



South Swindon Parish Council

Services Policy

Parish Service Provision Mission Statement

Background:

South Swindon Parish Council (SSPC) was established May 2017. The order to create the Parish was signed by the Borough Solicitor in November 2016. Prior to the first parish elections, the Parish executive - made up of Borough Councillors - oversaw the creation of the entity as a Shadow Parish committee.

Prior to the order to create SSPC being enacted, the Borough Council conducted two consultations. Parallel to the consultations, there also existed a cross-party working group of Borough Councillors tasked with agreeing boundaries and warding of the proposed new parishes.

The first consultation focused on a potential list of services and assets that could be transferred from the Borough Council. Theoretically, it was understood the various Shadow Parish Councils could decide the scope of services and assets to be transfer.

The second consultation changed focus regarding the list of services in that the Borough Council had taken the position that the service and assets listed would either be:

- ceased
- defunded
- Subject to a statutory minimum

therefore, placing addition pressure on the Shadow Parish to assume services and assets.

It should be noted that those who opposed the creation of Parish Councils in unparished areas of the Borough were not “anti-parish councils” but sought to highlight:

- Parishes should not be created top down
- A Borough Council should not create Parish Councils for the purpose of raising council tax over the legal threshold that would otherwise trigger a referendum.
- That the Borough Council Administration should be effectively petitioning the Secretary of State with regards to substantial reductions in the Central Government Grant Settlement.

The Borough Council should not have sought to pass a proportion of this Borough Council fiscal deficit directly to a Parish Council tax base.

South Swindon Parish Council have responsibility for three formal parks:

- Queens Park
- Town Gardens
- GWR Park

In the second consultation, the Borough Council were clear that they could no longer afford to continue to fund the formal parks and that future services would be at a statutory minimum

unless the Parish accepted transfer. Due to the social and economic importance of these parks to the town, the Shadow Parish accepted transfer on the provision that the size of the Parish could maintain an economy of scale to support what is a borough wide asset.

Services now being maintained by South Swindon Parish Council include –

- Street Cleaning and bin emptying within the parish
- Grounds maintenance within the parish
- Maintenance and inspection of 21 play areas
- Freehold of fourteen allotment sites containing ~600 plots
- Community events programming
- Youth Service provision
- Planning consultation
- Two community centres
- Two community libraries
- Community engagement activities

Reason:

Recent communications have highlighted that the Borough Council is seeking to make further budgetary savings by requesting that Parish Councils across Swindon accept devolution of further services including but not limited to HRA grounds maintenance, highway maintenance, gateways, weed killing, town centre street cleaning, graffiti, public toilets, tree maintenance and enforcement.

The mission statement below sets out clearly that SSPC is not able to raise the precept or cut existing services to subsidise current Borough statutory services, therefore enabling the Primary Authority to minimise the impact on the expected increase to Council Tax. It is implicit that, under these circumstances, that services would not be enhanced and commitment of Parish funds unlikely to pass the test to prove value for money for our Parishioners.

In summary, the mission statement proposed strengthens the Council position that Parish funds must not be apportioned to mitigate Borough Council cuts with no enhanced benefit to parishioners and where the Primary Authority can petition the Secretary of State for communities or conduct a referendum.

Parish Service Provision Mission Statement:

South Swindon Parish Council (SSPC), formally known as “Central Swindon South Parish Council” is an essential part of the structure of local democracy within the Borough of Swindon.

- SSPC represents the tier of local government closest to the electorate and best placed to serve local communities within the Parish boundaries.
- SSPC is responsible for the services it provides; it establishes policies and decides how money will be raised and spent for the whole community.
- SSPC will always attempt to make balanced, informed decisions, where it has statutory powers and duties to act, based on the differing needs of the whole community.
- The implicit position and stated aim of SSPC to seek best practice models to deliver service provision and where applicable add value and enhance the services provided by the Primary Authority for the benefit of SSPC parishioners.*
- The Parish Council can if it decides to enter discussions regarding transfer of services if there is an opportunity for revenue support to maintain that service. Consideration will also be given to capital funding opportunities whether monetary or asset transfer to the Parish may be beneficial in offsetting any additional strain placed on the budget.

(It is the implied position of SSPC that the Council will forthwith cease to :*

- 1. subsidise*
- 2. solicit*
- 3. accept the transfer of*

additional services - statutory or otherwise - from the Primary Authority where it cannot be evidenced that the sum total of a proposed Parish budget committed to additional service provision enhances the existing service and provides value for money.)

Policy Review

This Services Transfer Policy will be reviewed annually by the Parish Council. Details of the review and/or amendment will be recorded below.

Date	Description	Page Number	Who
May 2024	Issue	All	CEO/JM
May 2025	Annual Review	All	CEO/JM
May 2026	Annual Review	All	GSL/MT