

PARISH CHAIRS / CLERKS ENGAGEMENT MEETING

TUESDAY, 22 JUNE 2021

PRESENT:

Parish Council Representatives: Ms Val Brodin (Bishopstone), Mr Ian Jankinson (Blunsdon), Ms Teresa Whyborn (Castle Eaton), Mrs Steph Exell (Central Swindon North), Mr Andy Reeves (Central Swindon North), Mr Jake Mee (Central Swindon South), Ms Clair Wilkinson (Chiseldon), Ms Val Curtis (Covingham), Mr Vinay Manro (Haydon Wick), Ms Di Rodgers (Haydon Wick), Ms Georgina Morgan-Denn (Haydwon Wick), Mr Colin McEwen (South Marston), Ms Emma Sylvester (St Andrews), Mr Tom Charnock (Stanton Fitzwarren), Ms Angela Raymond (Wanborough) and Ms Emma Freemantle (Wroughton).

Swindon Borough Council Representatives: Councillor David Renard (Leader of the Council)(Chair), Councillor Robert Jandy (Cabinet Member for Organisational Excellence and Chair of Stratton St Margaret Parish Council), Councillor Emma Bushell (Shadow Portfolio Holder), Ms Susie Kemp (Chief Executive), Ms Samantha Mowbray (Chief Operating Officer), Mr Phil Smith (Strategic Planning Policy Manager), Mr Phil Murkin (Chief Digital Officer), Mr Andrew Woods (Senior IT Project Manager) and Dr Douglas Campbell (Senior Committee Clerk).

Apologies for absence were received from: Ms Tracey Judd (Blunsdon), Mr Dinesh Naidu (Castle Eaton), Mr Chris Watts (Central Swindon South), Mr Rob Core (Central Swindon South), Mr Matt Harris (Chiseldon), Ms Emma Hill (Nythe, Eldene & Liden), Mrs Vera Tomlinson (St Andrews), Mr Nigel Gibbons (West Swindon) and Ms Paula Harrison (West Swindon).

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Parish Chairs / Clerks Engagement Meeting held on 9th December 2020 were confirmed. There were no matters arising.

2. Broadband – Update

Mr Phil Murkin (Chief Digital Officer) and Mr Andrew Woods (Senior IT Project Manager) gave a presentation updating the group on the fibre infrastructure across the Borough, during which they highlighted the following:

- The Government has a target of 85% gigabit fibre coverage by 2025. In Swindon, it is currently 16.4%.
- There are two providers deploying in the borough at the moment. Openreach is mainly installing new cabling and ducts, whereas CityFibre mostly uses the physical assets that others have put in place but is doing some build itself where necessary. Both CityFibre and Openreach are infrastructure providers so they will not be selling internet services directly to the public.
- There are a further two providers working around the borough. Gigaclear is doing some rural deployment around the edge but not actually within the borough, and Virgin Media has no current plans for expanding its existing network but will do things by request.

- These are all commercial deployments and these providers are prioritising profitable areas. The role of the Borough Council is to facilitate that deployment in terms of build, Highways, and Way Leaves for its premises.
- Both Openreach and CityFibre have asked for Bulk Way Leave agreements for the Council's residential properties to make it as streamlined and efficient as possible to deploy to those premises.
- There are nine exchanges that fall inside the borough. The Toothill, Haydon Wick and Swindon exchanges are currently on upgrade, and Openreach is utilising existing ducting and poles and laying fibre in those areas at the moment.
- Openreach has announced that Stratton is the next exchange to be picked up later this year, and an announcement is expected on an indicative timeline for the Blunsdon and Highworth exchanges.
- DCMS schemes were submitted for all 3 exchanges in Wroughton, Chiseldon and Wanborough. The Chiseldon and Wanborough schemes are now live so it is possible for residents and businesses in those exchange areas to join those schemes and to submit for vouchers. The Wroughton scheme was declined by DCMS on the grounds that there were fibre providers looking to lay fibre in the Wroughton area already.
- BDUK has a project gigabit programme which aims to pick up areas around the country that are not commercially attractive to service providers. It is anticipated that the fringe areas around Swindon will be included in a single lot covering South Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, and some parts of Oxfordshire.
- CityFibre has put in two brand new fibre exchanges; one in Kembrey Park and the other in Derby Close. The areas they are going out to next are Stratton and Pinehurst.

The following matters arose and were discussed:

- The discussions held with CityFibre and Openreach to encourage them to collaborate on build areas and to share infrastructure where possible.
- To qualify for the DCMS scheme in Bishopstone and Hinton Parva, they need 100% take up of subscriptions for vouchers, which is not viable. It is likely, however, that this area will be covered by the project gigabit programme.
- Openreach will still supply to an individual premises if the owner of the premises is willing to pay for the connection to the green cabinet. Once the green cabinet has been made live, other people in the area can be connected quite cheaply.
- Openreach has an obligation placed on it by central government to supply any new development of more than 20 dwellings. When they announce an exchange, typically it means that 85% of the premises that fall within that exchange will be upgraded to fibre.
- That the move from 4G to 5G, due to follow on from the fibre roll out, may render some existing masts unnecessary. However, some might be upgraded to 5G.
- How the Castle Eaton photovoltaic park cable and the electric supply cable from the Inglesham solar farm are enabled for fibre, which will be passed on for information to CityFibre and Openreach.
- That by 2025 it is expected that Openreach will have discontinued the use of the PTSD line system and moved to a database system. This is in particular will affect analogue systems such as automated burglar alarms, the help systems for aged people and traffic lights to name a few. The Council is currently reviewing its provision.

A copy of the slides can be found here:



Fibre Infrastructure
Update Jun 2021.ppt:

3. Forward Planning Update

Mr Phil Smith, Strategic Planning Policy Manager, gave an update to the group and highlighted the following:

- The Borough Council has approved the Stratton St Margaret and Blunsdon East Neighbourhood Plans following the successful referendums on 6th May. The Plans now form part of the Development Plan alongside the Local Plan, other Neighbourhood Plans, and also a number of Minerals and Waste Plans as well. They will be considered in respect of planning applications in those two areas going forward.
- On 7th July 2021, Cabinet will be considering revisions to the Local Plan and, subject to approval, it will be going out for consultation (beginning on 29th July 2021 and running for seven weeks). The intention is to then formally submit it through Cabinet and Council, then on to the Planning Inspectorate, which will hold an examination in public (possibly early to mid-spring 2022).

The following matters arose and were discussed:

- The latest position on the five-year housing land supply will be announced soon. Officers are still confirming the figures and a statement will be released shortly.
- The Neighbourhood Plan for Blunsdon will be given full weight in terms of the Development Plan, alongside the Local Plan, on decisions on outstanding development applications. Applications are always considered in respect of the policies in force at the time of making that decision.
- The infrastructure delivery plan for Blunsdon to enable traffic flow at the Turnpike junction, the details of which can be obtained from Sam Howell.

4. Matters from Parish and Town Councils

Community Governance Review

Councillor David Renard, the Chair and Leader of Swindon Borough Council, advised the group that the Council may be embarking on a Community Governance Review (CGR), which would take up to a year to complete. The Chair referred to the slides he was presenting and highlighted the following:

- The last review took place in 2016 resulting in the current, fully parished landscape. All areas apart from Inglesham now have a Town or Parish Council.
- Some requests and suggestions have already been received for a review:
 - South Marston and Wanborough have an interest in what is happening in terms of the New Eastern Village area.
 - Badbury Park is now fully built-out, and there is some discussion as to whether it should have a separate parish council or not.
 - In the Wichelstowe area, East Wichel has been built for quite some time and currently sits in the Central Swindon South Parish, but Middle and West Wichel is being built-out rapidly and will continue to develop over the next 10 to 15 years.

- Tadpole Farm is now built-out and has significantly enlarged St Andrews Parish.
- Officers will review any suggestions that come forward from the parish and town councils and also consider the views of other stakeholders. Terms of reference and a timetable will be drafted, and ultimately Cabinet and Council will need to approve any final recommendations within the 12 month time frame.

The Group were invited to consider what the review could potentially include and the following matters arose and were discussed:

- How different parts of the borough will have different requirements and that some may choose not to participate in the review because they have had no major development.
- Some developments are now largely built-out and in those cases there is a need to establish what fits after the event. With others, like the New Eastern Villages, it can be discussed whether these are going to be developments with a management company infrastructure or whether they are going to have a local council leading the green infrastructure.
- If there is no appetite for a review in a given area, there is no point in having a borough-wide review, especially in stable areas that are not anticipating change in the future.
- With regards to the New Eastern Villages, there are plans to develop that area over the fullness of time and there is a strong argument for having a single body that looks after the whole area, and this could be a parish council with wards.
- Developers and builders are wedded to the idea of management companies but it would be better if there is just a single type in a given area to avoid double taxation.
- That the parish and town councils are being invited to formally discuss this and to let the Council have initial views as, once the process has started, it has to be completed within the year according to legislation.
- That the new urban parishes should not be involved in the review given that they have recently gone through the process and each respective council has created their own governance structure, transferred assets and services as well as invested in multi-million pound contracts.
- That if a request is received to look at a particular area then it will be reviewed, however it does not mean that there would be subsequent changes in that area as a result of that review.
- That it is anticipated that the Council will bring in external capacity to undertake the review and pick up any associated costs.
- That it would be helpful if information is shared on how a CGR is triggered and the technicalities of what will happen should a petition be raised against the wishes of the parish council.

Resolved – (1) That the Parish and Town Councils be invited formally to discuss this matter and submit their views on the remit / scope of the CGR by the end of July 2021.

(2) That information regarding the legislation on Community Governance Reviews being triggered by petitions would be circulated following the meeting.

A copy of the slides can be found here:



CGR Leaders
slides.pptx

Swindon Area Committee

- The group noted that the Swindon Area Committee (SAC) has been working on a preliminary draft of an amended Swindon Borough / Parish and Town Council Charter. It is shorter, more digestible and realistic than the original but still includes appendices such as the planning protocol. It will be circulated when available.
- SAC is also contemplating a change of name to the 'Swindon Local Council's Forum' which is more descriptive of what it is.

5.

Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 7th December 2021, from 5.00pm in Committee Room 6, Civic Offices.