

Swindon Local Councils Forum Minutes 12th March 2026
Meeting held at 7pm in Swindon Borough Council (SBC) Civic Offices,
Committee Room 1

Those present: V Manro (Chairman), I Jankinson (Blunsdon), P Park (Central North), A Houghton (Highworth), C McEwen (South Marston), N Hole (South Marston), G (Liddington), R Codrington (Stanton Fitwarren), J Firmin (South Swindon), N Hopkins (South Swindon), D Archer (Wroughton) and J Hewer (Wroughton)

Also present: L Cutter (Secretary, SLCF)

Cllr G McCaffery (Chair, Wiltshire Association of Local Councils)

H Robinson (Service Director for Integrated Communities & Partnerships, SBC)

Remote attendance: S Anthony (Director of Operations, SBC)

449 Apologies

Were received and accepted from K Glanville (Wanborough), I Kearsey (Chiseldon), A John (Haydon Wick), R Hailstone (Haydon Wick), E Freemantle (Wroughton), C Bunnie (Liddington), J Mee (South Swindon), J Chandler (St Andrews), V Curtis (Covingham) and G Hawkes (Covingham).

450 Minutes

Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 20th November 2026, with amendments to the title.

Proposed: Councillor G Wilson

Seconded: Councillor V Manro

Vote: Agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 20th November 2026, with amendments to the title.

451 Matters arising from the Minutes

Most items covered on the agenda for this evening's meeting.

452 Updates from Wiltshire Association of Local Councils (WALC)

Cllr G McCaffery (Chair, Wiltshire Association of Local Councils) introduced himself and provided an overview of his background to the Forum. Having recently been appointed as Chairman of WALC, he noted that he has been working closely with Ian Nockolds, and that both are keen to engage with local councils and their representatives.

Cllr G McCaffery highlighted that all available training is listed on the WALC website. In response to comments and queries from members, there is now a greater emphasis on planning training for councillors, as well as a new online Councillor Induction Course, which will be available following the local elections in May.

Upcoming events:

- **22 April 2026** – Large Councils' Meeting at Moredon Sports Hub.
- **Date TBA** – Highways Seminar focusing on safety and speed awareness, including the use of Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) and ways to support smaller parishes that do not have budgets to purchase SIDs.

- **Provisionally 23 September 2026** – County Conference in Swindon (venue to be confirmed). Suggestions for topics or guest speakers are welcomed; please forward any ideas to Ian Nockolds.

454 Partnership Working & Communications with Swindon Borough Council (SBC)

Members received a presentation from Swindon Borough Council on the Operations Update, Inclusive Growth Service Update and Communities Update.

Operations Update

Simony Anthony, Operations Director

- **Weed Control:** Liaison with parish councils ensures treatment of footways and carriageways focuses on areas with weeds rather than blanket spraying. This service is contracted out, with one application in spring and one in autumn. Procurement documents for carriageway and footway weed spraying are being consolidated, with a contractor to be appointed by the end of the month. Telematic data will provide evidence of where spraying has been carried out.
- **Street Sweeping:** Parishes are primarily responsible for street sweeping, although some side agreements deviate from this. The Borough Council operates one large mechanical sweeper, used approximately one parish per month and prioritised for tasks such as line painting. Collaboration with parishes is encouraged to maximise coverage.
- **Spring Events:** Initiatives such as the Great British Spring Clean offer opportunities for volunteering and litter picking. Support is available for parish council events, including loan of kits and collection of materials.
- **Parish Council Street Works:** A reduced rate for street works, approved by Cabinet in February, allows parish councils to undertake projects such as signage and benches more economically. Feedback is welcomed, though the reduction applies only to works from February onwards.
- **Special Requirements for Small Parishes:** Concerns were raised by Liddington regarding safety and support, including traffic management and new speed cameras, with recorded speeds up to 112mph. SBC is trialling ANPR cameras around schools, in collaboration with police, to improve enforcement. There is a commitment to work more collaboratively after the elections.
- **Recycling and Forward Planning:** Issues were noted regarding disposal of large loads of plastics and tins, with examples of successful initiatives to be considered for replication. Forward planning beyond May is encouraged to ensure parishes have clarity on recycling, plastic, tins, and general waste management.

A working together group will be established by the end of May/June with Matt Peachey and Simon Anthony to improve coordination and predictability of services, responsibilities, and support for smaller parishes.

Swindon Economic Growth Plan Update

Matt Peachy, Service Director Inclusive Growth

The economic growth plan was adopted by Cabinet last week, with members briefed on the main details. The plan aims to create better opportunities for residents and promote equality across Swindon, linking heritage with modern initiatives, such as attracting drone manufacturers and other employment opportunities. A strategic framework for Swindon's Country Parks has been developed, focusing on maintenance, biodiversity, and community use. Feedback from 150 consultations was well received, and funding opportunities are now being explored to deliver each park's unique character, encompassing nature, wellbeing, heritage, accessibility, and a welcoming environment.

Some elements are delivered by parish councils, providing potential for collaborative opportunities with larger parishes, and greater involvement in documents referencing parished areas is encouraged.

Communities Update

Helena Robinson, Service Director for Integrated Communities & Partnerships

Swindon is rich in community assets and organisations, with various places and spaces acting as community hubs that bring services closer to residents. These hubs provide welcoming spaces to connect, advise, and share resources with partners, helping to present opportunities or resolve issues earlier, before demand on Council services escalates. There are four core hubs (Penhill, Central Library, West Swindon Library, and Cavendish Square), supported by four locality teams, extension hubs, and partnership hubs, with participation based on who wishes to work in these spaces. The aim is for multi-skilled individuals to provide immediate support to families rather than relying on waiting lists, with interventions focused where the need is greatest.

Conversations have begun around sharing spaces and ideas, providing insight and data, and enhancing existing offers. There is potential for other locations to provide remote access to services, one-off workshops, or shared spaces for common community themes. Initiatives such as the Best Start in Life family hub focus on families and children, including midwives and related support, with parish councils helping to identify additional resources and better locations, such as John Moulton Hall, guided by data and communications. Where hubs are not available, services continue to be reported through Live Well.

Partnership Working Update

A protocol document has been circulated, though traction with SBC Officers is pending; it will be tidied up and progressed following the May elections, with any further amendments to be reported back. Community plans are being developed based on areas rather than strict parish or ward boundaries.

Positive relationships with key stakeholders, including Helena, have been noted, with thanks to Colin for progressing the work, though some delays are expected due to elections.

453 Shared Leadership Forum & Proposed New Format

A proposal was put forward for meetings to include the Leader of the Council, Chief Executive, relevant Cabinet Member, and a representative Chair from the Forum, with Officers and Directors also invited as appropriate. The rationale is to streamline discussions, as many meetings currently cover similar themes. Members agreed to take the proposal back to their respective councils for further consideration. It was suggested that feedback be reviewed at each meeting, with representatives reporting back on comments and areas for improvement. A Forum representative would attend these meetings to ensure continuity, recognising that multiple conversations are taking place and aiming to maintain a cohesive approach while assessing how the arrangement works in practice. It was also proposed that parish representatives attend where possible, with a schedule developed to map availability and plan around existing commitments.

Action: Individual Parish Councils to take this proposal back and agree on a new format.

455 Transfer of Services/ Service Level Agreements with SBC

Covered above in Simon Anthony's update.

456 Weed Spraying and Street Sweeping Communications

Covered above in Simon Anthony's update.

457 Joint Procurement Projects

Feedback has been received from several parishes, and the information is still being collated. Any common themes identified will be shared with members once the review is complete.

Members agreed that there should be better alignment of project timescales. While some projects have fixed deadlines, others may offer greater flexibility, or it may be possible to extend time at the end of certain contracts to allow for better coordination.

Members also suggested gathering further information from parishes in the following areas:

- **Insurance** – noting that costs have increased; there may be opportunities to work collectively to negotiate improved rates.
- **HR support**, including payroll services.
- **Project timescales** and opportunities to better synchronise timelines across councils.
- **Booking systems and access arrangements**, including the use of door code systems for community facilities.

458 Thermal Imaging Cameras

South Swindon Parish Council has purchased several cameras and has already begun loaning them out following a recent press release. The initiative is being delivered collaboratively with other parish councils that share similar objectives, with some cameras also intended for inclusion within the library system. Loans are being managed manually through parish council offices, including Chiseldon, Haydon Wick, and Central North. Although weather conditions are changing, the cameras remain effective where there are variations in temperature. Three cameras are still available,

and there is ongoing consideration around further participation, with some expected to be returned shortly. Appropriate loan in/loan out paperwork is in place, and Wiltshire Council has supported the initiative, with bulk purchasing helping to reduce costs.

459 S171 Street Works Licences

A 50% reduction for parish councils has been applied. The rates will be distributed from the new financial year; the discount cannot be claimed in retrospect for previous projects. Further clarification will be sought as to whether one permit covers an area i.e. two benches next to each other or if one would need to be purchased for each piece of equipment.

460 Elections / Post Elections

An email was received from Matt Box containing details of the nomination papers. Candidates are advised to use the system to have their papers checked by booking a 15-minute appointment through SBC's website. It was also noted that the next SLCF meeting will take place in June, and the AGM will be rescheduled to better align with election cycles.

461 Members Reports

South Swindon: Introduced an organisation called "Best Mates," which coordinates run and walk events at Coate Water and Lydiard. It is a small, local charity focused on peer support, aiming to match individuals in need with others who have lived through similar experiences, such as bereavement, child loss, or homelessness. Participation is open to adults, with a diverse mix of ages and genders involved.

Blunsdon: Has there been any feedback on revised local plan? *Nothing at present but trying to achieve a June deadline. Responses have been published.*

Wroughton: Has recently approved an AI policy and would be willing to share this with other parish councils. Please contact clerk@wroughton.gov.uk

462 Items for the Next Agenda

To be passed to the Secretary or Chairman in advance of the next meeting on the 18th June 2026.

The meeting closed at 21:02