

Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 25th November, 2025.

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

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Ahmed and Smith

PART 1

28. Declarations of Interest

Declarations of interest were received from Councillors Matloob, Muvvala and Tomar for Agenda Item 3 for openness as they all owned properties in Slough.

29. Minutes of the last meeting - 28 October 2025 & 11 November 2025

The minutes of the meetings held on 28 October and 11 November 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

30. Discretionary Property Licensing

The Lead Member introduced the item and informed the Committee that this was a progress update as the Committee had requested an update after the detailed report that the Committee had received in July 2024. Subject to the delivery and results of a private sector housing stock modelling survey, it was anticipated to consult on the proposal to implement discretionary property licensing. Schemes across some or all of the borough would be presented for a decision to Cabinet in February 2026. The Lead Member would be happy to bring back a report to CISC before the Cabinet meeting.

The Head of Public Protection gave a presentation to the Members. The main points included:

- The Housing Act 2004 provided the Council with the power to designate parts of the Borough as being subject to discretionary property licensing.
- The Council may only make a designation after they had considered if there were any other courses of action available to it, and if these would produce the intended outcomes that the designation would achieve.
- Discretionary licensing fell into two parts – additional and selective.
- Additional licensing covered small, 3 or 4-person Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- Selective covered more traditional, single-family dwellings.

- Licensing of larger HMOs (5 or more persons) were already subject to mandatory licensing and the Council already licensed this property type.

Additional Licensing

- Unlicensed HMOs statistically presented significantly greater risks to tenants' health, safety and well-being than single occupancy dwellings.
- Living in such conditions could also have a significant impact on the mental health and well-being of the occupants of the HMO.
- In order to license smaller HMOs, the Council would need to introduce an additional licensing scheme.

Selective Licensing

- Legislation allowed for six separate reasons for the introduction of selective licensing. They are that the area:
 - has low housing demand
 - has significant anti-social behaviour
 - has poor housing conditions
 - has an influx of migration into it
 - has high levels of deprivation
 - has high levels of crime
- In addition, 19% or more of the designation must be privately rented.

A timeline was given in the presentation for Members to note.

The Members raised the following questions to Officer. The responses are included, as follows:

- The report presented to the Committee had a lot of data missing in comparison to the report in July 2024, including the number of complaints, failed issues and staffing. Officers responded that the reports were both very different. In 2024, the report was looking at the evidence base originally in licensing schemes and looking for the evidence. The report at Committee today was still in progress as the initial findings from the stock modelling survey were being awaited and the report was due in mid-January. Officers were happy to bring a report back in January 2026 before it was presented to Cabinet in February 2026.
- Currently, both the additional and selective licensing had ceased and the new designations would not be in place until November 2026 according to the timetable. This indicated that nothing would be in place for two and a half years. Why had it taken so long? The Director of Public Health and Public Protection informed the Committee that it had taken a long time to get to this stage as all the work needed to be carried out thoroughly. The last time the report had been presented, the scheme in place was not ideal and had not reached full capacity. The Committee had advised last time that a broader scheme across Slough was required and it had to operate at full cost recovery. There had been some obstacles on the way, such as staffing and

sharing of data issues, but this was now getting back on track. Any licences issued under the existing scheme were still running but no new licences were being issued. This was a massive opportunity to make the process more robust. Officers were happy to come to CISC in January 2026 with a more detailed report.

- What happened once any licence currently in place, expired? Officers responded that since there was no designations in place, there was no need to licence so they would lapse.
- In the risks section of the report, one of the risks was human resources was intensive, were there enough staff in place? Officers reported that at present, there were not enough staff but these would be put in place when the process was back up and running and it was known how many staff were needed. The new staff would start a few months before so that they could be trained. The size of the organisation would determine the size and structure of the new Team and the fee.
- If there was a low uptake of licences fees from landlords, what was in place to make the landlords buy into the policies? Officers responded that in terms of compliance, this needed to be built into the structure of the Team so that the numbers could be checked to put the compliance in place. All landlords would need to have a licence and would be chased and pursued.
- How would the licence fee be calculated? What were the projected costs and revenues over the whole term and how would the Council ensure that the fees remained proportionate and not a barrier to the compliance? Officers commented that the scheme needed to be self-financing totally, funded from the licensing fee. All the costs in relation to the scheme, the compliance, the regulation and to bring the properties to the correct standard, could be recovered. The fees would be calculated including officer time and other administration costs. The cost recovery model would be used to get full recovery of costs.
- Would any benchmarking be carried out with other local authorities? Officers commented that there would be no benchmarking as the fees would be set using the cost recovery model and that would differ for each local authority. A market indicator was that 75% of all properties would be licenced.
- There had been a lot of complaints regarding abuse of landlords and safety of residents when English was not their first language and in Slough, there were many vulnerable residents. The existing system was not working well, were resources in place to upscale the process and the were the operators in place to do the work with the wider knowledge? Officers commented that in terms of getting the staff right, a lot was being done in making sure that the calculations were done correctly and properly with adequate training to be efficient and understanding of the wider picture across the Council and how to communicate with the landlords and understand the legislation and enforcement and therefore the structure needed to be made correctly. It was understood that vulnerable residents lived in the private rented sector and in smaller HMO's and these needed to be made compliant.

- A point that needed to be considered was that residents needed to be considered too and that they had language barriers as well as landlords.
- The report noted that non-compliance was a criminal offence with a penalty of £30K per offence and tenants who were living in licensable property with no license could apply for a Rent Repayment Order requiring up to 12 months to be repaid. Were we asking tenants to report their landlords if they have no licence? If so, that was a great initiative. What support was the Council giving to tenants who did this? Officers responded that the Council could fine £30K per offence. With respect to the Rent Repayment Order, this had to be led by the tenant and they would need to provide evidence that the property needed to be licenced and was not. This went to tribunal and if it was found that it was correct then the rent would need to be refunded back to the tenant.
- If a landlord had a property, currently it was not easy to find the information to whether that property needed licensing. When the new areas and wards were added to the scheme, how were landlords going to be informed? Officers commented that once the designated areas had been agreed, then a communications plan would be put into place to promote the new information on the website. It was reported that previously a leaflet drop had been arranged in the designated areas, one for landlords and one for tenants, with QR codes to information on the website, to inform them to licence their properties. Flyer drops were of good value, reasonable and had a good uptake.
- The July 2024 report had very little detail which was disappointing. There was no information on the risks from the last report and whether they had been managed or mitigated, for example the new IT system for care management, was that in place and had staff been trained in using it, was the landlord forum in place, was the tenants forum in place, had a restructure taken place and were all staff now in place, was the new staffing structure going to be proactive rather than reactive? Members felt that another delay would make it a lot harder especially with the new law coming into place. CISC needed reassurance that all was in hand. Officers reported that the new IT system used for housing regulation and another additional system were in place and running. All staff had been trained so this issue had been resolved. The staffing that had to be in place needed to be proactively supporting the work. The structure could not be put into place until there was more information on the number of properties and the fee set. There was a three month statutory window to get into place and have the right size. The landlord and tenant forums were not yet in place but these needed to be put into place.
- In the July 2024 report, there was a balance in the fund for 2024/25 and this was £346K. How much of this money had been spent, what had it been spent on and had it been used to improve the service? It was reported that the pot of money could only be used for housing improvements and improvement work. It had been used towards staffing for mandatory licensing and had not grown in size.

- There was currently a prevalence of converting offices to flats in Slough Town Centre, what scheme would these fall under? Officers commented that it would be the selective scheme.
- Members had been expecting a more detailed report. There was no detail so it could not be scrutinised. Was it to early for the report to be presented to CISC or had not enough work been completed? A report needed to come back to Committee. Officers had suggested that the report be presented at CISC when the results had come in but Members wanted sight of an early report. The survey results were crucial and these were being awaited. The initial results would be received in mid-December and a final report in mid-January.
- The report was disappointing and had no real information for Members to scrutinise. It was the first time that the delay had been acknowledged and that was welcomed. The Committee would like to see the detail when it was ready with the scheme being brought forward. There was a disparity and concerns around tenants verses landlords and there needed to be more communication of the scheme. The Committee would like to see detail on the cost recovery. There were good landlords in Slough who were committed to do the right thing, how would these landlords be recognised and rewarded? Could this be considered where good practice was recognised and bad practice highlighted.
- How was enforcement going to be taken forward? Would it be intelligence-led or proactive? How would unlicensed and non-compliant landlords be captured? Officers commented that this would most likely be reported by tenants. They would be able to report unanimously. Good landlords would report bad landlords too. Intelligence would also be used through council tax and even refuse collection. Enforcement would depend on how long the property had been unlicensed and if the landlords should have known. There was also an enforcement policy in place and informal action would be taken by speaking with everyone including the letting agent, landlord, tenant and neighbours.
- Barking and Dagenham had just introduced a boroughwide scheme in the private sector. Should a boroughwide scheme be considered for Slough? Officers confirmed that if the stipulated criteria was met then there could be a boroughwide scheme.

The Lead Member thanked Members of CISC for the vital points raised and the valuable input. There was quite a bit of learning from the last scheme that was in place and Officers were determined to make the new scheme better by including all the learnings. The new scheme needed to be self-funded and improve the standards across Slough. A more detailed report would be prepared once the data had been received. A report would be presented to Cabinet in February 2026 so could be presented to CISC in January 2026.

Resolved: that the Committee noted the contents of the report but felt that they needed further details to scrutinise the item.

The Committee asked for:

- **A more detailed report before it was presented at Cabinet. The report needed to consider all the points raised at CISC tonight.**
- **A communications plan for residents in different languages and in different methods such as for children at school to explain to their parents.**
- **With Members corporate parenting responsibilities, assurance that all Slough care leavers were in properties that were correctly licenced.**

31. Joint Local Health & Wellbeing Strategy - 2026 - 2036

The Chair of CISC welcomed the Leader and the Chair of the Slough Health and Wellbeing Board to the Committee. The Chair of the Slough Health and Wellbeing Board (SHWB) commented that the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy was a 10 year strategy. With respect to the poor health outcomes that were significant, it would take a number of years for change to happen. There were a number of changes in health geography with the ICB merging and the hospital trusts, Frimley being split between three geographic areas and the need to place more emphasis on prevention and to measure the impact over a long period and ultimately bring a large impact on healthy living. Slough was ten years behind neighbouring boroughs. It all needed to start with children and young people including preschool children. A broader strategy to have community hubs and inclusion of other strategies within the Council and with more closer working with communities and the health sector.

The Director of Public Health and the Public Health Programme Manager gave a joint presentation to the Committee. It was reported that the Health and Wellbeing Board had a broad membership including the Police, Fire Service, NHS and Healthwatch. An overview of the process undertaken to deliver the new strategy was given explaining that it was a phased approach that had a number of sessions that had taken place to shape the priorities including looking at the national policies. Currently, phase 3 was the consultation had just ended. This had gone out to the residents, on tour, pulling all information together and explaining to residents. The aim was that Slough be a healthy place where people could flourish from Start Well to Stay Well.

Members asked the following questions that Officers provided a response for as follows:

- The Chair asked why Slough was not an easy place to live well in, what were the main reasons? Officers explained that on the tour residents had given the following reasons:
 - Access to healthy food.
 - Access to keeping active every day.
 - Safety concerns.
 - Cycle lanes difficult to use.
 - Walking was difficult.

Residents wanted the opportunity to good stable work with an income and education and housing and access to a good career path. It was important to important to influence the wider public through all the organisations that the Health and Wellbeing Board included.

- Councillor Matloob made some observations for Officers, they included that it was good to hear that the concentration was on prevention, bringing the facilities closer to the residents, investing in walking tracks, cycling paths, lighting, improving the state of parks, CCTV, rest gardens, community classes, retaining staff to keep the knowledge, data centres, licensing for fast food restaurants, improving the response rates, working with schools, community groups, places of worship, working with GP's and surgery's and reducing mortality. Officers responded that the NHS health check programme was now in place and proactive outreach was being done. The points raised were the kind of actions that needed to be included in the action plan where all partners were involved and pushing for the same thing at the same time, all working towards a common goal. The strategy for improving physical activity had been recently published which was looking at walking paths, lighting and parks, in conjunction with the Police. The consultation response rate had been disappointing and when investigated further, it had come to light that not everyone had digital access and it had only been available in English and both of these points were being addressed.
- The Chair of SHWB agreed with all the points already raised and commented that only 20% of health was determined by medical treatment, the other 80% was environmental impacts. In Slough, if residents did not have a healthy lifestyle, they were four times more likely to go to the GP and have issues later in life.
- Could monies be used from S106 for prevention and early intervention. It was very important of how much of the Strategy was focussed on prevention. What early interventions were in place for children? Officers commented that the SHWB had an important role to play along with NHS in primary prevention, specifically to give a chance for a healthy life. There was a health visiting school provision in place, a prevention element for drugs and alcohol and sexual health, NHS health checks and the biggest contribution the Council made was in wider areas, earn, be safe, good education and job and be able to provide for family.
- Other local authorities were using different innovative ways to motivate residents to stay active such as a QR code for exercise to inform on steps or miles or calories burnt. It was important to remember that physical activity was free and a massive health benefit and needed to be built into everyday routine. Education and motivation needed to be key.
- Members had noted that walking on footpaths was difficult in Slough with increased cars and parking on footpaths and this discouraged people to walk. The safety in parks, street lighting that had broken was taking long to fix. Had any root cause analysis of why Slough residents were living less been done? How was this being tackled? How was the

success of the Strategy going to be measured? Using the faith and community groups was a good idea with more seminars and talks for residents to engage in and understand the benefits of an active life. Officers commented that there was more to do on engagement, work was being done on vaccinations through faith groups and the new JSNA online had a lot more evidence base.

- There was more to do about the non-working population and economic inactivity. It would help if it was broken down by neighbourhood showing what Wards needed more information. A more targeted look was needed for the hard to reach communities. Officers needed to think deeper to find solutions through a range of organisations and a better engagement piece. Further work could be done at football matches, at school gates, through friends of groups and other meets. Where was the core data in terms of health coming from? Officers commented that the evidence base was from everywhere, from many different sources. Officers thought of the questions and then found the data to answer those questions. The Ward profiles had now been completed. With respect to the hard to reach communities, more thought was being given on how to reach these and link up better with groups and be more creative. It was noted that economic inactivity needed a stronger reference in the Strategy. It was pointed out that Slough was leading on the work for the Berkshire Prosperity Board and all Berkshire Councils were working together on this.
- Commitment was required to protect key community assets, boroughwide. Further development was required in community open spaces and local parks. Contributions from Planning applications were required and more focus needed to be given to partners that wanted to invest in community spaces. The Leader commented that the Council had pushed back on the asset disposal programme and especially the selling of Arbour Park Stadium, which was now safeguarded. There was now a long term lease where the football club could bring in funding and maintain the stadium. The leisure centres were contributing more financially so not being considered.
- Members asked what was different about this Strategy and what KPI's were measured on a regular basis? Officers responded that the uptake on the NHS health checks had gone up by 50%, improving the health for people with higher risk. High risk patients were being proactively being chased so that a higher rate were having treatment and this would be continued to be measured. There were several Strategy checks to report against for children's development. Smoking had dropped for the second year running and had gone down from 15% to 7% and was continuing to fall. There was a good set of metrics to measure against. As part of the new Strategy, an infographic was included that looked at the key KPI's so that progress could be monitored as part of an annual review.
- There seem to be more anxiety and lifelong difficulties in children. Issues around temporary accommodation seem to be very big. This needed to be a whole Council initiative, further consideration in planning applications, more within the consultation and impact assessments stages, benches needed to be put back into parks and

swings needed to be put back. Sustainability was a part of all of the Council's work. Further investment was needed in infrastructure by getting funds back into Slough. Officers responded that they were aware that temporary accommodation had health impacts and work was being done to look at the prevention and mitigation. A piece of work was being done for planning and the new local plan and more could be done on Equality Impact Assessments for policies. The Chair of Planning Committee commented that S106 agreements were being looked at by Officers and developers. The local plan was due and the draft NEETS report had been received. A condition to prioritise young people in S106 going forward was being considered.

- The message for residents needed to be improved that they could make a change by partaking in consultations. Residents were influenced more by Councillors than the Council and Councillors could influence active lifestyle.

The Chair of SHWB commended the new strategy and all the hard work that had been carried out. Trying to adopt a holistic long term approach and commitment. It was crucial to see health outcomes change and put people on a better track for the future.

Resolved: That the Committee noted all the work carried out and made recommendations that included:

- To include KPI's for how life expectancy was being improved in various sectors to see more data and metrics.
- Sharing of the Ward data with Members in strengthening Ward profiles. Officers to send link to Members. **ACTION**
- Include the KPI's in the action plan for the Strategy including a dashboard and this would give a baseline.

The Committee were in agreement with and endorsed the key areas; Vision, Strategic Drivers and Relevance.

32. Attendance Report

Members noted the attendance report.

33. Date of Next Meeting - 9 December 2025

Members noted the date of the next meeting.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.51 pm)