

# Leader's Half Yearly Update to the Scrutiny Committee

**Scrutiny Committee**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

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Author: Leader of the Council

Wards: All

Parishes Affected: All

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## **1. Purpose and Reasons**

- 1.1 To allow the Leader of the Council to outline how the Authority has performed in the first half of 2017/18 Municipal Year, towards the Council's priorities and targets.
- 1.2 To allow the Scrutiny Committee to ask questions about those priorities.
- 1.3 The body of the report contains references to a number of the Council's plans and policies and allows the Scrutiny Committee to discharge one of its functions under Article 6.02 of the Council's Constitution.

## **2. Recommendations**

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the work towards the priorities set for 2018/19;
- 2.2 Put relevant questions to the Leader of Council;
- 2.3 Decide if any changes to the Overview and Scrutiny work programmes are required as a result of the progress report; and
- 2.4 Decide if any further action is required.

## **3. Detail**

What We Have Done Well

- 3.1 First and foremost I would like to thank my Cabinet colleagues: Councillors Oliver Donachie, Toby Elliott, Fionuala Foley, Brian Ford, Russell Holland, Mary Martin, Cathy Martyn, Garry Perkins, Keith Williams and more recently Maureen Penny, Gary Sumner and Dale Heenan, for all their efforts on behalf of the people of Swindon. I would also like to thank the Chief Executive on behalf of all the Council's officers who are working so hard to implement policies and deliver quality services within a challenging budget.
- 3.2 Since the adoption of the Council's Vision, Priorities and Pledges in 2015, some of the Pledges had been delivered and new issues and opportunities had emerged. It has been necessary to update the Pledges

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this year to reflect these changes.

## 3.3 Pledge 3

3.2.1 Pledge 3a Kimmerfields: We were delighted that Zurich, a major employer, reaffirmed its commitment to the town confirming that it hopes to build new purpose-built offices on the Kimmerfields site, next door to its current home in the Tri-Centre. It is welcome news indeed and sends out a strong signal to local residents and investors that our town centre remains a top priority for the Council and that visible progress on site is not very far away.

3.2.2 Pledge 3d Carriage Works: We have regenerated and reimagined these unique and historic buildings that are now home to a vibrant hub for learning, creative and digital industries in an emerging tech hotspot. We are committed to using Swindon's heritage assets to further enhance the town's image and reputation. A thriving Carriage Works will be an important signal to potential investors and businesses seeking to locate west of London while helping retain local business and improving the supply of commercial premises, with access to support networks, near to the train station and town centre amenities. The Council has invested in the Carriage Works in order to generate income with a long-term view on value-creation. Units 3 and 5 of the Carriage Works, The Workshed, having opened in July 2018 are approaching 50 per cent occupancy. New tenants include Nationwide (base for their mentor scheme) and Ntegra. Swindon's new workspace for entrepreneurs, pioneers and creative thinkers to innovate, connect and grow. We are delighted that the WorkShed has been shortlisted for a number of awards – including RTPI (highly commended) and Architects' Journal (awards to be announced next month). Planning approval and completion of tender process is expected by spring 2019 with a start on site to follow. The Cultural Institute, a partnership between the Royal Agricultural University and University of Wales Trinity Saint David are taking the pre let of Unit 11 and are on track to open in Autumn 2019 to deliver post under and post graduate courses. Many positive discussions have also taken place with potential tenants for further phases of development – including units 7/9 and the bike sheds.

In further good news, the historic Railway Village was recently announced as a new Heritage Action Zone by Historic England (beginning spring 2019). The designation will enable the Council to bid for funding for various aspects of the Carriage Works regeneration.

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3.2.3 Pledge 3f North Star: The Council recently granted Planning permission on the North Star development and we can expect to see swift progress on site, with SevenCapital signalling its intention to begin work in the next few months. This could see the leisure facilities open for business in just a couple of years. Just like the Oasis in its heyday, people will travel from far and wide to take advantage of what North Star Village has to offer. SevenCapital expects the development will attract an annual footfall of 3.3 million with a catchment area that will stretch as far as Stoke-on-Trent, Swansea, Exeter, Brighton and Cambridge. Hundreds of jobs will be created, the Council will receive an income from the long-term leases it has secured on its land, and the positive knock-on effects to Swindon's economy will be enormous.

3.2.4 Pledge 3g Reputation and Investment: Our record is impressive and it was great to be able to showcase that Swindon out performs much larger cities in the south of England. The most recent measure of economic output, Gross Value Added (GVA) per worker, was £59,466.10 – the seventh highest out of 62 towns and cities - higher than Bristol, Southampton, Oxford and Plymouth. There were 4.15 jobs in the wealth-creating private sector to every job in the public sector, the third best in the UK – a better ratio than Reading, Bristol, Southampton and Oxford. Swindon has one of the lowest numbers of working age residents with no formal qualification – 3.9% - 60th out of 64 towns and cities. In 2015, the most recent year for comparative data, Swindon had the fifth highest number of patent applications per 100,000 population – 61.59. This was higher than Southampton's 27.24, Bristol's 34.72, Reading's 40.26, and Slough's 45.45. Given that all these rival places have at least one university that is pretty good going and shows how innovative our local businesses are, something that we should all applaud.

Our town is successful because we are part of a wider network of the UK's leading towns, cities, and places. We are members of England's Economic Heartland, seeking funding to secure transport infrastructure, housing, and employment between England's two historic university cities – Cambridge and Oxford. We are also part of the South East Strategic Leaders, of which I am vice-chair, through which we campaign for other investment to support economic growth, such as a western rail link to Heathrow.

## 3.3 Pledge 6

3.3.1 Pledge 6b Wichelstowe Development: As the Joint Venture at Wichelstowe has been established, much work has gone into the drafting and negotiation of the s106 planning agreement to secure the necessary infrastructure to support the development. The District Centre phase continues apace with the construction of the Deanery Secondary School which is due to open in September 2019. The impressive Hall and

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Woodhouse project is nearing completion and is due to open early in the New Year. In addition, the unique footbridge, commissioned from Sebastien Boyesen, is under construction. The canal restoration, and public square are clearly visible on site and on target for completion. Housing delivery within the District Centre is expected to commence in spring 2019.

- 3.3.2 Pledge 6e Tadpole Garden Village: We continue to work with the developers at Tadpole Garden Village to bring forward facilities to provide a sustainable community. Our Planning Officers have received praise and won awards for their collaborative work with the developers in bringing forward this high quality development. They continue to work with the developer to secure new sports amenities (football pitches, cricket pitch, and pavilion), community facilities and health care provision for the new community and the benefit of the wider town. The developer and our Planning Officers are also seeking to secure some custom build plots as part of this development to provide a new and innovative approach to new housing provision. All planning applications for the residential parcels have now been approved and development continues apace and in line with the Local Plan predictions. There are already in the order of 800 occupations and this new community continues to thrive and demonstrate how a successful Community Interest Company arrangement can work. The Secondary School opened 2018 and the Second Primary School is due to open in September 2019

Tadpole Garden Village is now a multi-award winning development. These awards include Silver for the Best Public Realm in the What House? Awards 2018 (just announced), Winner of the Planning Awards 2018 for Best Housing Scheme (500 homes or more), Highly Commended in the Excellence in Spatial Planning category for the RTPI South West Awards for Planning Excellence 2017, Finalists in the RTPI National Awards 2017 in the same category, The Sunday Times British Homes Awards Finalist – Outstanding Placemaking Award 2017. Our collaborative work in conjunction with the LGA was praised by the Chairman of the LGA's Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board in their Planning publication.

- 3.4 Pledge 10 Higher Education: We have worked with a Steering Group of key partners, led by Swindon College to develop a bid for an Institute of Technology (IoT). The partnership was successful with the Phase 1 bid and the phase 2 bid was submitted on 21 November. The IoT model is employer led and 14 local employers are part of the steering group as well as Gloucester and Oxford Brookes Universities. If successful, the IoT will provide higher level technical training for over 1000 students in engineering, digital and life sciences subjects.

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There will be a strong focus on Apprenticeships. The DfE will confirm successful bids in March 2019.

- 3.5 Pledge 14 Waste: During a six-week period in September and October, the Council engaged with residents to ask a number of questions about how people currently recycle, including feedback on a number of proposals. The public response was very positive with more than 3,000 people giving their feedback. Our 10-year Waste Strategy outlines the Council's ambition for high recycling rates and low waste production in Swindon and will be supported by yearly action plans to deliver the strategy's objectives. It will focus on how the council deals with Swindon's waste including reducing the amount of waste people produce, increasing recycling, making sure all waste is dealt with responsibly and working with businesses and communities to encourage everyone to get behind the strategy.
- 3.6 Pledge 15 Heritage Assets: Our Historic Railway Village was recently awarded Heritage Action Zone status. The competition was steep and we are now one of only 18 such zones in the country. The designation will help to regenerate neglected buildings and enhance visitor attractions and other public amenities in order to draw in both residents, and visitors to Swindon
- 3.7 Pledge 19 Independent Lives: We have been successful in enabling older people to remain in their own home through our partnership with First City, our Lead provider of domiciliary care, and our Reablement service. This has led to fewer admission to residential and nursing care (15%) in the first six months of 2018/19. Our partnership with the CCG and Great Western hospital has resulted in reducing the delays patients face from leaving hospital so that we were the best performing local authority in the South West between April and September 2018. I can also report that our Reablement and Hospital Discharge service was awarded Highly Commended in the Health Service Journal Awards 2018
- 3.8 Pledge 21 Early Prevention: We are pleased to have been successful in our Innovation Funding bid for Children of Alcohol Dependent Parents, securing over £570k over 3 years. This is a good example of our partnership approach to early prevention and intervention across Swindon so that more children and families are supported as soon as possible. The main elements of this initiative include Identifying children of parents dependent on alcohol within early year's settings and schools, providing a parent education programme to improve parenting skills and relationships with children and school including the impact of parental alcohol misuse and the introduction of a virtual team to provide a trauma informed approach. We have also led on an awareness campaign regarding parental drinking and the impact on children; the establishment of a sustainable, peer-led programme to support the wider family/carers; and training in Adverse Childhood experiences (ACEs) for the virtual team and wider partners.

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- 3.9 Pledge 24 Dementia Friendly Town: There are over 2000 people aged over 65 with dementia in Swindon and excellent work continues to promote Swindon as a dementia friendly town - Swindon was shortlisted for the national dementia friendly community of the year award. We continue to promote a range of dementia friendly activities including weekly walks around the Outlet Centre, gardening and swimming opportunities and vintage films at the Wyvern Theatre. Many of the Parish Councils are engaged with looking at how they can be more dementia friendly, and there is increasing interest from schools requesting 'Dementia Friend' sessions: so far over 800 child Dementia Friends have been created. Ongoing dementia friends' sessions run within SBC and across Swindon and Swindon now has over 7000 dementia friends registered.
- 3.10 Pledge 25 Excess Weight: It is wonderful that 97% of primary schools, including special schools (63 out of 65 schools) participated in Beat the Streets and we are now exploring how we maintain the momentum from this programme to embed increased physical activity in the school setting. Over 85% of schools are engaged in the healthy schools programme which now includes a mental health award and an initiative for early years settings
- 3.10 Pledge 26 Homelessness: The Council has taken a number of proactive steps to significantly reduce rough sleeping in the town centre and some outlying areas of the Borough. The Temporary Winter Housing Provision will return this winter, opening its doors to a further 12 individuals who will receive dedicated support over a 12 week programme followed by a housing offer. A Day Centre also opened for the homeless at the Riverside Centre at the end of November 2018 to support and sign post individuals back into accommodation. The Council has been successful in attracting additional central government funding to support these projects as well as additional street Outreach Workers and "Housing First" flats that have enabled a further 12 individuals the opportunity to leave the streets and receive support in their own accommodation.
- 3.11 Challenges for the Year Ahead:
- 3.11.1 Brexit: The precise nature of Brexit is still unknown to us and whilst the debate about Brexit continues, the Council recognises that it must continue to discharge its statutory duties, especially in providing personal care services, as well as to deliver the refreshed Vision Priorities and the Swindon Programme. The greatest issue for the Council remains the uncertainty about whether Parliament will approve this Draft Treaty or, if it does not, what could happen next. A future report to Cabinet will set out immediate, medium-term, and long-term possible effects on the Council by comparing a possible worst-case scenario with the draft Treaty. It will



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focus primarily on those issues as they relate to the local council. Developing appropriate responses to possible effects of leaving the EU is an absolute priority for this council. We continue to be an active member of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) chaired by the Chief Constable of Wiltshire. This body is already undertaking appropriate preparations with "blue light" services, local authorities, and relevant central government departments and agencies to account for a range of scenarios. The Council's Business Continuity Manager is leading the core LRF task group and senior officers are being kept informed about any pressures as they emerge

- 3.11.2 Funding for local government from April 2020 onwards is uncertain and will be shaped by three main issues: Spending Review 2019 – this is expected to establish the total funding available nationally for 2020/21 and, possibly, future years; Business Rates Retention – the government is working with local government, led by the Local Government Association, to develop the arrangements for councils to retain 75% of the growth in business rates (compared to 50% currently); and, Fair Funding Review – this will establish the assessment of relative needs between authorities and take into account the ability of councils to raise income and will therefore form the basis of the redistribution of resources between councils.

Consultations on detailed aspects of business rates retention and fair funding review are anticipated by the end of 2018, but the impact at individual authority level is not expected to be known until Autumn 2019.

- 3.11.3 Children's and Adult's Services: Demand led social care pressures are increasing. The ageing population and changing structure of the population will bring both opportunities and challenges for the economy, services and society at national and local levels. With increased life expectancy, the probability of spending more time in poor health is expected to rise. The likelihood of being disabled and/or experiencing multiple chronic and complex health conditions increases with age.
- 3.11.4 Broadband: 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. The particular challenges for Swindon will include working in partnership with the existing fixed network providers to ensure that they invest the money to upgrade their networks

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to ensure there are no significant gaps in provision in the Borough's urban area. We will also be 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.

3.11.5 Partnerships: On 11<sup>th</sup> July 2018, Cabinet confirmed the Council's membership of England's Economic Heartland Strategic Transport Forum (draft Cabinet Minute 23, 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. 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 Article 6.02 of the Council's Constitution requires the Leader to submit a report immediately after the Council's Annual meeting or at such time as may be agreed by the chair of the Scrutiny Committee and the Leader. The Committee could eschew receiving the half-year update; however, this would weaken the Committee's ability to hold the Administration to account.

## 5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

### Financial and Procurement Implications

5.1 There are no financial or procurement implications in this report.

### Legal and Human Rights Implications

5.2 The author has considered legal and human rights legislation in the preparation of this report. It is considered that the report's recommendations are compatible with Convention Rights.

### All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

5.3 Where appropriate, these are addressed in the body of the report.



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## Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 Full Diversity Impact Assessments will be undertaken on proposals listed in this report when they are included in Cabinet reports for Members to determine whether to implement them. Hence, no DIA was undertaken at this time.

## Risk Management

- 5.5 None

## **6. Consultees**

- 6.1 The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Monitoring Officer have not been consulted as this is a Report for Scrutiny and not a decision making report.

## **7. Background Papers**

- 7.1 None

## **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix to Leader's half Yearly Update