

South Swindon Parish Council

Leisure, Environment & Amenities Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 1st October 2024 at 6.30pm

In the Parish Council Office, Gladstone Street, SN1 2AU

Present:	Cllr L Kasmaty (Chair) Cllr J Firmin (Vice Chair) Cllr S Allsopp Cllr D Griffiths Cllr P Herring	Cllr N Hopkins Cllr S James Cllr R Banwell-Moore Cllr T Silberberg
Apologies:	Cllr M Le Coyte-Grinney	Cllr D Vales
Officers:	Matt Leather Carol Clark Abigail Garside-Scutts	Deputy CEO Assistant Clerk Events Manager
Public:	Mark Taylor	
Public Questions & Representations:	Mark Taylor of Durham Street addressed agenda item 11, Queen's Park Lake. The resident said they were keen to engage with the council on its approach to improving the lake and use his expertise and contacts to develop the right approach to managing the lake.	

2425 – 126 Apologies

The Committee accepted apologies from Cllr M Le Coyte-Grinney and Cllr D Vales.

2425 – 127 Declaration of interest & Applications for dispensation

None

2425 – 128 Victoria Road/Wood Street Work & “Vision for the Heart of Swindon” Initiative

David Dewart, Head of Strategic Place Making at Swindon Borough Council, delivered a presentation on possible future improvements to Victoria Road and Wood Street and a new initiative by the Borough Council to improve the Town Centre and surrounding area.

Regarding the Victoria Road and Wood Street improvements, councillors provided the following feedback:

- There would be additional congestion caused by these changes to the road network and public realm.
- The likely timeframe to deliver these changes.
- The need to consult residents and businesses in Old Town.
- Possible diversion routes to move traffic away from the Bath Road/Victoria Road Roundabout.
- Seeking Highways department input into the scheme.

Regarding the “Vision for the Heart of Swindon” project, councillors provided the following feedback:

- The need to move the Town Centre towards an early evening economy offering.
- Getting staff of employers in the Town Centre Offices back in to the office to increase footfall.
- Developing a piazza around the Town Hall.
- Managing the infrastructure for the large number of residential units planned for the wider Town Centre area.
- Addressing the social issues in the Town Centre.

2425 – 129 Dussehra - GWR Park

The committee received a proposal from Ashutosh Singhal regarding a private event in GWR Park to mark the Ravana Dahan festival. The proposal was supported with a covering report produced by the Events Manager and presentation slides a copy of which appears in the Minute Book as Appendix A.

Feedback, questions and comments from Parish Councillors included on the following issues:

- The precedent of authorised fires in Parish Council parks.
- The documentation needed to for the event to be authorised by the local Event Safety Advisory Group.
- The need for licensing approval.

The Parish Council's Events Manager reiterated their view that the Risk Assessment produced by Mr Singhal was not sufficient and that she recommended that the event in the proposed format should not be approved by the Parish Council in one its parks.

RESOLVED: To refuse the request to organise the Dussehra event in GWR Park and to suggest other parks and open spaces that may be more appropriate for this event.

RESOLVED: To bring forward agenda item 11, Queen's Park Lake to the next item of business.

2425 – 130 Queen's Park Lake

A report produced by the Parish Council's CEO was presented to Councillors on measures the Parish Council had taken to improve the Queen's Park Lake and future measures Parish Officers are reviewing to improve the lake's water quality. A copy of this report appears in the Minute Book as Appendix B.

RESOLVED: Councillors note the content of the report.

Draft Youth Strategy

2425 – 131 Cllr James, as Chair of the Youth Working Party, presented the draft Youth Strategy and the strategy's covering report, a copy of which appears in the Minute Book as Appendix C

Cllr Griffiths said that the potential of a new Grants Officer would need to be considered by the Finance & Staffing Committee as there are staffing and cost implications. Cllr Hopkins was supportive of seeking further grants support as the role could pay for itself in grant funding.

Cllr James proposed adding a further resolution that the Leisure, Environment and Amenities Committee be updated on the progress of the Youth Strategy every 6 months.

RESOLVED: To recommend the draft Youth Strategy to Full Council.

RESOLVED: That the Leisure, Environment and Amenities Committee be updated on the progress of the Youth Strategy every 6 months.

Broadgreen Community Centre Update

2425 – 132 The Deputy CEO presented a report to Councillors on remedial work to the Broadgreen Community Centre bollard and entrance door, a copy of the report appears in the Minute Book as Appendix D. He asked that a decision on the Broadgreen Community Centre front door be deferred until a future meeting to ensure the door replacement suits all centre users.

Cllr Hopkins supported the proposed bollard renewal but proposed installing additional protective measures to protect the bollard in the future including rumble strips or a speed hump up to the bollard and CCTV coverage of this area.

RESOLVED: To defer a decision on the community centre entrance door to a future meeting.

RESOLVED: To support the replacement of the car park bollard with a view to installing additional protective measures.

Buckhurst Playzone

2425 – 133 The Deputy CEO presented a report to Councillors on the new Playzone planned for Buckhurst Field, including a design of the new Playzone. A copy of the report and design appears in the Minute Book as Appendix E. Cllr Allsopp felt CCTV would be necessary to deter damage on the courts. Cllr Hopkins said it was essential the Council did all it could to protect the Playzone, including CCTV.

Recommendations

1. To support the design of the Playzone as proposed in Appendix A.
2. To provide feedback on the issues detailed in the report.

RESOLVED: To approve recommendation 1.

Buckhurst Improvement Programme Update

2425 – 134 The Deputy CEO provided a verbal update on the progress of the Buckhurst Field Improvement Programme. His update included the completion of the car park resurfacing and expected completion of the goal store. He updated Councillors on the continued challenges in drawing down the funding from the Oakfield Board and the challenges that delays might cause.

Tree Carving at GWR Park

2425 – 135 The Parish Council's Committee Officer had produced a report on the potential sculpting of a tree at GWR Park and the report was presented by the Deputy CEO. Cllr Firmin was supportive of further tree carvings in the park and encouraged officers to seek proposals for other trees.

Recommendations:

3.1 To commission Graham Derham to carry out the tree carving as proposed in Point 2.3.

3.2 To provide guidance on whether the Council would like proposals for carvings of other tree stumps.

RESOLVED: To approve recommendation 3.1 with funding for this covered from the Formal Parks Earmarked Reserve.

Rewilding Review

2425 – 136 The Parish Council's Open Spaces Consultant had produced a report reviewing the Parish Council's Rewilding Strategy and this was presented by the Deputy CEO.

Recommendations:

3.1 Resolve to amend the current list of re-wilding areas listed in Point 2.1 by removing for 2024 the sites at Sandringham Road Open Space, the Magic Roundabout, and Queens Drive / Ripon Way.

3.2 Resolve to bring forward the cut and clear work at GWR Park to coincide with the natural end of flowering / seeding of the cow parsley.

3.3 Resolve to note the various options as proposed by the Ecologist and detailed in the Report

but to continue with the existing maintenance regime for 2025.

3.4 Resolve to continue to monitor the progress of the re-wilding areas and re-evaluate the re-wilding schemes should there be a continued decline in botanical diversity.

RESOLVED: To approve recommendation 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4.

Allotment Site Reps Meeting Notes

2425 – 137 The Deputy CEO presented the notes from the allotment site reps meeting held on the 10th September 2024.

RESOLVED: To note the record of the Allotments Site Rep meeting held on the 10th September 2024.

Town Gardens Toilets

2425 – 138 The Parish Council's Deputy CEO presented a report on the Town Gardens toilets. Cllr James said it was crucial the Parish Council was providing equal coverage when considering any changes to the toilets. Cllr Hopkins asked that parish officers order additional counters in order to count numbers in other facilities to the Town Gardens toilets. Cllr Firmin asked that if the council is to check on the usage of the toilets it measures both quiet and busier times to get a full picture. Cllr Banwell-Moore proposed that some research is done with park users who do not use the toilets to get an understanding of the barriers to accessing the toilets, if any.

Recommendation:

3.1 That a dataset is compiled for the usage of Town Gardens toilets using the already available people-counters.

RESOLVED: To approve recommendation 3.1.

RESOLVED: To conduct a survey with park users to understand the barriers to using the public toilets.

Meeting Closes at 20.50pm

Signed.....

Date.....

Chair of the Parish Council