived areas.

To help address these inequalities, the Community Development Team is taking an asset-based community development approach, prioritising work in neighbourhoods with the highest need such as Britwell, Chalvey, Elliman/Manor Park, and Langley. This approach focuses on strengthening existing community assets and networks. Early examples include seated exercise sessions with women from the Ujala Foundation, and Walk Leader training in Britwell delivered alongside our leisure provider, Everyone Active. This way of working began in July 2025 and will be evaluated to assess impact.

The Council is also working with the NHS on the development of community hubs in more deprived areas. The Britwell Hub is the most advanced example, offering services aimed at reducing inequalities and improving health outcomes. These include Department for Work and Pensions employment support, Social Prescribers and Community Connectors based on site, and community-led exercise and social activities. Sport England has additionally invested in Britwell to support physical activity. These initiatives are relatively new and are currently being evaluated.

Targeting resources where need is highest is also evident in other areas of the Council's work, including the Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight and our Smoking Cessation and Tobacco Control programmes. Smoking prevalence has fallen over the past two years, which we believe reflects the focused, targeted work undertaken in areas with the highest need.

The Council has also secured funding from the Department for Energy, Sustainability and Net Zero to improve energy efficiency in both council-owned and privately rented housing. This will help reduce health inequalities related to poor housing conditions, which disproportionately affect older residents.

In addition, our infrastructure contract with Slough CVS includes a community fund that supports local grassroots projects tackling isolation, poverty and health inequalities. Work has also begun on understanding and supporting residents facing multiple disadvantage, with the aim of reducing the inequalities they experience.

A report setting out the system-wide work on health inequalities will be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 5 December 2025, with a recommendation that the Board prioritise actions in this area.

It is also important to note changes within specific IMD domains. In the 'Barriers to Housing and Services' domain, 29 of Slough's 84 LSOAs rank in the 10% most deprived nationally, and 66 in total are in the 20% most deprived.

Particularly concerning is the change in the 'Income Deprivation Affecting Children' domain. In 2019, two LSOAs were in the 20% most deprived nationally; this has increased to nine in 2025, including two in the most deprived 10%. The number within the 30% most deprived has risen from five in 2019 to 29 in 2025. This underlines the importance of continuing to work closely with partners to support families, including through initiatives such as the Slough Poverty Forum.

A table showing the proportion of LSOAs within each decile for each IMD domain is provided below, where decile 1 represents the 10% most deprived nationally and decile 10 the least deprived.

LSOAs by deprivation decile (where 1 is most deprived)										
Domain	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
IMD 2025	0	8	18	21	15	11	5	2	3	1
Income	2	17	23	19	9	7	5	1	1	0
Employment	0	0	11	18	16	19	10	4	4	2
Education, Skills and Training	0	11	22	19	12	8	5	3	4	0
Health Deprivation and Disability	0	0	3	3	10	18	10	17	16	7
Crime	8	11	17	14	18	9	3	3	1	0
Barriers to Housing and Services	29	36	9	6	2	1	1	0	0	0
Living Environment	0	2	4	11	13	17	14	11	7	5
Income Deprivation Affecting Children	2	7	20	25	12	8	7	2	1	0
Income Deprivation Affecting Older People	5	21	20	12	11	8	3	3	1	0

The Strategy and Insight Team is currently preparing a more detailed analysis of the 2025 IMD, which will be shared with Members shortly.

**Councillor O’Kelly to the Leader of the Council:**

“Can the Leader explain when the administration intends to bring proper oversight to the council Directorates. Given the pattern of actions over the past year — including blocking access to one of the busiest Sikh Temples in Berkshire, proposing to close a much-needed car park for up to three years to store council vehicles, and fencing off a football ground car park for storing council’s transport. Is the Cabinet going to start working with highways and other directorates to protect our residents and ensure the requirement to carry out the required level of transport, community and equality impact assessments is met?”

**Reply**

Thank you for your question. The administration works closely with all Council Directorates and Departments, including Highways, Transport and Property and will endeavour to always make the right choices for Slough.

Slough is currently benefitting from significant government grant funding to upgrade key parts of our transport network through the A4 Cycle Lane and Destination Farnham Road schemes. As with any major infrastructure programme, it has been necessary to consider temporary changes to road layouts and identify appropriate locations for contractor vehicles and material storage. Throughout this process, the administration has remained focused on minimising disruption and addressing concerns raised by the community.

In relation to the Service Road outside the Guru Maneyo Granth Gurdwara, concerns raised during engagement were carefully considered. Working with the Highways Directorate, an alternative design has now been developed which avoids changes to how visitors access the Gurdwara from the A4.

Similarly, following further review of proposals for Elmshott Lane car park, the temporary closure previously under consideration will not be required, and this has been communicated to residents.

Regarding the fencing at Eltham Avenue recreation ground, after the sale of the Haybrook College site, the team lost its long-term base. A temporary move to Bower Way quickly proved unsafe and unsuitable for staff, residents and service users, so an alternative location had to be identified at pace to maintain a statutory service.

A full review of council assets showed that Eltham Avenue was the only site of sufficient size and capable of meeting operational needs. It is around 57 metres from the nearest home, has long been used for parking and changing facilities, and remains underutilised for most of the week. It provides secure space for minibuses and specialist equipment, as well as appropriate staff welfare facilities.

The sports pitches continue to be available seven days a week exactly as before. When matches take place at weekends, half of the car park remains open, providing 35 parking spaces and two disabled bays, with emergency access maintained. Sporting use has not been reduced or restricted; the minibus operation is secondary, necessary and compatible with community use.

The Assets Team consulted the planning authority, who confirmed that no formal approval was required. The fencing is solely for the operational security of the car park and does not affect the use of any facilities as they previously operated. As Leader, I recognise that ongoing engagement is important, and my Administration continues to press for this so that our approach remains data-led and resident-focused.

#### **Councillor Gill to the Lead Member for Finance:**

“In relation to the Cabinet proposal to cut council tax support for low-income residents, can you advise what EIA will be carried out to ensure this does not negatively impact families who are already struggling?”

#### **Reply**

On 20 October 2025, Cabinet approved a draft Council Tax Support Scheme for consultation purposes only. The consultation will run from 27 October to 21 December 2025.

The consultation seeks residents’ views on the proposed option, including what they believe the potential impacts might be and what support they would want to see in place to help mitigate those impacts. It also collects relevant equality monitoring information so that we can analyse whether particular groups may be disproportionately affected.

When the consultation results are reported back to Cabinet on 19 January 2026, the paper will be accompanied by a detailed Equality Impact Assessment. This will draw on the consultation findings, existing local data and national evidence.

#### **Councillor Mohammad to the Lead Member for Public Health:**

“In a recent member briefing for life expectancy in Slough, one of the statistics showed infant mortality in Slough is one of the highest in UK, are you able to advise if you have a plan to focus on this & what can be done to bring this shocking stat down?”

## **Reply**

Since 2019, infant mortality in Slough has remained higher than the England average. While previous years showed an upward trend, the latest national data published in November 2025 shows an improvement: infant mortality has reduced from 8.1 deaths per 1,000 live births (2021–2023) to 6.9 deaths per 1,000 live births (2022–2024). Although this rate remains above the averages for England (4.2) and the South East (3.2), the downward movement reflects the impact of increased focus and coordinated work across the system.

Infant mortality is influenced not only by medical factors but by wider social determinants of health. Nationally, around three-quarters of infant deaths occur in the neonatal period, with prematurity, congenital anomalies and antepartum infections accounting for the majority. Slough and Berkshire follow this same pattern, with additional contributing factors including deprivation, maternal health, smoking in pregnancy, obesity and breastfeeding rates. Higher rates of congenital anomalies can occur in communities where close relative marriage is more common; however, it is important to be clear that most babies born to consanguineous parents are born healthy and without complications.

Reducing infant mortality requires sustained and coordinated action across health services, local government and community partners. A wide range of activity is underway in Slough to support this. Health Visitors in the Child and Family Wellbeing Service provide expert advice on safe sleep, accident prevention, breastfeeding and healthy child development. All pregnant women and children under four in Slough are entitled to free Healthy Start vitamins, which support maternal health, reduce the risk of birth defects such as spina bifida and promote healthy early development.

Slough is also one of ten national High Need Areas funded to pilot a strengthened, culturally competent genetics service through NHS England. This programme includes dedicated midwives and neonatal nurses who work closely with families, providing sensitive and informed support around reproductive decisions. At Wexham Park Hospital, a specialist team of Maternity Tobacco Dependency Advisors offers evidence-based nicotine replacement therapy and behavioural support. This, combined with the support provided by Healthier Slough, has contributed to a reduction in smoking at the time of delivery from 5.9% in 2023/24 to 4.9% in 2024/25. System-wide learning also plays a crucial role. All child deaths in Berkshire are reviewed by the pan-Berkshire Child Death Overview Panel, which identifies modifiable factors to prevent future harm. Recent work has included GP and MASH team training, a multi-agency safe sleep campaign and a detailed review of Slough data to ensure targeted action where it is most needed.

Further work is planned on women's health, including reproductive and preconception health, and on improving health literacy, which will help address issues such as late access to maternity services. Alongside these clinical and public health measures, action on wider determinants of health is essential. An example is Slough Borough Council's work through the Warm Homes Grant from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, which is improving housing quality in some of our most deprived neighbourhoods.

Together, these actions form part of a coordinated and sustained effort to improve outcomes for women, babies and families in Slough, and to continue the recent progress in reducing infant mortality.

**Councillor Matloob to the Leader of the Council:**

“Commissioners 6th letter highlighted that SBC is still heavily focused on tactical issues, what is your plan to make the organisation more strategic?”

**Reply**

Councils are routinely faced with immediate and often unpredictable challenges, whether that is severe cold weather, rising homelessness, or disruption to local transport. When these situations arise, we have a responsibility to act swiftly and secure the best possible outcomes for our residents. Tactical responses matter when people’s wellbeing is at stake.

However, this does not mean we lose sight of the medium or longer term. We are taking a strategic, planned approach to Slough’s recovery. At the last Cabinet meeting we agreed the first tranche of our transformation programme. Tonight, at Full Council, we are debating devolution. In the coming months, we will be setting out the Medium Term Financial Strategy and agreeing our budget.

We have a clear Recovery and Improvement Plan, and we are committed to delivering services that meet residents’ needs at a cost the town can sustain. We have always been honest that it would take years to reverse the mistakes of the past, and unfortunately that is proving to be the case. But we remain determined to continue the progress already underway and to build a stronger, more resilient future for Slough.

**Councillor Parmar to the Lead Member for Finance:**

“Can you please advise on progress in relation to creating strong financial management in Slough Borough Council that is in compliance with CIPFA Financial Management Code?”

**Reply**

The Council is committed to building strong and sustainable financial management in Slough. As part of our improvement journey, we have carried out a full self-assessment against the CIPFA Financial Management Code. This work has led to the development of a comprehensive action plan, with clear Executive Director ownership to ensure that each action is delivered and that the Council achieves full compliance with the Code.

The complete action plan was presented to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee in July 2025, and all actions are scheduled for completion by November 2026. Progress is monitored quarterly to ensure we remain on track and continue strengthening the Council’s financial governance.

**Councillor Instone to the Lead Member for Planning:**

“Can you state when Slough Borough Council last made a compulsory purchase order for a residential property and what was the reason for making this order?”

## **Reply**

The most recent confirmed Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) issued by Slough Borough Council for residential property was the Tower and Ashbourne CPO 2020, which became operative in October 2021.

This CPO was made to enable the comprehensive regeneration of land at and around Tower House and Ashbourne House. The scheme included the demolition of existing buildings and the redevelopment of the site to deliver 193 new residential units (Use Class C3), along with 136 sqm of flexible commercial or community space. The project also incorporated associated access improvements, car parking provision, and landscaping.

The CPO was justified on the basis of promoting or improving the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the area, in line with the powers available to the Council under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Acquisition of Land Act 1981.

## **Councillor Hulme to the Leader of the Council:**

“Can the leader of the council please provide an update on the future of The Curve. Particularly details on the advancement of any plans for the building to be used in part or in full as an education institution. What impact will these plans have on The Curve as a centre for arts/culture and entertainment in our town.”

## **Reply**

Discussions with potentially interested partners are ongoing. Once all opportunities have been fully explored, the Council will provide an update to all parties with an interest in The Curve on future arrangements and potential uses of the building.

In the meantime, officers continue to consider how The Curve can be more effectively utilised to deliver services for residents. Our priority is to ensure that the building continues to host the Library, Registrars, Adult Learning, and a programme of arts, culture and entertainment for the community.

## **Councillor Mann to the Lead Member for Children:**

“The council has recently had a number of findings against it, and costs awarded to residents due to poor service for children with Special Educational Needs. Can the Leader please update members on how many cases the council has incurred compensation costs on, how many further cases are in the system and what he is doing to urgently improve this service.”

## **Reply**

The Council fully acknowledges the recent Ombudsman findings and the impact these issues have had on families of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

In 2025 to date, the Council has had seven cases where the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman issued final decisions requiring financial remedies, with total compensation amounting to £24,045. This compares with £18,950 in 2024. There are also four further cases currently under investigation by the Ombudsman, which may lead to additional recommendations and financial remedies.

Most of the decisions received this year relate to historic difficulties, often dating back 12 to 24 months. A significant number concern delays or failures in the annual review process, which the recent Ofsted and CQC SEND inspection also identified as a priority area requiring urgent improvement. In response, a priority action plan is being developed with the DfE SEND Commissioner, NHS partners and our education settings, with a clear focus on improving annual reviews and ensuring full compliance with statutory duties.

These issues have arisen in the context of long-term staffing shortages, recruitment challenges, financial pressures, and some gaps in specialist knowledge within the service. Although improvements have been made in other areas—such as the assessment process and partnership working—these risks were formally recognised in April 2024. It is important to note that ongoing financial uncertainty may continue to affect the Council's ability to reduce future Ombudsman findings unless the improvement plan is fully resourced and delivered.

A range of improvement actions is already underway. Processes have been strengthened to ensure statutory timeframes are met, and mandatory training on the SEND Code of Practice and Section 19 duties is being rolled out to staff. Internal reviews of panel decision-making, communication protocols and the monitoring of provision have been completed, and a standardised workflow for annual reviews has been introduced with clear escalation routes. The SEND Panel decision record process has been enhanced to provide a clearer legal rationale for decisions, and communication protocols have been updated to ensure families receive timely updates during placement searches and reviews.

Accountability has also been strengthened, with regular reporting now established to senior leaders and key Members. Specific officers have been allocated to lead on complex case types, including residential placements, Elective Home Education, Education Other Than at School and Children Missing Education. A dedicated team is now focusing on specialist school placements to support better place planning and commissioning.

Because LGSCO investigations take many months to conclude, it is likely that the full impact of these improvements will not be reflected in Ombudsman decisions for between six and eighteen months. The Council remains fully committed to improving the SEND service, restoring confidence among families, and ensuring that children and young people receive the support they need without unnecessary delay or distress.