

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Resources and Corporate

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 27th October 2016

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| Author: | Cabinet Member for StreetSmart |
| Wards: | All |
| Locality Affected: | All |
| Parishes Affected: | All |

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Resources and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to question the Cabinet Member for StreetSmart on his portfolio responsibilities and performance, and on ways to maximise income within his portfolio.
- 1.2 A key purpose of the Scrutiny function is to hold Cabinet to account and ensure that Council and partner's priorities and performance are being delivered. In particular, members are invited to measure progress towards achieving the Council's Vision, Priorities and Pledges.
- 1.3 Members of the Committee are reminded that all Members of the Cabinet are required to go before the Scrutiny Committee to take part in a Question and Answer session that will focus on the full remit of their portfolio. The Resources and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee is therefore encouraged to focus its Question and Answer sessions with Cabinet Members on topics and/or service issues specific to the Terms of Reference of this Committee, as detailed in Article 6 of the Council's Constitution, in order to avoid duplication.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Take note and put relevant questions to the Cabinet Member for StreetSmart, and to decide if any further action is required.

3. Detail

- 3.1 The Cabinet Member for StreetSmart is Councillor Keith Williams. The portfolio responsibilities for this Cabinet position are as follows:
 - Waterside Depot Management;
 - StreetSmart;
 - Public Toilets;

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Leon Barrett, lbarrett@swindon.gov.uk, Jason Humm, jhumh@swindon.gov.uk, or Glyn Peach, gpeach@swindon.gov.uk

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- EnviroCrime;
- Waste Disposal / Waste Minimisation;
- Street Lighting (maintenance);
- Street Cleaning;
- Recycling;
- Refuse Collection – Domestic and Trade;
- Ground and Tree Maintenance and Open Spaces;
- Removal of Graffiti and Abandoned Vehicles;
- Parks (StreetSmart services only);
- Environmental Issues; Landscape and Countryside (including Community Forest);
- Playgrounds, including those that are not presently utilised;
- Maintenance of Roundabouts and non-HRA verges;
- Building and Engineering;
- Building Services, Cleaning, Catering and Security services;
- Gullies and Drainage, minor road repairs, potholes;
- Digital by Design;
- IT Strategy and delivery;

3.2 Additional narrative on the performance of StreetSmart is set out in Appendix A.

What have you done well?

StreetSmart

3.3 *Improvements to the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC)* – In the past 12 months we've completed a number of improvements to the HWRC that improve the safety and operation of the site as well as prolonging the utilisation of the site delaying the need to introduce a second HWRC within the borough to manage increasing housing growth.

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- 3.4 The main improvements have been the introduction of a new entrance off Darby Close which now improves safety by separating residents from the operational traffic entering and moving around the site. This has significantly improved the holding capacity of the site removing the impact of cars queuing up Darby Close.
- 3.5 Other safety measures have included burying overhead power cables into the ground, and we are near completion of extended the site beyond the Transfer Station to improve safety for operational teams.
- 3.6 At the time of writing this report, we are preparing a separate disposal channel for Trade waste along with the introduction of a new weighbridge. By separating Trade waste disposal from household waste disposal, it is expected this will reduce the waiting times for residents using the site. This will also bring the introduction of charging for some materials as described in the recent proposal submitted to StreetSmart and Highways Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28th September 2016, details of which can be found on the Council's website.
- 3.7 *Improved performance of the EnviroCrime Team* – The new EnviroCrime team have been operating since mid-July 2016. Their focus is a combination of enforcement activity to address short term behaviour, and education in schools to change long term behaviour and reduce the cost of littering and fly tipping from happening in the first place.
- 3.8 By the end of September 2016 the new team had issued 150 Fixed penalty Notices. The team had also carried out 112 investigations into reports of fly-tipping, waste and littering and 7 of these are being investigated with the aim to prosecute. Through the year, we have published high value prosecution cases with the intention of raising people's awareness of the significant costs that can be incurred by irresponsible disposal of waste and fly tipping.
- 3.9 An education programme has been developed and Primary and Secondary Schools are being approached to arrange sessions to deliver these programmes. During the last few months, 20 schools have been contacted and 4 Schools have confirmed sessions. These sessions will be delivered between November 2016 and January 2017 with a target audience of over 1,000 school children. The team will continue to book sessions with other schools and our target is to have delivered programmes within 10 schools by 31st March 2017.
- 3.10 The team are also involved in working with the community in Broadgreen under the 'Keep Broadgreen Clean' initiative which will involve weekly clinics in Broadgreen Community Centre with the aim to assist residents and local businesses with any issues they may have around waste, recycling and littering. Day and night patrols will also be undertaken to provide advice and guidance to residents with regard to street drinking and disposing of waste appropriately.
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Posters and leaflets have been designed that make clear that there is a Fixed Penalty Notice for littering and we aim to work with local businesses to display these and hand leaflets out whilst on patrol with the aim to educate and change behaviours

ICT

- 3.11 In February 2016 the ICT service was brought back in house from Capita. This saved the organisation £800,000 per year. Through excellent preparation from Finance and IT the exit fees for the contract which should have cost the Council £2m were avoided entirely. 24 staff were transferred from Capita under TUPE and the department was further strengthened with permanent recruitment to a size of 53 FTEs including one new apprentice.
- 3.12 The new IT department has begun the process of stabilising the environment and bringing failing component up to an acceptable performance level and compliance level. It is the expectation of the department that they will be PSN compliant by the end of the year. To achieve savings a modest investment in on premise technology has been made to enable failing services running in the Capita data centre to be brought back to Swindon. This has the ability to save the Council up to another 300,000 per year.
- 3.13 The new IT department has delivered a self-service portal to staff to allow for all incidents to be logged and tracked by the users 24 x 7. A fully configured request system is available for staff to request pre-authorised procurement and used to log all non-authorised requests.
- 3.14 The IT team run a number of projects at any one time averaging at about 30. The current top 5 projects are a
- Deployment of Office 365 (November 2016), to increase service standards.
 - Insourcing SEQOL (October 2016 – March 2-017) to support adults Social Care
 - New Print Management Solution (November 2016) To deliver savings between £0.5m and £1.7m
 - New Mobile Phone Contract (November 2016) to deliver saving of £200,000
 - Citizen Portal (First live service - Green waste subscriptions, March 2017)

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- 3.15 The Information Governance (IG) in the organisation continues to mature as during 2016 the training of the Directors and Tier 2 Senior Officers in IG took place. IG training for school governors has also continued to be deployed.

Highways Maintenance

- 3.16 Outstanding backlogs associated with the number of defects identified by inspection teams and the public, compared to the number repaired, continue to be reduced.
- 3.17 Since the reintegration of the service from SCS the teams have been managing a backlog in defects. In October 2015 the backlog total was around 5,000 defects and this figure has now been reduced to under 3,000. Improvements in the management, efficiency and programming of the gangs as well as some additional funding through the Government's 'pothole fund' has allowed the backlog to be reduced whilst the teams have continued to cope with current work levels.

Winter maintenance

- 3.18 The winter service continues to deliver a good and reliable service. Whilst temperatures last year saw fewer extremes, it was a relatively average winter for salt gritting in relation to the number of times that sub-zero temperatures were recorded. The table below details the amount of gritting completed in recent years.

| Financial Year | Number of operations | Salt tonnage |
|----------------|----------------------|--------------|
| 2013/14 | 29 | 1,230 |
| 2014/15 | 39 | 1,580 |
| 2015/16 | 26 | 1,075 |

Table 1 – Winter Service (Salt Gritting Operations)

Incentive funding

- 3.19 In late October 2015 the Council submitted its self-assessment questionnaire, placing itself within band 1 (the lowest of the 3 levels). This year's submission is currently being prepared and will be submitted at a self-assessed band 2. The improvement in band has been very much reliant upon improvements to the programming and repair of defects, improvements in staff training; reduction in the associated backlog; and improvements to network resilience through management of information, works programming and staff training.

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Street lighting

- 3.20 Since last year the operations and asset teams have been itemising the exact number and specification of equipment across SBC's 33,000 lighting columns. Previous billing has been based on generic energy consumption for lighting. SBC's first itemised bill was submitted this month and whilst consumption figures are still being verified it is expected that this will lead to a reduction in energy costs of between 5-10 %.

What would you do differently?

StreetSmart

- 3.21 *Grass cutting through 2016* – Following a review of the Grass Cutting during 2016 presented to StreetSmart and Highways Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28th September 2016, we faced a challenging season this year with the significant rate of grass growth as experienced by council's up and down the country.
- 3.22 We could have considered replacing our grass cutting fleet during 2016, but with the transfer of services to some existing parish councils, we decided it was more cost effective to hold any plans for fleet replacement while we review what services and equipment any existing parishes may require.
- 3.23 We directed some resources from areas we considered were lower priority where there would be little impact if we allowed the grass to grow longer and directed those resources to try and maintain the cutting schedule in high priority areas where there was greater impact. One consideration for future seasons is to identify whether some areas should be left to fallow where there would be little direct impact and focus limited resources to the amenity areas with higher priority.

ICT

- 3.24 ICT have allowed many of the Councils major IT contracts to lapse. With the arm's length nature of contract management during the outsourced Capita partnership, this was not closely monitored and as such, following novation of the contracts back to SBC this has caused a real backlog of major procurement. It will take some years to overcome this backlog but plans are in place and being progressed. To avoid a backlog forming again all contracts are closely monitored in a procurement pipeline with a specialist procurement officer reporting directly to the Chief Information Officer.

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Highway Maintenance

- 3.25 Teams continue to operate paper records in relation to defect identification and repair. Upgrading the system to electronic mobile working is possible but this requires an extension to the Council's Confirm system (one of the 6 major SBC IT systems). This is being worked on at present along with a business case to support the move to electronic and mobile working.

Street Lighting Maintenance

- 3.26 Over the last 12 month the street lighting team have continued to manage the asset and maintain the equipment. Around 12,000 bulbs have been replaced across the network and nearly 400 columns including some heritage columns. 9,000 steel and 1,000 concrete columns have been structurally tested to ensure that risks are managed on the network. This represents good performance from the team however the aged nature of some of our assets creates capital and revenue pressures and in turn can impact on the financial viability of upgrading bulbs to more efficient LED's. A business case is currently being developed to see how significant investment up front could reduce ongoing annual spend and reduce energy consumption.

What are the challenges facing your portfolio:

StreetSmart

- 3.27 *Going Local* – At the time of writing this paper we are awaiting the outcome of the Community Governance Review, scheduled for the Cabinet Meeting on 19th October 2016, and subsequent Council Meeting on 10th November 2016.
- 3.28 Subject to the decision taken at Full Council on 10th November, it's possible that existing parish council boundaries may change and new parishes created from April 2017. We have already seen the transfer of some StreetSmart services to existing parish councils and we recognise the creation of new parishes could see far greater transfer of these environmental services to the local level where residents would have greater influence over the service standards being delivered in their community and reflecting local priorities.
- 3.29 If the decision at Full Council is to proceed with the Going Local initiative then it's expected the StreetSmart management team would engage and consult with the staff and unions through the remainder of 2016/17 to organise the workforce accordingly and deliver a smooth transition of the work in 2017/18 to minimise any impact on residents, businesses and visitors.
- 3.30 *Changes to the Waste Service* – At the time of writing this report we are finalising changes to the Waste and Recycling service to be implemented from 31st
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October 2016. The detail of these changes were presented to StreetSmart and Highways Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28th September 2016 and full details are available on the council's website.

- 3.31 The changes will deliver an annualised saving of circa £300,000 and will change the collection day for circa 55,000 households. The Waste project team have completed a significant level of preparation ahead of these changes with designing new rounds, training staff on new in-cab technology, and preparing an extensive communication plan for residents. However, it is recognised with this level of change, we are likely to experience some teething issues in the early phase of implementation. To mitigate any teething issues, we are ensuring Customer Service teams are well briefed on the changes, we are briefing all Ward Members of the changes in their area and we will be closely monitoring the rollout and responding to any circumstances where waste is not collected. During this time the common response if waste is not collected will be to recommend it is left out so that we can collect it the following day. Once we are alerted to any service failure then we would ask for a degree of patience as we rectify the issue and ensure this does not happen again.

ICT

- 3.32 The first of three major demands is security and compliance. During the Capita partnership management of the ICT department, the state of the infrastructure was allowed to degrade to old, end of life unsupported versions of software and hardware. These unsupported components become vulnerable to security threats and the compliance thresholds the Council need to meet to share information with other councils, DWP, NHS & the finance sector all become out of reach. Bringing all this end of life technology up to date is taking significant effort and costs.
- 3.33 The user experience of our staff working here in Swindon need to be improved. Customer satisfaction was at an all-time low when the department was benchmarked in April 2015. A work programme was developed and continues to be progressed to change the impact of IT from a poor hindrance to doing Council business to a strong enabler of the organisation processes. The back office experience and the support to front line colleagues needs to increase in quality and a rich digital experience will be provided.
- 3.34 The final and arguably most important challenge for the IT department is to create a new digital offering providing a rich customer experience for Swindon citizens and businesses wanting to transact with the council. This made some progress last year with the launch of our new Council web site and is progressing to step two this year with the launch of the citizen portal. The citizen portal is designed to give a rich 'Amazon like' experience for consuming Council Services.

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Highways Maintenance guidance

- 3.35 Highway Operations continue to work closely with the Highways Asset Management team in agreeing the service standards that are achievable in the current financial climate. New guidance is due from central Government (in October 2016) to update the requirements on Highway Authorities to inspect and repair the public highway. This is likely to allow Authorities to take a more risk based approach to its inspection and repair regimes. This is generally welcomed by Authorities, however it will require a significant reassessment of service levels and repair timescales associated with defect repairs and may lead to increased challenge on liability claims due to the potential for a more flexible interpretation of guidance.

Street Lighting

- 3.36 Street lighting energy costs continue to represent a significant commitment against budget. Working closely with Highway Asset Management teams the operations teams will be part of a number of trials for part night lighting, trimming of lighting hours and dimming of lighting levels. Each has potential to make operational savings, however trials will require teams to adjust maintenance approaches, implement changes to facilitate the trials and review the operation of the lighting equipment under differing operational conditions.
- 3.37 Teams dealing with asset strategy are also likely to prepare a business case for the replacement of current bulbs to LED's across some, or all, of the street lighting network. This will require significant input from operational teams around potential changes, and analysis of improvements in equipment performance and associated potential savings.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Committee can choose not to operate a Cabinet Portfolio Question and Answer session system.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial or procurement implications arising from 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.

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Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended) 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 this report. Any further implications will be identified when a topic is reviewed by the Committee and in any recommendations made by the Committee.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 No Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) is required at this stage as this report proposes no changes to services. Any DIA that is required during review of topics include 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 Committee and if it makes any recommendations.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Corporate Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None.

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 - Details of StreetSmart's Performance.