

**Stronger Together:
An Organisational Commitment To One Swindon**

CABINET

Date: 9th March 2011

Author: Leader of the Council and Chief Executive

Parish / Wards Affected: All

Purpose

To seek approval for a strategic approach to developing a new structure for the organisation that, when finalised and approved by Full Council, will enable it to work in a significantly different way to deliver the outcomes agreed in One Swindon and to build on Connecting People, Connecting Places.

Recommendation

Cabinet is requested to

- Authorise the Chief Executive to develop a new organisational model for working, within the context of the strategic response outlined in this report, specifically, one that is based on three specific areas of activities; namely, 'local first', 'strategic commissioning' and 'joined up delivery.'
- Given the importance of this work and the impact for the entire Council, request the Chief Executive to present the corporate strategy to Full Council for consideration in July 2011.
- Approve the engagement and consultation of Councillors, staff and as many stakeholders as is possible in the timeframe, focussing on established groups (e.g. Swindon Strategic Partnership, Parishes, Cluster meetings), so they can contribute to the development of the new model for working.
- Consider what is required to be presented to Full Council to support the model for working (e.g. implementation plan, resource plan, expectations about management costs/efficiencies/productivity as part of a high level benefits case, governance and decision making frameworks).
- Agree that the key assumption for developing a new relationship with local people is that as many decisions as possible should be devolved to as local a level as possible, and request all Members to contribute to the work of developing how this will happen in practice ahead of the Council meeting in July 2011.

1. Reasons

Strategic Context

- 1.1 Swindon Borough Council (SBC) like every other local authority in the country exists to secure the best possible outcomes for all of its residents.

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Historically this has largely been achieved by delivering a range of services that meets the needs of the many (e.g. waste collection, highways, street lights etc.) and increasingly the needs of the vulnerable (e.g. social care). The Council has attempted to achieve this through a Value for Money framework to ensure that Swindon Council Tax payers receive an appropriate balance between cost and quality.

- 1.2 In recent years there is substantial independent evidence from bodies such as the Audit Commission, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission that demonstrate that services in Swindon have consistently improved in both quality and value for money. This has been achieved through a combination of strategies:
- Investment in leadership to drive service improvement and cost effectiveness
 - A £200m partnership with Capita for back office and customer services
 - Development of *One Swindon* that has enabled us to leverage partners capacity in areas such as health and social care
 - A *New Ways of Working* programme to rationalise estate costs and invest in technology for better customer service and efficiency
 - A procurement strategy that has controlled spend and driven value.
- 1.3 These achievements have been largely delivered through a traditional service based organisational structure that is common to most if not all local authorities in England.
- 1.4 However, the validity of a traditional model of service delivery that has served Swindon residents well in recent years is now being challenged by a number of societal, financial and legislative changes:
- Demand for services to the vulnerable is increasing at a significant rate. The complexity of care is increasing as people are able to live for longer with often complicated medical conditions. This puts considerable and growing pressure on Council budgets.
 - The demographic make-up of Swindon is changing where our population is ageing and changing, which drives an associated demand for services.
 - Many public services are designed in a way that sustains a culture of dependency and does not effectively leverage the capability in each of us to remain independent for longer. In some cases people will become vulnerable and isolated for periods of time but historically our services have not supported re-ablement where people can again become independent.
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- The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) has resulted in a major reduction in the Council's financial resources which makes it impossible to sustain the same level and variety of services we currently offer to Swindon residents.
 - The new Coalition Government is introducing a whole range of policy initiatives that are designed to move power away from institutions such as Whitehall and the local authority and towards people and communities.
- 1.4 When these factors are combined it provides a powerful catalyst for substantive change affecting role of the Council, the functions it provides and the organisational structure it employs.
- 1.5 This paper seeks to propose a new way of working for Members to consider and to seek approval to develop a level of detail for Council consideration in July.

2. Detail

What we need to consider Assumptions

- 2.1. The starting point for a proposal to change an organisation's role and structure is to be explicit about the assumptions that are being made. Officers have conducted considerable research and analysis to develop the following set of assumptions:
- There needs to be an appropriate balance between citizens rights and responsibilities
 - Vibrant local democracy is essential and it must be exercised responsibly and appropriately
 - We must always respond to need, but we must also recognise, when we design services, that people have capabilities that can help to reduce long term dependency.
 - Invitation is more powerful than intervention – it opens up greater possibilities to work together
 - A genuine partnership based on trust between public service providers and Swindon's communities will result in more resilient communities
 - Investing more of our resources into root causes will help reduce long term vulnerability and dependency and represents better value for residents and service users
 - A One Swindon commitment to achieving agreed outcomes between people and organisations will enable us all to achieve far more than we could on our own

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- The decisions we make will be more appropriate and effective if we use data, both quantitative and qualitative
- Learning is a fundamental part of everything we do and we recognise the important role it plays in helping people realise their aspirations.

Purpose

- 2.2. The following purpose statement is proposed as the context for working in a very different way and is based on the assumptions in 2.1 and basic principles about what we are here to do, for whom and why.
- 2.3. The Council will work alongside local people to:
 - 2.3.1. Develop healthy and resilient communities with the aim of having less people who are vulnerable.
 - 2.3.2. Focus our resources to secure the outcomes as described in One Swindon and build on the learning from Connecting People, Connecting Places to ensure we secure the most cost-effective services for the people of Swindon.
 - 2.3.3. Ensure efficient and effective solutions by developing a diverse but well balanced market of public, community, voluntary and private providers.
 - 2.3.4. Shape Swindon's economic future and ensure that Swindon people benefit from associated growth
 - 2.3.5. Meet our statutory duties in a way that supports safer, stronger and creative communities.

Questions

- 2.4. These assumptions and purpose have helped us to consider the following questions in relation to the current way we are working and structured. Will we be able to:
 - 2.4.1. Fulfil the commitment we have made in *One Swindon* to work in an outcome focussed way across service areas and organisations?
 - 2.4.2. Understand the hopes, aspirations and needs of local people and work side by side with them to deliver the best outcomes?
 - 2.4.3. Reduce demand for services while working with rapidly diminishing resources?

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- 2.4.4. Support hard working elected members so they are able to represent and work with the people in their communities to the best of their abilities?
- 2.5. The Council of the near future will have to be, through necessity and design, very different from now. It will need to move away from services designed around organisational structures and statutory regulations to seamless working across all partners. It will need to enable decisions about services to be made as close as possible to the people who receive them. It will need to challenge existing behaviours, assumptions and ways of working.
- 2.6. What is also clear is that working with local people, communities and services users to genuinely influence and shape services will require a radical shift in the way both Councillors and officers work. We need to consider what skills and capabilities need to be developed across officers, Members and communities and how our respective roles and relationships need to change and grow.

Characteristics

- 2.7. To bring the above to life we will need to consider what areas we need to focus on and what the characteristics of an organisation working in new ways will be.
- 2.8. We will become more effective at securing outcomes that are both cost effective in the short term and sustainable economically and socially in the longer term. We will need to get better at joining up services to the advantage of service users and develop a strong strategic commissioning capability.
- 2.9. We need to develop an approach towards smart commissioning that relies on a diverse and effective supply market. Historically the Council has to a large extent been the unique provider of many services, which may have hindered the development of a wider supplier market. The Council should increasingly, through a market management role, seek to work with other public, private and third sector organisations to build a more mature market and working to develop synergies between different services for the benefit of service users, driving innovation and cost reduction.
- 2.10. If the Council wants to develop a closer relationship with the people it serves, it must physically and culturally get closer to those people. If the public purse cannot fund services to the extent that it currently does, then the voluntary and community sector will need to grow. This won't happen

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through chance and can only succeed if the Council is prepared to invest in local capacity building and commit devolving power from the centre to localities.

- 2.11. Over time a strategy that supports these aims should result in the voluntary sector and community sector, and other providers, being able to take on more direct service delivery and lead to a greater sense of local choice and prioritisation, with resources better matched at the local level to need. At the heart of this strategy must be an enhanced and more meaningful role for local ward councillors, where they are better empowered to drive local decision making, supported by full time locality based officers.

An organisational response

- 2.12. Taking all of these considerations into account it is clear that the Council needs to consider a radical shift in the way it operates and the way it is organised. This has led to the proposal for a new way of working for Swindon Borough Council based on three underpinning pillars: Local First, Strategic Commissioning and Joined up Delivery.

Local First

- 2.13. A strong local agenda, strengthened by the effective local leadership of ward councillors, which starts and finishes with residents and communities and the resources people need to live the lives they want to lead. This will mean working alongside communities to understand and prioritise needs, create capacity and broker local solutions. If more of our staff can spend more time with communities in the local area, they will be able to:
- 2.13.1. Have meaningful, purposeful conversations on which they can act upon to inform place based strategies, services and action;
 - 2.13.2. Build capacity and resilience for residents to help themselves and each other;
 - 2.13.3. Understand needs and aspirations so they can set relevant priorities and focus resources;
 - 2.13.4. Bring decision making closer to the local level.
- 2.14. So far as bringing decision making closer to the local level is concerned, it needs to be considered how this would tie in with future executive arrangements in terms of Member decision-making.

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- 2.15. One new option identified in the Localism Bill is the option of returning to a Committee system. This is in addition to the existing power to devolve decision-making to individual ward members which is something previously considered by the Corporate Governance Working Party but which has not been progressed at this stage.
- 2.16. Accordingly, the options before Members are a retention of the current executive arrangements; a system based on Service Committees, as pre-2000; a system of area-based committees focusing on Cluster / neighbourhoods; or some hybrid arrangement. Each of the models has strengths and weaknesses and also has resourcing issues in terms of cost and the extent of officer support needed. The Council's commitment to Connecting People and Connecting Places and localism has, however, put an added emphasis on any future Member decision-making structure being able to take into account the views of local ward members and residents.
- 2.17. There is an issue as to what could be devolved to Town/Parish Councils in parished areas. At present, although most Town/Parish Councils in Swindon would not have the resources to pursue this, there is interest from some in discussing this further.
- 2.18. So far as the timing of any future consideration of changes to the current executive arrangements is concerned, the Council resolved at its meeting on 13th January 2011 to 'support the Corporate Governance Working Review Group and the Scrutiny Committee in their investigations of alternative decision-making models once the Bill is sufficiently close to passing into law that the range of options is clear'.
- 2.19. At its meeting on 7th February 2011, the Corporate Governance Working group noted that 'the Council's Scrutiny Committee will, as part of its current work programme, undertake a review of the effectiveness of the Cabinet system and examine the alternative Executive Arrangements available to the Council, including the possibility and implications of a return to a Committee system as proposed within the Localism Bill, and will present the Committee's findings and evidence to the Corporate Governance Review Working Group for its consideration'.
- 2.20. It is envisaged that the Scrutiny Committee will next consider this matter at its meeting on 28th March 2011. In the interim, it is intended to consult with the Political Groups to ascertain ward members' views on the extent of local decision-making and how this could best operate.

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Strategic commissioning

- 2.21. This pillar establishes and holds the strategic context for the Borough as a whole, which is then developed in the delivery and locality pillar. Locally informed commissioning aligned to leadership of place will maximise value for money and promote economic growth and regeneration. Through having an overview of the whole Borough, the work in this pillar will be to:
- 2.21.1. Set overarching priorities, standards and strategies for the Borough, holding the framework for decision making and ensuring there is fairness and equality
 - ;
 - 2.21.2. Be accountable for quality of delivery while supporting the freedom to innovate and remove barriers to delivering local outcomes;
 - 2.21.3. Provide strategic internal commissioning e.g. provision of financial controls, information technology service;
 - 2.21.4. Define robust specifications for commissioned services.

Joined up delivery

- 2.22. Providers will coming together in partnership with ward members, residents and communities with an emphasis on building capabilities and achieve locally agreed outcomes. The Council will continue to deliver services that are statutory or where there is no external market. However, this cannot just be about the Council service delivery and the main focus will be to enhance and create a whole market by:
- 2.22.1. Joining up service delivery and focussing on delivering specified, quality outcomes that are value for money;
 - 2.22.2. Encouraging employment and training of local people, developing skills and grow community capacity;
 - 2.22.3. Supporting the creation and design of solutions with communities;
 - 2.22.4. Sharing information and intelligence effectively.
- 2.23. The three pillars of the proposed new operating model are illustrated in diagram 1 below:

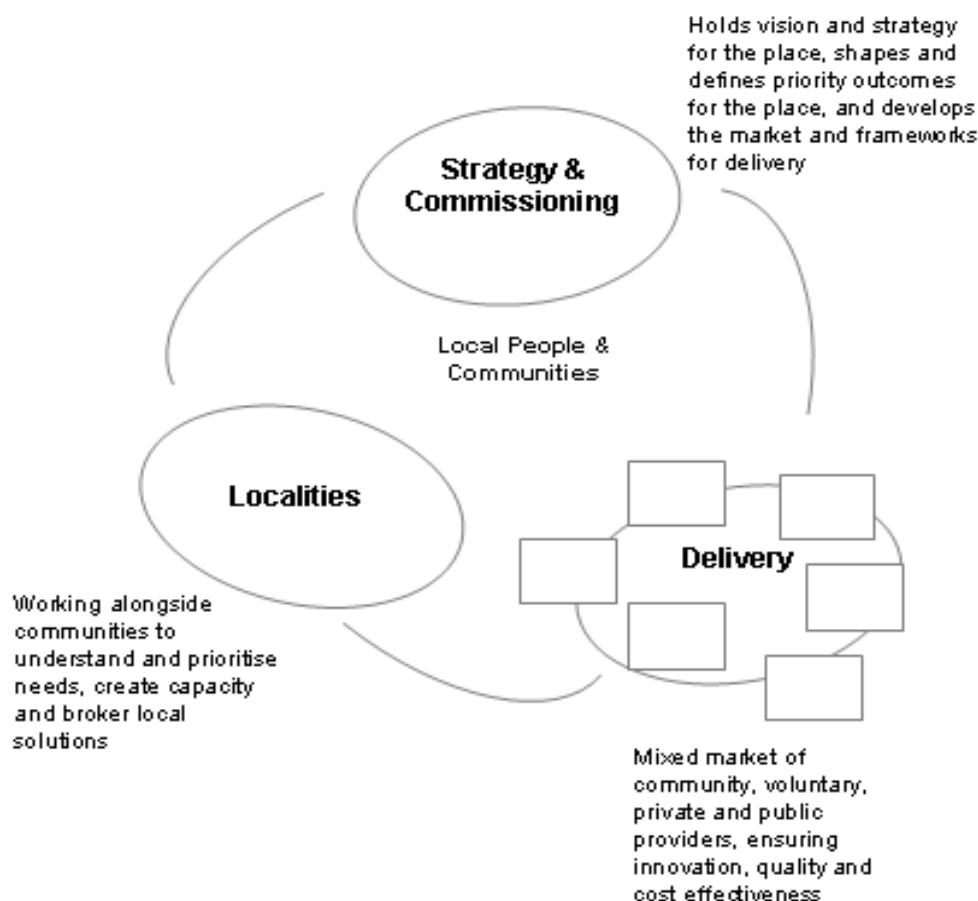
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Diagram 1



Conclusions

- 2.24. The Council, like so many other local authorities must react to external events and, in the interests of Swindon residents, it must adapt and change so that it remains relevant and of value to the Swindon tax payer.
- 2.25. Defining the drivers for change and responding in organisational terms is just one element of the overall change that is needed. An essential element of any organisational change has to be an understanding of the culture change required by officers, Councillors, partners and even residents themselves. Without a commitment to invest in this change, then change itself cannot happen.
- 2.26. Difficult political decisions will still need to be made in terms of priorities, but a new approach will better position the Council to work with Swindon

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residents to improve the quality of life in the Borough and respond to the drivers for change.

Alternative Options

- The Council could determine to do nothing at this time. However, it is not believed that the status quo is a real option. The work to be undertaken to inform and develop a new organisational model for the Council will identify options for the Council that can be considered as the proposals are presented to Councillors and partners.

Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- This report sets out a strategic response that addresses the drivers for change affecting the Council (described in paragraph 1.4 above). The development of the operating model described in this report is part of the organisation's response to how it will deliver against its Medium Term Resource Plan. Initial work has been absorbed within current staffing resources and budgets. Further reports will be brought to Members should additional resources or specialist skills be required to support development and implementation of the operating model.

Legal / Human Rights Implications

- Legal and Human Rights considerations have been taken fully into account in compiling this report. It is considered that the recommendations of this report are compatible with convention rights.

Links to Corporate Plans and Policies (in particular to Swindon 2010 Promises)

- This report sets out a strategic response that addresses the drivers for change affecting the Council (described in paragraph 1.4 above), that supports the achievement of One Swindon outcomes, and builds on Connecting People Connecting Places. The development of the operating approach described in this report will form a framework within which future corporate priorities, plans and policies will be developed.

Consultees

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

Background Papers and Appendices

- None

Key Decision/Decision in Forward Plan

- This is a key decision and is included in the March 2011 Cabinet Forward Plan.

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