

**Minutes of the Swindon Local Councils Forum meeting held 23rd May 2024 at the
Civic Offices, Euclid Street, Swindon Borough Council**

Those present: Councillors R Hailstone (Haydon Wick), I Jankinson (Blunsdon), M Compton (Blunsdon), A Jimmy (Haydon Wick), G Overbury (Wroughton), J Hewer (Wroughton), D Griffiths (South Swindon), N Hopkins (South Swindon), J Murphy (Highworth), L Gow (Highworth), G Wilson (Liddington), R Llewellyn (West Swindon), G Philpot (West Swindon), A John (Haydon Wick), I Kersey (Chiseldon), S Heyes (St Andrews), K Smith (Highworth), R Codrington (Stanton Fitzwarren), C McEwen (South Marston)

Also in attendance: L Cutter (Secretary), A Reeves (Central Swindon North), D Dewart (Swindon Borough Council), J Grant (Swindon Borough Council).

363 Apologies

V Curtis (Covingham), V Manro (Haydon Wick), J Mee (South Swindon), M Lucas (Central Swindon North)

364 Minutes

Members agreed to approve the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 15th February 2024.

Proposed: Councillor A John Seconded: Councillor I Jankinson

Vote: Agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 15th February 2024.

365 Swindon Town Advisory Board

Members welcomed David Dewart from Swindon Borough Council who gave an update on the Town and Advisory & Engagement Group's many projects across the Borough. It was acknowledged that Swindon is a cohesive railway destination with a heritage profile and that is what needs to be restored into the Town.

David gave an update on the six projects within the area and agreed to distribute the presentation to parish councils following the meeting. Members were encouraged to join an upcoming tour of the areas to understand the projects in more detail and see the progress within the Town. Regeneration of the Town Centre is the most sustainable place to develop and build as it is mostly accessibly by bicycle, walking or via public transport.

Members queried:

- if the Town Advisory Board would continue to meet, as the last meeting was in September 2023. *The group has now ceased but there are other forums that could be put in place for the continued engagement based on upcoming developments and partners.*
- about the ongoing general maintenance and upkeep costs, if the boards are sadly defaced or destroyed. *It was confirmed that the Borough Council's Team will be doing the works and has a budget to support.*
- if there were any plans to develop the Mechanics Institute. *There are ongoing issues with the ownership, but there is capital funding secured from the Hydro project which can be used to protect the Heritage site and wider area.*
- if the small business owners that are in the current railway parking site area have been relocated and received some support. *The Borough Council will work closely with these businesses during their relocations.*

- if Kimmerfields would be used as a cultural and arts centre. *Plans are in place to develop the upstairs of the Civic Building into an art gallery which will be opening to the public in a few months.*
- when the Bus boulevard works would be complete? *Autumn 2025.*
- if there will be a local enterprise partnership? *From April 2024, the Government ceased funding for LEPs. Therefore the Borough Council is responsible for its own economical development.*

D Dewart left the meeting at 19:27

366 Borough & Local Councils Protocol

Members noted that Councillor J Grant is keen to progress with the six appendices of the Protocol, in smaller working groups. Some parishes explained that they hadn't seen the latest document, and it was acknowledged that Members did not receive the Cabinet report or an outcome from the meeting. Communications need to be improved and there need to be adequate personnel to assist Councillor Grant with the discussions for the document to be reviewed. The Protocol Negotiating Team (Councillors I Jankinson, C McEwen, D Griffiths and R Hailstone) will organise a meeting to discuss this further with Councillor Grant and report back. Swindon Borough Council's Interim Head of Planning has made contact separately and is willing to work on the Planning appendices; any Councillors interested and/or experienced in planning are welcome to join the discussions.

Councillors J Murphy (Highworth), I Kersey (Chiseldon), N Hopkins (South Swindon) and A John (Haydon Wick) wished to be included in the discussions.

367 Transfer of Services

The Transfer of Services Working Party gave a brief overview of recent conversations held with Swindon Borough Council Officers and Councillor J Grant about the potential Transfer of Services held on 11th April 2024.

More information is required on what services SBC is looking to transfer, the cost for these services and the FTE personnel required to deliver the services. More understanding on the TUPE requirements and legal advice would be encouraged.

Members pressed the need for information to be received sooner rather than later as budget setting typically begins in October and the financial detail will be required to make an informed decision. Based on current information and contracts carried out in larger parishes, the estimated increase could be up to an 11% increase on individual precepts prior to other projects being included in budget aspirations.

Members were asked to pass concerns to the Secretary of the Forum to pass through to S Iles (Interim Director of Operations), this way an inclusive list of questions and answers to date can be circulated rather than multiple copies.

As the Town Centre funding and service requirement sits apart from the general Transfer of Services and it is suggested that South Swindon Parish Council discusses this directly with Swindon Borough Council, reporting back to the wider Forum when required.

Members advised that CIL payments are 12 months behind and S106 is 3 years behind. These payments could be crucial in budget setting especially if new projects and services are up for discussion.

368 WALC Updates

Members noted updates from WALC on the HR Offer of support and Changes to the Constitution. Some Members have expressed dissatisfaction with the level of support and lack of response from WALC given that there is a large membership fee. Recently there has been a change in the rates at which councils are charged and invoices were sent without any consultation with parishes. No consideration of Swindon. Members collectively agreed for the Forum to contact WALC to discuss improvements in communications and an update on what services are included, and can be improved upon, given the high subscription fees. Members requested the Chair of WALC is invited to the next meeting on 19th September 2024.

369 Members Reports

- Are Borough Councillors turning up to Parish Council meetings? *Very often there is a clash between Borough Council meetings and Parish Council meetings.*
- Protocol – Planning Appendix – *Planning Officer is happy to review the document and work with the Forum to implement this.*
- Planning Enforcement – *Some parishes have long historic issues; others did not have any. Agreed for those parishes to progress with SBC individually initially and come back to the Forum if a strengthening approach is necessary.*
- Planning Portal – *New portal launched, parishes need to sign up to register and review comments. Reminder that parishes need to present their objections through to the SBC Planning Committee which meets once per month.*

370 Items for the Next Agenda

To be passed to the Secretary ahead of the meeting on Thursday 19th September 2024, which will be the Annual General Meeting whereby the Chair/Vice Chair and External Representatives are renewed.

The meeting finished at 20:28