

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee
Date:	28 th April 2026
Subject:	Report of the Improvement and Recovery Task and Finish Group
Chief Officer:	Sarah Wilson, Monitoring Officer
Contact Officer:	Amy O'Brien, Scrutiny and Governance Officer
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	No
Appendices	None

1. Summary

1.1 This report sets out the work and recommendations of the Improvement and Recovery Task and Finish Group 2025-26.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee agree the following recommendations of the task and finish group:

- a) Note the report and findings of the task and finish group
- b) Approve the recommendation and actions set out in section 3.9 of the report and direct to officers as appropriate.

3. Report

Background

3.1 The Council has been on an improvement journey since the start of Government intervention in 2021. The updated [Improvement and Recovery](#) Plan was approved in May 2025, setting out the Council's previous improvement work, the current position, and the plan moving forward.

3.2 The Improvement and Recovery Task and Finish Group was established as part of the 2025/26 work programme of the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee (CISC), to have oversight of the work of the Council's Improvement and Recovery programme.

3.3 The main aims included pinpointing particular projects or workstreams where scrutiny could be most effective—either by making recommendations to the Cabinet or suggesting operational changes to the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) or Divisional Leadership Teams (DLTs). These actions would help address issues or concerns that arise as the Improvement and Recovery programme workstreams are developed and implemented.

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3.4 Task and Finish Group members were:

Cllr Hulme (Chair)

Cllr Mann

Cllr Mohindra

Cllr Muvvula

Cllr Tomar

3.5 The Chair was appointed by members at the July 2025 CISC meeting, from a pool of designated task and finish group Chairs. Other members of the task and finish group were appointed at the same meeting.

Timelines and Lines of Enquiry/Areas of Focus

3.6 On 5th August, the Chair of the Task and Finish Group met with Senior Officers leading on the Improvement Programme. They discussed the direction of the sessions, timelines, and what information was to be provided to members. As a result of this conversation, key workstreams were identified, alongside particular topics that they needed to discuss with members.

3.7 Those headline topics were:

- Risk and Mitigation – Key risks to delivery or service impact, likelihood/impact rating, and actions in place to address them.
- Cost–Benefit Analysis – Financial and non-financial costs and benefits, including net value and timescales.
- Benchmarking to Other Councils – Measured comparisons against at least one other local authority, showing Slough’s baseline, the comparator’s result, and the performance gap.
- Workstream Impact on Residents – Positive and negative effects, how these are being mitigated, and how changes are communicated.

3.8 Each workstream, outlined in the table below, was presented to members and included information and discussion on the topics above.

Date of session	Topic
August 2025	Initial Scoping Session
October 2025	Scene setting and Introduction
October 2025	Front Door and Complaints
November 2025	Temporary Accommodation and Housing (Joint with Budget TAF)
December 2025	Comms and Engagement
January 2026	Adults

3.9 Recommendations:

- a) That the scoping process is reviewed to ensure that topics for task and finish groups are tangible, realistic, and that the group has a clear structure by which to carry out the review.
- b) That training and guidance is provided for members and appropriate officers on effective task and finish group work, to lay out the roles and responsibilities of the respective stakeholders.
- c) That member attendance is monitored and included in the final report of all task and finish group reports
- d) That the Statutory Scrutiny Officer ensures that as part of the scoping, and investigative stages of the group's work, key internal and external stakeholders are identified and engaged with, with a particular focus on outward facing groups.

Findings

Scene setting and introduction

- 3.10 This session took place on 15th October.
- 3.11 Members of the task and finish group received a presentation which outlined the reasoning behind the creation of the Improvement and Recovery Programme and what it means for Slough, as an authority and as a place. It set out key objectives and priorities for each of the programme's recovery workstreams, the progress it has made, and the next steps.
- 3.12 It then outlined the work of the transformation plan, that is deeply linked and forms part of the Council's recovery journey.
- 3.13 A main theme of the input and comments from members was around how they wanted to approach the workstreams that had been initially laid out.
- 3.14 As a result of this session, the session topics were edited and reworked to reflect members comments around resident focus. Additionally, the comments on what they wanted to know about, were themed and each service lead was required to provide information on these themes during their session with members. These themes are laid out in section 3.7.
- 3.15 Additionally, comments were made about the engagement of the programme with key groups within the borough, particularly young people, who are the focus of priority one of the Council's [Corporate Plan \(2023-2027\)](#)
- 3.16 Members were keen to discuss with both the Children's directorate, and at a corporate level, the how the work of the programme will impact young people, and how they have been engaged throughout its development, implementation and forward planning stages.
- 3.17 However, over the course of the work of the group, and despite members attempting to meet with senior officers from Children's, this was not successful. This meant that members were not able to speak with the department about its improvement journey. Members felt this was a significant missed opportunity.

Front door and complaints

- 3.18 This session took place on 23rd October
- 3.19 It explored the steps the Council is making to improve how it manages complaints, in operational and strategic terms, and how the Council plans to develop its front door to ensure residents get what they need more efficiently. The Complaints team highlighted key risks and concerns around its non-compliance with the 'Ombudsman's Code of Practice' and what it being done to rectify this.
- 3.20 Officers outlined the projects underway concerning front door and customer experience projects, what is required and the benefits that will come from them.
- 3.21 A main theme of the questioning from members was around the lack of consistent and reliable resident data. This concern was raised at multiple sessions, reflecting that this is a concern Council wide. They felt there is no 'single view' of the resident which may make it difficult to triangulate services in a front door setting.

Temporary Accommodation and Housing

- 3.22 This session took place on 13th November and was held jointly with members of the Budget task and finish group.
- 3.23 This session focused on the financial and budgetary pressure within Temporary Accommodation, and the impact it has on the service's ability to transform and improve. It highlighted actions being taken to reduce pressure in the service, and what that would then allow the service to do to move forward.
- 3.24 They spent a part of the discussion considering the TA action plan, and what the approach is to reduce the significant pressure on the Council.
- 3.25 However, members felt there was significant confusion around the distinction between the work of the two task and finish groups at the session, and for the groups in general, which made it difficult for members and officer to engage effectively with the specific tasks at hand. This meant that for the TA session in particular, it was disproportionately focused on Budget issues and left little time for the wider improvement journey to be investigated.
- 3.26 At this session, members asked that the CISC received regular updates to Committee, and a flagging of key incidents. The Housing Service Improvement Plan came to [10th February Committee](#) and as a result, it continues to be overseen by the members of the Committee informally on a regular basis.

Communication and Engagement

- 3.27 This workstream was dealt with via a circulated briefing as no members attended. Members were given the opportunity to feedback with any comments. No comments were received and therefore no findings were put forward for this session.

Adults

- 3.28 This session took place on 9th February.
- 3.29 Members were given an overview of the position and progress of the Adult Social Care directorate, outlining key strategies and work streams, and how the service is mitigating risk, especially financial risk.
- 3.30 Members asked questions on how the service is developing its front door, and how that would link to the wider Council work on the front door service improvement.

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Information was provided on the approach being co-produced and focusing on independence and ensuring best practice.

3.31 Feedback from members included actions for officers to take regarding the return of unused care equipment for it to be redeployed, and for further information to be provided on arms-length services. This was provided to members at a later date.

Learning points/Conclusions

3.32 Reflecting on the work of the group, members concluded that the scope was too broad and expansive to allow for meaningful, in-depth scrutiny of the programme, or key aspects of it. This meant that impact was negligible despite the length of time the group was commissioned for.

3.33 Multiple issues around officer engagement, member attendance and engagement, and clarity of scope meant that of the sessions that were held, there was poor attendance (with some sessions having one or no members attending), lack of direction outside of an officer presentation, and no deep dive into specific topics.

3.34 Members ask that the Statutory Scrutiny Officer notes the concerns around scoping issues, and considers how future Task and Finish topics are scoped. This includes considering those involved in the scoping process – lead officers for the topic, members of the task group, and the scrutiny officer. Importantly, members would like to see work scoped in a way that considers the guidance produced by the Centre for Scrutiny and Governance (CfGS) in the '[Good Scrutiny Guide](#)' on what a good scope sets out (page 37).

3.35 Additionally, members noted that the period for the task and finish group was too long to enact meaningful impact. Slough's [Constitution](#) states that "All Task and Finish Groups shall have a standard maximum duration of 4 months".

3.36 Furthermore, for future task and finish groups, members expressed a desire to include a more outward focused look on issues, to get a more rounded view of the issues/concerns of residents, or those who engage with the Council. For example, if undertaking a deep dive on Temporary Accommodation, members would be keen to hear testimony from representatives of service users, temporary accommodation providers, and other stakeholders.

3.37 Additionally, members noted that they were not engaged with the work of the Improvement and Recovery refresh plan that will be going to May 2026 Cabinet and felt this was a missed opportunity for the group to engage with an up to date version of the improvement work, and for them to contribute to it ahead of it being endorsed at Cabinet.

4. Chair's Reflection

4.1 It is disappointing that the Improvement and Recovery T&F group were unable to make any recommendations to Cabinet or Council on the Improvement and Recovery programme workstreams members discussed with officers. From the outset there was insufficient planning, time and information set aside for members to be able to 'deep dive' the impact service changes would have on residents. The meetings with officers tended to focus heavily on potential financial savings, (which overlapped with the Budget Task and Finish group), rather than potential impact on service users. Information was mostly circulated to members in advance, but for some sessions was presented at the meeting itself, therefore not providing opportunities for members to prepare. There is no doubt that Member availability and attendance was clearly an issue, particularly as there were

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members that were also involved in the Budget T&F. The refreshed Improvement and Recovery plan is yet to be shared with members of the group.

5. Implications

5.1. Financial implications

This is not a decision-making report, therefore there are no direct financial implications.

5.2. Legal Implications

There are no known legal implications of this report.

5.3. Equalities

There are no known equalities implications of this report.

5.4. Corporate Parenting

There are no known corporate parenting implications of this report.

5.5. Risk Management

There are no known risk management implications of this report.

5.6. Environmental

There are no known environmental implications of this report.