

Council

Thursday, 8 November 2018

Additional Information (in relation to the following items)

- 5. Public Question Time
- 7. Council Petition Scheme
- 9. Motions
- 13. Councillors Question Time

**(Please note that any further amendments, arising from Group meetings,
will be tabled at the meeting)**

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**Public Question Time
Full Council
8th November 2018**

Mr Martin Costello has asked the Leader of the Council:

Further to my previous question regarding Councillors monetary allowance, you claim that the elected councillors are working more than 20 hours a week which is quite astonishing.

While it is possible some do work hard, this has angered many residents in my neighbourhood who have yet to see any evidence of this, ever. It would be interesting to know how many in the chamber tonight could honestly agree with this.

To ensure the council tax payers of Swindon are getting the best value for money from those who have been elected to serve us, will the Council Leader implement a modern timesheet system so that all 20+ hrs can be accounted for and provide evidence of what has been achieved?

Councillors are fast getting a reputation of having ones 'snout in the trough' and I'm sure this is something that they would not want to be associated with. Utilising this simple system will increase efficiency and productivity across the Borough and in turn will help make Swindon a more pleasant environment for all who dwell here and attract businesses to invest in the town."

The Leader of the Council has responded:

The work carried out by councillors does not take place solely in the Civic offices. Whilst attendance at meetings is an important part of a councillor's role, they will also be doing reading and research at home, responding to emails and other messages, attending public meetings, holding surgeries, undergoing training for their roles, meeting residents privately and representing the Council on outside bodies inter alia. The Local Government Association carry out a regular survey of how many hours councillors work. The last one from 2013 can be found at:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/census-local-authority-co-c95.pdf>

This shows the average hours worked was 25 compared with 22 previously. Many of our Councillors also do unpaid voluntary or charity work, act as school governors and sit on public boards – all of which take a time commitment and much of it aids the council in its work. I am against any action that increases the bureaucracy around their public service, as many already struggle to maintain a reasonable politics/life balance, and any further restrictions are likely to put good potential candidates with jobs and families off standing for election. If we are to be representative of the communities we serve, we must make the role of Councillor more attractive, not less.

Therefore, tracking the work of all individual councillors in the way suggested is impractical and, most definitely, costly.

The ultimate arbiter of whether a councillor has worked hard enough is their electorate at election time.

Toothill Farmhouse Petition Amendment

Cllr Keith Williams will move and Cllr Kevin Small will second:

“This Council:

- i) Thanks the petitioners for their petition.
- ii) Requests the Cabinet Member for Finance to bring a report to Cabinet addressing the issues raised by the petitioners, including:
 - Giving the Toothill Junior Youth Club some certainty of tenure by agreeing with them a long term fixed lease on the Farmhouse.
 - Setting out the steps needed to make the Toothill Farmhouse an Asset of Community Value.
 - Agreeing that the Toothill Farmhouse will not be further leased or disposed of and commit the site to its existing use.”

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Motion Responses
Full Council
8th November 2018

AMENDMENT

Mover – Cllr Mary Martin

Seconder – Cllr Tim Swinyard

Delete all and insert:

This Council welcomes the passing of the Modern Slavery Act by a Conservative led Government in 2015

This Council commits to comply with the spirit and letter of that Act.

The Council notes that developments to date have included:

- The Cabinet Member booked onto an LGA Sponsored Course on Modern Day Slavery Disruption and Community Safety
- SBC Being part of a pan-Wiltshire Anti-slavery Partnership Board
- SBC Community Safety lead chairing a Victim Services task and finish group to create a response plan for victims and survivors to provide short-term support. This resulted in an off-the-shelf package that instructs all relevant parties in Swindon and Wiltshire in how to respond to operations that identify victims of modern slavery and trafficking
- The work on the response plan leading to SBC being invited to the London Mayor's office to present the work to London boroughs as best practice. SBC were the only non-London Borough in attendance.
- During police operations to support victims of slavery and trafficking through the National Referral Mechanism, SBC coordinating the response of partners, including charities, and provide infrastructure to enable that support. This is done through the Community Safety team
- The Council has run weeks of action such as high quality media campaigns to raise the public's awareness regarding modern slavery and related issues.
- Training around sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, adults and children is also undertaken by relevant staff.

This Council requests that the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member keep this matter under review to ensure that we continue to be compliant.

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Councillor Jim Grant has asked the Leader of the Council:

1. Over the last three years, how much has Swindon Council spent on external legal costs- including QC expenses?
2. How much has the Council spent on external consultants over the last three years?

The Leader of the Council has responded:

1. The figures for external legal expenditure over the last three years is as follows:
 - 2015/16 - £206k
 - 2016/17 – £351k
 - 2017/2018 – £396k

These costs relate primarily to the cost of counsel in child protection cases and one off costs supporting specialist work and capital works. The increase over the last few years reflects the impact of the increase of work in the area of child protection. Work is already in hand to see how this can be managed more effectively and we will see the impact of this work in the next financial year.

2. In the last three financial years spend on external consultants has been:

2017/18	£2.120m
2016/17	£0.484m
2015/16	£0.167m

Councillor Steve Allsopp has asked the Cabinet Member for Digital Services:

3. What is the current call capacity of the call centre per month.
4. What volume of calls has been received for each complete month in 2018
5. What has been the average wait time per month for calls for each month in 2018
6. What has been the average rate of discontinued calls in 2018
7. What is the current staffing in the call centre for each month in 2018
8. What has been the average number of agency staff in the call centre in 2018
9. What is the % sickness rate in the call centre in 2018
10. What % of calls are answered

11. What is the current date when the call centre response times are expected to match target pick up times

The Cabinet Member has responded:

3. The call capacity in the contact centre current is c19k calls per month.
- 4.
- | | |
|-----------|--------|
| Jan 2018 | 32,800 |
| Feb 2018 | 32,646 |
| Mar 2018 | 43,766 |
| Apr 2018 | 34,718 |
| May 2018 | 30,220 |
| June 2018 | 26,527 |
| July 2018 | 30,755 |
| Aug 2018 | 29,701 |
| Sept 2018 | 27,963 |
| Oct 2018 | 28,962 |
- 5.
- | | |
|-----------|-------|
| Jan 2018 | 03:44 |
| Feb 2018 | 04:21 |
| Mar 2018 | 05:32 |
| Apr 2018 | 04:33 |
| May 2018 | 04:34 |
| June 2018 | 06:21 |
| July 2018 | 05:14 |
| Aug 2018 | 04:06 |
| Sept 2018 | 04:02 |
| Oct 2018 | 03:51 |
6. Our abandoned call rate in across the whole of 2018 is 38.3%
7. The average number of staff on the phones each month was:
- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| Jan 2018 | 10.36 FTE |
| Feb 2018 | 11.05 FTE |
| Mar 2018 | 13.02 FTE |
| Apr 2018 | 12.10 FTE |
| May 2018 | 09.45 FTE |
| June 2018 | 08.52 FTE |
| July 2018 | 09.36 FTE |
| Aug 2018 | 09.63 FTE |
| Sept 2018 | 10.29 FTE |
| Oct 2018 | 09.58 FTE |
8. This number has varied significantly across the year but has averaged around 2/3 across 2018.
9. 11.67%
10. Across 2018 we have answered 61.7% of calls.

We have now adapted our call response model so that 90%+ of calls to our general enquiries line receive an initial response from a call centre operative during which customers are informed of the likely wait for the specific service they are requesting before being put through to the appropriate queue. This allows people to make an active choice with live information about whether they wish to wait. Customer are also informed of the online options which are available to them.

11. We do not have a projected date for this as there are many influencing factors that are outside the control of the Customer Services function and sometimes the council as a whole. These factors include:

- Performance of services
- Communication to residents that drive calls
- Major incident or weather change
- Service peak times
- Staffing levels
- Breadth of training received by staff to deal with a range of call types

The key to ensuring that we are able to answer all calls* is to focus our resources on ensuring that customers who are interested and able to use our online processes do so successfully. To this end we have the following demand management activity:

- School admissions portal now live – all activity is now online via the portal
- Housing repairs portal now live – limited activity online but planned to grow over next 12 months
- Digital Hub programme
 - 28 new processes due to go live online by the end of 2018
 - 35 processes due to go live in Jan 2019

* - Industry standard target is 8-10% abandoned calls which accommodates those calls that are abandoned for reasons not related to length of wait. These could be connection failure, customer dropped call, customer responded to voice messaging directing them online, amongst other things.

Councillor Des Moffatt has asked the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety:

12. How many homeless families with children below the age of 16 from Swindon have been accommodated at Membury Services since January 1st 2018. Generally, how long might they be expected to be at Membury Services.
13. How many families with children were threatened with being 'intentionally homeless' since January 1st 2018.
14. How many of those families with children were subsequently accepted as homeless following eviction by a landlord.

15. How many landlords have been prosecuted or are under consideration for prosecution for unlawful eviction since January 1st 2018.
16. When a landlord claims repossession to enable property sale, are any checks made to verify that sale has taken place.
17. How many void residential properties in every category under the management of SBC Housing Department and or the General Fund were there at the end of business on Friday the 2/11/2018.

The Cabinet Member has responded:

12. 6 families who had children below the age of 16 were temporarily accommodated at Membury Services in the current calendar year. The Council uses this type of accommodation as a last resort where there are no alternatives and enables households to be rehoused quickly once formal homelessness assessments have been completed. The maximum number of nights used is 4
13. 9 number of families were regarded as being intentionally homeless in the current calendar year.
14. Of these 9 families, none were identified as having a local authority duty to accommodate. If a family is intentionally homeless the Council do not have a duty to accommodate.
15. The Council did not prosecute any landlords for unlawful eviction during this time period. The low number is due to the success of early advice and intervention by both the Homelessness and the Healthy Neighbourhoods teams.
16. The Council does not check if landlords sell a property when an Assured Shorthold Tenancy comes to an end. Landlords are entitled to bring the contract to an end at their discretion.
17. As at week ending 2/11/2018 175 residential council properties were empty. Of these only 69 were awaiting repair, the majority of the remainder are in the final stages of being let.

Councillor Jim Grant has asked the Cabinet Member for Children and School Attainment:

18. How many people have died whilst under the care of Children's services over the last five years?

The Cabinet Member has responded:

18. In the last five years there has been one young person who has died whilst in the care of the Local Authority. The young person's death is recent and has

been referred to the Local Safeguarding Children Board which has determined that it meets the criteria for a Serious Case Review.

During this time, Swindon Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) has been notified of four other cases where children known to, but **not** in the care of the Local Authority have died; in three of these the circumstances were such that the LSCB considered that the criteria for a Serious Case Review (SCR) had been met. Two SCR Reports have been published as SCR D and SCR S. The other one is in progress.

Local Safeguarding Boards are required to undertake reviews of serious cases in circumstances where abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected; and either the child has died; or the child has been seriously harmed and there is cause for concern as to the way in which the authority, their Board partners or other relevant persons have worked together to safeguard the child. The purpose of the review is to enable the LSCB to advise partners on the lessons to be learned for single and multi-agency safeguarding practice.

Agencies working with children and their families recognise the impact that the tragic loss of a child has and take it very seriously, both in terms of their on-going responsibilities for safeguard to protect children and in supporting families and communities who have suffered a sad loss.

None of us would wish for these tragedies and both I and the Children's Services Team will continue to do everything in our power to ensure that there is no repeat of the tragic death of a child.

