

**Minutes of the Swindon Local Councils Forum meeting held on Thursday 19th
September 2024 in Committee Room 2, Civic Offices, Euclid Street at 7pm**

Attendance: Councillors R Hailstone (Chairman), A Houghton (Highworth), P Newton Smith (Highworth), J Hewer (Wroughton), I Kersey (Chiseldon), G Wilson (Liddington), D Griffiths (South Swindon), V Manro (Haydon Wick), V Curtis (Covingham), G Hawkes (Covingham), T Charnock (Stanton Fitzwarren), I Jankinson (Blunsdon), K Smith (Highworth), L Gow (Highworth), A John (Haydon Wick), G Philphot (West Swindon), C Bunnie (Liddington), C McEwen (South Marston) and S Heyes (St Andrews)

Also in attendance: L Cutter (Secretary), E Hill (Nythe, Eldene, Liden), A Reeves (Central Swindon North), J Mee (South Swindon), Andrew Sadler (WALC), Ian Nockolds (WALC)

371 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor S Gattapur (West Swindon), E Freemantle (Wroughton), M Lucas (Central North), M Compton (Blunsdon) and N Hopkins (South Swindon)

372 Introduction from WALC (Wiltshire Association of Local Councils)

Members received an introduction from Wiltshire Association of Local Councils (WALC) representatives, Ian Nockolds (County Advisor) and Andrew Sadler (Vice Chairman). Ian has been in post for six months and has a great understanding of the importance of engagement and working together.

Biggest challenge was that there were not any training programmes in place to offer Members, but this has been addressed and an email detailing the upcoming training courses (based on feedback from Members) has been circulated, some of which are online, and others are in-person at a shared parish venue, to keep the costs of the training down. The training programme is timely to capture key events, such as budget setting, elections and chairs training. Please continue to feedback any training aspirations and content. Wiltshire Councils are due to have elections in 2025 – so training is provided to understand how elections work, this would be useful for Swindon Councils when required in 2026 – as the first course of its kind will be developed.

County Conference will be taking place in Devizes on November 5th – it is free for Members to attend. Aware of importance of putting on events locally in Swindon to make it easier for Swindon Councils to attend. Main themes will be:

- Planning (due to changes in government and upcoming amendments to the planning system), this will be delivered by an independent facilitator.
- Devolution of services from principal authorities to parish and town councils. Ian would like to receive representation from Swindon Councils at the event to share recent experiences.
- Inclusive equipment for play parks, flooding and resilience.

Ian advised that the next newsletter will be sent at the end of September 2024, usually distributed to the Clerk but is currently obtaining previous data to receive key contact information for parish representatives.

Q) NALC do some very good webinars – are you using them too?

NALC is WALC's governing body, so WALC does try and work collaboratively. NALC takes the lead and sets the programme. WALC sees the benefit in using local trainers and people with local experience. Also smaller scale events make a better networking atmosphere.

Q) WALC is the triage for public works loan applications, due to the delays in administration, the payout timescales are often too long. Process at WALC needs to be sped up, to go through NALC to become more of a priority for the UK Debt Management Office (DMO)?

Understand the delays. Currently supporting Devizes as a learning exercise, this will give the chance for a review for Ian, as he is new in post, and some insight for further improvements. The goal is for the department to come back to applications quickly and not allow applications to linger, especially for major project loans. Ian will ensure that this is the next priority to investigate.

Andrew Sadler (Vice Chair) advised that he has been in post for 12 months and came onboard as a local parish councillor, to understand more about what WALC could do. Andrew recognises that the potential between Swindon & Wiltshire is large and has become disconnected over recent years, but many of the issues faced within local government and local communities is similar. Andrew recognises that there is more to be done to enhance the service that WALC provides but concurred that Ian has made remarkable changes in just six months in post. Both Ian and Andrew are working hard and looking forward to developing the relationships.

Members thanked Ian and Andrew for attending the meeting. The Chairman advised it would be good to see both Swindon and Wiltshire Councils communicating effectively and looks forward to the Forum working with Ian and Andrew to ensure that this happens.

7.24pm Both WALC Representatives left the meeting.

373 Minutes

Members confirmed that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 23rd May 2024 were a true record, with amendments to the spelling of 'Kearsey' to 'Kersey'.

Proposed: A John Seconded: I Kersey

Vote: Agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 23rd May 2024 were signed as a true record.

374 Transfer of Services

Members noted the briefing paper written by Councillor C McEwen which gives an update from the Transfer of Services Working Party and the timescales of negotiation. The main concern is that the legalities and practical HR Advice regarding the TUPE arrangements associated with Transferring Services, along with costs and operational detail has not been received, despite several requests for information from Swindon Borough Council (SBC). At the beginning of the discussions, the deadline was set for the end of October due to budget setting.

The Forum's Transfer of Services Working Party recommend that the negotiations do not go any further at this stage and that the focus shifts back to the Protocol to improve communications and enhance partnership working, to enable future conversations. One of the annexes within the Protocol does cover Transfer of Services – what parishes can do for the wider residents of Swindon.

Members agreed that parishes should continue to stay united with the general discussions and feedback to their individual parishes the stance of the Forum. SBC has recently conducted a Peer Review and several Parish Clerks & Chairs have met to give feedback.

Members acknowledged that there has been press releases submitted by Swindon Borough Council and some parishes have commented in response. Members queried whether a joint press release should be distributed to explain the decision to halt negotiations to be transparent to residents ahead of any potential services ceasing in

the new financial year. The secretary confirmed that a draft press release was written several months ago, this would need reviewing and updating but can be circulated to members in the coming weeks.

Proposed: C McEwen

Seconded: D Griffiths

Vote: Agreed unanimously

RESOLVED: To halt negotiations with Swindon Borough Council regarding the Transfer of Services due to lack of detail surrounding TUPE, statutory services and financial and operational details.

375 Protocol

Recently the Negotiating Team met with the Leadership Team at SBC. The meeting was very positive, and the Chief Executive confirmed she was reworking the administration element due to a new labour government. During this process there have been inefficiencies, especially with taking on initiatives in-house, then realising that SBC does not have the capacity or resources. It was acknowledged there is potential for partnership working, but whilst the details are mentioned in the Swindon Local Plan, there has been no consultation with parishes or mention of parishes within the plan.

The Leadership Team is being restructured and the Chief Executive went through the roles and responsibilities of each member in the Leadership Team. The direct contact will be Kirston Nelson (Corporate Director of Stronger and Safer Communities) who will be working on engaging with parishes.

The Chief Executive has recently asked if Parish Chairs would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council on a six monthly basis. The secretary sent out a poll to all parishes, all the responses confirmed that this would be welcomed but the agenda needs to be relevant and Senior Officers of SBC to attend the meetings to talk through respective areas. Feedback from Members at the meeting was that there needs to be an opportunity to contribute to the agenda, so that the meetings are relevant, Senior Officers should be invited to talk through their areas of responsibility and the meetings should be 'round table' discussions and not held in Cabinet.

The recent peer review and working with Kirston on annexes from the Protocol should aid future communications and partnership working.

Members thanked Councillor C McEwen for the hours of work put into the Protocol, attending the meetings and the ongoing support. Members appointed Councillor C McEwen as the Chair of the Partnership Working Party so that he has an official title when conducting business on behalf of the Forum.

20:00 E Hill, J Mee and A Reeves left the meeting.

376 Members Reports

A John (Haydon Wick) – SBC is reviewing roads under the 20mph initiative via the SBC Ward Councillors who have been in touch regarding suggestions and conducting questionnaires for targeted roads, to obtain the evidence as required.

Stanton has been through similar process and now has 20mph zone signs up, but the process has taken 4 years. Ensure that the evidence of speed is taken in the appropriate areas and not near parked cars that naturally slow traffic.

Blunsdon has been through the same process and advised that this was resolved quickly following several traffic counts and public consultation, the process was done within 12 months. The traffic count is governed by the number of cars rather than the speed of cars.

I Jankinson (Blunsdon) – Complaining about a long time re S106/CIL money from Tadpole Development to make streets more landscaping in the natural environment. SBC due to put plans in place, but there has been no further progress still 5 years later. New system is going in for simplifying the process and ease the workload of the SBC Officers.

The meeting ended at 20:14

Minutes of the Swindon Local Councils Forum meeting held on Thursday 19th September 2024 in Committee Room 2, Civic Offices, Euclid Street at 8.15pm

377 Election of Chairman

Councillor R Hailstone advised that he would like to step down from the Chairman of the Forum and that Councillor V Manro has expressed an interest in the Chairman role. Members thanked Councillor R Hailstone for his service over the last few years as Chairman and accepted the nomination from Councillor V Manro.

Proposed: C McEwen Seconded: A John

Vote: Agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: To duly elect Councillor V Manro as Chairman of the Swindon Local Councils Forum.

Councillor V Manro thanked for the opportunity confirming that the Forum is a very valid entity and has a great purpose, which he hopes he can assist with moving things forward.

378 Election of Vice Chairman

Councillor I Jankinson confirmed he would re-stand as the Vice Chair of the Swindon Local Councils Forum.

Proposed: V Curtis Seconded: T Charnock

Vote: Agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: To duly elect Councillor I Jankinson as Vice Chair of the Swindon Local Councils Forum.

379 Confirmation of the Secretary

L Cutter was appointed again as the Secretary.

380 Confirmation of External Representatives

- **SBC Standards Committee:** Richard Hailstone and Mick Compton are the current representatives. Ian Jankinson will speak to Mick (as he is not present at today's meeting) to see if he still wishes to continue.
- **Countryside Access Forum:** Previously Tom Charnock, during the meetings there was only one person from Swindon, everyone else was interested in Wiltshire areas. Right of Way Officer from SBC was always due to attend, but never did. There has not been a meeting in some time.

- **Swindon Youth Advisory:** Previously Dave Griffiths – nothing has happened, have not met since the Swindon Town Board Deal meetings had ended. Dave will follow up and find out when they are and where they happen. It is evident that the Chief Executive at SBC is concerned about the lack of activities for youth being offered in Swindon. Lesely Gow would also like to be a representative. Suggestion that both representatives link in with Get Swindon Active and feedback to a future meeting.
- **Chair of the Partnership Working Party:** Councillor Colin McEwen

381 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Members accepted the minutes of the previous AGM meeting held on 21st September 2023 as a true record.

Proposed: V Curtis Seconded: I Jankinson

Vote: Agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: To confirm the external representatives as above.

382 Financial Report

The Secretary advised that there are three signatories on the account but due to the change of chairmanship it would be good to add Councillor V Manro and I Jankinson to the bank mandates.

Current balance £660.86.

Secretary salary of £1,136.00 has been paid up to the end of March 2024.

Outstanding balance from Wanborough, which is £20.00, have been in touch with the Clerk who believed the subscription was paid in March by the interim Clerk. However, nothing received in SLCF bank, so suggested a check to see this wasn't accidentally paid to WALC.

St Andrews pulled their membership after their Annual Meeting in May 2024; its subscription is £195.00. St Andrew's and West Swindon's membership renewal typically changes year on year which makes it unpredictable when budget setting and sending out the subscription invoices in April.

Typically the contingency has been set to £500.00 which has allowed for room hire charges or additional expenses such as printing, stationary etc, but this has never been required as SBC offers room hire free of charge.

The annual budget is set to £1500.00. Divided by the annual tax base & then multiplied by the individual tax base. Minimum fee £15 and maximum fee £400.

20:36 The Secretary left the meeting.

383 Secretary's Salary

Members recognised 5 years of service from the Secretary and the increased workload since beginning the post in 2019. Members felt that the additional work with the Transfer of Services and Protocol work should be compensated and agreed to a one off spot bonus of £250.00 to be paid immediately.

Members also agreed to increase the salary to £1,500.00 per annum from £1,136.00 per annum from April 2025 and for the salary to be reviewed in line with the NJC Terms and Conditions percentage as agreed nationally.

Proposed: R Hailstone Seconded: C McEwen

Vote: Agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To award the Secretary a spot bonus of £250.00 in recognition of the additional workload incurred throughout 2023/ 2024.**
- 2. To increase the salary to £1,500 per annum from April 2025, SLCF budget to be amended accordingly.**
- 3. To increase the salary annually in line with the NJC Terms & Conditions upon confirmation of the national agreements.**