

SOUTH SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL
(CENTRAL SWINDON SOUTH PARISH COUNCIL)

COUNCIL MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2020 at 6.30pm
in the Council Chamber, Parish Council Offices Gladstone Street

Present	Cllr C Watts	Chair
	Cllr J Howarth	Vice-Chair
	Cllr S Ahmed	
	Cllr J Ali	
	Cllr S Allsopp	
	Cllr J Firmin	
	Cllr M Gladman	
	Cllr D Griffiths	
	Cllr A Hamid	
	Cllr E Heavens	
	Cllr P Herring	
	Cllr N Hopkins	
	Cllr W Horley	
	Cllr L Kasmaty	
	Cllr M J Miah	
	Cllr J Miah	
	Cllr J Milner-Barry	
Cllr M Strinkovsky		
Cllr N Watts		
Officers	Rob Core	Clerk
	Jake Mee	Deputy Clerk

Public Five

Public Session A member of the public said that a report attached to the agenda regarding the refurbishment of the Town Garden gates contained errors in the spelling of road names and the Town Gardens. The Clerk said that the address details had been given to the contractor during a phone conversation because they are not local to Swindon and said that the comment had been noted.

A member of the public referred back to full council minutes from December 2019 and asked if modesty screens had been ordered yet. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that options had been provided and when decided on, the modesty covers would be installed.

A member of the public said that Queens Park had notices on the gates which state no cycling, but they had been disregarded by cyclists. He said that elderly people and children walk through the park and are being frightened by cyclists, he commented that cyclists seem to be taking over pavements and public access areas with disregard to the general public. He asked if the parish could do anything and had the gardeners any legal right to challenge the offenders. The Chair said that the gardeners do not have any legal right to challenge offenders and that he had ensured the gardeners did not approach people who are behaving anti-socially as it should be enforced by the relevant enforcement body; who in this case are Swindon Borough Council. The parish council had tried to get enforcement powers transferred to them from Swindon Borough Council to develop their own enforcement team but had been unsuccessful. The parish are currently in next year's budget setting stage and the issue will be revisited again next year.

A member of the public said that he had previously asked about Community Safety Forum meetings which parishes hold. The Chair explained that there had not been

another meeting in the south Swindon parish due to the meetings being held alternately in and around the area. The member of the public said that he is disturbed that the public seemed to be losing contact with the police and neighbourhoods are being starved of information and the only information he got was from the National Neighbourhood Watch. The Chair, Cllr C Watts said that he had attended a Community Safety Forum meeting in December 2019 and had raised the issue of cars speeding in Upham Road directly with the officer in charge of south Swindon. The Chair informed the officer in charge of south Swindon and it had been noted and minuted.

Wiltshire Police Commissioner Precept Presentation

The Chair introduced the Wiltshire Police and Crime Commissioner Angus Macpherson who provided a slide presentation alongside a verbal summary of the Precept Consultation.

The Wiltshire Police and Crime Commissioner Angus Macpherson explained that his role is to be the voice of the people of Wiltshire and Swindon in matters of policing and to take forward comments made by the public and to hold the Chief Constable to account for the service that is provided, and that the powers he and his force hold are being used in a positive approach and in the way that parish communities want them to be used i.e. to cut crime and deliver an efficient policing service. The Commissioner said that it is everyone's duty to police, to look after each other and to report crime to help stop it. Neighbourhood watch is a very good way of doing it.

The Commissioner came to the Parish last year regarding the precept which he wanted to increase substantially to be able to recruit police officers and set up a cyber-crime unit. As people were aware countless people had been "scammed" via the internet, and Facebook is also affecting young people. Cybercrime is growing and the need for cyber policing is evident. Subsequently 41 police officers had been recruited and a cyber-crime unit set up.

It will take 3 years to recruit, train and post an officer. The 41 officers recruited last year started the process in March 2019 and will be joining the Community Policing Teams across Swindon and Wiltshire in April 2020. The recruits have spent time in the classroom and going forward will spend time in tutorship in the communities with a constable. The extra police promised by most of the major parties in the recent campaign where most parties had said that there was a need of more police, the number of 50,000 had been put forward.

The Government stated that they will be funding 6,000 officers nationally in 2020; 49 of whom will be recruited in Wiltshire & Swindon. Until recently officers had been recruited and trained internally in the classroom and on the beat, however this system of training had changed in that new recruits joining in summer 2020 are required to do a university degree which is a national scheme over a period of 3 years with training in the classroom, on the beat along with college work which is in partnership with South Wales University who will deliver the new way of training officers. If the officers gain a degree, they will have a certain amount of credit for the degree which is in line with modern thinking as people do change careers and the qualification would be of help to them in the future.

This is the modern policing world and its changes, which means it takes 3 years to gain the degree, and this will happen with the new officers whose presence will not be seen for 3 years due to the training. Once the officers are ready, they will be joining the Wiltshire and Swindon policing teams and will be at the front line of policing which is not only the people who work in the community teams.

As we move into this decade we will see more cyber-crime; last year the parish enabled us to employ more people in the cyber-crime area which over the next few years will grow tremendously as crime today is not all based around general theft but is cyber enabled and cyber enhanced crime. The front room of policing is effectively the public's front room as that is where the public are using their computers, it does not matter if it is

physical acquisition crime, bank crime etc. or crime against people and those with disabilities, race or young people who are drawn into the county lines that run through Swindon. There is a lot of work to do as we move forward, some of that had been started and we are in a good position.

This year has been difficult because there has been an election, and we have not been told, just like you here in the Parish who is setting your budget. I am now looking to set the policing budget for next year.

There are two streams of income the first from Central Government and the second is raised via the Precept from Council Tax.

Currently each band D property pays £206 per year or £17 per month for policing services. Band D is the middle band and bands higher or lower pay greater or less than £17 per month. I do not know what the Government are going to give me, but I do know that in order to maintain the service we are currently providing in Wiltshire we need to increase the cost by £1 per month and this would mean the average family paying £218 per year, therefore I am consulting the public and I will be going to a police and crime panel - who both support and hold me to account - on behalf of the public this week regarding the consultation.

In the absence of knowing what money is coming from the Government and the absence of knowing what rules they will be putting in place of what I can ask for in the precept I have decided to ask 3 questions which are:

1. Would you be prepared to pay £1 a month to maintain the services as they currently are.
2. Would you be prepared to pay over £1 a month to have an improved service.
3. Would you like to pay less than a £1 increase and see a reduction in service?

There are 3 options on the consultation I do not know what the Government are going to give but do not think I can ask for more than a £1 which in percentage terms is quite a chunky percentage but I need to make sure we have enough money in the bank to pay the officers and staff we have in Wiltshire.

The proposition is to maintain staffing levels at the level we have now. You have heard that the government are giving extra police officers although in Wiltshire 50% of staff who work in policing are not police officers. There are approximately 50% civilian staff and 50% warranted officers because you do not need warranted officers to do a lot of the work done within the totality of policing.

The Government have added police warranted officers but not discussed giving extra money for the staff who support them in terms of training, investigation, interviewing and all back office work. On average it takes 3 years to train, recruit and post officers and we need to continue dealing with cyber and digital capacity and this money will go towards that.

We would like the public to have their say online www.wiltshire-pcc.gov.uk which will be open until the end of January 2020.

The commissioner asked the attendees to undertake the survey which is open until the end of January which is a very short time scale, because we have to tell the Borough Council what we want and have to go to the Police and Crime Panel and present there and then tell the borough what needs to be added to the rates bill which then has to be sent out, so we are normally in a better position than we are today.

There have been more responses this year than in the past 8 years we would like your responses which will be published in due course.

I am happy to take questions away and also to the Police Inspectors for their operational matters and respond via the Clerk.

Cllr J Firmin asked how many new recruits are needed a year just to standstill and to

deal with natural depletion as the new training model will take longer. The Police Commissioner said that just replacing officers is about 60-70 a year and that the force have a graph which gives the data of new, retiring and expecting to leave staff. Approximately 30 years ago there was a big increase in police recruitment and now due to the retirement of those recruited then and replacing them is difficult and in addition new recruits are required as well.

Cllr J Howarth said that one of the most visible problematic areas at the moment is McDonalds in Swindon town centre as it attracts a lot of people including young people who congregate in the evenings and behave anti-socially. Although there are PCSO orders in place no one seems to check them. The Commissioner said that he knew the area and would take the questions back to the Inspector of the division. Increasingly across the county there is security in the same way as within the Brunel Centre the In-Swindon team including other borough officers look after the area. The Chief Constable had given certain powers to civilian security staff in Salisbury, they are very limited powers', but they will help to move anti-social behaviour on. The Commissioner said that he is talking to Brunel Management in Swindon and the Shires Management in Trowbridge informing them of the powers that are available to them if they can prove that their staff are able and would the information regarding McDonalds area back to the Inspector of the division, and also suggested that the parish might like to write to Swindon Borough Council as a lot of this is around that.

Cllr D Griffiths said that there had been successful police raids on drugs but following that Swindon town centre has no police visibility which makes it easy for drug dealers to be in car parks, playgrounds and other areas all over Swindon dealing drugs. There are apparently 39 County lines through Swindon. Cybercrime is important, but youth crime and county lines seriously need to be dealt with in Swindon and people need to see uniformed police officers in cars, bikes and foot. Over the Christmas period there had been good police visibility, but no presence now. The commissioner said that if you do not have the staff you do not see them and that extra police had been recruited year and they are recruiting more who will not be back office staff but on the streets 60% – 40% of the increase between the County and Swindon. The commissioner said that he wanted policing on the streets, and the officers are being given the technology to do paperwork wherever they are and would ensure their visibility at the same time. The whole focus is getting police into visible policing back into communities.

Cllr Hopkins said that the current situation is due to recent governments reducing police numbers and allowing police numbers to reduce, and now the price is being paid for it. Drugs are out of control; youth services had been reduced therefore the ability to intervene at a crucial stage in young people's lives had gone, although when bobbies were on the beat they made and maintained relationships with the public. Cllr Hopkins said that he had reported a car parking issue via 101 the police phone line 3 times; and had been disappointed because nobody wanted to deal with it. The Commissioner said that it is Swindon Borough Councils responsibility and they had the powers to deal with that sort of crime. Cllr Hopkins said that the Borough Council had said they cannot deal with it.

The Commissioner said that policing is a last resort for many of the current crimes and mental health issues. The police had to prioritise and do not have time to check cars while there are more serious issues. Parking wardens were taken away from the police force a long time ago and the responsibility given to borough councils. It is now the borough council's responsibility. The Commissioner said that the Clerk should write to Swindon Borough Council regarding enforcement as they had been given money for such issues and the commissioner will feed the information back to the Inspector.

The Clerk said that the commissioner had said that he should write to Swindon borough council regarding powers of enforcement, and he would take up that offer potentially, but the borough council are not responding to anything from the Chief Executive down. Locally we are in a one beat area Broadgreen area where we have issues, and there are also issues in Queens Park, which falls under the Swindon town centre policing team as

far as the Clerk is aware, and we are struggling to make contact with them. A visual presence would help change the park and we would like to take up the offer of a conversation with you or the right person as to whether we can adopt powers from you albeit limited we could at least make some progress.

The Commissioner said that he will feed the comments about Queens park and McDonalds back to the inspector. Neighbourhood Watch is alive and well and that the police are working to put leaflets with information regarding sign up to community messaging where information about your local policing team and what is happening in your area and advice on all areas of their work. Leaflets could be added to the Parish newsletter.

A member of public said that police are having to respond to people with mental health and mental wellbeing issues therefore the police take more time dealing with the incidents due to the person(s) having to be taken to Devizes Hospital as Sandalwood Court in Swindon which had been a place of safety had closed.

The Commissioner said that he supported the change because it is better to have a place where a mental health doctor, mental health nurse and a social worker are in one place, where the patient is cared for by the right services. The system is better than it had been because now a patient is not taken into custody but getting the appropriate treatment. Police officers still drive patients to Devizes, but the Commissioner said he would prefer that the ambulance service took them and is trying to negotiate with the ambulance service to help with the issues around the mental health crisis.

The Deputy Clerk told the commissioner that the parish council are starting to deliver a youth programme, including county lines, educational projects and among other things which will be trying to fill the gaps at the lower level. Last year a youth budget was set, and the parish are now looking to deliver a quality youth programme to tackle youth issues in the area.

A member of the public asked how many defibrillators were in cars as he had noticed signs on police cars stating that they carry defibrillators and asked if it had been the commissioner's idea. The commissioner said that it had not been his idea.

Cllr C Watts said that he was concerned about the 50,000 that need to be trained for 3 years before they are on the streets because there is a 10,000 attrition rate so will be down by 30,000 before the 50,000 come in to bring the 20,000 back up again so it will get worse before it gets better, if the 50,000 get through, and they all pass. Also, I believe the government are paying for the training, the commissioner said that the recruits will be paid for from day 1 and they are paid for over and above the grant from the government and the money he gets from the parish. The Commissioner said that he will get the money for the first 49 new officers.

1014 Apologies

Cllr V Ayris
Cllr S James
Cllr S Pajak
Cllr T Philpot

1015 Declaration of Interest & Applications for Dispensation

None

1016 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 17 December 2019 be approved as a correct record.

1017 Finance & Staffing Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Finance and Staffing Meeting held on 17 December 2019 be approved as a correct record.

1018 Leisure & Amenities Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Leisure & Amenities Meeting held on 07 January 2020 be approved as a correct record.

1019 Planning & Environment Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning and Environment Meeting held on 07 January 2020 be approved as a correct record.

1020 Chair's Report

Background:

The Borough Council consulted on the creation of Parish Councils in unparished areas of the Borough in 2016. The consultations included two public consultations and working groups consisting of Borough Councillors in affected areas.

The order to create the new Parish Councils was signed in November 2016 along with the inception of the shadow Parish Councils. The Shadow Parish Councils were tasked with creating the initial Parish precepts for submission in February 2017. The first elections for the new Parish Council took place in May 2017.

The Borough Council intended to TUPE street cleaning and grounds staff to the new Parishes for April 2017. Due to the extremely short timescale allowed for the creation of the new Parishes, pressure on Borough Council resources and challenges obtaining budgetary information required from the Borough Council, it was deemed that this would be an unacceptable risk to continuation of service. The larger new Parish Councils requested that the Borough Council continue to provide street cleaning and grounds maintenance under contract, giving the Parishes the breathing space to build the organisations, secure continuation of service and protect staff. This was agreed by Swindon Borough Council.

In 2018, an independent auditor reported that South Swindon Parish Council (SSPC) was receiving value for money for services provided with caveats that included on-costs not being levied and issues with communication between SSPC and the street cleaning operation. For this reason, SSPC was unable to commit to a further 4 year contract for SBC to continue to supply the services. There would also be questions regarding procurement legislation if SSPC was to consider awarding a 4 year contract to the Borough. The current provision is a 1 year contract with a 4 month notice period to quit. It is understood by SSPC that a 1 year contract is a challenge for SBC with regards to leasing and procurement of machinery.

It is the adopted policy of the SSPC that future service will be supplied by a Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) model. Report ref: Minute 897. The report also highlights concerns with the future viability of SBC.

Nov 2019: SSPC gave notice to SBC of the intention to self deliver street cleaning services provisionally commencing May 2020 with the intention of self delivery of ground maintenance at a later date. It was the aim of SSPC to stagger the transfer in order to minimise potential risk to service and staff retention. This flexible approach to the proposed transfer takes into consideration the challenges SBC face regarding resources to deliver a timely TUPE process.

Whilst SSPC has sought to engage SBC regarding self delivery of street services, communication has been sporadic and conflicting. Whilst we have not received official notice of SBC's intentions, we have noted the January 2020 SBC cabinet papers that would lead SSPC to believe that 4 months' notice will be given by SBC with regards to street cleaning and groundwork services.

Whilst SSPC are content that we are in a position to complete a TUPE process, provide

for equipment machinery and premises in the required timescale, we are concerned that SBC will not be able to deliver a seamless transition in 4 months. It needs to be considered that SBC's task is further complicated in that the cabinet papers suggest notice will be given to all Parish Councils simultaneously.

The Budget:

Since November 2019, SSPC have been creating a budget to move the Parish forward to a position of self delivery of street cleaning as per policy statement minuted in minute 897.

The emergence of SBC Cabinet papers January 2020 and lack of direct communication by SBC to SSPC have placed SSPC in a position where the budget now needs to be re-written to be robust enough to ensure SSPC can deliver both street cleaning and grounds maintenance services if 4 months' notice is served in the short term.

The current staff and continuity of service are of paramount importance through this process. Therefore, the parish also needs to be flexible enough to allow for delay from SBC due to their resource issue, but this will require a much improved level of communication from SBC.

*It should be noted that further concerns with regards to the viability of SBC to deliver services moving forward for SSPC have been raised after the announcement, at a joint SBC / Parish Council meeting in December 2020, that SBC will need to find a further annual saving of £48M per year saving from the revenue budget by 2023.

1021 Town Gardens – Gates

The Clerk submitted a report on the refurbishment of the Old Town Garden Gates a copy of which appears as Appendix A in the Minute Book.

A report provided by the refurbishment company gave an in-depth report of past maintenance and colours used on the Quarry Road and Goddard Avenue gates which consistently matched in maintenance and colour. Unfortunately, the Quarry Road gates had been previously damaged by lorries hitting them due to small turning/reversing space in the area. The Clerk had approached Swindon Borough Council regarding the Parish installing bollards to protect the gates in the future.

Councillors discussed the colours and the necessity of installing bollards to protect the Quarry Road gates.

Councillor J Milner-Barry proposed with amendment replicating the original dark red/brown colour

Councillor M Strinkovsky proposed Dark Green

RESOLVED that Councillor J Milner-Barry's proposal be approved.

1022 Responses Working Party Update

The Chair of the Responses Working Party said that there was nothing to report at this time.

The meeting closed at 07.42 pm

Signed.....

Date.....

Chair of the Council