

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 25 MARCH 2021

PRESENT:- The Worshipful The Mayor in the Chair; Councillors Junab Ali, Steve Allsopp, Abdul Amin, John Ballman, Ray Ballman, Alan Bishop, Nick Burns-Howell, Emma Bushell, Matthew Courtliff, Claire Crilly, Malcolm Davies, Mark Dempsey, Paul Dixon, Oliver Donachie, Steph Exell, Emma Faramarzi, Brian Ford, Jim Grant, Dale Heenan, Steve Heyes, Russell Holland, Fay Howard, Robert Jandy, Jenny Jefferies, Vinay Manro, Mary Martin, Nick Martin, Cathy Martyn, Jane Milner-Barry, Stan Pajak, Barbara Parry, Kevin Parry, Maureen Penny, David Renard, James Robbins, Adorabelle Shaikh, Imtiyaz Shaikh, Carol Shelley, Kevin Small, Roger Smith, Bazil Solomon, Gary Sumner, Timothy Swinyard, Caryl Sydney-Smith, Rahul Tarar, Vera Tomlinson, Nadine Watts, Peter Watts, Steve Weisinger and Keith Williams.

91. Minute's Silence

The Council held a minutes silence in respect of Councillor Brian Mattock, Deputy Mayor, who had served the people of Swindon for over 40 years as a Housing Officer before becoming a Councillor for 13 years.

Councillors David Renard, Jim Grant, Oliver Donachie, Stan Pajak, Emma Faramarzi, Brian Ford and Jenny Jefferies spoke in memory of Councillor Brian Mattock.

92. Mayor's Announcements

(1) The Mayor reported the resignation of Councillor Andy Spry as a Member of the Council and thanked him for his service to the Council.

(2) The Mayor reported a number of Members were due for re-election or were retiring. On behalf of Council he thanked those members who were retiring for their work both for the Borough and the wards they represent.

(3) The Mayor reported that Councillor Bob Wright, former Chair of Scrutiny, had been admitted to Bristol Infirmary. He was pleased to be able to inform Council that his operation had gone well and that Councillor Wright thanked Members and Officers for their kindness at this time. With the Council's consent, he would write to Councillor Wright to express the Council's best wishes for a full and speedy recovery.

93. Appointment of Deputy Mayor for the Remainder of the Municipal Year, 2020/21

The Council considered a report of the Chief Legal Officer seeking a nomination for Deputy Mayor for the remainder of the Municipal Year, 2020/21 following the death of Councillor Brian Mattock on 12th March 2021.

Councillor Jim Grant moved, Councillor David Renard seconded and the Council agreed that Councillor Abdul Amin be Deputy Mayor of the Borough for the ensuing Municipal Year.

The Mayor congratulated Councillor Amin on his appointment.

The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Abdul Amin) thanked the Council for his election to the post of Deputy Mayor of the Borough.

94. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Janine Howarth, Oladapo Ibitoye and Bob Wright.

95. Communications

The Chief Executive reported that no communications had been received.

96. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th February 2021 be confirmed and signed.

97. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

Councillor Tim Swinyard made a personal declaration of interest in respect of Agenda Item 7(f) as he was a Trustee of Swindon Women's Aid

98. Public Question Time

Mrs Bhawna Goyal submitted a public question regarding government grants for new Changing Places toilets. The Cabinet Member for Adults and Health indicated that a written response had been tabled.

Mr Curtis Flux submitted a public question the recent Country Parks survey. The Cabinet Member for the Town Centre, Culture and Heritage indicated that a written response had been tabled.

Mr Daniel Adams submitted a public question regarding the Levelling Up Fund for Councils announced in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's 2021 budget. The Cabinet Member for the Town Centre, Culture and Heritage indicated that a written response had been tabled.

Ms Emma Williams submitted a public question seeking an update on the Council's Oasis Task Force. The Leader of the Council indicated that a written response had been tabled.

Mr Neil Robertson submitted a public question regarding the preservation of the Oasis Leisure Centre dome. The Leader of the Council indicated that a written response had been tabled.

Mr Vinjay Manro submitted a public question the repair of potholes in Swindon's roads. The Cabinet Member for Highways, Maintenance and Waste Services indicated that a written response had been tabled.

Ms Helena Bowie submitted a public question regarding the effect on the Equalities Act 2010 arising from the closure of the Oasis Centre. The Leader of the Council indicated that a written response had been tabled.

99. Motion - Oasis Centre

With the agreement of the Council the Motion was amended and Councillor Jim Robbins moved and Councillor Rahul Tarar seconded:

“In order to allow the Council to work with partners to get the Oasis reopened as quickly as possible it is important that we know full details of the current state of the building. This Council, therefore requests the Leader of the Council, to request that the current owners and leaseholders, include in the report (further to Minute 71) a full building and contents survey together with the associated costs required for any work required.”

The Motion, as amended, was put to the vote and declared carried.

100. Motion - Potholes

Councillor Steve Allsopp moved and Councillor Claire Crilly seconded:

“This Council notes that the government has recently reduced Swindon’s allocation of the road repairs fund by £1.4m a cut of 26% compared with the previous year.

This Council further notes that:

Nicholas Lyes, head of roads policy at the RAC, said the cut in funding for road maintenance was "worrying".

He added: "This can only lead to roads deteriorating further and being in a worse overall state than they are now.

"Councils require certainty of funding over a longer period of time – ideally five years – so they can plan resurfacing and routine maintenance rather than being forced into having a more piecemeal approach."

This Council also notes the recent AA survey, which stated that Swindon Borough Council fixed only 1.2% of its reported potholes in the past year. Additionally that many local residents complain that when a pothole is eventually “fixed” it is only done so on a temporary basis and that, often, the same pothole is having to be “fixed” again within the next year.

In light of the foregoing Council requests that the Leader of the Council writes to the Secretary of State for Transport to protest against this reduction in funding and asks that the government commits to funding resurfacing and routine maintenance over a five-year period

This Council also requests that the Cabinet Member for Highways, Maintenance and Waste Services brings a report to the next scheduled Cabinet which identifies how road resurfacing in Swindon can be addressed in the long term.”

Councillor Dale Heenan moved and Councillor Matthew Courtliff seconded that the Motion be amended to read:

“This Council notes that the government has recently reduced Swindon’s allocation of the road repairs fund by £1.4m a cut of 26% compared with the previous year.

This Council further notes that: Nicholas Lyes, head of roads policy at the RAC, said the cut in National funding for road maintenance was "worrying". He added: "This can only lead to roads deteriorating further and being in a worse overall state than they are now. "Councils require certainty of funding over a longer period of time – ideally five years – so they can plan resurfacing and routine maintenance rather than being forced into

This Council Notes that:

- In the past 12 months, we have received 5896 pothole enquiries and we have, to date repaired 5105. This is 87%.
- In recent years Swindon has consistently invested more on capital maintenance of highway assets than the capital grant available from central government and prioritises this spend annually through its Local Transport Plan Implementation Plan. Local Transport Plan Implementation Plan for 2021/22 is scheduled for Cabinet in July and will consider how road surfacing and the maintenance of the other major highway assets will be addressed in the long term.
- The condition of the highway also benefits significantly from other highway improvement grants that the Local Authority is successful in obtaining, for example Swindon has successfully bid for additional maintenance grant from the government’s Challenge Fund initiative totalling some £4.8m that will be spent on Swindon’s network in the next 2 years, with a further £2m awarded to us from the same fund to be spent in the same period. Any funding we receive for road maintenance is very welcome and helps to pay for every day pothole repairs and more permanent surfacing works such as those recently completed in North Swindon.)
- In light of the foregoing Council requests that the Leader of the Council writes to the Secretary of State for Transport to urge him to consider providing greater certainty of future grant settlements over a longer period.
- This Council also requests that the Cabinet Member for Highways, Maintenance and Waste Services brings a report to the next scheduled Cabinet which identifies how road resurfacing in Swindon can be addressed in the long term.”

The amendment was put to the vote and declared carried becoming the Substantive Motion.

The Substantive Motion was put to the vote and declared carried.

101.

Motion - Air Pollution

With the agreement of the Council the Motion was amended and Councillor Jane Milner-Barry moved and Councillor Keith Williams seconded:

“This Council notes the findings of the 2017 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Swindon which attributed 5.1% of overall mortality in Swindon to air pollution, and of the 2020 Centre for Cities report which put the figure at 5.4%.

While air quality in Swindon improved during the pandemic it is clear that long term the issue persists and will continue to get worse unless measures are taken to address the problem. Therefore, this Council calls on the Cabinet Member for Climate Change to produce a report to the next scheduled Cabinet meeting in which it can be outlined how air pollution can be reduced, including consideration to be given to extending the existing monitoring of air pollution.”

The Motion was put to the vote and declared carried.

102.

Motion - Public Sector Pay

Councillor Jim Grant moved and Councillor Steve Allsopp seconded:

“This Council notes:

The NHS has been offered a 1% pay increase this year.

This Council further notes:

Local government has endured central government funding cuts of more than 50% since 2010.

Between 2010 and 2020, councils lost 60p out of every £1 they have received from central government.

Over the last year, councils have led the way in efforts against the Covid-19 pandemic, providing a huge range of services and support for our communities. Local government has shown more than ever how indispensable it is. But the pandemic has led to a massive increase in expenditure and loss of income, and the Government has failed to provide the full amount of promised support.

Local government workers have kept our communities safe through the pandemic, often putting themselves at considerable risk as they work to protect public health, provide quality housing, ensure our children continue to be educated, and look after older and vulnerable people.

Since 2010, the local government workforce has endured years of pay restraint with the majority of pay points losing at least 23 per cent of their value since 2009/10.

At the same time, workers have experienced ever-increasing workloads and persistent job insecurity. Across the UK, 900,000 jobs have been lost in local government since June 2010 – a reduction of more than 30 per cent. Local government has arguably been hit by more severe job losses than any other part of

the public sector. The funding gap caused by Covid-19 will make local government employment even more precarious.

There has been a disproportionate impact on women, with women making up more than three-quarters of the local government workforce.

Recent research shows that if the Government were to fully fund the unions' 2021 pay claim, around half of the money would be recouped thanks to increased tax revenue, reduced expenditure on benefits, and increased consumer spending in the local economy.

This Council believes:

Our workers are public service super-heroes. They keep our communities clean and safe, look after those in need and keep our towns and cities running.

Without the professionalism and dedication of our staff, the council services our residents rely on would not be deliverable.

Local government workers deserve a proper real terms pay increase. The Government needs to take responsibility and fully fund this increase; it should not put the burden on local authorities whose funding has been cut to the bone and who have not been offered adequate support through the Covid-19 pandemic.

This Council resolves to:

Support the pay claim submitted by UNISON, GMB and Unite on behalf of council and school workers, for a fair pay settlement that is no less than the real living wage in April 2021.

Call on the Local Government Association to make urgent representations to central government to fund the NJC pay claim.

Write to the Chancellor and Secretary of State to call for a pay increase for local government workers to be funded with new money from central government.

Meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for the pay claim and consider practical ways in which the Council can support the campaign.'

In accordance with Standing Order 9(1) this motion stood adjourned to Cabinet without discussion.

103.

Motion - Pharmacy

Councillor Kevin Small moved and Councillor Jim Robbins seconded:

"This Council supports the residents of Rodbourne in their campaign to retain the pharmacy in Rodbourne Road and asks NHS England to support its retention."

The Motion was put to the vote and declared carried.

Councillor Adorabelle Sheikh moved and Councillor Tim Swinyard seconded:

“The Council notes the recent tragic murder of Sarah Everard and the debate this has provoked about violence against women and girls:

That the Law Commission has recently proposed that sex and gender be added to the list of protected characteristics covered by hate crime law. Misogyny is not currently recorded as a hate crime by the vast majority of police forces in the UK, outside of a handful of trial areas.

That like women and girls across the country our residents suffer harassment and abuse every single day. A YouGov national survey in 2016 showed that 85% of women aged 18-24 were subjected to sexual harassment in public.

A 2014 report by the parliamentary Home Affairs Select Committee found that 20% of all crimes were not recorded by police, with rape particularly under-recorded, and 26% of reported rapes being downgraded by the police. As of 2019, 12% of all violent crimes reported in Wiltshire were recorded as non-crime. The accurate recording of crime data is fundamental to tackling violence against women and girls.

The conviction rate for rape currently stands at 1% in England and Wales having fallen over recent years. Improved conviction rates for rape and violent crimes is fundamental to tackling violence against women and girls.

The recording of misogynist crime as hate incidents was successfully implemented in Nottingham, where analysis showed an increase in reporting as well as an increase in the use of wider services. It also showed the vast majority of local people wanted the scheme to continue.

Studies have shown that the intersectional nature of discrimination means that women with additional protected characteristics, such as those who are BAME, disabled or LGBT+, are even more likely to experience harassment, discrimination and abuse.

This Council welcomes the work that the Government has done in this area by introducing Clare’s Law as a way of helping to protect people from abusive and dangerous relationships and that they will consider whether this approach could be extended to stalking and other offences that give grounds for real concern.

The Council resolves to:

- Write to the government at the earliest opportunity in favour of the reporting of misogynist as hate incidents.
- Remind the government of the need to continue to acknowledge the lived experience of women and to urgently act on any recommendations the commission makes to strengthen the law on hate crime, and to reform legislation around harassment to recognise as an offence a ‘course of conduct’ which targets women and girls in their community.

- Call on the Government to continue to provide additional resources and funding for police forces across the UK to effectively tackle harassment, misogyny and domestic abuse and to improve conviction rates for rape and violent crimes against women and girls.
- Call on Wiltshire police force to record harassment of women as a hate incidents, following successful trials in Nottingham and elsewhere and to ensure the accurate recording of crime, particularly rape and violent crime against women.”

The Motion was put to the vote and declared carried.

(Councillor Tim Swinyard made a personal declaration of interest in respect of this Motion as he was a Director of Swindon Women’s Aid)

105. Minutes of Cabinet and Decisions Delegated to Cabinet Members

The Council considered (a) the minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 3rd February and 3rd March 2021, (b) questions to the Cabinet Members regarding their portfolio responsibilities and answers received, and (c) Cabinet Member Decision Notices.

106. Minutes of other Council Bodies

The Council (a) received the minutes set out in the “Minutes of Other Council Bodies” circulated with the Agenda, and (b) considered questions to Chairs relating to the work of their Committees and other bodies and answers received.

107. Councillors Question Time

The Chief Legal Officer reported that a Standing Order 15 Questions had been received from Councillors Steve Allsopp, Matthew Courtliff and Bob Wright.

Councillor Steve Allsopp asked a supplemental question seeking a meeting between the Cabinet Member for Highways, Maintenance and Waste Services and local residents in respect of road repairs to Upham Road. The Cabinet Member for Highways, Maintenance and Waste Services responded at the meeting.

Councillor Steve Allsopp asked a supplemental question regarding the use of arbitration to improve timescales for the adoption of Section 38 Agreements. The Cabinet Member for Highways, Maintenance and Waste Services responded at the meeting.

Councillor Steve Allsopp asked a supplemental question regarding a response to his Standing Order 15 Question on libraries. The Cabinet Member for the Town Centre, Culture and Heritage indicated that a written response would be provided.