

RESOURCES AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 18 JANUARY 2018

PRESENT:- Councillors Timothy Swinyard (Chair), Steve Allsopp, John Haines, Des Moffatt, Timothy Swinyard (Chair), Caryl Sydney-Smith, Steve Weisinger and Robert Wright

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Vera Tomlinson.

17. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Councillors to declare any known interests in any matter to be considered.

No such declarations were made.

18. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 27th November 2017 be confirmed and signed.

19. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

20. Wichelstowe

Robert Powe, Wichelstowe Programme Manager, gave a presentation on the development at Wichelstowe. He advised that it is a joint venture with Barratt Homes, a £679m partnership to deliver circa 2750 homes on Council owned land.

He outlined the strategic objectives of the joint venture touching upon the following areas:

- Economic development
- The high quality of the development
- Sustainability
- Creation of high quality neighbourhoods
- The type of homes needed in Swindon
- A rebalancing of Swindon's housing stock
- Delivering jobs that contribute to Swindon's economic growth
- Creating an intergenerational community that supports healthy active living

He outlined the key principles of the joint venture expanding on the following areas:

- The Council are providing the land and Barratt Homes providing the infrastructure
- That the Council and Barratt jointly fund the house building
- That the Council's land value will need to be rigorously tested
- Securing Planning permissions and Section 106 agreements aligned with the

developments design codes

Following the presentation the Wichelstowe Programme Manager responded to questions and observations put by Members of the Committee on the following areas:

- A perceived trade shortage in the area
- Guarantees in the legal agreements concerning the feasibility of 15-30% affordable housing
- The factoring in of the closure of Mill Lane to the development
- Traffic congestion and the bus route on Red Post Drive
- The future of Barratt PLC Holdings and its associated groups over the course of the development

Resolved – That the Wichelstowe Programme Manager be thanked for a useful and informative presentation

21. Digital Access Strategy

Samantha Mowbray, the Director of Performance, Organisational Improvement and Communications submitted a report introducing the Council's draft approach to all of Swindon's residents being able to engage with the Council as it moves more of its customer services online.

The report sought to give members of the Committee confidence that a coordinated approach to modernising customer services is in place and that this approach is being developed in conjunction with the Council's Digital Inclusion Strategy which aims to ensure that all of Swindon's residents are able to access the universal services which the Council provides.

The Organisational Excellence work stream is one of four themes within the Swindon Programme. The Swindon Programme is a £30m savings programme intended to ensure that the Council is financially and operationally sustainable by March 2020.

The Director referred to a report by Get Digital which provided a digital map of Swindon. She commented that the Council had a target of 85% of its contact with customer being provided digitally.

It was noted that 85% of the Council's customers currently own a smartphone.

She outlined the barriers to digital inclusion which included skills, language, trust and not recognising the benefits. The Council will support customers to use digital services and empower them to conduct their transactions digitally by using a customer support network.

Resolved – That the report be noted and that the Committee recognises that the proposals are currently in draft form with a fuller strategy being forthcoming over the coming months.

Councillor Keith Williams, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Digitalisation and Samantha Mowbray, the Director of Performance, Organisational Improvement and Communications submitted a joint report outlining a draft proposed approach to the modernisation of Customer Services which forms part of the Organisational Excellence programme.

The report sought to give members of the Committee confidence that a coordinated approach to modernising customer services is in place and that this approach is being developed in conjunction with the Council's Digital Inclusion Strategy which aims to ensure that all of Swindon's residents are able to access the universal services which the Council provides.

The Organisational Excellence work stream is one of four themes within the Swindon Programme. The Swindon Programme is a £30m savings programme intended to ensure that the Council is financially and operationally sustainable by March 2020.

The report notes that by 2020 customer services will have removed all unnecessary face to face and phone contact by providing clear information on the Council's website to either enable customers to do things for themselves; signposting customers to other external services; or correctly routing them to the right services within the Council

At the meeting, Karen McMahon, the Head of Customer and Business Services advised that there were now 68 processes using the customer portal. She explained that channel shift needed to be undertaken in conjunction with the 'right first time' approach to service delivery, in order to reduce failure demand from the outset. She commented there was already a natural shift from customers physically visiting the Council to using smart digital services and in future the team would introduce other communication methods such as WebChat. She noted that 17000 customers had signed up to the digital portal.

The Committee discussed the average response time to customer comments and the barriers to using digital services, including social phobias, confidence and lacking the necessary digital skills.

Resolved – That the report be noted and the Committee recognises that the proposals are currently in draft form with more detailed proposals being forthcoming the next few months.