

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th October 2015

Author:	Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills
Wards:	All
Locality Affected:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to question the Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Skills on his portfolio responsibilities and performance.
- 1.2 A key purpose of the Scrutiny function is to hold the Cabinet to account and ensure that Council 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 Cabinet Members on 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 Communities and Strategic Planning,
- 2.2 Put appropriate questions to the Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Skills, and
- 2.3 Decide if any further action is required.

3. Detail

Portfolio Details

- 3.1 The Leader of the Council has assigned the following responsibilities to the Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Skills:
 - 3.1.1 Economic Development
 - 3.1.2 Museums, including Steam
 - 3.1.3 Arts and Culture
 - 3.1.4 Community Heritage
 - 3.1.5 Regeneration

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- 3.1.6 FSL Ltd Client Lead Member
- 3.1.7 Strategic (Non-operational) Property Portfolio
- 3.1.8 Changes to the Borough's boundaries to support economic development
- 3.1.9 Adult Learning
- 3.1.10 Tertiary Education
- 3.1.11 Skills
- 3.1.12 Specific Responsibility for Lydiard Park Project
- 3.1.13 Country Parks (securing sustainable uses)
- 3.1.14 Parking Services – charges, enforcement and strategy
- 3.1.15 Community Assets – libraries, Community centres
- 3.1.16 Cemeteries & Crematoria assets
- 3.2 Members of the Scrutiny Committee are encouraged to contact the Cabinet Member and/or Committee and Member Services if they would like any assistance in preparing for this meeting.
- 3.3 Background detail to this report is provided in Appendix 1

What have you done well?

Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership

- 3.4 The Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) is focussed on economic development in the area of Swindon and Wiltshire. It is a partnership of the two Unitary Authorities and the business community. The SWLEP is the main source of government funding for infrastructure projects and European funding to improve skills and business development.
- 3.5 Through the SWLEP bidding process to government, the Council has gained in principle agreement to £95m of the £141m (67%) from the Local Growth Fund (LGF) allocated to the entire Swindon and Wiltshire area. This will be used to enable transport projects essential to the delivery of our key housing and employment sites, particularly in Wichelstowe and the New Eastern Villages. The projects supported are:
 - 3.5.1 Improvements to junctions 15 and 16 of the M4,
 - 3.5.2 Western access to Wichelstowe,
 - 3.5.3 White Hart junction,

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- 3.5.4 A420 junction improvements and Improvements west of the A419 to assist the White Hart junction,
- 3.5.5 A new road connecting the south of the New Eastern Villages to the Commonhead roundabout and a bridge over the A419 to link the New Eastern Villages to the centre of Swindon,
- 3.5.6 A Rapid Transit project to improve journey time reliability for buses through “intelligent” junctions and real-time traffic data,
- 3.5.7 Improvements to bicycle and pedestrian routes into town from the main new housing developments, and
- 3.5.8 Building a new bus exchange in the town centre.

FSL Ltd Client Lead Member / Inward Investment

- 3.6 Swindon Borough Council commissions Forward Swindon Ltd (FSL) to deliver regeneration services in the Borough, including Town Centre regeneration and inward investment activities. In the last financial year, there have been 57 direct investment enquiries, which have been assessed by FSL as significant and high quality and these have been pursued. These have include TNT, Hacklings Transport, The Entertainer, Handy Distribution, Johnan UK, Aldi, Wasdell Packaging, Mango Bean and Torin. This totalled an estimated Investment value of £27.75 million for the nine companies, in terms of jobs, premises and equipment.

Adult/ Community Learning

- 3.7 Swindon's Community Learning function is delivered to support the government's policy for Community Learning detailed in New Challenges, New Chances 2011. This provided a commissioning process enabling the service to achieve a stable network of delivery partners.
- 3.8 A strong partnership with Children and Family Centres and Supported Housing maximised the impact of Community Learning delivery to priority groups and enabled Community Learning to be responsive to 1500 priority learners, which has led to an Ofsted assessment of 'Good'. Outcomes included:
 - 3.8.1 95% of learners achieving all or some of their learning outcomes.
 - 3.8.2 35.8% overall made progress either to a training course at a higher level or to employment with 22% starting work.
 - 3.8.3 50% improved skills as a parent, 25% for employment.
 - 3.8.4 Learners said they had improved their skills. In addition to better literacy and numeracy, 25% improved their IT skills and 25% their spoken English.

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3.8.5 85% reported improved confidence

Museums – Including Steam

- 3.9 The event programmes at Lydiard and STEAM continue to be high quality and varied. The mix of historical interpretation and commercial events at Lydiard attracts good visitor numbers. These visitor numbers are expected to increase following the development of a strong relationship with the National Railway Museum (NRM), which owns the majority of the exhibits in STEAM. Following complex negotiations, the NRM has kindly agreed to the loan of two prestigious ex-GWR locomotives, which will create renewed interest in the museum.

Strategic (Non-operational) Property Portfolio

- 3.10 The Council undertook a number of changes in 2014/15 involving the strategic use of property assets. An example of this was the transfer of leisure and golf course assets, which completed on 1 November 2014. This involved six leisure centres transferring to GLL – a not for profit company - and two golf courses to Twigmarket. The transfer ensured that these services remain open to the public for up to ten years for the leisure centres and up to 75 years for the golf courses. In addition, the transfer will deliver revenue savings of approaching £1.3m a year and nearly £4.5m of backlog maintenance savings.

Arts and Culture

- 3.11 The Bath Road museum and art gallery has had a successful year, holding a range of well-received exhibitions, including hosting a travelling exhibition of Turner landscapes. The new Swindon Theatres contract covering both the Wyvern Theatre and Art Centre completed its first highly successful year of operation. There were 511 ticketed events over both venues with 133,000 tickets sold with a good mix between professional touring and local hires. Create Studios also had a highly successful year as an independent Community Interest Company securing £124,000 match funding and working with over 1,300 participants.

What would you do differently?

Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership

- 3.12 Enhance the work with members of the SWLEP Board to improve communication with the business community in order to increase their engagement in the development of projects to help achieve the priorities of the SWLEP.

Strategic (Non-operational) Property Portfolio

- 3.13 It will be necessary to progress the opportunity of further asset transfers and make sure the asset base reflects Council priorities, building on the leisure

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assets transfer. The Cultural and Community Assets Transformation programme in particular is being implemented in 2015/16 and will continue this work.

Community Heritage

- 3.14 Linking regeneration to the town's heritage is important and the restoration of the World War One Memorial in the Old Town Hall, and its relocation to a home where it can be displayed needs to be accelerated.

Parking Services

- 3.15 In the new financial year a review of Whalebridge car park will be undertaken by the council, to ensure that it meets the needs of residents in terms of service and security.

Arts and Culture

- 3.16 The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid for a new Art Gallery and Musuem was not successful, although the HLF Trustees were clear that the case for investment in Swindon had been made and they were keen to receive a further bid. We need to improve the bid by procuring an excellent detailed design for the new building, set the new museum and art gallery within a wider development plan for the area, which is commercially viable and ensure we have a secure source of revenue funding to sustain the provision.

What are the challenges facing the portfolio?

Economic Development and FSL Ltd Client Lead Member

- 3.17 Swindon's economic development is of major importance and is essential to help deliver the vision for Swindon. In challenging financial circumstances, we need to target our resources even further to enhance the regeneration of the town centre and ensure we maintain a healthy and vibrant economy. In 2015-16, FSL will carry out a review of the Town Centre Masterplan and make recommendations to the Council for a sharply focussed delivery plan to support the achievement of the Council's vision for Swindon.
- 3.18 At 0.8% of all businesses, Swindon's economy has twice the level of businesses employing over 250 people compared with the national average. This is coupled with a smaller concentration of businesses employing 0 -9 people at 87% of all businesses, which is 2 percentage points lower than the national average of 89%. This concentration of employment in large companies can provide instability in the local labour market, as one company closure can have serious impacts on the local economy. A coordinated approach to business support and start up services is necessary to help challenge this issue.

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Adult/ Community Learning

- 3.19 Presently there is a government grant to cover the £450,000 spend on adult and community learning through to July 2016. Currently there is no indication of the level of funding beyond this date. If there were any further reductions, this could potentially affect the present high quality inclusive nature of the service.

Museums Including STEAM

- 3.20 The future offer at Lydiard Park and House and STEAM will be considered in the Cultural and Community Asset Change Programme. Lydiard is a well-loved local resource but its limited commercial offer is not fully developed. In common with many museums, both Lydiard and STEAM require Council subsidies. It is absolutely critical that we work to reduce or remove these subsidies to enable both venues to become more self-sufficient.

Strategic (Non-operational) Property Portfolio

- 3.21 Reducing the costs of the asset base of the council, whilst maintaining/improving operational efficiency is a challenge when ensuring continued levels of service delivery. To overcome this it will be essential to work closely with change programmes and help to mitigate this risk.

Community Assets – Libraries, Community centres

- 3.22 These areas have just transferred to this portfolio and are part of a major change programme. There is a cross-party Cabinet Member Advisory Group that will be assisting in the Cabinet Member in developing proposals that will be reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny in the usual way.

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 as consequence of this report. Any expenditure arising as a result of an item on the Committee's work programme will be met by the Overview & Scrutiny Support budget, subject to the approval of the Committee.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended) requires every Local Authority to establish an overview and scrutiny function to hold the Executive to

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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 this 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 as this report proposes no changes to services. 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 The Board Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Board Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1- Additional Information on Portfolio Performance 2014\15