

Swindon Local Councils Forum Minutes 20th March 2025
Meeting held at 7pm in SBC Civic Offices, Committee Room 1

Those present: V Manro (Chairman), V Curtis (Covingham) G Hawkes (Covingham), M Lucas (Central Swindon North), R Hailstone (Haydon Wick), R Llewlyn (West Swindon), S Heyes (St Andrews), G Wilson (Liddington), P Sunners (Chiseldon), L Gow (Highworth), A John (Haydon Wick), J Mee (South Swindon), C Bunnie (Liddington), J Jeffries (Chiseldon), M Hinton (Chiseldon), Ian Kersey (Chiseldon), R Codrington (Stanton Fitzwarren), C McEwen (South Marston), J Firmin (South Swindon), J Hopkins (Hannington), N Harding (Hannington)

Also present: L Cutter, SLCF Secretary and I Nockolds, WALC

392 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and accepted from I Jankinson (Blunsdon), M Compton (Blunsdon), N Hopkins (South Swindon), E Freemantle (Wroughton).

393 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 21st November 2024 were signed as a true record.

Proposed: Cllr M Lucas

Seconded: Cllr I Kersey

Vote: Agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting held Thursday 21st November 2024 as a true record.

394 UPDATE FROM WILTSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (WALC)

The meeting welcomed Ian Nockolds from WALC. Ian advised that there was some upcoming time management training taking place at Moredon Sports Hub on Monday 24th March, still have spaces available. WALC has recognised the importance of Swindon based training and bring together relevant networks. Ian recently visited parishes to drop off some Swindon & Wiltshire pride leaflets to promote some of the community events happening locally and to advertise the Transformation Inclusion project which aimed at improving communications with people with visible and hidden disabilities.

The Chairman explained he had recently attended the Larger Parishes forum, and it was interesting to see how other regions have managed transfer of services and partnership working opportunities.

Ian advised that the next Executive Committee meeting is on 31st March 2025, and it would be good to get member councils to attend and receive an insight for the strategic leadership.

395 UPDATE FROM NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (NALC)

Members noted NALC – devolution proposals, government has confirmed it will try to consult with parish councils, so it is important to keep this on radar to ensure parishes have their say.

396 BOROUGH & LOCAL COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Members noted the report that was submitted by Councillor C McEwen ahead of the meeting. SBC Officers has been actively engaged in meetings and correspondence, but SBC would like to progress with the Swindon Plan & the Working Together Framework to replace the protocol. Members acknowledged that a lot of work and time had gone into the protocol and annexes to get this through SBC sign off and there is still work to be done to finalise the annexes.

Members noted that if there is another change of administration again parishes could be back to the drawing board if losing the momentum of the protocol now.

It was acknowledged that there is no mention of parishes within the Swindon Plan and there was no consultation with parishes about the document in the initial stages of forming the document.

Members noted that the parishes are actively involved in some of the services such as health care through Memory Cafes and these items seem to be falling in line with other initiatives set out in SBC's Live Well Hub. There are plans to develop these initiatives further working with local parishes and identifying the needs of each individual community prior to there being an influx of crucial and urgent referrals.

The transfer of some ground's maintenance services has been shelved for now, but many parishes have decided to take on weed spraying voluntarily to improve their own spaces, this is part of the protocol and has its own annex, but a joint approach to finalise this document is still required.

The larger parishes (Stratton, Central North, South Swindon, Haydon Wick and West Swindon) have met with SBC to talk about potential joint delivery initiatives, there was a suggestion that Highworth and Wroughton also considered to join in on these meetings as are delivering similar services. Members acknowledged that some of the smaller parishes have not been informed on several matters and communications need to improve regardless of the size of the parish, many of the actions and aspirations for each community remain the same.

After discussion it was agreed to continue to push the protocol and annexes and for the Chairman to arrange a meeting with SBC Leaders to discuss triaging things that parishes would like to be done via community plans and think strategically about the benefits this would bring Borough-wide.

397 STREET WORK LICENCES

Members acknowledged the recent street work licences being applied by SBC and how this can cause huge increases to parish funded projects. An example of upgrading a noticeboard, where there was no requirement for digging and the result would have been the same as the current standing noticeboard – but this resulted in needing more paperwork and having to apply for the licence which is in the remit of £300.00. This added to the noticeboard replacement budget would be too expensive and as a result the project hasn't been able to be completed within the 2024/2025 financial year. These improvements would upgrade the area and keep things looking nice which benefits the residents.

There have also been delays in agreements for Speed Indicator Devices and by the point of approval the relevant paperwork is out of date.

The Chairman advised of a recent letter from Councillor J Robbins regarding the "Legends on a Bench" initiative, asking parishes to consider locations for friendship benches. The Chairman has asked the question in his response as to whether this initiative is fully funded and includes the street work licence charges. The response will be reported back to Members.

There also has been charges associated with traffic management and road closures, so Highworth has trained in-house staff so that this can be conducted and there is no requirement to ask SBC.

Members suggested that this query is put to the SBC Leaders for clarification and to consider a tier system or discounted rates depending on the

398 JOINT PROCUREMENT PROJECTS

Prior to the meeting the Chairman requested that parishes advise of upcoming plans and projects and a consolidated list has been created, and this will be shared with Members via the parish council officers to consider. There were many examples of areas that parishes could join for cost-saving methods from sourcing benches, signage and street furniture to weed spraying contracts or adding value to jointly submitted large scale tenders such as play area refurbishments and outdoor gyms. There is also a knowledgebase of tendering processes and awarding contracts that could be shared with smaller parishes which haven't done large scale projects as taken several years to earmark and reserve the funds.

399 DATA SHARING

Members acknowledged the need for SBC to share its data for parishes to understand the community needs and demographic. This would assist in many aspects but help with items such as funding the libraries or identifying individuals who may need extra support during community emergencies. As an example, the bin men know where there are extra support measures necessary for some disabled residents and in some cases, these are the types of people that will benefit from local services.

400 STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Councillor R Hailstone gave an update on the recent SBC Standards Committee meeting. SBC is considering bringing its code of conduct more in line with NALC and went out to consultation earlier this year. As a result of the consultation outcomes, the proposal is for SBC to take this to its annual meeting to adopt the new model. There have been a series of training courses available on the training portal for new councillors to attend and ask questions.

401 LOGO

The Chairman introduced the concept of having a logo to strengthen the brand and begin to publish these on communications and agendas from the Forum. Each of the speech bubbles represents each of the parish councils within the borough of Swindon.

402 MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Secretary advised that the subscriptions for 2025/2026 have been sent out for payments due by the end of April. West Swindon Parish Council has not renewed their membership for this year but would revisit in the future. There is contingency available to cover the salary and administrative costs associated with the Forum, but the budget needs to be set higher for 2026/2027 to build back up contingency funds.

403 MEMBER REPORTS

Councillor A John (Haydon Wick) – Advised that he had complained on behalf of residents regarding the status of roads in Haydon Wick. SBC Ward Councillor for Haydon Wick, Stanka Adamcova, has put these areas to cabinet to be scheduled into the work programme for 2026/2027. Will continue to monitor the areas and update if the conditions of the roads deteriorate any further and need works prior to 2026/2027.

Councillor R Codrington (Stanton Fitzwarren) - Asked if anyone has an up to date telephone/contact list for Officers at Swindon Borough Council. *The consensus was that the*

telephone/ contact list changes frequently so is most likely out of date. Noted that Swindon Borough Council also do not close old email addresses with a bounce back.

The Secretary advised that Haydon Wick Parish Council has organised a Dementia Bus experience for Thursday 3rd April 2025 and tickets are £40.00pp.

404 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

To be passed to the Secretary and/or Chairman in advance of the next meeting scheduled for Thursday 19th June 2025.

The meeting closed at 20.35