

Appendix 1 Additional Information on Portfolio Performance 2014\15

Cabinet Member Q&A October 2015

1. Local Enterprise Partnership and Growth Deal

1.1 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.

1.2 Through the SWLEP bidding process to government, Swindon has gained in principle agreement to £95m from the Local Growth Fund (LGF) 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:

- 1.2.1 Improvements to junctions 15 and 16 of the M4
- 1.2.2 Western access to Wichelstowe
- 1.2.3 White Hart junction
- 1.2.4 A420 junction improvements
- 1.2.5 Improvements west of the A419 to assist the White Hart junction
- 1.2.6 A new road connecting the south of the New Eastern Villages to the Commonhead roundabout
- 1.2.7 A bridge over the A419 to link the New Eastern Villages to the centre of Swindon
- 1.2.8 A Rapid Transit project to improve journey time reliability for buses through “intelligent” junctions and real-time traffic data
- 1.2.9 Improvements to bicycle and pedestrian routes into town from the main new housing developments
- 1.2.10 Building a new bus exchange in the town centre.

1.3 The SWLEP established a comprehensive governance framework in order to enhance accountability and transparency of decision-making. There is a Joint Strategic Economic Committee (JSEC), made up of key Cabinet members from both Councils. The JSEC provides public accountability for spending decisions.

1.4 The SWLEP is unusual in having a Joint Scrutiny Task Group, made up of councillors from both Swindon and Wiltshire Councils. The Task Group focussed its initial work on understanding how the SWLEP operates and how a Scrutiny function could add value. This work is now helping the operation of the Group in its second year.

1.5 An area of development is to 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.

2. Swindon's Economy

- 2.1 The Swindon Economy is recovering from the recession and is reporting signs of growth. In particular gross value added (GVA), a proxy for productivity per employee in Swindon was £61,938 in 2013; this was 13 percentage points higher than the English average and significantly more than our neighbouring comparator authority areas, with the exception of Milton Keynes where GVA per head was £63,000 per employee. This is a growth of 18% since 2009.
- 2.2 Swindon has had high levels of resident employment, often exceeding 80%, throughout the last decade the English average has fluctuated between 70% and 74% over the last ten years. In the Centre for Cities report 'City Outlook', Swindon had the 3rd highest employment rate out of 64 cities. The employment rate for the working age population maintained a strong level at 76%, over 4 percentage pointshigher than the national average.
- 2.3 There were just over 6,000 businesses in Swindon in 2014, and between 2010 and 2014, the number of businesses in Swindon increased by 16% which is double the English average and more than three times the rate of growth experienced in the South West. Amongst our comparator areas, Swindon experienced the fastest rate of growth in the total number of businesses with the exception of Reading (where the number of businesses increased by 17 % over 2010-14). The Centre for Cities 2015 report identified Swindon as 4th in the UK in terms of growth in the number of businesses.
- 2.4 Following the recession, and in common with our neighbouring authorities, the business death rate exceeded the businesses birth rate in Swindon in 2009 and 2010. However since 2011, the business birth rate in Swindon has exceeded the business death rate. In 2013, business births in Swindon exceeded business deaths by 20 per cent; and this was the highest differential amongst all of our comparator areas with the exception of Milton Keynes.
- 2.5 At 0.8% of all businesses, Swindon's economy has twice the level of business employing over 250 people than the national average. This is coupled with a smaller concentration of business employing 0 -9 people at 87% of all business, 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.

3. Town Centre Regeneration/ FSL Ltd Client Lead Member

3.1 Swindon Borough Council commissions Forward Swindon Ltd (FSL) to deliver regeneration services in the Borough, including Town Centre regeneration and inward investment activities .

3.2 In terms of town centre regeneration a number of projects are underway. Support has included:

3.2.1 **Havelock Square** - Following concept designs and approval, the procurement process is close to completion and works will commence in this financial year.

3.2.2 **Kimmerfields** - A £4.5m Local Growth Fund application for funding towards the new bus exchange has been successful and negotiations over the NHS premises have been concluded. The demolition of the Carlton street car park has been awarded and due to take place next year.

3.2.3 **Aspen House** - The demolition works have been completed and are now waiting designs to be drawn up for the pocket park. To minimise disruption to council car parks in the future this site will be used as a construction compound for the Havelock Square works whilst designs are finalised and taken to tender.

3.2.4 **Oasis and North star** - Works on the improving the current facilities of the Oasis centre were completed in March in line with contractual obligation. Moirai held a public consultation in preparation of submitting an outline plans to the Borough.

4. Inward Investment

4.1 At year end there have been 57 direct investment enquiries in the financial year of which 41 have been assessed as significant and high quality and these have been pursued.

4.2 During the course of the year there have been 9 large inward investors that have credited Forward Swindon's role directly: TNT, Hacklings Transport, The Entertainer, Handy Distribution, Johnan UK, Aldi, Wasdell Packaging, Mango Bean and Torin. Investment value in total £27.75 million for nine of the companies. in terms of jobs, premises and equipment.

5. Skills

5.1 Adult Learning

- 5.1.1 Swindon's Community Learning function is delivered against 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.
- 5.1.2 Strong partnerships with Children and Family Centres and Supported Housing were developed. This maximised the impact of Community Learning delivery to these priority groups and enable the service to be responsive to 1500 priority community learners, which has led to an Ofsted assessment of 'Good'.
- 5.1.3 Outcomes have included:
 - 5.1.3.1 95% of learners achieving all or some of their learning outcomes.
 - 5.1.3.2 35.8% overall made progress either to a training course at a higher level or to employment with 22% starting work.
 - 5.1.3.3 50% improved skills as a parent, 25% for employment.
 - 5.1.3.4 Learners said they had improved their skills. In addition to better literacy and numeracy, 25% improved their IT skills and 25% their spoken English.
 - 5.1.3.5 85% reported improved confidence
- 5.1.4 Community Learning has not only provided a high performing service it has also maximised its investment. Pound Plus contributions data indicates that for every £1 of public investment £1.14 is returned in fees, subsidised accommodation, in-kind contributions and the use of volunteers.
- 5.1.5 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.

5.2 Tertiary Education

5.2.1 Employer and Apprenticeship Growth

- 5.2.1.1 The Apprenticeship Growth Strategy has been drafted for implementation in 15/16, this focuses on growing demand in employers and growing demand in young people. This has been supported by a well performing employer engagement service, with 6 volunteer employer ambassadors committed to supporting the implementation of the Growth plan. Further employers and young people will be engaged through the development and implementation of the apprenticeship growth campaign.
- 5.2.1.2 Strong apprenticeship growth is achievable; the government is making available apprenticeship funding for those that are delivering good quality apprenticeships, and the Skills team is ensuring this by working with providers to ensure the right environment for growth. There is also further work underway through the devolution deals with the LEP and government, about how greater control over apprenticeships can be taken at a local level.

5.2.2 NEET

5.2.2.1 The number of those local young people becoming Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) has remained low with almost all 16 year old students receiving an offer of learning, post 16 (only 16 did not in September 2014).

5.2.2.2 The SBC commissioned Learning Gateway minimised the numbers of young people leaving learning at ages 16 and 17, with a greater proportion of students “in learning” than national from October 2014 to March 2015. The numbers of those “unknown” are below national levels, for both years ages 16 and 17, and a further commission with Electoral Services colleagues has been put in place to reduce the numbers of students aged 18 whose destinations were unknown.

5.2.2.3 A review of careers advice/information and guidance has also been commissioned, which involved all local pre- and post-16 provision, supporting partners to evaluate their current service against nationally recommended standards.

5.2.2.4 There are present challenges with the need to focus on improving progression for young people at 17 years of age, with a greater focus on specific actions by all key partners. The loss of Talent Express as a learning provider reduced the range of practical, local, post-16 options.

5.2.2.5 Most importantly both locally and nationally, longer term outcomes (employed or in learning at 19) remained weak for particular groups of young people including young parents, looked after children and care leavers and those with Youth Offending Team (YOT) involvement.

5.3 Higher Education

5.3.1 A strong partnership has been developed committed to increasing participation in HE, a dedicated chair Mike Welsh, Headteacher of Goddard Park Primary School, is now in place who is a good champion for this area and there is work underway to identify a potential lead Higher Education Institute.(HEI)

5.3.2 A strong project management approach to this work now needs to be maintained to secure a HEI to lead the development of a HE centre. This will ensure a step change to the number of HE places offered in Swindon, and help to provide significant levels of growth.

5.4 Better understanding the skills needs of employers

5.4.1 The Skills Mapping and Brokerage Service has been commissioned in conjunction with the SWLEP and is being delivered by Business West. The work has led to the completion of an employer skills needs and gaps survey with over 400 employers, and skills workshops with the key sectors of Construction, Digital, High Value Added Manufacturing and Business & Finance.

5.4.2 The programme has delivered a strong level of research and information and it is now important to ensure the next phase responds to the skills needs and gaps identified and focuses on solutions.

- 5.4.3 A strategic joined up approach to employer engagement on skills is essential if this work is going to achieve its aims and objectives, and the present fragmented approach will need to be overcome. Funding for this will come from the European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) from 2016, ensuring this funding meets Swindon's needs and builds on what has been achieved.

6. Museums Including Steam / Specific Responsibility for Lydiard Park Project

- 6.1 The event programmes at Lydiard and STEAM continues to be high quality and varied. The mix of historic interpretation and commercial events at Lydiard attracts good visitor numbers, whilst the Lego and Railway Festival at STEAM continue to be flagship events at the museum. It is important that the success of these festivals are capitalised upon and build similarly popular themed events into the programmes for next year.
- 6.2 Another area that has been particularly successful is the relationship that has been grown with the National Railway Museum (NRM), who own the majority of the exhibits in STEAM. Following complex negotiations, the NRM have kindly agreed to the loan of two prestigious ex-GWR locomotives which will create renewed interest in the museum.
- 6.3 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 for all to see needs to be accelerated.
- 6.4 The future offer at Lydiard 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 operate at a loss to the Council and require subsidies. It is absolutely critical that work is undertaken to reduce or remove these subsidies to enable both venues to become more self-sufficient.
- 6.5 STEAM will be central to the 'Swindon 175' celebrations next year, which will mark the 175th anniversary of the opening of the railway works. There are a number of events planned around Swindon175, which require careful co-ordination, management and publicity. A cross-party Member Working Group has been established to oversee this process. Of these events, the movement of 'King George V' and 'City of Truro' to STEAM present a logistical challenge, but one which has been carefully planned. The moves are programmed in for the week commencing 9th November and will necessitate the closure of the museum for a fortnight.

7. Swindon Museum and Art Gallery (SM&AG)

- 7.1 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 building itself retains a number of challenges including poor access for disabled visitors, fixed and dated display space for museum artefacts and limited storage space for the collections

- 7.2 The Council committed up to £5m to a project to relocate the existing art and museum collections from the Bath Road site to a proposed new location in the town centre. To assist the development of this work the Swindon Museum and Art Gallery (SM&AG) bid for and received a grant from the Arts Council England to assess the importance of its collections, develop a deeper understanding of its current and future audiences and undertake community engagement, learning and development.
- 7.3 In addition, SM&AG was successful in its bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for a two-year project to develop a better understanding of current and future storage needs and rationalise the current storage of artefacts and objects. This work responds directly to the Internal Audit Storage Report and has enabled a two year full time fixed term Collections Manager to be appointed. Considerable progress has been made including removing all museum artefacts from Waterside and re-racking the Art Store.
- 7.4 The relocation project led to a bid to the HLF for £12.5m as part of a £22.5m scheme to build a new, iconic art gallery and museum on the site of the Wyvern Multi-Storey Car Park.
- 7.5 The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid 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. A new bid will be submitted in December 2016. The significant challenge in this area is to meet a much higher level of expectation for bid appraisals.
- 7.6 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. The Swindon Festival of Literature celebrated its 21st birthday with another excellent programme that drew in audiences from across the UK. Reach Inclusive Arts continued to seek and secure external funding from a number of sources including Children in Need and secured over £100k match funding for their disability arts participation work. After a successful succession plan and change in leadership and refreshed trustees, Sixth Sense Theatre for Young People are working to increase their value, reach and outcomes. They have broadened their remit to include arts training and accreditation, teaming up with SBC officers to secure £35k of funding for 15-24yrs Not in Education or Employment Training. They are rebranding and re-launching for their 30th anniversary in 2016, celebrating SBC's commitment to the arts and brokering new investment and energies from Arts Council England.

8. Community Assets

8.1 Swindon's libraries are increasingly used by customers requiring digital access for claiming universal credit, job searching and health and wellbeing services. Many of whom are displaced from other providers who are no longer able to continue supporting these people. To deliver this an up to date, fit for purpose IT system is being implemented.

8.2 Wifi is an essential service in providing information to the public whilst visiting Swindon's libraries. A bid has been submitted to The Arts Council to ensure that Wifi coverage is extended to all service points by the end of the year and has already been implemented in West Swindon library

8.3 The Cultural and Community Assets Change Programme is evaluating future library services, and looking at ways in which a more cost effective provision can be geared to specific community requirements. Currently opening hours do not reflect staff resource availability and consequently an increase in unplanned closures has been experienced.

9. Parking Services

9.1 The Parking Services team deal with the management of multi storey and surface fee paying car parks in the town centre and Old Town as well as on-street parking places and waiting restrictions (including residents parking zones) across the whole of the Borough. They also manage the penalty charge appeals system. In addition, they manage the Wroughton Park and Ride site and the Shopmobility service now based at Sanford Street.

9.2 The numbers of Penalty Charge Notices issued by Swindon Borough Council for parking contraventions over the last two years are detailed below. The total Penalty Charge Notices are split between on street (contraventions that occur on the public highway) and off street (usually contraventions that happen in Council owned car parks).

Year	Total Penalty Charge Notices	On Street	Off Street
2013/14	24767	16361	8406
2014/15	20688	14323	6365

9.3 Penalty Charge Notices are issued at two price bands, higher and lower rates. The rate depends on the seriousness of the contravention. For example parking on double yellow lines is deemed as a higher rate contravention while overstaying in a car park is charged at the lower rate. The relative numbers issued were:

Year	Higher Level £70	Lower Level £50
2013/14	12362 (50%)	12405 (50%)
2014/15	12094 (58%)	8594 (42%)

9.4 The funds generated by Penalty Charge Notices only totalled £635,000 for 2014/2015. The costs of providing this service costs more than the income received.

9.5 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.

10. Strategic (Non-operational) Property Portfolio

10.1 The Council completed a number of changes in 2014/15 involving the strategic use of property assets. An example of this was the leisure and golf course asset transfers which completed on 1 November 2014. This involved 6 leisure centres transferring to GLL and 2 golf courses to Twigmarket which achieved revenue savings of approaching £1.3m a year and nearly £4.5m of backlog maintenance saving.

10.2 Children and families teams working in out of centre locations, have relocated to Clarence House with moves completed October 2014. This enabled teams to strengthen collaborative working and the refurbished space has allowed all teams to adopt new ways of working. A development brief was approved by planning committee in February 2015, for redevelopment of one of the vacated locations resulting from the relocation, the Limes and Palm Tree Lodge in Green Road Stratton. This will enable the site to be sold for residential development, to maximise the site value.

10.3 There has also been work pursued to support the key approach to increase co-location, partnership working and sharing of knowledge where collaborative working reduces operational cost / subsidies. In December 2014 the town centre police team moved in to the Plus One building on the civic campus, alongside Council teams who work with the police to strengthen joint working. Further Council teams are relocating to Plus One to take advantage of joint working with the police.

10.4 Support has been provided for the voluntary and community use of buildings to improve service outcomes and reduce cost in this way, where it is considered more beneficial than asset disposal. Sanford House was refurbished and let in June 2014 to Voluntary Action Swindon to operate the Adult Information Hub. This has involved a number of groups, such as CAB and Mind who are commissioned by the Council to provide adult services. The co-location of groups providing Council funded services, in a Council owned building managed by a charity, is aimed to improve service outcomes whilst improving service provision at a reduced operating cost.

10.5 Town Centre regeneration is a continuing priority. The demolition of Aspen House and Cheltenham House was completed in January 2015 to initially provide an additional area of public realm in the town centre, and also enhance the opportunity of development based on Granville Street car park.

