

# **Scrutiny**

**Monday, 14 January 2019**

## **Report To Follow**

Item 6 – Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session – Cabinet Member for  
Corporate and Customer Services

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## **Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session – Corporate and Customer Services**

**Scrutiny Committee**

**Date: 14<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

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Author: Cabinet Member for Corporate and Customer Services

Wards: All

Parishes Affected: All

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

- 1.1 This report updates the Scrutiny Committee on pertinent information occurring over the past year within the Corporate Services and Digitalisation portfolio.
- 1.2 The report is requested by the Committee on an annual basis and provides the basis for the question and answer session to be held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

### **2. Recommendations**

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the report and ask any questions on its content at the meeting planned for 14<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

### **3. Detail**

The Composition of the Corporate and Customer Services Portfolio

- 3.1 The Leader of the Council has allocated the following responsibilities to Councillor Keith Williams, the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Customer Services: performance and risk, human resources and organisational development, customer services, health and safety, information technology digitalisation, estate management, property, legal services, committee services and communications.
- 3.2 Each of these services will be addressed in turn with achievements, challenges and future plans for each service addressed in brief throughout the report.

Performance and Risk

- 3.3 Since the last report the department has successfully worked with the Portfolio Holder and senior officers to refresh the Pledges which set out how the Council will deliver its Vision. A suite of deliverables and performance measures has been identified to ensure that there are actions in place to implement the Pledges. Progress will be measured using the directorate scorecards. There has also been significant progress in the consolidation and successful incorporation of analysts from education, customer services and adult social care into the Corporate Team. Other successes include the automation of data entry for the scorecards, and development of the I Share Mapping tool so that the Council is providing better spatial information for residents and development of Open Data.

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- 3.4 Since the last report the team has undergone a significant restructure. Although some of the impact is absorbed through improved productivity, it will also be necessary for the Council to be better at self-serving in areas including policy, research, consultation and mapping.
- 3.5 Priorities for Performance and Risk in the next 12 months are the production of a Corporate Plan, to support staff to understand their role in delivery of the Vision, Priorities and Pledges, continuing to build resilience across the team through skill sharing including developing the report writing capacity to fully automate the scorecards and utilising the capacity released by automation to carry out more detailed analysis to support the Council's performance improvement. The work on consolidation of building analytical capacity through consolidation of skills and skill sharing within the Corporate Team will also continue with the incorporation of analysts from children's social care.
- 3.6 Challenges for the service over the next twelve months include work to improve data quality, which will depend in part on the pace of installation of new systems and supporting the Council to be better able to identify, understand and use their performance data.

## Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR&OD)

- 3.7 Since the last update to Scrutiny the HR team has supported managers with a number of change processes as part of the Swindon Programme. The team has been integral to supporting managers with the re-design of their staffing structures and has supported 18 restructures in the last 12 months. This continues to be an area of focus for the team over the next six months as the Council works to re-design services as outlined in the December Cabinet report. We have worked well with union colleagues on this with early engagement and formal consultation working effectively to support colleagues at risk of redundancy.
- 3.8 Particular achievements for the HR/OD function in the last twelve months have been the successful running of leadership development programmes at all levels. Aspiring Leaders and Future Leaders continue to be well-received and have demonstrated value in the business challenges that participants have undertaken as part of their programmes. A Senior Leadership development programme for EMT and CMT members was launched in November and will run until July.
- 3.9 Last year's report outlined the issues the Council was having with our approach to strategic resourcing and managing our non-permanent workforce. A new framework for this was established in July 2018 and has saved the Council £145,660 over the last 6 months. Further work is required around the use of

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agency staff, particularly in Children's Services, which continues to be a challenge to both the budget and to effective service delivery.

- 3.10 Swindon Borough Council (SBC) have strengthened the approach to apprenticeships to make sure we strive to meet our Public Sector Duty as well as work with Local employers to create as many apprenticeship opportunities for our residents as possible. The Apprenticeship project Group has Sally Burnett as the Corporate Sponsor, working with the L&D team to oversee our programme and in particular take a focus on care leavers during 2019. Our Aspiring Leaders will be taking on a challenge to look at how we can better support and develop SBC to improve our role as a Corporate Parent.
- 3.11 2019 looks to be an incredibly busy year for the HR/OD team. In addition to delivering the outcomes required for other services as part of the Swindon Programme the HR/OD team have a number of strategic projects in development which will come to fruition in 2019. A long-term pay and reward project will hit significant milestones in 2019 with a view to implementation in 2020, and a new careers website is on track for launch in January which should help Swindon Borough Council be more competitive in the recruitment market and make it easier to attract new staff. Absence continues to be an area of particular focus and the re-procurement of our occupational health contract in 2019 offers opportunities for a more holistic approach to workplace health and well-being. In addition, providing a successful procurement is made, 2019 will see the council do the bulk of the work to achieve a migration to a new Finance and HR system in 2020. There is significant resource required from the HR team to achieve this.
- 3.12 Finally, a major priority of the HR/OD service in 2019 is to support colleagues in Children's Services with their improvement journey. Recruitment of staff and supporting the learning and development of new and existing Children's Services managers and staff are key areas of focus for the HR team. This will include a refresh of the Owning and Driving Performance leadership development programme bespoke to colleagues in Children and Adults Services. This will in turn improve the resilience, quality of practice and outcomes of the team for the benefit of Swindon's most vulnerable young people.

## Communications

- 3.13 The Communications Team have taken significant strides over the last year in demonstrating the value of strategic communications. A Communications Strategy and 2018-20 Campaign Plan was endorsed by Cabinet in July 2018, implementing one of the recommendations from the LGA comms health check from January 2018. This sets out our commitment to strategic communications: delivering evidence-based campaigns with clear objectives that make a measurable difference to council priorities. A high profile example was the voter ID campaign to support the local elections in May 2018 that has been shortlisted

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in the 'Campaign of the Year' category of the 2019 LGC Awards. The 2017/18 staff flu vaccination campaign was also recognised with a Gold award in the 'Internal Communications' campaign of the 2018 Chartered Institute of Public Relations Pride Awards, competing against private sector entries. For minimal outlay, this campaign drove a 35% increase in flu vaccinations, helping staff stay well over winter and able to maintain services for residents. At the same awards the voter ID campaign received a silver award in the 'Best Campaign' category.

- 3.14 Recruitment fully to the new Communications Team structure that was put in place in November 2016 has been an ongoing challenge, accessing candidates with the right skills and experience. However, the core team are high performing and have shown remarkable resilience to cover gaps. The Communications Team completed a restructuring process between September and November 2016, which led to the deletion of several roles and identification of non-staff cost savings. The team have continued to deliver a wide range of high quality external and internal communications work over that period, including campaigns on fostering, recycling and the new housing online repairs service.
- 3.15 The focus over the next 12 months will be on the continued delivery of the priority campaigns and projects set out in the 2018-20 Campaign Plan and reported through the Head of Service scorecard. In particular, developing a campaign that will articulate our corporate narrative, giving residents a clear understanding of the Council's role in delivering what matters to them, their families and Swindon's future. Following the reshaping of the team, there are some new roles to be recruited which should create greater dedicated resource to support staff communications and engagement activity, working closely with HR and Organisation Development colleagues. This will be important as the Council continues to deliver the Swindon Programme and the next staff survey will run in 2019 (last one was 2017). The intention is to conduct a residents' survey during 2019/20 to compare the results with the last one commissioned by the Communications Team in 2017.
- 3.16 As an enabling service, the Communications Team depend on service areas to recognise the value of well-planned, evidence-based strategic communications. Some services areas still treat tactical communications activity as an end in itself, rather than an activity that is led by evidence and contributes to achieving a clearly defined objective. Our role will be continue to educate and support colleagues to work with us to apply the best practice OASIS model developed by the Government Communication Service, using the results from past successful campaigns to demonstrate what effective communications looks like.

## Health and Safety

- 3.17 The health and safety management model has been reviewed and a revised approach is being undertaken to develop a model of continuous improvement

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across the Communities and Housing Directorate. Service Managers will own a health and safety improvement plan with KPI's being monitored through the management functions and monitored by the Corporate Director for Communities and Housing on a Quarterly basis. All significant health and safety risks will be incorporated into the continuous improvement model and escalated through the line management functions to the Corporate Director.

- 3.18 The priority of the Health and Safety team this year has been focused on utilising this strategy to ensure that all aspects of health and safety are fully integrated into the management of SBC, therefore enabling the work of SBC through the principals of sensible risk management.
- 3.19 To achieve an improved balance between systems and behavioural aspects of management, the team has focused on integrating:

## Competency

- 3.19.1 The unfortunate occurrence of Grenfell Tower put a spotlight on the management of property compliance for many organisation throughout the country. Technical competency for delivering these services for the Council has been reshaped and demonstrated through:
- 3.19.2 New Policy for Property Compliance Management Arrangements which sets out the roles and responsibilities and governance for all matters relating to property compliance to include the major 'five' specialist areas of Asbestos, Gas, Electrical, Fire and Water Hygiene safety.
- 3.19.3 New Statutory Compliance group formed within Property Maintenance to facilitate these services on the Council's behalf with appropriate technical competencies on staff.
- 3.19.4 Integration of health and safety performance monitoring with Communities & Housing service delivery areas. Implementation of performance reporting against identified performance indicators utilising leading and lagging indicators as trend analysis.
- 3.19.5 Focused H&S Management audits; for example, LA Maintained schools consistently demonstrating a good level of compliance, Property compliance audits at Sheltered Housing schemes.
- 3.19.6 Topical risk focused audits, for example, Hand-Arm Vibration to measure safety compliance, gaps and opportunities for management improvement.
- 3.19.7 Monitoring inspections of service delivery workforce team within Communities & Housing service directorate

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## Customer Services

- 3.20 2018 has been a year of significant change within Customer Services. Following a management restructure Customers Service now has responsibility for the One Stop Shop, Contact Centre, and the council's main website, and has a new Head of Service. This has meant a period a change which has now embedded and is working well.
- 3.21 In the previous annual report, the priorities for 2018 were listed as follows:
- 3.21.1 Increasing the number of services available via the My Account Portal; to give the customer a single point of entry into the Council for transactional services.
  - 3.21.2 Progress update: The My Account portal is now an embedded element of the customer interaction. We have developed this function and are making sure that it is only used where it adds value to the customer experience.
  - 3.21.3 Upgrading the telephony system used in the contact centre to enable improved messaging, intelligent call routing and robust management information, which will help to identify opportunities to drive down demand.
  - 3.21.4 Progress update: The contact centre telephony will be upgraded as part of the council's wider telephony project in January/February 2019 and will provide a much more flexible and reliable system. This will support customers to access the right service at the right time, and provides the service with more accurate data to manage demand where necessary.
  - 3.21.5 The remodelling of face to face services making greater use of self-service and continuing to reduce unnecessary footfall.
  - 3.21.6 Progress update: The 'Modernising Customer Services' project is currently in its delivery phase, with capital works taking place to create a new face to face space for Customer Services to replace the current One Stop Shop. Opening in February 2019, this space will be focused on supporting customers to self-serve and will offer a more modern style of engagement. A key part of this project is to manage the demand coming into both the One Stop Shop and the Contact Centre. The primary opportunity in this area has been to modernise our services to allow residents to access them online. As such the Digital Hub has been, and will continue to, develop online processes, whilst our newly formed Web Team will make sure that they easily accessible and simple to use.
- 3.22 In general it has been a year of significant challenge and change for the Customer Services team. The One Stop Shop (and our other contact points) received 66,000 visitors (compared to 80,000 in 2017). The Customer Contact
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Centre received 360,000 calls (compared to 376,000 in 2017). This is in the context of a reduction in headcount, and a changing management structure. Whilst call wait times have clearly been a challenge for the Contact Centre this year, we are seeing significant improvements in recent months and this is something that will continue to be worked on throughout 2019. The drive to support residents to move online has meant that we have had a period of higher callers and visitors whilst customers become used to the new offer. Whilst this has created challenges in terms of staffing capacity in the short term, we are confident that, in the longer term, we are moving to the most efficient and effective operating model available.

3.23 The council's new Customer Access Strategy 2018-21 was adopted in September 2018 and this will guide our future customer engagement activity whilst ensuring that we don't leave any residents behind on our modernisation journey.

3.24 There are three key areas of focus for Customer Services in 2019. They are:

3.24.1 Delivering continued progress against the target of 85% of customer transactions taking place online.

3.24.2 Delivering the remaining elements of the Modernising Customer Services project, specifically including;

3.24.3 The delivery of a new face to face customer service space in Wat Tyler House.

3.24.4 The delivery of the staffing restructure of the Customer Service function.

3.24.5 Demand management activity to support customer channel shift to online.

3.24.6 A full review of the Council Complaints process including policy, processes, systems of work and monitoring/reporting activity.

## Information Technology

3.25 The focus for IT in 2018 has been on major change to support the Organisation Excellence tranche of the Swindon Programme.

3.26 Work has been ongoing throughout 2018 to move servers from our Capita Private Cloud to the SBC data centre. During 2018 68 out of 80 servers were migrated or decommissioned. The Local Area Network has also been upgraded to support this work and machines on the network now receive 1GB speeds. This has improved the performance of a number of key systems and saved £308k per annum.

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- 3.27 The Wide Area Network has also been upgraded. Resulting in faster speeds and cheaper costs. In 2019/20 the annual savings from this project are forecast to be £74k per annum.
- 3.28 SBC has some legacy line of business systems which are critical to our front line staff. In 2018 we re-procured new line of business systems for Adults, Children's Social Care, Housing, Legal services and our Planning Services; and are actively working on tendering for new Finance & HR and Highways systems. Work on implementing these will continue into 2019 and 2020.
- 3.29 As a predominantly Microsoft-based council IT continuously work to offer the latest tools from Microsoft. This year we have rolled out Skype for Business and upgraded our SharePoint environment to provide a new intranet and SharePoint Online. We are now testing Windows10 and OneDrive ready for full deployment in the New Year.
- 3.30 2019 will see more transformation work for the department as we focus on completing the implementation of new systems and deliver a departmental restructure to streamline delivery.

## Digitalisation

- 3.31 The Digital Hub continue to work on enhancing our offering to improved residents' opportunities to interact with us online through My Account services. Every month more services are coming online and the team are starting to roll-out online bookings in tandem to make transacting with the council simpler for residents. November 2018 saw the launch of the Housing Online Repairs Portal. This service provides the highest number of calls to the Contact Centre and offering an alternative for our tenants to raise repairs outside office hours has gone down well with 30% of tenants choosing to interact with us through this channel.
- 3.32 March 2018 also saw Councillors using tablets to support paperless meetings. My colleagues have made good progress in adopting this practice and are making the most of the technology to support wider Councillor work.
- 3.33 The Customer Access Strategy was approved by Cabinet in September 2018. The strategy provides a roadmap for our ongoing digitisation of services whilst ensuring we can offer an alternative for those who cannot interact with us through digital methods.

## Lydiard House and Park

- 3.34 The Council took over operation of the hotel and conference centre in April last year, following the termination of the operational lease agreement by Chartridge Conferences, the previous occupiers. In the last year, staff have worked

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extremely hard to ensure continuity of service; oversee essential works; and build business at the hotel and conference centre. Starting from a baseline of very few ongoing bookings, the hotel is now close to full occupation on most week nights and also trades well at weekends. The conference centre is also booking at least to Chartridge levels, and the wedding offer is being developed with a number of bookings for both 2019/20 and 2020/21.

- 3.35 A large amount of work has been undertaken on refurbishment of the hotel and conference centre including a replacement kitchen, improvements to the reception area and decommissioning of the pool, alongside a programme of external works to the house which are ongoing. This internal refurbishment has created a one-off financial pressure, which is projected to be mitigated in the next year by increased business and an improved catering offer.
- 3.36 However, challenges remain at Lydiard. The WiFi improvements required to bring the facility up to modern day standards have been complicated by the nature of the house and its designation as a listed building. It is anticipated that these issues will have been resolved by the end of the financial year.
- 3.37 Lydiard Park continues to host a range of events. Last summer a successful concert featuring Simple Minds and The Pretenders took place, and the promotor is keen to return next summer. Vacancies in the Parkland team have been filled with temps this year to help provide flexibility for a holistic restructure of the Heritage function which is currently being developed. The expectation is that the restructure will shave 5% off base costs, and increase income by a further 5%. The restructure will also include a review of the Council's Catering function, which now operates largely from Lydiard.
- 3.38 Although Lydiard is run in-house, I remain open to advice from other organisations and groups to help us ensure that the facility covers its costs. I have recently met with the National Trust to share learning from their experience of operating similar facilities elsewhere in the UK.

## **4. Alternative Options**

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Committee could choose not to operate Cabinet Member Question and Answer sessions.

## **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.

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## 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.

## 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 appropriate 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.