

Cabinet Member for the Town Centre Q&A Report

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 16th July 2018

Author: Cabinet Member for the Town Centre

Wards: All

Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to question the Cabinet Member for the Town Centre on his portfolio responsibilities and performance.
- 1.2 A key purpose of the Scrutiny function is to hold Cabinet to account and to ensure that Council and partners' priorities and performance are being delivered.
- 1.3 Members of the Committee are reminded that all Members of the Cabinet are required to come before the Scrutiny Committee to take part in a Question and Answer session that will focus on the full remit of their portfolio. Scrutiny Committee is therefore encouraged to focus Question and Answer sessions with Members of specific topics and/or services in order to avoid duplication.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the report by the Cabinet Member for the Town Centre.
- 2.2 Put appropriate questions to the Cabinet Member for the Town Centre, and decide whether any further action is required.

3. Detail

The scope of the portfolio

- 3.1 The Leader of the Council has assigned the following responsibilities to the Cabinet Member for the Town Centre, Councillor Garry Perkins.
 - 3.1.1 Developments as determined through the pledges / capital programme
 - 3.1.2 Current Museums, including STEAM
 - 3.1.3 The future of Swindon Museum and Art Gallery
 - 3.1.4 Arts, culture and Community Heritage
 - 3.1.5 North Star
- 3.2 In overseeing these areas, the Cabinet Member for the Town Centre is responsible for the delivery of the following pledges in pursuance of the Council's Vision.

Cabinet Member for the Town Centre Q&A Report

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 16th July 2018

- 3.2.1 Pledge 3 - Demolish the obsolete Carlton Street and Wyvern car parks and use the space for regeneration
- 3.2.2 Pledge 5 - Replace the current Health Centre in the town centre with a new and improved facility
- 3.2.3 Pledge 6 - Establish effective and appealing pedestrian links from the Town Centre to North Star and enhance Wellington Street as a prime thoroughfare for the town.
- 3.2.4 Pledge 10 - As part of the town's regeneration: Re-develop the former Aspen House site / Granville Street area, to extend on the successful Regent Circus development and make Havelock Square an attractive, safe open space to complement local shops
- 3.2.5 Pledge 11 Replace the current bus station with a new and modern facility.
- 3.2.6 Pledge 12 Improve the town centre road network to pave the way for the Kimmerfields development.
- 3.2.7 Pledge 21 Secure a new Museum and Art Gallery that can showcase the high quality art and exhibits that we possess.
- 3.2.8 Pledge 22 Support the development of the new regional leisure destination at North Star.
- 3.2.9 Pledge 23 Long-term to: Secure a sustainable future for the Mechanics Institute and support the redevelopment of the Corn Exchange

What have we done well?

- 3.3 North Star – The design of the leisure building has progressed well and is close to agreement. Work is ongoing on highways modelling to inform proposed mitigation works arising from the development. There is good occupier interest. Empire Cinema have signed up for a new 13 screen multiplex including the largest IMAX in Europe, and The Snow Centre for 180,000 sq ft. including two indoor real snow slopes. These are the 2 largest elements of the scheme.
- 3.4 The Carriage Works (Great Western Works) has been developed as a brand to identify the railway heritage quarter and this is attracting investment and business growth. Unit 3 of the Carriage Works has been completely refurbished and is partially occupied, realising its vision as a destination for high value, knowledge based businesses. The land swap deal with Network Rail was concluded in May 2018.
- 3.5 WorkShed, which is being run by operator TEN (The Enterprise Network) opened its doors to the public in June 2018, providing 80 work spaces to rent on a flexible basis, aimed at start-up businesses. The development has received

Cabinet Member for the Town Centre Q&A Report

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 16th July 2018

positive media coverage and feedback from businesses looking to re-locate their offices to the Carriage Works. Several companies have already made WorkShed their home - including Bravedog, Carto Group, and Digital Marketing.

- 3.6 The deal with Standard Life Investments to renovate Falcon House has levered in significant private sector investment to match Swindon's own investment (subject to approvals) as part of a wider funding package. It will create 90 new town centre apartments and will radically improve the external appearance of a building that connects the town centre and the Kimmerfields development.
- 3.7 The completion of the refurbishment of 1 & 3 Faringdon Road has resulted in 8 new apartments and 2 commercial units coming onto the market in a previously long-term vacant building that connects the town centre with the Railway Village. Almost half of the development has been sold / or are under offer in six weeks of marketing and are achieving higher than expected sales values.
- 3.8 Following the termination of the development agreement with MUSE Developments Ltd, the Kimmerfields masterplan is being refreshed with Homes England. Swindon Borough Council is working on bringing forward significant office development and there is strong commercial interest in the hotel plot.
- 3.9 Physical works have been undertaken at STEAM to improve both the visitor experience at the foyer and to the parking area outside the museum, which has been regraded and laid with a more resilient surface to ensure that waterlogging is no longer a problem.
- 3.10 The developing relationship with the Science Museum, and the National Railway Museum in particular, continues to be productive. Locomotive No.2818, which was donated to the Council from the National Collection is due to arrive in late August. This will be the first locomotive to be owned by the Council and assists with ensuring the long-term resilience of the collection.

What could we do/have done better?

- 3.11 The land swap agreement with Network Rail in respect of the Carriage Works took significantly longer than expected which resulted in more legal resource being expended to consider alternative solutions to granting licenses to tenants.
- 3.12 With support from the Council, the Swindon Museum and Art Gallery Trust submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for an iconic new venue to not only house the museum and art gallery, but also to act as a core of a cultural quarter drawing development around Princes Street and the Wyvern Theatre. Despite positive feedback throughout the process, and the bid passing through to the final stage, this was unsuccessful, with the emphasis turning towards re-use of existing facilities during the process.

Cabinet Member for the Town Centre Q&A Report

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 16th July 2018

- 3.13 Feedback has been sought from the HLF, and a piece of work appraising potential options around the museum and art gallery would be helpful to inform a Cabinet report on options for SMAG in the autumn.

Challenges for the Portfolio

- 3.14 Mechanics Institute – the Council does not own this property and the last private company to have title now appears to be active again. The Council will be seeking recompense for the expenditure that had to be undertaken to ensure the safety of the public and physical structure of the building during the time the company was not operating.
- 3.15 However, given the Institute's historical significance to both the town and the country, the local authority is ready to play a leading role in working with partners from the private and not-for profit sector to secure the building's restoration and sustainable future.
- 3.16 There is a need to move the bus station from its current position on Kimmerfields to maximise the development potential of that site. An option to show how this might be achieved will be submitted to Cabinet on 11th July 2018 and reviewed by Scrutiny Committee on 16th July elsewhere on its agenda.
- 3.17 Delivery of the next phases of the Carriage Works development will need to be aligned to the needs of occupiers to minimise risk to the Council of incurring cost without having signed up a tenant. However, this strategy may result in loss of potential high value tenants if we are unable to take speculative development risk and understanding likely demand is needed to help mitigate the situation.

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.

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.

Cabinet Member for the Town Centre Q&A Report

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 16th July 2018

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 Council's Report Writing standard requires authors to consult appropriate Corporate Directors, Directors or Heads of Service, other officers and relevant partners on the purpose, content, and recommendations of the report before it is presented for decision. In respect of reports to Cabinet, authors are also required to consult the relevant Cabinet Member.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix One – Further details about ongoing schemes