

Swindon Local Councils Forum Minutes 26th June 2025
Meeting held at 7pm in SBC Civic Offices, Committee Room 2

Those present: V Manro (Chairman), L Gow (Highworth), S Heyes (St Andrews), G Hawkes (Covingham), V Curtis (Covingham), J Hower (Wroughton), J Hodgkinson (Hannington), A Houghton (Highworth), D Archer (Wroughton), P Park (Central Swindon North), C McEwen (South Marston), C Bunney (Liddington), J Firmin (South Swindon), I Kersey (Chiseldon), A John (Haydon Wick), T Charnock (Stanton Fitzwarren)

Also present: L Cutter, SLCF Secretary and M Firth, Wiltshire Community Foundation

405 Apologies

Were received and accepted from:

Ian Nockolds, Wiltshire Association of Local Councils (WALC)
Gordon Wilson, Liddington Parish Council
Richard Hailstone, Haydon Wick Parish Council
Jaime Blackman, Bishopstone Parish Council
Val Brodin, Bishopstone Parish Council
Nick Hartley, Hannington Parish Council

406 Minutes

Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 20th March 2025 are a true record, with amendments to the wording of Minute Reference 401 to give thanks to Haydon Wick Parish Council for generously providing the staff time to provide the logo designs for the Swindon Local Council's Forum.

Proposed: Councillor P Sunners

Seconded: Councillor S Heyes

Vote: Agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 20th March 2025 as a true record.

407 Matters arising from the Minutes

No matters were arising from the Minutes that are not included in the agenda for this evening's meeting.

408 Introducing Local Insight

Margaret introduced herself and thanked for the invitation this evening and provided a presentation on the Wiltshire Community Foundation and its partnerships, which work together to raise the profile of local grant giving. Last year £2.5 million was distributed through grants to support low income families, poor mental health and educational assistance for SEN learning. A core value is to listen to the community and respond to local needs, so please raise awareness for the Wiltshire Community Foundation with your communities.

Local insight is a new resource available to anyone keen to understand more about the needs of local people and places. The key focus is in supporting the voluntary sector and providing data to support grant applications and find localised data to give statistics.

Margaret will be hosting monthly drop in sessions online to introduce the portal and discuss local issues. Details of the resource and the drop in sessions can be found here <https://wcf.localinsight.org/#/map>.

409 Updates from the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils (WALC)

Ian Nockolds provided a written update:

The next WALC Executive Meeting is on July 7th. It's a hybrid meeting and I would strongly encourage Swindon Councils to attend, to ensure your voice is heard. The agenda includes any other business and I'm conscious that some Councils have raised concerns about the loss of funding for Neighbourhood Plans. This and other issues are invited for discussion at the Executive, with reports passed to the National Association of Local Councils. Can anyone interested in attending please contact me for further details.

The National Association of Local Councils and the Charity Commission have been confirmed for our County Conference on September 10th, which is advertised on the WALC website. The Charity Commission will be focussing on the role of a Council as sole Trustee, whilst NALC will be discussing their lobbying role. More information will be advertised as speakers are confirmed, but the listing on the website can be found at: https://www.wiltshire-alc.org.uk/council_events/county-conference-10th-september-2025/

Councils may have seen social media publicity around the recent Wiltshire Climate Summit, which was arranged in collaboration between Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council. In preparation for this event I have prepared support for Councils around the SLCC draft Biodiversity policy, which I would be happy to share with anyone interested in exploring this further.

Finally, I am conscious of Town and Parish elections scheduled for next year and I would like to report that following meetings with Wiltshire Council, I strongly urge the planning for preparatory events as early as possible. I will produce an induction guide for our Swindon member councillors, tailored to your relationship with Swindon Borough Council. I would also like to offer online sessions to prospective candidates and member Councils on election administration, as we did with Wiltshire. Feedback from the Wiltshire elections would suggest that the earlier we can arrange these the better.

Thank you for your interest in WALC and I welcome any comments, questions or feedback the Forum may have. Hopefully next time you meet I will be with you in-person.

410 SLCF Standards Board Representative

Members acknowledged that Councillor M Compton (Blunsdon) has stepped down as a Parish Councillor and therefore a vacancy is available for a Standards Board Representative.

Councillor I Kersey (Chiseldon) offered to take Councillor M Compton's place.

411 Working Together

The Chairman reported that the Leader and CEO had determined that a meeting with all heads of services was required to get buy-in for the Protocol principles but had not been able to set this up despite reminders. The Chair of the Partnership Working Party said that the Community Liaison Officers remained reluctant to discuss any measures that would enable Parishes to take a more central role in community building and initiatives.

Members expressed frustration at the lack of progress. Some felt that the themes of some Annexes are not relevant to parishes, although they acknowledged after discussion that part of the protocol appendices focused on Highways & Infrastructure was a good starting point to build partnership working.

Partnership working is beginning to happen on an individual basis in some parishes, especially with the expansion and success of the early intervention services such as Live Well. SBC has requested to work with parishes and visit some local initiatives. Members would like SBC to allow parishes to take on their own projects and not block any progress. The key element is to get SBC to work with parishes.

The protocol document with the added appendices as presented and agreed by parishes remain the same and this is the version that will be presented to SBC during the discussions.

The Forum would suggest that the meeting is initially taken with Highways and Infrastructure in the beginning as well as developing better working practices with Helena and Kirsten.

The Chair agreed to try again to get a review with the CEO and Leader.

Parish Council outstanding items:

Wroughton: March 2025 reported a 'Keep Left' road sign, reference given and after a chase up did not recognise the reference, case closed. New sign eventually installed but this is only single sided. Tree enquiry response states that this is now parish council's responsibility – SBC acknowledged this was a mistake. Query on what is happening with the Local Plan as there are housing developers are eager. Hedge cutting, council housing hedges but did not cut the footpath side then had to come out twice.

Members acknowledged a lot of 'case closed' examples and questioned whether this is in relation to the service level agreement, to ensure timescales with contractors are not compromised, but it is unknown what services are delivered externally. May need to be further training in the SBC Call Centre as acknowledged fast turnaround in staffing.

Stanton: CIL Payments revision has been re-run. Previous system is more instructive and details funding and development. New system doesn't go in to the level of detail. Experiences are that this is getting better in the last couple of years but appreciate that a breakdown would be helpful itemised per year.

6 monthly meeting with the Chief Executive and the Leader is due in August 2025.

Rate cards still outstanding for parish rates on items such as street licences.

Action: Call out to all parishes to collate agenda items and outstanding matters for the 6 monthly Leadership Meetings.

Borough Wide Dog Fouling PSPO Consultation

Members have noted at retrospective parish councils. Collectively, enforcement improvements could be raised as something that could be enhanced to resolve some of these issues. Statistics of enforcement charges could be asked for to share with the Forum as acknowledged this would be a very difficult area for enforcement to monitor. The statistic request could also be expanded to find out the costs for Fly tipping and Parking as well. Breakdown by Ward would be useful.

412 Additional Powers for Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)

Members received an update that Wiltshire Police give the least amount of power to PCSOs than any other district in the UK as Wiltshire is relatively a lower-crime area, this is disproportionate because of how rural Wiltshire is and is the lowest funded Police Force. PCSOs are keen to do more within the community and would like to

ask parishes to support them by jointly writing to the Police Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable to consider issuing additional powers to PCSOs to better support communities within Swindon. In most cases, the PCSOs have the equipment and power to stop activity. A list will be developed and escalated to individual parishes for further feedback. PCSOs are integral to local communities.

413 Membership Subscriptions

Members noted an overpayment from a parish council due to having a similar bank account name as WALC memberships. This has now been rectified with payments being sent back. There are also bank charges which are being incurred which has happened within this financial year.

414 Members Reports

Wroughton – bus boulevard is finished, unsure why it isn't being used yet, will there be a grand opening? *John Street works still being done but not visible from the boulevard, this is the area that outer Swindon buses will come from.*

Hannington – visited Officers at Wroughton Parish Council, who were fantastic and very professional, helpful with play area tenders.

Liddington – biogas development site update - 50 parishioners went along to an unprofessional site visit, planning went through – national landscape site – close to hospital. Concerns of a fire risk for South Swindon & Liden but these were not considered. Liddington is looking into legalities for a judiciary and will be considering a review and further press/media.

Highworth – old golf course, nature haven naturally regenerated, preplanning application for an exception site for 25 houses, but under local plan and 700 houses – this will be looked at scrutiny committee.

South Marston – developer negotiations in progress. PC hoped to take on Green Infrastructure instead of a Management Company. The Developers were initially supportive but expected the PC to have the initial capabilities of a commercial Managing Agent rather than being a substitute for a Resident Management Company. Additionally, the Developers were not prepared to accept that if there was no management company there would be a small premium on the value on the houses. Ultimately, the developers were not prepared to put money into the parish taking over the GI maintenance even though the Management Company model equates to double taxation, happy to share experiences.

415 Items for the Next Agenda

To be passed to the Secretary or Chairman in advance of the next meeting on the 18th September 2025.

The meeting closed at 21.10