

Report on the Partnership Working initiative by Colin McEwen 01.11.2025

Helena Robinson introduced me to Matt Peachey Corporate Director for Economic Development etc. at the Let's Talk Swindon event and he was generally supportive of the Community Plan concept, mirroring Simon Anthony's willingness to look at cooperation on infrastructure matters when we met a few weeks ago.

I also spoke to Sam who confirmed her willingness for us to be involved as consultees in developing Borough plans.

Following these discussions, I looked again at the "One Community" guidelines that she and KN said would direct our discussions a year ago. I referred Helena to parts of this and remarked that we hadn't made significant progress.

Subsequently she and I had a meeting to review the Protocol that went well and amounted to a tidying up of the 2024 version. Attached. Please confirm that this may be circulated to members with the Agenda

Helena had agreed that she, SA and MP would come to our November meeting, but a clash of dates has prevented this.

An in-person meeting with myself, HR, SA and MP has been organised in CR2 TV for the 17<sup>th</sup> of December at 15.00, open to WG members as available.

"To explore cooperative working between the Borough and Local Councils through the Protocol and draft Annexes adopted by SBC Cabinet in March 2024"

Having achieved a change of approach from Helena, we may need to move on to consider how Partnership Working might be achieved in practice. She and I both feel that increased senior Officer involvement on both sides on both sides will be essential. Perhaps we could review the Working Group either before or after the 17<sup>th</sup> December.

### Organisation

Last year HR and KN were clear that the Protocol was inappropriate and instead HR developed a Meetings schematic that they hoped would magically produce joint working. In practice, the Clerks meetings have assumed greater importance to the detriment of the Forum. KN is clearly happy working with fellow Clerks and also gets appropriate Officers along to talk to them, whereas we don't even know if the appropriate officers are in post.

This needs addressing so that we are the primary body that the appropriate officers address. To my mind this would ideally mean that all Councillors and Officers who are interested attend Forum meetings. If this means we need a bigger room, let's get a bigger room. The Clerk's meetings could then revert to procedural, training and operational issues.

Another question is how useful the Joint Leadership meetings are in their present format. The last one was sprung on us and, to my mind, was an unfocussed waste of time. I have asked HR if she will work with us to set an agreed Agenda for the next. Would they better be incorporated into the Forum meeting calendar?

#### What's in a name?

Firstly, the term "Forum" suggests a meeting and is uncertain. Should we change it to "Association"?

Next, some people are confused or unhappy with the term "Parish Council" and this may affect our credibility. Should we move towards "Local Council" in all our correspondence and suggest that members adopt this term?

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