

Cabinet Member for Economic Prosperity Q&A Report

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 10th September 2018

Author: Cabinet Member for Economic Prosperity

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 Economic Prosperity on 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 Economic Prosperity.
- 2.2 Put appropriate questions to the Cabinet Member for Economic Prosperity and decide whether any further action is required.

3. Detail

- 3.1 In May 2018, the Leader of the Council has assigned the following key objectives to the Cabinet Member for Economic Prosperity, Councillor Oliver Donachie.
 - 3.1.1 Set the strategic vision to allow the economy to prosper.
 - 3.1.2 Provide the overarching direction to enable the Borough to have the range of vocational and higher education opportunities necessary to meet employers' needs for skills
 - 3.1.3 Provide the political leadership for business growth in all areas including town centre, investment, R&D, Switch on to Swindon, and tourism
 - 3.1.4 Provide the strategic vision for the next generation of digital cities.
 - 3.1.5 Ensure that the Council's agreed priorities within the portfolio are delivered.

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- 3.2 To deliver these, the Leader of the Council has also allocated Councillor Donachie the following specific responsibilities:
- 3.2.1 Represent the Council on the Local Enterprise Partnership
 - 3.2.2 Adult Learning
 - 3.2.3 Higher/Tertiary Education
 - 3.2.4 Skills
 - 3.2.5 Country Parks (securing sustainable uses)
 - 3.2.6 Strategic Parking assets
 - 3.2.7 Parking Services / Bus gate locations and creation, charges, and enforcement
 - 3.2.8 Apprentices
 - 3.2.9 Renewable energy
 - 3.2.10 Client for PPS
- 3.3 In overseeing these areas, the Cabinet Member for the Economy and Skills is responsible for the delivery of the following pledges in pursuance of the Council's Vision.
- 3.3.1 Pledge 1: Deliver the Government standard Superfast Broadband coverage to all commercial and domestic premises in the Borough by 2017
 - 3.3.2 Pledge 16: Improve the reputation and image of Swindon to attract inward investment.
 - 3.3.3 Pledge 18: Increase the number of businesses employing young people as an apprentice from 15% to 20% (an additional 280).
 - 3.3.4 Pledge 19: Secure a range of options to access Higher Education in Swindon.

What have we done?

Swindon's Economy

- 3.4 In delivering its Vision for Swindon, the Council aims to create sustainable growth and employment within a robust yet dynamic economy, which produces a high quality of life for all. The themes of connectivity, productivity, and quality of life drive this work in partnership with the private, public and community/voluntary

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sectors, underpinned by the place making which will support a world-class economy.

- 3.5 The Centre for Cities Outlook 2018 Report, which compares Swindon with up to 62 other leading UK town and cities, showed that Swindon continues to be highly successful. It had the:

3.5.1 Third highest employment rate – 80.59%

3.5.2 Third best ratio of private to public sector employees – 4.13:1

3.5.3 Fifth highest number of patent applications per 100,000 population – 61.59

3.5.4 Seventh highest Gross Value Added (GVA) per worker - £59,466.

Working to raise aspirations and secure an Institute of Technology

- 3.6 Officers have worked successfully with Swindon College, employers and other stakeholders to progress the bid for an Institute of Technology (IoT) in the town. The bid was one of 16 bids nationally that was successful in at Phase One. This is tangible demonstration of excellent partnership working with other LEP areas, employers and education providers to produce a cohesive proposal which will greatly benefit Swindon learners and business.
- 3.7 The Government's IoT funding aims to achieve a step change in the provision of higher level technical education (post A level to Degree level) by delivering high quality employer led training and teaching at new innovative institutions – it is aimed at addressing the gaps in higher level technical education and skills, particularly in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects. The facility will focus on attracting over 1800 students and deliver Engineering/Manufacturing, Digital and Life Sciences courses. A number of local employers have signed up as partners in the development and delivery of the IoT. The bid required commitment from employers to be part of its governance and contribute resources and so far Nationwide, Catalent, Excalibur Communications and Bath ASU have committed to do this.
- 3.8 The vision for the IoT is as follows: “Our Institute of Technology will transform the productivity and performance of the employers we work through, improve the life chances of those who study with us and build the communities those students come from. We will achieve this by delivering sustainable world class higher level technical education”.
- 3.9 The IoT will provide the opportunity for the two Swindon Colleges to combine their STEM based HE provision and co-locate it within one facility. It will comprise E-learning, Advanced Manufacturing training modelled on Rolls Royce practice, creative media labs, start-up space, digital and computing labs, life science labs and an employer suite with the Recruitment and Enterprise Agency. The bid deadline is November 2018 and the institutes are due to open in 2019/2020.
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- 3.10 The IoT work is part of the emerging Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP)-wide Higher Education Strategy to meet employer needs and identify progression routes to higher level technical provision and raise aspirations. The aim is to finalise the strategy by the end of 2018. Members will be kept informed of the progress through the Cabinet's work programme.
- 3.11 Officers continue to work with schools to improve the employability of young people through the Careers Enterprise Network and all secondary schools are currently involved in the network and matched with employers to support their plans and delivery. The Careers Enterprise Company, funded by the DfE provides match funding for this work. Officers have worked with SWLEP to gain further funding to develop a Careers Hub to improve Careers Education outcomes (outlined in the Gatsby Benchmarks, which are guidelines on what makes the best careers provision in schools and colleges). The Careers Hub will work with Swindon Secondary Schools and bring additional resource to achieve the benchmarks.

Carriage Works and Work Shed

- 3.12 On behalf of and in partnership with the Council, Forward Swindon Ltd has successfully delivered the first stage of the exciting and innovative Carriage Works project, a scheme which transforms a Swindon heritage asset into accessible and high-grade work space. Workspace units are being developed incrementally and there is a significant level of interest in these units as they are built out.
- 3.13 The Work Shed, managed by The Enterprise Network, occupies units 3 and 5 of the Carriage Works, the first ones to be completed, and offers bespoke workspace aimed at start up and micro businesses, particularly in the digital sector, with targeted business support to develop our digital businesses and support them to grow and succeed.
- 3.14 A new mentoring programme from Nationwide is set to begin in the Workshed, providing advice, work space and support to help start-ups. This will presents a fantastic opportunity for Swindon's small businesses, providing support for local businesses to grow and thrive, with the opportunity to develop new and innovative products and services, working with a successful major company which is based in the town.
- 3.15 There has been interest in future units from companies of varying sizes and it is also hoped that current occupants will be able to grow and occupy larger spaces within the complex.

Place Marketing

- 3.16 The June 2018 Switch On To Swindon event at the Carriage Works heralded a new phase to this successful programme, which continues to grow and achieve

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in terms of business engagement and promotion of the town. The first year has seen the Network grow to over 600 Ambassadors (a number that has far exceeded targets) who have pledged to promote Swindon as an ideal destination to live, work, invest in and visit.

- 3.17 Now Switch On To Swindon, led by its Place Board (on which Swindon Borough Council now has two seats alongside representatives from 15 local businesses from all sectors), has a dual focus:

3.17.1 Maintaining communication with the local business network

3.17.2 Working with Swindon Borough Council to raise Swindon's profile externally, promoting Swindon as a place

- 3.18 The first external activity will be a Talent Attraction Campaign, supported by members of Nationwide's Marketing and Communications Team, the Business & Economy team and other Ambassadors. The Campaign aims to attract additional highly skilled staff to increase Swindon's workforce and enable its growth, particularly in digital technology, business finance and professional services, life sciences and health and advanced manufacturing.

- 3.19 As Cabinet Member and Member of the Switch On To Swindon Board, I am proud to be an ambassador for the town and promote Swindon's economic successes as well as the work of our partners, including Switch on to Swindon, through my social media accounts.

Inward Investment

- 3.20 Swindon Borough Council's Business and Economy Team is leading a bid to the EU to work in partnership with Wiltshire Council and SWLEP to attract companies from The Americas and Asia and the Pacific. Activity will include research to understand fully Swindon and Wiltshire's commercial offer and promotion of the opportunities in these target markets.
- 3.21 This partnership was represented at MIPIM UK in October 2017, which is the UK's number one property marketplace where capital investment opportunities are showcased.
- 3.22 The team is producing Swindon focussed Inward Investment marketing collateral, and working with the Department for International Trade to attract investors into Swindon, convert enquiries and proactively engage with businesses. This is in addition to our business engagement and retention programme involving account management of local businesses in order to support growth and expansions in Swindon (see below at paragraph 3.20)

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Tourism

- 3.23 A new website <http://www.visitswindon.org.uk/> has been created to promote Swindon both as a visitor destination in its own right as well as a place stay to explore nearby counties. The Council is encouraging local hotels and businesses to take up reciprocal hosting to promote this website as well as themselves. Switch On To Swindon Ambassadors are being encouraged to create online blogs outlining some of the great places to stay, eat and visit in Swindon. Members of Swindon Library Service and the Business & Economy team are working with other partners to promote the site outside Swindon. The website was created by a local company, Jazzbones Creative, in the Old Town.

Business Retention and Expansion Service

- 3.24 The Team is working to support Swindon's key employers and fast growing companies. The Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) service aims to work intensively with these companies to encourage growth and generate new jobs.
- 3.25 As examples of BRE activity, the team facilitated supply-chain meetings at Farnborough Air Show trade event for one of Swindon's most exciting, innovative digi-tech companies. Also, Officers supported an advanced manufacturing company with workforce development and some tricky job vacancies.
- 3.26 A detailed report entitled "Outlining the Inward Investment and Business Retention and Expansion Strategies" was submitted to the Growing the Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20th June 2018 (Minute 23, 2018/19 refers).

Superfast Broadband

- 3.27 Swindon delivered this pledge and achieved its target of having at least 95% of its population with access to the Government's standard of superfast broadband in January 2017; coverage will be 99.6% by the end of this calendar year. Since then, residents have benefited from further investment from private companies that was stimulated by the Council's actions. Relish, the company providing a commercial wireless broadband service, had 1403 subscribers at May 2018. This work has enabled essential infrastructure for Swindon's businesses, particularly SMEs and home workers and also for education providers to support a thriving and inclusive economy. Work with DCMS to install superfast broadband through their voucher scheme has supported the value-for-money take-up of this facility.

Parking

- 3.28 On 25th January 2018, Council debated the cost of Town Centre parking for residents and resolved to invite Cabinet to:
- 3.28.1 "...Amend the Residents Parking Scheme that includes a 'Town Centre zone' & 'Old Town Centre Zone' to enable residents not included in the

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existing zones and living within this area to purchase a permit to park at any time in the town centre long stay car parks (£299 per year, £149 for 6 months), or park between 6.00pm and 9.00am only (£149 per year)." and

- 3.28.2 "Undertake a review of this change after one year." (Council Minute 73, 2017/18 refers).
- 3.29 At the same meeting, a motion concerning making provision for NHS workers at the Hermitage Surgery was defeated; however, during the debate I gave Council an assurance that I would investigate the particular parking issues in Old Town within the constraint that any possible changes would have to be equitable.
- 3.30 On 22nd February 2018, Council passed a further resolution relating to parking concerning the price of season tickets stating:
- 3.30.1 "This Council: notes that a Council motion is to be considered by Cabinet regarding the reduction of charges for residential parking season tickets in Council Long-Stay Car Parks."
- 3.30.2 "Requests that the Cabinet Member include within this item to Cabinet the feasibility of the Residents Parking Season Ticket charge being applied to other secure Council Car Parks, plus a fee for the Council's security services." (Council Minute 89 2017/18 refers),
- 3.31 In responding to Council's resolutions, I presented two reports to Cabinet. The first, which Cabinet approved on 14th March 2018, amended the operation of the Town Centre and Old Town parking zones to allow those residents who did not have access to any existing residents' parking zones to purchase discounted season tickets to use the Council-owned long centre car parks. The cost of the season ticket for using these car parks at any time was reduced from £625 to £299 per annum while those who wished only to have access for overnight parking (6pm to 9am) would be able to purchase a season ticket for £149 per annum (Cabinet Minute 93, 2017/18 refers). Officers had not identified a possible solution to address the parking needs of staff for essential public services, such as the Hermitage Surgery. Nevertheless, along with Officers I will continue to review options as they become available.
- 3.32 The second Cabinet report, approved on 13th June 2018, considered further opportunities to provide additional access to the Council's car parks at times when they are less heavily used. However, fellow Cabinet Members noted officers' advice that a twelve-month period was necessary to measure and assess the effect of providing discounted season ticket options for residents, as set out above in paragraph 3.30. Therefore, Cabinet resolved to review the position after a year's operation (Cabinet Minute 8, 2018/19 refers).
- 3.33 To continue to keep transport around the borough flowing effectively, the Council is taking enforcement action against those who unlawfully use bus gates and bus
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lanes by increasing the number of locations where there are cameras. This has led to a rise in enforcement income that the Council will reinvest into the borough's highway and transport schemes.

- 3.34 The Council has recently introduced contactless payment at its pay on foot car parks, becoming Payment Card Industry (PCI) compliant and promoting an easier method of payment in the digital era. This should improve the service to customers and help all users pay the correct charge.
- 3.35 Swindon has introduced a camera car to assist in the safety around school zones by ways enforcement of vehicles parking on school safety zones. The initial feedback from parents and schools is that this car is having a noticeable positive effect in reducing inappropriate parking. As such, it is a great aid to make walking or cycling to school safer.
- 3.36 Additional investment in to Car Park Cleansing has seen the recruitment of three additional permanent staff. The Car Park Cleansing team now operates four staff and attend the Multi Storey Car Parks Monday through to Sunday from 06:00 to 22:00 daily. The result of this additional staffing has meant an improved cleanliness standard across all of the multi storey car parks and an increased response time when and if issues are reported. Complaints and requests for service within the car parks have reduced significantly. Any evidence of (the reduced) elements of misuse/substance is generally cleared whilst the team are carrying out their daily activities however if a report is received this is usually cleared immediately. There has been improvement in Whalebridge Multi Storey Car Park where complaints from commercial, public, and residential users have reduced significantly.
- 3.37 For the first time the council is now also in the position to do a structural clean of the parking decks and this work has commenced in Spring Gardens Car Park. There will always be a re-active element of Car Park Cleansing however this reactive element has reduced significantly due to the more robust and time appropriate cleansing regime that has been able to be introduced due to the increased staffing levels.
- 3.38 This programme by the Council has therefore made our car parks cleaner, more attractive and safer to use for residents and visitors.

What could we have done better?

Access to apprenticeships and Adult Learning

- 3.39 The Council is committed to working with key stakeholders to increase the number of people taking up apprenticeships. Due to national policy and the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy, the number of Apprenticeship starts dipped in 2016 /2017 as employers held off recruiting while planning future

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approaches. Employers are reporting greater confidence in using the Levy moving forward.

- 3.40 To support the continued growth of Apprenticeships, the Council has worked with SWLEP to develop an Apprenticeship Strategy and secure resources for a campaign to promote Apprenticeships. Promotional video clips have been produced with local employers and can be found at <https://vimeo.com/251290371>, <https://vimeo.com/250417923#at=0> and <https://vimeo.com/250441438>. The LEP wide Higher Futures Programme continues to provide support and brokerage to businesses to access support to recruit or use Apprenticeships to up-skill the workforce. Another successful JobFestSwindon took place at the STEAM museum to provide an opportunity for over 800 young people, to meet the 62 local employers present who recruit young people to job or apprenticeship opportunities.
- 3.41 SBC delivered Adult Learning Programmes to over 700 adults in 2017/18, supporting adults who have barriers to accessing learning and work. Following an Ofsted inspection in Autumn 2017, when the Council received a 'Requires Improvement' judgement, officers worked with subcontracted providers on an improvement plan to improve performance and de-commission provision where appropriate and significant improvements have been made to support achieving a 'Good' judgement. The Council is also moving forward to deliver courses directly and employ tutors to provide more flexibility and make the improvements required.

Parking Services

- 3.42 Recruitment to vacant posts of Civil Enforcement Officers has been difficult, which could be a side effect of Swindon's successful growing economy that is providing better paying jobs in the private sector. This puts pressures on the enforcement of the existing restrictions.

What are the challenges for the Portfolio?

Ultrafast Broadband

- 3.43 As the internet-based economy continues to develop, competition between places for investment is more likely to be based on the quality of the broadband infrastructure that is available to businesses and customers. In July 2018, the UK government published its own policy goals of full fibre networks to 15 million homes by 2025 and 5G access to the majority of residents.
- 3.44 The particular challenges for Swindon will be:
- 3.44.1 Working in partnership with the existing fixed network providers to ensure that they invest the money to upgrade their networks here and, unlike the

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situation prior to the Council's investment in UK Broadband, ensure there are no significant gaps in provision in the Borough's urban area;

3.44.2 Ensuring that there is adequate investment in the rural areas to support local residents and businesses; and

3.44.3 Liaising with the Planning and Highways Departments as necessary to ensure that any physical work to lay or replace cables can be undertaken with the least disruption to residents.

Electric vehicles

3.45 A study has been commissioned from Public Power Solutions, the Council's wholly owned power company, to look at short, medium and long term policy on electric vehicle charging. Over the next year, the Council will continue to examine the potential for supporting domestic and fleet electrical vehicle charging points. This report will present a business case for potential installations on Council owned sites and will also consider where we may be able to influence partners to deploy this facility. This work is in the context of the SWLEP Local Energy Strategy, which is in turn feeding into the SWLEP Local Industrial Strategy.

3.46 As part of the Local Plan review, the Council will also revisit its planning policies to consider provision of electrical vehicle charging points.

Digital advertising

3.47 In line with the Council's recently adopted Communications Strategy and Action Plan (Cabinet Minute 22, 2018/19 refers) officers will be investigating opportunities for digital advertising at a key location or locations within the Borough. The primary objective will be to have a tool at the Council's control to promote our development opportunities, successes, and ongoing campaigns that support the local economy and economic development. This would also be a tool with which the Council would want to engage partners. A key element of this will be determining the financial viability and sustainability of any such advertising and a cost neutral solution is being sought.

Parking Services

3.48 The Pay and Display machines are at an age of at which no further improvements are viable. To compete in the new digital era, the equipment needs to change. The Council will continue to explore local solutions to address these specific concerns with the objective of enabling the customer experience to be easy and simple.

Strategic Partnerships

3.49 On 11th July 2018, Cabinet confirmed the Council's membership of England's Economic Heartland Strategic Transport Forum (draft Cabinet Minute 23,

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2018/19 refers). The Council will use this membership to support further physical transport infrastructure that is necessary to enhance Swindon's connections to from the economies of Oxford, Milton Keynes, Cambridge, and beyond.

- 3.50 The particular challenge for Swindon is to ensure that this body, and the National Infrastructure Commission, considers investment in infrastructure that will benefit the western part of Oxfordshire and Swindon, especially improvements to the A420. Being a successful partner here will increase Swindon's presence nationally and support dialogue with government that will benefit the people of Swindon through successful strategic growth in and around the borough.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Committee could choose not to hold annual question and answer sessions with Members.

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.

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.

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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 None.