

# **Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session**

## **Cabinet Member for Economy and Place**

**Scrutiny Committee**

**Date: 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

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Author: Cabinet Member for Economy and Place

Wards: All

Parishes Affected: All

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### **1. Purpose and Reasons**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to question the Cabinet Member for the Economy and Place on portfolio responsibilities and performance.
- 1.2 A key purpose of the Scrutiny function is to hold Cabinet to account and to ensure that Council and partners' priorities and performance are being delivered.
- 1.3 Members of the Committee are reminded that all Members of the Cabinet are required to come before the Scrutiny Committee to take part in a Question and Answer session that will focus on the full remit of their portfolio. Scrutiny Committee is therefore encouraged to focus Question and Answer sessions with Members of specific topics and/or services in order to avoid duplication.

### **2. Recommendations**

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the report by the Cabinet Member for Economy and Place.
- 2.2 Put appropriate questions to the Cabinet Member for Economy and Place and decide whether any further action is required.

### **3. Detail**

- 3.1 In May 2019, the Leader of the Council has assigned the following key objectives to the Cabinet Member for Economy and Place, Councillor Oliver Donachie.
  - Set the strategic vision to allow the economy to prosper.
  - Provide the political leadership for business growth in all areas including town centre, investment, R&D and tourism
  - Ensure Swindon has the ability to be part of the next generation of Digital and Smart Cities
  - Ensure that the Council's agreed priorities within the portfolio are delivered.
- 3.2 To deliver these, the Leader of the Council has also allocated Councillor Donachie the following specific responsibilities:
  - 3.2.1 Represent the Council on the Local Enterprise Partnership

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Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Philippa Venables, 07824 550469, pvenables@swindon.gov.uk.

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- 3.2.2 Strategic Asset Management of employment/business land
- 3.2.3 Country Parks (securing sustainable uses) – excluding Lydiard
- 3.2.4 Enforcement and Regulatory Services
- 3.2.5 Envirocrime
- 3.2.6 Renewable energy
- 3.2.7 To lead on the implementation of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs), in collaboration with Cabinet colleagues
- 3.2.8 Tourism
- 3.2.9 Client for Public Power solutions
- 3.3 In overseeing these areas, the Cabinet Member for the Economy and Place is responsible for the delivery of the following pledges in pursuance of the Council's Vision.
  - 3.3.1 Pledge 1: Set the ambition for Swindon to compete to at the forefront of digital innovation with a commitment to using technology for positive change
  - 3.3.2 Pledge 2: Enhance Swindon's reputation as a sustainable energy exemplar, by exploring technology that converts energy from waste, facilitating the move to electrified transport, and delivering opportunities to invest in renewable energy to reduce carbon footprint.
  - 3.3.3 Pledge 3: Refresh and implement the Masterplan for Swindon Town Centre, supporting our vision that Swindon is a vibrant, modern place. We will do this through working with ambassadors and partners to promote Swindon effectively to improve the town's reputation, increase income from business rates and compete for the best business growth opportunities, inward investment and talent.
  - 3.3.4 Pledge 4: Support businesses by working in partnership to create conditions in which businesses succeed and grow.
  - 3.3.5 Pledge 16: Deliver a programme of work to ensure that residents, visitors and businesses feel that Swindon is a safe place to live, work, visit and do business.

### Enforcement and Regulatory Services

- 3.4 During the budget setting debate at Council earlier this year I was keen to ensure that we earmarked sufficient resources to support the visible enforcement of

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environmental and regulatory offences, particularly in the town centre. The purpose of this was twofold, firstly to bring about an improvement in our town centre environment so that people can enjoy what Swindon has to offer in safety and with confidence and secondly visibly to drive behavioural change amongst those who flout legislation in our town centre.

- 3.5 I am delighted to provide Committee with the update that a Town Centre Enforcement and Behaviour Change Initiative will go live on 1st October 2019, focussing initially on improving behaviours in the area covered by the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO). Effectiveness of this initiative will be monitored and reported over a three month period.
- 3.6 The additional resource secured for this purpose will be in place to supplement the existing activity, which will comprise two Civil Enforcement Officers (focussing on parking enforcement) and two Envirocrime Officers, focussing on behavioural change. Resource will also be reallocated on a weekly rota basis to ensure increased multi-skilled visibility from Envirocrime, licensing, environmental health, parking, and planning enforcement across the PSPO area.
- 3.7 Beyond this period, work is in hand to enable two multi-skilled enforcement posts within the Envirocrime team, which will further improve the visibility of town centre enforcement. As part of this process, we will work with our partners in the Police to ensure that multi-agency enforcement is both visible and effective, and is supporting the key outcomes that all parties expect for the town centre.
- 3.8 Moving further afield, I am pleased to advise that the Lydiard Park PSPO covering the control of dogs on leads at certain times of day during the peak season has proven to be successful in amending behaviour. Since the PSPO has been in place we have only had one incident reported to us of an out of control dog causing a problem in the Park – and this was during the winter when the Order does not apply. Prior to the order being in place we experienced a number of complaints around dogs off leads causing a nuisance to those seeking to enjoy the Park. In recognition of this officers undertook a consultation around extending the order beyond its 3 year life. The feedback provided strong justification for doing so, and the order is now in place for a further 3 year period.

### Swindon's Economy

- 3.9 In delivering its Vision for Swindon, the Council aims to create sustainable growth and employment within a robust yet dynamic economy, which produces a high quality of life for all and is resilient enough to withstand the effects of various events which may change the business base or the supply and demand components of the economy. The themes of connectivity, productivity, and quality of life drive this work in partnership with the private, public and

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community/voluntary sectors, underpinned by the place making which will support a world-class economy.

- 3.10 The Centre for Cities Outlook 2019 Report, which compares Swindon with up to 62 other leading UK town and cities, showed that Swindon continues to be highly successful. Swindon's performance includes the third best ratio of private sector to publicly funded jobs at 4.4 and the eighth highest Gross Value Added (GVA) per worker at £67,700.

### Institute of Technology

- 3.11 Officers worked effectively with Swindon College, employers and other stakeholders to progress the bid for an Institute of Technology (IoT) in the town and this bid was declared successful in April 2019. This excellent achievement is tangible demonstration of excellent partnership working with other LEP areas, employers and education providers to produce a cohesive proposal which will greatly benefit Swindon learners and business. This will achieve a step change in the provision of higher level technical education (post A level to Degree level) by delivering high quality employer led training and teaching at new innovative institutions. It will address the gaps in higher level technical education and skills, particularly in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects.
- 3.12 The IoT work is part of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP)-wide Higher Education Strategy to meet employer needs and identify progression routes to higher level technical provision and raise aspirations.

### Business Retention and Expansion Service (BR&E)

- 3.13 The Business & Economy Team continues to coordinate the Honda recovery programme, which includes liaison with Honda, the supply chain, Government departments (particularly the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, which leads the National Taskforce) and numerous local partners. The five Task & Finish Groups are focused on key areas of support:
- 3.13.1 Communications
  - 3.13.2 People, Skills and Employment
  - 3.13.3 Supply Chain
  - 3.13.4 The Sites
  - 3.13.5 Community Wellbeing
- 3.14 Current activity is focussed around supporting Associates (Honda employees) in the first phase of redundancies with their future choices e.g. start-up support,

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moving to other jobs and / or training; access to 'free-to-use' financial and mental well-being support; and assisting supply chain companies to source new contracts. The team is also looking at economic resilience lessons learned from other areas and practical impact measures to assess SBC interventions.

- 3.15 Although the Honda announcement and TechSwindon project (see paragraph 3.26) have influenced the SBC Business Retention & Expansion service (it has resulted in an increased focus on advanced manufacturing and "tech" business engagement), the team has achieved much improved business engagement levels and is starting to build strong relationships with Swindon companies. The service is aimed at stimulating and reporting business growth or safeguarding issues, so is expecting another busy period around the planned Brexit date.
- 3.16 The team has led research into Swindon and Wiltshire's advanced manufacturing, life sciences and health and digi-tech sectors to determine key capability, Unique Selling Points and growth opportunities. The findings indicated that digi-tech (comprising both companies which rely on tech to operate, and companies which provide tech services and products) are vital to drive Swindon's growth. The team uses the specialist services of TechSPARK (a Bristol-based company which supports digi-tech companies across the West of England) to support Swindon's most promising digi-tech companies, by signposting to national and international specialist support and business opportunities. Using the TechSwindon branding, this specialist team operates from The Workshed (see paragraph 3.20).
- 3.17 Within the BR&E service, a number of pharmaceutical manufacturing companies are considering local growth. The team is working with these companies and national partners to support this growth and will report successes via its Switch On To Swindon channels.
- 3.18 The sector research also highlighted a Research and Development (R&D) gap in the market, which if addressed could support and attract innovative companies; further research (stimulated by the Honda announcement) recommends Electronics and Connected Systems as an R&D focus, to support local and neighbouring advanced manufacturing companies to use the latest technology to improve processes. Further work is underway to investigate this exciting opportunity.
- 3.19 The team continues to support the Swindon & Wiltshire Growth Hub (an online portal for general business engagement and advice) and is working with local partners on some new EU-funded business support programmes.

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### Carriage Works

- 3.20 The first stage of the exciting and innovative Carriage Works project, a scheme which transforms a Swindon heritage asset into accessible and high-grade work space, is now fully operational operating as The Workshed and teams are now progressing further units within the Carriage Works. Workspace units are being developed incrementally and there is a significant level of interest in these units as they are built out. The Council has benefited from £100,000 of funding from the Government's One Public Estate programme which has facilitated this work to create new jobs and allow further development of the whole site
- 3.21 The Business and Economy team manages The Workshed concession contract (operated by Wiltshire Council as part of The Enterprise Network). The Workshed co-working and small incubation office space is ideal for start-ups and micros looking for a digi-tech community in unique heritage surroundings, and as the rest of the estate is developed around it, its popularity will continue to grow.
- 3.22 There is ongoing interest in future units from companies of varying sizes and it is also hoped that current occupants will be able to grow and occupy larger spaces within the complex.

### Inward Investment

- 3.23 The long-awaited European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) - funded Inward Investment programme to attract new-to-Europe Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) to Swindon & Wiltshire is now underway, with sector specialists engaged in life sciences and health and digi-tech. The Business & Economy team manages this programme, which is delivered in partnership with SWLEP and Wiltshire Council. The specialists have already visited the US to attend a pharma event and further visits are being planned. The team is currently working successfully with the Department for International Trade to draft and design sub-sector propositions.
- 3.24 The Business and Economy team continues to respond to inward investment enquiries, including arranging visits to and around the area, and currently has several warm leads on the pipeline. The team is also working with Planning colleagues to support Honda in finding the best use of the site for the local economy and community, as well as the company.

### Exit from the European Union

- 3.25 Government has stated that "In the event that the UK leaves the EU without a deal, the UK will leave the EU Budget, meaning UK organisations would no longer receive future funding for projects under EU programmes, such as the European Regional Development Fund and Horizon 2020, without further action.



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- 3.26 However, the Chancellor announced in August and October 2016 that the government will guarantee EU projects agreed before we leave the EU, to provide more certainty for UK organisations over the course of Brexit.
- 3.27 In July 2018, the Chief Secretary laid a Written Ministerial Statement (HCWS926) extending this guarantee to provide further stability for UK organisations in a 'no-deal' scenario. The guarantee now covers the following: the full Multiannual Financial Framework allocation for structural and investment funds over the 2014-20 funding period, with payments to beneficiaries made up to the end of 2023"

### Place Marketing

- 3.28 The Switch On To Swindon (SOTS) business ambassador network is going from strength to strength. This branded network, set up to address negative local perceptions, has now reached a record 800 Ambassadors, who are working together to broadcast positive Swindon messaging to a much wider audience.
- 3.29 The annual SOTS event was held in June at Nationwide Building Society's impressive HQ, when the TechSwindon campaign was formally launched using some of Swindon's most innovative tech companies, which demonstrated their products to over 400 attendees. TechSwindon is a new year-long campaign, which aims to attract people to live, work and invest in Swindon's 'digi-tech' cluster. The project was seed-funded by SBC and the majority of funding comes from the private sector with Nationwide Building Society named as the first contributor. TechSPARK recently won a contract to develop and lead the project including micro-events, talent-attraction activity and culminating in a summit in 2020, which will showcase international and local innovations.
- 3.30 As part of the TechSwindon launch, the team at local tech company The Carto Group produced a hugely successful 3D film, which allows users to fly through Swindon's streets highlighting the huge growth opportunities including in the town centre, New Eastern Villages and Kimmerfields.
- 3.31 SOTS has also been working with local video production company Ottr to produce a series of social media case study films, featuring some of Swindon's most exciting stories from local companies. These, and the TechSwindon launch PR, have generated over 18,000 online impressions over recent months – so positive Swindon business messages have been seen over 18,000 times. A very real example of the strength of the SOTS media reach followed the online publication of a film featuring Catalent (international pharmaceutical company) which received over 250 unsolicited job applicants the following day.
- 3.32 The Visit Swindon website has recently undergone some improvements, and now features easy-to-read, attractive pages covering events, things to do, hidden

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gems and places to stay. The site is also the local link to the Great West Way, a 125-mile touring route from London to Bristol. This nationally funded tourism project passes through Swindon and acts as a great promoter for the town.

### Electric vehicles

- 3.33 Public Power Solutions, the Council's wholly owned power company, was commissioned to install two electric vehicle charging points on the Civic campus to demonstrate Council leadership in deploying new energy vehicle technology; these are now operational and will provide commercially priced recharging facility for staff members and the public.
- 3.34 As part of the Local Plan review, the Council will also revisit its planning policies to consider provision of electrical vehicle charging points.

### Digital advertising

- 3.35 In line with the Council's recently adopted Communications Strategy and Action Plan (Cabinet Minute 22, 2018/19 refers) officers have investigated opportunities for digital advertising at a key location or locations within the Borough. The primary objective will be to have a tool at the Council's control to promote our development opportunities, successes, and ongoing campaigns that support the local economy and economic development.
- 3.36 As at the publication of this report, a procurement process is being carried out to identify a suitable supplier.

### Strategic Partnerships

- 3.37 On 11<sup>th</sup> July 2018, Cabinet confirmed the Council's membership of England's Economic Heartland Strategic Transport Forum (draft Cabinet Minute 23, 2018/19 refers). This membership continues to support further physical transport infrastructure that is necessary to enhance Swindon's connections to from the economies of Oxford, Milton Keynes, Cambridge, and beyond.
- 3.38 Swindon continues to work with this body, and the National Infrastructure Commission, to ensure investment in infrastructure that will benefit the western part of Oxfordshire and Swindon, especially improvements to the A420. Being a successful partner here has increased Swindon's presence nationally and supports dialogue with government that will benefit the people of Swindon through successful strategic growth in and around the borough.
- 3.39 Further recognition of Swindon's pivotal location and strategic importance has been shown by the invitation to Swindon to join the Great Western Powerhouse. This strategic grouping of seven key authorities (Swindon, Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset, Gloucester, Newport, Cardiff and Swansea) is working to lobby



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government with one voice, particularly on matters of industrial strategy and inward investment. Swindon is participating in the discussions and will continue to seek the best outcomes for Swindon businesses and residents.

### Local Industrial Strategy

- 3.40 The Council's teams are currently working with Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) and the government department for Business, Energy and the Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to produce a Local Industrial Strategy (SWLIS) for Swindon and Wiltshire with the objectives of boosting productivity and earning power, while aligning with Swindon's objectives. The document is at the drafting stage but in light of recent events has been prioritised by government, therefore timelines have been accelerated.
- 3.41 Below are the areas of focus for Swindon within the strategy, showing how the Council's teams are working within this LEP-wide piece to deliver outcomes for Swindon.
- 3.42 Further information on the Local Industrial Strategy and the Council's strategic partnerships is contained in a report to Cabinet for 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019, which, if Cabinet approves the recommendation, will be considered elsewhere on the agenda at this Scrutiny Committee meeting.

### Business

- 3.43 The focus is on diversifying the economy to increase resilience by leveraging sectoral and local strengths, including: advanced manufacturing around Swindon and reducing dependence on single large employers. The diversification will embrace new technologies merging manufacturing and digital expertise (commonly called Industry 4.0) and emphasise the growth of medium size enterprises.
- 3.44 Industry 4.0 technologies and digital applications use data and connective processes to create "smart industry" which are increasingly significant to improving productivity through the adoption of automation and other efficiencies. These are key components to improving local manufacturing productivity and growth.
- 3.45 Swindon will be developed as an advanced engineering, digi-tech and R&D centre of excellence and attract new high value activities into the area building on the reputation, skills, expertise and the legacy which Honda leaves behind.
- 3.46 We will support employment in R&D and higher value activities through securing foreign direct investment in high value manufacturing and advanced engineering, life sciences, cyber and digital technologies.

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- 3.47 Working with SWLEP and partners we will also focus on business start-up and scale up support resulting in employment and productivity growth across a wider range of sectors and communities through the delivery of scale-up support services for SMEs.

### Infrastructure and Place Making

- 3.48 We will explore transformational programmes in infrastructure and place making to improve movement and the visitor experience through the whole town making Swindon a more accessible and enjoyable place to be, attracting visitors, new residents and new levels of investment and promote Kimmerfields as the flagship site for development, alongside the new Bus Boulevard.
- 3.49 We will improve our visitor, high street and cultural offer and strengthen resilience to economic fluctuations. The transformational plans for the development of Swindon town centre as an integrated settlement will include its Smart City capabilities, cultural offer and developing its R&D and advanced manufacturing capabilities.
- 3.50 We are working with strategic partners to establish and strengthen the A420 as a key route connecting Swindon with Oxfordshire in terms of supporting business and commuter flows and linking the area with the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford arc.
- 3.51 Swindon will develop a Cultural Quarter which will comprise a significant area of the town and house Swindon's world class art collection. It will provide a diverse and vibrant cultural offer, creating spaces which showcase the existing offer and provide an environment in which new cultural attractions can be developed.
- 3.52 The Railway Corridor will provide a landmark gateway to Swindon by developing the Rail Station and its environs, opening up the route to the North Star Site, bringing new leisure and retail opportunities and easing movement between the north and south of the railway.
- 3.53 New Eastern Villages, Wichelstowe and Tadpole Garden Village will deliver good growth for Swindon, creating attractive places where people want to settle and continuing the growth for Swindon and looking to build excellent, sustainable communities.

### People and Skills

- 3.54 We will work to Increase the number of people taking up apprenticeships; businesses employing an apprentice and increase the number of higher and degree level apprenticeships.

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3.55 We will raise the aspirations of young people and local workers who have not engaged in higher education and address the status of Swindon as a particular higher education cold spot working alongside our Further Education Colleges and private sector training providers and the new Institute of Technology in Swindon.

3.56 We will address our skills gaps working alongside our business community resulting in resilient and inclusive growth, innovation and productivity improvements as well as to mitigate the impact of EU exit on skills and labour availability.

#### **4. Alternative Options**

4.1 The Scrutiny Committee could choose not to hold annual question and answer sessions with Members.

#### **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.

##### 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.

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### 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.