

Date of issue: 15 April 2024

MEETING:	CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Councillors Shaik (Chair), Khawar (Vice Chair), Escott, Hulme, Iftakhar, Mann, Matloob, Mohindra, O'Kelly and Stedmond)
DATE AND TIME:	TUESDAY, 23RD APRIL, 2024 AT 6.30 PM
VENUE:	COUNCIL CHAMBER - OBSERVATORY HOUSE, 25 WINDSOR ROAD, SL1 2EL
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries)	MICHAEL EDLEY 07875 407 409

NOTICE OF MEETING

The above named Councillors are requested to attend the above meeting, at the time and date indicated, to deal with the business set out in the following agenda.



WILL TUCKLEY
Chief Executive

AGENDA

PART I

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

1. Declarations of Interest

All Members who believe they have a Disclosable Pecuniary or other Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting must declare that interest and, having regard to the circumstances described in Section 9 and Appendix B of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter is discussed.

2. Minutes of the last meeting 1 - 8
3. Attendance Report 9 - 10

SCRUTINY CHALLENGE ITEMS

4. Report from the Safer Slough Partnership (SSP) 11 - 48
5. Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee Annual report 2023-24 49 - 86
6. Scrutiny Task and Finish Group Report: Resident Engagement and Building Trust 87 - 128

MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next formal committee meeting will be on 25 June 2024. The items for this and meetings going forward will be developed and proposed in workshops in May following Full Council.

Press and Public

Attendance and accessibility: You are welcome to attend this meeting which is open to the press and public, as an observer. You will however be asked to leave before any items in the Part II agenda are considered. For those hard of hearing an Induction Loop System is available in the Council Chamber.

Webcasting and recording: The public part of the meeting will be filmed by the Council for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's website. The footage will remain on our website for 12 months. A copy of the recording will also be retained in accordance with the Council's data retention policy. By entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings.

In addition, the law allows members of the public to take photographs, film, audio-record or tweet the proceedings at public meetings. Anyone proposing to do so is requested to advise the Democratic Services Officer before the start of the meeting. Filming or recording must be overt and persons filming should not move around the meeting room whilst filming nor should they obstruct proceedings or the public from viewing the meeting. The use of flash photography, additional lighting or any non hand held devices, including tripods, will not be allowed unless this has been discussed with the Democratic Services Officer.

Emergency procedures: The fire alarm is a continuous siren. If the alarm sounds Immediately vacate the premises by the nearest available exit at either the front or rear of the Chamber and proceed to the assembly point: The pavement of the service road outside of Westminster House, 31 Windsor Road.

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Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 26th March, 2024.

Present:- Councillors Shaik (Chair), Khawar (Vice-Chair), Escott, Hulme, Iftakhar, Mann, Matloob, Mohindra and Stedmond

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Nazir

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor O’Kelly

PART 1**47. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were made.

48. Minutes of the last ordinary meeting held on 22 February 2024

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2024 be approved as a correct record.

49. Minutes of the last extraordinary meeting held on 13 March 2024

Resolved – That the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 13 March 2024 be approved as a correct record.

50. Launch of a Task and Finish Group: Children's services and SCF Engagement with Children, families, and faith and community groups

It was noted that apologies had been received from the Lead Member for Education and Children’s Services and from the Executive Director, People, Children.

The Director of Operations, SCF (Slough Children First) in his summary of the report advised that the Task & Finish Group (T&FG) was being launched to help improve SCF’s engagement with the faith and community sector locally. This initiative had been identified as critical to the transformation and improvement of the service provided to children and families, was linked to the Council’s Corporate Plan and would contribute to the Council’s improvement and recovery. It was supported by the DLUCH (Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities) Commissioners and feedback from OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) and children & young people and families had indicated that improvement was required in this area.

Members endorsed the setting up of the T&FG and made the following points and asked the questions below:

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- with regard to the scope of the T&FG, it should be remembered some communities were more established and had a better understanding of engagement. Therefore, the T&FG should focus on any gaps in the Council's knowledge and address this. It should drill down to discover if communities were providing informal support to local children and families, that the Council may not hitherto have been aware of;
- the importance of two-way communication with community & faith groups and the awareness that community groups were not homogenous entities and it was important to appreciate the nuances between them;
- What had been the finding of the recent OFSTED inspection; had any mapping of early help provision been undertaken?

The Director of Operations advised that one of the stated outcomes was to map all the community and faith groups in Slough and identify where there was lack of engagement. The inspection report had highlighted the need for community recognition around certain types of harm, e.g., FGM (female genital mutilation) and exploitation. The T&FG would help build relationships with these groups which would enable learning by the Council.

With regard to mapping, the Council currently had a good understanding of the community & voluntary sector and more engagement with faith groups and places of worship was underway. The multi-faith forums had been re-established and work was ongoing with the voluntary sector to evaluate how many children and families they were currently supporting and to provide them with the tools and support to continue in this.

The following membership of the T&FG was agreed, with the Chair and additional Members' names to be confirmed by the Groups after the meeting: Councillors Mohindra, Khawar & Stedmond.

Resolved – That:

1. a Task and Finish Group (T&FG) be launched as per the draft scope at Appendix A of the report;
2. membership of the T&FG to include Councillors Mohindra, Khawar & Stedmond. The Chair and additional Members' names to be confirmed by the Groups after the meeting.

51. **Shaping proposals for a policy on Community Asset Transfers**

The SBC Executive Director of Regeneration, Environment & Housing stated that the formulation of a community asset transfer policy (CAT) was a crucial element in the Council's approach to dealing with its assets and finances. The development of an estates strategy, building the asset register, clarifying terms of ownership of assets, associated covenants, etc would help inform the policy. However, this information was not readily available at Slough and there remained much administrative work to be completed to finalise the asset register and consequently the estates strategy.

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Other issues such as how out-of-borough assets and development sites would be dealt with and which operational assets would be retained also needed to be resolved. The Council had a large portfolio of community buildings where sports groups and charities were based. Each building would require careful assessment and decision-making. The preferred option would be to ensure that voluntary organisations could continue to deliver current services through the adoption of a model of CAT. Options could include empowering local groups to take over assets and services, thereby reducing the Council's day-to-day responsibility for managing and maintaining them; or a mixed response, as detailed in the case studies in the report e.g., where larger organisations could be offered a package of buildings or encouraged to bid as a consortium.

Formulating the CAT would require careful consideration and resolution of the above and other issues, such as:

- defining the goals and outcomes of the policy – i.e., what was the policy aimed at achieving, how this would be done, the key drivers behind the policy and what parameters would be set;
- how best value, social value and community benefits would be balanced against each other and prioritised;
- reducing the Council's financial responsibilities and increasing the autonomy of the voluntary sector;
- the financial viability, expertise and experience of individual community groups and their capacity to deliver services;
- would assets be offered singly or in a suite;
- would groups be encouraged to share responsibility and bid as consortiums;
- the inclusion of any covenants regarding future use, change of use or future sale of an asset by a community group;
- would the Council become a corporate landlord;
- length of leases, etc.

If done correctly, a CAT could be a win-win situation for both the Council and Community groups.

Members made the following comments and asked the questions below:

- When would the asset register be finalised?
- Could the Council raise funds by selling or transferring assets to voluntary groups?
- What information was available regarding community groups' use of assets, the services they were delivering and their capacity? What support could be provided to them to build sufficient capacity to enable them to submit bids?
- Would equalities impact assessments be carried out? Would potential savings be identified?

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- Had existing community tenants expressed interest in taking over any buildings?

The Executive Director stated that the asset register was being continually updated as new information was discovered. However, there remained grey areas in the register that required further clarification. It was a challenging process as large numbers of assets had not been properly logged or managed over recent years. There was a history of rents not being levied on community groups. It was therefore crucial to formulate a policy first and then undertake the necessary work to implement it.

He added that some community groups had submitted expressions of interest regarding assets, however, there would need to be a vetting process to ensure that the group had sufficient capacity to undertake the responsibility. There was clear data regarding where council run services were delivered, and significant, though incomplete data regarding services delivered by voluntary groups. There was currently insufficient resource to compile more comprehensive data regarding the latter.

A number of different approaches were available in a transfer e.g., an asset could be designated nil value, usage could be free or discounted, whether market values should be applied, the length of leases, etc - all these options would require careful consideration.

Members made the following additional comments:

- council-owned assets with no community use should be retained;
- there should be no blanket discount given as some community groups were able to afford to pay commercial rates;
- the Council may not be aware of all council and other services being delivered at its buildings;
- how would groups be helped to build capacity?

It would be easy to identify council services at venues such as the Curve but more difficult to do for outlying facilities operated by voluntary and community groups where the Council's involvement was minimal.

The Executive Director advised that CATs had been done in the past, though this was not widespread. Any asset transfer should take into consideration the impact, financial benefit, market values, social/community value, service provision and the capacity of the organisation to deliver. An evaluation matrix would need to be devised to assess these factors. He added that large national charities and umbrella groups were no longer represented in Slough. In view of the high levels of need in the town, any CAT policy should aim to entice these organisations back to Slough.

He agreed that building capacity and offering first right of refusal to current occupiers would be a sensible approach, provided that the organisation could

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demonstrate it had been paying rent, maintaining the building and delivering reasonable services.

Members expressed the view that they were not in a position to make detailed recommendations regarding the priorities of the CAT on the limited information available. They would require the following information to inform their discussions and any recommendations arising:

- the finalised target operating model (which would set out what the Council would look like, how it would operate, which services it would continue to deliver and which services would be devolved to the voluntary sector);
- a complete asset register;
- the finalised estates strategy;
- details of current occupancy and service-delivery by the Council and community groups.

A Member proposed that the community asset transfer policy be submitted to the Committee prior to its submission to Cabinet. The Executive Director undertook to provide the draft CAT policy to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Executive Director agreed that it would be necessary to clarify the policy position with each service area and the voluntary sector, the structure of the authority its policy position on service delivery, etc. For example, the preferred option would be to implement a corporate landlord model, with all assets managed centrally by a corporate landlord team. A delivery model for this would need to be agreed. The estates strategy was due to be submitted to Cabinet in June for approval – however, the content of the strategy was contingent on finalisation of the standard operating model and timelines may need to be pushed back.

- Members then asked whether the impact of the proposed sale of Hatfield car park on shoppers and parking capacity been assessed;
- Serena Hall had been sold at auction and Slough Homeless had been obliged to move out of the building. The CAT policy should have been developed sooner, which would have benefitted voluntary groups. The CAT policy would work well with the estates strategy;
- How would applications be prioritised?

The Executive Director stated that the sale of the car park was a good example of best value and this was supported by the figures. There was an over-proliferation of car parks in the town centre, some of which were underpriced. There was good data available regarding operational assets and their usage, however, information regarding community use was incomplete as often there were no formal lease or other agreements in place, no clear paper trail and the prevalence of historic occupancy, all of which would take time to clarify.

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The Executive Director advised that it was important to distinguish between community assets where voluntary groups operated and commercial buildings leased on commercial terms – the martial arts school was an example of a commercial client.

The Executive Director advised that work on the asset register was ongoing. Currently there were resource issues to check each individual. Each building, its current usage and application would need to be assessed on its merits and on the basis of the CAT policy. The estates strategy would include a complete list of assets and discussions at the scrutiny meeting and additional feedback from scrutiny members would inform the principles of the CAT.

- How would landmark buildings such as the Curve be dealt with, - would the size, social value and impact residents be taken into consideration?
- Members sought clarification regarding plans for the Curve and other landmark buildings;
- How loss of council services and facilities at the Curve would be mitigated against.
- Eqias (equality impact assessments) best value, social & community value, impact on communities and service provision should be taken into consideration when transferring assets;
- The Curve, despite its design flaws, was currently the only entertainment venue in the town centre and therefore should be retained.

The Executive Director advised that the Curve generated a marginal income and cost approximately £1M p.a to maintain it. There were a number of design-related issues which put constraints on its usage, this coupled with high maintenance costs meant that it was not a commercially viable asset. There was an aspiration to get an arts, educational or cultural organisation to take it on (an expression of interest had been received). Specialist organisations with experience in running such venues were better placed to run it and could draw on additional funding.

Council services provided at the Curve could remain there or be relocated elsewhere in the town centre. All possible options would need to be weighed up. The Council did not necessarily plan to sell the Curve, but its intention was to cease running it in the current financial year (this had been identified as a saving in the budget) and it hoped to transfer the lease to an organisation capable of running it.

The Executive Director re-iterated that every bid and asset would be judged on its individual merits and on the capacity and expertise of the bidding organisation, and the protocols in the CAT policy once finalised. He advised that the sale or transfer of some assets required consultation of users, however, others such as car parks did not.

A Member speaking under rule 30 stated that the Commissioners had emphasised the importance of best value and this should be a key basis of any CAT policy. Corporate, social and statutory considerations should also be

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taken into account. It was crucial that a CAT policy and data regarding current community use of buildings and the services they delivered should inform the CAT, however, the resource to undertake this assessment was not currently available.

Actions: the following action was agreed:

1. Eqias (equality impact assessments), the possible use of covenants, best value, social & community value, impact on communities and service provision should be taken into consideration when transferring assets.

Members made the following recommendations to the Executive Director, which were seconded and agreed.

1. the committee be given a pre-decision opportunity to review a draft CAT policy and the wider estates strategy once they are sufficiently developed and before it was too late to influence the outcome;
2. current community group occupiers should generally be given first right of refusal (provided that they could demonstrate that they had been paying rent, maintaining the building and delivering reasonable services and subject to market considerations).

Resolved – That:

1. the committee be given a pre-decision opportunity to review a draft CAT policy and the wider estates strategy once they were sufficiently developed and before it was too late to influence the outcome;
2. current community group occupiers should generally be given first right of refusal (provided that they could demonstrate that they had been paying rent, maintaining the building and delivering reasonable services and subject to market considerations);
3. the report be noted.

52. Attendance Report

Resolved – that the attendance report be noted.

53. Date of Next Meeting

23 April, 2024.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 7.00 pm and closed at 9.11 pm)

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MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE RECORD 2023/24
CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

	COUNCILLOR	27 June 2023	25 July 2023	26 Sept 2023	24 Oct 2023	28 Nov 2023	4 Jan 2024	30 Jan 2024	22 Feb 2024	13 March 2024	26 March 2024
	Manku	P	P	P	P						
1.	Shaik	P	P	P	Ap	P	P	P	P	P	P
2.	Escott	AP	P	P	P	P	P	P	Ap	P	P
3.	Hulme	P	P	P	P	P	P	Ap	P	Ap	P
4.	Iftakhar	P	P	P	P	P	Ap	P	P	P	P
5.	Khawar						P	P	P	P	P
6.	Mann	P	P	P	Ap	P	P	P	Ap	Ap	P
7.	Matloob	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
8.	Mohindra	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
9.	O'Kelly	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Ap
10.	Stedmond	P	P	AP	AP	P	P	P	P	Ap	P

P = Present for whole meeting
P* = Present for part of meeting
Ap = Apologies given
Ab = Absent, no apologies given

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Report To:	Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee
Date:	23 April 2024
Subject:	Safer Slough Partnership annual update
Chief Officer:	Tessa Lindfield Public Health and Public Protection
Contact Officer:	Sue Dicks Community Safety Partnership
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	No
Appendices:	Appendix A – Update Reports for Key Priorities

1. Summary

- 1.1** This report provides an overview of the Safer Slough Partnership (SSP) work and achievements against its key priorities from April 2023 to December 2023.
- 1.2** The SSP key priorities are:-
- **Domestic Abuse**
 - **Serious Violence**
 - **Anti-Social Behaviour**
 - **Substance Misuse**
- 1.3** More detail information is provided in Appendix 1, from each of the Priority Lead reports.
- 1.4** There will be a Thames Valley Police presentation supporting this report to bring a local crime overview of Slough and, how we compare with other police areas.

2. Recommendation

That the Committee note and comment on the progress made by the SSP in these challenging times.

DLUHC Commissioner Review: The work of the Safer Slough Partnership is of great concern and interest to residents in Slough. CLT will wish to give careful consideration to any comments this committee has to make on the Annual Report.

3. Report

3.1 Key Findings

- 3.1..1** In preparing this report, it emerged that in 2020-2021, SBC introduced 'Our Future Restructure', where the Community Safety Partnership Analyst was removed and based within the Corporate Performance Team. This post was then deleted due to cost savings. In addition, there had been no Community Safety Partnership Manager for 16 months.
- 3.1..2** In order to strengthen the SSP, a new structure was established in April 2023. Prior to this, there is little evidence of published strategies, plans and strategic crime assessments relating to the delivery of the SSP agenda.
- 3.1..3** In addition, the last report for the SSP was in 2020. This has resulted in a failure to call the SSP and its members to account. The current lack of meaningful SSP relevant data makes prevents effective scrutiny and the means that the SSP is unable to compare evidence, measure progress and assess its impact.
- 3.1..4** Key to these findings is the need to support the Community Safety Partnership Services and SSP to enable them to deliver the priorities, in making our communities safer. A crime analyst is crucial to collate and analyse crime and related information to enable the SSP, to monitor local crime, asb and disorder outcome indicators and the performance and impact of partnership work in Slough. This is crucial for effective governance, fulfilling our statutory duties and supporting our local communities.
- 3.1..5** This report therefore aims to update on the SSP progress from 1st April 2023 to December 2023, in delivering the key priorities to tackle the most challenging issues for maintaining and improving community safety in Slough,
- 3.1..6** It will provide a brief overview of what has been achieved from each SSP Priority Lead. (Appendix 1). It will also include more recent updates from early 2024, highlighting continued progress.

4.0 Introduction

- 4.1** The SSP is the statutory Community Safety Partnership (CSP) for Slough in which the responsible authorities (local authorities, prescribed probation service providers, chief officer of police, fire and rescue authority, integrated care board) have a duty to work with other local agencies to tackle crime and disorder. It is the mechanism for responsible authorities to work together to formulate and implement strategies for reducing crime and disorder in the area. This includes anti-social behaviour and other adverse behaviour affecting the local environment and combating misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in the area.
- 4.2** The partnership serves to provide strategic, coordinated and proactive responses to reduce crime, the fear of crime and disorder within the borough, making Slough a place where people want to live, work, visit, and invest.
- 4.3** The SSP is a thematic group and is governed by a Board, currently chaired by the Local Policing Area Commander for Thames Valley Police, supported by representatives from the responsible authorities. These are the police, local authority, fire and rescue, health and the probation service.
- 4.4** The new SSP is ambitious and strongly believe they are better when working together in making our communities safer.

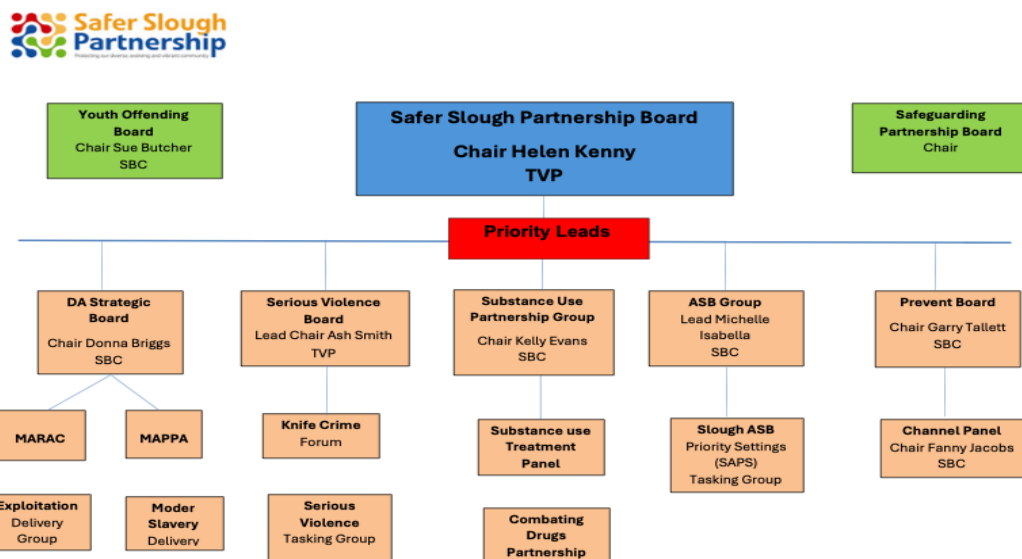
4.5 SSP statutory duties Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the authorities forming a CSP have responsibilities to:

- form a strategic group that formulates and implements strategies to reduce crime and disorder, including anti-social and other adverse behaviour affecting the local environment, combatting misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances, reducing re-offending and preventing and reducing instances of serious violence
- seek the views of the public annually
- publish an annual strategic assessment to inform/identify local priorities
- set out a partnership plan and monitor progress
- provide a framework for information sharing
- reduce re-offending
- commission Domestic Violence Homicide Reviews.

4.6 Performance management and governance.

4.6.1 The overarching objective of the SSP is to make our communities safer. Partners have a statutory duty to deliver its strategic priorities. These are performance managed to track progress with evidence-based outcomes. The new SSP constantly challenge ‘what difference are we making?’

4.6.2 The governance reporting methods are transparent and, where there are issues or barriers, these are identified and resolved together through the SSP Board. Progress reports are submitted to the Board by responsible strategic leads for each priority on a quarterly basis. The priorities ensure they support the delivery of the Council’s Corporate Plan, TV Police and Crime Commissioner Police and Crime Plan 2021-2025.



4.6.3 The priorities in item 4.6.4, were informed by a Community Safety survey, commissioned early 2023, and went live in June 2023, with a closing date of 31st August 2023.

4.6.4 The survey is conducted annually to inform the SSP about community safety concerns of those who live and work in Slough. The survey aids the SSP to deliver its

key priorities. Valuing and listening to the voices of the communities underpin these priorities as follows: -

- **Domestic Abuse** - include sexual abuse, violence against women and girls
- **Serious Violence** - tackle gang and knife related crime
- **Anti-Social Behaviour** – develop a partnership place-based approach
- **Substance use** - substance misuse and mental health.

4.6.5 Priority leads ensure progress of this work is carried out by a number of partnership sub-groups, as illustrated in the chart below. Each sub-group consider on-line risks, harms and disproportionality in their action plans.

4.6.6 Sub-groups have multi-agency representation, including third sector organisations, schools, colleges and businesses, where relevant and appropriate. Key to their success is working in partnership and ensuring that important messages are shared with partners and communities.

4.6.7 The priority leads provide quarterly progress reports (as Appendix A), to the SSP Board and Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) These are summarised in Sections 6-9 below. The priorities aim to support the delivery of the Council’s Corporate Plan, and the TV Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Police and Crime Plan.

5.0 Local crime picture for 2022 – 2023

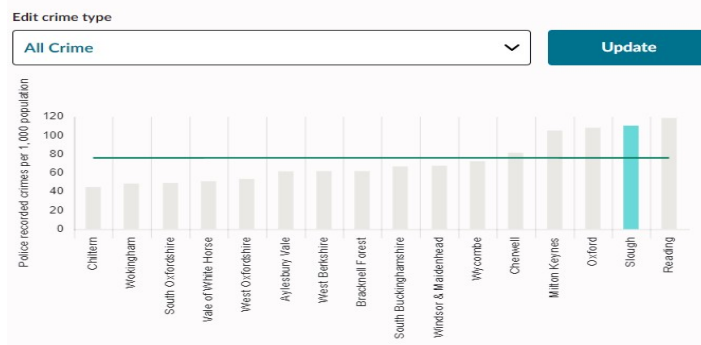
The chart below, compares the crime rate in Slough to the average crime rate across similar areas over 2022-2023. It shows the total number of crimes per thousand residents, for the crime type selected. A more detailed presentation will follow this report illustrating the local crime picture for Slough.

Crime in Slough FY 22/23 (Source: police.uk)



Crime in Slough compared with crime in other areas in the Thames Valley force area

In the year ending March 2023, the crime rate in Slough was higher than average for the Thames Valley force area.



Brief overview of each of the SSP Priority Leads progress from Q3 report

6.0 Slough Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board – Priority Lead: SBC - Children First

6.1 Project Summary

To develop the strategic approach to Domestic Abuse (DA) across the SSP and ensure there is a partnership strategy and action plans to address DA and the impact on children (as victims in their own right), vulnerable adults, and families. This includes the Housing Safe Accommodation element, which will have a standalone strategy as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

6.2 Objectives - three-year strategy 2023-2026

- 6.3 The DA Partnership Board was established to meet the requirements set out in the Section 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which places a statutory duty on Local Authorities to convene a Local Partnership Board
- 6.4 The Board, which comprises representatives from statutory, voluntary and private sectors who work together to address DA across Slough. It recognises that DA destroys the lives of victims and their families.
- 6.5 In Slough, the DA needs assessment 2023, evidenced that the volume of domestic incidents has remained relatively static, and DA crimes have risen steadily as shown below.

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022
Incidents	4668	5010	4699	4807
Crimes	2614	2791	2894	3017

- 6.6 Annually the current commissioned provider (Hestia) has supported over 600 survivors each year, as shown below.

Year	2020-21	2021-2022	2022-23
Survivors supported by IDVA	482	539	598
Survivors Supported in Total	62	690	765

- 6.7 Evidence also showed that children were listed as present in a high proportion (50%) of DA occurrences (Incidents and crimes), and that high numbers of children were associated with Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) cases.
- 6.8 Findings found a strong correlation between locations and indices of deprivation, indicating opportunities to consider how to ensure targeted localised service provision.
- 6.9 The Purpose of Slough DA Partnership Board is to develop the strategic approach to DA across the SSP. The shared commitment is to ensure there is a partnership strategy and partnership action plan to address DA and the impact on children (as victims in their own right), vulnerable adults, and families. This will also include the Housing Safe Accommodation element, which will have a standalone strategy as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

6.10 Key work undertaken to date – 2023 / 2024:

Work continues to ensure implementation of the DA Act 2021, which received Royal Assent on 29th April 2021. This includes the introduction of;

- A new legal definition of DA, which recognises children as victims in their own right
- A DA Commissioner to stand up for survivors and life-saving DA services

- A legal duty on councils to fund support for survivors in ‘safe accommodation’
- New protections in the family and civil courts for survivors – including a ban on abusers from cross-examining their victims, and a guarantee that survivors can access special measures (including separate waiting rooms, entrances and exits and screens)
- New criminal offences – including post-separation coercive control, non-fatal strangulation, threats to disclose private sexual images.
- A ban on abusers using a defence of ‘rough sex’
- A guarantee that all survivors will be in priority need for housing, and will keep a secure tenancy in social housing if they need to escape an abuser
- A ban on GPs for charging for medical evidence of DA, including for legal aid
- A duty on the government to issue a code of practice on how data is shared between the public services survivor’s report to (such as the police) and immigration enforcement.

6.11 Priority lead progress summary of DA Plan

✓ Safer Accommodation needs Assessment completed that will inform the Housing Safe Accommodation strategy
✓ MARAC review report received from SafeLives, and action plan monitored. TVP currently looking at the action plan as this will be addressed on a Thames Valley wide basis rather than individual Local Authorities
✓ Hospital IDVA in place at Wexham Park also covering Frimley Park Hospital (Commissioned by Health)
✓ Hospital Navigators in place at Wexham Park specifically for Serious Violence and will support DA victims in that reachable moment (commissioned by VRU)
✓ DA Strategy completed and approved by the SSP Board 25 January 2024
✓ Two independent Chairs for DHRs appointed. Commissioning the DHRs final sign off approved and reviews underway
✓ Tasking and Finishing group progressing work of children as victims.
✓ DULUC funded Shine project, has started to undergo the respect accreditation programme
✓ DRIVE Perpetrator programme established with terms of reference and panels convened. TVP are chairing the panels
✓ International Women’s Day event at the Curve was a huge success on 8 March 2024, with over 130 visitors attended.

6.12 Opportunities and Challenges

- No funding for DHR’s
- The Housing Safe Accommodation Strategy is urgently overdue
- Trauma Informed practice to be adopted
- Children First/STAR to be adopted
- Uncertain future funding from DA from DA Commissioner after 2025
- SBC Independent Children DA Advisors needed.

6.13 Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR’s)

6.14 Section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004) - implemented in April 2011. This Act made it a statutory responsibility for Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) to complete a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) when a case meets the criteria set in the Home Office guidance.

- 6.15 The purpose of a DHR is not to reinvestigate the death or apportion blame, but to establish 'what lessons are to be learned' from the domestic homicide. It scrutinises the way local professionals and organisations work individually and together to safeguard victims'.
- 6.16 **Slough DHR's:** - Since 2011, we have received notification of two cases and the following provide the latest update for 2022-2024. Both received Home Office authorisation to progress.
- DHR1 – Underway - Independent chair and author appointed
 - DHR 2 – Underway - A complex and sensitive case, which was delayed due to Criminal Justice proceedings and lack of funding. Both TV Police and Health supported funds to ensure this review was progressed.

7 **Serious violence - Priority Lead: Thames Valley Police**

7.1 **Project Summary;**

- To develop a strategic approach and plan to address the increases in Violence that Slough is experiencing.
- To ensure that Slough meets its obligations in respect of the Serious Violence Duty.

7.2 **Objectives:**

- Reduction in crime, risk and demand, through a preventative (public health) approach.

7.3 Violence and associated risks are a cross-cutting theme and one of the core priorities is to safeguard those at risk of the most harm. This includes addressing crimes such as: knife crime, serious youth violence, violence against women and girls (VAWG), DA and sexual abuse.

7.4 The local aim is to reduce incidents of violence in Slough by having a comprehensive public health approach to preventing violence, through education, intervention, and where necessary enforcement.

“Serious Violence includes specific types of recorded crime, such as homicide, grievous bodily harm, incidents that involve a knife, and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in county lines drug dealing.”

7.5 The monitoring and analysis of serious violence falls into two distinct groups.

Group 1

- All homicide
- All grievous bodily harm
- All knife crime (as collected for Home Office recording).

Group 2

- All actual bodily harm (thus excluding 'other' violence with injury)
- All drug supply / trafficking (thus excluding possession alone)
- All sexual assault (thus excluding sexual activity and 'other' sexual offences)
- All rape.

This diagram illustrates these groups as a local summary for Slough 2018 – 2023.

Executive Summary: Violence with Injury

Group 1 and 2 offences

Data period: Jan 2018 to Apr 2023

Despite a general fall in Group 1 offences over the five years, Group 2 offences have seen an 12% rise from 2018-2022

18 – 21
Age band
was most recorded Group 1 victim cohort

11 – 14
Age band
was most recorded Group 2 male victim cohort

816
Group 1 offences

- 50% GBH
- 44% Knife-enabled ABH

Group 1 Murders

- 10 attempted murders
- 2 manslaughter
- 9 murders

Of Slough's population, males <25 represented 18%

- Male victims <25 represented 24% of Group 1 offences
- Male suspects <25 represented 32% of Group 1 offences
- Both show high representation in comparison to their overall presence in Slough's population

Mental health as indicator of homicides

30% of murder cases made mentioning of perpetrators' mental health illness

Trends

In a randomised dip-test of ten Group 2 ABH offences against 11-14 year old boys:

50% involved group assault on victim

Children & Young People

49% Year 6 students experienced being hit by another student

Anti-Social Behaviour

34% secondary school suspensions due to disruptive and anti-social behaviour

School Absence

36% of secondary school exclusions due to physical abuse towards staff

7.6 Key work undertaken – 2023-2024

SSP completed the SSP Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment and the findings informed the following strategy
The SSP Serious Violence Strategy 2024-2027 is completed and the SSP Board approved and signed this off on 25 January 2024
To deliver this Strategy, a Serious Violence Action Plan 2024, is underway and will be presented to the SSP Board for approval April 2024
TVP Op Cuba – include a dedicated Sergeant and 6 PC's undertaking high vis patrols, engagement with the community, stop and searches, arrests, and responding to calls for service around Serious Violence. 7 Days a week 1300hrs – 2100hrs
TVP Inspector now has 3 Sergeants, and 12 PC's focusing purely on Knife Crime and Serious Violence with excellent results over short space of time
Two Serious Violence Reduction Order (SVRO's) granted since the last October 2023, meaning TVP can search these individuals with no grounds if seen out and about on conviction, and granted by a Judge. **The two offenders are currently in custody - to be released in 2024. Slough has submitted the most amount of SVRO's in TVP
Hot Spot patrols – TVP completed 252 patrols in October 2023, and 371 in November 2023. In total in the last 11 months we have completed = 2420 patrols
At the last SSP 5 young people were enrolled on Street Games, which is an initiative led by Slough Borough Council (SBC) to divert young people away from crime
Led by SBC, the PSPO process is underway to tackle ASB and street-violence (street drinking)
As of end of January 2024, Slough has seen 8% reduction in Knife enabled crimes, compared to end of January 2023. In 2022, crimes = 121 vs 2023, crime = 111.

7.7 Opportunities and challenges

- Elements of the partnership are not working together effectively, risking duplication, inefficiency, and the preventative approach. For example, substance misuse priority
- A 'long-term' preventative approach should be brought under one umbrella. We will better integrate the 'public health approach to drugs', and how this will drive our overall partnership approach
- Oversight and assurance of tackling exploitation and risk requires progression following the strategic 'Mace' paper
- Linked to the above, transition phase from child to adult remains challenging
- Capacity - Police and partner resources are stretched
- Information sharing. The system and collation of partner intelligence and information could work better. A lot of work to get information
- To include Trauma Informed and Children First/STAR practices within the Serious Violence Strategy and Action Plan.

8 Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Priority Lead – SBC Community Safety Partnership

8.1 Project Summary;

To develop the strategic approach to ASB abuse across the SSP, ensuring there is a partnership strategy and partnership plan to address demand, risk and vulnerability. To ensure there is an effective ASB case review process in place.

8.2 Objectives:

- Reduce demand of personal, environmental and nuisance ASB
- Reduce repeat caller/victim demand
- Provide a victim centred approach underpinned with an effective ASB case review process
- Ensure there is an effective partnership response to complex ASB based on threat, harm, risk and demand
- Ensure that the approach to ASB is underpinned with a cogent problem-solving model.

8.3 Key work undertaken – 2023

The new Partnership Sector Tasking is now formed and meetings commenced– with terms of reference completed
✓ Meetings are held monthly - jointly chaired by SBC and TVP
✓ Key focus - identify top 3 priority locations, 3 top individuals up to a maximum of 3 referrals
✓ Group monitor open ASB Case Reviews (formerly community triggers)
PSPO consultation - Received 256 responses, with overwhelming support of 238 for PSPO. Work underway for Cabinet approval and order go live
ASB Partnership Policy – the ASB Action Ltd has been commissioned to develop the ASB policy plan, hold resident consultation meetings, staff training and ASB case management. Funded by SBC Community Safety Team and Housing Services
Local Housing resident board will be part of the process.

Key performance SBC Enforcement – 2023-2024

147 Total number of complaints received for February 2024
50 Total number of complaints closed within February
6 FPN's issued under s34 EPA 1990
1 Warrant application made under Animal Welfare Act 2006
3 Hearings heard at Slough Magistrates S80(4) EPA 1990 for breaching of an abatement notice and forfeiture of noise equipment, with 2 pleading not guilty and 1 non-attendance which is adjourned for 8 th March 2024
2 Trial for S80(4) EPA 1990 listed at Reading Magistrates 3 rd May 2024 & 1 st July 2024
1 Prosecution bundle accepted by Legal for offence under Animal Welfare Act 2006
1 Prosecution being submitted to legal for offences S33 & S34 EPA 1990, 55(7)(a) Control of Pollution Act
1 Prosecution submitted to legal for failing to comply Community Protection Notice
Outcome from Magistrates Court of S33 EPA 1990, Guilty plea. The Magistrates deliberated briefly and imposed £150 fine to mark the offence after giving him credit for his early guilty plea. He was also ordered to pay £100 towards the costs of the prosecution and victim surcharge of £60 making a total of £310
2 Prosecutions investigations in process to be submitted to legal
1 Prosecution with legal for CNEA 2005 Exposing vehicles for sale on the road listed for the 23 rd February 2024, adjourned until March 2024.

ASB Enforcement Slough Borough Council

6 CPN warnings issued
3 premises closure orders obtained
4 FPNs paid for S33 and S44 offences
1 x outstanding FPN for S33 and S34 not paid and will be prosecuted
1 x prosecution for S33 offence with Legal

ASB prosecutions/successes

Akaya Lounge – pleaded guilty to 3 x Section 33 Environmental Protection Act 1990

£3,000 fine per offence (£9,000 total)
£2,000 victim surcharge
£2,851.60 costs (full costs)
Total : £13'851.60

Offender in Farnham Lane deposit of waste meat items into the rear access road over back end of 2021 into early 2022. The court issued:

12/01/22 – Fine £480;
13/01/22 – Fine £480;
18/01/22 – No separate penalty
19/01/22 - No separate penalty
No Costs

Total: £960 + victim surcharge of £96. 28 days imprisonment in default.
Initial sentence was:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine: £2640 for each offence. This is a total of £10,560
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim Surcharge: £190 each
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Court have asked for a contribution towards costs to be paid: £2872
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total of £13,622 pounds to the Court today.
This was handed down as offender did not attend court.

8.4 Opportunities and Challenges

- Staff structures – Council and TVP ASB functions need to assess capacity and capability to deliver
- Demand is not well understood owing to poor data capture across the system with no analyst is remains a problem. However, with Arcus system to be launched in Feb 2024, it is hoped that this will capture some of the required data to inform priorities eg Housing Regulation, Environmental/Licencing/Trading Standards data
- ASB action plan provides a focus needed for a partnership approach.
- TVP Crimefighters plan brings a focus on crime reporting, community policing and crime prevention
- SBC Social Housing ASB data to be provided and shared to provide a better picture and inform performance/outcomes of delivery and concerns
- To design a collaborative approach to tackling ASB – The Gloucester model ‘Solace’ is a good example of a collocated approach.

9

Substance use Priority Lead – SBC Public Health

9.1 Project Summary;

- Combating Drug Partnership Slough Substance Use Partnership
- Slough Substance Use Partnership – a plan on a page
- Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment Grant (SSMTR)
- Rough Sleepers Drug & Alcohol Treatment Grant (RSDATG)
- Drug & Alcohol substance use rapid needs assessment.

9.2 Objectives:

- To support both the CDP SSU partnership and SSU partnership
- To support both SSMTR and RSDATG grants
- To provide key findings (data) to the Substance use Summit (14/11/23) and share the same findings from the rapid SU HNA with key partners in a joined-up approach while developing a local action plan.

9.3 Key work undertaken

Combating Drug Partnership (CDP)
The CDP originally set up as an East Berkshire partnership, with West Berks as a separate CDP. This has merged over recent months, and the two separate CDP plans under review to align where appropriate
The Berkshire wide CDP is joint chaired by East Berks Director of Public Health & Matthew Barber TV PCC
In addition, a National Combating Drugs Framework has been agreed
A Berkshire wide stakeholder day held on 29 th Sept. 23, helped to develop the Berkshire wide plan for implementing the national strategy
Slough Substance Use Partnership
This is the multi-agency group that supports the delivery of a Slough focused approach to the CDP
The group are developing a local dashboard. A Substance Use Partnership seminar was held on the 14 th November – the drugs and alcohol needs assessment was presented and the feedback from the day has informed our first 12mths agreed priorities. Priorities are;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) develop a detailed communications help and support plan (ii) set up a nurses forum (iii) extend the roll out of Audit c 9(alcohol use) across the system. B children and young people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) add SFC data to the needs assessment (ii) identify young champions to be trained and working with school peers (iii) gain feedback from parents who prefer not to be referred to the SU treatment service (iv) increase the take up of trauma informed training for front line staff. C co-occurring conditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) multi-agency approach with clients agreed (ii) Turning Point to have access to “connected care” for access real time health care needs (iii) Link to NHS Frimley Multigenerational household initiative
Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment Grant (SSMTR)
The 2024/25 SSMTR grant uplift is less than 6k. The aim is to provide substance use treatment to 761 individuals during 2024/25 and this relies heavily on referrals into treatment from across the system.
Some new initiative include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) We are aiming to reach 47% of those released from prison direct into the local treatment service (ii) Nitazene take home testing kits will be provided to Substance Use clients as a means of harm reduction

iii) We will further increase the provision of naloxone testing to mitigate the risks associated to drug related deaths

Rough Sleepers Drug & Alcohol Treatment Grant (RSDATG)

The Rough Sleepers outreach contract has been extended for one further year in line with the grant extension.

The team have recruited 19 peer supporters who will be active out and about in Slough providing harm reduction to Rough Sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping.

They will focus on those not in treatment and provide naloxone training and naloxone kits to those they engage with

Full recruitment to the outreach team remains a risk.

Drug & Alcohol substance use rapid needs assessment

Public health is leading on a drug & alcohol substance use rapid needs assessment process that has started in September 2023

The aim of this rapid needs assessment is to (i) improve our understanding on the burden of drug and alcohol substance use locally, and (ii) engage more effectively with key partners in a journey that will support our preventative approach as well as improve the current healthcare model locally.

The project will be divided in two phases with separate objectives:

Phase 1: *This initial and important phase will aim to inform and support both the Safer Slough Partnership (SSP) program of work and our commissioning priorities with a specific focus on exploring, analysing, and providing local information covering the following areas:*

- Prevention (Prevalence of drug & alcohol substance use risk factors)
- Treatment (Drug & alcohol drug treatment – national and local picture, including unmet need)
- Healthcare Services (local picture)
- Enforcement actions (Drug & alcohol related crime and evidence-based interventions)

Method:

An epidemiological approach will be taken to understand the prevalence of problem drug and alcohol use and associated harm in Slough. This will be accompanied by a comparative analysis of service provision and outcomes between different populations. Both elements have been benchmarked against comparator populations (i.e. Berkshire, SE, and England) where possible.

Phase 2: The aim for the 2nd phase would be to share the findings from the 1st phase and support the Substance use partnership group and the SSP in terms of taking forward this work. A brief overview of key findings and proposed actions has been presented to H&WBB and SSP Board meetings last November 2023.

- A substance misuse ‘plan on the page’ document has been produced that will serve for one year (2024/25) in terms of addressing key findings from the needs assessment and improve the current situation and close the inequalities gaps both in terms of treatment and unmet needs.
- A longer-term objective would be to scope the possibility of developing a drug & alcohol substance use strategy document (locally or at Berks East level) that will serve us for a period of at least 5 years
- The 1st phase was almost completed by end of November.
Note: However, the needs assessment has not been signed off yet as we are still waiting for some C&YP and CAMHS data and clarifications. This includes illegal drugs and alcohol is associated with violence, acquisitive crime, and anti-social behaviour.
- The local approach is in partnership to:
 - Break the drug supply chains
 - Ensure those needing treatment receive appropriate services to recovery
 - Achieve a shift in the demand for recreational substance through education.

9.4 Opportunities and challenges

- Some barriers relate to lack of local data as well as capacity and resources
- The Substance Use rapid needs assessment is only the end of the 1st phase of our work in terms of better understanding the current landscape (prevalence, treatment and crime related figures); However, a barrier would be the continuation towards the 2nd phase of the project in terms of adding an enforcement piece and more importantly embedding enforcement activity into plan (we have already included Thames Valley police (crime-related) data in our current report)
- A closer collaboration across the healthcare spectrum including SSP as well as the police and safeguarding is required to move this agenda forward.
- A more systematic approach to referring into the treatment system
- An effective care coordination approach for joint working across partner services reducing the need to refer on
- An agreed plan on a page that the partnership works jointly together on.

10. Other areas covered

10.1 The SSP work in partnership with Slough Town Centre Bid Team and is currently supporting the application to the Accreditation Scheme for the BID Street Wardens. The accreditation of additional powers awarded to the Street Wardens will be authorised and agreed by TVP Chief Constable. This is underway and it is aiming to be completed by August 2024.

- 10.2 Slough's BID Safe and Secure business plan aims to:-
- BID & businesses to work together to tackle ASB
 - Making Slough Town Centre a welcoming and safe environment for residents, customers, businesses and workers
 - Encourage, update and expansion of PubWatch Radio Scheme to include all businesses implementing a banned from one banned from all.
 - Funding a Town Team
 - Supporting Businesses to report crime
 - Improve Security Infrastructure with additional CCTV coverage
 - BID is working with TVP as a representative voice for the business.
- 10.3 Over the past three years, the Bid Team saw an increase in reported incidents in the town. For example, from April 2023 - mid March 2024, they received 1130 reported incidents. In April 2022-March 2023, they received 982. From April 2021-March 2022, 367 incidents recorded.
- 10.4 The top three highest incidents recorded are, 1) Theft and Fraud, 2) ASB and Verbal abuse, 3) Violence and Abusive behaviour. The Bid Board therefore approved the application for the Street Wardens to receive additional powers through the Accredited Scheme. This will aim to help manage the growing challenges and demands.
- 10.5 In support of this, the SSP gained Safe Street 5 grant funding for 2 years (2023-2025) from Thames Valley PCC, to help set up a Slough Street Guardian scheme, in the town centre. This will be a pilot for the area.
- 10.6 This involves a volunteer-led scheme providing reassuring and visible presence to signpost people to support and help. In partnership with voluntary sector, TVP, SBC, faith groups, Slough BID and Slough Community Transport are working in partnership, to ensure positive outcomes for the community. The first briefing session with the volunteers was held on 7 March 2024 evening. Further briefing sessions will be held over the coming months. The SSP aim to roll this out wider for Slough, once the pilot scheme is established.

11. Summary of main findings / report by exception

- 11.1 The new SSP remain ambitious and committed to deliver the key priorities and securing sustainable outcomes for our communities. Plans are already in place to establish this:-
- Strategic Crime Assessment – Currently underway – first draft May 2024,
 - SSP Strategy – included in the CSP Manager's business service plans – first draft July 2024
 - SSP Action Delivery Plan – included in the CSP Manager's business service plans – first draft Aug/Sept 2024 (following final approval of SSP Strategy)
 - Align and adopt the new SBC framework to standardise governance across all Boards. (all agreed by the SSP Board 23 January 2024)
- 11.2 The SSP has a range of wider responsibilities that link to matters of community safety, safeguarding and exploitation. Some of these include the Counter Terrorism – Prevent and reducing the risk of radicalisation, Domestic Homicide Reviews, Modern Slavery, Exploitation, Female Genital Mutilation, Honour Based Crime and Youth Justice.

- 11.3 The SSP has been established since 1998, and it has come a long way in driving the great cause of community safety, delivering years of solid outcomes and successes. This has all been made possible through the support of the Slough Borough Council and Partners. The SSP is acknowledge for its commitment and hard work to make our communities safer and stronger – placing people and victims at the heart of what they do.
- 11.3 The SSP will face greater challenges in 2024-2025, with the growing demand on the Board to deliver the new Serious Violence and Domestic Abuse duties and needs. The SSP is self-funded and has to rely on external funds to support the demands and above all, protect our communities and the most vulnerable, families and children.
- 11.4 The DHR duty on the SSP, come with no funds provided and, on average most DHR cases cost around £10,000 to complete. This is a national concern for all Community Safety Partnerships, and it has proven a great strain on the SSP to find these funds.
- 11.5 The SSP Strategic Crime Needs Assessment is underway by the Thames Valley PCC Analyst, and will be completed May 2024, where this will inform the SSP Strategy and Delivery Plans.

12. Detail/elaboration of what you are seeking from the committee

- 12.1 The committee to acknowledge the progress made by the SSP in this report.
- 12.2 To note the presentation of the local crime update, in comparison to other local police areas.

13. Implications

13.1 Financial implications [Required]

- 13.2 Although there is a clear focus on the growing challenges and demands locally to reduce crime and disorder, new duties on serious crime and domestic abuse in this paper, there are no direct financial implications because it is purely for information purposes.

13.3 Legal implications

- 13.4 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out responsibilities for local authorities and other statutory bodies to work together in a statutory partnership and to collectively formulate and implement strategies to reduce crime and disorder in the area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment), combat the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in the area and reduce serious violence.
- 13.5 The Council also has an overarching duty under s.17 of the 1998 Act to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment), the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area and re-offending in its area and serious violence in its area.

13.6 The Crime and Disorder (Formulation and Implementation of Strategy) Regulations 2007 set out further requirements for responsible bodies forming a CSP. This includes:

- having a strategy group whose function is to prepare strategic assessments and prepare and implement a partnership plan for the area on behalf of the responsible bodies. This group must have in place arrangements governing the review of the expenditure of partnership monies and for assessment the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of such expenditure
- The strategy group must have in place arrangements for the sharing of information between responsible authorities and shall prepare a protocol setting out those arrangements
- The strategy group shall prepare a strategic assessment on behalf of the responsible authorities, the purpose being to assist the strategy group in revising the partnership plan
- The strategy group shall prepare a partnership plan taking account of the strategic assessment and any community safety agreement. The partnership plan shall set out a strategy for reduction of re-offending, crime and disorder, prevention and reduction of serious violence and for combating substance misuse in the area, priorities identified in the strategic assessment prepared during the year, steps the strategy group consider it necessary for the responsible authorities to take to implement that strategy and meet those priorities, how the strategy group consider the responsible authorities should allocate and deploy their resources to implement that strategy and meet those priorities, the steps each responsible authority shall take to measure its success in implementing the strategy and meeting those priorities and the steps the strategy group propose to take during the year to comply with its obligations
- The strategy group shall make arrangements for obtaining the views of persons and bodies who live or work in the area about the levels and patterns of re-offending, crime and disorder, serious violence and substance misuse in the area, and the matters which the responsible authorities should prioritise when exercising their functions in relation to these matters. This must include at least one public meeting during the year and that meetings are attended by persons who hold a senior position within each of the responsible authorities
- The partnership plan must be published in such a form as it considers appropriate.

14. Equalities

14.1 There are no equality impact implications arising directly from this report. However, there are differential impacts on individuals, families, and communities in respect of issues that the SSP seeks to address. This needs to be borne in mind when planning and delivering work and services.

- 14.2 The SSP address known inequalities relating to community safety and have due regard to all being given equality of opportunity, human rights, prevention of crime and disorder, environmental and risk management considerations as appropriate.
- 14.3 The strategic aim of the SSP is to foster a safer cohesive borough. It seeks to do so by tackling specific community safety issues, including violent crime, hate crime, domestic abuse, exploitation, modern slavery, repeat victimisation, and reoffending.
- 14.4 The SSP plans and outcomes strengthen services that support victims and survivors of domestic abuse. These include children and young people and male victims, as well as those individuals who may be more at risk of domestic abuse by reason of their sexual orientation, gender, gender reassignment, race or disability.

15. **Risk Management implications**

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Residual Risk
Lack of scrutiny of SSP	Failure to provide effective and efficient scrutiny and accountability of SSP functions resulting in service failure	Thematic leads ensure monthly action plans/reports are submitted and scrutinised to identify points of potential failure and address.	Med
Partnership collaboration breakdown	Lack of synergy and resources between partners that results in poor performance and greater operating costs through 'silo working'	Develop proposals for integrating some of the functions of the Community Safety Partnership and SSP to drive efficiencies with the right resources. To also adopt the new SBC framework to enhance governance	Med
Failure to effectively collect crime/ASB data and share information/intelligence	Failure to gather, share or use relevant information across the partnership to save lives or reduce/detect crime	Create role of partnership analyst that can facilitate gathering, sharing and protecting relevant information and intelligence across all partnership functions including SBC social housing ASB data	High
Ineffective representation on SSP	Accountable bodies not providing or resourcing meetings at the correct level to engage or make meaningful decision	Annually review Terms of Reference and membership of all SSP, Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership meetings to ensure the right people at the right level are attending meetings, and that attendees are contributing and, empowered to make decisions on behalf of their organisations	Med/High
Failure to comply with DA Act 2021	No Housing Safe Accommodation Strategy	No governance and development plans to provide safe accommodation for victims and families of DA.	High

15.1 To understanding the real problems in our communities. There is a need for a SBC community safety crime analyst to provide local crime/ASB data, to enable SSP, SBC and Scrutiny to evaluate the concerns in our local communities. This data will feed into and help inform a Slough Community Safety Strategy and Action Delivery Plan to enhance governance and scrutiny.

16. Environmental implications

16.1 There are no known environmental implications arising from this report.

Appendix A: Priority Leads Q3 reports

Appendix A: Priority Leads Q3 reports



<p>PRIORITY: Domestic Abuse</p>	<p>HIGHLIGHT REPORT Quarterly Report Q3 2023 Date: 3rd January 2024 Completed by: Jon Chandler & Sharon Ballantyne</p>								
	<p>RAG STATUS</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="772 488 1345 600"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="772 488 962 528">Previous</th> <th data-bbox="962 488 1152 528">Current</th> <th data-bbox="1152 488 1345 528">Forecast</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="772 528 962 600">Not assessed</td> <td data-bbox="962 528 1152 600">Red</td> <td data-bbox="1152 528 1345 600">Amber</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Previous	Current	Forecast	Not assessed	Red	Amber
Previous	Current	Forecast							
Not assessed	Red	Amber							
<p>Project Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop the strategic approach to Domestic Abuse (D.A) across the Safer Slough Partnership, ensure there is a partnership strategy and action plan to address domestic abuse and the impact on children (as victims in their own right), vulnerable adults, and families. This will also include the Safe Accommodation element which will have a standalone strategy as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. 									
<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure (A) a comprehensive needs assessment (generic) and D.A strategy is in place (B) a comprehensive assessment of accommodation needs and a D.A housing strategy (<i>both statutory requirements</i>) are implemented. Understanding and clarity of demand regarding children as victims (<i>statutory requirement</i>). Ensure that there is a graduated partnership response to tackling domestic abuse, through evidence informed interventions. Increased reporting of domestic abuse. Increased accessing of quality specialist commissioned services, underpinned via source of referrals. Improvement in outcomes from service providers (risk reduction) through greater accountability. Identify, contrast, and compare to 'most similar group' localities in terms of demographics and/or reporting. Reduction of repeat victimisation numbers. Introduce supportive Perpetrator programmes. Respond to the MARAC recommendations in the report from SafeLives. Understand the impact on survivors and how we can support them best. Training practitioners in all sectors to be knowledgeable on how to identify and respond to domestic abuse. 									
<p>Outcomes/Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universal: Increase reports of D.A and strengthen access to services for Early Help with a focus on early identification and intervention/advocacy support. Raising awareness across educational settings and public facing organisations as well as within the community. Secondary: Increased referrals for support for survivors and perpetrators and referrals into MARAC from partners. Tertiary Safety and Support: Enhance survivor perception of safety and well-being & children's safety post D.A intervention & MARAC (reduction in incidents and repeats). Reduction in risk Annual community and survivor survey (required for baseline) 									

The **Slough Domestic Abuse Partnership Board** reports to: **Safer Slough Partnership**

Progress Summary (reference plan):

- Safer Accommodation needs Assessment and Strategy underway: Will be complete by end of Q3 when it will be signed off by the SDAPB. Arc4 are conducting housing needs assessment.
- MARAC review report received from SafeLives, and the action plan will be monitored. TVP currently looking at the action plan as ideally this will be addressed on a Thames Valley wide basis rather than individual Local Authorities.
- Hospital IDVA in place at Wexham Park also covering Frimley Park Hospital (Commissioned by Health).
- Hospital Navigators in place at Wexham Park specifically for serious Violence but will support D.A victims in that reachable moment (commissioned by VRU).
- Progression of DA Strategy; Draft subject to final changes. Will be presented to SSP in January 2024.
- Two independent Chairs for DHRs identified. Commissioning the DHRs needs final sign off before the reviews can begin.
- T & F group progressing work of children as victims.
- DULUC funded Shine project, has started to undergo the respect accreditation programme.
- DRIVE Perpetrator programme established with terms of reference and panels being convened. TVP are chairing the panels.
- Project Salama will work with partners to build a presence in Slough - projectsalama.co.uk

Achievements / Working Well /Highlights:

- Whole system D.A Board in place. ToR agreed. Immediate priority work streams agreed.
- Dashboard draft launched which monitors the outputs of services and the level of D.A in Slough.
- First draft of D.A Strategy complete.
- New Chair is the Group Manager Early Help, vice Chairs will remain to work alongside.
- Chairs, CSM and DA Coordinator meeting monthly to drive actions.

Obstacles:

- Not meeting statutory obligations with regard to Safe Accommodation needs assessment and Strategy.
- Time limited to complete strategies and action plans, so have a proposal to increase the number of meetings to complete this work (needs sign of by the Board as a group).
- Funding for DHRs
- Interim CSM joined in December 2023, hand over given and now needs to understand the systems in Slough.
- Continuous funding for current Domestic Abuse Specialist Services (currently Hestia).

Opportunities:

- Strategic Needs Assessment has been completed. Interpret results to understand how gaps that exist in community service provision and across the partnership.
- An extension has been sought for the main commissioned provider, that will provide sufficient time to design and co-produce a service for the future.
- To assemble a DA Operations Group that will report into the DA Board
- Opportunities for partners to come together for conference later part of the year.
- Training review taking place of all services to identify opportunities and gaps.
-

Risks/Threats:

Please rate consequence and likelihood as either red, amber or green and make an assessment as to overall risk.

Risk or Issue <i>Description</i>	Consequence	Likelihood	Risk Rating	Mitigation <i>Description</i>
Legend	G	R	A	
No D.A housing needs assessment or strategy in accordance with D.A act. Depth of housing management. Failing to comply with law risks organisational reputation of council, partners, and risk to survivors	R	R	R	New Director and AD appraised and plans in place to address the D.A Act requirements, and ensure pathways embedded. This must be given priority as a statutory requirement.
No D.A Strategy Linked with above, risks disparate approach to those affected, poor service provision, inefficient ways of working	R	R	R	Needs assessment completed and draft strategy in being worked on with a completion time of December 2023. For presentation to SSP in January 2024.
Partnership scrutiny of the MARAC for forum that deals with those at highest risk of death/serious injury (and their children)	A	A	A	SafeLives reviewing efficacy of MARAC meetings, Quality assurance of case management to be introduced. Now an agenda item for the SDAP Board
Children as Victims	R	A	A	Meeting held; initial assessment shows opportunities to systemise the approach. Current Provision mapping completed.
Failure to secure ongoing funding for Domestic Abuse IDVA services (Hestia)	R	A	R	Paper being submitted to cabinet in December 2023

Budget Summary:

SBC had received from central government £341,724 (2022/23) in respect of support of D.A services for victims and their children within safe accommodation, and for perpetrator programmes. This has been subject to report to DULUC in June.

There is a carry forward of this budget, that together with further annual grants has enabled the continued funding of projects, along with consideration of new projects.

A comprehensive assessment of existing projects will take place at 5-6 months, together with consideration of new projects, to help profile spend plans for 2024/25 and beyond.

A spend plan for this year's funding is being prepared for the next D.A Board in support of the Safer Accommodation duty.

SBC also funds Hestia to provide the local IDVA provision for those most at risk of domestic abuse. Annual contract amount = £214,443. Contract in place to 31st December 2023. The contract value has been expanded to incorporate a 5.7% increase.

Planned

Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment (N.A) and Strategy for housing.

DA Act spend plan review and recommendation within next quarter. Summary report to SSP for reference only. This is Tier 1 SBC funding for Safer Accommodation.

Overall N.A and Strategy (99% complete).

MARAC report has been presented and an action plan is being convened on across the Thames Valley, which the Board will review.

Complete 'Children as Victims' work.

Recommissioning work continues.

Overall Assessment

Summary: There is a significant amount of work being undertaken across the partnership, with opportunities to improve co-ordination.

The challenges around Safe Accommodation have been raised with SBC and are on-going.

The firm intention is that the board can better assess performance via a dashboard that builds upon the work presented in January 2023.

Officer Completing: Jon Chandler & Sharon Ballantyne

PRIORITY: VIOLENCE	HIGHLIGHT REPORT Quarterly Report Date: 19th December 2023 Completed by: Chief Inspector 6180 Ash Smith								
	RAG STATUS <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="background-color: #e1eef6;">Previous</th> <th style="background-color: #fff2cc;">Current</th> <th style="background-color: #fff2cc;">Forecast</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="background-color: #e1eef6;">Red</td> <td style="background-color: #fff2cc;">Amber</td> <td style="background-color: #fff2cc;">Amber</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Previous	Current	Forecast	Red	Amber	Amber
Previous	Current	Forecast							
Red	Amber	Amber							
Project Summary; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop a strategic approach and plan to address the increases in Violence that Slough is experiencing. To ensure that Slough meets its obligations in respect of the Serious Violence Duty. 									
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in crime, reduction in risk, reduction in demand, through a preventative (public health) approach. 									
Outputs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SSP Partnership strategy and plan with a graduated response from prevention, through to early intervention and enforcement. Needs assessment and strategy. 									
Outcomes/Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in violence, less victims, reduced risk. Annual community survey – shows improved feelings of safety. 									
Board reported to: Safer Slough Partnership									

Progress Report

Progress Summary (reference plan):

- We have now completed our Strategic Needs Assessment as a partnership.
- We are very close to completing our 3 year Strategy on Serious Violence as a partnership. This will shortly be going to a publisher, and will be presented at the SSP in January 2024 for sign off.
- Op Cuba – we still have a dedicated Sergeant and 6 PC's in Slough every day from 1300hrs – 2100hrs 7 days a week. They are completing high vis patrols, engagement with the community, stop and searches, arrests, and responding to calls for service around Serious Violence.
- Inspector Pete Lawman now has 3 Sergeants, and 12 PC's who are focusing purely on Knife Crime and Serious Violence on a daily basis. They have obtained some excellent results in a very short space of time.

- 2x SVRO's granted since the last SSP meeting meaning we can search these individuals with no grounds if seen out and about on conviction, and granted by a Judge. **They are both currently in prison, and will be released in 2024. Slough has submitted the most amount of SVRO's in TVP**
- Hot Spot patrols – we completed **252** patrols in October 2023, and **371** in November 2023. In total in the last 11 months we have completed = **2420** patrols.
- At the last SSP 5 young people were enrolled on Street Games which is an initiative led by Slough Borough Council to divert young people away from crime. EYJS met with Chrissy Newman (Project lead), and they now have “ “ enrolled.
- PSPO to tackle ASB (street drinking) will impact on street-violence. **Michelle Isabelle is leading on this from Slough Borough Council**
- As of today we are seeing a **-8% reduction** in Knife enabled crimes compared to last year. Last year's crime = **121** vs This year's crime = **111**.

Achievements / Working Well /Highlights:

- Proactive policing is increasing, and the results highlighted above clearly show that we are committed, forward thinking, but ultimately we need to be joined up with our partners as we cannot do it alone.
- Local police analysis of demand has identified high demand localities and partnership environmental visual audits have been undertaken. Problem solving in place.
- An analysis of those who have most frequent contact with police in respect of Violence, matches the professional opinion of those who work across the system (Police, early help, outreach and schools).
- Navigator scheme at hospital - that is 'picking up' on victims attending emergency department. Need to understand 'what' they do with the data, and how this is shared.
- Significant range of intervention and early help work evolving in Early Help and Youth Justice – ALL partners need to understand this, and agree who leads on 'prevention'.
- Outreach and SYV projects in place delivering range of interventions, mentoring and programmes.
- The community safety survey has been completed. Community concerns include Violence/Gangs and drugs.

- Strategic MACE paper presented and agreed, that will ensure oversight of those at risk of exploitation and risk of causing/being victim of serious violence.

Barriers:

- There remain elements of the system that are not working together, risking duplication, inefficiency, and the preventative approach. For example, substance misuse priority outcomes, link/cross with violence outcomes. For example, an opportunity to better link with PHSE.
- Whilst the strategic Mace paper was presented, its oversight and assurance of tackling exploitation and risk requires progression.
- Linked to the above, transition phase from child to adult remains challenging.
- Community concerned / not feeling safe.
- Capacity - Police and partner resources are stretched.
- Information sharing. The system and collation of partner intelligence and information could work better. Seems to take a lot of work to get information.

Opportunities:

- Bring together the 'long-term' preventative approach under one umbrella. We need to better integrate the 'public health approach to drugs', and how this will drive our overall partnership approach.
- As above, develop better co-ordination of the long-term approach, ensuring a consistent, co-ordinated approach to working with young people.

Risks/Threats :

Please rate consequence and likelihood as either red, amber or green and make an assessment as to overall risk.

Risk or Issue <i>Description</i>	Consequence	Likelihood	Risk Rating	Mitigation <i>Description</i>
Lack of Strategic Needs Assessment that risks understanding and effective targeting of resource.	G	G	G	Strategic Needs Assessment has been completed.
Lack of partnership strategy, and council enforcement policy risks community	G	G	G	The 3 year strategy is nearly complete. The public will be able to view this, and we will have an action plan that

expectations not being matched.				underpins this to drive activity across the partnership.
Management of the most dangerous 'people'	A	A	A	<p>Good progress around Police / Partners who we are most concerned about.</p> <p>Monthly Knife Crime meeting set up to focus on children / adults of most concern.</p> <p>Inspector Pete Lawman working on identifying Top 10 most concerning people, and putting together a partnership response.</p>
Management of most dangerous locations	A	A	A	<p>OSARA and 4P plan in place for the Town Centre. Monthly meeting takes places to review Serious Violence.</p> <p>Strategic MACE agreed</p>

Budget

Budget Summary: None.
Overall Allocation: None.
Budget to Date: N/A.

Planned

<p>Q4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSPO to tackle ASB (street drinking) will impact on street-violence. **Michelle Isabelle leading on this from Slough Borough Council** • 3-year strategy to be completed by the end of January 2024. Delivery plan will focus on Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary. Finalise delivery plan across primary, secondary and tertiary prevention • Develop 'community involvement' through a 'community collective' approach. • Decisions required in respect of ongoing OPCC funding. (SV workers, outreach % Choices)

Overall Assessment

Summary:

My assessment of the current approach to Violence as a 'partnership' is Amber, and my rationale is:

1. Strategic Needs Assessment, and Partnership Strategy is now in place.
2. There are opportunities to improve the approach to long term prevention, and this vital that it is implemented from a very young age.
3. Resources are stretched, with neighbourhood policing significantly restricted, and across our partners. 'Everyone' across the partnership plays a role in reducing / preventing Serious Violence.
4. We need to seek the 'community's views' on Serious Violence, and how they can support us.

Officer Completing: Chief Inspector 6180 Ash Smith

PRIORITY: ASB	HIGHLIGHT REPORT Quarterly Report Date : 5 th January 2023 Completed by: Michelle Isabelle		
	RAG STATUS		
	Previous	Current	Forecast
	Not assessed	Amber	Amber
Project Summary;			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop the strategic approach to ASB abuse across the Safer Slough Partnership, ensuring there is a partnership strategy and partnership plan to address demand, risk and vulnerability To ensure there is an effective ASB case review process in place 			
Objectives:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in demand of personal, environmental and nuisance ASB Reduction in repeat caller/victim demand Provide a victim centred approach underpinned with an effective ASB case review process Ensure there is an effective partnership response to complex ASB based on threat, harm ,risk and demand Ensure that the approach to ASB is underpinned with a cogent problem-solving model 			
Outputs			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SSP Partnership strategy with a graduated response from prevention, through to early intervention and enforcement Baseline needs assessments across personal, environmental and nuisance ASB Partnership reporting and data oversight Carryout a capability and capacity review across the partnership 			
Outcomes/Impact			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in overall and repeat caller demand Annual community- survey that shows improved perception in prevalence of ASB and satisfaction as to resolution 			
Board reported to: Safer Slough Partnership			

Progress Report

Progress Summary (reference plan):

Strategic position

- Please see Appendix A in relation to ASB plan

Operational

- The sector tasking meetings has been rebranded to Slough ASB Priority Setting (SAPS). A new terms of reference has been completed and membership has been agreed. The meeting will be held on a monthly basis and jointly chaired by Slough Borough Council and Thames Valley Police. The meeting will focus on identifying the top 3 locations, 3 top individuals and up to a maximum of 3 referrals that we will look for agreement from within the partnership to work towards. SAPS will also look to monitor any open ASB Case Reviews (what was formerly called community triggers). First meeting set for 10/01/2024.

- PSPO update – awaiting approval of expenditure control panel (ECP) in order for public consultation to begin. During consultation, officers will be working with community groups to get their views and to encourage them to complete the online survey. ASB surveys will also be completed and all survey information will form part of the Cabinet report.
- ASB Policy – due to procurement rules, 3 quotes have been received and we will be looking at which external agency can provide best service & value for money to meet our requirements. Housing have asked that their residents board be part of the process. We are also looking at training for staff as part of the ASB policy development.

ASB Enforcement

- 6 CPN warnings issued
- 3 premises closure orders obtained
- 4 FPNs paid for S33 and S44 offences
- 1 x outstanding FPN for S33 and S34 not paid and will be prosecuted
- 1 x prosecution for S33 offence with Legal

ASB prosecutions/successes

- **Akaya Lounge** – pleaded guilty to 3 x Section 33 Environmental Protection Act 1990
 £3,000 fine per offence (£9,000 total)
 £2,000 victim surcharge
 £2,851.60 costs (full costs)
 Total : £13'851.60

- Offender in **Farnham Lane deposit of waste meat** items into the rear access road over back end of 2021 into early 2022. The court issued:

12/01/22 – Fine £480;

13/01/22 – Fine £480;

18/01/22 – No separate penalty;

19/01/22 - No separate penalty.

No Costs

Total: £960 + victim surcharge of £96. 28 days imprisonment in default.

Initial sentence was:

Fine: £2640 for each offence. This is a total of £10,560

Victim Surcharge: £190 each

Court have asked for a contribution towards costs to be paid: £2872

Total of £13,622 pounds to the Court today.

This was handed down as offender did not attend court

Community Trigger – progress update

The Community Trigger (CT) process is working well. Each trigger creates a number of actions, with all parties kept up to date regularly. Below summarises the status of ASB case reviews.

ASB CASE REVIEWS – LAST 12 MONTHS			
Alexandra Rd	August 2022		Ongoing. Recommendations have been progressed, but groups continued to congregate, and evidence of ASB has not been available
Bromycroft	August 2022		Officers have liaised with complainant and she is happy for this to be closed. All recommendations have been completed and/or ongoing. Housing officer will continue to liaise with complainant and reports will be investigated as and when reported. SBC Housing leading.
Hudson Place	September 2022		Closed. Matters rest with A2 Dominion. Closing letter sent to main complainant in Oct 2023.
Elmshott Lane	September 2022		Closed. Matters resolved
Lomond Court	September 2022		Closed. Matters resolved
Moreton Way	April 2023		Did not meet threshold. Matters resolved through housing intervention
Hudson Place	May 2023		Closed. Matter does not meet threshold. However, meeting scheduled with applicant. A number of communications received, potentially vexatious.
Carlton Way	Oct 2023		Did not meet threshold. Ongoing live TVP involvement.
The Centre	Nov 2023		Ongoing. Recommendations made and being progressed. SBC to undertake works to replace bollards, open and close times to be agreed and carpark to be cleaned. Complainant kept updated and happy with works to be carried out to stop the ASB.

Achievements / Working Well /Highlights:

- ASB case review process continues to work well
- Sector tasking has been reviewed – new ToR in place. Will be renamed Slough ASB Priority Setting (SAPS). To be jointly chaired by Slough BC and Thames Valley Police. Membership has been adapted for the meeting.
- ASB Policy to be drafted by an external organisation and will incorporate the ASB action plan

Barriers:

- Staff structures – the council and Police ASB functions need reviewing. We need to assess capacity and capability to deliver.
- Demand is not well understood owing to poor data capture across the system – still a problem, however with Arcus system to be launched in Feb 2024, we are hoping to capture required data to inform priorities

Opportunities:

- The Launch of the ASB action plan provides us with the focus needed to shape a partnership approach.
- Thames Valley Police Crimefighters plan brings a focus on crime reporting, community policing and crime prevention.
- To design a collaborative approach to tackling ASB – The Gloucester model ‘Solace’ is a good example of a collocated approach.

Risks/Threats :

Please rate consequence and likelihood as either red, amber or green and make an assessment as to overall risk.

Risk or Issue <i>Description</i>	Consequence	Likelihood	Risk Rating	Mitigation <i>Description</i>
	G	R	A	
Lack of Needs Assessment that risks understanding and effective targeting of resource	A	R	A	Task and Finish Group, to assess what achievable and next steps
Lack of partnership strategy, and council enforcement policy risks community expectations not being matched	A	A	A	Devise strategy and plan
A number of processes in place for managing ASB, including three sector tasking meetings (resource intensive) and other processes such as MART risk effective management and intervention, each of which does not have partnership scrutiny.	G	G	G	Review sector tasking Review of MART processes

Budget Summary:

n/a

Overall Allocation: n/a

Budget to Date: n/a

Planned

Q1:

- Review the ASB Action Plan and integrate into the Slough ASB Policy
- Engage partners in a discussion regarding staff resources and scope options
- Revised ASB case review process

Q2:

- OPCC Analyst – draft strategic assessment draft
- Partnership strategy

Q3:

- OPCC Analyst – draft strategic assessment draft
- Draft ASB management resource plan
- ASB Policies and Procedures work to be commissioned

Q4:

- ASB Policy to be in place
- PSPO to be in place
- Community Safety Comms plan to be in place

Overall Assessment

Summary:

Assessment of ASB management is Amber and identify the following reasons why.

5. We have made significant progress in managing Community Triggers, keeping communities informed and tracking actions.
6. We are commissioning an external agency to draft ASB Policy and procedures that will involve consultation across partnership. Work due to commence.
7. PSPO drafted, has been through legal and will be subject to consultation and cabinet reports for implementing in 2024.

Officer Completing: Michelle Isabelle

PRIORITY: Substance use	HIGHLIGHT REPORT Quarterly Report Date: 25 January 2024 Completed by: Leidon Shapo /Deborah Redknapp		
	RAG STATUS		
	Previous	Current	Forecast
	Not assessed	Red	Amber
Project Summary; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combating Drug Partnership Slough Substance Use Partnership • Slough Substance Use Partnership – a plan on a page • Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment Grant (SSMTR) • Rough Sleepers Drug & Alcohol Treatment Grant (RSDATG) • Drug & Alcohol substance use rapid needs assessment. 			
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support both the CDP SSU partnership and SSU partnership • To support both SSMTR and RSDATG grants • To provide key findings (data) to the Substance use Summit (14/11/23) and share the same findings from the rapid SU HNA with key partners in a joint up approach while developing a local action plan 			
Outcomes/Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership working: Continue to collaborate with key stakeholders and be proactive as part of a joint up approach with measurable inputs (i.e. completing the SU highlight report going fwd.) • Translate the findings from the substance use rapid HNA to a local action plan (present data and key findings at the SU Summit - 14/11/23 - Now completed). • Develop specific KPIs that would improve the core elements of prevention, treatment, and enforcement actions at local level • Support the development of a SU strategy for Slough in the future (partnership working approach at local and/or Berkshire East level) 			
Board reported to: Safer Slough Partnership			

Progress Report

<p>Progress Summary (reference plan):</p> <p>Combating Drug Partnership (CDP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CDP was originally set up as an East Berkshire partnership, with West Berks as a separate CDP. This has merged over recent months, and the two separate CDP plans are being reviewed with a view to aligning the plans where appropriate. • The Berkshire wide CDP is joint chaired by Tessa Lindfield (East Berks Director of Public Health) & Matthew Barber (Police and Crime Commissioner) • In addition, a National Combating Drugs Framework has been agreed, please see the annex within the attached Ministerial letter.
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Outcomes
framework Ministeri

- These metrics will be collected nationally and fed back to local CDPs. Thereafter they can come back to the SSP.
- A Berkshire wide stakeholder day took place on 29th Sept. '23 and this has helped to develop the Berkshire wide plan for implementing the national strategy. Please see the imbedded link to the plan. Your feedback would be very welcome

Slough Substance Use Partnership

- This is the multi-agency group that supports the delivery of a Slough focused approach to the CDP.
- The group are developing a local dashboard that was discussed at the 6th July '23 meeting. Thereafter, a Substance Use Partnership seminar was held on the 14th November and the feedback from the day will inform a plan on a page to help address our first 12mths agreed priorities.

Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment Grant (SSMTR)

- The 24/25 SSMTR grant has had a small uplift for this year (less than 6k). In the main the grant funds posts within the treatment service and commissioning capacity as per the national strategy requirements. This will enable the service to have the capacity to increase the numbers into structured treatment. However, a system wide approach for joint working is necessary for us to deliver on this.
- Our ambitions and how we aim to meet this demand will be submitted to the national team by the 31st January 2024.
- Some new initiatives include:
- (i) some additional drug testing of substances in circulation to help identify modified doses to mitigate any additional risk to those using such substances
- (ii) requesting a comfort letter from TVP to enable drug treatment services to issue safe and appropriate inhalation devices for crack cocaine
- For 23/24 we are required to increase structured treatment numbers to 750 adults and 25 CYP and for 24/25 it is 795 and 30 respectively. Q4 22/23 year-end data there were 607 adults & * CYP

Rough Sleepers Drug & Alcohol Treatment Grant (RSDATG)

- We have been notified that the grant will be extended into 24/25.
- The grant funds a 7-man outreach team and new hub in Church Street. The hub in church street has been set up as a multi partnership base from where our most vulnerable can access services
- A reprofiling plan has been submitted to the national RSDATG team to enable Slough to utilise its grant underspend from this year. Any changes that are agreed will mean the funds have to be spent by 31st March 2024.
- The treatment service outreach team has so far engaged with 57 people who are at risk of rough sleeping and 49 rough sleepers. Of these 25 were engaged with MH services prior to engaging with the rough sleepers' team and an additional 26 people have subsequently engaged with MH services.
- Full recruitment to the outreach team remains a risk

Drug & Alcohol substance use rapid needs assessment

- Public health is leading on a drug & alcohol substance use rapid needs assessment process that has started in September 2023.
- **The aim** of this rapid needs assessment is to (i) improve our understanding on the burden of drug and alcohol substance use locally, and (ii) engage more effectively with key partners in a journey that will support our preventative approach as well as improve the current healthcare model locally.
- The project will be divided in two phases with separate objectives:

Phase 1: This initial and important phase will aim to inform and support both the Safer Slough Partnership (SSP) program of work and our commissioning priorities with a specific focus on exploring, analysing, and providing local information covering the following areas:

- Prevention (Prevalence of drug & alcohol substance use – unmet needs | risk factors)
- Treatment (Drug & alcohol drug treatment – national and local picture)
- Healthcare Services
- Enforcement actions (Drug & alcohol related crime and evidence-based interventions)

Method: An epidemiological approach will be taken to understand the prevalence of problem drug and alcohol use and associated harm in Slough. This will be accompanied by a comparative analysis of service provision and outcomes between different populations. Both elements have been benchmarked against comparator populations (i.e. Berkshire, SE, and England) where possible.

- *Phase 2: The aim for the 2nd phase would be to share the findings from the 1st phase and support the Substance use partnership group and the SSP in terms of taking forward this work. A brief overview of key findings and proposed actions will be presented at today's SSP Board meeting.*

A longer-term objective would be to scope the possibility of developing a drug & alcohol substance use strategy document (locally or at Berks East level) that will serve us for a period of at least 5 years.

The expectation was to complete the 1st phase by end of October. Note: The work for this phase was 95% complete by mid-November. However, we are still waiting for some C&YP and CAMHS data.

Achievements / Working Well /Highlights:

- The first draft of our “plan on a page” has been developed via the substance use partnership group.
- We continue to work with the NHS to enable TP to access “connected care” clinical records so that a client clinical history is transparent in real time thus ensuring clinical safety.
- The rough sleepers outreach team work very closely with the housing team.
- A sector wide nurses forum has been agreed as a priority and will include the treatment service, MH, and the acute trust.
- A Berkshire wide Local Drug Information System (LDIS) has been set up so that alerts can be circulated in a timely manner to the appropriate services. The LDIS model is intended for dangerous, new and/or novel, potent, adulterated, or contaminated substances regardless of their legal status. An alert was issued during December 2023.

- The phase 1 of developing the substance use rapid needs assessment is progressing well despite capacity and resource barriers and the work will be completed by mid Nov.

Barriers:

- Some of the barriers relate to the lack of local data as well as capacity and resources.
- The SU rapid needs assessment is only the end of the 1st phase of our work in terms of better understanding the current landscape (prevalence, treatment and crime related figures); However, a barrier would be the continuation towards the 2nd phase of the project in terms of adding an enforcement piece and more importantly embedding enforcement activity into plan (we have already included Thames Valley police (crime-related) data in our current report)
- A closer collaboration across the healthcare spectrum including SSP as well as the police and safeguarding is required to move this agenda forward

Opportunities:

- A more systematic approach to referring into the treatment system
- An effective care coordination approach for joint working across partner services reducing the need to refer on.
- An agreed plan on a page that the partnership works jointly together on

Risks/Threats:

Please rate consequence and likelihood as either red, amber, or green and make an assessment as to overall risk.

Risk or Issue <i>Description</i>	Consequence	Likelihood	Risk Rating	Mitigation <i>Description</i>
Legend	G	R	A	
- The CDP Slough deliverables are not appropriate and miss the mark	R	A	A	The Substance use partnership and the SSP to review and feedback
- The Substance use dashboard either not agreed or too difficult to measure	R	A	A	The partnership to discuss and agree and where a metric is unmeasurable an alternative to be recommended.
- The SU rapid needs assessment (phase 1)	G	G	G	Key findings (data) to be shared at the Substance use summit (14/11/23)

Budget

Budget Summary:
Overall Allocation:
Budget to Date:

Planned

Q1:
Q2.
Q3
Q4

Overall Assessment

Summary:
Officer Completing: Deborah Redknapp

Slough Borough Council

Information needed	Details
Report To:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date:	23 April 2023
Subject:	Draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23, including Scrutiny Progress Report by Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS)
Chief Officer:	Stephen Taylor, Monitoring Officer
Contact Officers:	Alexander Polak, Head of Governance and Scrutiny and Statutory Scrutiny Officer Michael Edley, Scrutiny and Governance Officer
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	NO
Appendices:	A: Draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23 B: Slough Borough Council Scrutiny Progress Report March 2024 - Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS)

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to comment on and endorse the Draft Annual Scrutiny Report 2022/23 (appended) which will be submitted to Council. A progress report by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) is appended, and their recommendations have been incorporated in the action plan for endorsement.

Recommendations:

Committee is recommended to:

- (a) *Note the Slough Borough Council Scrutiny Progress Report produced by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, and its recommendations;*
- (b) *Endorse the draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23 as final, including the proposed response to the CfGS recommendations on pp18-19 of Appendix A; and*
- (c) *Recommend to Council:*
 - 1) *that the Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23 be noted and the progress made by the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee be commended; and*
 - 2) *that the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee's response to the CfGS Recommendations (on pp.18-19 of Appendix A) be endorsed.*

Reason: It is a requirement of the constitution that a Scrutiny Annual Report be presented to Council, and an external review has recently been conducted so that this can be well-informed. The Annual Report is important evidence for Members, the public and Commissioners of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny function during 2022/23. It is critical that councillors understand the function and value that scrutiny is intended to have during the council's current financial and governance crisis, and that all members take an active role in its continued improvement.

DLUHC Commissioner Review: *Commissioners recognise that improvements are being made in the way that the committee contributes to the effective governance of the Council. The Council knows that much remains to be done but members are to be congratulated on the progress achieved to date.*

2. Report

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny is an important part of the Council's governance arrangements. It is a requirement of the constitution that an annual report about scrutiny's business be presented to Council. The draft Annual Report 2022/23 is appended to this covering report. It is self-contained and self-explanatory.
- 2.2 As covered in more detail in section 2 of the appended draft Annual Report 2023/24, Commissioners appointed by the Secretary of State are currently monitoring, as part of a suite of Directions made to the council, the Council's progress on achieving "improvements in relation to the proper functioning of the scrutiny function". The Annual Report is important evidence for Members, the public and Commissioners of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny function during 2023/24, and how the council intends to sustain its improvement trajectory.
- 2.3 In January 2022 The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) conducted a review of Slough Borough Council's overview and scrutiny arrangements. Their [final report](#) was presented to the council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in [November 2022](#). [Their report](#), and [the council's covering report](#) which accompanied it, together provide important context for today's item including criticism of SBC's scrutiny function by various governance reviews going further back in time.
- 2.4 CfGS' recommendations and the accompanying '[scrutiny improvement action plan](#)' (produced by the current Statutory Scrutiny Officer) were endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 November 2022 and by [Full Council on 22 November 2022](#).
- 2.5 Accordingly and following further cross-party design work, a new scrutiny committee structure and terms of reference for a Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee were agreed at the May 2023 Annual Meeting of the council. This was the first AGM following an all-out election and change of administration.
- 2.6 Success of the Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan as presented in November 2022 was to be assessed and verified by two main methods: a new annual survey of councillors, and a follow-up review by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS).
- 2.7 Therefore:
 - Appendix A includes comparative results of the two member surveys carried out at either end of 2023 (i.e. before and after the election, change of administration, and implementation of new scrutiny structure).
 - Appendix B is a report of a follow-up review conducted by CfGS in January 2024.
- 2.8 The draft annual report sets out a number of other sources in addition to these, including feedback from committee members, officers and commissioners.
- 2.9 Based on all of the above sources, Appendix A then sets out next steps for the continued and sustained improvement of the council's overview and scrutiny function..

3. Implications of the Recommendations

3.1 Financial implications

3.1.1 None

3.2 Legal implications

3.2.1 The Council has a duty to provide Best Value and the government has published [draft Best Value guidance](#) against which the council expects to be measured. This mentions the effectiveness of scrutiny arrangements. The Council must also be mindful of the [Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities](#) published by what was then the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in May 2019, and the legislation on which this stands, when considering the design and effectiveness of its scrutiny function.

3.3 Risk management implications

3.3.1 The risk of either not endorsing an annual report or of endorsing a substandard or incorrect annual report is primarily of reputational damage to the council. Furthermore the risk to the council of having a substandard scrutiny function is substantial even without it being the subject of one of the [specific improvement directions made by the Secretary of State in December 2021](#).

3.4 Environmental implications

3.4.1 None

3.5 Equality implications

3.5.1 None

4. Background Papers

None

5. Appendices

A: Draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23

B: Slough Borough Council Scrutiny Progress Report March 2024 - Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS)

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Appendix A:

Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee

Annual Report 2023/24



Committee Members



Cllr Shaik
Chair
(Dec – Present)



Cllr Escott



Cllr Hulme



Cllr Iftakhar



Cllr Khawar
Vice-Chair



Cllr Mann



Cllr Manku
Chair and committee member
June-Nov 2023



Cllr Matloob



Cllr Mohindra



Cllr O'Kelly



Cllr Steadman

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1. Chair's Introduction



Cllr Mabu Shaik
Chair

Since becoming the Chair of the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee in December 2023, I have seen the committee continue the improvement started by my predecessor, Cllr Manku. Our public meetings are more focused and business like, thanks to a new approach we have taken in our pre-meeting workshops. The topics explored by the committee are also more targeted and beginning to add value to the organisation and the services it delivers. I am particularly pleased that the committee has been more effective in calling the leadership of the Council to account, especially in relation to the draft budget for 2024-25 and with regard to the Commissioners' 4th Best Value Report. The quality of the work of our task groups also has seen considerable improvement, not least because of the way we scope the terms of reference, focusing on delivering measurable outcomes.

This is not to say that there is not more to do! Far from it, and I am pleased to see that a draft improvement plan for 2024-25 is contained within this report.

I Hope that by 2026, the Borough's residents, communities of place, of interest and by association, and the Council's Members, Cabinet and senior management recognise and value CISC as an independent, objective but critical friend. The Committee will have continued to play an active role in scrutiny of the transformation of the Council as it responds to the Commissioners' Directions it will have begun to focus on responding to residents' more immediate concerns, identifying improvements to public services and policies that have been embraced by the Council (and other public services in Slough) whenever possible.

Mabu Shaik

2. Context: the need to improve scrutiny in SBC

In October 2021 an [external assurance review](#) of Slough Borough Council was published. This included a [governance review by Jim Taylor](#) for the Secretary of State, dated September 2021. This called the scrutiny function ‘under-resourced’, with reports too complex and hard to interpret. Slough Children First felt there was a lack of focus on them, and councillors reported an erosion of trust, considering ‘what has happened’. There was no scrutiny forward plan.

In December 2021 the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (“the Secretary of State”) made [Directions to Slough Borough Council](#) under the Local Government Act 1999 which included the following [in section 3 of Annexe A](#):

“In the first three months prepare and agree an Improvement Plan to the satisfaction of the Commissioners (which may include or draw upon improvement or action plans prepared before the date of these Directions), with resource allocated accordingly, and as a minimum, the following components:

...

An action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of the scrutiny function...”

At the time of the Jim Taylor report, Slough Borough Council also commissioned the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to do a review of its scrutiny function. This review was carried out after commissioners had then been appointed. The CfGS report was eventually published in November 2022. It included a number of recommendations (set out later in this report) which were considered advisable for the further improvement of SBC’s scrutiny function. The recommendations were not binding, but they were evidenced, authoritative and public.

In response to the Secretary of State’s Directions, and informed by the CfGS review, a Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan and Democratic Governance Improvement Action Plan were created, and this work has continued all year, monitored by Commissioners via the Improvement and Recovery Board. The Scrutiny Action Plan was endorsed by Full Council before the election, and a change to the structure of O&S was agreed at the first Full Council meeting following the May 2023 election.

3.1 Delivery: New Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Cttee

In May 2023 the Council approved the establishment of a single Scrutiny Committee - 'laser focused' on Corporate Improvement - to be known as the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee (CISC). This went along with newly designed Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

CISC Terms of Reference (extract)

- Monitoring and driving Improvement against any Directions by the Secretary of State and other external or internal inspections/reviews/performance information;
- Monitoring and driving progress of major corporate improvement initiatives eg transformation programmes, major programmes of savings delivery, culture change, governance improvement;
- Scrutinising and inputting into the council's budget-setting cycle and monitoring the council's financial recovery progress;
- Scrutinising proposals for, and delivery of, major savings initiatives, including their impact on partners and residents; and
- Commissioning Task and Finish Groups to investigate specific discrete questions or issues.

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Cllr Manku became Chair of CISC at the May 2023 annual meeting of full Council, and Cllr Shaik became Vice-Chair (later, Chair). Both embraced their roles with intent and enthusiasm, while being amongst the 70% of the committee who were new councillors at that time, without scrutiny experience. As well as adjusting the induction program to meet this challenge, steps were taken to encourage a culture of mutual support and openness about the committee's learning curve, so that potential lessons could be openly highlighted and discussed during private and public committee sessions. Steps included holding in-person pre-meetings with informal seating, food and workshop-style exercises to encourage team-building. Most councillors have worked well together, after an initial period of tension largely eased. Recruitment of a long-sought-after Scrutiny and Governance Officer just after the committee formed also added some much-needed capacity, although the committee still remains dependent on temporary additional officer capacity.

3.2 Delivery: Scrutiny training and briefings 2023/24

Training and development for all councillors has been recognized as key to the council’s improvement and recovery for some time, and the programme of learning for scrutiny needed to be especially robust, since 22 of the 42 councillors (including a majority of the scrutiny committee and its Chairs) were new to the role. To achieve this, a member development strategy and plan which has been in place since 2022, agreed by Standards Committee, was adapted and upgraded. This included a full scrutiny induction for CISC members, cabinet and officers, funded by the Local Government Association and delivered by the CfGS and the Statutory Scrutiny Officer. Full details of the CfGS proposal can be found at Appendix B to an [April 2023 Standards Committee report](#). Furthermore, both the new scrutiny chairs have benefited from engaging well with excellent peer mentors provided by the LGA.

To the right is an indicative selection of the training opportunities and briefings which have been made available to Scrutiny members this year. See [Report to Standards Committee on 19 March](#) for full details.

Chairing Skills for scrutiny – delivered 1:1	SBC	May 2023, January & March 2024
Planning an Effective Scrutiny Work Programme	CfGS	04 July
Budget/Finance scrutiny (joint cabinet/scrutiny)	CfGS	06 September 2023
Cabinet Scrutiny Training	CfGS	07 September 2023
Financial and Budget Scrutiny	CfGS	19 September 2023
Community Power	ADSO	07 December 2023
Budget Briefing I	SBC	13 December 2023
Budget Briefing II	SBC	10 January 2024
Chairing Scrutiny	LGA weekend	January 2024
Data and Managing Performance	LGA	01 February 2024
Data and Scrutiny	SBC	07 February 2024
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities	SBC	20 February 2024
Community Asset Briefing	SBC	22 February 2024
PCC and Chief Constable annual report	TVP	27 February 2024

3.3 Delivery: 2023/24 Scrutiny items

The main items for each committee meeting this year are listed with links to the relevant agendas or papers.

This EXCLUDES:

- Launching and Reporting of task & finish groups (reported on slide 9)
- Development or briefing sessions held in private, occasionally using committee time
- Work programming workshops and items to review/decide the work programme (these were large items early in the year)
- Recommendations and actions tracking.

	2023		2024
June:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement & Recovery update 	January:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement and Recovery update • Human Resources Improvement Programme • Update on task and finish report: Review of Workforce Strategy Business Case for Slough Children First (SCF) • General Fund Revenue Budget Proposals 2024/25 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28
July:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset Disposal Programme 	February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEND Statutory Services Update
September:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement and Recovery update • Budget Monitoring Report 	March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Assets Policy Development • Extraordinary meeting: The Commissioners' 4th Best Value Report and Minister's response
October:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT and Digital Update • PSED and SBC public sector equality duties • Update on Procurement and Contract Management 	April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual report • Safer Slough Partnership
November:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Setting and financial update: Verbal Update 		

3.4. Delivery: Task and Finish Groups

Three Task and Finish (T&F) groups were commissioned this year. T&F work, while often quite resource-intensive, tends to produce more concrete and better informed recommendations, while being more rewarding for the Members involved. It is primarily used for pre-decision scrutiny (policy development) rather than post-decision ('holding to account') scrutiny.

	Started	Completed
Task Group 1: ASC preparedness for CQC assessment of Adult Services	Sept 2023 ,	November 28 2023
Task Group 2: Resident Engagement and Building Trust	Dec 2023 ,	April 23 2024
Task Group 3: SCF Engagement with Children, Families and Faith	March 2024	Due July 2024

Each T&F has been launched and run at a scale which was mindful of councillors' learning curve and the availability of resources. Lessons learned from each one have fed into the subsequent ones. For example, the second and third are each more focused and ambitious in turn than their predecessors. The second T&F involved some member-led research into residents' perceptions of council consultations, and some simple co-design of a comms product. The third is expected to involve a face-to-face workshop or workshops with faith and community groups, in a 'scrutiny-in-a-day' style. The mechanism for reporting recommendations to council has also improved as the year progressed, to allow better tracking and accountability.

3.5.1 Delivery: Scrutiny Improvement Actions

Last year's Scrutiny Annual Report highlighted the following areas of the Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan

Key area for improvement in 2022/23	Progress update
<p>Agree new scrutiny structure and ways of working in May 2023, to optimise the function for the council's unique situation. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a reframing of the main committee's focus • a move to more T&F work • Continuing and improving the council's whole-year focus on financial management in scrutiny 	<p>New structure agreed with a clear focus (see above). Pre-decision scrutiny now conducted primarily via Task & Finish groups – almost all committee members have now signed up to join at least one T&F. Members made their appetite and frustration clear with regard to budget scrutiny and their difficulty accessing early information, and this is reflected in the 2024 CfGS review, however they used their time well to gain knowledge via briefings and have a clear plan for their role in budget setting and savings delivery during 2024/5.</p>
<p>Deliver enhanced training and induction for new members in 2023 including training for Chairs.</p>	<p>Delivered, as above – and refreshers to be run soon as per the outline member development plan for 2024/5 agreed by Standards Committee in March 2024.</p>
<p>Deliver enhanced training for officers working with scrutiny.</p>	<p>Scrutiny training delivered to CLT and wider leadership via the 'Governance Leadership Learning' sessions, plus the scrutiny Chair has visited CLT personally.</p>
<p>Continue to develop a cohesive work programme for scrutiny, tightly focused on scrutiny of the council's plans for financial and organisational recovery</p>	<p>The need for a 'laser focus' on the council's improvement and recovery has been a constant theme in work programming discussions all year, but some members tend to look for chances to set up extra scrutiny committees, to look at topics deemed less 'corporate'. The committee's first draft work programme was rejected by commissioners, so members redesigned it with a stronger focus on specific improvement directions.</p>

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3.5.2 Delivery: Scrutiny Improvement Actions (cont.)

Key area for improvement in 2022/23	Progress update
Improve the effectiveness of pre-meetings	There has been steady progress in the use of pre-meetings, particularly in the latter part of the year. Members have learned strategies for developing key lines of enquiry which are collaborative and conversational, with more experienced members generously reaching across the floor to help inform newer members, and genuine good humour from most attendees. There is some evidence of this translating into more effective meetings, such as the compliments given by commissioners at the March extraordinary meeting to hold leadership to account in light of the commissioners' 4 th letter and minister's response.
Restore dedicated, permanent officer support for the scrutiny function.	The Scrutiny and Governance Officer position was finally filled in the summer after several failed rounds of recruitment. While the Democratic Services Manager post was also filled, the post-holder left before they could take on the role of Statutory Scrutiny Officer. That post has recently been re-advertised without success, Further attempts are in train and meanwhile some temporary resource is available.
Empower scrutiny members to self-evaluate their performance in committee and plan steps towards further improvement.	See below for the output from members' end-of-year review workshop. Assisted by their LGA mentors, both scrutiny chairs have been self-reflective and open to feedback from officers and other members, and there is evidence of various changes to committee practice as a result, including allowing multiple follow-ups per councillor, and strong public statements about the committee's intention to behave apolitically.

4.1 Assessing improvement: CfGS 'progress review'

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny were invited back to conduct a rapid review of progress made on SBC's scrutiny arrangements since CfGS's last set of recommendations were implemented over the past 18 months.

Their report aims to show how scrutiny is developing, where it is progressing effectively and adding value and equally to highlight areas that need further support or consideration by the council if progress is to be sustained.

Their full report is at **appendix B**, and it includes a series of recommendations for the future which are reproduced in section 5, below.

The report also gives useful feedback to assist the council in measuring scrutiny's improvement progress.

Summary (P.2 of Appendix B)

"Scrutiny is steadily improving after a fairly slow start. There are a number of contributing factors to this.

- New, and inexperienced councillors
- A period of uncertainty after the election
- Learning needs of the committee
- Effectiveness of corporate level support

However, this has been offset by some important positives.

- Good commitment from most of the committee members
- Stable and generally positive committee operating culture
- Excellent cross-party working
- New Chair has key skills and capacity to effectively lead and chair scrutiny – he appears to act apolitically and is improvement-focused
- Excellent support by Scrutiny and Governance officers

Our rapid review therefore concludes that scrutiny has many of the essential characteristics for it to continue to develop and improve. But this can only happen if scrutiny operates in a core, not peripheral space and that there is whole-council support to make it work in the medium and long term.

Conclusion (P.7 of Appendix B)

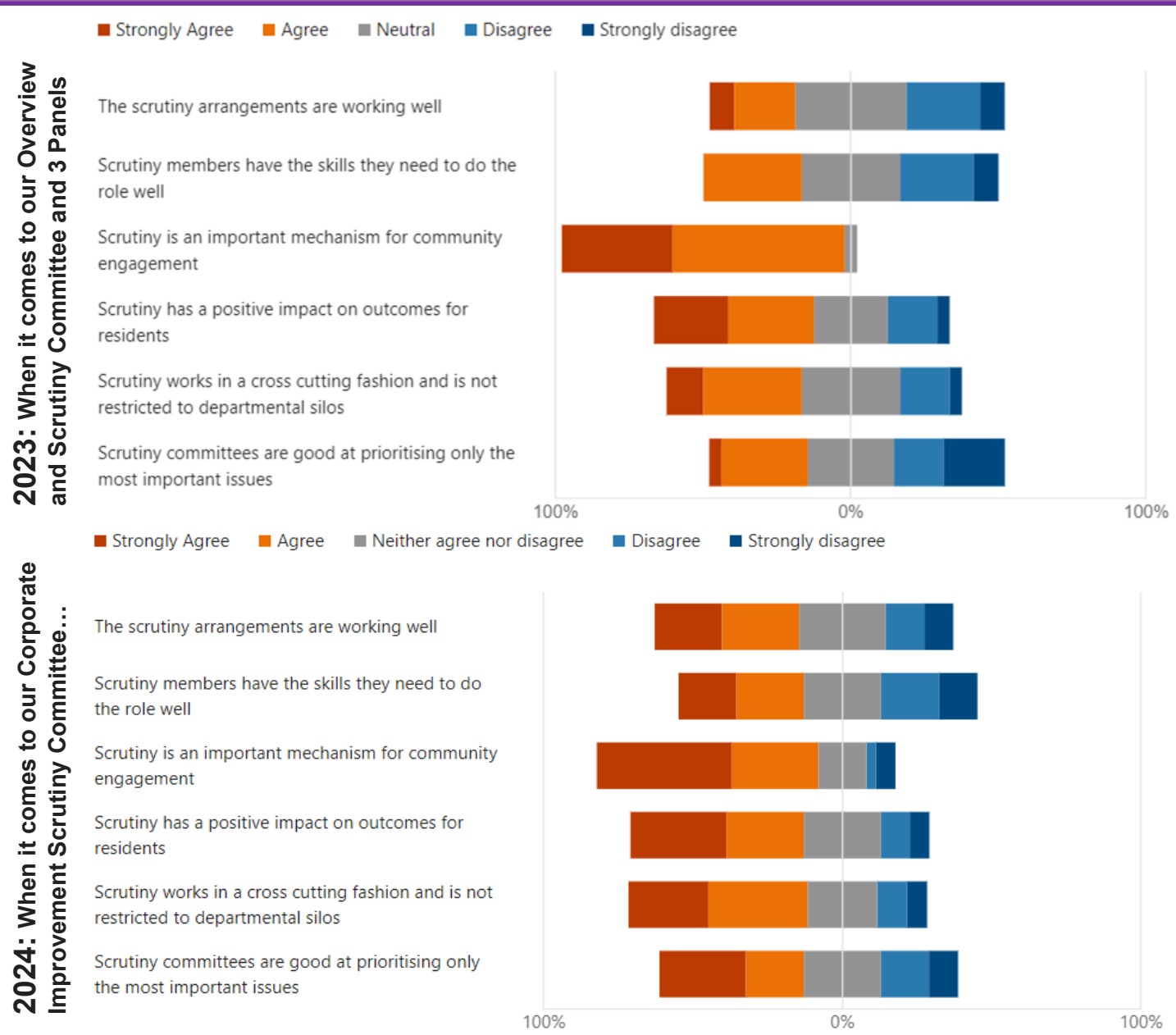
Slough need good effective scrutiny and there is lots of effort to try to make that happen. Despite its challenges, set-back, gaps in corporate support and size of its task, the CISC has worked hard to get to a reasonable position in a short period of time. It is not currently working at the level required, and it will need to be a more integral part of the council, supported and let-in to function better. It has weaknesses in its capacity and member engagement and there will be a limit to how much training and development can change this. However, many of the characteristics of good scrutiny are already present in terms of structure, process and culture and there is clearly some very experienced Members on the committee, although currently limited. The building blocks for improvement are in place and are beginning to become embedded. However, to have greater impact, it needs more time (months) and support to deliver much more.

4.2 Assessing improvement: survey data

All Members were surveyed in December 2023 and results were reported in 2024. The survey was extensive covering a range of topics such as culture, member support and member wellbeing, as well as concerning Democratic Governance and Scrutiny in particular. Thirty-one members responded to the '2024' survey, out of 42 councillors (74%). In 2023 there were 24 (57%).

The full results were reported to the Standards Committee on 19 March 2024. The following results relate specifically to Scrutiny.

Overall a moderately higher proportion of members now agree or strongly agree with positive statements about scrutiny, compared with the previous survey. However, there is still polarisation.



People tend to be more positive or optimistic about their own work than others'. Note that in 2023, over half of all councillors were on one or more scrutiny committees (24 out of 42). Whereas by the time of the second survey, only ten councillors were directly involved on a scrutiny committee.

In light of this, the improvements in the perception data are particularly good.

4.3 Assessing improvement: survey responses

The 2024 councillor survey included space for councillors to provide any additional comments about the council's scrutiny function.

This feedback has informed the action plan elsewhere in this annual report.

As reported to Standards Committee in March, the survey response data is being used in a number of settings across the council in order to learn about potential issues and to plan improvements. For example, the data is reviewed by the wider officer leadership and by individual Directorate Leadership Teams.

Furthermore the Democratic Services 'Service Plan' for 2024/25 is strongly informed by the survey data.

"Officers should support the scrutiny with any information the scrutiny team needs"

"Scrutiny Committee need to be more proactive"

"The amount of collaboration required is huge, the officers are doing great job"

"Scrutiny needs more support and training in different aspects of this function. More public engagement"

"Every six month scrutiny committee member need to refresh training"

"The committees are set up politically instead of by skills. Upskilling low skilled politicians who think they know everything already is hard work."

"The officers made sure enablement of the councillors to conduct a proper scrutiny"

"Officers need to engage with transparency and have effective communication"

"I don't think there is enough engagement with the local community, or focus on residents getting value for money. Scrutiny definitely has the potential to challenge silo working and require more collaborative effort. I think most/too much of its prioritising is done for it by officers (maybe for the reason that resources are still very limited)"

"Scrutiny should do more"

"The Scrutiny function is working well, big targets to meet"



4.5 Assessing Improvement: commissioners' comments

Slough Borough Council's government-appointed commissioners were invited to an Extraordinary meeting of CISC on 13 March, along with the whole cabinet and corporate leadership team, as scrutiny aimed to hold the council's leadership to account on the pivotally important contents of the commissioners' fourth letter to the Secretary of State. [The minutes and webcast are available online](#). During the meeting Lead Commissioner Gavin Jones gave a summary of serious issues still facing the council as well as some limited areas of success, and later the assistant commissioners offered direct feedback to the scrutiny committee.



On governance and scrutiny, some selected positive quotes from commissioners follow. More quotes about next steps, including further challenges scrutiny must address to become more effective, can be found in section 5 below.

- “Governance has been an area that has really improved quickly”.
- “There has been a commitment to member development”.
- “Scrutiny needs to engage to see when is the right time to engage and ask questions and hold to account. You’ve modelled this well as a committee tonight, you’re doing that very well. Scrutiny must stay involved in the business of the council - what’s been modelled here today is a very good example of how scrutiny can contribute.”

4.4 Assessing Improvement: councillors' annual review

A simple workshop was held in the 12 March CISC pre-meeting, followed up by an email to those councillors who could not attend, for the following purposes:

- 1) Reviewing the past year to inform the Scrutiny Annual Report
- 2) Collecting further qualitative information alongside the Member Survey, to inform the improvement of the Scrutiny function

It was NOT a work programming session – this is scheduled for May.

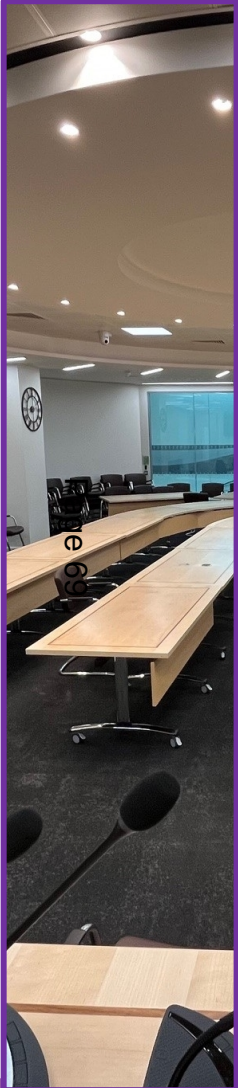


Summary of representative POSITIVE feedback – What went well / improved in 2023/24?

- Adult Social Care T&F review -Learned from this - it was good that it was very timely and in response to something that should help the council's preparedness for the CQC inspection.
- In latter 'scrutinies' as a committee we have tried to be non-partisan which has been to the committee's credit and that is starting to embed fairly well, that's a good thing.
- The Chair is doing a good job - I might have my niggles here and there but if I do have a concern I do feel I can raise it with you, you are inclusive in your approach and you take the role seriously and that's to be commended.
- Teamwork has been good this year. So far it worked well and hopefully this should continue.
- There is a bit of disparity in the amount of knowledge and experience between councillors, but the way this has been handled has been good - the returning councillors have been generous in sharing with colleagues and helping to upskill everyone.
- We did as good a job as we could do on the budget process, changes were made to the final budget, some of which were things we raised at scrutiny eg some of the fees and charges, use of budget smoothing reserve (and some of the savings).
- [On the budget] we asked relevant questions and they were very probing. I thought they were impressed that we were able to ask such good questions by that point in the year.
- The Consultation and Building Resident Trust Task & Finish group - is ongoing - but what is good about this is that we are getting our own feedback from residents and members, asking various members to share the role of gathering information.
- We're getting better at our scoping pre-agenda meetings, where the chair sets out his expectations for a report coming through two meetings ahead, so there is more collaboration. People are coming too, and if they don't turn up the Chair is calling them.

(See part 5 for commissioners' pointers - things to work on, which could go better)

5.1 Next Steps: councillors' annual review



Summary of representative feedback – What could have gone better / needs to improve?

- We need to bring in a bit more recovery-focused items into the agenda - is this happening enough?
- Servicing of the committee by senior officers - it has got better towards the end of the year but early on we did not get given good quality reports to enable us to do the job – eg assets early on, and
- Are group leaders appointing the best people onto scrutiny? We need people who aren't going to pick their hobby horse topics, will be team players and take a whole-council view.
- The structure of having a single recovery committee means that there is a lot which the council does which is not being scrutinised. There is an issue with capacity. We'd like to be able to do more T&Fs. We haven't got the balance right yet between looking at recovery but also looking at the whole raft of council services too.
- Should circulate the actions tracker every other month to keep us all on top of it.
- How do we get info for members on important things, when scrutiny doesn't have time? Written briefings from Lead Members? More All-Member-Briefings?
- Information about recovery is always very laggy and replicates what has gone elsewhere.
- If we want scrutiny to work everyone has to want it to work. The buy-in is now there by the committee members but I haven't yet seen that matched by the rest of the organisation.
- We should consider cancelling meetings if reports aren't forthcoming again.
- In future we will have a pre-xmas meeting, rather than an early Jan meeting.
- The pre-meets are useful and they do set the tone. It's good that the pre-meets are member-led, but Michael could restrain himself less, we do welcome a steer on key things!
- There's a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes to steer and shape topics - this is working very well. Michael's engagement with the police and EDs is working well, there is a lot of collaboration, which is bearing fruit, but it does put michael in people's bad books too sometimes.
- Need to avoid occasional clashing diary invites.
- Can we circulate the extra reading Michael produces (which is handy!) earlier?
- Need to ensure we have proper debate on each recommendation, ideally one at a time.
- Give councillors more time to talk longer and ask every question they have, and ask them for follow-ups.

At the 12 March workshop (see section 4 for more detail) members gave a range of constructive feedback about issues or areas for improvement. scheduled for May.

This begins the section of this annual report which is focused on designing improvements for the future functioning of scrutiny in SBC.

5.2.1 Next steps: CfGS's recommendations

Recommendations for further improvement, from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's 2024 review (see Appendix B)

CfGS recommendation 2024	Response	SBC comments
1.CISC to maintain its core objective and purpose to support the corporate improvement plans, transition and financial recovery through strong and objective scrutiny. And to resist in the foreseeable future any expansion of the scrutiny committee structure.	Agree	A spontaneous recommendation from the committee, possibly to itself, at its extraordinary meeting on 13 March was for a second scrutiny committee to be created to cover non-improvement & recovery topics. Members should instead accept this CfGS recommendation, mindful that their work programming efforts in May should give them the opportunity to prioritise, and that an extra committee does not necessarily create extra councillor or officer resource (usually the opposite).
2.CISC Members will need to engage with the next phase of learning and development opportunities.	Agree	The outline member development programme for 2024/5 was agreed by the Standards Committee in March.
3.A focus through the Annual Scrutiny Report should evidence progress against objectives. In addition, it should also include clarity around the statutory duties regarding Health, Crime and Disorder, Education etc.	Agree - Complete	See section 4 above for progress, and section 5 below for plans regarding statutory duties. In short, our crime and disorder duty is already met and will continue to be, and work is in train to set up joint working with other authorities on Health scrutiny. Education co-optees will be appointed this coming year.
4.Cabinet role at scrutiny committee should be clarified and working arrangements with scrutiny Chairs/Vice Chair formalised.	Agree - Underway	The committee is keen to hear fewer prepared speeches and for cabinet members to take more of the reins in answering questions rather than deferring to officers. The scrutiny Chair is keen to meet regularly with cabinet members to assist in keeping the committee informed.
5.Scrutiny's role in MTFP and budget planning should be factored into the timetable with appropriate support.	Agree - underway	The committee has made clear its intention to play a continuous role in monitoring the delivery of savings across the year, and has formally requested that the cabinet member provide them with suitable materials to allow early engagement with meaningful budget choices in the coming year. Work programming on these matters is not waiting until May!

5.2.2 Next steps: CfGS's recommendations (cont.)

CfGS recommendation 2024	Response	SBC comments
<p>6. It is essential the Corporate Leaders present a consistent and resolute position on the importance of scrutiny within the organisation. Top-level support will also drive the necessary closer support by senior officers and their staff. It will build upon an agreed understanding on how scrutiny needs to be supported with information, reports, advice and expert briefings etc. This should be further developed and agreed. New senior leaders in key corporate roles should offer a plan of support and engagement for scrutiny to show how it will be supported in future.</p>	<p>Agree - underway</p>	<p>With substantial turnover at CLT-level at the time of writing, it must be assumed that there is an opportunity to reset this relationship through early and positive engagement between senior officers and members. Governance induction training for senior leaders is planned which should assist with this. There may be a need to write a cabinet/scrutiny protocol as recommended elsewhere in CfGS literature, in order to assist with this.</p>
<p>7. Reports and information supplied to scrutiny should not be overburdening or too technical. There should be an understanding that scrutiny members are not experts in many of the subjects in front of them. To be effective in their task they need the appropriate tools.</p>	<p>Agree - underway</p>	<p>'Pre-agenda' meetings now take place two months and one month ahead of each item, with report authors invited. This allows the Chair and Vice Chair to play a more active role in shaping reports to the needs and preferences of committee members, with the support of scrutiny officers.</p>
<p>8. Scrutiny work programmes should show a clear alignment with the council's corporate improvement plans and have a mechanism for subject selection and prioritisation – it needs to 'show its working out'. We note that some work on this has already started.</p>	<p>Agree - underway</p>	<p>A new process and proforma for scrutiny topic selection was developed mid-year and trialled at the December mini-workshop on the work programme. Having learnt from this, slightly more support will be given to councillors proposing items in the May round of work programming, to ensure proposals are complete before consideration. The weighting given to the topic's centrality to the council's improvement and recovery may also need adjusting.</p>

5.3 Next steps: Commissioner comments

Referring again to Commissioners' comments at the Extraordinary meeting of CISC on 13 March, for which [the minutes and webcast are available online](#), Commissioners gave a number of pointers for areas of growth or next steps for the committee to consider over the coming year.



On Scrutiny's challenges and next steps, some selected quotes from commissioners (paraphrased in places) follow:

- “The best advice I can give you is yes, you should be engaged... Stay involved, there is a very important role for you as a scrutiny committee... You'll need to work out the detail of when is appropriate for you to engage. That's good running of a council, if your scrutiny committee are informed, up to speed with what is happening, and have the opportunity to ask appropriate, searching questions of members and the officer corps, and you've modelled this well this evening.”
- “The risk is - there is so much to be done, how will you prioritise and phase your engagement? That's a challenge for the administration and for scrutiny. The main task is to identify where to add value.”
- “Scrutiny must be clear which financial issues are a national issue and what is a unique issue for Slough. These are clear and distinct challenges for the council which scrutiny should understand.”
- “Scrutiny should make sure you have full transparency and disclosure on the risk to which you are exposed and the scale of the challenge.”
- “You need to be very clear about what you require in terms of in-year sustainability, what does that look like, what needs to be reviewed, how will performance be assessed in order to track and to be able to deliver what is expected of you in-year and to be able to deliver on your balanced budget?”
- “Scrutiny should ask what does the future council look like without a requirement for exceptional financial support – that is the TOM. That is a test of sustainability and a test of resilience. Test that target operating model and be clear that sustainability and whether you can deliver core services without exceptional support are your benchmarks for considering the TOM.”
- “Must consider how to ensure you are joined up and not duplicating with the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.”

5.4 Next steps: Priorities for Improvement in 2023/24

The following three slides set out the next proposed phases of a scrutiny improvement action plan which has now been running continuously for several years, through at least two distinct planning and delivery phases before and after the May 2023 election.

The council's new four-year electoral cycle provides an excellent opportunity for members to learn and develop together over an extended period of time, and it is to be hoped that a reasonable continuity of chairmanship and Group Leaders' appointment of informed, committed members over the coming years will allow these plans to bear fruit for the residents of Slough.

The sources in this report have informed these actions. Those sources include:

- Reference to the draft Best Value Guidance published by DLUHC;
- The 2024 CfGS progress review (appendix B)
- The wider membership via the councillor survey
- The committee's own reflections
- Commissioners' verbal advice
- Scrutiny officers' professional advice
- Prior actions still outstanding

The plan recognises the importance of developing an effective scrutiny function. It incorporates in full the recommendations of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, although recognises that the Member Working Group on Scrutiny will make an informed decision about what to recommend to Full Council where constitutional changes are required.



5.4.1 Next Steps: Updated Improvement Action Plan

Ref	Outcome	Outputs	Progress	Deadline for completion	Notes	
1	Residents are better informed about Scrutiny at Slough	Web presence. Relevant page/s explaining the role of Scrutiny, the current forward plan and how Residents can engage with, attend meetings, provide evidence at meetings.	Underway	Sep 24	Some web pages redesigned but not ready for full launch yet.	
2	Residents able to propose scrutiny topics	Process, criteria and guidance produced, needs to link in with e-petition	Underway	June 24	Citizenspace training complete.	
3	Members propose topics for scrutiny that are relevant and deliver impact	Design a topic-related training programme for 2024-25 for scrutiny members	Pending	June 24		
4		Process, criteria and guidance for members to propose scrutiny topics with recovery focus and criteria/information required	Done	Dec 23		
5		Plan/process for evaluation of topics for Mid Term Review	Done	Dec 23		
6		Mid-Year review of Forward Plan	Done Pending	Dec 23 Dec 2024		
7		Plan/process for evaluation of topics new forward plan municipal year 24/25	Underway	May 24		
8		Better evidence of good governance	Action Log circulated more frequently with updates	Underway	Oct 23	Commitment to embed this as good practice over the coming months.
9		Better evidence of impact and of good governance	Recommendations Register and standard format cabinet report trialed to address cabinet response.	In progress	Oct 23	Although not satisfied we are getting timely clarity from Cabinet

5.4.2 Next Steps: Updated Improvement Action Plan (cont.)

Ref	Outcome	Outputs	Progress	Deadline for completion	Notes
10	Assurance that scrutiny recognises the value of specific stakeholders	Co-optees and expert witnesses used as appropriate	Pending	June 24	Ensure thought is given to potential co-optees on task groups during work programming. Education co-optees are separate matter.
11	Better evidence of good governance	Review key dates initiation to publication of reports	Underway	June	Trying to test new timeline/milestones for March and April
12	Residents recognise and engage with the work of scrutiny	Regularise/establish Scrutiny Brand for reports and publication routes	Pending		Task group reports need to link to annual report
13	Directors and senior managers engage positively with the work of the committee and recognise the positive impact it can have	Engagement and training plan – include scrutiny in officer induction and repeat visits by Chair to CLT. CLT role in work programming. Consider a cabinet-Scrutiny protocol.	Underway	April 2024	
14		Identify data that can be used as evidence for Residents' big Issues	Pending	Feb 2025	
15	Scrutiny is evidence based	Create Reference Library	Done	Dec 23	
16		Training on Data	Done	Feb 24	
17		Develop a mechanism/procedure to use performance data, BMOs, IRB updates etc	Pending	April 2025	Need to embed this in item 7

5.4.3 Next Steps: Updated Improvement Action Plan (cont.)

Ref	Outcome	Outputs	Progress	Deadline for completion	Notes
18 Page 76	Scrutiny is making a difference	<p>CfGS progress review.</p> <p>Recommendations log containing substance</p> <p>Testimony from public and partners involved in scrutiny reviews</p> <p>Budget scrutiny is effective and mindful of national/local issues, and of risk.</p> <p>Committee's role in non-financial recovery clarified.</p> <p>Scrutiny of savings in-year happen meaningfully and in a timely fashion.</p> <p>Scrutiny has designed its role with incoming CLT in the non-financial recovery of SBC.</p>	Underway	May 2025	
19	Agendas etc more accessible and of high quality	Clean up Agendas and distinguish between reports to scrutiny rather than covering a report to Cabinet	Pending	August 2024	Democratic Services Service Plan 2024/5 includes a focus on quality and consistency.
20	Agenda items are more likely to be of member origin or public origin	<p>Public calls for evidence</p> <p>Members submitting good, viable, relevant ideas in the work programming exercise</p>	Pending	May 2025	Next test will be May sessions Proposal template has resulted in 2 submissions to date. 01/12/23
21	Scrutiny helps residents to feel they can influence decisions made by the council	Various public engagement mechanisms in place – and regularly used, with a consequential impact.	Pending	May 2026	

5.4.4 Next Steps: Updated Improvement Action Plan (cont.)

Ref	Outcome	Outputs	Progress	Deadline for completion	Notes
22	Scrutiny members feel that they have been able to adequately cover issues important to residents	<p>Best Value is at the heart of scrutiny's decision-making processes.</p> <p>Well-evidenced prioritisation in work programming cycle</p> <p>Other regular opportunities for all-member briefings (written or verbal)</p> <p>Options explored for additional officer capacity to support scrutiny or at least T&Fs</p>	Underway	Ongoing	<p>Work programming mechanisms reviewed recently.</p> <p>All-member briefings appetite and mechanism to be explored with new incoming Chief Exec and CLT members. Seek more capacity from services to support T&Fs?</p>
23	Scrutiny contributes to the wider partnership landscape, not only SBC's internal crisis	<p>Joint working arrangement set up locally for scrutiny of health.</p> <p>Education co-optees formalised via an election as necessary</p> <p>Crime and disorder item scheduled annually in work programme.</p>	Underway	May 2025	<p>Arrangements in motion to create option of co-opting SBC members onto a neighbouring council's Frimley-focused health scrutiny committee.</p> <p>Crime and disorder items build into 23/4 work programme already</p>
24	Decision-makers are held to account publicly	<p>Consider a cabinet-scrutiny protocol.</p> <p>All cabinet members appear on work programme reasonably regularly.</p> <p>Cabinet's good attendance record does not sour.</p> <p>System for news releases by O&S?</p>	Pending	Ongoing	<p>NB no cabinet member attended the late March scrutiny committee meeting – first time this has happened since May 2023.</p>

6. Petitions Report for 2023/4

For the period 1st April, 2023 to 31st March, 2024 a total of 12 petitions were received: 3 paper petitions and 9 e-Petitions. Two of these met the [threshold \(1500\) for a debate of full Council](#).

Paper Petition Title	Signatures
23-01 - Cippenham Residents Against Bus Schedules	60
23-02 - Anti Social Behaviour - Parlaunt Road	10
23-03 - Belgrave Road Parking Permits	28

ePetitions Title	Signatures
Star & Garter Inn	72 to date
Require Additional Parking Restrictions for Non-Residents Near Burnham Station (Royston Way, Crosthwaite Way, Meadway & Sandringham Court)	66
Urgent Appeal Save Community Hub	1,564
E-Petition for Review and Reversion of the Bi-Weekly Bin Collection Policy in Slough	2,103
Support the Sale of Property from the Asset Disposal List to the Langley Islamic Centre for Community Development	382
Petition Against Development on 71 Bower Way Site	31

Appendix B: Report of a short review of scrutiny at Slough Borough Council

Progress and areas for further improvement in the overview and scrutiny function

March 2024

Report purpose

This report is based on a rapid review of scrutiny. Its aim being to assess its progress and its impact since changes were made to its operating model and following changes after the May 2023 Elections.

This report aims to show how scrutiny is developing, where it is progressing effectively and adding value and equally to highlight areas that need further support or consideration by the council if progress is to be sustained.

We recognise that as part of the council's governance, scrutiny has a vital role in accountability and assurance. And that its ability to prove it can robustly deliver these is an essential characteristic of a successful and stable future council.

Background

The Centre for Governance & Scrutiny CfGS has been engaged by the council and supported by LGA to strengthen scrutiny as part of governance at the council. It began with an initial review of scrutiny and a set of recommendations designed to provide a new focus and concentration on scrutiny's role in aligning and supporting the corporate recovery and improvement plans. As part of the CfGS-recommended redesign, scrutiny moved to a single committee structure. This would have a clear work plan and agenda primarily to hold to account the Council's Cabinet and Corporate Leaders for the delivery of the council's recovery plans.

This single committee structure and its new remit, along with a scrutiny protocol was adopted by the Council at its meeting after the May 2023 council elections.

The election outcome itself brought a fresh set of challenges including new Chair with no scrutiny experience and several new Members to the committee, including a significant proportion of first-time councillors with no scrutiny experience. To get scrutiny up and running again, along with the training and development needs of new members, meant that there was effectively a need to 'reset and go again', which inevitably lost some time and traction. However, it is pleasing to report that Members have embraced the task and have shown a determination to crack on.

Process

This review was undertaken during late January and early February 2024 and involved conversations with Members and Officers, observations of meetings, including planning and preparation meetings and consideration of supporting documentation. At that time, a new committee chair was holding his first meetings.

Summary

Scrutiny is steadily improving after a fairly slow start. There are a number of contributing factors to this.

- New, and inexperienced councillors
- A period of uncertainty after the election
- Learning needs of the committee
- Effectiveness of corporate level support

However, this has been offset by some important positives.

- Good commitment from most of the committee members
- Stable and generally positive committee operating culture
- Excellent cross-party working
- New Chair has key skills and capacity to effectively lead and chair scrutiny – he appears to act apolitically and is improvement-focused
- Excellent support by Scrutiny and Governance officers

Our rapid review therefore concludes that scrutiny has many of the essential characteristics for it to continue to develop and improve. But this can only happen if scrutiny operates in a core, not peripheral space and that there is whole-council support to make it work in the medium and long term.

Gains so far

It has not been an easy transition for the council, not just scrutiny members, to move from multiple scrutiny committees to just one, with many questions about why it would help recovery and how it could deliver greater impact. Doubts and resistance was experienced by Officers as well as Members, and there are constant pressures to push for more capacity.

However, it is fair to say that scrutiny committee Members and Officers have worked hard to implement the new scrutiny model within the council's limited resources and there is now a greater sense of purpose and improved behaviours which is underpinning scrutiny's progress. The benefit of senior councillors, who also have a clear understanding of the challenge and experience of Cabinet, have also been an important asset to scrutiny.

Greater preparation including methodically using pre-meetings and briefings has meant that scrutiny is better equipped and ready to function. Recent meetings have shown how this improved structured preparation has resulted in better organised scrutiny in the meeting itself. More of this methodical planning and preparing will certainly lead to better outcomes and greater impact.

With substantially a new set of Members, working in a streamlined structure with clear tasks and responsibilities and supported by a new scrutiny protocol, scrutiny has had a lot to take on. On balance it has made some visible progress and can go further.

The Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee has been just 10 months in operation. It was given the remit to focus on supporting delivery of the Council's recovery and improvement programme, scrutinising policy, financial and performance issues.

Predictably, its principal challenge has been agreeing its committee agenda and work programme. Deciding what to scrutinise and what can wait or be redirected elsewhere. It has not been straightforward. The committee is trying to be brave and reject what might be subjects with compelling reasons to include, but do not fit its selection criteria that must follow its overarching objective. This has been especially hard as meeting agendas are also designed to avoid over-burdening with too many items, aiming for just two per meeting, to provide enough time for considered and thorough scrutiny.

Sticking with the guiding principles set out in its agreed remit, the committee and its supporting officers have done particularly well to craft a work plan and agendas which overall align with corporate and financial delivery plans.

It has also made a reasonable attempt to scrutinise the budget scrutiny process and proposed budget, but it has realised the unavoidable reality that this requires early engagement, planning and resources for this to be meaningful and effective. It can work, and should form part of the committee's priorities. But it will require corporate officer support and a real intent in order to get the process off the ground early enough in future years. It will need sufficient top-level buy-in and consistent understanding from Executive Directors and Cabinet Members, to make it impactful.

The current committee chair took up the post in December and has enthusiastically picked up the reins. He has equipped himself with good skills, training and mentoring and is clearly determined to do a good job. He has been keen to engender a positive scrutiny culture which can work objectively and cross-party. He also appears to be accepted as a 'good chair' and in small but perceptible ways is having a positive effect.

Behind-the-scenes support by scrutiny officers and others to both recent Chairs of the committee, both of whom have experienced a steep learning curve, has been essential and valuable.

Members recognise that scrutiny must be a protected, safe space for it to openly test and challenge the council's leadership. Our assessment is that the council's leadership, in principle, recognise the importance of a collaborative and constructively challenging relationship. This needs to be a golden rule for the future success of scrutiny.

The CISC Chair, committee members and Scrutiny Officers have realistic ambitions for the continued growth and value contribution of scrutiny, which will support the council's recovery plans over the coming years. They have set out their plan in this year's Scrutiny Annual Report. If these plans can be delivered – noting that this requires both sufficient investment by the council in this function and a focused effort by all councillors involved – then SBC's governance will be enriched accordingly, during and beyond the duration of the current government intervention.

Work still to do

The new CISC is not the finished article and has still some way to go. But from a standing start the committee has done more than could have been reasonably expected and, in some ways, exceeded expectations.

Our observation is that Member engagement and contribution is widely variable and some Members are less effective at understanding and questioning or following the Chair's lead and respecting his authority. Some Members will need further support to ensure they are able to positively participate. Members also need to ensure that they build their own understanding of the issues in front of them, to do some independent research and spend time preparing for the meeting itself.

There is still too much agenda drift, Members pursuing ward or personal issues, irrelevant interventions, and repetition, which wastes time and deflects the committee's attention.

The Chair will need to increase efforts to ensure these behaviours are managed and that the committee remains on mission.

Membership of the CISC is an important role and it may not suit everyone's interests or skills. Appointments and performance are a matter for the Group Leaders. We would suggest that appointments are made by the Groups after careful consideration of suitability and capacity. Overall committee success and impact is dependent on the performance of its Members. Group Leaders may wish to reflect on how they can influence this.

The committee has not been as effective as it would like to be, and intends to be in the future, in scrutinising council finance. Unfortunately, the committee found itself frustrated as it became clear that it would not be able to scrutinise the budget in a way which could be described as 'best practice'. The lack of timely information and support to organise the committee to work on scrutinising the budget and the council's improvement and recovery plans and progress was unsatisfactory. The committee has clearly learned lessons from this experience and has set out strong plans for scrutiny of the council's budget and financial position over the coming year. It will need support from relevant corporate directors to allow this to happen.

We should highlight the difficulty the committee has experienced in finding a place for itself inside the council's recovery process. This may however, reflect the issues with the organisation's overall approach to transformation, which were referenced by the Commissioners fourth report.

In the near future, several new senior corporate directors and Chief Executive are about to join the council. Along with the existing Corporate team, an important question needs to be addressed along the lines of; how will they ensure that scrutiny is able to play a full and active part in the development of the corporate and financial recovery plan and the next phase of transformation? The scrutiny function, as part of overall governance, needs to be more integral and be given higher corporate priority.

There has been significant frustration by the committee over availability of information, timing of reports and overall level of from Service and Corporate Officers. Whilst recognising the considerable pressure that is present across the council, scrutiny outputs are very much dependent on the support and inputs it receives.

The Committee and its Chair has a reasonable relationship with Cabinet. This is essential and could be improved through more structure dialogue to agree common objectives and areas of collaboration. The relevant Cabinet member should attend every CISC meeting and to be the focal point of scrutiny questioning and accountability. Currently there is an over emphasis and dependency on officer input and explanation. Clarity around the role of the Cabinet member (accountability and assurance) and Officer (advisor) would be useful to ensure that meeting focus is clear.

The committee needs to resist overextending by trying to spread too widely and therefore more thinly, and to avoid calls for extra committees. The committee has yet to reach its full potential and needs to demonstrate that it is adding value and impact.

It already has capacity to use task and finish groups to take on short deep-dives into issues where it feels greater understanding or additional original evidence gathering would be wise and beneficial. Pilot exercises have now emerged as a series of T&Fs projects which have shown clear progression in their complexity, focus, member-led activity and value, matching the progression of the scrutiny members' learning as the year has passed.

This has demonstrated that a clear, structured and realistic approach has been taken, building rigour and capacity. These basic principles in good task and finish work, largely due to single issue focus, needs to be more consistently applied in the committee itself.

The committee must be disciplined about its work programme, and apply strict prioritisation to select what it will scrutinise or leave out. They will need to accept that they cannot, and should not try to cover everything, but to identify the strategic issues that will drive improvement and change. This requires a clear rationale and self-discipline to avoid being overwhelmed by issues that claim to be essential to recovery.

We would recommend that work planning undertakes a filtering process for subject inclusion based on the recently-introduced methodology, that can help to provide suitable weightings for selection.

The committee and its Chair will need to be wary of being swayed by issues which are arising as areas of concern amongst councillors, even if they are affecting multiple wards, and maintain a rigorous process of selection for scrutiny work programmes and agendas. The committee needs to accept that in the short term its focus must be on recovery and transformation even if this is to the exclusion of other issues. The committee might wish to

consider how it approximately divides its time, perhaps setting allocations such as 40% financial recovery, 40% transformation 20% for the wider issues regarding policy change or pan-borough issues.

CISC needs to strengthen its recommendations and feedback to Cabinet and its tracker system needs to be more closely monitored to ensure that there is follow-through and accountability for the recommendations. The loop needs to be tighter.

Recommendations for further improvement

1. CISC to maintain its core objective and purpose to support the corporate improvement plans, transition and financial recovery through strong and objective scrutiny. And to resist in the foreseeable future any expansion of the scrutiny committee structure.
2. CISC Members will need to engage with the next phase of learning and development opportunities.
3. A focus through the Annual Scrutiny Report should evidence progress against objectives. In addition, it should also include clarity around the statutory duties regarding Health, Crime and Disorder, Education etc.
4. Cabinet role at scrutiny committee should be clarified and working arrangements with scrutiny Chairs/Vice Chair formalised.
5. Scrutiny's role in MTFP and budget planning should be factored into the timetable with appropriate support.
6. It is essential the Corporate Leaders present a consistent and resolute position on the importance of scrutiny within the organisation. Top-level support will also drive the necessary closer support by senior officers and their staff. It will build upon an agreed understanding on how scrutiny needs to be supported with information, reports, advice and expert briefings etc. This should be further developed and agreed. New senior leaders in key corporate roles should offer a plan of support and engagement for scrutiny to show how it will be supported in future.
7. Reports and information supplied to scrutiny should not be overburdening or too technical. There should be an understanding that scrutiny members are not experts in many of the subjects in front of them. To be effective in their task they need the appropriate tools.
8. Scrutiny work programmes should show a clear alignment with the council's corporate improvement plans and have a mechanism for subject selection and prioritisation – it needs to 'show its working out'. We note that some work on this has already started.

Conclusions

Slough need good effective scrutiny and there is lots of effort to try to make that happen. Despite its challenges, set-back, gaps in corporate support and size of its task, the CISC has worked hard to get to a reasonable position in a short period of time. It is not currently working at the level required, and it will need to be a more integral part of the council, supported and let-in to function better. It has weaknesses in its capacity and member engagement and there will be a limit to how much training and development can change this. However, many of the characteristics of good scrutiny are already present in terms of structure, process and culture and there is clearly some very experienced Members on the committee, although currently limited. The building blocks for improvement are in place and are beginning to become embedded. However, to have greater impact, it needs more time (months) and support to deliver much more.

Ian Parry | Director of Governance Services

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Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee
Date:	23 April 2023
Subject:	Report of the Resident Engagement Task and Finish Group
Chief Officer:	Chief Executive
Contact Officers:	Michael Edley, Scrutiny and Governance Officer Kate Pratt, Acting Head of Communications Dave Hounsell, Acting Head of Service, CEO Office
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	No
Appendices:	Appendix A: Report of the Scrutiny Task Group on Resident Engagement and Building Trust

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 The attached report (Appendix A) is that of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group, launched at the CISC meeting on 28 November 2023. The recommendations made by the Task Group, if adopted by Cabinet and CLT, will contribute directly towards the council's improvement & recovery, being linked to 3 of the 5 strategic priorities in the council's corporate plan,

Recommendations:

- a. **That the committee thanks the members of the Task and Finish Group, and the officers who supported it, for their work to produce the report at Appendix A;**
- b. **That the report (Appendix A) and its recommendations (Section 4) are endorsed by the committee; and**
- c. **That the recommendations a-o, set out in the Executive Summary (Page 3) of the report, made by the 'Resident Engagement and Building Trust' Task & Finish Group, are recommended to Cabinet for their approval or endorsement.**

DLUHC Commissioner Review: Commissioners will be interested to see the Council's response to this considered and important report.

2. Report

- 2.1 In accordance with this committee's work programme, most recently [considered by the committee on 4 January 2024](#), a 'task and finish group' was launched on the 28 November 2023, on the topic of 'resident engagement and building trust'.
- 2.2 This topic was originally recommended for the CISC forward plan due to the low levels of trust identified in our resident survey in early 2023, and the importance of this issue in terms of the overall improvement and recovery of the council.
- 2.3 [Slough Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2023-27](#) sets out five principles, three of which relate to the interaction between residents and the council. This reflects that finding from the 2023 resident survey. Delivery of this strategy is a key driver of the council's improvement and recovery journey, and effective resident engagement has been identified as key to successful delivery of the plan.
- 2.4 The scope of the Task and Finish group (Appendix A) focused on Improvements that will contribute to delivery of the outcomes set out in building trust, being resident focused and enabling residents and communities .



- 2.5 The recommendations, arising from the work of the task group, are set out in Section 4 of the report and the Committee are asked to endorse them to be submitted to the Cabinet for their approval or their endorsement if a recommendation is made to another committee, the Council or to CLT.

3. Implications of the Recommendations

Financial implications

- 3.1 This is not a decision-making report so there are no direct financial implications. The task group has focused on improvements requiring few additional resources and /or adds value to the use of existing resources.

Legal implications

- 3.2 The Local Government Act 2000 introduced a new political management system for local councils in England and Wales, requiring them to have a separate 'executive' in the form of a leader, or elected mayor, and cabinet. To provide a counterweight for this, the Act also introduced the concept of 'overview and scrutiny' – sometimes referred to simply as 'scrutiny' – whereby every council with an executive management structure is required to have an overview and scrutiny committee. This enables the rest of the council to scrutinise the executive by investigating their decisions and policies, and issuing reports and recommendations where any shortcomings are identified,

Risk management implications

- 3.3 Overview and Scrutiny, commonly referred to as Scrutiny, is a statutory function and is currently subject to government direction in Slough. It is important that topics selected by the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee clearly contribute to the overall improvement drivers for the council, in order to demonstrate that the conditions of the government intervention are being met.

Equality implications

- 3.4 The Task group has sought to address under representation of certain demographic groups in voter registration and voting in local and national elections so that residents from all backgrounds are able to engage with the democratic process and the council's work and so ultimately should improve equalities outcomes.

4. Appendices

- Appendix A:** Report of the Resident Engagement and Building Trust Task and Finish Group

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**Appendix A:
Report of the
Corporate
Improvement
Scrutiny
Committee's
Task and Finish
Group:**



**Resident Engagement and Building
Trust**

April 2024

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Foreword



Cllr Mohindra
Chair

In November 2023 the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee launched this Task and Finish Group to explore concerns in relation to three of the five Corporate Priorities: Building Trust; Resident Focussed; and Enabling Residents and Communities.

The scope (Appendix A) of this Task and Finish group was considerable and I am pleased that, we recognised, early on, the need to focus on areas where relatively simple solutions could be implemented, at minimal cost, to the greatest effect. Our investigations therefore do not include the significant and varied service related activity, nor work necessary to build community capacity, possible only when resources allow. Neither have we explored the many complex interactions that affect residents' trust in the council. Our recommendations whilst probably representing the tip of the iceberg of work required to fully deliver the priorities in the corporate plan, I believe they are essential building blocks, without which future improvement work would almost certainly falter.

We have been fortunate to be able to link to improvement and development work already underway or being planned, and in so doing, have secured buy-in to our proposals from relevant senior officers.

I am grateful to members of the Task and Finish Group for their input and contribution to this work. I would also like to thank the scrutiny officers and several senior officers across the organisation for the support they provided.

Our work has resulted in recommendations to support the role that members have as the conduit of information between Council, residents and communities. This could prove to be an important factor in re-building the trust residents have in their council. We have also made several recommendations that add value to current resources to support members and officers connect with borough-wide and local communities, by

Our investigations have also identified a significant oversight in ensuring our consultations are co-ordinated and meet the minimum standards necessary to ensure residents feel they can influence key aspects of the council's work, in a way that suits them, is timely and transparent. We hope that our recommendations will be reflected in the Target Operating Model, currently being developed.

The committee also considered the engagement of residents in the democratic process and has recognised the need for the scrutiny offering to improve in this regard.

Finally, the council's biggest challenge remains the need to increase the capacity of residents and communities across the Borough to enable and empower residents and communities to live well independently: build the capacity and resilience of their communities, to foster self-sufficiency and to create platforms that allow our community to shape Slough's future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SC Mohindra'.

Councillor Subhash Mohindra
Chair, Resident Engagement and Building Trust
Task and Finish Group

Executive summary and recommendations

A Scrutiny Task and Finish group on Resident Engagement and Building Trust was convened in November 2023. This was in response to commissioners' concerns in relation to resident engagement, a resident survey revealing a significant decline in trust in the council and that three of the five corporate priorities of Building Trust, being Resident Focussed and Enabling Residents and Communities related to our interaction with residents. This is its report.

The Task and Finish Group made the following recommendations:

Member Communications

- a. To add all SBC Councillors to the distribution list for media releases from the communications team, to ensure members receive the latest news at the same time as the public; and
- b. Cabinet to endorse a monthly release by the Communications Team to Councillors, either stand-alone (Councillors' Cascade?) or as part of the current bulletin schedule. The main aim of this to provide Councillors with key Borough-wide and local information that they can pass on to residents. Typically, this would include latest news, upcoming major street works, major planning applications received, performance data, information from partners for example TVP or Frimley Health and information about commissioned services as well as planned community and consultation events.

Consultation

- c. The CEX should ensure that the Target Operating Model includes a senior officer with corporate responsibility to ensure a strategic approach to resident engagement, consultation and communication to ensure quality engagement, meeting required standards that are consistent and co-ordinated across the organisation (and ultimately with Partners). The appointed officer, as a priority should:
 - i. Meet with the Scrutiny Chair, Task Group Chair and Scrutiny Officer to discuss the member and resident feedback in relation to Consultation set out in Appendices D and E.
 - ii. Refresh and submit to Cabinet the Corporate Engagement Policy ([Slough Engagement Policy 2015](#)) including a review of customer standards, applied through all of our interactions with residents. (Current standards go back to 2013); and
 - iii. Review, refresh and relaunch the [Slough Engagement toolkit](#) with case studies of current slough examples, links and resources.

- d. Promote [Citizen Space](#) internally and externally, as the Consultation and Engagement Hub for Slough. This will be relaunched shortly with a new look and feel that will highlight accessibility links and set out the consultation and feedback standards residents can expect.
- e. Cabinet asks the CEX to establish and develop a forum of officers (reporting to CLT) across the council (and partners) that will help ensure there is a cohesive and joined-up approach to consultation and engagement across the council, a Corporate Consultation and Engagement calendar, peer support for officers to share best practice as well as monitoring of consultation standards; and
- f. Cabinet asks the CEX and CLT that, from immediate effect, the consultations for 2023-24 and all consultations going forward are published on Citizen Space, including both the results of all consultations and a link to the ultimate outcome (Cabinet report) within proscribed time periods. Whenever possible, as a courtesy, provide feedback specifically to those people who contributed to a consultation.

Community Networks

- g. That Cabinet request the Member Development team work with the Community Development Officer to develop a simple self-service tool, for Members by which they can refer residents to relevant community groups. This would be of value in Members' surgeries, and an opportunity to connect with community groups and to build local conduits for 2-way flows of information;
- h. Cabinet directs Community Development to produce a guide for Councillors that list key sources of information about Borough-wide and ward-based Community Groups;
- i. Cabinet directs Member Development to commission a training module, to be rolled out for all councillors, helping them learn about how to make connections (see g above) with residents and borough and local community groups (see h above). The [LGA starter kit for front-line councillors](#) offers a useful starting point;
- j. Cabinet request Democratic Services and CLT to find ways to publicise the [Community Directory](#) to all councillors and officers responsible for consultation and engagement ; and
- k. Cabinet request that Cabinet Reports have a new section (in Implications section perhaps), setting out the detail of resident and community engagement that has taken place especially in relation to new policies and changes to services.

Democratic Engagement

- l. (To Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee) That over the life of this administration, the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee should aim to continuously improve the way it involves the public in work programming, priority setting and the investigation of issues, including, developments such as:
- Putting out a public call for work programme topics at the beginning of the year;
 - Calling for public evidence whenever a T&F group is launched;
 - Making greater use of options to invite or even co-opt expert witnesses to assist in representing specific relevant groups on a topic-by-topic basis; and
 - Making greater use of alternative approaches to scrutiny that enable greater public representation either directly or through community representatives.
- m. Cabinet approve and instruct Member Development to commission a training module to be developed and rolled out to all **committee chairs** (open to all other councillors) on public participation options and methods. This will assist the council in developing better, more consistent and pro-active practice with respect to a resident engagement element at its committees.
- n. That the Cabinet and other Committees where appropriate make better use of Slough's Youth Parliament (YP) as a way of involving young people in the decision-making process, on issues that are relevant. In particular, the Cabinet should consider consulting the YP during the budget-setting process, and meet the YP to discuss young people's priorities and how they might be taken forward; and
- o. Cabinet endorses the recommendation that the Electoral Registration Officer commissions a review to identify what additional action could be taken by the council to improve the rates of voter registration and voting especially amongst any identified under-represented groups of residents in Slough.

1. Introduction

Effective overview and scrutiny provides constructive ‘critical friend’ challenge and ensures the voice of the public is heard. It should be led by objectivity and evidence by people who take responsibility for their role and drive improvement in public services.

This report sets out the work and conclusions of a task group of the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee (CISC) that was convened at the end of November 2023. The Task Group met on 4 occasions, the fourth meeting taking place on the 26 March 2024 to inform this draft report and recommendations before submission to CISC on 23 April 2024.

1.1 Membership

Councillors:

- Subhash Mohindra (Chair);
- Zaffar.Ajaib;
- Christine Hulme;
- Pavitar Mann;
- Frank Mark O Kelly; and

Slough CVS

- Ramesh Kukar

Supported by:

- Rebecca Curley, Community Development Officer
- Michael Edley, Governance and Scrutiny Officer
- Dave Hounsell, Acting Head of Service, CEO Office
- Anita Jan, Tenant Participation Officer
- Sally Kitson, ASC Partnership Manager;
- Alexander Polak, Head of Governance and Scrutiny; and
- Kate Pratt, Acting Head of Communications

1.2 Terms of Reference

The broad terms of reference of the Task and Finish Group were as defined by outcomes in the Scope of work (Appendix A.) These outcomes were approved by CISC at its meeting on 28 November 2023.

2. Background

Local authority best practice is defined across seven overlapping themes (Fig 1) that reflect what most local authorities already do or are striving to achieve. While these themes are all interdependent, strong governance, culture and leadership underpin effective partnerships and community engagement, service delivery and the use of resources. Continuous improvement is the outcome of all the themes working well together.

Figure 1. The seven best-value themes



As is the case for Slough (<https://www.slough.gov.uk/commissioners>), it is these themes that underpin the basis of the Minister’s intervention in a failing council and inform the Commissioners’ directions and subsequent assessments. As part of Slough Council’s response to intervention, it undertook a resident survey parallel to a similar nationwide [LGA survey](#). This revealed a significant loss of trust in the Council, down to 25% of Slough respondents that said they trust Slough Council a great deal or a fair amount compared to 59% of national respondents. Finally, the Council’s relationship and interaction with residents features in 3 of the 5 corporate priorities (see Fig 2 below).

Figure 2: The 5 Strategic Priorities as set out in the [Corporate Plan 2023](#).



Resident Focused



Providing financial sustainability



Enabling residents and communities



Strengthening partnerships



Building trust

These priorities are characterised as follows:

Building trust: Work to restore trust and confidence in SBC: ensuring that we are reliable, responsive, and open, as we continue to recover and improve;

Resident focussed: Serve the people of Slough first and foremost: responding to their concerns, ensuring their views are heard and delivering on the issues that matter most to them; and

Enabling residents and communities: Focus on enabling residents to live well independently: building community capacity and resilience, fostering self-sufficiency and creating platforms that allow our community to shape Slough's future.

These were the principle factors informing the decision to launch a task and finish style scrutiny investigation.

3. Approach

The Task and Finish Group's approach to this investigation was through the collection of evidence by a combination of: discussions with officers; a survey of councillor colleagues; informal conversations with residents; comparison with neighbouring Councils; some preliminary 'secret, shopper' style activity; reviewing relevant guidance such as that from the LGA¹ and CfSG²; and their own experiences of interactions with residents.

Task Group members met on 3 occasions, and at each, they received, reviewed and discussed information put before them. The discussions led the task group to either:

- Identify potential improvements that might require a recommendation to Cabinet/Council/Committee, or a proposal to a member of CLT;
- Identify specific issues they should investigate further; or
- Close off a particular line of enquiry.

At its first meeting, members had previously carried out their own desk top research on aspects of resident engagement and reviewed the results of the Resident Survey. A wide-ranging discussion followed in which members recognised the wide number of activities and issues associated with the three outcomes, (Building Trust, Resident Focussed and Enabling residents).

The task group concluded that at their 2nd meeting they would be more likely to add value by focussing on 3 specific aspects of resident engagement each relating to one of the 3 Outcomes set out in the scope as follows:

¹ New Conversations: An LGA Guide to engagement (Feb 2017)

² A. Aiken, 2022: How to write effective survey and research questions. CfGS

- Building trust:** In the resident survey, residents considered councillors the most trusted source (43%) when it came to information from council sources. The task and finish group identified the potential for Councillors to have a front-line role in disseminating consistent information by being a conduit / cascade locally.
- Resident Focussed:** Councillors agreed to explore how Consultations are experienced by residents, as well as evaluating alternative (representative) approaches to securing residents'/service users' views on issues and activities.
- Enabling Residents:** Councillors sought to focus on opportunities to enable more residents to participate in democratic engagement, believing that any improvements more likely to be realistic than a drive to build resident and community capacity.

Members agreed that these issues would be investigated, through hearing evidence from relevant SBC officers:

- At their 2nd meeting (Appendix B) by focussing on member communications and consultations; and
- At their 3rd meeting (Appendix C) by focussing on alternative (representative) approaches to securing resident engagement and considering democratic engagement.

Further research, led by members following each of these meetings, generated further evidence (Appendices D and E) that informed the findings and associated recommendations which were discussed and finalised in the members' 4th meeting (set out in Section 4).

In making recommendations, the Task and Finish Group were conscious of the need to focus on corporate issues and to recognise the current resource pressures faced by the Council.

4. Findings and recommendations

4.1 Building Trust: Member Communications

The response from councillors to the task group members' survey (Appendix D1) clearly re-enforced the proposal that Councillors would value a regular (Monthly) update that supports their role as Ward Councillor that they could cascade to residents in their wards or have as a reliable resource to respond to typical resident queries.

A 'Councillor Cascade' would complement the Members Bulletin, which provides members with council activities/events they should be aware of in their role as Borough Councillors.

The Cascade would ensure members were equipped with key messages and press releases, consistent accurate information about the council and highlight activities (such as road works, events and consultations) directly relevant to residents.

The proposal is founded in the finding (SBC Resident Survey 2023) that residents most trust information provided by their ward councillor. It is envisaged that the exact content of the cascade would evolve over time in response to member and resident feedback. Two recommendations result:

- a. Cabinet to endorse the addition of all SBC Councillors to the distribution list for media releases from the communications team, to ensure members receive the latest news at the same time as the press and public;
- b. Cabinet to endorse a monthly release, by the Communications Team, to Councillors, either stand-alone (Councillors' Cascade?) or as part of the current Members' Bulletin schedule. The main aim of this is to provide Councillors with key Borough-wide and local information that they can pass on to residents. Typically, this would include latest news, upcoming major street works, major planning applications received, performance data, information from partners, for example TVP or Frimley Health, and information about commissioned services as well as planned community and consultation events.

4.2 Resident Focussed

4.2.1 Consultation

Consultation is used informally and formally to ensure resident voices are heard in the shaping of policies and delivery of universal services. The transparency afforded to the consultation process is key to the trust residents have in the council.

There are a number of issues regarding the way we consult our residents on key issues, as can be seen in feedback from residents via Councillors' responses to the Task Group's survey (Appendix D2). In summary they relate to matters of quality, consistency, co-ordination, accessibility and a failure to feedback either the results of the survey or the final decision made by Council, cabinet, committee or Director. It is these broad themes that the task group has responded to in the following recommendations:

- c. The CEX should ensure that the Target Operating Model includes a senior officer with corporate responsibility to ensure a strategic approach to resident engagement, consultation and communication to ensure quality engagement, meeting required standards that are consistent and co-ordinated across the organisation (and ultimately with Partners). The appointed officer, as a priority should:
 - i. Meet with the Scrutiny Chair, Task Group Chair and Scrutiny Officer to discuss the member and resident feedback in relation to Consultation set out in Appendices D and E.
 - ii. Refresh and submit to Cabinet the Corporate Engagement Policy ([Slough Engagement Policy 2015](#)) including a review of customer standards, applied

through all of our interactions with residents. (Current standards go back to 2013); and

- iii. Review, refresh and relaunch the [Slough Engagement toolkit](#) with case studies of current slough examples, links and resources.

- d. Promote [Citizen Space](#) internally and externally, as the Consultation and Engagement Hub for Slough. This will be relaunched shortly with a new look and feel that will highlight accessibility links and set out the consultation and feedback standards residents can expect.

- e. Cabinet asks the CEX to establish and develop a forum of officers (reporting to CLT) across the council (and partners) which helps ensure there is a cohesive and joined-up approach to consultation and engagement across the council, a Corporate Consultation and Engagement calendar, peer support for officers to share best practice as well as monitoring of consultation standards; and

- f. Cabinet asks the CEX and CLT that, from immediate effect, the consultations for 2023-24 and all consultations going forward are published on Citizen Space, including both the results of all consultations and a link to the ultimate outcome (Cabinet report) within proscribed time periods. Whenever possible, as a courtesy, provide feedback specifically to those people who contributed to a consultation.

4.2.2 Community Networks

Community and voluntary groups have the potential to offer access to groups of residents brought together because of where they live, of having a common interest or by association.

These groups offer the potential for more targeted, bespoke engagement, as well as the source of advice on the most appropriate means by which to engage particular groups of people.

These groups may also act as a conduit for the two-way flow of information for consultation exercises and other forms of engagement. Where the advocacy of a group may secure more and better-quality responses than the council might independently.

At ward level, by accessing community groups, Councillors may be able to direct residents, if appropriate, to valuable local support networks or to receive information and advice on topics and issues that may be unfamiliar to a Councillor. In all cases, Councillors would benefit from understanding and connecting with groups in their area and the Task Group make the following recommendations to support members in this respect:

- g. That Cabinet request the Member Development team to work with the Community Development Officer to develop a simple self-service tool, for Members by which they can refer residents to relevant community groups. This would be of value in Members' surgeries, and an opportunity to connect with community groups and to build local conduits for 2-way flows of information;

- h. Cabinet directs Community Development to produce a guide for Councillors that list key sources of information about Borough-wide and ward-based Community Groups;
- i. Cabinet directs Member Development to commission a training module, to be rolled out for all councillors, helping them learn about how to make connections (see g above) with residents and borough and local community groups (see h above). The [LGA starter kit for front-line councillors](#) offers a useful starting point;
- j. Cabinet request Democratic Services and CLT to find ways to publicise the [Community Directory](#) to all councillors and officers responsible for consultation and engagement ; and
- k. Cabinet request that Cabinet Reports have a new section (in Implications section perhaps), setting out the detail of resident and community engagement that has taken place especially in relation to new policies and changes to services.

4.3 Enabling Residents: Democratic Engagement

The Task and Finish Group, recognising that building community capacity, typically requires substantial and sustained resources and officer time, chose to focus on opportunities to enable more residents to participate in democratic engagement. Resident attendance at public committee meetings is generally low and Rule 9 (enabling resident questions) is not actively promoted. The Task Group also recognised the responsibility of CISC in this regard.

Finally, members discussed the need to increase participation in the democratic process by segments of the population from whom we don't hear (e.g. the Polish community). In addition, members queried whether the demographics of Councillors themselves are sufficiently representative of the population. For example the Council is currently generally more male than the population, The following recommendations arose from these discussions:

- l. (To Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee) That over the life of this administration, the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee should aim to continuously improve the way it involves the public in work programming, priority setting and the investigation of issues, including, developments such as:
 - Putting out a public call for work programme topics at the beginning of the year;
 - Calling for public evidence whenever a T&F group is launched;
 - Making greater use of options to invite or even co-opt expert witnesses to assist in representing specific relevant groups on a topic-by-topic basis; and
 - Making greater use of alternative approaches to scrutiny that enable greater public representation either directly or through community representatives.
- m. Cabinet approve and instruct Member Development to commission a training module to be developed and rolled out to all **committee chairs** (open to all other councillors) on public participation options and methods. This will assist the council in developing

better, more consistent and pro-active practice with respect to a resident engagement element at its committees.

- n. That the Cabinet and Committees make better use of Slough's Youth Parliament (YP) as a way of involving young people in the decision-making process, on issues that are relevant. In particular, the Cabinet should consider consulting the YP during the budget-setting process, and meet the YP to discuss young people's priorities and how they might be taken forward; and
- o. Cabinet endorses the recommendation that the Electoral Registration Officer commissions a review to identify what additional action could be taken by the council to improve the rates of voter registration and voting especially amongst any identified under-represented groups of residents in Slough.

5.0 Conclusion

This task group has identified 15 improvements to the approach the Council takes to its engagement (communication, engagement and consultation) with residents. It is hoped that they will contribute to improved outcomes in relevant current strategic priorities in the Corporate Plan. The work of the task group has only touched the tip of the iceberg in terms of the totality of the Council's interaction with its residents.

There is undoubtedly a need to bring an overarching, corporate, more consistent approach to improvement in the way we engage with residents. This should be outcome driven, and measured against aspirations described in terms of residents' experience of how they receive information, how they are involved in the design and delivery of the services they use and how empowered they feel as individuals and as members of the communities (of place, of interest and by association) to which they belong. Ultimately this is likely to be couched in terms of outcomes relating to strong, resilient, connected communities, rather than strategies for communication, engagement, involvement and empowerment.

Appendix A: Scope of work for Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

SUMMARY: SBCs Corporate Strategy 2023-27 sets out 5 principles, 3 of which relate to the interaction between residents and the Council. This Task and Finish group will review the degree to which the council has a vision that sets out its ambition, is clear and consistent about its overall approach to achieving it and has begun to put in place firm foundations for for residents to engage and to build their trust			
Scrutiny Officer	Michael Edley	Steering Group	Cllrs: Mohindra (Chair), Hulme, Mann, O’Kelly, Ajaib + Ramesh Kukar (CVS)
Project Lead	Caroline Adlem		
Strategic Lead	Sarah Hayward ³ (Director)	Other stakeholders	Kate Pratt, Dave Hounslow

Outcome	Objectives	Outputs
Building Trust: Slough has reference to a framework that ties together factors affecting trust and mechanisms to strengthen (e.g. commitments to customers in Engagement, Communications and Consultation (ECC)) and is consistent in their application and understands the benefits and risks in relation to reputation and trust so the Council can pro-actively re-build residents’ trust.	Key trust drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how to measure quality and outcomes of ECC (LGA Toolkit?) • clear staff support/overarching guidance • self-assessment (LGA Tool)
Resident Focused: The council is aware of Slough’s communities of place, interest and association and is connected to them through community leaders, through the VCS and other ways. As a result better quality engagement means that our services reflect the needs of residents and relevant customers, and residents and communities feel engaged and involved in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we currently engage strategically with VCS • Resident voice in democratic process • Engagement in policy, strategy, service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer to communities and VCS corporately and degree of cross dept consistency • Corporate info about engaging strategic community and voluntary orgs

³ The Director and Project Lead effectively left the employ of the Council early in 2024.

Outcome	Objectives	Outputs
service design and delivery as well as able to engage with the democratic process	development design, delivery	
Enabling Residents and Communities: Slough BC recognises the co-dependence/relationship between building stronger more resilient communities and the 2-way relationship with its communications and engagement with residents and has strategies in place to build community capacity building communities where residents feel respected, valued and empowered so they are confident and more self-sufficient with leaders that build bridges between different communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are we currently doing? • Benchmark/best practice • Role of VCS • Levers sticks and carrots to build capacity and leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A common language and if when and how the council is proactive.in building capacity • How the Council plans to enable (and empower) communities at a strategic level
In Scope	Out of Scope	Resources
Complaints, online meetings; scrutiny, reporting, PSED Subsequently agreed that the enabling strand was too complex and that SBC was not ready/could barely afford anything in this area	Childrens engagement? T&FG on this in March. Service specific relationships	background

Building trust: Work to restore trust and confidence in SBC: ensuring that we are reliable, responsive and open, as we continue to recover and improve.

Resident focussed Serve the people of Slough first and foremost: responding to their concerns, ensuring their views are heard and delivering on the issues that matter most to them.

Enabling residents and communities: Focus on enabling residents to live well independently: building community capacity and resilience, fostering self-sufficiency and creating platforms that allow our community to shape Slough's future.

Work streams	Objectives	Outputs/milestones	Target Date / Completed
Research analysis and interpretation	Review of resident survey, Review of member survey What builds trust, What loses trust Response time commitment and actual across different interfaces Secret shopper, and user testing of translate Complaints Data Finbar McSweeney , reporting process and data Review of recent consultations Dave Hounsell Data relating to Councillors' case files Finbar Website hits (several target pages), Accessibility of website (note we are in top 10 in country) Attendance at public council meetings (in person /online), Petitions data Nick Pontone Can we benchmark	•	
Consultation	Task group members to explore with residents their experience of consultation to feed into Dave Hounsell proposals for new approach to consultation	Analysis and interpretation of member input that lead to recommendations regarding consultation	<i>13 march</i>
Internal comms	To make recommendations relating to the development and content of members bulletin so that members can cascade information to residents	Recommendations for Members bulletin and resident cascade,	<i>13 march</i>
Democratic Engagement	Receive evidence about the ways by which residents can engage formally and informally in the democratic process and institutions of Slough BC	Recommendations	<i>Evidence from witnesses on 6/3/24</i>

Appendix B: Notes of 2nd Meeting of Task Group

Task and Finish Group on Building Trust and Resident Engagement

31st January 2024: 2nd Meeting

Initial discussion focused on need to narrow down the focus of groups investigations.

Arising from the previous meeting were 4 priorities:

- Community Empowerment
- Customer Contact
- Consultation
- Democratic Engagement including member communications

Due partly to lost time over the holiday, compounded by officer illness in the new year, there was the recognition that the Group needed to be pragmatic in the scope of its work.

It was recognised that Community Empowerment (Building resilience, Community development, stronger communities) was complex and wide ranging. It was almost certainly beyond the capacity of the group to get traction on this important aspect of Community Engagement at this time, notwithstanding the financial challenges the council is facing that predicated against implementing any recommendations the group may make.

It was also acknowledged that Customer Contact (resident reporting of issues, complaints etc), whilst clearly in need of review, would also present complex challenges in any investigation at this time.

It was agreed that the two areas of Consultation and Democratic Engagement offered the group the opportunity use their own experience and research in areas that are currently under review and therefore open to any recommendations that might arise from the Group's investigation.

Democratic Engagement

A useful reference to help understand the different aspects of this topic can be found at this link

[21st Century Councillor](#)

This sets out the key challenges and multiple roles of a Councillor.

Task group members then commented and offered evidence in relation their role as councillors as follows:



- Leafletting draws greatest response from residents. Can get a ten percent response rate on leaflets from councillors – national party politics, this experience was supported by officers. BUT this is an expensive way to communicate.
- Discussed benefits of paper going through letterboxes. About £18k for a single run on folded A4. We do put other things in the council tax billing, but there is only so much we can do so before it weighs too much.
- Apart from online, what do we do to help local people know about their local councillors? Do we just leave it to the political parties? Difficulties in accessing electoral register due to GDPR restrictions.
- In residents survey councillors were the most trusted (43%) when it came to information from council sources
- If a resident comes and registers themselves on the electoral register, why can't we send them info about their local councillor, how to contact them, who they are, other council services - can we do it by email when people register?
- Can we ask people whose emails we hold for permission to add them to our list?
- Can we expand the SBC newsletter to email more people?
- Many people don't generally go online a lot in relation to the council.
- Councillors do not have enough up to date information about their local area. Would be good to have an updatable information pack.
- Don't think councils engage with councillors well enough about things happening in our wards, so we can't help inform our residents. This needs to improve.
- Council is currently investigating an email newsletter system – there is a cost implication.
- We have Slough Alerts – costs only £1k a year, but it works – councillors rate this. Planning to do more in the new year to help people get more direct/targeted information
- What about an app for SBC? Our website is entirely mobile friendly so in effect that's our 'app'. Our website can report things fine, so no need for an app there.

From this discussion there emerged a link to work KP is undertaking in regards to developing the members bulletin and council-to-member-to-resident communications and information flow.

Communications

Kate P is working on a big internal communications plan:

- A key element is based, to some extent, on expansion of the Members' Bulletin;
- Coupled to this exploring idea of communication/distribution hubs.

E.g.

- Via faith-based organisations, where for example we ask Imams to give the proper advice re fasting and children.

- Eastern European parent governors – sought one via the local catholic church
- What do we do to engage with local religious leaders in order to leverage their influence/stamp of approval: Community notices distributed in places of worship etc
- One councillor has 55 WhatsApp groups, one or two for each street in his ward, Councillor can circulate messaging at the press of a button to about 2000 people. Another advantage of WhatsApp is you can informally poll people quite easily.
- Note - The member newsletter doesn't come into 'focused' inbox because it goes to multiple people.

KP: Comms team is keen to get better corporate information to members. Kate wants to change the members bulletin so that it can include the equivalent of a cascade – e.g. here is some info on a consultation, press releases or opinions, or whatever, and recruit Cllrs' efforts to assist with the dissemination and engagement of it.

Currently it is clear that councillors have different information, so we're not being consistent with residents. Do cllr like the above suggestion?

Kate P would welcome this group having an active role to play in designing this new approach to supporting member communications with residents.

Kate will work with Cllrs O'Kelly and Ajaib to funnel member feedback

Consultation

NB difference between statutory consultation and informal consultation. Doing the latter better and at an earlier stage in the process makes Statutory much easier.

DH: The Council has been trying to review its model of formal consultation.

There will be a new director of strategy, change and resident engagement starting in 2 months' time, so there is an opportunity to influence them and the new model of consulting.

What we do now:

There are some we have to do (Statutory) – like the corporate plan, equalities objectives etc. They're important, but they don't get a great deal of engagement.

People aren't that interested in responding re the budget!

We get lots of responses to are things people use every day like libraries consultations. In this case we use more mechanisms – focus groups, drop-ins, etc

We know we need to consult more and earlier to shape policy and ask why are we doing it? Check it's not tokenistic. Make sure the feedback will genuinely change policy and practice.

Ask when to do it (early as possible, this is easy)

Ask HOW we should do it

There are different models:

a. Centralised? One team runs every consultation

Is good because it's a lot of expertise needed to do it well

b. Devolved

Is good because people know about the subject matter. But results in variable quality, variable approaches across the organisation etc

c. Hub and spoke

Central small team with the expertise, who advise the subject matter experts who run their own consultations

London Borough of Kensington & Chelsea have provided some input for SBC team (they have done lots of work on this in wake of Grenfell disaster)

Learning from this – planning to use 'Citizen Space' which helps us communicate better through our website etc and coordinate the online side of things.

But we are at the place as a council of acknowledging that the model needs to change, but we've not done it yet, so councillors' views would be well timed.

Recommend support for the hub-and-spoke structure.

Discussion:

Members feedback from residents say consultations are tedious. They give up. Have to create a password etc etc. Same for planning. Councillor has to help people do it. So most residents give up, we need to make this more user friendly.

DH: The planning portal requires a login – this is the barrier. But our other consultation things we offer up, there is no password required.

DH: We're always going to need a mixed-methods approach to how we consult. People need to have lots of ways to talk to us, so that nobody is excluded for any reason.

We also need to accept that a proportion of residents simply do not need or want to engage with the council. A 2% response rate on a door drop is considered normal.

Why can't we listen to people's views on facebook, why do we have to direct them to our portal?

We like engagement which grew based on interest. Do you like this, yes/no. if you don't, would you like to tell us why?

It would be useful to help the consultation team learn about what the experience of people is who use the various engagement portals.

Can we ask on facebook?

Is the organisation settled on the hub and spoke methodology? It's how it's worked recently

Do we publish the results of consultations?

It's not good enough for the only feedback which residents get about a consultation to be buried in a council or cabinet report.

Note that the staff survey can't just be found by any officer easily.

Note that our consultation that's been launched on EDI etc is at the very bottom of the webpage, not at the top.

DH: Citizenspace has a 'you said we did' function in it. But this it not always used. So we should make sure this is always done in future. RBKC make sure this is always done within a week of a decision being made.

NB: How do we address it if the public say one thing and we do another. This is all about transparency, which is how we build trust!

Feedback re the CPZ carparking consultation event held in Chalvey. About 100 residents were complaining there had not been enough time for the consultation and they missed the date. Officers offered to allow late responses.

DH: These kind of things will happen if there's not a consistent approach followed across depts – so the proposed hub/spoke model could help cover it.

KP: This confirms that there is variation happening. Comms picked it up afterwards too.

Should have a step built into the standard consultation process which guarantees relevant councillors will be notified.

Note example of a planning consultation where the sign on the lamppost was hidden by foliage which the council hadn't cut. So residents launched a petition to say they had not been properly consulted.

DH: We tweet saying these are new/recent planning applications. But realise we don't send these direct to councillors.

DH to ask members to do some research and pass on the anecdotal experience of residents with respect to consultation. DH to suggest some key questions to ask perhaps. 2/3 task group members to work with Dave on this: Cllr Mohindra and either Cllr Mann/Hulme + Ramesh Kukar (Slough VCS) perhaps

NEXT STEPS

Work on Communications and Consultation to proceed immediately with aim to report 13 March (See below)

Interim officer/member meetings (via teams) on comms and consultation to be organised according to need by KP and DH

Two task group meetings: ME to set up in discussion with Chair.

The first one (6 March) more exploratory on the issue of democratic engagement – Alex and the following people to provide thinking, case studies etc

- Rebecca Curley – could help us a bit with input on the democratic engagement side...
- Anita Jan: Citizens panels and assemblies –in housing and has some experience of this – she does tenants' engagement
- Sally Kitson

The second (13 March): Kate will seek Task group members views on developing the bulletin so that there will be a template comms product to look at, and we've done our research on residents, to input to Kate's product and feedback what we've found and look for any more actions out of that.

DH will feedback work in relation to task group members' views / resident experience of Consultation.

Appendix C: Notes of 3rd meeting of Task Group

Apologies

Cllr Hulme and Ramesh Kukar (CVS)

The aim of this meeting: To bring evidence to councillors of 3 case studies representing different approaches to resident/stakeholder engagement.

1. ASC Co-Production Network (CPN), Sally Kitson: **Appendix A**

Sally and her team have worked hard to establish an informal recruitment process that enable selection of volunteers to better represent the various [protected] characteristics of service users and hard to reach groups.

ASC have realised that it is necessary to move away from expecting residents to come to us to feed in on issues, there is a need to reach out more, especially into settings which we would not normally hear from to promote the CPN role and recruit members. Working with the CVS is key as well as taking advantage of social media platforms.

The main challenge, at the moment is to bring the male experience to CPN.

There are currently 12 residents with direct experience of health and social care that form the network. Further community volunteers who are also 'experts by experience' are involved in the recently re-launched Adult Social Care steering groups, that oversee the newly developed strategies (Carers, Older People's, Learning Disabilities and Autism)

Coproduction Network volunteers are offered training to support them in their role to actively participate as members.

2. Community Development and Community Networks, Rebecca Curley: **Appendix B**

Rebecca was keen to reiterate that any approach to communities had to be more bespoke than in the past.

It was clear that community networks had the potential to offer a valuable conduit for the flow of information in both directions.

3. [The Tenants' and Leaseholders Housing Board](#): **Anita Jan**

Slough Borough Council's Housing Service has recently updated its Resident Involvement Strategy. This is to ensure SBC meets the strengthened requirements of the Regulator for Social Housing; in line with the Social Housing Bill 2023. The strategy was approved by Cabinet in December 2024 and is about to be launched on 18 March.

The housing service has recently recruited Tim Blanc, an Independent Chair for the Resident Board. The board is an important part of the council's governance

structures. It is responsible for co-regulating, scrutinising, and influencing the Housing Service offer.

The board consists of 12 (currently 8) residents (nine tenants, three leaseholders) and the independent chair, the team are looking to recruit more members to bring the board up to full complement.

This is a statutory board of the council's tenants and leaseholders, modelled to some extent on the Scrutiny model. The board can investigate issues of concern to their community (e.g. repairs, grounds management) in relationship to people living in council housing (rented/leasehold).

In April 2024, Anita is to be joined by 3 officers, The council's housing stock consists of 7200 tenants/leaseholders. A significant amount of officer time will be spent on creating opportunities for the wider community to help shape services; as well as build capacity of the board members' to be effective in their role.

In addition to support to the board, a monthly housing newsletter is circulated online (approx. 2000 people). Housing has recently started printing a number of hard copies to ensure we are sharing this with residents who may not have online access.

Possible task group recommendations:

- A list of services supplied by Bex's team, with self-service instructions for how councillors can refer residents;
- Councillors need a guide, or a list of the key websites which they could look up themselves;
- Councillors' surgeries – if members wanted to focus their surgeries on a particular issue at a particular time, and members wanted to publicise that, officers may be able to come and support you when you do this. Not necessarily officers – maybe you could have links to eg BabyBank, via your surgeries. If you know that something is a bit of a need in your area, invite another organisation along to your surgery with you. When you do, you can ask for their contact details, and ask if they're okay with being added to your WhatsApp to keep them updated.
- Recommend that a member development session is put on for all councillors helping them learn about how to make these connections locally.
- Maybe Councillors aren't aware enough that the members bulletin exists.
- We need to publicise the Community Directory to all councillors and officers.
- There should be more work done on customer standards, and they should be applied through all of our contact with residents. Current standards go back to 2013?
- Should reinstate a forum of officers across the council (and partners) which helps ensure there is a cohesive and joined-up approach to consultation across the council, as well as keeping an eye on consultation standards.
- The council needs to improve the way it provides feedback to people who input into consultations.

Appendix A: ASC Co-Production Network

THE SLOUGH CO-PRODUCTION NETWORK - APPROACH

- **Coproduction Network (CPN) set up in 2019** to ensure **local residents** with direct experience of health and adult social care **have a real say** in what services should look like.
- Local residents with very **different lived experiences work alongside senior SBC ASC staff and other partners** including health and Healthwatch to support the development of policies, strategies and services.
- The CPN is **very committed group** - agreed together how it works through a '**charter**'.
- It has **strengthened** over time and profile has increased.
- The commissioning team has developed a **strategic commissioning framework which outlines our approach**– CPN has a key role in commissioning projects – ie volunteers part of project groups to support the development of service specifications and involvement in tender panels



Slough

THE SLOUGH CO-PRODUCTION NETWORK - EXAMPLES OF WORK

Supported designing accessible leaflets and information for residents

- **Self-neglect and Direct Payments** – raise awareness/promote
- **Winter blues campaign material** - promoting services.

Involvement as **active participants with SBC, NHS and Slough SVC in deciding the allocation of the 'One Slough Fund'** to voluntary sector groups in line local aims and objectives highlighted within Slough's Health and Wellbeing and Corporate plans.

Part of the **recommissioning of voluntary and community sector service contract** –help design what the service should look like and participated in provider validation meetings prior to contract award

Supporting Advocacy recommissioning . CPN volunteers part of partnership project with social workers from Learning Disability, Mental health and localities teams and NHS representatives. Reviewed current service specification and designed new outcome/ service specification for the new advocacy service. Volunteers part of the tender evaluation panel



Slough

THE SLOUGH CO-PRODUCTION NETWORK - EXAMPLES OF WORK CONTINUED

- **Worked with Healthwatch** to gain insight into the experience of Slough resident's access to their GP. This work was incorporated in April 2023 report titled **What Matters Most**
- **Involved in the recruitment of Adult Social care staff**, agreeing interview questions and sitting on panels to help decide who should be appointed (Coproduction lead, Carers Support and Development Officer) and led stakeholder panel for senior posts – recent ASC Director of Operations
- **CPN volunteers led workshop with ASC for local residents** to help support the recruitment of more volunteers. More residents have joined us
- **Supported the review of Oak House**– Part quality conversations with residents, families and staff to get feedback on experiences at the service. We worked with commissioner and provided feedback to help inform the commissioning options.



Slough

EXAMPLES OF RECENT ENGAGEMENT WITH RESIDENTS

- Community Network Forum
- Co production recruitment workshop
- Quality Conversations at Oak House
- Carers Strategy
- Older People Strategy
- Learning Disability Strategy
- Autism Strategy
- Carers Rights Day
- Accelerated Reform Fund
- Substance misuse seminar
- Executive function / Brain injury resource pack developed in response to serious case reviews (safeguarding)
- Substance misuse – managing two national grants including monitoring and performance reporting to DHSC on a quarterly basis



Carers Rights Day – 23 November 2023



[Coproducton Video.pptx](#)

Appendix B: Community Networks

Slough Poverty Forum

Launched in June '22 monthly meetings with representatives from voluntary, community, statutory, business and private sector to address cost-of-living challenges

Outcomes

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Capacity building | Aligned and united approach of support for residents around cost-of-living |
| Sharing intelligence | |
| Repair Café Slough | Ensuring overlaps in delivery are considered |
| Cost-of-living resource pack | Weekly Community Development Drop-Ins |
| Problem-solving for groups | |
| Building links and networks | |
| Community Support Café | |
| Bridging gap between sectors | |

Community Directory

A partnership approach to developing and expanding existing website into a community directory meeting needs of residents and partners [Slough Community Directory - Activities and services to keep Slough residents fit and healthy \(sloughhealth.org\)](#)

Outcomes

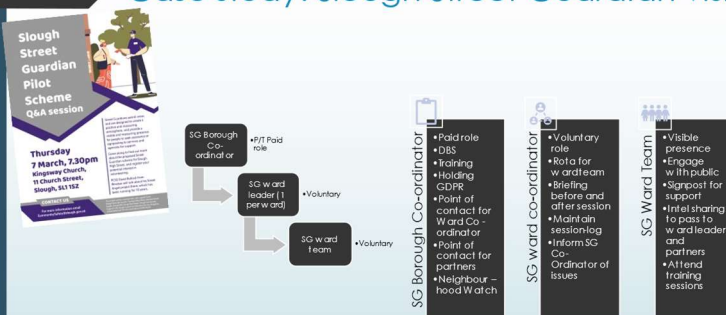
- ▶ Free platform for community groups
- ▶ Free platform for residents to search for activities, groups and support in their area
- ▶ Linking groups and partners
- ▶ SP and GPs resource to utilise for benefit of patients
- ▶ User-friendly
- ▶ Self-sustainable
- ▶ Builds on self-help, prevention and resilience
- ▶ Trusted resource
- ▶ In progress with capacity to change functionality

Volunteering and community work

Ways to already engage

- Early Help also do the Slough Information and Services Guide [Slough Information and Services Guide \(sloughfamilyservices.org.uk\)](#)
- Neighbourhood Watch
- Slough Street Guardian scheme – pilot launching for the Town Centre with view to roll out borough-wide – poster attached
- Link with Parish Councils
- Link with NAGS
- Link with existing groups such as Chalvey Community Partnership, Britwell Community Forum, Langley Forum, West Cippenham Tenants and Residents Association
- Slough CVS volunteering [Slough CVS – Slough Council for Voluntary Service](#)

Case study: Slough Street Guardian vision



Town Centre pilot to roll-out March 2024 through Slough Community Transport and Shop Mobility

Appendix D: Feedback from Councillors in response to task group members' survey.

1. Member Information needs/Weekly member bulletin:

The idea behind this information is that councillors should share with their residents information relevant to them

An emailed monthly list of "links" to councillors

Planning applications: For example, planning applications are a source of pain when residents don't notice a yellow planning notice and then get up in arms when building is started.

Road works/disruptions: Letting residents know about Road works notice gives the appearance that there is a plan in place, and someone is in control

Planned Council works (road markings, potholes, hedge trimming, tree/parks maintenance: Planned council works again gives the appearance that there is a plan in place, and someone is in control.

Issues with recycling collections, policy reminders for recycling: Issues with recycling and bins are still going on with no clarity on a remedy, More resident guidance would help. It is also noticeable that rubbish is blown all over the town and street cleaning has disappeared, will it ever come back?

Fly tipping reports: Fly tipping is a disgusting feature of every large town. Maidenhead is possibly even worse than Slough. It would be good for councillors to communicate what action the council is taking, how much it costs the residents, who are the culprits etc.

Resident Complaints: A report on customer complaints is a normal part of every large organisation and should be public domain.

Press releases could be shared with councillors at the same time as they are posted, I catch some on Facebook and repost them to share but I am not using face book during the day

Generally, members do find the Bulletin quite useful as a prompt of upcoming meetings and agendas. I think this can be used to share more wider information with members like information on complaints, fly tipping etc...

The format can be frustrating on a mobile device so this needs to be looked at across all browsers.

Customer Contact Centre performance is it possible to have this broken down to the types of calls they are receiving. E.g. Bins, Parking issues, Children's Services etc? Is there any ward intel that can be included?

Social media:

There are issues which get to social media or the press before we, as councillors, get to see them. It is frustrating to have to be on the back foot sometimes.

The other thing is that bad news propagates quickly, it would be helpful if there was a weekly social media summary which was sent via email fact checking statements and giving the councils official position. This could be added to the weekly bulletin.

WhatsApp:

We see some council services have started using this more with individual community groups to broadcast messages of upcoming events. All members have council/personnel smart phones and use this platform so something to review.

Old Citizen Magazine

This one of the best communication devices to residents that we had and It would be good to see something like that happen again once or twice a year and then be supplemented with an online version which might be updated perhaps once a quarter or monthly basis. I think our web/online platform Jardu probably has ability to produce this digital piece.

Other:

Can we have member information about training and mini briefs in a stand-alone sperate bulletin or via another platform so that members can easily access as when needed for self-learning and development.

information of all the pick ticket items that will be happening in their wards, this is a bit patchy...for example we get emails of planning apps but not on other majors works that are about to happen in a particular ward.

I would love to have a Councillors hub, a landing page on which there could be links to all the information requested by councillors

We could have a section on

- Constitution, for reference
- Meetings calendar, agenda and minutes - for review
- Cabinet decisions by date and items coming up for decision
- Member training - past and upcoming
- Discussion forum in topical items
- A section to raise questions of the leadership but limited to the conservative alliance
- Byte sized topic of the week - something new to share from the business
- Press releases going out in the councils name
- Call stats comming into the building, response rate,KPI's
- Message from CLT
- And so on.....

Once the hub is in place, we can add to it. The hub would be the landing page which each councillor laptop would be taken to on logging in, so each councillor would start their day with an opportunity to browse what is happening in council

I would like to add that having timely information on road closures and temporary traffic lights is crucial. Collaborating with relevant departments or implementing a system to provide councillors with this data in advance could facilitate proactive communication with residents. Sharing such updates on social media platforms can enhance community awareness and engagement, benefiting both councillors and residents.

2. SBC Consultations

- In general, when a survey is put out for residents, they can be unwieldy to reply to and often don't ask the right questions, for example when residents are offered say three choices but in fact like none of them and there is no way to indicate that (this was one direct feedback from the children's centres changes a year or so ago).
- Improved advanced notice of these would be useful and to be planned not across periods when people may not be around like XMAS type periods..
- Officers from SBC get in touch either directly and send over their consultations to disseminate through Slough cvs networks and emails. There are also SBC officers, who work with SCVS, who will often send over from other departments.
- I don't think SBC have asked us to share any information about their online portal.
- If we see a consultation for residents on SBC social media channels, we will share them without being asked.
- How often residents get involved with consultations? Very Rarely - maybe once a year at the most!
- Which 'channels', e.g. online Planning Portal, online Citizen Space, in person, through councillors, do they use to express their opinions? If it is a survey that is quick and with easy tick box options to select.
- What can be difficult when they try and respond to a consultation? Time and relevance of the consultation with regards to if the issue has an impact on my life.
- Do residents hear a reply from the council if they do respond to a consultation? I can't recall - so probably not
- What would make it easier for residents, and more meaningful? Same as above has to be relevant... no point asking me about changes in Langley if I live in Britwell for example.

Examples of engagement sites

PLANNING PORTAL WINDSOR: <https://consult.rbwm.gov.uk/kse/>

Planning Portal of Surrey: <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/land-planning-and-development/planning/applications-register/process/have-your-say>

The council lets itself down time and time again in consultations.

If the council decides to go ahead with a consultation exercise, it's important to make sure we give people enough time to respond. We also need to make sure that there is sufficient time to analyse the results, evaluate the process and consider residents views before any decisions are decided about the next steps.

- The length of time needed will vary depending on:
- the consultation channels selected
- the ability of consultees to participate (for example, if they have special needs)
- the time of year (for example school holidays) – election periods should be avoided
- the level/number of responses we are seeking or expecting
- if other local events are taking place Mela, Local Fairs, faith events etc. (can we use this to our advantage)?

Best practice suggests we should plan for up to six to 12 weeks for a consultation exercise. We should also be aware of the legal requirements for statutory consultations.

Whom to consult

We will need to identify the people or groups who are likely to be affected by, or have an interest in, the focus of the consultation. Will the exercise be open to lots of different people or will it be restricted to a certain group (e.g. service users at a day centre or bus users/road users for a bus lane)?

Although It is unrealistic to consult everyone about everything, We should strive to achieve a representative cross-section of views to ensure that we understand differing views within the community. If we have a target group in mind, it may be possible to consult with this entire group depending on its size.

When selecting whom to consult, we should think about the type of information that we can expect to receive. For example, individual users can give a snapshot of the service as they have experienced it, while non-users might give a relatively impartial but possibly uninformed view. Representative groups can offer good knowledge about a service, and their views might be stronger than those of the general public who might offer more general perceptions about service provision. We may want to set a target number of responses you wish to reach, broken-down by certain characteristics (e.g. gender, age and ethnicity). This will be beneficial when evaluating the effectiveness of the consultation exercise.

It is important that your consultation is representative of your communities. There will be many local variations but some of the groups you may wish to consider are:

- older people
- young people (consent may be required from a parent/guardian)
- people from different ethnic backgrounds
- people with disabilities (steps may need to be taken to gain informed consent)

- people on low incomes
- faith groups
- Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, and Transgender people
- migrant workers
- travellers
- homeless people.

We may need to ask participants to provide a small amount of information about themselves (their age, gender etc.) to enable you to make a judgement about representativeness.

Ways to consult

There are lots of ways to consult local people; the scale of which should be proportional to the potential impacts of the proposal or decision being taken. Some methods are 'quantitative' and others are 'qualitative'. Each has advantages and disadvantages. The method we choose will largely depend on the type of questions we want answered (and the subject matter, if it is a sensitive subject, for instance).

Some of the methods we might want to use.

Method	Channels	Other channels
Self-completion surveys	Post Text messaging	Social media Online
Telephone interviewing	Telephone interviewer	Computer-aided
Face-to-face surveys or interviews	Door knocking On the street Focus groups Sounding boards	Citizens' panel/jury Service user panels Workshops
Feedback forms or comment boxes or show of hands	Open days or drop-in events Consultation days, exhibitions and roadshows	Community forums Public meetings
Online venues	Chat rooms	Online forums or discussion groups

When thinking about what method to use it's important to think about what you want the exercise to achieve, the resources you have available to conduct the consultation, and whether you have all the data that you need to be able to conduct a statistically robust consultation.

You should also make sure that your consultation is accessible to all those who wish to participate, which might mean identifying and overcoming any barriers to their involvement. For example, offer a range of dates and times of day for events (some older residents may not wish to be out at night and working people might not be able

to get to a daytime event). Remember that different groups will have different and specific needs depending on language barriers, literacy ability, access, cultural differences and different levels of understanding.

Communicating the results is critical.

it's important to communicate the findings to our internal and external audiences. Developing key messages to summarise findings will help stakeholders understand the outcomes of the consultation and what the next steps will be.

it is important to clearly articulate whom you consulted, the methods you used and how the information gathered will inform your future work.

If possible, we should show that all opinions and suggestions have been taken into account and explain if there are reasons why it hasn't been possible to address all of the issues raised by the people you consulted.

The results and the outcomes of the consultation should be published as soon as they are available and you should make sure that the format you present your results in is suitable for all your audiences.

The council should also tell people about any changes made as a result. It is also good practice to have a dedicated consultation section on our website.

Self-Evaluating your consultation.

Evaluation is an important aspect of any consultation. At the end of each consultation we should ask ourselves:

- did your consultation achieve its objectives?
- did you use the right methods?
- did you reach your required response rate?
- did you reach all your desired groups?
- how did consultees contribute to the outcomes?
- did they understand why they were involved?
- did they receive adequate feedback?
- were there any unexpected outcomes?
- was the process cost-effective?
- what has changed as a result?
- what would you do differently next time?
- who might find what you have learned useful and how can it be shared with them?
- Evaluating your consultation exercise will help to measure how effective the council is at running consultations and assess whether we need to make any changes to your processes.

I detail below further information from my colleagues with their recent experience with Destination Farnham Rd scheme consultations. This is a very recent consultation and is for a fairly big scheme in a key area of Slough town.

Their findings are below:

- We made a number of observations with regards to the typical difficulties the council has in engaging residents and stake holders.
- We spoke to Mars who have approx. 1000/1200 staff on-site and many use the Farnham Road, however senior management were totally unaware of the scheme and that it was being consulted upon.
- We spoke to approx. 300 residents over two weekends canvassing them individually over their thoughts and collated this in a report to officers.
- In the past we have been told “councillors” opinion are marked as individual feedback. Which as councillor is frustrating as residents are very reluctant to engage.
- We had a number of drop in session run by officers, however many of the officers hadn’t even visited the actual site. Resulting in stake holders like Mr Ali from Checkout conducting his own walkabout with officers.
- We also note that very nice booklets were printed with a questionnaire on the back but the drop in areas made no provision for drop box for people to drop them off at the leisure.
- The trouble is that residents don’t want post such paper copies we make no provision on paper drop ins.
- More generally the online version was useful for those that have access.
- But for those that don’t we’re missing out on a huge cohort of resident important feedback.
- Our walkabout achieved a lot of interest, and we would encourage councillors who are impacted to get involved.
- I should add we still don’t know the return rate for the scheme from residents.

Appendix E: Notes from meeting between Cllr Mohindra (Chair) & ASC Co-production Network (CPN)

Date 20th March 2023

Present:

- Cllr Mohindra
- Marcia Wright CPN Volunteer
- Sue Benford CPN Volunteer
- Gaye Jeynes CPN Volunteer
- Bestina Bukori Adult Social Care Coproduction and Engagement Lead
- Sally Kitson Partnership Manager (note taker)

Introductions /Purpose of meeting:

Cllr Mohindra outlined that a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group has been set up to build trust and improve residents' experience of consultation and engagement. He was there keen to speak directly with residents to understand their current experiences of engagement and communication the Council.

CPN volunteers were invited to be part of this as local residents that are actively involved with the Council.

Summary of discussions

CPN volunteers were very pleased to have the opportunity to meet with Cllr Mohindra for constructive discussions in helping re-built trust. They were keen to state that they recognise some of the current issues are not new or indeed unique to Slough Borough Council.

Communication was a big theme that was identified by the volunteers from own direct experience as residents as well as listening to others through their contacts/networks in the community. They see that improving communication is key to re-building trust. Some of the issues raised included:

- SBC staff not answering telephone;
- SBC staff not responding to emails;
- Silo working between SBC departments;
- SBC staff losing information which means residents have delays in getting matters dealt with promptly;
- Overreliance on on-line information and assumptions that residents are IT literate when many are not. This means that many are excluded from accessing information or resources (eg Blue Badge)
- The SBC Citizen newsletter being delivered to households was seen as a useful resource and way for residents getting information. This was cut following S114

- Loss of 'front facing office' for residents – Landmark Place seen as a huge loss to residents when it closed. The 3 hubs are a challenge for some residents to access. Volunteers would like to see OH as a place where residents can get information /support;
- Loss of services - day services and lunch clubs since covid;
- Language barriers in Slough makes communication challenging;
- Citizens Advice Bureau not offering face to face support;
- Concerns that not all staff adopt a compassionate approach when dealing with members of the public – they believe this may be under more pressure with recruitment cuts; and
- More proactive approach to communicating good news stories /opportunities - Volunteers recognise that there are lots of positives about Slough. Need to consider how this can be shared/promoted in a more coordinated way

The group had lots to say about housing. This included:

- Wanting to see SBC take a more proactive approach to filling empty properties – they felt this is hindered as a result of the number of housing allocation officer posts being reduced.
- Repairs and property upkeep slow – a more proactive/responsive approach to avoid that properties becoming beyond the point of repair or more serious maintenance required
- Re-establishment of tenants/resident association meetings as opportunity to engage directly with residents.
- Carers fobs not working (managed by housing) which means families finding it difficult to access properties for the person they support .

Consultation – volunteers have suggestions as to how this can be improved.

- Gave example of a recent consultation event stating venues and timings not practical – not on bus route and lack of parking
- Need to ensure residents are involved from the outset in processes
- Consultation needs to take a range of formats.

Experience of being CPN volunteers

- Really valuing being involved in the network and involved in decisions
- Talked about advocacy recommissioning and having a real say/influence on design of service and selecting provider
- Helping ensure residents get clear information. They gave example of being involved in designing the Direct Payment and Self Neglect leaflets – able to share their own experiences about what information residents really need and is pertinent to them
- Want to be involved in discussions / decisions early on
- Valuing opportunities to influence and shape the autism strategy consultation – would like to see more opportunities across the council where residents are involved in methods of consultation.

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