

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th August 2019

Author:	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence
Wards:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This report updates the Scrutiny Committee on pertinent information occurring over the past year within the Corporate Services and Operational Excellence portfolio.
- 1.2 The report is requested by the Committee on an annual basis and provides the basis for the question and answer session to be held on 12th August 2019.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the report and ask any questions on its content at the meeting planned for 12th August 2019.

3. Detail

The Composition of the Corporate Services and Operational Excellence Portfolio

- 3.1 The Leader of the Council has allocated the following responsibilities to Councillor Keith Williams, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence: performance and risk, human resources and organisational development, customer services, health and safety, information technology and digitalisation, estate management, property, legal services, election and committee services, communications, libraries, leisure and Lydiard Park.
- 3.2 Each of these services will be addressed in turn with achievements, challenges and future plans for each service addressed in brief throughout the report.

Performance and Risk

- 3.3 Performance scorecards are now embedded within the organisation and reviewed on a monthly basis by the Corporate Management Team (CMT) so that performance information, people and finance data, and risk are presented together. They allow CMT members to identify areas of concern where they can commission further in depth analysis. The Policy, Performance and Research team has introduced a full framework for performance and risk which was

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Sam Mowbray, 07823 525337, smowbray@swindon.gov.uk.

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th August 2019

presented at the Resources and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June. This framework sets out how performance, risk and business planning form part of a continuum of work to ensure that the Council is focussed on delivery and improvement.

- 3.4 The team actioned data requests and analysis to support the Ofsted inspection in July 2019 and supply a range of performance outputs and manage statutory data returns across Children's Services, Education and Adults. Our public facing interactive map platform (iShare) is live and providing key geographic information to the public. We have also utilised underlying web services in iShare to provide integration with other digital services, for example, address lookups for clinical/bulky waste, school transport catchment areas and the food waste trial. In addition, integration with digital processes for reporting faults has begun and successfully implemented for reporting potholes through using a map. The ability for the public to report other faults digitally, via their location, will be continually rolled out throughout the rest of the year
- 3.5 Particular challenges for the service have been the introduction of the new adult's social care case management system which has impacted on reporting during the implementation period and has resulted in some additional manual processes for data capture. Actions and resolutions are underway with the software provider to progress and implement the remaining actions needed to reinstate full performance reporting.
- 3.6 Priorities for Performance and Risk in 2019 are to fully embed the new Performance Framework which will include the implementation of a new performance report to cabinet on a quarterly basis. This report will outline the Council's progress towards achieving its priorities and pledges. The team is also planning to improve its report writing capacity to better support requests for information from across the Council. The service will also continue to support decision making in the Council through the provision of analysis, research, evaluation and consultation support, including around the forthcoming public consultation at whether to change the Council's election cycle.

Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR&OD)

- 3.7 The HR/OD service is broadly split into three functions: Resourcing, Organisational Development and Human Relations.
- 3.8 In terms of Resourcing, our Employee Value Proposition (*the way we package our offer to current and prospective members of staff*) has been established, based on 3 key themes "make a difference, make it better, make it right". The main component of the EVP was the launch of the new careers website in January, which has been well received both internally & externally. The

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th August 2019

resourcing team has just been re-structured, with the aim of moving to an added value resourcing service (focusing on talent pools and maximising internal capability and “grow your own talent”) rather than reactive recruitment. Matrix (neutral framework provider) were awarded the contract for temporary staffing requirements in July 2018, this has achieved a saving to date of over £400,000 compared to pre-contract spend. We are working on reducing the temporary workforce by 5% this financial year.

- 3.8 Particular achievements within the Organisational Development team over the last twelve months have been the centralisation of Learning and Development including resource and budget to achieve savings as part of the Swindon Programme. PDP completion rates increased from 64% to 80% during the last PDP window from April to June. The PDPs are currently being reviewed and analysed to inform current performance and staff development requirements.
- 3.9 Since its launch 80 people have successfully completed the Aspiring and Future leader programmes. The focus for the coming months is to evaluate the success of all the Council’s Management & Leadership programmes with the results informing the next phase. The mentoring and coaching offer provided by the OD team has supported 44 staff across the council and this will continue reinforcing the focus on improved development and performance. Another particular success for the Council is that apprenticeships in the council increased by 50% on last year and supporting apprentices and managers hosting apprentices was a key focus of the team last year. This area will continue to grow especially with the increase of schemes available, particularly in health and social work.
- 3.10 46% of staff responded to the recent Employee Satisfaction Survey which is held every 18 months. The results are currently being analysed and these will feed into the both HROD and directorate plans over the next 12 months. The results of the survey will be scrutinised by the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September.
- 3.11 Building on the success of the employee awards that were held for the first time last year, this year’s employee awards will take place again in December 2019 with an added Mayors award for community impact.
- 3.12 A key priority for HR is the health and wellbeing of employees and the ongoing work to reduce employee absence. Although absence continues to reduce it is still higher than average, an external provider “Absentia” (part of the Medigold Group), has been engaged to provide “a day one absence management service” to support this work. This service approach has been very successful in other Councils and roll out will begin in the autumn, early engagement from staff and Unions has been very positive.

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th August 2019

-
- 3.13 In addition we have rolled out a Health & well-being App from our EAP provider and are out for tender for a revised Occupational Health Service. During the year further health & wellbeing initiatives will be implemented as part of our health & well-being strategy.
 - 3.14 The work on the Swindon Programme continues and since September 2018 over 30 restructures have been successfully implemented, on time and to budget. This success was “in part” via early engagement with trade unions ensuring a smooth transition for staff.
 - 3.15 The national pay award was implemented on time, after a rocky start, local negotiations took place with the Union in advance and an agreement on the revised pay spine for SBC staff was agreed and implemented prior to 1st April 2019.
 - 3.16 The pay and reward work will continue to be a key focus over the next 12 - 18 months. Engagement and consultation with trade unions is in place as well as a communications programme with staff. Work has started on developing a career families approach working in partnership with Korn Ferry and senior managers across the Council. In addition to the pay work we will continue to broaden our employee reward and benefits offer, identifying what benefits are key to attract and retain staff, a recent example is the option to purchase annual leave from up to 10 days to 12 days. Further work includes the option of employee loans offered through the Swindon Credit Union and the introduction of an employee benefits platform covering a full range of benefits for employees later this year.

Communications

- 3.17 Strong progress has been made in delivering the campaigns and projects set out in the Communications Strategy and 2018-20 Campaign Plan that was approved by Cabinet in July 2018. Each piece of work is underpinned by clear objectives and an evaluation of impact. This included generating over 3,000 survey responses to the Waste Strategy public engagement exercise and over 300 new foster carer enquiries in seven months. As part of our winter weather communications, a new service status page on the website was visited over 8,000 times on one single day and our social media posts were seen over 480,000 times. Our campaign work was awarded with both a gold and silver in the 2018 CIPR PRide Awards and was shortlisted for a Local Government Chronicle award.
- 3.18 The Communications Team is lean but still achieving results on a low or no cost basis. Relative to its size and budget, it has contributed significantly to Swindon

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th August 2019

Programme and in-year organisational savings, with the team structure remodelled last year. There have been ongoing challenges filling some positions, but the team has shown resilience and flexibility to cover all external and internal communication activity, and take on new responsibilities such as redesigning and producing Member's Bulletin.

- 3.19 Priorities ahead include supporting the forthcoming public consultation as to whether to change the Council's election cycle. Also delivering communications to support new transport projects, particularly those linked to New Eastern Villages, and a variety of campaigns on subjects including recycling, potholes and flu vaccinations. Another priority will be applying best practice from across the public and private sector to continue to develop our use of social media to communicate and engage with residents, having doubled our Facebook followers over the past year.

Legal Services

- 3.20 There have been significant changes in the legal services team in the last year. Over the last year the team have introduced a case management system known as IKEN which has significantly reduced the Council's reliance on paper, printing and storage of current and completed files. It has also allowed for a better allocation of cases to ensure fair caseloads across the team. The move to open plan office space on Wat Tyler West 2 has provided significant additional meeting room space within the civic building and has provided a much needed opportunity to increase collaborative working across enabling services and the rest of the Council. It has also provided an opportunity for flexible and remote working.
- 3.21 A key success was the successful prosecution of a large furniture company in Swindon for breaching six counts of Health and Safety legislation. Sentencing is due in December but is likely to be significant. The team have also managed to get a civic restraint order on a vexatious complainant to prevent further claims against the council and settled a long standing claim with a healthcare organisation in relation to adult social care funding. This has led to the Council being reimbursed for significant expenditure paid out over the last two years. Furthermore, the team have been successful in defending a judicial review of a challenge in respect of a planning decision for New Eastern Villages. If that defence had not been successful this would have meant significant delays to that project and additional costs running into millions.
- 3.22 In the coming year the focus will be on re-building the legal service within a smaller budget and ensuring that work is completed at the right level. The restructure of the service has been difficult for many and the new Chief Legal

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th August 2019

Officer, who started in June, is focused on developing the team and supporting team members in their new roles. The restructure of the service has meant that there is now much more opportunity for progression within the team and an emphasis on “growing our own talent” will be crucial given the difficulties we face recruiting experienced solicitors.

- 3.23 In the coming year the team will continue to bed in the IKEN case management system and work with IT and the courts to enable paperless bundles for the majority of litigation matters. This will reduce the administration required to complete these tasks and will allow the team to focus on tasks which add greater value to the Council and its residents. The use of IKEN to its fullest potential by using workflows to reduce and streamline processes on standard legal matters will also help in this regard. A significant case coming up for the team is a potential inquiry for Compulsory purchase of land for the Southern connector route.

Elections and Democratic Services

- 3.24 The European Elections were a real challenge for the team, with so little time to plan and prepare for them and much of the timetable overlapping with the local elections. However the election was a real success in the face of some national problems with registering EU nationals. The continuing political uncertainty in the UK means we are having to maintain a high state of readiness for any snap polls that may be called.
- 3.25 In the coming year, aside from the next round of local elections in May 2020, we have the reform of the Annual Canvass of Electors. This will see an end to the system of registration forms being sent to every property, with national and local data sets being utilised to target registration activities at those properties where a change has likely taken place.
- 3.26 Committee Services has seen a change in the management structure this year and has settled in well with the new arrangements. The newly elected Councillors in 2019 have received a warm welcome and have been inducted successfully, and the council and committee meetings have been well supported by their respective clerk.
- 3.27 The changes in management personnel have required a careful handover to ensure nothing is missed. Whilst this has resulted in time being needed to be taken for handovers and settling in, the service needs to maintain momentum to effectively support Members, and there is now renewed focus to ensure Members receive the best support possible.

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th August 2019

- 3.28 We have the usual focus on the full schedule of committee meetings, but outside of this we have the 2020 induction to plan and a series of improvements we wish to implement relating to the software we use (utilising additional functionality and improving the look and feel on the website).

Health and Safety

- 3.29 The introduction of a digital platform for accident and incident reporting across the Council has been a real improvement for the Council in the last 12 months. This will provide improved access to reporting and the review process. Similarly the Director of Communities and Housing has specifically focused on the introduction of a health and safety site initiative for employees and visitors at Waterside which has included:
- The introduction of a Waterside staff booklet to include key standards and code of conduct.
 - Implementation of additional personal protective equipment for all employees on site.
 - Group Director Briefings to Waterside employees on the importance of health and safety standards and responsibilities.
- 3.30 A management review of noise and vibration hazards has identified opportunities for improvement in the current management arrangements for these hazards in the workplace and these shall be actioned in the year ahead. Other areas of focus for the coming year are:
- The implementation of mitigating strategies from specialist health and safety reports on key hazards including noise, vibration and water hygiene.
 - To support the performance monitoring review process by completing a focussed programme of management audits to measure health and safety performance within departments. The aim of this is to enable management improvement with health and safety by providing effective coaching and facilitation

Information Technology

- 3.31 The focus for IT in 2019 has been completing the major business system upgrades and achieving Public Services Network (PSN) compliance whilst defending and protecting our infrastructure from foreign threats and actors. Work has been ongoing throughout 2019 to move servers from our Capita Private Cloud to the SBC data centre. By the end of July 2019 we will only have our Oracle Financial servers in Capita. The Local Area Network has also been

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th August 2019

upgraded to support this work and machines on the network now receive 1GB speeds. This has improved the performance of a number of key systems and saved £308k per annum.

- 3.32 The Wide Area Network has continued to be upgraded and this has resulted in faster speeds and cheaper costs. In 2019/20 the annual savings from this project are on track to be £74k per annum. We have now embraced sharing our network with other Public Bodies and as part of the Digital Strategy (draft) we have delivered new networking to support SBC officers working in other public sector buildings, and we support civil servants, NHS colleagues and non-SBC local government officers to work in our offices. This is achieved with the deployment of GovRoam and GovWifi. In addition a new network and firewall security has been implemented to protect the SBC infrastructure.
- 3.33 April 2019 saw Swindon gain PSN accreditation for the first time, a result of significant investment in bringing the standards of the department up to a sufficient and safe level to assure partners of our competence in managing IT assets and enabling sharing of systems, services and data. SBC has some legacy line of business systems which are critical to our front line staff. In the first half of 2019 we have been implementing the re-procured new line of business systems for Adults, Children's Social Care, Housing, Legal services. In 2019 we tendered for a new Finance & HR systems. This tender did not conclude to a contract award and we are currently reviewing our options.
- 3.34 As a predominantly Microsoft-based council, IT continuously work to offer the latest tools from Microsoft. This year we are working to deploy SharePoint online to provide a new intranet and SharePoint site as well as Teams and OneDrive to support business unstructured data and next generation universal communications. We are implementing a new Microsoft Mobile Device Management solution. We are deploying Windows10 as a replacement for Windows 7 with the intention to be fully off Windows 7 by the end of 2019.
- 3.35 2018 saw a new structure to the department with clarity between Operational IT and IT Change coming from two heads of service respectively. The focus of the Head of IT Operations is to ensure high availability and minimal interruptions to services of our critical systems focusing on security, cyber and other forms, together with operation effectiveness and a continued service improvement and productivity across all staff and processes. The Head of IT Operations leads all major incidents. The Head of IT Change has a role of modernising the Council's IT systems and ensuring IT changes are well managed and the council exploits and get maximum value for the investment in IT. Together with the Director of

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th August 2019

Digital, these posts provide strategic leadership and lead on delivery of the Digital Strategy (draft) on behalf of the portfolio holder.

Digitisation

- 3.36 The digitisation of our processes has revolved around a JADU implementation of the CXM Product. The current position for Digital Channel shift is sitting at 73% of customer interactions, as at the end of June 2019. 263 digital forms have been designed in Jadu. 88 processes have been built in Jadu and are live with a further 19 scheduled to be live by 1 September 2019. A further 21 processes have been identified for delivery in 2020. The quality of the user experience on these forms is addressed in the Customer Services update at paragraph 3.40.

Customer Services

- 3.37 The first half of 2019 has continued the significant changes that have taken place within Customer Services. A modernised Customer Service reception has been opened to the public, a new telephony system had been rolled out, and the council's Web Content Team has become a core part of the service. It has been a year of significant challenges within the contact centre as call demand has been high and there is now a clear plan in place to deliver against a service level of 80% of calls answered within 2 minutes.

- 3.38 In the previous report, the priorities for the last period were listed as follows:

3.38.1 Delivering continued progress against the target of 85% of customer transactions taking place online.

The number of online transactions has moved from 45% up to 74% and we are currently on target to achieve 85% by the target date of March 2020.

3.38.2 Delivering the remaining elements of the Modernising Customer Services project.

This project has now been completed and was the most significant success of past 6 months. The council's previous One Stop Shop has been entirely remodelled into approximately one third of its previous space. The new space supports our digital ambitions, providing a place for supported self-serve with Customer Service staff available to support residents when required. Wait times have significantly reduced by around two thirds with customers now waiting on average around 5 minutes to be seen.

3.39.3 A full review of the Council Complaints process including policy, processes, systems of work and monitoring/reporting activity.

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th August 2019

Ongoing improvements have been made in terms of the council's handling of complaints with CMT receiving monthly performance updates regarding both complaint types and handling times. The Corporate Customer Feedback Policy has been under review with a view to simplifying the process for residents, and ensuring clear and prompt resolution of issues. This policy will be brought back for agreement in November 2019.

- 3.39 In general it has been another year of significant challenge and change for the Customer Services team. The new Customer Service reception received on average 1,500 visitors per month (compared to 2,500 per month in 2018). The Customer Contact Centre received on average 25,800 calls per month in the first half of 2019 (compared to 30,000 per month in 2018). These numbers have been delivered in the context of a smaller Customer Services Operations team.
- 3.40 Whilst call wait times have continued to be a challenge for the Contact Centre, we now have significantly more data available regarding the nature and cause of the calls received. This allows us to identify the root cause and work with services which are generating high call demand to improve their customer engagement processes. Resources have increased over the past 3 months and will continue to do so until our target service level of answering 80% of calls within 2 minutes has been reached. Abandoned call rates have halved over the period and whilst rates are still higher than we would like, we have a clear plan to reduce them to at, or below industry standards.
- 3.41 A major success within the first half of 2019 is the customer satisfaction with our online forms. Following a period of customer feedback, between March and June 2019, we found that 89% of all residents who used our online forms thought the experience was either 'Good' or 'Excellent' (sample size 2,307). This shows real progress in both the number of services available online, and the usability of our online forms themselves.
- 3.42 The three key areas of focus for Customer Services in 2020 are:
1. Achieving consistent delivery of the contact centre's target service level of answering 80% of all calls within 2 minutes.
 2. Achieving continued progress towards the corporate target of 85% of all transactions delivered online.
 3. Protecting the resources available to deliver face to face and telephony support those who cannot use online process by increasing and improving the self-service opportunities for those that can.

Lydiard House and Park

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th August 2019

-
- 3.43 The operation of Lydiard House, Park, Museum, Hotel and Conference Centre continues to provide an enjoyable challenge. Having taken responsibility for all commercial aspects of Lydiard 15 months ago, we have fully replaced a condemned kitchen and have started a programme of investment in bringing the hotel and conferencing facilities up to date. This has included improving the WiFi and redecorations. The programme of external and cosmetic backlog maintenance continues in a timely manner and within budget.
- 3.44 Hotel, conference and event bookings continue to rise, and the team has focused on expanding the wedding and wedding breakfast market, with wedding bookings secured for as far ahead as 2021. Lydiard continues to attract a wide ranging programme of events, including a number of repeat bookings and the recent Mfor festival.
- 3.45 A section of the 'A site' car park which we have previously been unable to use in wet weather has now had a mesh surface laid. This has eased the pressure on parking spaces during adverse weather conditions.
- 3.46 Lydiard has hosted a new exhibition for 2019, aimed at encouraging new and repeat visitors to the House. Curatorial aspects are being refreshed and reviewed with an Audience Development Plan scheduled as a work priority. All aspects of the schools programme are currently being reviewed with the development of a refreshed formal and informal learning. School bookings have started to come in at Lydiard once again.
- 3.47 A long awaited staffing restructure is underway, which will refocus activity onto more commercial priorities at Lydiard. This will enable us to bring in more income which will help maintain this prized asset.
- 3.48 The web presence and booking system for the hotel are in the process of being replaced, and the Wi-fi will be further upgraded. The new, dedicated website will allow online hotel bookings and will enable quicker, more efficient marketing of the offer. The restructure will propose a consolidation of catering activities across several sites to the new kitchen at Lydiard, which will not only be cost effective, but also provide a more bespoke service to satellite outlets.
- 3.49 Work will continue to progress the programme of backlog maintenance, and will seek to prioritise the conversion of the pool area into an additional events room, with work also planned for the House, conference rooms and courtyard.
- 3.50 On curatorial and learning aspects we are pursuing a 'service level agreement' with STEAM, which enables Lydiard to access a much wider breadth of staff expertise. There is no financial benefit for STEAM, but it does provide Lydiard with a wider professional skill set that they would otherwise have access to.
-

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th August 2019

-
- 3.51 We will also shortly be trialling the use of an electric vehicle to be used across the park. If the trial is successful the use of the current petrol pick up vehicle will be discontinued.

Estates Rationalisation

- 3.52 As part of the Estates Rationalisation programme, the following buildings are currently being decommissioned and will close during Autumn 2019:- Gladstone Street – which will revert to the Parish; The Lyndhurst Centre – to be utilised by Goddard Park School; and The Limes / Palm Tree Lodge – to be offered for market development. Wat Tyler West Floors 2,4 and 5 have now been refurbished with approximately 600 staff successfully relocated and a 28% increase in desk space within the building. Works on WTW Floor 3 are almost complete, and will accommodate the Children's Services Early Help teams of The Hub, MASH and ACP, to be co-located with Social Workers.
- 3.53 These moves will increase the number of staff working on campus by approximately 150. Civic car parking has already proved problematic, and a review is currently underway, with Unison consulted and an 'in principle' agreement obtained.
- 3.54 Further ground floor refurbishment work of Wat Tyler is planned for Autumn 2019. This will include the creation of new Training & Meeting areas, and an IT Suite. This will allow for the release of the David Murray John Building 9th floor which is currently used for this purpose. There is a planned move for the Family Contact Centre to occupy the previous Children Centre space at Saltway. This will create an important new self-contained facility, taking account of recent best practice guidelines that would offer future potential as a Traded Service. The Everleigh Centre has been identified as a building in which the Early Help service can develop a training suite, to offer high quality supervision and the opportunity to also showcase good practice. Their Family Conference service would continue to use the building, in conjunction with new premises created in the building on the Civic Campus formerly used by Occupational Health. Children who have previously been users of this service are being consulted over the refurbishment, and will be invited to a launch party in August 2019 to celebrate their involvement.

Property Services

- 3.55 Property held by the Council is a significant resource, which is essential for the provision of the vast majority of Council services. The portfolio is split into operational and non-operational property. Not all property responsibility falls within the Cabinet Members portfolio: investment acquisitions, disposals and town centre regeneration portfolios are held by others.

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th August 2019

-
- 3.56 There are 132 operational properties occupied and used for direct front line service delivery including the corporate offices as well as 360 properties let on concession rentals where third parties deliver services for Swindon either under a direct commission and/or via occupation under a lease eg Sanford House. The property team continue to manage the day to day transactions and enquires that arise from this property holding.
- 3.57 The non-operational estate of commercial properties produces a revenue income of £7m pa to supplement the Council's financial plans and corporate priorities. The portfolio has increased over the past couple of years with the acquisition of investment properties and the Carriage Works with the day to day estate management being absorbed into the property portfolio. For the Carriage Works this has resulted in the review of 12 of the 25 tenancy agreements now managed increasing the revenue income of £25k pa for this financial year (excluding The Workshed).
- 3.58 There are approx. 850 commercial lease arrangements and during the course of the last financial year approx. 160 estate management transactions eg new lettings, lease assignments and licence consents were formally documented and this is typical of the business being undertaken annually by the property assets team.
- 3.59 The portfolio asset valuation at 31 December 2018 was £1.019bn split between the General Fund at £537m and the HRA at £482m. The Council is still responsible for its social housing stock of 10,300 freehold and 500 leasehold homes. Schools made up the majority of the general fund total, at £150m, with the non-operational (commercial) income producing assets totalling £85m. Officers within the property assets team valued 50 % of all assets and those with an individual value of > £5m (a total of 478 desk top valuations) in time to meet the end of year deadline to support the completion of the annual accounts.
- 3.60 The adopted approach for operational property is to co-locate service delivery functions where possible; introduce new working practices to maximise space utilisation; trigger cultural organisational changes and improve productivity. This enables identification of where assets can be declared surplus or transferred as has been the case with the estates rationalisation programme.
- 3.61 The transfer of assets to third parties to improve service outcomes, reduce cost and support community and voluntary use of buildings continues. Following the community governance review and parishing of the whole borough a further opportunity to transfer a significant number of community assets to the local parish council has arisen, to enable them deliver local community services in place of the Council. The current programme has resulted in 27 community
-

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th August 2019

assets being transferred to parishes so far this year with a further 80 identified and being progressed eg Town Gardens and Queens Park.

- 3.62 Property continue to ensure that assets held are correctly maintained for their intended use. Annual repairs, maintenance and compliance activities incur a revenue cost of £535k pa. A rolling programme of condition surveys is commissioned, reflecting planned or proposed changes, coordinated by property assets team to ensure work taking into account any changes to the asset base. The current identified backlog maintenance for operational premises is £8m with this year's capital budget of for identified work of £1.4m. Additional capital funding for repair and maintenance is sought based on case by case requirements eg Cabinet approved £1.5m of funding in March 2019 to carry out maintenance and improvement works to the Health Hydro to ensure that GLL continued to operate the Health Hydro and Dorcan Leisure Centre and to avoid them implementing a lease break clause.

Swindon Libraries and Information Services

- 3.63 In February 2019 the decision was taken by Cabinet for the Library and Information Service (LIS) to continue to be delivered by SBC and not to become a PSM (Public Service Mutual).
- 3.64 Following the decision for the service to remain in house, the service has focused on implementing the Libraries vision and strategy and developing a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) so that the outcomes of the service are more clearly defined and monitored.
- 3.65 The service has worked with key officers across all directorates to identify the contribution it is able to make to the Council pledges and priorities and this work is now reflected in the refreshed pledge deliverables. The service has also mapped the key contribution to early intervention and prevention.
- 3.66 2018/2019 was the first full year that the LIS statutory service was delivered from five core Libraries. The service continues to work closely with the community libraries, supplying bought in stock and staff to them and community libraries are a vital service to many library members, allowing them to borrow books at any core or community library. The Service Level Agreement with each Community Library has now been reviewed.
- 3.67 Outreach work is delivered across the Borough and work with all communities delivering targeted activities. Work has been particularly successful working with Health visitors in clinics, developing the skills and confidence of sharing stories to develop language skills. Other work, in partnership with the national Literacy Trust, has included developing a new reading challenge aimed at teenagers and

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th August 2019

adults. The outreach team continue to work with people with dementia and have strengthened the reading well offer for people with mental health barriers.

- 3.68 The number of book stock items borrowed has increased by just over three thousand and online borrowing of e-audio, e-magazines and e-books continues to increase.
- 3.69 A sample survey of one week showed that over 4000 information service enquiries were dealt with by staff during the survey week. Over a year the sample would equate to 61,900 enquiries a year with 55,000 being face to face. The Central library information desk has integrated the Visitor Information Service for Swindon into the general enquiry service.
- 3.70 Much work has been done to extend the retail offer at the Central library, with an emphasis on local history books, book related retail items and items produced by local artists. Income continues to increase year on year.
- 3.71 Extended access is proving popular, allowing library members to access libraries outside of staffed hours. The service is working extensively with volunteers who contributed 3,782 hours in the last financial year, helping to deliver services in libraries and delivering the home library service to residents unable to access library services.
- 3.72 “A Swindon Time Capsule”, the book produced as part of a National Lottery Heritage Fund project by the Local Studies team with *Swindon Heritage Magazine*, won the 2018 Alan Ball Award for Local History. This is the national award for local history publications.
- 3.73 In 2019 the Libraries Local Studies team celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Swindon & District History Network (the S&DHN) which they founded, and host and run at Central Library. It unites over 40 local heritage community groups, societies, and organisations. Another success for Local studies has seen the total views of the Flickr gallery (since going live in July 2009), achieving more than 30 million views.
- 3.74 Swindon LIS continue to work closely with the National Literacy Trust, supplying a member of staff to manage the Swindon hub. There is lots of joint working with staff from education, schools and the Library service to deliver programmes and activities that help with the literacy of children and young people.
- 3.75 The summer Reading challenge helps children maintain their reading habit over the summer holiday and last year 2,638 children took part in the challenge with 60% completing the challenge. The challenge takes place in all libraries, core and community.

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th August 2019

- 3.76 The service has worked with the Digital Hub to review how the library service can streamline events and display bookings, improve the induction process for extended access, improve volunteer record management and record keeping for the summer reading challenge. In addition the business case for a digital system to manage the retail services has been developed, as currently the retail services are hindered by manual processes in sales and stock management.
- 3.77 A key challenge for the service is ensuring staffing of all core and community libraries and ensuring adequate cover during sickness/leave, particularly in the community libraries. The introduction of a new Library management system will need a significant amount of staff time to ensure the data is transferred from the current system with staff training for staff in core and community libraries.
- 3.78 Extended access has had some technical challenges due to issues with doors and equipment failures. This is being resolved with maintenance contracts being transferred to the original equipment suppliers rather than a third party supplier.
- 3.79 In the next year we will be upgrading the library management system, RFID (self-service machines) and obtaining a digital system for our retail shop at Central Library.
- 3.80 Further integration into Children Services, joint planning of services and use of library assets to achieve our outcomes for children and families is planned. We will also be reviewing the workforce development of our staff and considering the opportunities for Apprenticeships.

The Appointment of a Commercial and Income generation manager is in train to add capacity and expertise in generating income. This work will include the review of the café space with our library users. The service will further develop their approach to user engagement, building on engagement currently done and ensure the LIS is meeting the needs of residents.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Committee could choose not to operate Cabinet Member Question and Answer sessions.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial or procurement implications arising as a result of this report. Any expenditure arising as a result of an item on the Committee's work programme will be met by the Overview and Scrutiny Support budget, subject to the approval of the Committee.

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th August 2019

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Section 21 of the Local Government Act requires every local authority to establish an overview and scrutiny function to hold the Executive to account, undertake policy development and review, monitor and improve performance.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 There are no other direct implications arising as a result of the report. Any further implications will be identified when a topic is reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee and in any recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 No Diversity Impact Assessment is required at this stage. Any DIA that is required during review of these topics included within the work programme will be identified at the appropriate stage.

Risk Management

- 5.5 No risk management issues have been identified at this stage; any risk management issues will be identified at the appropriate time when a topic is under review by the Scrutiny Committee.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The author has consulted, where appropriate, with Corporate Directors, Directors, Heads of Service, other officers, and relevant partners on the purpose, content, and recommendations of the report.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None.

8. Appendices

- 8.1 None.