

# **Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session**

## **Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety**

**Scrutiny Committee**

**Date: 11<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

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Author: Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety

Wards: All

Parishes Affected: All

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

- 1.1 This report sets out details of the portfolio for the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety.
- 1.2 A key purpose of the Scrutiny Committee function is to hold the Cabinet to account and ensure that Council priorities and performance are being delivered. The Scrutiny Committee partly fulfils this requirement through the use of question and answer sessions with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety.
- 1.3 The purpose of the Question and Answer session is to ensure that the Cabinet Member provides the Scrutiny Committee with performance information that relates to their portfolio responsibilities. It also requires the Cabinet Member to provide budget information for their portfolio responsibilities and provides an opportunity for the Scrutiny Committee to ask questions on the portfolio responsibilities.
- 1.4 The remit of the Committee includes the review, scrutiny, and development of policy recommendations and the monitoring of performance of corporate priorities.

### **2. Recommendations**

Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Take note of the report by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety.
- 2.2 Put appropriate questions to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety.
- 2.3 Decide if any further action is required.

### **3. Detail**

- 3.1 The Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety is Councillor Cathy Martyn who is accountable for the following Pledges from the Council's Vision:
  - 3.1.1 Pledge 6 (in part) Ensure that there is a range of good quality housing options in Swindon, including affordable opportunities to buy and rent.
  - 3.1.2 Pledge 12 (in part) Work with partners to promote healthy lifestyles for the people of Swindon.

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Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Michael Ash, Head of Housing, Communities and Housing, [mash@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:mash@swindon.gov.uk)

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- 3.1.3 Pledge 16 (in part) Deliver a programme of work to ensure that residents, visitors and businesses feel that Swindon's town centre is a safe place to live, work, visit and do business.
- 3.1.4 Pledge 26. To prevent homelessness where possible, using additional measures including the Temporary Winter Housing Provision and enabling a Day Centre to prevent rough sleepers from returning to the streets.
- 3.2 The Portfolio responsibilities for this Cabinet position were updated in December 2016 and are as follows :
  - 3.2.1 Housing Allocations and Advice Services
  - 3.2.2 Empty Homes
  - 3.2.3 Estate and Tenancy Management
  - 3.2.4 Housing Enabling and Strategic Services
  - 3.2.5 Homeline Services
  - 3.2.6 Homelessness
  - 3.2.7 Housing Right to Buy/Sales Services
  - 3.2.8 Neighbourhood Wardens
  - 3.2.9 Private Sector Housing Renovation Grants
  - 3.2.10 Repair and Improvements to Council Housing Stock
  - 3.2.11 Sheltered Accommodation
  - 3.2.12 Environmental and Public Protection Services Gypsies, Travellers and Unauthorised Encampments
  - 3.2.13 Reducing Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Abuse
  - 3.2.14 Control Room Operations
  - 3.2.15 Principal Member for consultation on Public Space Protection Orders
  - 3.2.16 Licensing, including taxis, etc.
  - 3.2.17 Community Safety Partnership
  - 3.2.18 Reducing Domestic Abuse

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### Update on current priorities and key achievements

#### Delivering The Council's Vision and Pledges

Pledge 6 (in part) Ensure that there is a range of good quality housing options in Swindon, including affordable opportunities to buy and rent.

- 3.3 During the year the Housing Service through the Housing Revenue Account built specialist assisted living affordable housing developments at the Hawthorns and two other smaller sites. In all 35 assisted living bungalows were completed in partnership with Adult Social Care. The majority are for individuals, but there are also some larger units that enable shared living. A further 26 rented homes were built across two sites at Cranmore Ave and Downton Rd. Work is also soon to complete on 13 rented homes on Penhill Drive. In addition 50 existing homes have been acquired with a further 30-40 due in 2019.
- 3.4 Work also continues in negotiating and delivering additional affordable housing as part of S.106 agreements. It is forecast that we will enable an additional 281 affordable in 2018/19, these are predominantly delivered in partnership with our housing association partners namely Aster, GreenSquare, Stonewater and Sovereign.
- 3.5 In addition to the new builds and acquisitions there are a range of other projects that help make best use of our current housing stock. For example, a fortnightly Housing and ASC panel meets to discuss complex cases and more than 30 households have had a housing offer leading to an improved outcome. There is also a project where households who are over occupying are encouraged and assisted with the move to a smaller home, thereby freeing up high demand family housing. Since April 2018 18 tenants have moved with the vacant property then being offered to a family in temporary accommodation.

Pledge 12 Work with partners to promote healthy lifestyles for the people of Swindon and Pledge 16 Deliver a programme of work to ensure that residents, visitors and businesses feel that Swindon's town centre is a safe place to live, work, visit and do business

- 3.6 The Licensing Committee has adopted a number of important policy documents over the last year. Amongst the most significant have been an updated Statement of Gambling Principles and a revised Street Trading Policy, both of which form material considerations when licences are applied for. The Statement of Gambling Principles helps to promote healthy lifestyles by ensuring gambling establishments are correctly licenced and that their licences include appropriate conditions to ensure that advice is provided around the dangers of compulsive gambling, and that an awareness of gambling addiction is promoted. The Street

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Trading Policy improves safe and vibrant activity in the town centre, whilst also ensuring that hot food vans are not sited close to schools in the future.

- 3.7 The town centre Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) was successfully extended for a further three years from November 2018 – 2021 with no amendments or changes to the original five conditions which cover dogs on leads, consumption of alcohol, begging, skateboarding and cycling.

Pledge 26 To prevent homelessness where possible, using additional measures including the Temporary Winter Housing Provision and enabling a Day Centre to prevent rough sleepers from returning to the streets

- 3.8 Following a review of provisions for rough sleepers at Cabinet in July 2018 a number of activities have since taken place. The benefits of the Temporary Winter Housing Provision (TWHP) have been clearly demonstrated with the majority of guests still maintaining their own tenancies and avoiding returning to the streets. The TWHP has therefore been recommissioned at a new location for the current winter. The new location has also been able to accommodate a new Day Centre for the homelessness. The TWHP is currently being run by the Housing Service and a strong volunteer base, and the Day Centre by the Swindon Night Shelter. Both projects will be under review in 2019. The benefits of the TWHP and the Council's wider approach to rough sleeping gained the interest of the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, resulting in an award of just under £500k to combat rough sleeping. This money is being used to support a number of projects including extending the current out-reach service and providing "Housing First" flats for those sleeping rough. The Local Government Association have also taken a keen interest in the work of Swindon and allocated a specialist advisor to help disseminate best practice nationally. Their report will be due out in February/March 2019. Further details on homelessness are accounted in paragraph 3.21.

### Licensing

- 3.9 Once again, the Licensing Manager led two successful joint operations to ensure that private hire drivers do not invalidate their insurance through their actions, whereby they ply for hire without the benefit of a hackney carriage licence. These operations were extremely successful, with some good joint working with the Police, helping to ensure that the public can have confidence when using private hire vehicles.
- 3.10 In addition to the Gambling and Street Trading policies, the Licensing Committee also resolved to consult on whether the Council should introduce CCTV as mandatory in licensed vehicles which, if implemented, would provide additional security for users of the service. Committee also authorised consultation on a

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Hygiene star rating scheme covering the tattoo and skin piercing industry. Both of these initiatives are integral to the Council's public protection agenda and I await the outcome of the consultation exercises with interest.

- 3.11 The Licensing team also launched 'Ask for Angela' in December 2018 which is a joint initiative with Wiltshire Council, the Police and licensed premises. The scheme is about providing assistance to those individuals who find themselves in a vulnerable position in the night time economy. Assistance is given by the trained staff to return the individual home safely. So far 27 of our licensed premises within the night time economy have signed up to the initiative and have trained staff.
- 3.12 Last summer, I was delighted to learn that our Animal Health function was awarded an RSPCA 'Gold' standard for its stray dog service. The prestigious award was announced at the animal charity's recent Community Animal Welfare Footprints (CAWF) awards. The award scheme was developed 10 years ago by the RSPCA to recognise outstanding work carried out by local authorities, housing providers and other public service organisations, and to highlight those who have improved animal welfare and their communities. Dealing with stray dogs goes beyond just animal welfare, having a much wider impact on the community on matters such as street cleanliness, public protection and anti-social behaviour. The Council's licensing team have assisted with compulsory micro-chipping, and undertaken regular proactive work to encourage responsible dog ownership. This has also included outreach work with schools to help children understand how to safely interact with dogs.
- 3.13 The team also scooped a Silver Animal Activity Licensing Footprint. There has been a 44 per cent increase in the number of stray dogs reported to SBC over the last two years but, despite that, we have managed to reduce the number of dogs that were not claimed, taking those requiring a rescue space down from 20 per cent to 13 per cent. Very rarely in the last year has a dog that we have taken to the Pound stayed longer than 7 days - a statutory timeframe which enables the Council to rehome. All costs incurred at the Pound are recouped from the owner if the dog is returned. However, where a dog is not reclaimed and goes to rescue the Pound costs are incurred by the Council. The work that the team are doing ensures that we can source homes as early as possible so that the dogs are ready to leave the Pound at day 7. As a result, no healthy dogs have had to be destroyed in this financial year. In addition to dogs, we have increased powers available to deal with fly grazing of horses, which we used in the last year to seize a horse. The good relationships we have with Blue Cross rescue enabled that horse to be rehomed quickly.
- 3.14 All this builds on the good work done over the last few years and is testament to dedicated and highly committed staff who regularly go over and above to ensure

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that the service operates efficiently and effectively. The big challenge in animal health and welfare last year was the introduction of new legislation, repealing a wide range of acts, some dating back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This has required us to re-visit each boarding, day care and kennelling business, pet shop and riding establishment and issue new licenses under the Act, based on revised criteria under the updated inspection regime. We have had to do this in the absence of clarification on many areas from the Government, which has been a particular challenge for all licensing authorities.

- 3.15 The Licensing Manager is also the Council's statutory Safety at Sports Grounds officer, chairing the Safety Advisory Group, and is fully trained in this field. Leading multi-agency teams, our responsibilities here are principally around safety at Swindon Town FC. In addition the Licensing Manager chairs the multi-agency Event Safety Advisory Group, and has undertaken a number of inspections at key events such as concerts at Lydiard, community events and festivals like the Old Town Festival and Pride, as well as events at STEAM.
- 3.16 Finally on licensing and animal health, we continue to support the 2 Public Spaces Protection Orders that have been developed and adopted around dog control at Lydiard and dog fouling Boroughwide. In respect of the Lydiard PSPO only words of advice have been required, as it has been well received and users of the area are compliant. We continue to undertake dog fouling patrols and problem areas are subject to temporary stencilling which we continue to use.

### Public Protection

- 3.17 The Public Protection team continue to work to support and protect local residents and acts across a wide range of public health determinants and statutory functions.
- 3.18 The Health Compliance team aims to encourage and support local businesses and organisations large and small to comply with statutory requirements. There have been a number of successful health and safety prosecutions this year including; Cable Services – Formal caution. Food Hygiene prosecutions included: Marmaris £2,400 fine, The Curry Place Tandoori £12,000 fine 9 O'clock £1500 fine and Zeera £5100 fine. Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Orders were ratified at Court for: The Owl in the Tree and Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notices for New Sammy's Takeaway. The team continue to work with our Primary Authority partners the National Trust, ISS, Snack and Sandwich and are developing possible Primary Authority partnerships with First Great Western Railway and WH Smiths.
- 3.19 Trading Standards (TS) targets 'rogue traders' and deals with scams that impact upon some of our most vulnerable residents. Two rogue traders recently released



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from prison, were identified and recalled to prison after swift action by TS, due to them repeat offending. Ben Stevens, who was claiming to be a landscape gardener, who took thousands of pounds for poor work and not completing jobs was successfully prosecuted with TS securing compensation orders for those victims out-of-pocket.

- 3.20 TS continues to work with businesses and the team has a 'Primary Authority' relationship with WH Smith and works closely with the Outside Clinic, (a 'Buy with Confidence' approved domiciliary opticians).
- 3.21 It has become increasingly difficult to recruit qualified TS staff. This is a national issue and is impacted upon by the lack of training opportunities within local authorities. SBC has consequently recruited a TS trainee to address this issue locally and although it will take a number of years for them to be fully qualified, their training has gone well and they have established themselves as a valuable member of the team.
- 3.22 Primarily the teams work to ensure compliance however where, for example, landlords are found to be non-compliant the team will look to prosecute. The team were recently successful in prosecuting a local landlord for offences in a House of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) where the council received fines and costs totalling nearly £10,000. A further two prosecutions for housing offences are being worked through.
- 3.23 The team have also recently resolved a particularly serious and persistent Statutory Nuisance case where it was necessary to seize noise making equipment from an address on 3 separate occasions in a short period, and are preparing a prosecution file for the offender there too. Fortunately these cases are usually resolved using an escalating enforcement approach (which resolves most cases at a relatively low level).
- 3.24 We have completed the necessary work to bring in the extended Mandatory HMO Licensing in Swindon, and will be presenting the revised Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy to Cabinet in February to adopt a suite of new powers, including Civil Penalties for Housing offences that will ensure tenants are not put at risk.

### Air Quality

- 3.25 Poor air quality can have a negative impact on health and wellbeing. The council constantly monitors air quality across the borough and generally Swindon has good air quality. Last year however it was necessary to declare Swindon's first Air Quality Management Area, part of Kingshill Road where volume of traffic and the road canyon effect prevent the NO<sub>2</sub> from dispersing. An Air Quality Steering group was established to work collaboratively across the borough to improve air

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quality and ensure that pollutant levels (nitrogen) are in line with limits set out in the Air Quality (England) Regulations 2000. This group are developing the Air Quality Action plan for Kingshill. This follows a number of local engagement events and the drafting of an action plan currently out for consultation.

### Housing

- 3.26 New **Homelessness** legislation came into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018. The impact of this has been a major change to the way in which homelessness clients are advised, when they are advised and how their case is managed. The main emphasis is now placed on prevention rather than acceptance of a homelessness duty. Therefore it is very difficult to make meaningful comparisons on case work this year compared to previous years. Data on the national recording system is still being verified, however as an indication of recent demand, local recording in **Quarter 1** of 2018/19 showed 241 assessments carried out as below. Within these assessments 16 households were prevented from becoming homeless and 43 households relieved (new accommodation found for them)

households deemed not to be homeless within 56 days and general advice and assistance given	100
households accepted into a prevention duty	40
households accepted into a relief duty	101

- 3.27 **Tenancy Management.** An ongoing challenge continues to be rent collection. The income of the Housing Revenue Account to meet tenants' service aspirations depends on a high rate of collection. The collection rate stands at 96.79% above the performance as at end of December 2018, compared to December 2017 (95.87%) this is a remarkable achievement given the on-going changes to the Welfare System. Swindon went live on the 'full' Universal Credit (UC) system on 30th November 2016 as an "Early Adopter" of Universal Credit. Almost 1,800 council tenants now claim UC. The Tenancy Services team has been restructured to refocus work on more complex rent recovery cases and improvements made to the Housing (IT) operating system to automate the escalation of rent arrears alerts to tenants. Total Mobile has been implemented which provides housing officers with real time information when in tenants homes.
- 3.28 **Tenancy Management** –Housing have been working in close partnership with communities and partner agencies such as police, YOT and Adult Services to address anti-social behaviour on various estates including Pinehurst, Parks and



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Walcot and Upper Stratton. As a result of the information that has been obtained, a number of properties have been raided by the police and the Council have followed up with notices and legal action. There have been 3 cases where the tenant has been evicted or returned the keys following possession action. In addition a number of individuals have come to our attention where the person's behaviour has caused disruption to neighbouring residents. During 2018 Housing have taken legal proceedings to obtain 7 injunctions in order to impose conditions to control the person's behaviour. Usually these proceedings have the desired effect but in some cases the persons have been arrested and held in police custody overnight for breaching a condition with a power of arrest attached. Injunctions have also been used to safeguard, vulnerable residents who live in sheltered accommodation.

- 3.29 **Fire Safety** remains a priority. The Grenfell tragedy continues to place a spot light on the Council's processes and procedures. I reported to the Adults, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in detail in September 2018 on this matter. In summary, work is onsite at the DMJ Tower to install new fire doors, additional smoke detectors and intumescent fire grills. In the 6 x 10 storey blocks, additional internal fire doors have been fitted, a fire suppression system will be installed at George Hall Court (sheltered housing), and a separate specialist contractor has had to be sourced to undertake the latter. Escape and emergency lighting has been fitted to 28 x medium rise blocks. The Council continues to work closely with the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service, and conducts joint training events on key aspects of fire safety management with Housing staff.
- 3.30 **Void Management.** This is the work undertaken to return properties back into use after a tenancy has ended. In 2017 the contract for these works were re-let, the successful tenderer being the Bell Group. Unfortunately for a number of reasons this contract performed poorly, by February 2018 despite considerable attempts to improve performance, the contract was terminated. Through a combination of excellent work from the in-house work force and the direct management of two subcontracting teams that worked for Bell, the Council has made significant improvements in turnaround time. This has been the subject of reports and updates to the Housing Management CMAG. In summary, by February 2018 over 230 properties were empty. There will always be property empty for a variety of reasons but with a stock size of approximately 10,300 80 to 100 would be regarded as a good performance. As of November 2018 150 properties remained empty. The target is to drive this down to below 100 by March 2019 and the service area are on target to do this.
- 3.31 **Online Repairs Reporting.** As part of the efficiencies introduced by commissioning a new Housing (IT) operating system, the "My Tenancy" online offer has been extended to cover repairs reporting. During October extensive
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Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Michael Ash, Head of Housing, Communities and Housing, [mash@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:mash@swindon.gov.uk)

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testing with tenant represented proved successful with some actions identified to improve the process. Within the first four weeks of going live 19% of repairs were being reported in this way enabling tenants to make requests out of hours for non emergencies, including weekends. The facility also allows tenants to book their appointment times online. Our target is to increase this to 60% by April 2019.

- 3.32 **Training and professionalisation of the work force.** The Grenfell tragedy has also rightly underlined the importance of maintaining a trained and suitably qualified workforce to implement Council housing policy and manage a range of high risk housing management functions. Swindon's professional membership of the Chartered Institute of Housing is higher than any other South West Housing Authority. The Housing Service provides the highest number of apprenticeships across the Council, with regularly over 20 apprenticeships across all areas including trade operatives. This year the Housing Service has been nominated for National Housing Maintenance Forum Housing Apprenticeship Scheme of the Year, the judges were particularly impressed stating:

*'The organisation's clear commitment to apprenticeships and succession planning has resulted in the process becoming embedded in BAU with a good outcome for the apprentices and benefits to the organisation in reduced recruitment costs and better qualified 'home grown' staff.'*

### Community Safety

- 3.33 **Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.** The Community Safety Team (CSP), with partners, developed a Reception Centre operational process in 2017 to provide a safe space for victims of human trafficking and modern slavery. This process was successfully put into practice in November 2018 to support a police operation to rescue five victims of trafficking into sexual exploitation.
- 3.34 **Domestic Abuse (DA)** continues to be a concern. The 2018 DA JSNA identified that we would predict a population of Swindon UA's size (in 2017) to have an annual prevalence of 6.1% for DA, with an estimated 7,890 people aged 16-59 years experiencing DA within one year however only 4,582 incidents were reported to the Police. We work collaboratively across the borough with partner agencies to raise awareness and ensure that victims feel confident in coming forward and that we have the services available to provide advice help and support. Swindon Women's Aid provide our DA support service with the provision of a 22 bedded purpose built unit and outreach provision which in Q1+2 of this year supported 44 women in the refuge, including 3 with no recourse to public funds, and 98 in community services including 5 men. The helpline received over 5000 calls and is available for victims and their families as well as professionals.

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- 3.35 Turning Point, our local provider of alcohol and drug treatment, continue to work with partners to reduce the harm caused by substance misuse. They have delivered training to partner agencies and conduct engagement work with high risk and prolific offenders. We have Substance Misuse Liaisons workers based at the hospital who work with individuals who turn up at GWH as a result of their substance misuse as well as Cell Intervention workers who again provide early intervention, in this case where offending behaviour is linked with substance misuse (since April 2018 they have worked with over 175clients). Our drug related deaths are low in comparison to national and regional figures. This is in part due to the successful roll out of Naloxone (we have very good distribution with a wide range of stakeholders) which reverses the effect of overdose from opiates.
- 3.36 Our two year Local Alcohol Action Area project has successfully been completed which has resulted in an upgrade of the licensing database system with an option for mapping licensed premises, training for door staff, Ask for Angela, funding for a gazebo to support NTE night time economy workers and provide a safe space to talk to and help support vulnerable people within the town centre, improving safety (signage developed to guide people through the town centre between Old Town and Regents Circus) and diversity within the night time which will inform the spatial strategy for the Town Centre in the forthcoming Local Plan Review. The Local Plan Review will establish planning policies around the mix and location of land uses in the Town Centre.
- 3.37 We continue to raise awareness of the harms caused by substance misuse and last November actively supported the multi-agency activity around Alcohol Awareness week with a booth in the Pop-up-Café (Brunel shopping centre Swindon), a drop in session at Booth House and a workshop at North Star College engaging with over 114 students as part of their wellbeing week.
- 3.38 We were successful in our bid for funding to tackle the harm caused to children of alcohol dependent parents. This was a partnership bid that has resulted in over £570k of additional funding coming into Swindon to tackle this issue.

### **What would you do differently?**

#### Licensing

- 3.39 Much of our work in licensing requires joint working with the Police. Resources are scarce in both organisations, yet there are statutory responsibilities that require enacting. A joint Tasking Group has worked well, but merely formalises relationships that already exist. More integrated working with the Police, through co-location and access to information would be greatly beneficial in ensuring that join ups are maximised and priorities can focus on agreed outcomes. To this end
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desktop access has been made available to the Police in the Licensing team, and access to shared data, (where possible) has been enabled.

- 3.40 I was keen to ensure that Licensing benefitted from early engagement with the digitisation agenda as there is much more that could be done with a fully digital, fit for purpose process. A lot of key staff time has been invested in this process to date, to the detriment of day to day service delivery. It is my hope that digitisation will deliver the expected improvements and in doing so should enable a more efficient and effective service delivery.

### Public Protection

- 3.41 There are ongoing opportunities around digitalisation of some of the public protection services which will increase efficiency and effectiveness. Officers are identifying key areas that can be accessed online such as registration of new food business and access to food hygiene information, training, infectious disease information, private water supply information, allergen information, Health & Safety information, Feed, Animal Health, Approval information and report complaints.
- 3.42 Increased focus on compliance and supporting individuals and organisations to change their behaviours to hopefully reduce the need for prosecution activity.

### Housing

- 3.43 Changes to the Council's approach to managing housing demand particularly homelessness has been a challenge. New legislation coupled with ambitious and creative ideas on how to improve outcomes for customers has been challenging and difficult whilst in tandem consulting on a new Rough Sleeping Strategy. Earlier approval of the Strategy would have helped in the wider ownership and understanding of what the Council has achieved.
- 3.44 A clear success once again has been the confidence our residents have shown in our Fire Safety arrangements. However, it is important that we pay particular care and attention to our continued communication and engagement with residents. I anticipate that this will be a finding of the Grenfell Inquiry and we need to prepare for timely engagement.

### Community Safety

- 3.45 The limited powers of criminal legislation to tackle repeat perpetrators of Domestic Abuse means that a number of victims in Swindon are being subjected to a cycle of abuse. There are some useful powers in civil legislation and the partnership fully resourcing this focus would see a reduction in repeat victims and perpetrators at MARAC.

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### Reducing Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Abuse

- 3.46 Now that the drug treatment services have been recommissioned from Turning Point and successfully embedded across the borough the focus should now move to preventing drug and alcohol misuse and the harm caused by it. This work will need to be delivered in partnership across the system targeting our more vulnerable and at risk residents.
- 3.47 We will be focusing on dual diagnosis, substance misuse and mental health, as this cohort experience higher drug related deaths and suicides. We will continue to focus on reduced hospital related admissions for substance misuse.

### **What are the Challenges and Priorities facing your Portfolio?**

#### Public Protection

- 3.48 Given current and future budgetary pressures prioritisation of service provision will need to focus on its statutory responsibilities and those areas which are most able to deliver the needs of our community as recognised through the Councils vision and priorities and in particular by protecting those who are most vulnerable or at risk.

#### Licensing

- 3.49 The licensing service continues to deal with a wide range of important and high profile issues. Much time has been invested in a programme to renew the main IT support system for licensing, including taxis and this work will continue. Currently we only have one fully qualified Licensing officer (the Licensing Manager), whose time inevitably is diverted to other more strategic matters. There is still a level of staff development required which, although ongoing, is likely to mean that the service is not able to operate fully in the pre-emptive manner that I would like. The Licensing Manager is overseeing this staff development, and has also introduced mandatory training for licence holders, such as for taxi drivers on issues of Child Exploitation and safeguarding.
- 3.50 Particular challenges in the next year exist around the implementation of the new Animal Licensing legislation and building on the outcomes of the consultation documents on tattooing and CCTV in taxis.

#### Housing

- 3.51 **Housing Repairs.** The social housing 4 year rent reduction of 1% per year will be in its final year in 2019/20. This has exacerbated the capital funding shortfall in the HRA. As reported in the Medium Term Financial Plan to Cabinet in July 2018 a balanced budget can be achieved over the next 5 years, however, the



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total funding available to invest in the stock to achieve “just in time” major repairs and renewals is £116.2m. The total required is £199.3m. I am pleased to say that current reserves and efficiency savings continue to reduce the immediate impact on tenants and I will continue to mitigate against this loss in funding. I have also approached our local MPs and the Minister of State to review the difficult funding arrangements facing Swindon’s HRA.

- 3.52 **Homelessness** is the other key area where although budget pressures have eased thanks to our success with higher performance based grant awards, this still remains a challenge for future years, particularly 2019/20 as targeted savings of £642k need to be achieved to assist overall savings plans for the Council. Officers will by March 2019 have started the re-commissioning of our temporary accommodation portfolio to achieve the majority of these savings..
- 3.53 **Housing Voids.** A 2 to 7 year contract will be let for vacant property repairs with a potential value up to £14 million. Poor performance by either the principal contractor or in-house services will be closely managed and the lessons learned from the previous contract shared and embedded to improve performance.

### Community Safety

- 3.54 The issue of County Lines is an area of focus across the agencies given the drastic impact it can have on young people and vulnerable adults. Sharing of intelligence and increased awareness raising are both key to working towards tackling County Lines. Focus must lie in reducing the impact of County Lines on the availability of drugs and the exploitation of vulnerable and young people.
- 3.55 Domestic Abuse (DA) affects individuals and families and has a significant impact on both Council and partner agencies. A DA Strategy is being developed informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Victims having the confidence to come forward and report DA continues to be an area of focus as does ensuring comprehensive family approach to support victims and their children to recover from DA.

### Reducing Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Abuse

- 3.56 With the success of the Innovation fund for reducing the harm to children of alcohol misusing parents our challenge will be to roll this out successfully working with partner such as schools, Butterflies Family Centre, CAMHS, LIFT Psychology and Turning Point alongside the Nelson Trust and AdFam. This complex project will tackle, alcohol dependency, parental conflict, harm caused by Domestic Abuse and mental health relating to alcohol dependency impacting on Children.



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### **4. Alternative Options**

- 4.1 The Committee can choose not to operate a Cabinet Portfolio Question and Answer session system.

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

#### Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial or procurement implications arising from this report.

#### 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 from this report. Any further implications will be identified when a topic is reviewed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and in any recommendations made by it.

#### Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 No Diversity Impact Assessment is required at this stage. Any DIA that is required during review of 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 Overview Scrutiny Committee and if it makes any recommendations.

### **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.

# **Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session**

## **Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety**

**Scrutiny Committee**

**Date: 11<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

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### **8. Appendices**

8.1 None.