

**Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 9th December, 2025.**

**Present:-** Councillors Khawar (Chair), Hulme (Vice-Chair), Ajaib, Mann, Matloob and Tomar

**Also present under Rule 30:-** Councillors Bedi and Shaik

**Apologies for Absence:-** Councillor Mohindra, Muvvala and O’Kelly

**PART 1**

**34. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

**35. Minutes of the last meeting**

**Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2025 were approved as an accurate record.**

The order of the agenda items was changed after all Members were in agreed.

**36. Progress Update - Budget 2026/27 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2026/27 to 2029/30**

The Interim Executive Director, Corporate Resources and S151 Officer and the Director of Financial Management & Strategy presented the report to the Committee.

The report set out an update on the progress towards delivering a balanced budget for 2026/27 and an updated medium-term Financial Strategy that was due to be presented to Cabinet the following week. A breakdown of ongoing pressures, new risks & savings proposals were included in Appendix A.

The Councils budget process started in October. This represents a significant compressed timeline, with comparatively late start caused by and exacerbated by the in-year financial situation and overspend which at the time exceeded £20m.

The Council was working within a very challenging financial context with increasing future demand from residents to address more complex issues.

EY had been commissioned to support the Council with its budget setting process, including challenge and scrutiny of budget pressures and risks. This work was ongoing.

Members asked the following questions and Officers responded as follows:

- How was public engagement going to be carried out, would and digital channels be used? Officers responded that it would mainly be through the website. A full communications plan would be developed. The timeline was very short. The consultation would begin with business rates payers as well as community groups and the voluntary sector and would also use the local press. There would also be separate processes and decisions such as those for council tax that would feed into the budget process engagement.
- For the current budget, was there anything that was absolutely deliverable that would help? Officers commented that it was a difficult position to be in and many measures had been proposed such as a recruitment freeze, with exceptions in place, an exercise was being carried out on agency staff, exemplifying 40% of agency staff where a number of agency staff would be departing, bringing forward fees and charges and deploying reserves to the balance. The demand pressures would impact the budget gap for next year. Compliance work was also being carried out on spending on a variety of things such as travel, catering and training. Contracts were being looked into with discussions with contractors. Conversations were taking place with departments. The early signs were looking positive.
- Some of the specific pressures and savings were discussed and Officers gave explanations and reasons for these.
- What other charges were expected from government that may have an effect? How was the Council going to achieve the three values? Officers responded that the Fai Funding Review may have an effect. The government determined grant funding for different authorities and they were consulting on the calculations. It seemed there was an emphasis on the level of deprivation and Slough would be a net beneficiary, however it would take a few years for the difference to be seen. Other effects may be from the proposals for SEND, the DSG not being enough for all SEND pressures as the Council was carrying as a debt. The government were saying that from 2028/29, they would not expect local authorities to carry the SEND burden. This was being investigated further to understand their proposals. There was also the new Mansion Tax and local authorities would be expected to collect on behalf of Treasury.
- The high needs of schools was discussed and that 0.5% could be approved by the Schools Forum and anything above that would have to be approved by the Secretary of State. The school budgets varied in Slough. There was some work being carried out on this.
- What would be the impact of savings on residents for example from the postal vote re-application via email and a reduction in home care hours for adult social care. Officers explained that with respect to the postal votes, other methods would be used to save on postal costs and with respect to a reduction in home care hours, this would be looking at specific home care hours and not all day but benchmarking was being carried out against other local authorities to understand what was the best option and providing for the need and not the want. Looking to make care more appropriate through annual reviews.

## Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee - 09.12.25

- The Equality Impact Assessments needed to be more robust to give the Committee assurance. Officers would take this on board going forward and give more attention to these. **ACTION**
- Many of the savings proposals and income raising proposals were duplicated from previous years and if these were further savings and further income then assurance needed to be given to the Committee. Officers reported that EY had been engaged for six weeks to look at the proposals and the deliverability of the proposals. For each proposal, there would be a delivery plan that would hold people to account.
- There was no results or realisation on the digital advertising agreed in 2025. Could this be included in all the work carried out. **ACTION**
- It was worth taking the time to consider the model for Task and Finish Groups to follow for future years to ensure that they were adding value. This needed to be planned better. The Officers would work with Members to put a process in place to optimise the process and time for working groups. **ACTION**
- Officers informed all that there would be an All-Member briefing on the local government finance settlement and local government background refresher on Wednesday 7 January 2026.
- Would the workflow size and structure be effected, losing knowledge and resource, as a result of the savings programme? Officers reported that there was currently a recruitment freeze and there was also a large number of vacancies in the organisation. Staff could redeploy into vacant posts. There would be very few redundancies for next year, however over three years, there would be significant loss in staff numbers. This would all be set out in January 2026.

**Resolved: that the Committee noted the update towards delivering a balanced budget in 2026/27 and reviewed the proposed list of risks, pressures and savings and the comments made by the Committee. The Committee noted that Phase 2 of the 2025/26 Budget Proposals would be presented to them at the February 2026 CISC meeting which would have a full budget proposal and would include the local government finance settlement, that was due in December 2025.**

### 37. Report of the NEETS Task and Finish Group

The Chair of the NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) Task and Finish Group presented the report to the Committee. The report provided an overview of the work of the NEETs Task and Finish Group between February 2025 and September 2025. The report had a number of recommendations for the Committee to put forward to Cabinet for their consideration.

The Task and Finish Group (T&FG) was launched to explore NEETs provision in Slough with the aim to understand the challenges face in supporting NEETs. The scope was to focus on key risks and concerns raised by Officers and Members.

## Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee - 09.12.25

The Director of Education commented that the current situation of such high levels had been running for two years and these were not levels that SBC were happy with. The recommendations made by the T&FG were very helpful especially about working harder and doing things differently. Currently, work was being done with schools to look at the opportunities for late applications to college and some virtual school work was ongoing too.

Members made the following points:

- Early intervention was key and a timeframe was required, how much earlier could it begin? Officers commented that for this cohort, it would have to be before July and earlier for future cohorts.
- The S106 funds could be used towards this. The Local Plan was due next year and NEETs could be added to that too especially for the Thames Valley University site and Town Centre. Could this be added as a recommendation by the Chair. The wording to be agreed the Head of Democratic Services. **ACTION**
- Some of the recommendations were for CISC and others for Cabinet. The recommendations for CISC would be added to the work programme for Committee or by correspondence by email. This would be picked up with Officers in Adult Social Care Team. **ACTION**

**Resolved: that the Committee noted the findings in the report and approved the recommendations within the report.**

### 38. Refresh of Forward Work Programme of the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee (CISC)

**Resolved: that the Committee reviewed and agreed the refreshed Forward Work Programme as in Appendix A of the report.**

### 39. Attendance Report

The attendance report was noted.

### 40. Date of Next Meeting - 27 January 2026

Members noted the date of the next meeting to be 27 January 2026.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.53 pm)