

RESOURCES AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 16 JANUARY 2019

PRESENT:- Councillors Brian Mattock (Chair), Steve Weisinger (Vice-Chair), Steve Allsopp, Claire Ellis, Mary Friend, Timothy Swinyard and Robert Wright

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Des Moffatt and Andy Spry.

22. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. No declarations were made.

23. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 29th October 2018 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

24. Public Question Time

No public questions were asked or submitted for this meeting.

25. Presentation - Swindon Programme

The Director of Digital Services and Corporate Programmes gave a presentation updating the Committee on progress made on the Swindon Programme and how targets were to be achieved. In particular, he drew the Committee's attention to the following:

- The challenge faced by the Council in ensuring it becomes more effective.
- The collaborative work undertaken with internal and external partners to ensure Swindon Programme goals were achieved. These included financial targets agreed by the Corporate Management Team focusing on opportunity identification.
- The setting of a baseline and smart targets following the recent efficiency benchmarking exercise undertaken jointly by Swindon and other local authorities.
- Swindon Programme Board monthly target reporting to the Leader's Advisory Group.
- Creation of directorate dashboards to embed the Swindon Programme principles in the day to day running of the Council.
- The Swindon Programme consisted of three project types: a) the Swindon Programme Projects, b) the Human Resources Supported Projects and c) the Directorate Projects.
- The deployment of Skype for Business to enable digital rationalisation across the Council.
- The success of the Digital Hub in transferring a high number of processes into on-line services.

Following the introductory remarks, Director of Digital Services and Corporate Programmes with the assistance of the Director of Finance, responded to

questions and comments on the following points:

- The Swindon Programme was on track to meet targets this financial year and the basis has been laid to support further endeavours and future challenges.
- Support provided by customer services for local community residents unable to complete digital applications for Council services.
- The difference in processes for customer phoning the Customer Services Centre and those using the walk-in Centre in Wat Tyler House.
- The necessity of undertaking customer satisfaction surveys to influence future processes.
- Promoting digitalisation of access to services to reduce footfall through the Customer Centre at Wat Tyler House.
- The maintain the adaptability of the Swindon Programme model to ensure it responds to changing environment of the Council and local needs of the community.

Resolved – (1) To note the contents of the presentation.

(2) That the Director of Digital Services and Corporate Programmes be thanked for his comprehensive and informative presentation.

(3) That the Director of Digital Services and Corporate Programmes be requested to circulate information on the Key Performance Indicators relating to the success of the Digitalisation Programme for Customer Services before the next meeting of the Committee.

(3) That a visit to Wat Tyler West be set up for the Committee in the near future to enable the Director of Digital Services and Corporate Programmes demonstrate the work currently being undertaken by Customer Services.

26. Presentation - Outcomes from the latest LGA Peer Review

Director of Digital Services and Corporate Programmes updated the Committee on the recent LGA's visit to the Council on 10th and 11th December 2018. He stated that the peer inspection centred on the Council's Transformation Plan and that the Council was awaiting feedback from the LGA in the near future. He added that a report with findings would be submitted at the next meeting of the Committee for scrutiny.

Resolved - That the Director of Digital Services and Corporate Programmes be requested to submit a report with the LGA's findings at the next meeting of the Committee.

27. Presentation - Fair Funding Review and Business Rate Retention

The Director of Finance gave a presentation on the Fair Funding Review and Business Rates Retention and explained that the subjects were interlinked. He drew the Committee's attention to the following:

- The Ministry of Housing, Community and Local government (MHCLG) and the Local Government Association (LGA) were conducting workshops to better understand the impact of the review on local governance nationally.
- Council funding from 2020 would be driven by:
 - a) the spending review by the Government to determine the budget for MHCLG future financial years;
 - b) the introduction of 75% business rate retention; and
 - c) the results of the Fair Funding consultation. This had looked at the local authority's 'need to spend' on public services which covered key cost drivers including population, deprivation and rurality.

- Service-specific formulae for adult social care and children's services.
- The overarching methodology that determined how much funding each authority received each year was introduced over ten years ago and had not been updated since funding baselines were set at the start of the 50 per cent business rates retention scheme in 2013/14.
- The Government undertook the Fair Funding Review to update the needs formula and set new funding baselines for the start of the new 75 per cent business rates retention scheme from April 2020.
- Further technical papers were planned for spring and summer 2019 to develop and consider relative needs, resources and transition, with the new arrangements coming into force in April 2020.
- The Business Rates Levy paid by the Council for business rate growth. This was also being reviewed by the Government.
- The discussions being undertaken regarding the proposal to deal with the risks relating to business rates appeals nationally.

Following the introductory remarks, the Director of Finance, responded to questions and comments on the following points:

- The Government's use of the Office of National Statistics (ONS) demographic projections data to determine future funding and once set, to be fixed for a number of years.
- The vital importance of new housing development calculations with regard to Swindon's demographics and future population predictions.
- In line with the Government's scheme, Council contacted businesses whose rates had increased considerably offering support. This was conducted within the scheme's parameters.
- The balance of funding to be generated when allocating spaces within the Local Plan for business, housing and green space was not currently quantifiable.
- Business rates were set nationally by the Valuation Office Agency and the Agency provided valuations for business properties on their website.

Resolved – (1) To note the contents of the presentation.

(2) That the Director of Finance be thanked for his comprehensive and informative presentation

28.

Work Programme 2018-2019

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Director of Law (Interim Monitoring Officer) setting out the topics for inclusion on the Committee' 2018/19 Work Programme, as agreed at its meeting on 11th June 2018 and updated during the course of the Municipal Year.

Resolved – That the Work Programme for 2018/19 be updated to include a report by the Director of Digital Services and Corporate Programmes regarding the Local Government Association's findings following their inspection in December 2018.