

RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 14 JANUARY 2016

PRESENT:- Councillors Richard Hurley (Chair), Steve Allsopp, Oliver Donachie, Mark Edwards, Des Moffatt and Caryl Sydney-Smith

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nick Martin and Timothy Swinyard.

32. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd September 2015 be confirmed and signed.

33. Public Question Time

There were no public questions

34. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded members of the need to declare known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

No declarations of interest were made.

35. Website and Digital Approach

The Board Director Resources submitted a report setting out the landscape for developing digital services in Swindon, following implementation of a new Council website in September 2015.

Gavin Calthrop, the Council's Head of Communications and Insight Resources gave a brief presentation concerning the development of the Council's new website. He commented that the IT department had worked in partnership with the communications team to deliver a new web platform to support the new Council website which went live in September 2015.

Mr Calthrop advised that the new platform allows the Council to control the design and implementation of further improvements to the website using in-house skills and capacity, thereby ensuring that the Council has the flexibility to respond to changing customer expectations.

It was noted that the immediate priority for the new website was to migrate all existing content from the old site to the new platform. All content would then be refined in line with best practice guidelines to provide the best possible customer experience.

It was noted that the new site had already significantly enhanced the user experience, even at this early stage with the following key improvements:

- Responsive design that enables the site to be fully accessible on all mobile

- devices
- Improved search functionality
- Simplified navigation and focus on key tasks based on research and evidence about what customers use the site for
- Improved forms and transactions in some areas

Karen McMahon the Council's Head of Business Services & Support Resources - Customer & Business Services gave a brief presentation concerning the Council's improved Customer Services function. Ms McMahon referred to a reduction in customer contact through traditional channels and commented that using the new web platform and end to end digital processes would enable the Council to manage down demand and still continue to provide a good customer experience across all interaction channels.

She referred to the changing face of customer services with a new "doc drop" service and the improved contact centre with a Police counter service.

Resolved – (1) That the report be noted and the improved service provision outlined by the officers in their presentation of the report be welcomed.

(2) That members be provided with copies of the website statistics referred to by the officers in their presentation of the report.

36. Performance Management

Sam Mowbray, the Head of Performance, People and Engagement submitted a report setting out the progress made on the development of the Council's Performance Framework, which will be the vehicle for Members, residents and stakeholders to measure the success of the Council's Vision, Priorities and Pledges.

The Committee noted that, in accepting the Vision for Swindon at the full Council meeting in September 2015, alongside the four council priorities and 30 key pledges, there was a commitment by the Leader of the Council to bring forward a performance system which would allow Members and residents to monitor performance against these priorities and pledges in order to ascertain whether adequate and sufficient progress is being made towards the delivery of the Vision for Swindon. In response to that commitment, Ms Mowbray commented that numerous performance measures and targets had been developed by lead officers and relevant Cabinet Members to help the Council to identify whether it is being successful in the delivery of the Council priorities between now and the end of 2020. A spreadsheet was tabled at the meeting identifying the proposed measures and targets, along with baseline and benchmark data where such existed.

She commented that numerous performance measures and targets have been developed by lead officers and the relevant Cabinet members to help the Council to identify whether it is being successful in the delivery of the Council priorities between now and the end of 2020. She tabled a spreadsheet showing the measures and targets, along with baseline and benchmark data where it exists.

Ms Mowbray advised that it was intended that these measures and targets should be agreed by Cabinet at its next meeting, in February 2016, and that they would be the basis Council's Performance Framework from now until the end of 2020. It was noted that some targets may be met by that date and replaced with new measures and targets as appropriate and that others are longer-term.

Resolved – That the report, and, in particular, the measures and targets planned to form the basis of the Council's Performance Framework to 2020, including the use of the online performance tool, demonstrated at the meeting and forming the basis of the Council's Performance Framework, be noted.

37. Capital Planning

The Board Director Resources submitted a report setting out an overview of the capital planning and delivery arrangements for the Council's capital projects.

Mr Paul Smith, the Council's Head of Technical Finance gave a brief presentation setting out in more detail the processes for capital planning and delivery and identifying areas of particular risk including procurement approvals, robust cost estimates, the level of budget contingencies, resourcing projects, publication of budget finance, "scope-creep" and the relationship between borrowing and revenue budgets.

It was noted that the Council had an on-going capital programme with a total budget in the region of £120m, funded through a mixture of capital grant, capital receipts, revenue contributions, S106 contributions and borrowing and that, despite falling resources, the capital programme was still substantial and many of the projects are highly significant in terms of delivering the Council's aims.

The Committee was advised that the Government awarded capital grant on an annual basis for schools and highways work, and provided indicative funding for future years, and that notification of this was usually received by the Council around Christmas time each year. It was noted that any schemes funded from the Council's own borrowing have a revenue budget impact in terms of the resulting debt charges.
Resolved – That the report, and the additional detail provided in the officer's presentation of the report, be noted.