

# Cllr Williams Annual Q&A report

**Scrutiny Committee**

**Date: 8<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

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Author: Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Digitalisation  
Wards: All  
Parishes Affected: All

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## **1. Purpose and Reasons**

- 1.1 This report updates the Scrutiny Committee on pertinent information occurring over the past year within the Corporate Services and Digitalisation portfolio.
- 1.2 The report is requested by the Committee on an annual basis and provides the basis for the question and answer session to be held on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

## **2. Recommendations**

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the report and ask any questions on its content at the meeting planned for 8 January 2018.

## **3. Detail**

The Composition of the Corporate Services and Digitalisation Portfolio

- 3.1 The Leader of the Council has allocated the following responsibilities to Councillor Keith Williams, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Digitalisation: performance and risk, human resources and organisational development, customer services, health and safety, information technology and digitalisation.
- 3.2 Each of these services will be addressed in turn with achievements, challenges and future plans for each service addressed in brief throughout the report.

Performance and Risk

- 3.3 In the last twelve months the department has introduced scorecards for the Council and for directorates so that performance information, people and finance data, and risk are presented together. A new corporate performance dashboard has been established using free software which released saving of £24k per annum. The Council has also introduced “I Share” which enables better spatial presentations of data, increasing use of research to inform decision making.
- 3.4 Particular challenges for the service have been the length of time it has taken to deliver an updated consultation policy which is now due to come to Cabinet for discussion in February 2018 and the manual and onerous nature of data collection across the council for performance reporting purposes. Plans are in place to address these as part of the Swindon Programme.

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- 3.5 Particular achievements of note for Performance and Risk are the introduction of directorate scorecards and the conclusion of the latest Internal Audit report into Performance and Risk which returned a “satisfactory” audit conclusion.
- 3.6 Priorities for Performance and Risk in 2018 are automating data gathering for the scorecards and dashboard, embedding wider use of scorecards at heads of service level and their use to improve risk and performance management, building resilience across the team through skill sharing, enabling the Council to be better at self- serving in areas including policy, research, consultation and mapping, investigating wider use of the address gazetteer including integration with other Council address systems.

## Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR&OD)

- 3.7 Since the last update to Scrutiny the Council has implemented MARS (Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme). This was the first time the Council had operated a voluntary resignation scheme and it met the financial savings that were aligned to it. The HR&OD team now has a much better understanding of performance and absence management challenges across the Council. Reporting has been improved and support had been put in place for managers to manage absence. Our position on absence is more accurate and therefore a more targeted approach to reducing absence can be applied.
- 3.8 However, our approach to strategic resourcing and managing our non-permanent workforce approach has not progressed as well as we would like and procurement activity for a more cost effective framework provider needs to be priority in the New Year. The numbers of temporary workers within the Council both on and off contract remain high. Our Employee Value Proposition (the way we package our offer to current and prospective members of staff) is still absent and we need to progress our EVP and website design.
- 3.9 Particular achievements of note in the last twelve months are the introduction of the Aspiring Leaders and Future Leaders programmes. This has had significant interest across the organisation and a good competitive process to identify our Future and Aspiring Leaders. The partnership introduced with the University of West of England is going well and some fantastic external coaches and mentors are supporting the programmes. The business challenges set for Aspiring Leaders have been aligned to the Swindon Programme and are well underway.
- 3.10 Priorities for the HR&OD service for the next twelve months are providing support to the Swindon Programme and delivering the Workforce Development element of that programme. Pay and reward will be a particular challenge, especially with the national pay awards announcements and ensuring SBC scales align appropriately until wider work is in place. Further work is planned around leadership development, reducing absence and increasing productivity.

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## Health and Safety

- 3.11 This year the Health and Safety team's priority has been a renewed focus on delivering an active health and safety management, shifting the culture from reactive measures and management to a more pre-emptive approach. This has been evident through:
- 3.11.1 The co-operative work with the Learning & Development Department and managers to maximise efficiencies by properly evaluating required health, safety and competency training;
  - 3.11.2 Working with managers and Occupational Health to ensure that staff identified in need of health surveillance due to their job role specifications are receiving scheduled screening to ensure that control measures enacted are operating to protect the workforce from identified hazards; and
  - 3.11.3 Collaborative working with stakeholders to identify and put a framework in place for the effective management of building compliance issues to include health and safety.
- 3.12 The areas which require technical specialists outside of the team have been a challenge for them to manage in 2017; for example legionella risk assessments; noise and vibration testing. This has created an opportunity to re-evaluate the delivery of these services to secure the best model for the Council.
- 3.13 Since 2014, the team has been working hard with the business to improve "Near Miss" reporting and a particular achievement this year is that we have seen the numbers of near miss reports submitted increase by 65%, over that time to 103 in 2016/17 and sustained that in 17/18. We have achieved approximately a 32% reduction in accidents over the last year which is also a positive achievement and although there is no direct link between the increase in near misses and the fall in reported accidents; there is a high probability that there is a correlation.

## Customer Services

- 3.14 In 2017 we successfully implemented the Customer Portal, which enables customers to transact with us on line for over 60 process, including waste services, highways, housing and environmental services. It is early days but for these processes, 47% of transactions are now being done on line. The Council has also seen a continuing reduction in face to face contact, down a further 18% year on year. Work is underway to reduce this further, removing all unnecessary visits, to only provide services to those most in need.
- 3.15 Particular challenges in 2017 have arisen with our telephony service. Response times for answering the telephones have been significantly higher than in previous years; with the average speed to answer now 91 seconds. Staffing numbers are 33% lower than twelve months ago and calls volumes have only

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reduced slightly to date; meaning there is limited capacity to manage at peak times. However, we anticipate that this will improve as more and more services are available online.

- 3.16 We have not seen a significant rise in customer complaints as a result of the call answering times; but we do recognise a reduction in performance does impact our residents. To mitigate this, we have improved the messaging on the lines to actively promote online services so that those customers who are able to can go online and raise their request.
- 3.17 The transfer from the LAGAN Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to the new portal has been a particular achievement for the team this year. It was a complex project; rebuilding 60 new processes in the new system; and training customers and the business to use it. The project team worked tirelessly to deliver the change on time and on budget. To date we have almost 17000 residents' My Accounts open and the number is increasing daily.
- 3.18 There are three key areas of focus for Customer Services in 2018. They are:
- 3.18.1 Increasing the number of services available via the My Account Portal; to give the customer a single point of entry into the Council for transactional services.
- 3.18.2 Upgrading the telephony system used in the contact centre to enable improved messaging, intelligent call routing and robust management information, which will help to identify opportunities to drive down demand.
- 3.18.3 The remodelling of face to face services making greater use of self-service and continuing to reduce unnecessary footfall.

## Information Technology

- 3.19 2017 has seen Swindon's first full year as an in house IT service for many years. The major focus for 2017 has been to stabilise our Information Technology infrastructure, to commence the replacement of our core business systems, to launch a new framework for information Governance and to build a high performing, customer service focused ICT team.
- 3.20 In May 2015 the IT department was bench marched as performing the lowest in the country by SOCITM (Society of IT Management) In May 2017 we again benchmarked the ICT department and were rated as mid performers across the country. The context further supports the improvement journey in that Swindon Borough Council is one of the lowest funded Local Government IT departments in the country. The improvement was mainly a result of a strong customer service ethos being brought into and adopted by the department.
- 3.21 2017 saw ICT deliver many successful projects; a small highlight selection are as follows:

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- 3.21.1 The MS Office 2013 deployment, including move to Office 365 for email services. 2018 will continue to see us adopt further components of the Office 365 suite.
- 3.21.2 A new implementation of Windows update and patching deployment along with a new Active Directory and Group Policy design.
- 3.21.3 Upgraded the SBC datacentre with networking, storage and compute capacity ready for the 2018 project to bring back the remaining servers hosted in the Capita Cloud and save £500,000 per annum.
- 3.21.4 New IT solutions for: Property; Stores integrated barcoding solution; Tool and plant solution; fuel management solution; Policy management solution; e-learning solution and spatial information solution; library extended access solution.
- 3.22 Operationally as well as avoiding any major security incident, including the WannaCry virus which crippled many of our health colleagues, the year saw the IT team reduce its incident and request end of day figures from circa 1200 to a manageable 600.
- 3.23 A particular proud achievement for 2017 was seeing Alex Gee, Senior Service Desk Analyst, win the coveted national prize of Young IT Leader of the year for his work at Swindon in reducing impact and duration of major incidents, service maturity and SLA performance for himself and his colleagues.
- 3.24 2018 will see SBC ICT deploy a new WAN (Wide Area Network) increasing capacity and reducing costs as well as deploying a new LAN (Local Area Network) deliver massive speed increases at the desktop to support the media rich productivity applications. 2018 will also be the year the major work is completed in refreshing the business applications the council. By March 2018 we will see the completion of the Superfast Broadband project.

## Digitalisation

- 3.25 The advent of the Swindon Programme in 2017 has significantly ramped up our digitalisation efforts. As mentioned above, the implementation of the Customer Portal has hugely improved residents' opportunities to interact with us online. As part of the Organisational Excellence workstream within the Swindon Programme, the first phase of service re-design is starting in January 2018 with 12 services being re-designed to be more digitally enabled from customer enquiries to back office fulfilment. This phase will run from January to July with phase two being scoped early in the New Year.
- 3.26 Other plans for digitalisation in 2018 include the rollout of some of our "Digital Office" projects and products to make the council more modern, efficient and effective by 2020. Projects such as the Digital Mailroom, paperless payments,

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the implementation of a virtual booking system and Skype for Business will be rolled out across the year to enable more efficient working practices which are less costly to administer.

- 3.27 In order to ensure that members are fully involved in this process a Digitalisation CMAG has been established and will begin in the New Year. Its role will be to help with the development of the projects outlined above and most crucially to aid in the development of the Council's Digital Inclusion Strategy which is being developed with the help of the first Aspiring Leaders cohort. The aim of the strategy is to ensure that the Council pays due diligence to the needs of those for whom digital may be a struggle, whether that be for reasons of social mobility, age, language, health or access.

## **4. Alternative Options**

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Committee could choose not to operate Cabinet Member Question and Answer sessions.

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

### Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial or procurement implications arising as a result of this report. Any expenditure arising as a result of an item on the Committee's work programme will be met by the Overview and Scrutiny Support budget, subject to the approval of the Committee.

### Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Section 21 of the Local Government Act requires every local authority to establish an overview and scrutiny function to hold the Executive to account, undertake policy development and review, monitor and improve performance.

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

- 5.3 There are no other direct implications arising as a result of the report. Any further implications will be identified when a topic is reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee and in any recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee.

### Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 No Diversity Impact Assessment is required at this stage. Any DIA that is required during review of these topics included within the work programme will be identified at the appropriate stage.

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## Risk Management

- 5.5 No risk management issues have been identified at this stage; any risk management issues will be identified at the appropriate time when a topic is under review by the Scrutiny Committee.

## **6. Consultees**

- 6.1 The Director of Finance (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 none