South Swindon Parish Council
Finance & Staffing Council Meeting
Minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2025 at 7.15pm
In the, Parish Council Office, Gladstone Street, SN1 2AU

Present:	Cllr Neil Hopkins (Chair) Cllr John Firmin Cllr Patrick Herring	Cllr Rebecca Banwell-Moore (Vice-Chair) Cllr Sam James
Apologies:	Cllr Junab Ali Cllr Steve Allsopp	Cllr Nadine Watts
Absent:	Cllr Jamal Miah	
Attendees:	Cllr Tom Silberberg	
Officers:	Jake Mee Max Tanner Magdalena Kunda	CEO Committee Officer Finance Manager
Public:	None	
Public Questions:	None	

2526 – 152 **Apologies**

The Committee accepted apologies from Cllr J Ali, Cllr S Allsop and Cllr N Watts.

2526 – 153 **Declarations of Interest & Applications for Dispensation**

Cllr R Banwell-Moore declares an interest for Agenda Item 8 Staff Survey as they have worked for the company on occasion and recommended them to officers.
Cllr N Hopkins declares an interest for donating plants to GWR Park although this will not be on a council agenda until the next meeting of the Leisure, Environment & Amenities Committee.

2526 – 154 **Accounts – June 2025**

The CEO and Finance Manager submitted the Parish Council's Accounts for September 2025, a copy of which appears as Appendix A in the Minute Book.

RESOLVED: That the Accounts for September 2025 be approved.

2526 – 155 **Payment Schedule – July, August & September 2025**

The CEO and Finance Manager submitted the Payment Schedule for July, August & September 2025, a copy of which appears as Appendix B in the Minute Book.

RESOLVED: That the Payment Schedule for July, August & September 2025 be approved.

2526 – 156 **Budget Monitoring Report – Quarter Two**

The CEO and Finance Manager submitted the quarterly budget monitoring report for quarter two 2025-26. A copy of which appears as Appendix C in the Minute Book.

RESOLVED: That the quarterly budget monitoring report for quarter two 2025-26 be noted.

2526 – 157 **<u>Grants</u>**

The committee was presented with a report detailing the latest grant applications. A copy of which appears as Appendix D in the Minute Book.

<u>19th Swindon Scouts – £1,000</u>

RESOLVED: To approve the grant application of £1,000

<u>Wiltshire Treehouse - £1,000</u>

RESOLVED: To approve the grant application for £1,000.

<u>Step - £2,000</u>

RESOLVED: To approve the grant application of £1,251.07

2526 – 158 **<u>Flexible Working Policy</u>**

The committee received a draft policy for flexible working requests. A copy of which appears as Appendix E in the Minute Book.

RESOLVED: To adopt the Flexible Working Policy.

2526 – 159 **<u>Staff Survey</u>**

The Deputy CEO submitted a report regarding commissioning a staff survey. A copy of which appears as Appendix F in the Minute Book.

<u>Recommendations</u>

3.1 To agree to the commissioning of a staff survey as detailed in Points 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6.

RESOLVED: To approve recommendation 3.1.

2526 – 160 **<u>Investment Monitoring</u>**

To receive a report from the CEO regarding historical investment performance. A copy of which appears as Appendix G in the Minute Book.

<u>Recommendations</u>

1. Continue Balanced Approach Maintain our dual-account strategy which effectively balances immediate revenue needs with long-term capital preservation. The current allocation provides operational flexibility while ensuring reserves continue to grow.

2. Monitor Interest Rate Environment Given the significant impact of interest rates on returns, the team will regularly review whether current account types remain optimal. We will consider fixed-rate options if rates begin to decline to lock in favourable returns.

3. Review Account Balance Allocation The reduction of CCLA from £2M to £1.8M was necessary for cash flow. This has since been reinvested and the current investment sits at £2,900,00. Maintaining higher balances in both accounts is beneficial given the current favourable rate environment. Therefore, the Finance Team are looking to implement an active investment scheme with the CCLA. This means retaining as much of the revenue budget balance in this account as possible, calculating monthly requirements for paying salaries, suppliers etc and drawing down from the balance. This strategy will maximise the council’s returns on the investment for the coming year.

4. Diversification Opportunities While the current strategy is sound, we have considered exploring additional investment vehicles that might offer higher returns for a portion of reserves that are not needed for immediate liquidity. This includes longer-term fixed deposits or other local authority approved investment options. At the writing of this report, alternatives to the 3.45% rate offered by Nationwide were as high as 3.95% but this would only deliver an additional £878.87pa on the initial capital balance. The administration required to notify, close and move these funds to a lesser-known (riskier) bank with slightly higher returns would not be a safe choice.

5. Regular Performance Reviews Continue conducting annual reviews of investment performance to ensure accounts remain competitive and aligned with Council objectives. Benchmark returns against other available options in the market.

RESOLVED: To approve recommendations 1,2,3,4 & 5

2526 – 161 **Admission of Public and Press**

RESOLVED: that in accordance with standing order 3(d) that 'in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded, and they be instructed to withdraw'. Reason: Staffing.

2526 – 162 **Future Direction of Parish Council**

The Committee received a presentation regarding potential changes to the Parish Council's operating model.

RESOLVED: To allow the CEO to draft a Terms of Reference for a new Working Party focused on the future direction of the Parish Council to be tabled at November Full Council.

2526 – 163 **Draft Staffing Budget - 2026-27**

The council were presented with the draft budget for 2026-27 (a) and a report detailing potential new staffing (b). A copy of both appears in the Confidential Minute Book as Appendix A.

Recommendations

1) To approve a first draft of Staffing Budget. This can include all or some of the changes outlined in the separate staffing report and Version 2 budget as detailed below.
2) To recommend Full Council approve the immediate creation of a Community Gardener position focussed on gardening maintenance, improvement in GWR Park and other maintained gardens across the Parish, as detailed in Point 2.1.
3) To recommend Full Council approver budgeting for the reprofiling of the Head Gardener roles for Town Gardens and Queen's Park as outlined in Point 2.2. This is proposed to be implemented from April 2026.
4) To recommend Full Council consider the recruitment of a Maintenance Officer as outlined in Point 2.3 as part of the 2026/27 budget. This role has been benchmarked at SCP 13-17 (£29,064- £31,022) with savings on Tree Maintenance budgets to fund this.
5) To recommend Full Council decide whether to implement the staffing changes proposed to the Youth Service as detailed in Point 2.4.
6) To recommend Full Council consider budgeting for the recruitment of a Marketing and Engagement Officer based on the conditions set out in Point 2.5.

RESOLVED:

1) To approve recommendation 2 and recommend Full Council incorporate immediate recruitment of a Community Gardener and build this into the 26/-27 budget.

2) that recommendations 3, 4, 5 and 6 are taken back to the Staffing Working Party for further scrutiny. Recommendations 5 & 6 to be considered in line with the development of potential funding streams.

2526 – 164 **Staff Contracts**

Councillors were presented with new staff contracts and a new employee handbook for adoption.

RESOLVED: To adopt the new staff contracts and employee handbook.

2526 – 165 **Staffing Review**

Councillors discussed reviews to some staffing processes.

RESOLVED: To note the discussion.

Meeting Closed at 20:42pm

Signed:

Dated:

Chair of the Parish Council