

Swindon Local Councils Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 23rd March 2023 at the Civic Offices, Swindon. Start time 7.00pm.

In attendance: Councillors Richard Hailstone (Chairman), John Hewer (Wroughton), Dave Griffiths (South Swindon), Richard Codrington (Stanton Fitzwarren), Ian Jankinson (Blunsdon), Val Curtis (Covingham), Mick Lucas (Central Swindon North), Adam John (Haydon Wick), Bob Biggs (Wanborough), Colin McEwen (South Marston), Gordon Wilson (Liddington)

317 APOLOGIES

Councillor Mick Compton (Blunsdon)

318 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 17th November 2022 were accepted as a true record.

Proposed: V Curtis

Seconded: A John

Vote: Agreed with two abstentions

RESOLVED: To agree that the minutes of the 29th of September 2022 are signed as a true record.

319 SBC LOCAL PLAN AND NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Stephen Hay and Molly Gallagher introduced themselves to the meeting. Both work in the Local Planning Team at SBC and are responsible for producing new local plan and overseeing neighbourhood planning. Members may be aware – due to a circulation email in Dec 22 – that the Borough Council is currently live with a ‘call for sites’. Members explained that the emails may have been missed amidst budget setting and requested the deadline for submissions is extended. A two week extension was granted.

Stephen Hay gave an overview of the current work programme for officers in producing the new Local Plan: SBC has stepped back from the ‘Local Plan Review 2036’ (last consulted on in July 2021) and is working towards a new integrated Local Plan (to 2042). This will refresh the evidence base and consider a new vision for the borough. The consultation on the plan will start with ‘Regulation 18’ consultation in Autumn 2023 and ‘Regulation 19’ - the final consultation before submission for examination, by Summer 24 (the Government has set the deadline for June 2025 for Local Plans to be in place). The new Local Plan is being developed in a fluid policy and regulatory environment – the government consulted on changes to the NPPF in December 2022, and the Regeneration and Levelling Up Bill is currently working through Parliament, potentially coming to fruition around 2024.

A wide range of officer teams are working collaboratively on the new Local Plan production. The current work programme for officers involves establishing forecasts for house building, commissioning evidence, (such as housing needs, flood risk, transport modelling, employment needs and impact assessments) to inform the Local Plan, with other evidence studies being undertaken in house. A call for sites is currently live. All sites submitted in the call for sites will be assessed regardless of previous assessment statuses, but historic information will be captured where necessary.

Key challenges for the new Local Plan include the zero carbon agenda, extended length of plan to 2042 and 2050 for the strategic vision.

Key evidence areas are transport infrastructure, green infrastructure and creating sustainable environments, as well as, building momentum of regeneration of the town centre and more diverse way of housing opportunities within Swindon.

Q) Parishes know of local site issues and have local knowledge – how will those views be considered? *All sites submitted will be assessed in accordance with the 'site assessment methodology'. This will set out reasons why a site would be found unsuitable. SBC will issue the methodology for a short consultation to allow opportunity for comments and feedback to be considered on the approach to site assessment. The methodology will be broadly like the last SHLAA process. Any site submitted will be assessed, and would not be excluded from receiving a new assessment based on any previous assessments. However, reasons sites rejected previously may not have changed from last time. Once the DHLAA work has been undertaken by the Borough Council, the SHLAA will be published and there will be opportunity for feedback and consultation on findings for the sites.*

Q) If Central Government removed the 5 year target for housing land supply, how will this impact calculating and publishing land supply position? *The 5 year target hasn't been removed yet, it is only a proposal and there are arguments in opposition and support. Regardless of a five year position, the Borough Council need to understand the projections on housing delivery and supply. Officers are gathering information from developers This will produce large scale housing plans and give a good indication with market feedback on, where and when delivery will be. Counting houses will also be put in place to verify what has been delivered and allow the Borough Council to update the 5 year land supply figures for publication in late 2023.*

Members raised concerns that some sites (such as Wichelstowe, Tented Market, Old bus depot on Eastcott Hill) which have been granted permission but not implemented. Officers answered that planning permissions may not be implemented. For land supply purposes, the Borough Council will account for non-implementation rates in the calculation. But, officers are working to need to get to the bottom of why some schemes are not completed. The current Developer Questionnaire work helps us to understand issues and timetables.

Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood Planning is governed by the Localism Act 2012. Neighbourhood Planning Act gives communities the same power to plan for development in their area as the Local Authority has for the Local Plan for local area plans. They are focused only on development and planning land use. Other non-planning matters that arise in consultation can be reviewed and packaged as 'projects', but never form part of Neighbourhood Plan.

It was acknowledged that it takes a lot of time to produce a Neighbourhood Plan and early engagement with the SBC, Developers and the local community is very important.

The Forum would like to explore how parishes engage with the Borough Council, which is proposed as part of the Draft Protocol which it is developing in conjunction with SBC to improve communications and procedures. SH confirmed that such a protocol is outside of the remit of Policy team to discuss.

8:00pm SBC Officers Stephen Hays and Molly Gallagher left the meeting.

320 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- **SBC Enforcement Matters** – trying to recruit someone else, but maybe not successful. Planning training in December was useful.
- **Peer Review** – No known updates. *Secretary to ask Sam Mowbray what is happening with this and any next steps.*
- **Bus Services** – Responses received from Swindon Borough Council and Swindon Bus Company. SBC Ward Councillors now progressing.

- **School Swimming Lessons** – Raised with Councillor D Heenan about the lack of provision and deficit of Swindon for swimming, primary school children to be able to swim 25m before they move on to secondary school. Received a response but the question needs to be clarified further.
- **Thames Water Burst Water Mains** – Since reporting this there have been further burst water mains on Thamesdown Drive. Thames Water will replace the pipelines, but it could be up to 3 years before remedial works start. Tankers are deployed as a precautionary measure in the event of bad weather or early signs of another burst water pipe.

321 SBC STANDARDS COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Councillor R Hailstone (current Standards Committee representative) advised that he has not been called upon to handle any assessments at the Monitoring Officer at Swindon Borough Council investigates these prior to it ending up in front of any panels. Both Councillors R Hailstone and M Compton agreed to continue as representatives for the Standards Committee again this year.

Proposed: V Curtis

Seconded: A John

Vote: Agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: To appoint Councillors R Hailstone and M Compton to be the SBC Standards Committee Representatives.

322 BOROUGH & LOCAL COUNCILS DRAFT CHARTER

The Working Party updated that a zoom meeting was held with Sam Mowbray in January. It was a useful meeting with agreed next steps to pass on to Councillor D Heenan in a draft form. The document is not ready to distribute to parishes yet. Members acknowledged the difficulty progressing with this document and that there are still communications with Swindon Borough Council. Once the document is agreed upon it should be a method of working more efficiently.

323 SBC BOUNDARY REVIEW (OUTSIDE OF NATIONAL CONSTITUENCY REVIEW)

It is believed that the constituency review coming into effect in November 2023 may prompt a Ward and Parish Boundary Review in 2024.

324 STREET SCENES

Members discussed the faded road markings and potholes around the borough. There are some locations where road markings are so faded on mini roundabouts that motorists do not realise that they are mini roundabouts until too late and this causes road traffic accidents. Potholes have to be more than 41mm deep to be repaired but the method of repairing the potholes is temporary and come the following winter will likely need more repairs. Members acknowledged there are budgetary constraints, but the works should be quality checked prior to sign off to make sure the job is done satisfactorily. Members acknowledged there is also issues with no parking zones near schools, enforcement seem to issue the fines but due to lack of resources and the number of primary schools within the borough, visit too infrequently. Police can help with issues as they arise.

325 HOUSING MANAGEMENT COMPANIES

Councillor R Hailstone (Chairman) wrote to the two MPs Justin Tomlinson (North Swindon) and Robert Buckland (South Swindon) recently about residents having to pay housing management companies and parish councils. The two MPs were in full agreement and passed the information to Rachael Maclean (Minister of State for Housing & Planning). It appears that a new policy is being created. Members wished for parish, town and borough councils to have an input into the policy during the legislative stages prior to the policy being finalised. South Marston & Blunsdon suggested communicating with developers early in conjunction with the SBC Planning Department for local area knowledge to be captured.

326 SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Secretary gave a verbal update on subscriptions for 2023/2024. Now that the contingency amount has been achieved the budget is able to go back to the baseline. Taking out two of the parishes that did not wish to join and calculating the overall tax base and the individual tax base, some of the larger parishes have received a smaller subscription fee. Subscription letters will be sent to Clerks in early April 2023 with a reminder to appoint two new Councillors as representatives.

327 MEMBERS REPORTS

I Jankinson (Blunsdon): Advised that Deborah Bourne has been appointed as the County Secretary for the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils and is proactive in developing the support for Wiltshire parish councils. Could the Forum request that she attends a future meeting? *Secretary to make contact.*

A John (Haydon Wick): Any further information about devolvement of services from Swindon Borough Council to parishes? At the last Clerks & Chairs meeting it was advised that nothing would happen until after April 2023 with implementation in April 2024. Some suggestions from informal discussions included pothole repairs, tree maintenance, footpath maintenance, etc.

Also asked Blunsdon Parish Council about a recent high profile planning application of a place of worship on a green field site in Blunsdon which would comprise of large minibus parking spaces and a large number of toilets. The Officers trusted what the Developers. The application was refused but the reasons for refusal left the application open to an appeal that may be difficult to defend.

D Griffiths (South Swindon): Recently attended a Town Deal Board Meeting. The bids close on the 26th of March 2023 and will come back to SBC to review. SBC is in consultation with South Swindon about maintenance works for some of the ideas. Health Hydro closes end of March for 18 months.

Blossom circle project in Farrington Park has been launched if anyone gets the chance to visit.

Do any parishes know of any Recycling facilities for tetra packs? *Ace UK will supply with euro bins if you can fill one up within two weeks empty free of charge.*

V Curtis (Covingham): Mentioned a new consultant for SBC (Eden Speller) who is the contact for the Trees for Climate projects, he has been helpful with enquiries. Any new trees that are planted; the responsibility for maintenance will be passed immediately to the parishes. With Trees for Climate there is a 15 year maintenance contract, give parishes £19k per hectare.

R Hailstone (Haydon Wick): Seem to be having insurance claims regarding lack of maintenance, some prior to the Transfer of Services Deed; but SBC is pushing back and leaving for the Parish Council to resolve.

Meeting closed at 21.13