

Swindon Borough Council

Special Committee

Wednesday, 25 August 2010

Committee Room 4, Civic Offices, Swindon (Anticipated meeting room)

At 1.00 p.m. or at the conclusion of the Corporate Governance Review Working Group

Conservative Councillors

Roderick Bluh (Chair)

Garry Perkins (Vice-Chair)

Brian Mattock

David Renard

Deputies: *All other Cabinet Members*

Labour Councillors

Jim Grant

Derique Montaut

Deputies: *All other Labour Shadow Cabinet Members*

Liberal Democrat Councillors

Stan Pajak

Deputies: *All other Liberal Democrat Members*

(Copies to all other Members of the Council – For Information)

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AGENDA

PART 1 (PUBLIC ITEMS)

1. Apologies for Absence.

2. Declarations of Interest.

Members are reminded that at the start of the meeting they should declare any known interests in any matter to be considered, and also during the meeting if it becomes apparent that they have an interest in the matters being discussed.

3. Minutes. (Pages 1 - 2)

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 27th July 2010.

4. Public Question Time.

See explanatory note below. Please phone the Committee Officer whose name and number appears at the top of this agenda if you need further guidance.

5. Draft Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission.
(DLDS-B) (Pages 3 - 40)

Date of Despatch: 17 August 2010

Key:

Officers:

DLDS-B - Director of Law and Democratic Services – Business Transformation

Public Question Time - Swindon Borough Council is committed to increasing its accountability to the public and to promoting active citizenship. Up to 15 minutes will be allowed at the start of all Council meetings for questions to the Chair from members of the public about the work of the Committee (except for confidential matters and specific planning applications). Questions must be relevant, clear and concise. Because of time constraints Public Question Time is not an opportunity to make speeches or statements. Prior notice of a question to the Director of Law and Democratic Services is desirable - particularly if detailed background information is needed.

Access Arrangements – The Venue is wheelchair accessible and an infrared receiver hearing system is provided. If you would wish to attend the meeting but have any special requirement to enable you to do so please contact the Committee Clerk above, as soon as possible prior to the date of the meeting.

If you would like to receive any of the pages contained in this agenda in a larger print size please contact the Committee Officer whose name appears on the first page of this agenda.

Special Committee - Terms of Reference

The Special Committee shall have delegated to it the power to act for the Council on the advice of the Chief Executive on any policy decision or any particular matter that is urgent and necessary in the best interests of the Council.

The quorum of the Committee shall be three.

Deputy Members may be appointed at the Annual or any meeting of the Council.

Minutes of any proceedings of this Committee shall be submitted to the Council.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 27 JULY 2010

PRESENT:- Councillors Roderick Bluh (Chair), Roderick Bluh (Chair), Garry Perkins (Vice-Chair), Brian Mattock, Derique Montaut and Fionuala Foley (Deputy).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Renard, Stan Pajak and Jim Grant.

1. Declarations of Interest

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

2. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 25th March 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. Exempt Items - Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved – That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during the discussion of the matters referred to in Agenda Item No. 6 of the Notice of the Meeting on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information concerned. (Minute 5 refers.)

4. Public Question Time

No public questions were asked under Standing Order 28.

5. Voluntary Severance

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Corporate Services and the Group Director, Business Transformation submitted a joint report concerning the voluntary severance arrangements with Employee 2000757.

The Group Director, Business Transformation explained that the Council was facing an extremely challenging future and that it was essential that services were re-shaped, re-configured and delivered in new ways. It had become clear over recent months that this employee's particular skill set did not fully match the Council's future needs. Discussions had taken place on ways to resolve the situation over the last six-months but it had been concluded that a voluntary severance was the best way forward for all parties. The Group Director commented on the detailed arrangements associated with the severance and on the financial implications for the Council.

The Chair noted the contents of the joint report. He commented that there was a disparity between the joint report and its Appendix. The figure contained in the Financial Implications section of the report was a "net" figure, excluding the total

income tax and employee National Insurance contributions. This meant that the financial impact on the Council overall was greater than highlighted in that paragraph. However, he remained supportive of the proposed action.

Resolved – That the Special Committee, on behalf of the Council -

- Approves the voluntary severance arrangements for Employee 2000757.
- Authorises the Director of Law and Democratic Services to conclude a compromise agreement between the Council and Employee 2000757 based on a final day of service no later than 31st July 2010, unless otherwise agreed in consultation with the Chief Executive.
- With effect from Employee 2000757's agreed final day of service approves that:
 - The Group Director, Business Transformation, be authorised to exercise the delegations numbered 384 to 390 in the Council's Scheme of Delegations and Designations of Proper Officers (Part 8 of the Council's Constitution), together with all other matters delegated to that post holder.
 - Interim arrangements are put in place to enable the holders of posts 1438675 and 1124139 to exercise key responsibilities of the vacant role.
- Authorises the Director of Law and Democratic Services to make any necessary amendments to the Council's Constitution to reflect the decisions set out above.

Submission to Local Government Boundary Commission

Special Committee

Date: 25 August 2010

Author: Director of Law and Democratic Services

Parish / Wards Affected: All

Purpose

- To receive and consider a draft Submission by the Council as its contribution to the Local Government Boundary Commission's consultation on Council size being undertaken as part of its Electoral Boundary Review of Swindon.

Recommendation

Special Committee, on behalf of Full Council, is requested to authorise the Director of Law and Democratic Services to

- Submit to the Local Government Boundary Commission the Council's response to the Commission's consultation on Council size, which has been endorsed by the Corporate Governance Review Working Group
- Make such amendments and corrections to the Council's Submission as may be deemed necessary prior to dispatch.

1. Reasons

- 1.1. On 15 June 2010 the Local Government Boundary Commission (the Commission) gave notice that it would undertake a review of Swindon's electoral arrangements since two criteria were met for such a review; namely, a ward with a variance of more than 30% from the average, and 30% of wards having a variance of 10% or more.
- 1.2. As part of the process, outlined by Max Caller, Chair of the Boundary Commission, to all Councillors on 15 July 2010, the first stage of consultation by the Commission seeks evidence on the existing governance structures to build a case for how many councillors the Council needs. A submission on that issue is required by 30 August 2010. Once the Commission has determined how many councillors there should be, the next stage of the consultation will occur from 28 September to 20 December 2010, which relates to the setting of ward boundaries.
- 1.3. Attached as Appendix 1 is the draft submission to be considered by the Corporate Governance Review Working Party and any changes will be reported to Special Committee.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Stephen Taylor on (01793) 463012 here or Email staylor@swindon.gov.uk.

Submission to Local Government Boundary Commission

Special Committee

Date: 25 August 2010

2. Detail

- 2.1. A review has been conducted by Council Officers of how the Borough's existing governance arrangements operate, the number of committees, their workloads, the Members' representational role and the Member commitment needed to fulfil their obligations.
- 2.2. In addition, a survey was undertaken of all councillors, to which 33 Members responded, which sought to determine actual workloads and provide an understanding of the time being committed to serving the community by being an elected member. The survey revealed that councillors were typically spending between 26 and 37 hours a week on council-related business, although there were some spending far more than that.
- 2.3. Informal discussions were held with some councillors to obtain a steer on the size of Council that would be acceptable. The general impression was that 59 would be realistic. Discussions have been on the basis of the current electoral arrangements of elections by "thirds" and there are no current proposals to change this arrangement.
- 2.4. From the above information a submission has been drafted, which is attached as Appendix A. The draft submission details the current cabinet-leader form of executive, how the overview and scrutiny function is discharged and how the regulatory committees operate. In addition to this it notes the large number of external appointments for which councillors are required. The draft submission also notes the role played by councillors in their wards as "community champions".
- 2.5. The draft submission notes the large commitment by the Borough to joint working with public sector partners to pool resources under the Section 75 agreements. Consideration is also given to the need for councillors to serve on boards, committees and other governance bodies to provide accountability for this spending.
- 2.6. All of the above supports the case for 59 councillors, which is the *status quo*. No suggestion is made about how any wards should be altered, as this will form the phase two consultation. The deadline for submitting views to the Commission is 30 August 2010.

Alternative Options

- Special Committee could choose not to make a submission and leave the response to Party Groups, individual councillors or third bodies. However, there is no reason why the Council itself should not express a view which may well be more persuasive if it is cross-party.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Stephen Taylor on (01793) 463012 here or Email staylor@swindon.gov.uk.

Submission to Local Government Boundary Commission

Special Committee

Date: 25 August 2010

- Special Committee could choose to recommend a reduction in the number of councillors, but that would necessitate a reduction in the number of committees and participation in outside bodies.
- Special Committee could choose to request more councillors, however there would need to be a strong case to show that there was sufficient work for all the members in the governance structures. The final report on Stoke-on-Trent, where there was such a request, shows the difficulty of justifying an increase.

Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- There are no immediate financial or procurement implications of this report that are not covered within existing budgets.

Legal / Human Rights Implications

- All legal and human rights implications are dealt with in the body of the report.

Links to Corporate Plans and Policies (in particular to Swindon 2010 Promises)

- Effective governance arrangements are central to a successful modernised and transformational council being able to deliver the Council's corporate plans and policies.

Consultees

- The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

Background Papers and Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Draft Submission: Electoral Review of Swindon Borough Council: Size and warding arrangements

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Stephen Taylor on (01793) 463012 here or Email staylor@swindon.gov.uk.

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ELECTORAL REVIEW OF SWINDON BOROUGH COUNCIL: SIZE AND WARDING ARRANGEMENTS

SUBMISSION TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR
ENGLAND

August 2010

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Overview

1 Introduction

- 1.1. In a letter to Swindon Borough Council on 15 June 2010, the Local Government Boundary Commission confirmed that it was going to launch an Electoral Review of Swindon. This was triggered by a review of the December 2008 electoral register which identified that 1 ward had an electoral variance of over 30% from the Borough average, and 8 of the 22 wards within the Borough had an electoral variance of 10% or more. The two most extreme variances were
 - a) Abbey Meads with a +52% variance and
 - b) Penhill with a -15% variance.
- 1.2. The Corporate Governance Review Working Group, a cross-party committee has prepared a submission that was subsequently endorsed by the Special Committee of the Council on *[insert date]* August 2010, which presents the case for a Council of 59 Councillors.
- 1.3. On the *[insert date]* December 2010, Council agreed a submission of a warding pattern of 21 electoral wards that are predominantly three-member wards with the case being made for [two] single member wards.

Determining the Size of the Council

2 Calculating Council Size

- 2.1. The initial stage of an Electoral Review is to determine a preferred Council Size. This is the number of Councillors required to deliver effective and convenient local government (choosing the appropriate number of members to allow the council and individual councillors to perform most effectively).
- 2.2. This will subsequently determine the average (optimum) number of electors per councillor to be achieved across all wards of the authority. This number is reached by dividing the electorate by the number of councillors on the authority.
- 2.3. Guidance from the Local Government Boundary Commission states that 'All proposals [on council size] must be justified and a clear rationale provided in support of them, based on the particular decision-making and democratic processes in place or envisaged in the local area.' (Technical Guidance April 2010, page 11).
- 2.4. Council took particular note of the different criteria being applied to other recent Local Government Boundary Commission reviews (Northampton Borough Council, May 2010 and Stoke-on-Trent Council, March 2010), and noted the variations in the process since the Borough's ward boundaries were last reviewed (Swindon, March 1999).

3 Guidance on Calculating Council Size

- 3.1. In the Technical Guidance issued by the Local Government Boundary Commission (para 5.11), it is recommended that the following issues are considered when developing a proposal for Council Size:
 - 3.1.1. The model of local governance used by the local authority, or intended to be used by any authority. These models have impacts on the workload of councillors and the working practices of the council, and therefore will have an effect on the number of councillors needed by that council.
 - 3.1.2. The existence of parish and town councils in an area may also have a bearing, although it is unproven as to whether this factor necessitates more or fewer councillors.

- 3.1.3. The functions of the scrutiny, planning and licensing committees of the council may also have an effect.
- 3.1.4. The representational aspect of councillors' roles, which may have changed following new practices put in place by the 2007 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (the 2007 Act), and the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act (the 2009 Act).
- 3.2. Each of these issues is considered in the following pages of this submission, which presents the case for the recommended Council Size for Swindon Borough Council. The report concludes that the optimum Council Size to enable convenient and effective local government for Swindon would be 59 members in 19 three member wards and [two] single member wards.

4 Swindon Borough Council (SBC): The present model of local governance

- 4.1. The Local Government Act 2000 (the 2000 Act) fundamentally altered the political management of local authorities by separating executive from non-executive functions. Prior to 2000, SBC had been managed, like other local authorities in England, by a range of committees each with its own remit and responsibility for overseeing a function of the Council.
- 4.2. Each committee was required to respect political proportionality with the majority party having the chair of the relevant committee. It was in this vain of needing enough councillors to ensure the functioning of various decision-making committees that the last ward boundary review in Swindon Borough Council was conducted in the late 1990s.
- 4.3. A further element underpinning the 1999 Review of ward boundaries was that Swindon had only taken on full responsibilities as unitary authority in 1997, having previously, as the Borough of Thamesdown, been a shire district within a 3 tier Wiltshire comprising Parish/Town councils, district councils, and County Council.
- 4.4. Between 2000 and 2002 the Borough Council used a pilot Leader-Cabinet model with a ratification committee, a committee of full council, to scrutinise and authorise decisions. Following an extensive statutory consultation process, the Council resolved in September 2001 not to pursue either of the mayoral options available but to adopt the Cabinet-Leader system (s11(3) 2000 Act).
- 4.5. The 2000 Act was significant as, whilst Full Council sets the broad policy and budgetary framework, much of the executive decision-making was placed within the Cabinet or delegated to individual Cabinet

Members or Officers. There was no requirement for the Cabinet to have political proportionality. In Swindon, the Cabinet has been completely dominated by the majority political group since 2004 although there were representatives from either one or two opposition parties during the period of no overall control under the new executive arrangements (2002-2004).

- 4.6. The 1998 White Paper: *Modern Local Government: In touch with the people* that underpinned the 2000 Act describes Cabinet's role as being: *"...to propose the policy framework and implement policies within the agreed framework. The role of backbench councillors would be to represent their constituents, share in the policy and budget decisions of the full council, suggest policy improvements, and scrutinise the executive's policy proposals and their implementation."*
- 4.7. The Council adopted a new strategy in 2008: Connecting People, Connecting Places as part of a wider transformation to provide better roles for non-executive councillors and enhance the opportunities for residents, community groups and other stakeholders to become involved in shaping service provision. The wards were grouped together into seven clusters, each of which has a senior officer to support it and a non-executive councillor, elected by the other councillors, as chair.
- 4.8. A review of Members Allowances for Swindon Borough Council by its Independent Remuneration Panel (11 November 2009) used written submission and interviews with Councillors along with comparisons with national data to determine the workload and recommend an appropriate level of allowances.
- 4.9. To obtain an understanding of present demands on councillors, a survey was developed to measure the typical workloads experienced by councillors and this is included below (see Table 2, p23).
- 4.10. What this demonstrates is that since the 2000 Act, Swindon Borough Councillors typically spend five to seven hours a week on attending or preparing for formal meetings, and a further eight to 10 hours a week on personal contact with residents and casework. Together with the various other activities involved in relation to council business and party political work, this makes a typical weekly total in the region of 26 - 38 hours.

Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors

5 Full Council

- 5.1. The Council currently has 59 Councillors, elected by “thirds” with two single-member wards for predominantly rural areas, three two-member wards, and seventeen three-member wards.
- 5.2. All Councillors are members of Full Council. Full Council is responsible for appointing the Leader, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Members and the committees of the Council, and for setting its Budget and Policy framework on the recommendation of the Cabinet. Full Council is also the forum where members of the Cabinet, the executive, are held to account by all members of Council for decisions made at Cabinet meetings, and through the exercise of delegated decision-making, known as ‘Cabinet Member Decision Notes’. The Chairs of all Council Committees and the Council’s representatives on the joint Police and Fire Authorities also report on the activities of those bodies and respond to questions from other councillors. Non-executive councillors can also submit written questions to any member of Cabinet and follow-up with supplementary questions. Full Council typically debates two or three motions on issues of concern to Councillors. The Full Council meets on average 6 times per year.
- 5.3. Since the implementation of sections 10-18 of the 2009 Act, Members of the Public may participate through using the Petitions Scheme to prompt a debate at full council. This is in addition to the existing provision of a 15 minutes “Public Question Time” for the Public to be able to ask questions of Councillors. The first use of the petition scheme occurred on 15 July 2010.
- 5.4. The Council has established over fifty Committees, Sub-committees, Boards, Working Parties and Advisory Groups to deliver the Council’s priorities and objectives and to oversee its operation and specific projects. Some of these bodies are proportional and are made up of a number of non-executive councillors, others may only have one Councillor serving on them, often an executive member on a joint board with partners. Some of the more significant Council bodies which place demands on Councillors time and commitments are described in the following paragraphs.

6 Cabinet

- 6.1. Swindon Borough Council operates an indirectly appointed Leader and Cabinet model. The Cabinet is responsible for most day-to-day decisions. The Cabinet comprises the Leader and at least two, but not more than nine, councillors who are appointed by the Council. The Council has operated the Leader-Cabinet model (s11(3) of the 2000 Act) since 2002 to ensure more efficiency and accountability in decision-making.
- 6.2. The Leader of the Council allocates individual Cabinet Members (also known as lead members) quasi-departmental responsibilities and they have the competence to make decisions relating to their portfolio.
- 6.3. There are currently 10 members of Cabinet. The Cabinet meets to perform its collective executive function through ten meetings a year. Councillors who are not members of the cabinet attend for items relevant to their wards and may speak when called by the Chair. Other councillors, particularly the Leader of the Opposition Party, attend for part or all of the meeting.
- 6.4. Five members of Cabinet at a time serve on a statutory sub-committee, the Cabinet Panel on School Organisation, which makes the final decision on possibly controversial matters such as whether to extend, open or close a school.
- 6.5. For approximately 30 minutes before each formal meeting of the Cabinet an "Open Forum" is held at which members of the public can ask questions, make statements and engage with Cabinet members. If there is a particularly contentious issue this session can be extended. This is in addition to the 15 minutes of public question time, which takes place at all Cabinet meetings and is recorded in the minutes.
- 6.6. In addition to the formal meetings as a Cabinet, the Leader and the nine cabinet members meet informally as the Leader's Advisory Group – a non-decision making body – each week and before each Group meeting, each Cabinet Meeting and each Full Council.
- 6.7. Although the Coalition Government has indicated that it will introduce new legislation to permit the adoption of a committee system (HM Government 2010: *The Coalition: Our programme for government*, p12), no Bill has yet been laid before Parliament. Moreover, prior to the election the leading Party in the coalition advocated allowing residents to have the final say on the council's constitutional arrangements through a referendum (Conservative Party 2009, *Control Shift: returning power to local communities*, p22). Therefore, no allowance has been made for a possible change in executive arrangements or an alteration in the roles and responsibilities of cabinet members at this time.

- 6.8. Given the experience of running a Cabinet of 10 members it is felt that this number and the division of portfolio responsibilities enable effective and convenient leadership of the authority.
- 6.9. At a Corporate Governance Review Working Group on 5 July 2010, the Members informally expressed a preference for the adoption of the strong Leader/Cabinet model as opposed to the directly elected mayor and cabinet. While this model does involve strengthening the powers of the Council Leader in relation to the Full Council meeting, it does not materially affect the work load of cabinet members or other councillors. A consultation exercise will take place over the summer of 2010 to seek the public view on preferred governance executive arrangements. The outcome of the consultation will be reported to Members in the autumn and a proposal will be put forward for endorsement by the Full Council in December 2010.

7 Lead Member Advisory Groups

- 7.1. To support Cabinet members the Constitution permits the creation of lead member advisory groups that are not formal decision-making bodies. These have been created to allow for non-executive councillors to contribute to the early stages of policy formation or to provide advice on a cabinet decision without compromising the role of overview and scrutiny or being bound by the public access to information regulations.
- 7.2. The Procurement Advisory Group has been one of the most successful advisory groups and has tended to meet on a monthly basis. It had seven members, including one member of the largest opposition party and was chaired by a non executive member. Its primary function was to scrutinise all aspects of the procurement process – a five part “gateway” system – to assist the Cabinet Members in securing value for money, devising good tenders and ensuring that the organisation reviewed and learnt from each procurement.
- 7.3. An additional advisory group, the Financial Planning Advisory Group, consisted of 10 members, all from the majority group. Its primary goal was to assist in scrutinising the proposed budget proposals before the consultation budget was presented to Cabinet.
- 7.4. In May 2010, the Cabinet Member for Finance proposed an additional Budget Advisory Group. Following the coalition Government’s emergency budget in June 2010, the three advisory groups were combined into two parallel groups known as Budget Management Advisory Group (BMAG) I and II. These would combine budget scrutiny, budget planning and procurement with BMAG I focusing on Adult Social care and Children’s Services and BMAG II dealing with all other council directorates.

- 7.5. In total, BMAG I and II include a single councillor from the largest opposition party who sits on both advisory groups together with 15 non-executive councillors from the majority party who are split between the two. Each Advisory Group will meet fortnightly to assist in the preparation of an emergency budget in October 2010 as well as to prepare for the main budget for 2011/2012. They will build on the strengths of the processes developed by the Procurement and Financial Planning Advisory Groups.

8 Overview and Scrutiny Functions

- 8.1. The 2000 Act also required each local authority such as Swindon Borough Council to establish a scrutiny process, which means overview and scrutiny committees can be viewed in the same way as planning and licensing committees in that they are a statutory function of the council.
- 8.2. However, what sets overview and scrutiny apart from quasi-judicial committees is that it has continued to evolve in its core functions since the 2000 Act with various other pieces of legislation such as:
- Health and Social Care Act 2001 – Gave unitary and county councils powers to scrutinise health and NHS bodies but have an obligation to involve second tier overview and scrutiny authorities in the process. As part of discharging this, Swindon is part of a multi-authority scrutiny of the Great Western Ambulance NHS Trust.
 - Local Government Act 2003 - a power to grant voting rights to co-opted members of overview and scrutiny committees who are not elected members of the authority.
 - Police and Justice Act 2006 – requires all councils to have a scrutiny committee that has the power to consider crime and disorder issues.
 - Local Government and Public Involvement Act 2007 – introduced a statutory provision allowing Councillors to raise issues of local concern at an overview and scrutiny committee, which is referred to as a Councillor Call for Action. It also requires certain partners to provide information to Overview and Scrutiny and have regard to its recommendations.
 - The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 - introduced the requirement for councils to adopt a petitions scheme by which matters could be raised at Full Council. Petitions can be referred to an Overview and Scrutiny

Committee where appropriate in the process, including at the stage where the petitioner is not satisfied with the Council's response.

- 8.3. In May 2008 the Council agreed to restructure its Overview and Scrutiny Committees to align with the four blocks of the Local Area Agreement in order to provide better scrutiny of the work of the local strategic partnership. Accordingly, the current political structure is of one scrutiny committee and four overview and scrutiny committees.
- 8.4. The Scrutiny Committee has ten members, allocated proportionately and is chaired by a councillor from the largest opposition Party Group. It meets ten times a year on the Monday following a Cabinet meeting as well having additional meetings when required. The purpose of the Scrutiny Committee is to review the policies, process and implications of Cabinet, Cabinet Member and Officer decision-making and the way in which Cabinet and Cabinet Member decisions are made.
- 8.5. Swindon is distinctive in that all Cabinet decisions are submitted to review by Scrutiny, which speeds up decision-making by not requiring a lengthier call-in period. In addition to this, the Scrutiny Committee considers requests for "Call-in" as defined in the Constitution's "Call-in" Procedure and can refer decisions back to Cabinet (or the decision maker) for reconsideration. It may do this once for any individual decision, after which if there is no agreement the decision will be referred to the full Council for determination.
- 8.6. At its first meeting after each Annual Council meeting, the Scrutiny Committee receives a report by the Leader of the Council on the Council's priorities for the coming year and on the Council's performance in the previous year. There is a six-month update on this report. Each member of Cabinet appears at least once a year before the Scrutiny Committee to deliver a performance report on the core policy goals set out in the Swindon 2010 "50 Promises".
- 8.7. The Scrutiny Committee oversees the arrangements for Overview and Scrutiny within the Council and can carry out any investigation into the business and functions of the Council and to call in any Cabinet Member or senior officer of the Council so that they can offer advice, support or answer any question that will assist the Committee in carrying out its functions.
- 8.8. There is an external scrutiny function for the committee, particularly in relation to corporate issues and issues falling into the remit of a number of Overview and Scrutiny Committees. It also fulfils all the functions of an overview and scrutiny committee as they relate to –
 - the review, scrutiny and development of policy recommendations;
 - the management of performance,

- the monitoring of progress against corporate priorities and
 - the formulation of advice for the Cabinet, Council and other partners and stakeholders.
- 8.9. The four overview and scrutiny committees are: a) Children and Young People, b) Economic, Environmental and Sustainability, c) Health, and d) Safer and Stronger Communities. These committees are also aligned to the Swindon Strategic Partnership themes to facilitate scrutiny of the wider local governance in the locality and not just remain a Council-focused body.
- 8.10. Overview and Scrutiny Committees make use of working parties to focus on areas of special interest that are relevant to electors, for example, a study on the provision of public toilets.
- 8.11. The number of councillors per committee has been set to enable every non-executive member to serve on an overview and scrutiny committee in order to enable them to develop a detailed understanding of part of the Council's operations. In addition, this enables them to develop skills in questioning officers and partners, interpreting data and understanding strategies that can assist those who are subsequently promoted to Cabinet at a later date.

9 Planning Committee

- 9.1. The Planning Committee currently meets once a month to determine planning applications and consider other planning issues. Swindon is an expanding Borough, with house building peaking at nearly 2,000 a year and even in the recession there were in the region of 800 completions in 2009. The Council is also preparing a Core Strategy to manage future growth, in which the Planning Committee will play a vital role.
- 9.2. Sixteen members sit on Planning Committee. These places are allocated according to proportionality rules and there is a Chair and Vice Chair.
- 9.3. Planning Committee meetings currently last approximately two hours. There has been, over time, a move in Swindon to compulsory, rather than voluntary, Member training before a Councillor can sit on Planning Committee, and there is a subsequent requirement for Planning Committee Members to attend at least one further training/up-date session per annum. Currently four training sessions per Council year are scheduled.
- 9.4. Given the nature of the Borough, which covers a significant rural hinterland, there is a Footpaths and Rights of Way Committee that works in parallel to the Planning Committee.

10 Licensing Committee

- 10.1. There are 15 members who sit on the Licensing Committee. The places are allocated according to proportionality rules. A sub-committee of three members sits as a “Licensing Panel” to hears applications, appeals, cases of none compliance etc. There are also two other sub-committees dealing with “Ad-Hoc” licensing issues and with Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing. Membership of the licensing panel depends on availability and can be chaired by any member but is often the chair of the parent committee. These panel meetings do not need to be proportionate. The Sub-Committees are established on a proportionate basis.
- 10.2. The main committee meets approximately every two months, and the panel and sub-committees meet on an ad-hoc basis as and when required. A meeting of the full committee lasts between one to two hours, and meetings of the panel and sub-committees can often last for up to two hours or more, depending on the complexity of the application or appeal being heard.
- 10.3. All members of the committee are given mandatory basic training by the Council on the legal and technical processes to be applied. Additional external training is also provided where applicable/available.
- 10.4. Whilst the demands placed on the Committee, Panel and sub-committees can reflect aspects of the current economic climate, which could for example lead to changes in the number of premises licensed for alcohol, taxis etc., activity levels have been fairly static for the last 2-3 years.
- 10.5. There is an evolving public debate and expectations regarding alcohol consumption and its control, particularly in relation to anti social behaviour issues. This may result in local action being taken or a change in national guidance on how committees / panels make judgements and/or introduce changes in licence conditions.
- 10.6. In Swindon the Licensing Committee also has a key function in regulating street trading, which is an on-going issue due the recent refurbishment of the pedestrian areas in the town centre. The function will remain important as the regeneration and redevelopment of the town centre takes place, particularly as the £300m Union Square scheme takes shape over the next decade.
- 10.7. Due to the lack of guidance on any future changes to the Licensing Committee’s workload or remit, and the flexibility offered by the existence of the panel and its sub-committees to respond to increases

in demand, it is not recommended that the structure of the Licensing Committee needs to be changed in any way.

11 Audit Committee

- 11.1. Audit Committee comprises seven Councillors. These places are allocated according to proportionality rules. The Committee meets every two months and supports the Council's own internal audit team.
- 11.2. The present chair is a qualified accountant and the committee takes its responsibility of supporting the Council seriously by ensuring high standards of fiscal governance are applied.
- 11.3. As well as its scheduled work programme, the Audit Committee has also assisted the Council with specialist advice, for example, by providing a review of the arrangements for a £450,000 to support an innovative borough-wide wi-fi project that had attracted some controversy in the press.
- 11.4. Given that the current national fiscal pressures will encourage the Council to seek other innovative revenue generating schemes, as well as the need to steer the local economy into recovery, the Audit Committee will retain its key role in ensuring the Council manages to deliver its priorities while managing risk.

12 Appointments and Appeals Committees

- 12.1. The Appointments Committee has 17 members and meets at least annually to appoint its sub-committees and then as and when required. The places are allocated according to proportionality rules.
- 12.2. The Appointments Committee is, through its sub-committees, responsible for the appointment of the Chief Executive and the Chief Officers where there are vacancies.
- 12.3. The Appeals Committee has fifteen members, all of whom are non-executive councillors. All the places are allocated according to proportionality rules. This Committee meets at least annually to appoint its sub-committees and then as and when required.
- 12.4. The primary work of this Committee is discharged through its sub-committees, particularly its Education (Transport) Appeals Sub-Committee. There were eight meetings of the Education (Transport) Appeals sub-committee in the 2009/0 municipal year, all of which were day-time meetings. Its other sub-committees meet as required to consider appeals relating to ad-hoc issues, staff appeals (involving

senior staff), Social Care appeals, and appeals relating to introductory housing tenancies,

13 Special Committee

- 13.1. Under the Constitution the Special Committee can act on behalf of Full Council where a decision needs to be made between meetings of the Council. Special Committee has also been employed where there is a need for an urgent decision that falls outside the remit of Cabinet or delegated decision making but when it would not be practicable to summon all 59 councillors. Changes to mid-year Committee appointments and issues such as the required minor amendment of aspects of the Council's Scheme of Delegations are also dealt with by this Committee to avoid the necessity of calling a special meeting of the whole Council for minor, often procedural, issues.
- 13.2. Further, the Cabinet does not have the power to appoint staff, and to determine the terms and conditions on which they hold office (including procedures for their dismissal). However, it is not always practicable or desirable to bring such matters to a Full Council meeting, especially where confidentiality is required. Consequently, it has been normal for matters requiring a decision on terms and conditions of employees to be brought to the Special Committee.

14 Standards Committee

- 14.1. The membership of the Standards Committee is 4 Councillors, 4 Independent Members (i.e. non-councillor members with no political affiliations who seek membership through a public advertisement and recruitment procedure), 3 parish councillors, nominated by the Swindon Area Committee of the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils. Proportionality rules do not apply. Appointments are made by the Council at its Annual Meeting in May.
- 14.2. The purpose of the Standards Committee is to promote ethical conduct within the Council. The Committee also undertakes the assessment of complaints made against Borough councillors and parish councillors, and, where required, hold determination hearings. It also receives an annual report from the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive on how they ensure probity in decision-making and the Council's operations.
- 14.3. The Committee meets once every three months or more frequently if there are cases to be heard. The Committee also has 2 sub-committees and a "Hearings" Panel. These sub-committees meet to consider complaints on an ad hoc basis necessitating a potentially greater frequency to meet. Meetings generally last between one and two hours

for the main committee and varied times for the sub-committees depending on the issue.

- 14.4. There is no legislation or guidance at present that would necessitate a change in the number of Councillors sitting on the committee.

15 External Bodies

- 15.1. Three councillors are appointed to the joint Police Authority with Wiltshire Council along with independent members. Four councillors are appointed to the joint Fire Authority, also with Wiltshire Council Members.
- 15.2. As referred to earlier (para 5.2), each meeting of the Full Council receives the minutes from these respective authorities. These are presented by one of the councillor representatives, with all councillors having an opportunity to ask questions.
- 15.3. There remain a small number of joint bodies with Wiltshire Council, largely a result of managing shared facilities that are used by both councils since Swindon became a unitary authority in 1997. A full list of external appointments is included as Appendix 2 (p.32).

16 Joint Boards and Committees with other Public Sector Bodies

- 16.1. Section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006 provided a means to allow local authorities and their local NHS bodies jointly to commission and provide services. Swindon Borough Council and the Swindon Primary Care Trust use Section 75 agreements to commission services for adults and young people. On 12 March 2008 Cabinet approved £21.6m as the Borough share of £40.2m joint expenditure for adults. For 2008/9 the joint Section 75 expenditure for Children was £5.1m.
- 16.2. Governance is provided through two joint Commissioning Boards. One is for Adult Services which includes the Cabinet lead member along with two non-executive members the chair and vice chair of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The second board is for commissioning services for children and consists of the Cabinet Lead Member and two non-executive members, one of whom serves on the Children and Young people's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 16.3. In the 2009/2010 Municipal year there were five meetings for the Adult Services Joint Commissioning Board and seven for the Children's.

17 Connecting People Connecting Places

- 17.1. Since 2008 Swindon has been divided into seven clusters of wards under a strategy known as Connecting People, Connecting Places. In addition to the objectives detailed earlier (para 4.7), the cluster arrangements also provide residents with new opportunities to inform Council policy making, to make representations for services and to provide feedback on the quality of those services.
- 17.2. Each cluster has between two and four wards and is chaired by a non-executive councillor. The chair is supported by a senior council officer who works part-time on cluster duties as well as their main function.
- 17.3. Since each cluster is intended to reflect local priorities and concerns there has been a wide range of activities undertaken ranging from well-attended public meetings in the northern cluster to smaller, parish and community group focused gatherings in the south. The town centre cluster has also made use of weekend road shows to engage with the public.
- 17.4. In order to reconcile and prioritise the different demands within each cluster, it is envisaged that non-executive councillors in particular will have to develop their roles as facilitators and brokers rather than continue with their traditional role of being the first line of the council's customer service department. Therefore, maintaining the number of councillors at the present level is necessary to best ensure the number of elected representatives required to deliver effective decentralisation.
- 17.5. On 19 July 2010 the Prime Minister announced his plans for the Big Society, a radical redistribution of power, authority and responsibility from government to local communities and individuals. Local authorities will be more accountable to local residents rather than Whitehall departments.
- 17.6. The scope of this transformation has not yet been set out in draft legislation, however, it could require a complete rethink of the way in which the Council operates in order to devolve more decision making to lower levels. In such a case, the workload of non-executive members seems likely to increase since they will hold the key role of brokers between various groups over how resources are allocated. Such facilitation would occur at the Cluster level within the council's present governance arrangements.
- 17.7. Given the Coalition Government's emphasis on localism and neighbourhoods, and in anticipation of the publication of a Decentralisation and Localism Bill in the autumn, as announced in the Queen's speech, it is believed that the clusters will take on an

increasingly important role over the next few years in service planning and delivery.

18 Town and Parish Councils

- 18.1. There are currently 15 town and parishes within Swindon Borough Council with a significant amount of the urban core being unparished. One parish, Inglesham in the northern eastern part of Highworth ward has an annual parish meeting rather than elected councillors. Highworth has a town council while the other 13 parishes have parish councils. One of these, Stratton St Margaret was rated as one of only 41 Best Value Town and Parish councils in England.
- 18.2. In 2009 one small parish in the Borough suffered a constitutional crisis when due to the resignation of all but one parish councillor, there was no longer a quorum to co-opt new members. Following a resolution of Full Council on 12 November 2009, the ward councillor and two other councillors were able to step in to ensure that the parish council remained viable until new elections could be held in May 2010.
- 18.3. No formal requests have been received for a community governance review, however, a question remains about how to handle the growth of housing in the Wichelstow area just north of the M4 and south of the Old Town area. In the 1970s the area known as the western expansion, now covered by the Freshbrook & Grange Park, Toothill & Westlea and Shaw & Nine Elms wards was removed from North Wiltshire District Council, which had a two tier system with parishes, to accommodate the urban growth. The area in the Northern Expansion, which came under the Haydon Wick and Blunsdon St Andrew Parishes was not removed from those parishes when development was agreed in the 1990s. There has been significant housing growth in the area of these two parishes in recent years.
- 18.4. The Ward Councillors that currently have parish councils within their ward were asked what impact this has upon their workload as a Ward Councillor. It was generally agreed that in some aspects, such as when the parish council responds to Planning Applications, the existence of a parish council decreases the workload of a Ward Councillor. However, having an active parish council with a clear agenda can mean that the Ward Councillor is lobbied on local matters more rigorously and their casework increases as a result. The frequency of parish council meetings is unique to each parish, however they tend to occur between 5 and 12 times a year, and Ward Councillors are encouraged to attend, although in practice they use their discretion to decide how frequently they attend these, taking into account other Council commitments.
- 18.5. Given the limited, and in many cases unquantifiable, impact that the existence of parish councils has upon the role of the local Ward

Councillor and the improbability that the number of parish councils in Swindon will increase significantly over the coming 5 years, it is felt that the existence of parish councils is immaterial to the consideration on Council Size.

- 18.6. As a consequence of the development of new housing in the Borough, however, the current warding arrangements are not coterminous with the Parish Boundaries, which leads to inequalities in the level of work. It also diminishes representation as residents can be confused about whether they live in a parished area or not. More examples are given in Table 1 (p.20).
- 18.7. The disparity between Ward Boundaries and Parish Boundaries does not make for effective and convenient local government and will seek to be addressed by the future warding arrangements proposal.

Table 1 Distribution of Town and Parish Councils between Borough Council Wards (July 2010)

Borough Council Ward	Town/Parish Council (PC)
Abbey Meads Ward	Blunsdon St Andrew PC
	Haydon Wick PC
Blunsdon Ward	Blunsdon St Andrew PC
	Castle Eaton PC
	Hannington PC
	Stanton Fitzwarren PC
Haydon Wick Ward	Haydon Wick PC
Moredon Ward	Haydon Wick PC
Highworth Ward	Highworth Town Council
	Inglesham Parish meeting
St Philip Ward	Stratton St Margaret PC
St Margaret Ward	Stratton St Margaret PC
Covingham and Nythe Ward	Stratton St Margaret PC
	Covingham PC
Ridgeway Ward	Bishopstone PC
	Liddington PC
	South Marston PC
	Wanborough PC
	Chiseldon PC
Wroughton and Chiseldon Ward	Chiseldon PC
	Wroughton PC

Representational Aspects of the Councillors' Role

19 Councillors' Functions

- 19.1. The Council's Constitution includes role definitions for the Leader of the Council, a Cabinet Member, a non-executive councillor, for an overview and scrutiny committee chair and member and for chairs and members of Scrutiny, Standards, Audit, Planning and other regulatory committees and for the leaders of the opposition party groups. The Constitution is available on the Council's website (*www.Swindon.gov* under the *Council and Democracy* pages).
- 19.2. All these definitions stress the multifaceted nature of a councillor's work which extends far beyond meetings in the Civic offices. For example, a non-executive councillor should "contribute to open government and the development of increased democracy through the active encouragement of all sections of the community to participate in the 'governance' of Swindon."
- 19.3. The definition also stresses the councillor's role as a representative of their constituents to the Council as well as representing the Borough Council to their residents and the wider community.
- 19.4. The Councillors' survey revealed the time members spend in case work both formally through letters, emails and phone calls as well as in face to face contact or at ward-based events (Table 2, p.23).

20 Councillors' Workloads

- 20.1. At the Annual Council Meeting (May 2009) the 59 councillors were allocated to more than 438 posts including Council, Cabinet, overview and scrutiny committees, project boards. This includes 87 seats on external bodies.
- 20.2. Cabinet members had an average of 14 positions and non-executive members, excluding the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and the Mayor's Consort who was also a councillor, had an average of seven appointments. The average for all councillors was eight positions.
- 20.3. It is worth noting that the range of committee and outside body allocations to non-cabinet members varied quite widely from 17 to just one. Seventeen councillors had five or fewer allocations. This is a consequence of the representative nature of the councillors as this group includes those who work outside Swindon, or work on a shift

pattern, or have carer duties. By having 59 councillors it is possible to accommodate individuals who do have other work or caring commitments to remain councillors, providing they perform their other representational duties.

- 20.4. The Committee and Member Services section records various details of meetings for which it provides committee officer support (committee clerks). In 2009 data was recorded for 214 meetings of which 79 were daytime and 135 were in the evening. Of these 144 were open to the public. It should be emphasised that many of the project boards, working groups and user bodies are not supported by Committee and Member Services and the data for those meetings is not included within the totals given.
- 20.5. Committee officers are asked to record whether the meeting was less than an hour, 1 to 3 hours, or more than 3 hours. In the 2009/10 Municipal Year 13 evening meetings were under one hour, 4 lasted more than 3 hours and the remaining 120 were between 1 and 3 hours long. For daytime meetings 24 lasted under an hour, 50 lasted between one and three hours, and 3 lasted more than three hours.
- 20.6. To support this submission, a survey was conducted to determine present councillors' workloads. The results of this survey are shown below in Table 2 (p.23) and a copy of the survey questions is included as Appendix 1 (p.29).
- 20.7. A councillor on Swindon Borough Council commits between 26 and 38 hours a week to all forms of Council-related work (including party political work). The National Census of Local Authority Councillors undertaken by the LGA and IDeA (LGA/IDeA 2008) reported that councillors spent an average of 22 hours a week on council/political business, indicating that Swindon's elected representatives deliver an above-average commitment.
- 20.8. Swindon Borough Council's survey also indicated that councillors spent between 8 to 10 hours a week dealing with constituents either face to face, at community meetings or through correspondence. This was also higher than the national average which in 2006 was seven hours per week (LGA/IDeA 2008: p4).

Table 2 Survey of Swindon Borough Councillors' Workloads July 2010

Question	median response (hours per week)	Number of respondents (n)
Attending formal meetings	Between 2 and 3 hours	33
Preparing for formal meetings	Between 3 and 4 hours	33
Informal cabinet/shadow cabinet meetings	Between 1 and 2 hours	30
Liaising with partner organisations eg Fire, Police and PCT	Between 1 and 2 hours	31
Reading reports	Between 3 and 4 hours	33
Meetings with cabinet members for casework	Less than 1 hour	33
Attending briefing meetings	Between 2 and 3 hours	34
Dealing with constituents face to face	Between 4 and 5 hours	33
Dealing with constituent correspondence	Between 4 and 5 hours	31
Attending Party Group meetings	Between 2 and 3 hours	32
Party Political campaigning	Between 2 and 3 hours	32
Attending other governance bodies	Between 2 and 3 hours	32

- 20.9. Each committee represents a distinctive time commitment for its members. However, this can be divided into three general levels of commitment; high, medium and low commitment (as outlined in Table 3 p.24). This provides an indication of the number of Committee places each Councillor could reasonably be expected to take to ensure convenient and effective local government.

Table 3 Indication of Time Commitment to Committees

Time Commitment	Description	Examples of Committees	Colour code
High	For the most part executive or statutory committees which meet seven or more times a year and include a substantial time commitment – briefing, training etc – in addition to those meetings	Cabinet, Planning,	Red
Medium	Committees that meet between four and six times a year	Audit, Standards, O&S Task Groups	Yellow
Low	Committees that have met less than four times a year	Archaeological Advisory Body, Tenant Farmers Forum.	Green

21 Time Commitment

- 21.1. Historically, member meetings at Swindon Borough Council have taken place in the evening. However, appeals meetings, some number of regulatory committees and joint boards regularly meet during the day, which means that membership of these is restricted to those Councillors that do not have a full-time day-time job. The day-time scheduling is necessary to serve residents, local business representatives, members of partner organisations and other stakeholders. In reaching the optimum number of Councillors to run the Council, there has to be certainty that there will be a sufficient number of councillors to enable such meetings to be well-enough attended.
- 21.2. All Councillors are expected to carry out a community engagement and representational role within their ward, attend Full Council meetings and participate in Neighbourhood Working arrangements, which in the future are expected to include regular attendance at Cluster meetings and events. A number of Members also hold their own Ward Forums, which operate at sub-Cluster level.
- 21.3. Each year, a Councillor holds the position of Mayor. During his/her year of office the Mayor does not participate in any committees other than Full Council, due to the time commitment that is required to carry out their mayoral and civic duties. In addition, there is the post of Deputy Mayor who substitutes for the Mayor on civic occasions as and when required but still participates in the committees of the Council.

- 21.4. In total, it is expected that 13 Councillors would hold positions as members of the Cabinet or Chairs of the three Statutory Committees – Scrutiny, Planning and Licensing. These meet 7 or more times a year and the roles carry significant additional responsibilities outside the meeting. This excludes the Mayor and Deputy Mayor who have many additional civic duties as well as attending formal council meetings.
- 21.5. A further 41 places would be available on the Statutory Committees for other Councillors (Scrutiny, Planning and Licensing). Whilst some Councillors may sit on more than one of these committees, this is not common, and enables the majority of Councillors to participate in one of the Statutory Committees. The Council's Constitution also sets out that a member can only receive one Special Responsibility Allowance in order to encourage the workload to be distributed more widely.
- 21.6. Additional places, including chairs, will be available on the other committees. These meet with either medium or low frequency, and it is possible for Councillors to combine places on these committees with positions on committees that require more commitment.
- 21.7. Places on the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees and any ad-hoc Task Groups and Working Groups will be allocated according to the particular skills and interests of the Councillors, and may be drawn from any of the Councillors. Membership of the Member Development Group will be one representative from each political group.
- 21.8. Given that more than 438 formal positions on council committees and outside bodies under the current political management arrangements require to be filled. Given also the current time commitment of elected members in their decision-making role and in their representational role in the community, as set out above. It is recommended that the Council would deliver convenient and effective local government with a Council size of 59 Councillors.
- 21.9. With a Council Size of 59 Councillors, each Councillor would be allocated an average of between one or two of the 92 places available on the Cabinet, Regulatory and Overview and Scrutiny Committees. This would leave them with sufficient additional time to deliver their representational and community engagement roles and participate in the Swindon Clusters and “Outside Bodies”, as well being available to participate in any ad-hoc working parties or groups that were formed.
- 21.10. Using the forecast electorate for 2015 this represents a target for each Councillor to represent an electorate of approximately 2760 electors in order to achieve electoral equality. In 2010 the ratio was one councillor to approximately 2665 electors.

22 Resembling/Representing the Electorate

- 22.1. On issues of representation as resemblance, the Borough Council has seen a number of younger councillors elected. Survey data (July 2010) indicates that at least six councillors were under 40 years of age with at least one under 30. This amounts to just over 10% of the total number of councillors who returned the survey (34 out of 59 councillors).
- 22.2. In terms of employment status Swindon Borough Council, like many authorities, has a slight tendency towards the number of retired people with nearly 34% of councillors being in that group. In the 2001 Census only 12.96% of the entire population was 65 or over (or 16.9% of the population aged 18 or over). However, this was less than for the rest of England where 43.5% of councillors were retired in 2008 (LGA/IDeA Census 2008, p3). The full distribution of councillors is set out in Table 4 (p.26).

Table 4 Councillors' Employment Status July 2010

Employment Status	Number	Share of all councillors
Full time employed/self-employed/business-owner	32	54%
Retired	20	34%
Unemployed, seeking work	6	10%
Looking after the home	1	2%
Total	59	

- 22.3. With only 12 councillors who are women (20% of the total), Swindon does fall below the Commonwealth's Millennium Development Goal of having women occupying 30% of decision-making positions. However, there is no analysis available to indicate that the policy agenda is being biased against women. Until May this year the position of Deputy Leader of the Council was held by a woman, who has remained a member of Cabinet since standing down from that role.
- 22.4. Swindon has a number of minority ethnic communities who are entitled to stand for election. These include Commonwealth and EU nationalities. Given the personal and political sensitivity of ethnic monitoring data that can be traced back to individuals, no data was collected in the survey (Appendix 1, p.29). Nevertheless, it is apparent that councillors in Swindon do not reflect the full range of the Borough's ethnic and minority communities. However, the electoral choices of residents about whether to stand and for whom to vote play a more significant role in this.

23 Support for Members

- 23.1. The two largest groups each receive support from a full-time Political Assistant, under the criteria of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The purpose of these posts is to “provide timely political and administrative support to the political group and its leader. A change in political party representation on the Council could result in the appointment of a third political assistant, should the relevant statutory criteria be met.
- 23.2. The political assistant to the majority group is also required to perform more support functions for Cabinet, particularly acting as a conduit for information in the preparation of Cabinet reports and delegated decisions.
- 23.3. The Leader of the Council also has the support of a full-time Executive Secretary. The purpose of this post is to “Act as personal assistant to the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council in all matters relating to the effective management of the Leader’s office”.
- 23.4. There is also an administrative assistant to the Cabinet Office who assists in diary management, reception and other functions to support the Leader and Deputy Leader.
- 23.5. Two additional members of staff in the Committee and Member Services section provide administrative and communications support for members. In particular, there is a weekly on-line and paper communication, the Members’ Bulletin, which is the primary vehicle for informing councillors of road works, planning issues and other matters that may affect their ward. It also publishes notices of decisions made by Cabinet Members under their delegated authority. In addition it is also the publication in which members who attend training or other conferences are required to report back to inform others of the outcomes of those events.
- 23.6. A dedicated phone number for the Council’s contact centre, Swindon Direct, is in operation for Councillors to log their ward issues and commission responses.
- 23.7. To support member development there is a Member Development Steering Group. The Member Group meets four to six times a year and considers matters related to the training and development of members. This includes setting the member development programme for the Municipal Year and then monitoring, reviewing and evaluating its effectiveness.
- 23.8. Members can apply to attend conferences and other briefings. One requirement for having these considered as an approved duty is that a

report must be submitted to all members summarising the training or insight received. This is usually circulated to all councillors in the Members' Bulletin. Failure to submit such reports can result in authorisations to attend future conferences being withheld.

24 Single or Multi-Member Wards

- 24.1. At present Swindon has a mixture of single, two and three member wards with elections "by thirds". Schedule 2 of the 2009 Act provides a core assumption that any local authority retaining elections by thirds will be presumed to have three member wards unless exceptional cases can be made.
- 24.2. On the assumption that Swindon Borough Council continues to elect by thirds, the Corporate Governance Working Party has recommended to the Full Council that on the basis of a council membership of 59 councillors, there is no compelling case for retaining all of the three two-member wards in the urban core.
- 24.3. There may, however, be a case for retaining the two single-member wards for the rural areas covering a number of parishes with a relatively low population density, and the rationale for this will be addressed once the total number of councillors has been confirmed.

Conclusion

- 25.1. Swindon Borough Council submits the above evidence as its case for having 59 councillors to operate the Leader-Cabinet model of governance with a strong overview and scrutiny function.
- 25.2. Having this number of councillors also permits those from a wide range of economic and social backgrounds to participate in local democracy.
- 25.3. The range of work councillors undertake has proved adequate to attract a large number of candidates with no Borough councillors having been elected unopposed since the Council became a unitary authority in 1997.

Appendix 1 Councillors' Survey Questionnaire Responses

1) Gender							
Male = 26	Female = 6	No answer= 2					
2) Age range							
18-21 = 0	22-29= 1	30-39= 5	40-49= 10	50-59= 6	60-69=7	70+ = 4	
3) Which of these activities best describes what you are doing at present?							
Full time = 14	Unemployed and seeking work= 1	Part-time= 3	Permanently sick/disabled= 0	Self-employed= 3	Wholly retired= 13	On govt. training= 0	Looking after home = 1
Full time education= 0	Other= 0						
4) If you have duties, either as a parent, carer or through work that require you to be away from home for at least 2 consecutive nights are you away each year							
2-6 = 5	7-12= 1	13-18= 1	More than 18= 3	None= 17			
5) Which additional offices do you hold							
Cabinet Member= 5	Chair or Vice chair of a council committee= 15	Town or Parish Councillor= 1	Borough Council Mayor/deputy= 1	Hold no other office= 11			
6) Hours spent per week attending formal meetings (Full Council, Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny etc)							
Less than 1 hour= 0	At least one hour but less than two= 3	At least two hours but less than three= 14	At least three hours or more= 16				
7) Hours spent per week preparing for formal meetings							
Less than 1 hour= 2	At least one hour but less than two=5	At least two hours but less than three=5	At least three hours but less than four=9	At least four hours but less than five=6	At least five hours or more=3		

8) Hours spent per week at informal/shadow cabinet meetings							
Less than 1 hour=14	At least one hour but less than two=3	At least two hours but less than three=6	At least three hours or more=7				
9) Hours spent per week liaising with partner organisations e.g. Police, PCT Fire Authority etc.							
Less than 1 hour=13	At least one hour but less than two=7	At least two hours but less than three=2	At least three hours but less than four=2	At least four hours but less than five=3	At least five hours or more=4		
10) Hours spent per week reading reports							
Less than 1 hour=2	At least one hour but less than two=2	At least two hours but less than three=9	At least three hours but less than four=7	At least four hours but less than five=5	At least five hours or more=8		
11) Meetings with a cabinet member about casework							
Less than 1 hour=17	At least one hour but less than two=7	At least two hours but less than three=5	At least three hours but less than four=2	At least four hours but less than five=2	At least five hours or more=0		
12) Hours spent on briefing meetings							
Less than 1 hour=6	At least one hour but less than two=10	At least two hours but less than three=11	At least three hours but less than four=1	At least four hours but less than five=1	At least five hours or more=5		
13) Hours spent on direct dealings with the public (surgery, residents groups, civic functions etc)							
Less than 1 hour=0	At least one hour but less than two=6	At least two hours but less than three=6	At least three hours but less than four=4	At least four hours but less than five=6	At least five hours or more=11		

14) Hours spent per week dealing with correspondence (email, letters, phone calls)							
Less than 1 hour=0	At least one hour but less than two=5	At least two hours but less than three=4	At least three hours but less than four=3	At least four hours but less than five=7	At least five hours or more=12		
15) Hours spent per week attending political party group meetings							
Less than 1 hour=8	At least one hour but less than two=8	At least two hours but less than three=12	At least three hours but less than four=0	At least four hours or more=4			
16) Hours spent per week on political party activities							
Less than 1 hour=4	At least one hour but less than two=7	At least two hours but less than three=8	At least three hours but less than four=3	At least four hours but less than five=6	At least five hours or more=4		
17) Hours spent per week on other governance duties e.g.school governing body							
Less than 1 hour=1	At least one hour but less than two=12	At least two hours but less than three=9	At least three hours but less than four=5	At least four hours but less than five=2	At least five hours or more=3		

Appendix 2 – Complete List of Outside Bodies to which Councillors are Appointed

Archaeological Advisory Body Of the Swindon Development Trust (6 members)
Arts Council England – South West (1 member)
Association of Public Service Excellence (1 member & 1 deputy)
Braeside Management Committee (1 member)
Cotswold Water Park Joint Committee (1 member)
Cre8 Studios (2 members)
Cricklade Country Way (1 member)
Digital City (UK) Board (1 member)
Dorcan Site Management Committee (3 members including 1 ward member)
Forward Swindon Limited (CE and Cabinet Member)
Governing Body of Swindon College (1 Member) – 4 year term
Great Western Enterprise Business West (2 members - normally including 1 officer)
Great Western Community Forest (3 members and 3 deputies)
Health Hydro Management Committee (now known as Best Value Team) (1 member)
Highworth Recreation Centre Management Committee (1 member + 1 deputy)
Joint Committee of the National Parking Adjudication Service (1 member [Cabinet member for service area] + 1 deputy [shadow lead member from the largest minority group])
Local Authority World Heritage Forum (1 member)
Local Government Association (4 members)
Local Government Association Rural Commission (2 members)
Local Government Association Urban Commission (2 members)
Local Government Information Unit (1 member and 1 deputy)
Lydiard House Conference Centre (1 Member – Cabinet Member with Portfolio Responsibility)
North Wessex Downs Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership Board (1 member + 1 deputy)
Oxenwood Management Committee (1 member)
Plas Pencelli Management Committee (5 members)
South West Provincial Employers National Joint Council for Local Government Services (2 members)
South West Regional Committee of “Room”, National Council for Housing and Planning (1 member and 1 deputy)
South West Councils (3 members) (Note: Members may also be appointed from Swindon under the LGA proportionality arrangements. These are Regional LGA Appointments)
South West Regional Executive Board for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (1 member and the Chief Executive, or a nominated representative)
Stratton Pupil Referral Unit Management Committee (2 members)
Swindon Adoption Panel (2 members - no deputies)
Swindon Commercial Services Board (1 member)
Swindon Dance Board (2 members)
Swindon Fostering Panel (2 members – no deputies)
Swindon Foyer (1 member)
Swindon Lifelong Learning Partnership (1 member)

Swindon Ocotal Link (5 members including 1 from each minority political group)
 Swindon Portage (1 member)
 Swindon Railway Historic Castings Ltd (3 members)
 Swindon Railway Heritage Centre Trust (2 members – including the Leader of the Council)
 Swindon Strategic Partnership Board (1 Member - Leader or Cabinet Member with Portfolio Responsibility preferred, + the Chief Executive)
 Swindon Urban Regeneration Company (The New Swindon Company – now Forward Swindon Ltd) (2 members)
 Thames Regional Flood Defence Committee (1 Member) (Note: Appointed on a rotational basis with Hampshire and Oxfordshire County Councils. Current status: Observer. Next appointment for SBC 2011. Preferred appointment Cabinet Member with Portfolio Responsibility)
 Thamesdown Transport Board (Note: the Council nominates 4 members of the Board)
 Town Twinning Network (6 members)
 University Court of the University of Bath (1 member)
 Upper Thames Area Liaison Forum (5 members)
 Urchfont Manor Management Committee (1 member)
 Wessex Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (1 member)
 Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust (1 member and 1 deputy)
 Wiltshire Pension Fund Committee (2 members)
 Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre Advisory Group (2 members)
 Wilts and Berks Canal Trust (1 member)

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