

Swindon Borough Council

Policy Development & Scrutiny Committee - Build a Better Swindon

Thursday, 11 July 2024

Committee Room 6, Civic Offices

At 6.00 p.m.

Labour Councillors

Junab Ali (Chair)
Stanka Adamcova
Claire Crilly
Ian Edwards
Princia Fernandes
Neil Hopkins
Rose Llewellyn

Conservative Councillors

Gary Sumner (Vice-Chair)
Daniel Adams
Matthew Vallender

Committee Officer: Shaun Banks - Committee Officer

Swindon Borough Council can be contacted at the Civic Offices, Euclid Street, Swindon, SN1 2JH (Telephone 01793 445500)

AGENDA

NOTE:

The link for the broadcast of the public meeting is here: [Live Link for Policy Development & Scrutiny Committee - Build a Better Swindon on 11th July 2024 from 6.00pm.](#)

Please note that if Members resolve to go in to a private and confidential discussion (exempt session) the public link will be paused or closed.

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Declarations of Interest

Members are reminded that at the start of the meeting they should declare any known interests in any matter to be considered, and also during the meeting if it becomes apparent that they have an interest in the matters being discussed.

3. Minutes (Pages 5 - 10)

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 29th February 2024.

4. Public Question Time

See the explanatory note below. Please contact the Committee Officer whose details appear at the top of this agenda if you need further guidance.

Those wishing to submit questions are requested to send them to committeeservices@swindon.gov.uk no later than 3.00pm two clear working days before the meeting [Monday 8th July 2024].

5. **Pavement Parking** (Pages 11 - 16)
6. **Presentation - Town Centre/Heritage Action Zone Update**
(Presentation to follow)
7. **Work Programme 2024 / 2025**
(to follow)

Date of Despatch: 02 July 2024

Quorum: The quorum for this meeting is at least one quarter of the whole number of the Committee, which is two Councillors.

Public Question Time - Swindon Borough Council remains committed to increasing its accountability to the public and to promoting active citizenship. 15 minutes will be allowed at the start of all Council meetings for questions to the Chair from the public about the work of the Committee (except for confidential matters, and matters relating to planning and licensing applications). We will give priority to those who submit questions in writing at least two clear days before the meeting. Questions must be relevant, clear, and concise. You may not use Public Question Time as an opportunity to make speeches or statements.

The recommended submission deadline for public questions is: 3:00pm on Monday 8th July 2024.

Questions in writing should be sent to the Committee Officer whose contact details appear on the agenda above or to the Chief Legal Officer. We will publish it, along with the answer, alongside the Minutes. The process associated with asking a public question is set out in the [Public Question Time at Council Meetings Protocol and Guidance](#) in the Constitution. A privacy note about how we record Public Questions is available here: [Publication of public questions and questioners](#).

Access Arrangements: The venue is wheelchair accessible and an infrared receiver hearing system is provided. If you have any special requirements to enable you to attend the meeting, or would like to receive any of the pages contained in this agenda in a larger print size, please contact the Committee Officer as soon as possible prior to the date of the meeting.

Terms of Reference:

To meet at regular intervals to consider the need for, and to develop or revise, policies relating to matters within the Committee's remit, and to conduct specific and/or periodic scrutiny of existing policies to ensure effectiveness.

- To receive referrals for policy development, review or scrutiny from Cabinet, Cabinet Members, full Council, Committees, or officers.
- To make recommendations to Cabinet and other relevant bodies in relation to new and amended policies, or issues identified in relation to policy implementation and compliance
- To undertake scrutiny of policies falling within the committee's remit (except scrutiny of policies relating to Education and Social Care which will be scrutinised by the Children's and Adult's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee).
- To fulfil the following functions:

Build a better Swindon:

Policy development and scrutiny of corporate plans and any other matters falling within the Committee's remit -

- Planning and heritage assets
- Town centre rejuvenation
- Enhancing the economy and helping local businesses
- Improving transport networks
- Housing and regeneration
- Promoting Council efficiency and Parish collaboration
- Performance against pledges & action plans

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POLICY DEVELOPMENT (BUILD A BETTER SWINDON) COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 29 FEBRUARY 2024

PRESENT:- Councillors Stanka Adamcova (Chair), Gary Sumner (Deputy Chair), Daniel Adams, Tom Butcher, Claire Crilly, Nick Gardiner, Rob Heath, Neil Hopkins, Jason Mills, Vallender, Ravi Venkatesh, Sean Wilson and Jake Chandler

Also in attendance was Councillor Jim Robbins, Leader of the Council.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Matthew Courtliff.

18. Declaration of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. No declarations were made.

19. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 31st January 2024, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

20. Public Question Time

Councillor Jim Robbins, Leader of the Council, provided a verbal update on the Swindon Plan. The Leader advised that elements of the delivery of the Plan would be overseen by either the Cabinet or Policy Committee as relevant, with oversight provided by Full Council. Members were reminded that, whilst the Policy Committee had no budgetary powers, the Committee could make financial recommendations for Cabinet to consider.

Mr Roy Worman, a Swindon resident, was present and asked questions on the following matters:

The Council's "24/25 borrowing target was £80m. Would some of that cover events in relation to the Swindon Plan?" The Leader confirmed that the figure of £80m was not a target spending figure but a cautious estimate of total Year One costs required for the successful launch of the Swindon Plan. The additional debt would not be taken on immediately. Expenditure might also be revised downwards if not all elements of the Plan were implemented. Subsequent years' costs would vary depending on the progress of implementing the Plan.

21. Swindon Plan Consultation Update

Martin Bell, Intelligence Lead, provided an overview of recent stakeholder consultation regarding the development of the Swindon Plan, which was key to the delivery of the 'Build a Better Swindon' mission. Colleagues, residents and partners in the statutory, voluntary and business sectors had all given their input at various in-person events. Additionally, the provision of an online consultation platform had further increased engagement. The Data, Performance and Insight team were currently analysing this feedback, which would be

considered in more depth by Cabinet at their meeting in March 2024.

The consultation had covered a wide number of areas including: planning and development; the repurposing of the town centre; the importance of heritage, leisure and parks; transport; the role of businesses, both large and small; the importance of the local economy and how to foster pride in Swindon by celebrating its history, heritage and assets and promoting community events.

Committee members commented on a range of subjects linked to the Build a Better Swindon mission.

- The timescales for Cabinet receiving a proposal for the finalised Swindon Plan were raised, together with the importance of managing public expectations, given that many of the ideas, highlighted above, had regulatory and/ or financial implications which were not within the Council's scope to achieve. The Leader replied that the parameters for discussion had been established by the Chief Executive who, before each consultation session, had set out the context, highlighting the financial constraints within which the Council operated. Key stakeholders such as the Canal Trust were reconciled to the fact that the restoration of the canal network through Swindon town centre was not feasible as part of the Swindon Plan.
- It was confirmed that the Swindon Plan, incorporating feedback, would now be considered by Cabinet after the local elections in May 2024. The final iteration of the Swindon Plan would achieve either fully-costed and implementable schemes of work or incremental change which would prepare the way for more ambitious projects.
- Councillor Jim Robbins, Leader of the Council, wished to acknowledge his gratitude to the Officers for their hard work in delivering such an effective and wide-reaching consultation.
- Details on how the Swindon Plan would be communicated to the public were raised, particularly those aspects which it would not be possible for the Council to deliver.
- Members were reminded of the importance of being honest and transparent and to focus on the deliverables. Councillor Robbins confirmed that a three-year plan would be set out highlighting how the mission would be achieved. He acknowledged that those whose contributions would not be included in the Swindon Plan would not necessarily be pleased. Further consultations would be offered, which would give the Council the opportunity to explain the finalised Plan and steps to delivery. This was the start of an ongoing conversation with the community about how to improve Swindon.
- Councillor Robbins observed that feedback on the Eastern Villages developments had focused on the need for facilities within walking distance to cater for those who might now work more from home.
- In response to questions from Councillor Ravi Venkatesh, Councillor Nick Gardiner and Councillor Sean Wilson, Martin Bell confirmed that digital engagement had been deployed as part of the consultation exercise with an online platform available for residents who could not attend the in-person events. Ward-specific feedback

would be shared with Ward Councillors. Councillors were advised that this might include a small percentage of residents from other wards if, for example, they had not been able to attend a feedback event in their own ward. The data would not include age, ethnicity or gender as this had not been specifically captured.

- Councillors were assured that an evaluation of the consultation events would be undertaken, which would inform future community consultation to ensure that the Council was engaging with the wider community. The analysis of the data, to be considered by Cabinet in March 2024, would consider both current and anticipated data trends of town centre use.
- It was noted that parishes had successfully introduced small-scale skate parks, which catered to local need, but that there was a lack of a leisure space that would draw in out-of-town visitors or be a suitable space for competitions. Members were urged to be ambitious in their plans, especially in creating something suitable for children. Martin Bell confirmed that feedback had been received on children's facilities and that this would be considered by other missions.

22. Town Centre Stakeholder Engagement

Stephen Hay, Head of Strategic Place Making, presented a proposal for renewed engagement with residents, stakeholders and prospective investors regarding the future of the town centre, to which the Director of Finance and Audit (s151 Officer) and the Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) had also contributed.

Of note were the town's structural challenges, namely that the proportion of vacant street-level properties was above the national average at 20.8% (compared to 15.3%). Floor space vacancies had more than doubled since the previous survey, indicating an acceleration in this trend. Public perception of the town centre was also poor, with 42.1% of those surveyed stating that they could find nothing of merit to recommend Swindon town centre.

More positively, regeneration activity was yielding results, with the creation of new workspaces and quality town centre homes, as well as a sense of place being created through community art projects.

Nevertheless, with the marked decline in retail and office space, Members were recommended to consider a new long-term ambitious strategy in the form of a Development Framework, which would have the benefit of providing a cohesive vision, whilst being flexible, investment-focused and able to work at scale. Whilst being non-statutory, it would complement statutory plans and policies.

Councillor Robbins thanked the Head of Strategic Planning for the comprehensive overview and commented that in consulting with residents, there was clearly a desire to see renewed investment in the town centre. However, residents had to be prepared for the expense involved as well as the potential disruption in the interim to enable regeneration to happen.

Councillor Gary Sumner, Deputy Chair, summarised his experience of dealing with large developers locally and noted that Swindon was not considered big enough to be viable to

attract large-scale development. The Deputy Chair urged the new Administration to invest in the Council's assets, which would boost regeneration activity elsewhere in the town centre. The Deputy Chair also requested that the key stakeholders be named in due course.

Councillor Robbins acknowledged the Deputy Chair's concerns but pointed out that the pandemic, as well as people's changing shopping habits, meant that the existing Master Plan was now out of date, hence the need to attract renewed investment to the town. It was recognised that there was consensus between the parties of the need to increase residential development, with the right stakeholders involved, and that the council had a key role in leading the way. Councillor Robbins was confident that the council would be able to develop its assets, which it was hoped would encourage the necessary levels of private investment to enable further change to happen. To that end, Councillor Robbins confirmed that there had been positive news in expanding the Buy to Rent in the Kimmerfields development.

Councillor Chandler: Council should be a facilitator rather than architect of a grand plan. Focus on smaller deliverable things; Council leading by example.

Councillor Hopkins warned Members of the need to stay focused on the town centre and not consider citing facilities too far away, for example, having the theatre cited nearer to the train station rather than as part of the Kimmerfields redevelopment. Councillor Hopkins argued that the Council should explore whether it had the authority to instigate the compulsory purchase of land in the town centre to enable large development to happen. The Council mostly owned car parks; easier to redevelop; bring in financial institutions. Finding the right partner and a vision to attract people to visit; improve the environment. Learn from others who have developed other places e.g. Bracknell. Capitalise on heritage; create vision from listen to people and capitalising on others' expertise.

Councillor Wilson asked in regard to stakeholders in the town centre, would they be prepared to take a financial hit e.g. sell properties at lower price and the policing in the town centre – older visitors don't feel safe? How are we engaging with the police to make the town centre safer? Stephen Hay replied: business needed to innovate and adapt; we are dealing with legacy buildings. A Development Framework would present a key vision based on current issues and create a spacial action; members were recommended to look at the example of Keighley to create a new vision and economy. Also need to consider Swindon's USP. Re the police, the Leader replied that he had had recent meetings; Police being more proactive and increasing their presence. Looking to have a positive impact on ASB and persistent shoplifting. Desire from businesses to get Swindon BID running again. Considering wardens programmes in other parts of the country to see if this could be adapted for Swindon. Got to be careful that you're not moving ASB into a quieter area of town. Police investing more money into town centre policing.

Councillor Sumner referred to a 3D plan developed showing planning permission; looking at stakeholder engagement and zones of possibility so that it's not just dead space. We can't be too prescriptive; have a positive planning process, especially at the pre-planning stage. Enable others to work on viability without spending millions on planning applications.

Councillor Vallender noted that it would be good to embrace new technology to get more people to feedback. The Leader offered to find out where they were with Idox. Aware that

Planning wishes to improve their service.

Councillor Heath asked if there was anything in the analysis about size and detail? Places that are working have smaller units; Swindon town centre has larger units. SH: focus is on smaller units, diversifying retail offer, more independents. The Leader: Outlet Centre is only competitor that offers a different experience; don't want to compete with that but offer a complementary offer for the Outlet's 4m visitors. Outlet impacts people's shopping choices.

The Chair highlighted the Committee's role in sharing the vision of a reinvigorated town centre, working collaboratively with members of the community as well as officers. She proposed engaging with officers working with them on the next item for the Committee.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

23. Transport - Vision Zero

Paul Bartlett and Harry Payne, Partnership Manager, Wiltshire and Swindon Road Safety Partnership summarised the current position of the Swindon Road Safety Strategy, which had been adopted in 2022 using a 'Safe System' approach. Building on that work, the Committee was asked to consider whether a target of 'Vision Zero' should be adopted, whereby no deaths or serious injuries from road and traffic accidents would be accepted. Annual data on collisions and fatal or serious injuries data was available in the public domain on the Council website. Paul Bartlett summarised the criteria of what Vision Zero would entail and emphasised that its success would be dependent on collaborative working with other stakeholders such as the Police.

Harry Payne provided an overview of the structure of the Road Safety Partnership, the various stakeholders and how they worked together in setting priorities. The Chair asked whether the Council should adopt Vision Zero as a policy recommendation and set targets?

Councillor Sumner: Working towards Vision Zero is a sensible approach. Concerns about adopting a 20mph speed limit; deaths would not be eliminated due to human error e.g. using mobile phones. What will that feel like for Swindon residents if we adopt Vision Zero? PM: report doesn't make specific recommendations. 2022 Strategy needs to be updated. Partners also need to commit, not just the Council. Not about any one facet e.g. 20mph but how all partners work together.

Councillor Adams raised the issue of parking visibility as a result of poor parking; car with cameras and ticket on the move. Meeting with Highways this week; praised this car and wished they had more. As a Committee we should pursue enforcement of bad parking. The Chair confirmed this would be for the Cabinet member to iron out operational issues.

Councillor Mills endorsed a position of Vision Zero. Should a fatality occur, there should be a thorough review to ensure that lessons were learned to prevent it in the future. It was noted that the Coroner would want information anyhow following a fatality, so the Partnership constantly reviews emerging risks.

Councillor Heath indicated that setting targets drives innovation.

The Committee noted that enforcement was crucial. What is available through the partnership and technology to help enforcement? It was noted that AI has enabled this to happen.

Councillor Chandler whole heartedly supported Vision Zero. There had been several incidents near schools and asked what can be done with our school safety environment to address. Officers responded that more could always be done and they were looking at entire school journey not just area around the school. School environment constantly changes with new cohorts of children.

Councillor Crilly noted that segregating road safety would help as happens in Holland; could this be done around schools? Road safety was really important. There was a vacancy currently for Road Safety Officer.

Resolved - That the Committee supported to the adoption of Vision Zero underpinned by targets to reduce deaths and serious injuries. Members unanimously approved.

(2) That the Partnership be requested to provide an update on Vision Zero to a future meeting.

24. Work Programme

The Committee considered the Work Programmes of the Policy Development Committees as attached at Appendix 1.

Resolved – That the Work Programme be noted

Pavement Parking

Policy Development & Scrutiny Committee – Build a Better Swindon

Date: 11 July 2024

Author:	Corporate Director of Inclusive Economy & Sustainability
Wards:	All Wards
Parishes Affected:	All Parish areas

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This report provides members of the Policy Development & Scrutiny Committee – Build a Better Swindon, an opportunity to review and scrutinise the implementation of the Council policy towards restrictions on pavement parking approved by Cabinet on 12 June 2024.
- 1.2 The report has been requested by the Committee Chair as part of the Committee Work Programme for 2024/25.
- 1.3 The Committee has a key role in reviewing, revising, developing, and scrutinising Council policies within its remit. The policy adopted by Cabinet in relation to pavement parking will contribute to the Council Mission to Build a Better Swindon.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Review and scrutinise the implementation of the restrictions on pavement parking approved by Cabinet on 12 June 2024.

3. Detail

Background

- 3.1 Pavement Parking was raised as a topic at an initial Working Group of the Policy Development (Build a Better Swindon) Committee in August 2023. As a result, at its meeting on 31st January 2024 the Committee considered an item on “Pavement Parking Enforcement Options”.
- 3.2 The Committee discussed the road safety, health and equalities implications of vehicles being parked on pavements on a frequent basis. They heard from Highways officers that there is no general prohibition of pavement parking in Swindon and that any national change in legislation is unlikely to come forward in the short term. The option of introducing a Traffic Regulation Orders to prohibit pavement parking was considered and the benefits of a Borough wide ban compared to bans only in certain areas were reviewed.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Philip Martlew, pmartlew@swindon.gov.uk.

Pavement Parking

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- 3.3 It was noted that in many areas pavement parking was an embedded behaviour, seen as the norm, and that an overall shortage of parking spaces relative to levels of car ownership in some areas could result in some negative impacts arising from any prohibition on pavement parking. However, the Committee felt the desire to set a direction of travel for the Council to move away from pavement parking being a normal behaviour and one which should not be accepted in the long term. Rather than a widespread prohibition it was therefore agreed initially to promote the idea of a trial in a local area with known issues where there was public and Ward Councillor support.
- 3.4 The Committee resolved “(1) That the Committee note the update on Pavement Parking Enforcement Options. (2) That Cabinet be recommended to approve that a Traffic Regulation Order relating to the prohibition of pavement parking be trialled in a targeted area of the Borough”.
- 3.5 The recommendation was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 12 June 2024 along with proposals from officers about how the policy could be implemented. Cabinet resolved to:
- 3.5.1 Thank the Policy Development (Build a Better Swindon) Committee for its work on the issue of pavement parking in Swindon and note its recommendation to introduce a prohibition of pavement parking as a trial in one area of the Borough.
 - 3.5.2 Authorise the Corporate Director: Inclusive Economy and Sustainability, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for the Environment and Transport, to:
 - 3.5.3 Invite Ward Councillors to submit proposed areas within their Wards to be considered for the introduction of an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order to prohibit pavement parking.
 - 3.5.4 Consider applications received from Ward Councillors giving priority to areas where there is a recognised public concern about pavement parking and that residents and other stakeholders are generally in support of a prohibition being introduced and where the on-going resource impact can be contained within the existing revenue budget.
 - 3.5.5 Advertise and make the necessary Experimental Traffic Regulation Order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and submit a further report to Cabinet prior to the end of the Experimental period to determine whether to make the Order permanent.

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Implementation

- 3.6 Officers have considered the best approach to implementing this recommendation. In the first instance proposals will be invited from Ward Councillors who represent each area. They may demonstrate local support through surveys, petitions, questionnaires or on-line or social media dialogue and through the views of Town or Parish Councils.
- 3.7 The success of traffic and parking restrictions schemes relies on local support and compliance so there should be evidence that there is clearly a problem to be addressed and that there is local support for the scheme. Officers will then carry out consultation with the local community through the normal Experimental Traffic Regulation Order process. This includes a formal right of objection. Any objections received will need to be formally considered by the Council before the Experimental Order is made permanent.
- 3.8 An experimental TRO may be introduced for a maximum of 18 months and while it is in force any changes are monitored and assessed (and further changes made if necessary). Residents, local businesses and other interested parties may submit their support or objection to an experimental TRO at any time within the consultation period during the first six months of operation.
- 3.9 Once the consultation period has closed all comments received are reviewed. A further report to Cabinet will be submitted for a decision on whether to continue the Order on a permanent basis.
- 3.10 It is anticipated that there will be a period of information and advice before formal enforcement commences and any penalty charge notice are issued.
- 3.11 Proposed areas may be individual streets or groups of streets. While each application will be considered on its own merits it is likely that preference will be given to areas where there are higher numbers of pedestrians – particularly more vulnerable users – such as near schools and health facilities. Some thought will need to be given to where displaced vehicles will be parked instead – to consider the impacts of simply moving problems to other adjacent areas.
- 3.12 A number of roads in Swindon include grass verges and these are sometimes used for parking in addition to the pavement areas. Any prohibition on pavement parking in these areas will need to incorporate the verges in order to be effective.
- 3.13 It is anticipated that written guidance will be issued to all Ward Councillors along with a timescale for applications and implementation. There will also be the opportunity for Ward Councillors to discuss potential applications with Highway officers in advance of

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Philip Martlew, pmartlew@swindon.gov.uk.

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any submission. This will allow consideration of issues that are specific to the differing highway arrangements in individual Wards.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Cabinet has agreed the basis of the application process to be implemented by officers however details of timescales and implementation dates remain to be decided following further input from Ward Councillors.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 Financial and procurement implications of the policy were considered as part of the report to Cabinet. There are no additional financial or procurement implications arising from this report to the Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee – Build a Better Swindon.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Legal and human rights implications of the policy were considered as part of the report to Cabinet. There are no additional legal or human rights implications arising from this report to the Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee – Build a Better Swindon.

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

- 5.3 All other implications of the policy were considered as part of the report to Cabinet. There are no additional implications arising from this report to the Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee – Build a Better Swindon.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 5.4 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been prepared and a copy is available from the report author.

Risk Management

- 5.5 The work on this policy has demonstrated a high level of interest in the issue of pavement parking amongst local communities. If the Council is not able to offer solutions to these concerns within a reasonable timeframe it could pose a risk to the Council's reputation.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Philip Martlew, pmartlew@swindon.gov.uk.

Pavement Parking

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6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Director of Finance and Audit (S151 officer) and Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 None

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