

Swindon Borough Council

Cabinet

Wednesday, 13 July 2016

Committee Room 6, Civic Offices

At 6.00 p.m. or at the Conclusion of the Cabinet Open Forum

Conservative Councillors

David Renard (Chair)

Russell Holland

Oliver Donachie

Toby Elliott

Fionuala Foley

Brian Ford

Dale Heenan

Mary Martin

Garry Perkins

Keith Williams

Committee Officer: Steve Jones (Telephone 01793 463602)

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Swindon Borough Council can be contacted at the Civic Offices, Euclid Street, Swindon, SN1 2JH (Telephone 01793 445500)

Access Arrangements - The venue is wheelchair accessible and an infrared receiver hearing system is provided. If you have any special requirements to enable you to attend the meeting or would like to receive any of the pages contained in this agenda in a larger print size, please contact the Committee Officer as soon as possible prior to the date of the meeting.

AGENDA

NOTE:

A Cabinet Open Forum is held at 6:00 p.m. prior to the start of each scheduled Cabinet Meeting. The Open Forum is similar to the 'public question time' that happens at most Council meetings but without the need for questions. It provides the chance to meet with Cabinet Members as well as Board Directors and Directors to discuss matters relevant to the Cabinet and its responsibilities. It provides an opportunity to raise issues and give views. The Forum will normally close at 6.30 pm and the Cabinet will then reconvene for the start of the formal Cabinet meeting. If the Open Forum completes its business earlier than anticipated then the Cabinet Meeting will commence at

6:15pm or at the Forum's conclusion.

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 5 - 16)

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 16th June 2016

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. Adoption of the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan HP&RS (CM:TE) **WW**
(Pages 17 - 22)

6. Debt Management DLDS, HRB (CM:RH) (Pages 23 - 38)

7. Securing a sustainable future for Swindon's Library Services HLCI&V
(CM:MM) (Pages 39 - 118)

8. Budget Management 2016-17 BDR (CM:RH) (Pages 119 - 134)

9. Fixed Penalty Notice Enforcement Policy HP&RS (CM:OD) (Pages 135 - 146)

10. Education Transport Policy 2017/18 HES (CM:FF) (Pages 147 - 202)

11. Council Tax Discretionary Discounts & Premiums DLDS, HRB (CM:RH)
(Pages 203 - 212)

12. Adoption and Implementation of Financial Inclusion Policy DLDS, HRB
(CM:RH) (Pages 213 - 230)

13. References from Other Council Bodies - Health and Wellbeing Board DLDS
(CM:BF) (Pages 231 - 272)

Date of Despatch: 05 July 2016

Key:

Officers:

| | | |
|--------|---|--|
| BDR | - | Board Director Resources (Section 151 Officer) |
| DLDS | - | Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) |
| HLCI&V | - | Head of Localities, Community Involvement and Volunteering |
| HES | - | Head of Education |
| HRB | - | Head of Revenues and Benefits |
| HPRS | - | Head of Planning and Regulatory Services |

Wards

WW - Wroughton and Wichelstowe

Cabinet Members Responsible for the Service Area concerned:

| | | | |
|----|---|-----------------|---|
| DR | - | David Renard | Leader of the Council and Chair of Cabinet |
| RH | - | Russell Holland | Deputy Leader of the Council, Vice-Chair of Cabinet, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services |
| OD | | Oliver Donachie | Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness |
| TE | - | Toby Elliott | Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning |
| FF | - | Fionuala Foley | Cabinet Member for Children's Services |
| BF | - | Brian Ford | Cabinet Member for Adults' Health and Social Care |
| DH | - | Dale Heenan | Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Transport |
| MM | - | Mary Martin | Cabinet Member for Communities |
| GP | - | Garry Perkins | Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills |
| KW | | Keith Williams | Cabinet Member for Streetsmart |

Public Question Time - Swindon Borough Council remains committed to increasing its accountability to the public and to promoting active citizenship. 15 minutes will be allowed at the start of all Council meetings for questions to the Chair from the public about the work of the Committee (except for confidential matters, and matters relating to planning and licensing applications). We will give priority to those who submit questions in writing at least two days before the meeting. Questions must be relevant, clear, and concise. You may not use Public Question Time as an opportunity to make speeches or statements.

Questions in writing should be sent to the Committee Officer whose contact details appear on the agenda above or to the Director of Law and Democratic Services, we will publish it, along with the answer, alongside the Minutes. The process associated with asking a public question is set out in the "Public Question Time at Council Meetings Protocol and Guidance" available on the Council's Website.

(<http://ww5.swindon.gov.uk/moderngov/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13338&path=0>) or from the Committee Officer named above.

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CABINET

THURSDAY, 16 JUNE 2016

PRESENT:- Councillors David Renard (Chair), Russell Holland, Oliver Donachie, Toby Elliott, Fionuala Foley, Brian Ford, Dale Heenan, Mary Martin, Garry Perkins and Keith Williams.

Councillors Claire Ellis, Jane Milner-Barry and Chris Watts attended the meeting in respect of Minute 8.

1. Observation of a Minute's Silence

Councillor David Renard, the Leader of the Council, referred to the very sad death of Jo Cox, the Labour Member of Parliament for Batley and Spen, following an attack made on her earlier in the day. Councillor Renard invited cabinet colleagues, other councillors, officers and members of the public present in the Chamber to stand and observe a minute's silence as a sign of respect.

2. Declarations of Interest.

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

3. Minutes.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th April 2016, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4. Public Question Time.

There were no public questions.

5. 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 the item listed below, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in the respective paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

| Item No. | Paragraph No. | Minute No. |
|----------|---------------|------------|
| 19 | 3 | 19 |

6. Councillors' Allowances 2017/18 - Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (Minute For Confirmation)

Cabinet considered recommendations submitted by the Independent Remuneration Panel on (i) the level of Councillors' Allowances in Swindon for 2017/2018 and

future years, and (ii) a proposed amendment to the Councillors' Allowance Scheme for 2016/17 regarding Special Responsibility Allowances associated with the Health and Wellbeing Board. It was noted that whilst the Council was required by the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 to consider the recommendations of its Independent Remuneration Panel when making decisions relating to its Scheme of Councillors' Allowances, it was not required to adopt all or any of the Panel's recommendations.

Councillor David Renard, the Leader of the Council, introduced the report, taking the opportunity to thank Mr Keith Strickland, the Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel, and the Panel members, for their hard work in support of the review and their preparation of the comprehensive recommendations before the Cabinet.

Resolved – (1) That Cabinet notes the thorough and comprehensive review undertaken by the Independent Remuneration Panel, and thanks the Panel Chair and its members for their work.

(2) That the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on Councillors' Allowances for 2017/2018 and future years, as set out in paragraph 3.5 of the report, be referred to the Council.

(3) That the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on Councillors' Allowances for the 2016/17 year, as set out in paragraph 3.7 of the report, be referred to the Council.

(3) That the Director of Law and Democratic Services be authorised to introduce a revised Councillors' Allowances Scheme for 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 and future years, to be based on the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, and as approved and adopted by the Council.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

7. Medium Term Financial Context and Budget Strategy 2017-18

Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, and the Board Director, Resources, submitted a joint report setting out a strategic context and framing for the direction of travel of the organisation to deliver the Vision for Swindon over the next four years, within the expected financial context. It was noted that this, with the Budget strategy for 2017-18, sought to ensure that the organisation understands the financial context within which it operates and has plans to remain financially stable and underpins the Council's ability to achieve its Vision, strategies, plans and priorities, including the Council Plan, to be considered elsewhere on this evening's agenda.

Councillor Holland introduced the report, emphasising the unprecedented pressures on the Council, from both an increased demand for services and expected reductions in government income, as summarised in the forecast funding position (Table 1 of the report), and the scale of the challenge facing the Council over the next four years to ensure that the Council was sustainable. He observed that even a Council Tax increase to the capping limit, in addition to the permitted 2% social care increase, would be insufficient to cover the forecast demand for care services.

Councillor David Renard, the leader of the Council, reiterated that the pressure to provide adult social care and children's services meant that these areas could,

potentially, consume 80% of the budget by 2020 and was driving the unprecedented pressures and need for organisational transformation referred to by Councillor Holland in his introduction of the report.

Resolved – (1) That the Council's medium term context be noted and it be agreed that the contents of this report be used to engage and consult with residents, stakeholders and service users on the organisation's strategic response.

(2) That the latest version of the Efficiency Statement, showing the financial plan for the next four years to 2020, the final version of which needs to be submitted to the Government in October 2016, be noted.

(3) That the Budget Strategy for 2017-18 be agreed.

(4) That the licensing fee structure set out in Appendix One to the report, be approved.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

8. Future Direction - Transfer of Services to Parish Councils

Councillor David Renard, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Russell Holland, the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, Councillor Keith Williams, the Cabinet Member for Streetsmart and Councillor Mary Martin, the Cabinet Member for Communities, the Board Director Resources, and Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a joint report providing an updates on (i) progress made with the transfer of services to existing parish councils, and (ii) the first stage of the community governance review, and setting out the future direction of travel of the Council's "Going Local" agenda.

Councillor Renard introduced the report, explaining that it provided an assessment of progress with the Community Governance Review and feedback received to date, and proposed a way forward in relation to future engagement over what a future, democratically-elected borough could look like. He remarked on the different levels of devolution that had already occurred with existing Parish Councils and observed that the overwhelming majority of response to Stage One of the Review had come from areas without parishes.

Councillor Mary Martin, the Cabinet Member for Communities, noted the pressures on the Council's budgets and advised that, in her view, the proposed mechanism of the transfer of services would facilitate the Council in continuing to provide or extend services that might, otherwise, have to be reduced or removed.

Councillor Keith Williams, the Cabinet Member for Streetsmart, commented on the positive feedback from the pilot areas, noting that a parish council would be able to ensure that its available financial resource was spent only on improvements and services within the particular parish's area.

In response to a question put by Councillor Dale Heenan, the Director of Law and Democratic Services confirmed that the process for conducting a Community Governance Review did not contain a statutory requirement for a referendum and that the Council needed to adhere to the legislation and guidance to avoid the risk of any judicial challenge.

In response to a further question put by Councillor Heenan, the Director of Law and Democratic Services agreed to inform Cabinet of the number of Borough Councillors that had responded to the Stage 1 Community Governance Review consultation.

Councillor Claire Ellis, on behalf of residents of Old Town, advised the meeting of:

- Residents' concern about the lack of information available to reach a conclusion about the introduction of a parish, particularly since most respondents to the CGR had stated their opposition to creating parishes,
- Residents' concern at the lack of any legislative requirement for a referendum and residents' support for a consultative poll, even if councillors still had to make the final decision, and
- Local businesses, concern about the possible extension of the BID area or a request to pay more to support local services.

Councillor Chris Watts referred to views expressed earlier in the debate of this matter and commented that residents of areas without parishes were equally proud of their local community areas as were residents of parished areas and that residents in currently non-parished areas were engaging with the Community Governance Review process. Councillor Watts also referred to a comment at a previous meeting regarding the Labour Group's position on parishing and clarified that any opposition was purely in relation to the adopted review process.

Councillor Renard, with Councillor Brian Ford, the Cabinet Member for Adults' health and Social Care, responded to a question put by Councillor Jane Milner-Barry about the level of Parish Council feedback to the Streetsmart and Highways Overview and Scrutiny Committee's review of the devolution of streetsmart services pilots.

Resolved – (1) That the following be noted:

- The context and forecast direction of travel for services provided in local communities if no action is taken.
- The findings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that examined the success of service transfers to existing parish councils.
- The outcome of the first stage of the Community Governance Review.

(2) That Cabinet agrees that it wishes to enable community empowerment at a local level, to promote community cohesion and allow the devolution of power and responsibility to communities within the Borough, by considering potentially parishing the whole Borough and altering some existing parish boundaries and will, to that end:

- Engage with local communities in June and July to address issues raised in the first stage of the Community Governance Review.
- Authorise the Director of Law and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Communities, to prepare illustrative maps for use during the engagement process.
- Agree the revised review timetable set out in the report.
- Request the Cabinet Member for Communities to work with fellow councillors, residents, business representatives and parish councillors and the Borough Council to develop a community infrastructure able to sustain important local services.

(3) That officers engage with the business community over creating a sustainable service model in commercial areas of the Borough.

(4) That local services will not be funded by the Borough Council in future and that it wishes to work with parish councils, businesses and communities to develop alternative service solutions including:-

- Street cleaning, low-level graffiti, fly tipping and fly posting removal outside of the major highway network.
- Cosmetic grounds maintenance work that is not covered by fee income and does not create a health and safety risk around road network visibility.
- Litter and dog waste bin emptying, with bins being removed where on-going alternative services cannot be put in place.
- Play and games area inspection and maintenance, with resulting equipment removal where on-going alternative services cannot be put in place.
- Other services provided by the Borough Council.

(5) That Cabinet is committed to enabling a smooth transition to the new delivery model and that operational and tapering financial support will continue to be made available, funded from the savings enabled by the joint working arrangements during the early years of operation, and to provide appropriate training where requested.

(6) That Cabinet be asked to agree, in due course, the recommendation for consultation during Stage 3 of the Community Governance review.

(7) That specific engagement work be undertaken to help residents understand the wider context, proposed changes and the future impact on Council Tax bills.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

9. Budget Management 2015/16.

Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, and the Board Director, Resources, submitted a joint report presenting to Cabinet the 2015-16 Revenue Budget out-turn, based on actual expenditure incurred during the Financial Year ending 31st March 2016.

Councillor Holland introduced the report, reminding Cabinet of the amount of officer effort that was spent ensuring the Council continued to provide services within the budget. He drew members' attention to the demand-led pressures for personal care services, which had resulted in the overspend in the Commissioning department, and emphasised that the Council remained committed to the support of vulnerable people being a priority.

Resolved – (1) That the 2015-16 Out-turn for each service area, set out in Table One and Appendix One, be noted and that it also be noted that the out-turn was delivered within Budget for the tenth year running.

(2) That it be noted that the General Fund underspend of £0.2m has been added to the Council's transformation reserve as approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 20th April 2016 (Cabinet Minute 87(3) 2015/16 refers).

(3) That the out-turn positions for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and Public Power Solutions Ltd (PPS) be noted.

(4) That the proposed changes to fees and charges for Licencing be agreed and that the changes to Land Charges, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, be noted.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

10. Capital Programme Monitoring Out-Turn

Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, and the Board Director, Resources, submitted a joint report setting out the 2015/16 Capital Programme position as at the end of March 2016.

Councillor Holland welcomed a suggestion from Councillor Dale Heenan that the Council investigate whether staff costs on particular projects could be capitalised in order to reduce pressure on the revenue budget.

In response to a question from Councillor Toby Elliott, Councillor Heenan undertook to provide written details of the speed amelioration work on Thamesdown Drive.

Resolved – (1) That the latest 2015/16 Capital Programme position, as at financial year end, and as detailed in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.4 of the report, be noted.
(2) That the changes to the Capital Programme, detailed in paragraph 3.5 of the report, be approved.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

11. Treasury Management Performance 2015/16

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, and the Board Director, Resources, submitted a joint report setting out the Treasury Management performance for 2015/16.

Resolved – That the 2015/16 Treasury Management performance, as detailed at paragraphs 3.1 to 3.17 of the report, and Prudential Indicators shown at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

12. Housing Revenue Account - Medium Term Financial Plan

Councillor Oliver Donachie, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, and the Board Director, Resources, submitted a joint report sets out the Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) over the next 30 years.

Councillor Donachie drew Cabinet's attention to the key messages set out in paragraph 3.5 of the report, namely:

- The significant shortfall in resources available to undertake the investment required.
- The directing of investment towards maintaining homes to the Decent Homes Standard, undertaking structural repairs to the non- traditionally built stock where viable to do so, and re-categorisation of the sheltered housing stock where finances allow.

Resolved – (1) That the Medium Term Financial Plan, set out at Appendix 1 to the

report, be endorsed.

(2) That it be noted that the plan will be updated annually to take into account changing policies and updated survey information.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

13. The Council Plan and Performance Dashboard 2016- 2020

Councillor David Renard, the Leader of the Council, and Councillor Russell Holland, the Deputy Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, submitted a joint report seeking Cabinet's approval to the adoption of the Council Plan 2016-2020, outlining the work that the Council will do over the next four years towards the delivery of the Vision, the four priorities and thirty pledges. The report also introduced the Performance Dashboard, developed to ensure that residents, members, and staff were able to access information about the Council's performance, and containing the measures and targets by which the Council's performance against the work programme outlined in the Council plan would be tracked.

Councillor Holland acknowledged the work of members and officers to produce this plan, the aims of which would be to provide more data to residents, encourage informed debate and empower local people to suggest ideas of their own to support delivering the Plan that the Council could investigate.

Resolved – (1) That the Council Plan, detailed in Appendix One to the report, be approved and that the Chief Executive be asked to ensure that the Council's work programmes are aligned with the Plan.

(2) That the Head of Performance, People, and Engagement be authorised to publish and update the Performance Dashboard.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

14. Swindon's Country Parks - Future Operational Model

Councillor Garry Perkins, the Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills, and the Board Director Resources, submitted a joint report on the specific proposals for the introduction of car parking charges at Lydiard House and Park and Coate Water Country Park, which were agreed in principle by Cabinet and Council in February 2016. It was noted that the proposals recognised feedback from a public consultation, the results of which were outlined in the report.

The report also asked Cabinet to confirm its acceptance of a range of lease durations that might be offered by a future operator of Lydiard House and Park, recognising the need to be mindful of the designation of Lydiard as an "Asset of Community Value" under the Localism Act, which could impact on the process to be followed to transfer the running of the facility to another operator.

It was noted that these activities form part of the Council's strategy of growing the economy and attracting new income streams and would contribute directly to the objective of securing a sustainable future for Swindon's cultural assets, including

country parks.

Councillors Keith Williams and Fionuala Foley commented on the significant level of engagement with residents and park users as part of the consultation and the willingness to amend the proposals to address issues raised, including:

- The possibility of providing dispensation to voluntary and sporting groups that use the two parks.
- Changing the proposed levels of pricing.
- Introducing separate pricing for Lydiard Park and Coate Water Park.

Resolved – (1) That it be noted that the timeline for the submission of bids for the future running of Lydiard House and Park had been extended until 8 July 2016, for the reasons detailed in paragraph 3.1 of the report.

(2) That the introduction of car parking charges at Lydiard House and Park and Coate Water Country Park from 1 July 2016, using the charging structure set out under paragraph 3.4, be approved.

(3) That a further report be brought to Cabinet in December 2016, following a review of practical issues arising from the implementation of car parking charges, to highlight any lessons learnt for future arrangements.

(4) That the current designation of Lydiard House and Park as an Asset of Community Value be noted and that it be agreed that the Council confirms to potentially interested parties that it is willing to consider a “relevant disposal” through a lease of greater than 25 years to a third party, which would trigger a 6 week ‘interim moratorium’ period during which any qualifying community group is able to express an interest in potentially running the site.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

15. Swindon Local Transport Plan - Implementation Plan 2016/17 (Minute For Confirmation)

Councillor Dale Heenan, the Cabinet Member for Sustainability, Highways, and Transport and the Head of Highways and Transport submitted a joint report seeking approval for the adoption of the Local Transport Plan Implementation Plan for 2016/17 and for the Local Transport Plan Capital Programme budget apportionment for 2016/17.

Councillor Heenan introduced the report, setting out how it confirmed receipt of £3.9m of government grant along with identifying a pool of schemes on which that money could be spent over the next three years. He added that, if Cabinet approved the recommendations, the Head of Highways and Transport would consult with him to prioritise those schemes set out in the appendix to the main report.

Councillor Heenan advised that the report also sought support to make a submission to the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) for £1.27m to support work on the proposed Thamesdown Drive Extension, for which the substantive business case had already been prepared. Councillor Heenan explained that the additional funding would be used to pay for the detailed design work, ecological and environmental impact assessments along with preparing the planning application.

Councillor David Renard, the leader of the Council, informed the meeting that this submission would be considered by the SWLEP Board at its July 2016 meeting.

Resolved – (1) That the Local Transport Plan (LTP) Implementation Plan for 2016/17 be approved.

(2) That the Local Transport Plan Capital Programme budget categories and total spend for 2016/17, as detailed in Tables 1 to 7 of the Implementation Plan attached as Appendix 3 to the report, be approved.

(3) That, subject to approval of the Local Transport Plan Implementation Plan by Council :

(a) the Head of Highways and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainability, Highways, and Transport, be authorised to:

- (i) prioritise schemes in accordance with Vision for Swindon priorities,
- (ii) approve scheme progression in accordance with the updated Protocol (attached to the report at Appendix 2 and originally approved by the Cabinet in July 2010),
- (iii) amend the Protocol to reflect changing job titles and organisational restructuring,
- (iv) vary allocations between different budget categories,
- (v) approve variations in scheme costs,
- (vi) add/substitute schemes, provided expenditure is contained within the approved total budget, and
- (viii) vary the allocation of the £200k of previous funding set out in paragraphs 3.10 and 3.11 such that it is returned to the Council's reserves to be used for Corporate priorities.

(b) the Sustainable Travel Transition Year revenue funding budget categories and allocations for 2016/17, as detailed in table 8 of Appendix 3 to the report, be approved and the Head of Highways and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainability, Highways, and Transport, be authorised to amend budget allocations between the package elements where necessary to ensure delivery of the projects set out in the bid document.

(c) the Head of Highways and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainability, Highways and Transport, be authorised to work with the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership to submit a bid to the Large Local Major Schemes Fund for development funding for the Thamesdown Drive to Barnfield Link, as set out in paragraphs 3.13 to 3.15 of the report.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

16. Local Bus Services and Strategy Review

Councillor Dale Heenan, the Cabinet Member for Sustainability, Highways, and Transport, and the Head of Highways and Transport, submitted a joint report on proposed revisions to the Local Bus Strategy for Swindon Borough Council, and informing of (a) bus service revisions and reductions being proposed in line with the proposed revised draft Local Bus Strategy required to meet revenue support funding budget pressures, following the Council's decision to remove £100k from the revenue support budget of £267k in 2016-17, (b) the approach, in line with the

proposed revised draft Local Bus Strategy, for mitigating revenue support funding changes, (c) proposed service revision and review of Dial a Ride and Community Transport following the Council's decision to reduce the Community Transport budget of £313.5k by £100k in 2016-17, in line with the revised draft Local Bus Strategy, and (d) the development of a single consultation document, based on the revised draft Local Bus Strategy (Appendix 1) aligned with details of the Public Transport Contracts (Appendix 2) and Examples of the Proposed BusLink Community Transport Hub Services (Appendix 3), that would be the basis of consultation on the strategy and its implications.

Councillor Heenan introduced the report, commenting that the proposals were a continuation of issues raised during the 2016/17 Budget process. He advised that the intention was to commence a consultation on proposed changes to the Council's Bus Strategy in order to seek a bus network that consisted entirely of commercial routes. The savings achieved would be used to support bus link and hub projects to enable residents in villages and parts of the Borough not served by commercial bus services to reach key public services such as the hospital, or places where they could interconnect with public transport. Councillor Heenan added that the final Bus Strategy and proposals would return to Cabinet for consideration in the autumn.

Resolved – (1) That the use for public consultation of the draft revised Local Bus Strategy, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, and its implications for local bus services, as set out in Appendices 2 and 3, be noted and that the proposed service revision and its implications for Dial a Ride and Community Transport be also noted. (2) That the Head of Highways and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainability, Highways and Transport, be authorised to finalise the public consultation document and to carry out the public consultation on the draft revised Local Bus Strategy and its implications. (3) That a report detailing the results of the public consultation be submitted to the meeting of the Cabinet in September 2016.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

17. Waste and Recycling Service

Councillor Keith Williams, the Cabinet Member for StreetSmart, and the Head of StreetSmart, submitted a joint report setting out proposed changes to the Waste and Recycling Service during the third quarter of 2016/17, to enable service improvements and efficiency savings to be made in waste and recycling collections. It was noted that the proposed changes to the service would impact some households, where their collection day would change, and that consultation with staff and unions would be undertaken where any proposed changes were likely to impact staff.

Councillor Williams introduced the report and explained that the changes would involve reducing the number of vehicles and contract workers, but that no permanent posts would be made redundant. He advised Cabinet that around two thirds of properties in the Borough would be affected by the changes in the collection schedules from the Autumn but that a communications plan had been prepared to ensure timely and repeated advice to residents so as to minimise any possible disruption or misunderstanding.

Resolved – That the Head of StreetSmart be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for StreetSmart, to implement changes to the Waste and Recycling collection service during 2016/17.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

18. Use of compulsory purchase powers in the New Eastern Villages (NEV), Swindon

Councillor Toby Elliott, the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, and the Board Director, Service Delivery, submitted a joint report concerning the New Eastern Villages (NEV) development area and proposing that the Council should use its compulsory purchase powers (CPO) to acquire any land falling within the area shown on the plan at Appendix 2 to the report, which it has been unable to acquire by private treaty, and which is necessary for the provision of an item or items of infrastructure and in order to achieve the proper planning of the area. Cabinet was advised that it was considered to be extremely important that the Council makes its position very clear at this early stage that it will use its CPO powers where purchase by agreement is not possible.

Councillor Elliott introduced the report, explaining that the New Eastern Villages scheme was the largest greenfield housing expansion project in the UK. He added that the Council was seeking to ensure that this development had adequate infrastructure, for which the CPO powers would be a useful tool to be used only in the last resort. He set out details of the extensive engagement that had already occurred as well as informing Cabinet about a major event with stakeholders in July at which he hoped to secure progress without using the CPO powers.

Following his introduction of the report, Councillor Elliott responded to comments from Councillor Dale Heenan, who endorsed the approach as a means of indicating the Council's commitment to the development, and Councillor Russell Holland, whom he undertook to involve fully so that residents' concerns about any possible loss of access from Ermin Street could be addressed.

Resolved – (1) That the Head of Property Assets, in consultation with the Board Director, Service Delivery, the Director of Law and Democratic Services, the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and all relevant stakeholders, be authorised to:

- (a) identify and compile a list of specific areas of land within the area shown on the plan at Appendix 2 to the report, which are required for the purpose of the delivery of necessary infrastructure and in order to achieve the proper planning of the NEV area; and
 - (b) subject to obtaining the necessary authority, depending on purchase price, to undertake negotiations with the owners of relevant interests in the said areas of land with a view to achieving purchase by private treaty.
- (2) That the Director of Law and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and the Head of Property Assets, be authorised to complete such transactions, on such terms as he considers necessary to protect the Council's interests.
- (3) That, in the event that purchase by private treaty proves unachievable, a report

(or reports) be brought to the Cabinet to seek authority for the Director of Law and Democratic Services to make any necessary Compulsory Purchase Order(s).

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

19. Regeneration Opportunities at Cheney Manor Employment Area

Councillor Garry Perkins, the Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Skills, and the Chief Executive, submitted a joint report regarding a regeneration opportunity at the Cheney Manor Industrial Estate.

Councillor Perkins introduced the report, setting out its intention to provide much-needed investment to improve the quality of a Council-owned industrial estate unit. He added that these refurbishments would be paid for through a 20 year agreement with the present tenant, an engineering firm that was seeking to expand its workforce.

Resolved – That the Director of Law and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Board Director for Resources and Head of Property Assets, be authorised to enter into all necessary documentation, on such terms as he considers necessary to protect the Council's interests, to enable the grant of a lease of Council owned premises at Cheney Manor as detailed in the main body of the report and as identified in the plan appended to the report, and on the basis that the Council funds further landlord improvements, up to the cost identified in the report, in accordance with the financial arrangements also detailed in the report.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

Adoption of the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan

Cabinet and Council

Date: 13 and 14 July 2016

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Author: | Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning |
| Wards: | Wroughton & Wichelstowe |
| Locality Affected: | South |
| Parishes Affected: | Wroughton |

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the process followed that resulted in the successful examination of the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan and a majority of participants in a referendum voting in favour of it.
- 1.2 To seek Cabinet's approval to recommend to Council that the plan be adopted. To comply with the Localism Act 2011, Swindon Borough Council as the local planning authority is required to 'make' (or adopt), a neighbourhood development plan as soon as reasonably practicable following a successful referendum.
- 1.3 Neighbourhood Plans are a means by which communities can shape development in their areas and thus are a means of achieving the Council's Priority 4: Help People to help themselves.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Commend to Council that the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan is adopted formally as part of the statutory Development Plan for the Borough.
- 2.2 Authorise the Head of Planning, Regulatory Services and Heritage to undertake a Neighbourhood Planning review exercise in order that the Borough Council can assist other communities in progressing their Neighbourhood Plans.

3. Detail

Background

- 3.1 The 2011 Localism Act allowed for local communities to shape their areas by enabling town and parish councils along with other designated bodies (?) to prepare neighbourhood development plans. A detailed legislative framework for undertaking neighbourhood planning was set out in the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.
- 3.2 A Neighbourhood Plan, once adopted, forms part of the statutory development plan and sits alongside the Swindon Borough Local Plan. Should planning permission be sought in areas covered by an adopted Neighbourhood Plan, the

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Contact Phil Smith, on direct dial number 01793 466443, or by e-mail psmith@swindon.gov.uk.

Adoption of the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan

Cabinet and Council

Date: 13 and 14 July 2016

application must be determined in accordance with both the Neighbourhood Plan and the Local Plan.

- 3.3 Neighbourhood planning has been enthusiastically taken up by the many of the towns and parishes in the Borough, with seven plans currently at various stages of preparation.
- 3.4 There are a number of legally prescribed stages that need to be undertaken in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. The plan needs to be subject to examination by an independent examiner. Subject to a positive outcome from such an examination the plan then proceeds to a referendum. Where a neighbourhood plan is subject to a successful referendum, and the local planning authority is satisfied that EU and human rights obligations have been met, it is a legal requirement to bring the plan into force as soon as reasonably practicable.

Progress of the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan

- 3.5 In September 2014 Wroughton Parish Council published the draft Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan for a six week consultation, in line with regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.
- 3.6 Following additional work and consultation to meet the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment, the Parish Council submitted the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan to the Borough Council in October 2015 for assessment by an independent examiner. The Plan and associated documents were publicised for consultation by Swindon Borough Council for six weeks between 5th November and 17th December 2015 (the Local Authority publicity consultation).
- 3.7 Mr Andrew Matheson MSc MPA DipTP MRTPI FCIH was appointed as the Independent Examiner and all comments received at the Local Authority publicity consultation were passed on for his consideration.
- 3.8 The Examiner issued his Report into the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan on the 4th April 2016. He concluded that, subject to modifications, the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan will meet the necessary basic conditions (as set out in Schedule 4b (8) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and subject to these modifications being made may proceed to referendum.
- 3.9 Special Committee of 25th April 2016, approved the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan Decision Statement, which was attached as an appendix to the main report (Special Committee Minute 24(1), 2015/16 refers). This stated that having considered each of the recommendations made in the examiner's report, and the reasons for them, Swindon Borough Council accept the Examiner's recommendations in order to ensure that the draft plan meets the 'basic conditions' as set out in Schedule 4B of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011). The 'basic conditions' that a

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Adoption of the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan

Cabinet and Council

Date: 13 and 14 July 2016

neighbourhood plan must meet are: appropriate regard to national policy; general conformity with strategic policies of the development plan for the local area; contribute to the achievement of sustainable development; and compatible with EU obligations.

- 3.10 The Special Committee also authorised the Director of Law and Democratic Services to undertake a referendum on the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan in Wroughton Parish, in accord with regulations set out in The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendum) Regulations 2012 as soon as is practically possible.
- 3.11 A referendum was held in Wroughton Parish on Thursday 9th June 2016 posing the following question to eligible voters: "Do you want Swindon Borough Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Wroughton to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?"
- 3.12 2,430 (40%) of registered electors, recorded votes, of which 2,122 (87%) were in favour of 'yes'. It was declared that more than half of those voting had voted in favour of the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan. By way of comparison with other Neighbourhood Plan referendums, figures published by the Department of Communities and Local Government in February 2015 showed an average "yes" vote of 88 per cent, with an average turnout of 32 per cent. More recent referendums have shown a similar outcome. Accordingly, the Wroughton Referendum showed a relatively high turnout with an outcome similar to previous referendums.
- 3.13 In accordance with Section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), following the outcome of the referendum it is now recommended that Cabinet ask Council at its next meeting that the Borough Council be authorised to 'make' the neighbourhood plan so that it formally becomes part of the development plan for Swindon Borough Council.

Neighbourhood Plans Process Review

- 3.14 Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan is the first Neighbourhood Plan in the Borough to reach the examination and referendum stages. The outcome has been successful, and it is suggested that it would be a useful exercise to review the process in order that the Borough Council can assist other communities in developing their neighbourhood plans. In particular the review would look at:
- SBC officer support for Parishes
 - Ward Member engagement
 - Referendum process
- 3.15 It is proposed a report is prepared and presented to the Streetsmart, Highways and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the earliest opportunity.
-

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Contact Phil Smith, on direct dial number 01793 466443, or by e-mail psmith@swindon.gov.uk.

Adoption of the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan

Cabinet and Council

Date: 13 and 14 July 2016

Benefits to Wroughton Parish

- 3.16 As well as allowing the local community to have a greater say on development within their Parish, formally adopting the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan will allow the Parish Council to benefit from a higher proportion of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) revenues arising from chargeable development that takes place in the parish. This will rise from a capped 15% of levy revenue to an uncapped 25% when the neighbourhood plan is made. Therefore, this will result in a transfer of future levy revenue from the Borough Council to Wroughton Parish Council to spend on priority infrastructure required to support the development of the area.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 To be in accordance with legislation the Borough Council is legally required to bring the plan into force following the successful referendum, therefore there is no lawful alternative.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 The Borough Council is obliged to fund the costs of the Examiner and referendum. The costs have been covered through specific neighbourhood planning grant funding which have been drawn down from Central Government. .
- 5.2 Although there will be a financial implication from adopting the Neighbourhood Plan, in terms of the apportionment of CIL income, there will be no financial implications for the base budget.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.3 Legal and Human Rights implications have been taken into account in preparing this report. It is considered that the recommendations are consistent with Convention Rights. The context of this Report is guided by the relevant provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and relevant secondary legislation.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.4 The Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan has to be in accordance with the strategic policies of the Swindon Borough Local Plan and therefore is subject to the same assessment in terms of sustainability. In addition a separate Strategic Environmental Assessment was undertaken on the Plan.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Contact Phil Smith, on direct dial number 01793 466443, or by e-mail psmith@swindon.gov.uk.

Adoption of the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan

Cabinet and Council

Date: 13 and 14 July 2016

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.5 The Swindon Borough Local Plan was subject to detailed Diversity Impact Assessment and the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan has to be in general conformity with the Local Plan for it to meet the basic conditions.

Risk Management

- 5.6 The following risks will arise if the recommendations are not implemented. The Council will be in breach of its statutory duty under the Town and County Planning Act 1990. As the legislation concerning the recommendation is quite explicit there is no way of mitigating this risk.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Board Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.
- 6.2 Ward Members for Wroughton and Wichelstowe

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 A copy of the Wroughton Neighbourhood plan can be found at:

<http://www.wroughton.gov.uk/wroughtonneighbourhoodplan>

9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan

- 9.1 This is / is not a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for Month Year.

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Debt Management

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Author: | Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member Finance, and Corporate Services Director of Law & Democratic Services / Head of Revenues & Benefits |
| Wards: | All |
| Locality Affected: | All |
| Parishes Affected: | All |

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 The Council's Debt Management Policy requires officers to submit an annual report of write offs to the Cabinet. Improved debt management is a key component of the Council's Value for Money Strategy and help achieve the "Best use of Resources."
- 1.2 Reducing the requirement for Council Tax recovery action helps households avoid costs and help protect "our most vulnerable." Providing early support for people in debt and reducing the need to use Enforcement Agents (Bailiffs) is one of the Council's pledges (number 24).

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to note that:

- 2.1 The Collection rates of all debt types improved in the financial year 2015/6. This includes Council Tax, Business Rates, Business Improvement District charges, Housing Rent, Parking collections, Overpaid Housing Benefits and Miscellaneous Incomes.
- 2.2 Collection rates remain above average compared to other Unitary Authorities.
- 2.3 The work being undertaken to reduce Council Tax recovery proceedings and the use of Enforcement Agents has led to a 33% reduction in the number of summonses issued (a fall of 4,608) in the last 2 years and a 24% reduction in referrals to bailiffs (a fall of 1,899) in the last year.

3. Detail

Council Tax Recovery

- 3.1 Since August 2014, the Council has been utilising additional resources to telephone customers prior to summonses being issued for non-payment. Customers are requested to make payment of part or all of the arrears or if unable to, are offered a revised payment arrangement. This and the increased use of text reminders to residents' mobile phones led to a reduction in the

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Andy Stevens, (01793) 464661, anstevens@swindon.gov.uk.

Debt Management

Cabinet

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number of summonses being issued in the last two financial years. The number of summonses issued in 2015/6 was 9,416 compared to 11,016 in 2014/5 and 14,024 in 2013/14. A reduction of 4,608 in the last 2 years. At the same time the Council Tax collection rate improved by over 0.4% to 97.82 (97.73% in 2014/5 and 97.4% in 2013/4).

- 3.2 Debt and Benefits advice is provided to help customers and the Council works with residents to ensure that debts are paid in accordance with Council requirements, and without creating any undue hardship. The Council hosts a stakeholder group and is working closely with Citizens Advice Bureau, Wiltshire Law, Christians Against Poverty, and other local partners. Utilising funding from the One Swindon Partnership the Council has also appointed a Social Inclusion and Welfare Manager, who together with the Council's partners, is looking at developing strategies to help low income households. There is a separate report on Financial Inclusion before Cabinet that addresses this.
- 3.3 Before undertaking recovery proceedings, residents are encouraged and assisted in making realistic repayment arrangements. Those with low incomes are given help to claim Benefits to help pay their debts. The Benefits Service ensures that claims are paid expediently.
- 3.4 In 2015/6 the Council Tax office issued 51,144 telephone text messages when instalment payments were missed. Where payments were still not made, paper reminders were issued later in the month or at the beginning of the following month (32,969 were issued). These measures and the telephoning mentioned in 3.1 above led to the reduction in summonses and Enforcement Agent (bailiff) referrals.
- 3.5 The number of Council Tax 'text' and 'paper' reminders issued in the last three financial years is shown below:

| | 'Text' Reminders issued prior to 'Paper Reminders' | Paper Reminders | 'Text' Reminders on Court Arrangements |
|---------|--|-----------------|--|
| 2013/14 | 43,660 | 42,280 | 2,636 |
| 2014/15 | 50,547 | 32,374 | 2,708 |
| 2015/16 | 51,114 | 32,969 | 2,463 |

- 3.6 If residents are summonsed they incur £60 summons costs and a further £40 court costs. If court orders are then passed to Enforcement Agents (bailiffs) this can incur a further £310 in Enforcement costs if a visit takes place. The Council

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Andy Stevens, (01793) 464661, anstevens@swindon.gov.uk.

Debt Management

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

and its partners are working hard to help residents make payment promptly and reduce the numbers of households who may be burdened with such fees.

3.7 Where Council Taxpayers have defaulted and it has been necessary to obtain court orders, wherever possible Attachment of Benefits and Earnings orders are used in preference to Enforcement Agents. Requests are sent to these taxpayers to make arrangements to pay or provide employment details, but these are rarely returned.

3.8 The number of Council Tax debts referred to Enforcement Agents (bailiffs) reduced to 6,104 in 2015/6.

| Debts Referred to Bailiffs | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/6 |
|----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| Council Tax debts | 7,045 | 7,200 | 8,003 | 6,104 |
| Car Parking PCNs | 2,048 | 2,057 | 3,260 | 3,931* |

* Includes Bus Lane Contraventions

3.9 In March 2013, Cabinet resolved to introduce the civil enforcement of Bus lane and Bus gate contraventions (Cabinet Minute 128, 2012/13 refers). This proposal enjoyed cross-party support. An element of the increase in unpaid Car Parking PCNs relates to these violations of bus lanes and bus gates by private motorists.

| Number of Complaints Recorded | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/5 | 2015/6 |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|--------|--------|
| Council Tax Complaints – Bailiffs | 20 | 34 | 20 | 11 |
| Car Parking Complaints - Bailiffs | 1 | 5 | 6 | 6 |

3.10 The number of complaints regarding enforcement Agents (bailiffs) has reduced. This is as a result of the reduced referral, additional assistance being provided and the changes in the Enforcement Regulations regarding fees. The fees are now fixed and no longer set by the Enforcement Agents as 'reasonable costs'.

3.11 A summary of Swindon's collection rates is shown below and the total amount collected in 2014/15 is shown in Appendix 1 and 2.

Debt Management

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

| In year Council Tax Collection Rates | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Year | Council Tax Collection – Traditional Calculation Method | Council Tax Collection – Excluding Credits |
| 2004/5 | 95.20% | 94.14% |
| 2005/6 | 97.15% | 95.75% |
| 2006/7 | 98.05% | 96.64% |
| 2007/8 | 97.98% | 96.57% |
| 2008/9 | 97.76% | 96.65% |
| 2009/10 | 97.66% | 96.52% |
| 2010/11 | 97.79% | 96.81% |
| 2011/12 | 97.80% | 96.89% |
| 2012/13 | 97.90% | 97.10% |
| 2013/14 | 97.40%* | 96.42%* |
| 2014/15 | 97.73%* | 96.76%* |
| 2015/16 | 97.82%* | 96.79%* |

* The changes to Council Tax Benefits (Support) that were introduced in April 2013 have had an impact on collection rates since 2013/14.

3.12 As at 31st March 2016 the collection of Council Tax for the two previous financial years was:

2013-2014 – excluding credits = 98.53%

2014-2015 – excluding credits = 98.18%.

3.13 Following the Cabinet report of 22nd April 2015 on Council Tax recovery and Social Inclusion (Minute 85, 2014/15 refers), research was undertaken into debt and financial deprivation and the results from this were reported to the Cabinet Member Advisory Group for 'Benefits Strategy and Welfare Reform.' This has led to the appointment of a Social Inclusion and Welfare Manager, and the work being undertaken as detailed in the separate report on Financial Inclusion. Financial Inclusion projects will contribute in assisting residents improving their finances.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Andy Stevens, (01793) 464661, anstevens@swindon.gov.uk.

Debt Management

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

- 3.14 A presentation by the Behavioural Insights Organisation was given to the Revenues managers and many ideas that were demonstrated has already been adopted, such as reviewing the wording on reminders letters and issuing text reminders.

Business Rates

- 3.15 The Council's Business Rates Collection Rate for 2015/16 was recorded as 98.6. This represents an increase on the 97.8%, 98.0%, 98.35% and 98.4% achieved in the previous financial years. With the introduction of a National scheme under which part of the Business Rates income is retained by local authorities from April 2013, it is important for the Council to continue to collect Business Rates income efficiently.
- 3.16 For rates retention purposes, the Council's income is affected by potential rating reductions that ratepayers may receive following appeals on rating assessments. A deadline date of 31st March 2015 for appeals resulted in a large number of appeals being registered. These appeals are reviewed by HM Revenues and Customs and can take a considerable period to resolve, but the Council has to assume that a certain percentage of appeals will be successful.
- 3.17 A revaluation of all rating assessments is due to be undertaken and will come into force from the 1st April 2017. The relative increase or reductions in rateable values compared with other local authorities will have an impact on the Council's income; although in 2017 there may be some national equalisation through central grants.
- 3.18 An increased scheme of Small Business Rates Relief to help smaller businesses has been implemented in 2016 and will continue in 2017.

Business Improvement District Charges

- 3.19 The Council collects Business Improvement District (BID) charges on behalf of InSwindon Ltd who are responsible for Swindon Town Centre management. A collection rate of 96.7% was achieved in 2015/16. This is the highest ever collection rate since the BID began in 2007. The amount collected was £367,933.

Housing Rents

- 3.20 Housing reported an improvement in rent collection during 2015/16. This includes current, former and garage rent arrears.

| Percentage of Rent Collected | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 |
| Swindon | 99.04% | 98.98% | 98.77% | 98.61% | 98.63% | 98.78% |

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Andy Stevens, (01793) 464661, anstevens@swindon.gov.uk.

Debt Management

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

- 3.21 Current rent arrears decreased as shown below.

| Balance of Current Housing Rent Arrears | | | | | | | |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| April 2005 | April 2010 | April 2011 | April 2012 | April 2013 | April 2014 | April 2015 | April 2016 |
| £1.2m | £0.47m | £0.40m | £0.48m | £0.63 | £0.65m | £0.756 | £0.749 |

- 3.22 There were 28 evictions during 2015/16. It is a long process to reach the stage of eviction; tenants are given intensive support to ensure they are given every assistance and advice to avoid eviction.

Overpaid Housing Benefits

- 3.23 A large number and value of overpayments were created in 2015/16 although less than 2014/15. Data matching exercises between Housing Benefits, the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) and HM Revenues & Customs continued. As part of this, claimants' earnings were reviewed in accordance with HM Revenues & Customs information. The DWP initiative to review more claims from self-employed persons and 'nil' income claimants also continued. In 2015/6 £3,882,089 was created (compared to £4,359,822 in 2014/5 and £3,224,142 in 2013/14).
- 3.24 The amount collected in the financial year was £3,825,190 (compared to £3,252,696 in 2014/5).
- 3.25 In addition to the above mentioned exercises, the vast majority of overpayments are caused by claimants failing to advise the Council of changes to their financial circumstances promptly. The Benefits Team limit the number and value of overpayments, since claims have to be suspended as soon as the Council becomes aware of improvements in the financial circumstances of claimants. The Council receives electronic information from the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP), when there are changes to claimant's DWP Benefits or Tax Credits. Overpayments created by error or delay are low and under the threshold set by the DWP, and so the Council receives maximum 'Benefits subsidy'. Unfortunately, many claimants are slow to advise the Council of changes in their circumstances.
- 3.26 Many customers continue to pay back their overpayments in regular instalments based upon their means. These arrangements often exceed 12 months.
- 3.27 Overpaid Housing Benefits with a value of £163,786.48 are currently being put forward for write off.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Andy Stevens, (01793) 464661, anstevens@swindon.gov.uk.

Debt Management

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

Car Parking Penalty Charge Notices

- 3.28 The collection rate for Penalty Charge Notices issued in 2015/16 and collected by 31st March 2015 was shown as 72.65%. A further 9.5% remained outstanding and continued to be pursued for collection as at the end of April 2016.
- 3.29 This collection rates exceeds the overall collection rate achieved by similar local authorities.

Miscellaneous Debtors

- 3.30 The value of debts written off from the 'Miscellaneous Debtors' system was £249,196.31
- 3.31 The collection rate in respect of Miscellaneous Debts is above average compared with other Unitary authorities. Prompt issuing of reminder notices and telephoning of large value debts has helped maintain this collection rate.

Debt Management Summary

- 3.32 The total value of debt written off by the Director of Resources in 2015/16 under his delegated authority is shown in Appendix 3. Whilst it is a significant sum, it is important for Members to note that it represents less than 1% of the total that is collectable for the year. In most cases the debts that were written off also fell due in previous financial years, and a breakdown of the years during which the Council Tax fell due is shown in Appendix 4.
- 3.33 Officers will continue to pursue all debts in 2016/17 and to administer amounts written off in accordance with the criteria set out for irrecoverable debts contained in the Council's Debt Management Policy.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Since this report is for Information only no alternative options are suggested.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 Improved Council Tax and debt collection performance results in additional income for the Council. The reduction in summonses has led to a reduction in court costs income for the Council and additional resources have been employed to telephone residents and offer assistance. However, it appears that the increase in Council Tax collection in the last two years offsets the reduction in costs income and the cost of employing additional staff.

Debt Management

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Legal and Human Rights considerations have been taken fully into account in compiling this report. It is considered that the steps taken by the Council in relation to debt management are proportionate and compatible with convention rights.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 An additional member of staff has been employed by the Council in the Credit team to undertake telephoning of residents prior to issuing summonses and offering assistance to them. Reducing the numbers of people against whom recovery action is undertaken may help reduce poverty and possible links to crime, in addition to helping meet the Council's pledge number 24.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) in respect of the recommended changes to Council Tax recovery processes was first undertaken in June 2014 and this has now been reviewed. No adverse impacts were highlighted under this process and no further changes proposed as a result of the DIA review, except the Council's Debt Collection Teams will promote Financial Inclusion work. The work being undertaken under 'Financial Inclusion' will provide further benefits to residents in reducing poverty. A copy of the DIA can be obtained from the report author.

Risk Management

- 5.5 This report is for information only and so there is no decision or risk to be considered. The Revenues and Benefits Service maintains a risk register.

6. Consultees

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

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Collection Performance in 2015/16
- 8.2 Appendix 2 - The net value of payments to Swindon B.C. in 2015/16
- 8.3 Appendix 3 – The value of debts written off and the annual amounts due in 2015/16

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Andy Stevens, (01793) 464661, anstevens@swindon.gov.uk.

Debt Management

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

- 8.4 Appendix 4 – Breakdown of Council Tax write off by year the debt was due
- 8.5 Appendix 5 – Debt Management Policy extract showing reasons for write offs
- 9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan**
- 9.1 This is not a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for July 2016.

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Appendix 1

| Summary of Swindon's Debt Collection Rates | | | |
|---|---------|---------|---|
| | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | Comments and Comparisons |
| Council Tax | 97.73% | 97.82% | The collection rate has improved and it is believed that this improvement relates to the measures introduced in 2014. These include increased use of text message reminders to mobile phones and telephoning customers following the issue of reminder notices. Benchmarking has shown that the collection rates for other Unitary Authorities have increased. Swindon remains above average. |
| Business Rates | 98.4% | 98.6% | The collection rate has increased, despite many large ratepayers opting to pay by 12 instalments, and so not making final payments until March 2016. Most other Unitary Authorities have increased their collection rates too. The Swindon collection rate is above average. |
| Business Improvement (Town Centre) | 96.5% | 96.7% | The best ever performance in terms of collecting the BID charges. This equates to £367,933. |
| Housing | 98.63%* | 98.78%* | An increase in collection. |
| Miscellaneous Number of debts paid in 60 days | 94.02% | 94.56% | A high level of collection maintained. The average for invoices paid in 90 days for other unitary authorities when previously benchmarked was 84%. |
| Overpaid Benefits | 75.0% | 98.53% | The amount collected in 2015/6 was very high, although much of this related to Overpayments created in 2014/5. |
| Car Parking Penalty Charge Notices | 72.48% | 72.65% | Collection rates have been maintained and are in line with rates for similar authorities. |

*Based on the previous best Value indicator used by local authorities

Appendix 2

Summary of cash collected 1st April 2015 – 31st March 2016

| Debt Type | Cash £ |
|---|---------------|
| | |
| Council Tax | £95,541,433* |
| | |
| Non domestic Rates | £111,365,578* |
| | |
| Benefit Overpayments | £3,825,190 |
| | |
| Car Parking Penalty Charge Notices & Bus Lane Contraventions | £1,438,398 |
| | |
| Housing Rents | £53,583,422 |
| | |
| Oracle Miscellaneous Invoices | £40,665,807 |
| | |
| Total Cash | £306,419,282 |

*Payments made in respect of debts due in 2015/16 only.

Appendix 3

Summary of Write Offs 1st April 2014 – 31st March 2015

| Debt Type | Amount Written Off – Relates To All Years | Annual Charges Due |
|---|---|-----------------------|
| | | |
| Council Tax | £845,815 | £97,672,652 |
| | | |
| Non domestic Rates | £1,119,722 | £112,688,959 |
| | | |
| Benefit Overpayments | £163,786* | £3,882,089 |
| | | |
| Car Parking Penalty Charge Notices & Bus Lane Contraventions | £247,038 | £1,498,140** |
| | | |
| Housing Rents | £240,700 | £54,480,714 |
| | | |
| Oracle Miscellaneous Invoices | £249,196 | £42,063,483 |
| | | |
| Total | £2,866,257 | £312,286,037 |
| | | |
| Amounts written off as a percentage of the Annual Charges raised | 0.92% | |

* Value of Overpayments being submitted for write off currently.

** Value of car parking penalty charge notices once 50% for prompt payment discount granted.

Appendix 4: Council Tax Write Off By Year

| Year During Which Amount Fell Due | Amount Written Off |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1993-2003 | £9,066 |
| 2004/5 | £10,398 |
| 2005/6 | £17,371 |
| 2006/7 | £26,570 |
| 2007/8 | £122,665 |
| 2008/9 | £328,857 |
| 2009/10 | £159,318 |
| 2010/11 | £56,302 |
| 2011/12 | £31,246 |
| 2012/13 | £19,571 |
| 2013/14 | £26,072 |
| 2014/15 | £29,188 |
| 2015/16 | £9,191 |
| Total | £ 845,815 |

Appendix 5: Categories to be submitted for Write Off

| Category | Requirement | Action |
|---|---|----------------------|
| Claimant deceased | Insufficient funds in estate to discharge debt | Submit for Write Off |
| Claimant absconded | All attempts to trace debtor have failed. Including tracing agent (above £100). Including long-term imprisonment (36 months). | Submit for Write Off |
| Claimant in bankruptcy or liquidation or other insolvency proceedings | A claim against the debtor has been lodged with the administrators. No dividend is to be paid or the balance after the dividend is submitted. | Submit for Write Off |
| Debt cannot be proved (conflict of evidence) | An explanation should be given as to why recovery cannot be made. | Submit for Write Off |
| Ill Health & no means | Written evidence of one of the following criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terminal illness and limited means • Where payment would cause further ill health • Old age and frailty and no financial assistance • Severely mentally impaired and no financial assistance • Long term hospitalisation or residential care and no means left to pay | Submit for Write Off |
| Undue hardship | Where the debtor can provide written evidence of genuine financial difficulty. Showing evidence of inability to pay even small instalments or that such payment will cause undue hardship. | Submit for Write Off |
| All recovery action appropriate to the debt has been taken and has not resulted in collection (All Avenues Exhausted) | Action in the Magistrates Court or County Court has failed to recover the debt. In the case of miscellaneous debts that would be subject to County Court action, external agents are used instead of court action, in order to avoid the council paying large court fees, which would be unlikely to be recovered. | Submit for Write Off |

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Securing a sustainable future for Swindon's Library Services

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

Author: Cabinet Member for Communities
Head of Localities, Community Involvement and Volunteering

Wards: All

Locality Affected: All

Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This report proposes a strategy for securing a sustainable future for Swindon's Library Services. It follows previous reports in which Cabinet requested the development of a strategy for the Library Service that would continue to deliver a comprehensive library service. These reports also approved an emerging model for the service as the basis of public engagement.
- 1.2 Approval of the recommendations would initiate public consultation on the proposed Libraries strategy and delivery model and authorise further work to support its development. This would include working with ward councillors, parishes, partners, community groups and other stakeholders who might provide continued access to library facilities.
- 1.3 The proposals contribute towards the Council's Vision for Swindon, and particularly: Priority Two: offer education opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs in the right places; Priority Three: ensure clean and safe streets and improve public spaces and local culture; and Priority Four: Help people to help themselves while always protecting the most vulnerable children and adults.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 To note the findings of the public engagement summarised in paragraphs 3.3 to 3.11 set out in full in appendix 1.
 - 2.2 To note that it is the proposed strategy's intent to:
 - 2.2.1 Sustain access to library services through the use of technology, outreach and learning,
 - 2.2.2 Support ward councillors, parishes, partners, and local communities to preserve or enhance local Library services
 - 2.3 To approve the proposed strategy and delivery model as the basis of public consultation and authorise the Head of Localities, Community Involvement and Volunteering to carry out public consultation on the proposed strategy in accordance with the approach and timetable set out in paragraph 3.27.
-

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Securing a sustainable future for Swindon's Library Services

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- 2.4 In order to encourage and support the development of viable, community-led arrangements to supplement the Council's core provision, make available transitional funding of £500k from the Council's one-off resources to help meet the one-off costs of establishing community-led arrangements.
- 2.5 To authorise the Head of Localities, Community Involvement and Volunteering to:
 - 2.5.1 Continue, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities, to engage ward councillors, parishes, partners, and stakeholders to develop options to sustain Library services, and agree the basis on which transitional funding is allocated to support the development of community-led arrangements.
 - 2.5.2 Use c£6k of the transitional funding to undertake a commercial options appraisal to develop strategies for generating additional income.
 - 2.5.3 Commence, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities and the Board Director, Resources, the procurement of technology that enables Libraries to be accessible to the public beyond their staffed hours, in accordance with paragraph 5.3.

3. Detail

Background

- 3.1 At its meeting of 10th February 2016, Cabinet considered a report that set out the demographic and financial context for the future of Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services (Cabinet Minute 58, 2015/16 refers). That report described the context affecting the future of Swindon's Libraries, including a detailed needs assessment, the financial context that the service is operating in, and an emerging model for the service that was approved as the basis of public engagement.
- 3.2 This report builds on that work, and sets out the findings arising from the public engagement on the emerging model that took place between February and April 2016. This report also sets out a proposed strategy for Library Services that reflects public feedback and further work that has been undertaken to develop a sustainable delivery model for Library services in the context of the Council's Vision, Priorities and Pledges and its medium term financial position.

Findings from Public Engagement

- 3.3 To inform the development of the Council's Libraries Strategy, public engagement took place between 22nd February and 29th April 2016. The process included:
 - 3.3.1 Providing information in paper form and electronically through the Council website explaining the background to the need for changes in the way the

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Library Service is provided, and describing an 'emerging model' about which views were sought.

- 3.3.2 Sessions in all Council Libraries and other community locations in which people were given an opportunity to give their views on the fundamental questions about Library services.
- 3.3.3 A questionnaire survey, made available online and on paper, through which people were invited to provide information about their use of the service, their priorities for its future, their views on the emerging model, and suggestions for other models the Council might usefully explore.
- 3.3.4 In addition, several letters and emails have been received expressing opinions on the issues raised in this process.
- 3.4 A total of 2,688 questionnaires have been submitted, 619 online and 2069 on paper. The report at Appendix 1 sets out the detailed results of the questionnaire survey and reports on the opinions expressed. The data analysis and the report have been independently prepared.
- 3.5 It is clear from the engagement feedback that respondents have taken time and trouble to provide considered and thoughtful responses. Where possible, these have been reflected in the development of strategy and delivery model proposed in this report.
- 3.6 Almost all respondents are users of Swindon libraries and the libraries most often used by respondents are Central, Highworth, North, and West (though all libraries are represented to some extent). Occasional visitors to Libraries, in particular those that might occasionally visit a Library for IT use, do not feature strongly in the responses, nor is broader public opinion strongly represented.
- 3.7 The report highlights that book lending by adults is the principal transaction undertaken by respondents or their families at libraries, well ahead of any other activity, but finding information and children's lending are also well-used services. Computers are mainly used for research and homework. A number of services are available online and a fairly substantial minority of respondents access these services using computers, tablets or smartphones, but not in a library, including using e-services, including renewals online and ordering items through the catalogue, but very few stream media or download e-books electronically.
- 3.8 Although there is some backing for the emerging model, and people recognise the financial benefits, (for example, over half of respondents see possible advantages in co-location, and half of respondents are willing to at least consider volunteering to support the service), most respondents oppose it. The main objection to the emerging model is the loss of local libraries and difficulties in accessing the Central Library, especially for less mobile users, parents with young children, and older residents. There are also questions about the capacity

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of the Central Library to handle the volume of traffic the model suggests would have to go there. A large number of people note the reliance of the emerging model on e-services, and suggest that there are large numbers of older users in particular who have no internet access at home. Some add that they are in fact dependent on the local library for their internet access.

- 3.9 Many respondents highlight adverse impacts from the proposals with concerns about the loss of local facilities that act as a focal point for the community, providing social benefits for otherwise isolated people as well as formal library services. There is a widespread belief that children would be disadvantaged by these proposals, with consequences for future literacy, and that older people, who use the service extensively, would also be adversely affected. There are also concerns about the impact on well-being, and potential consequences in health and mental health.
- 3.10 Several respondents campaign for the retention of their own local library, with strongest support (but not limited to) for Highworth, Wroughton, North and West Swindon. Some people suggest a compromise which allows retention of some larger libraries, allowing others to close or become dependent on volunteers.
- 3.11 Suggestions as to alternative approaches are very limited; a large number of responses call for no change, and many admit they do not know what might work. The most frequent suggestions are key elements of the emerging model, co-location and e-service expansion - alongside reduced opening hours, or charging for some services (use of PCs are the most often mentioned, but some are willing to pay for book loans, or to pay an annual membership fee).

Proposed Strategy and Delivery Model

- 3.12 The Library Service strategy is to build communities through literacy and learning. By 2020, the service aims to be recognised nationally for the quality of its services, innovation in delivery, cost effectiveness and the outcomes it achieves for early years, for adult learners, for active citizens and for active ageing.
- 3.13 The proposed strategy would be delivered through a core provision comprising:
 - 3.13.1 A network of four Libraries of Central, West Swindon, Highworth, and North Swindon, supported by investment in self-service technology that would allow extended access to borrowers beyond staffed hours. Staffed hours will change to 47.5hrs per week in Central, to enable staffed hours of 15hrs per week to be available at West, Highworth and North Swindon Libraries.
 - 3.13.2 Professional Library services delivered by qualified Librarians and trained Library staff including service development, learning and outreach, local

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studies, information and digital literacy, stock management and volunteer co-ordination.

- 3.13.3 Support with ward councillors to develop parish, school, or community-led local Library services, including a menu of optional free and paid-for services.
- 3.14 The strategy and delivery model is founded on a principle of partnership in the design and delivery of Library services, and to secure their ongoing sustainability. The Council would fund expert, professional and innovative Library services, supported by local partnerships, co-location and income generation that help meet the costs of the service. This builds on a number of recent discussions where partners have stated their willingness to work with the Council to explore options that secure the accessibility of Library services. .
- 3.15 In developing this core provision, the Council has sought to balance competing criteria of (i) service reach and accessibility (ii) community need and (iii) affordability. The proposed core network of Libraries meet 74% of current visits, and mean that 80% of current Library users and 85% of Swindon's households are within 2 miles of a Library.
- 3.16 The Council's direct provision would include dedicated resources to support the expansion of volunteering including dedicated volunteer roles in Libraries, the Home Library Service, and any additional forms of volunteering that preserve and enhance access to Library Services,
- 3.17 Analysis of current usage also shows that Library provision has low impact on those communities in Swindon that have the highest indices of deprivation. Neighbourhood Libraries in those areas only attract a small percentage of current visits. Whilst this number is low, it is also recognised that the services delivered from these Libraries are highly valued by the relatively few numbers of people who rely on them.
- 3.18 As a consequence, as part of the Council's future core provision, the strategy proposes that Libraries outreach and learning services are repurposed to deliver targeted literacy and learning programmes – designed in partnership with communities and partners - that meet local need and make a measurable difference to lives. As examples, this could include using the summer reading challenge model and extending this type of programme to other cohorts and at other times of year, and initial discussions have already started with Citizens Advice Bureau to develop joint programmes around financial literacy. This type of provision could be delivered both in community venues other than Libraries, and in developing local solutions with communities.
- 3.19 The Council is committed to enabling parishes, schools, and community-led provision to be self-managed, resourced and operated by local communities, partners and volunteers, as part of co-located offers in public and community
-

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buildings. Alongside the Council's core provision, ward councillors, communities, and local groups will be encouraged and supported to maintain and develop local community venues for library and other community activities and services.

- 3.20 Appendix 2 sets out the range of measures and resources the Council could use to support Members and community organisations who wish to sustain local libraries in their communities including the provision of advice, guidance, facilitation support and transitional funding that enables community-led provision to be established.

Implementation

- 3.21 It is proposed that implementation take place as follows:

Stage 1 – 2017/18

- 3.22 New arrangements for core provision to be implemented between April and July 2017. Where partners and communities wish to contribute funding that helps sustain and complement the Council's core provision, the Council would work with those partners to ensure a common implementation timetable.
- 3.23 The Council would actively seek, encourage, and support the development of local arrangements that ensure continued access to Library services. Transitional funding of £500k has been reserved to support this work, which may be used to support the one-off costs of establishing local solutions, for example, to meet equipment costs, IT investment, the temporary funding of facilities whilst local funding arrangements are sought, and the training and development of local organisations and volunteers.
- 3.24 Discussions will take place with ward councillors, local partners, community organisations, and local residents to identify and initiate local interest in establishing the provision of community-led services. This would occur in parallel to the public consultation with a view to local solutions taking effect from 1st July 2017.
- 3.25 Council funding would not extend to maintaining book stock, building costs, public network IT, or paid staff in Libraries beyond the four Libraries proposed in this delivery model. Given the pressing need to reduce costs, it is envisaged that funded services will be withdrawn from all other Libraries with effect from 30 June 2017.

Stage 2 – 2017-2020

- 3.26 For the Council's core provision, consideration will be given to different governance models, additional shared services and the generation of additional income streams to further reduce costs to ensure services are delivered within the Council's 2020 affordability limit of £1.1m.

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Consultation

- 3.27 It is recommended that public consultation on this proposed strategy commence from 1st August 2016 and run for eight weeks to 30th September 2016. This would comprise a public meeting of stakeholders, consultation events at all Libraries, and be supported by a consultation questionnaire that would seek specific feedback on this proposed strategy. It is recognised that this would include the period of the school summer holidays, which would enable consultation to include those users accessing the services during the holidays. The timetable would be managed to ensure other public events take place outside the holiday period.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Council could choose not to develop a new strategy. However, this would then undermine any changes to the current service that might be proposed, including those that might sustain access to Library services.
- 4.2 Public engagement generated a number of responses calling for no change to current Library services. This is not an option given the financial pressures facing the Council and in any event, the current network risks being unsustainable as Library services are spread too thin to ensure reliable access and quality.
- 4.3 A range of different options for the network have been considered. For example, provision at Central Library or the other larger libraries could be further reduced to enable additional resources to be made available to community libraries. From data relating to how users access the service, it is clear that this would not maximise service reach and accessibility for the significant majority of current users and residents overall.
- 4.4 Detailed consideration has also given to finding ways to extend the proposed core network to include Parks and Wroughton Libraries for a temporary period. Beyond the four Libraries of Central, West, North and Highworth, these are the next most visited Libraries and this options would further extend service reach. This would however restrict flexibility in the use of transitional funding to support the establishment of local community provision across all other community Library locations, so these Libraries are not included in the proposed core network.
- 4.5 Consideration has also been given to other approaches for meeting the Council's criteria of affordability. Given the scale and pace required for cost savings to be made, this cannot be achieved without reducing staffed hours, and as a consequence, reducing the size of the Library network.
- 4.6 Alternative governance and delivery models have been considered as ways of achieving financial savings. The Council already works collaboratively with other

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authorities on its IT systems and stock purchasing and whilst the service will continue to achieve efficiency savings in these areas, in themselves, these are not sufficient to generate the required financial savings.

- 4.7 Representations have been made through the public engagement to move Swindon's Libraries into a form of Trust. There are many reasons to consider a Trust model, and other Library Authorities have judged this to be appropriate to their circumstances. At this time, it is proposed that the priority focus in Swindon be to successfully establish the Council's core provision and work to support communities who wish to develop workable solutions that sustain local library services. In the short term, a Trust model in itself will have limited impact on Council budgets overall.
- 4.8 New forms of income generation have also been considered. Whilst there are opportunities to create revenue through commercial approaches to use of space, and potentially through events and exhibitions, from experience nationally it is unlikely that any one idea will bring substantial income on its own. Rather a wider commercial strategy for the service will be developed across the range of Library services, and this will not make a significant impact in the immediate short-term.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 The table below sets out the financial framework for the funding of SBC's core provision and transitional funding.

| Library (hours it will be staffed) | Buildings | Stock, materials & IT | Staff | Income | Total |
|--|--|-----------------------|-------|--------|-------|
| Central (47.5 hrs) | 238 | 136 | 235 | (77) | 532 |
| West (15 hrs) | 77 | 27 | 42 | (16) | 130 |
| Highworth (15 hrs) | 51 | 25 | 32 | (14) | 94 |
| North (15 hrs) | 94 | 38 | 42 | (54) | 120 |
| Professional Library Services | | 126 | 416 | | 542 |
| | | | | | 1418 |
| | Non-funding of buildings costs from April 18 and additional income | | | | (318) |
| | | | | | 1100 |
| <i>Transitional funding of £500k to support implementation of the delivery model</i> | | | | | |

- 5.2 Core provision will be funded through Council revenue funding, and is affordable within the £1.1m limit if £318k additional income or cost reduction is secured. To achieve this, the Council proposes to no longer meet building costs from April 2018, with these costs will being met from commercial opportunities and co-

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location with other partners and services, in accordance with the principles of the Council's Community Assets review. In addition, further service efficiencies will also be pursued, for example by extending partnership working with other Library authorities, and securing additional income (for example grant funding and sponsorship for specific literacy and learning programmes, fundraising and paid-for services)

- 5.3 In order to progress the procurement of technology to support public access to Libraries beyond staffed hours, initial scoping work has been undertaken to broadly assess the types of products and solutions which are available, and how other library authorities have implemented this type of solution.
- 5.4 The next steps would be to further explore and soft market test the different options available with a range of external suppliers to explore how different options would integrate with Swindon library services and sites and then develop a fit for purpose specification. A business case will be developed which will set out the whole life costs of the recommended solution and will include the costs of capital works to prepare for and enable a solution to be implemented, the estimated costs of the purchase of the solution along with the associated costs for ongoing maintenance and support.
- 5.5 The business case will also investigate implementation factors such as development of policies and procedures and training for staff and users to make best use of this. The most appropriate procurement route for a solution will be followed depending on the requirements of the specification and the relevant Procurement policies.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.6 All legal and human rights considerations have been taken fully into account in compiling this report. It is considered that the recommendations of this report are compatible with Convention rights.
- 5.7 Swindon Borough Council has a duty as a Library Authority under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 "to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons' in the area that want to make use of it (section 7), taking into account local needs and within available resources.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.8 There are no direct staffing implications arising directly from this report. Libraries staff and trade unions have been informed throughout the process of developing this strategy, and a cross-section of staff have worked to develop the vision for the service. Further staff engagement will take place through the public consultation period, and formal staff consultation will commence following Cabinet decisions anticipated to be made in December 2016.

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Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.9 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has been developed to assess the effect of the proposed library strategy and a number of affects have been identified for individuals / groups with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.
- 5.10 Users of the library service would be affected by the proposed strategy to varying degrees. The degree of impact and disadvantage would depend on a range of factors including: proximity to and ability to travel to an SBC library; requirement for staff assistance to access different facilities and services such as books and resources; ability to access alternative IT infrastructure, and skills to use IT infrastructure without staff support.
- 5.11 Particular impacts are likely for older people, children and young people; disabled users including physical disability, mental ill health, learning disabilities and visual impairment. The consultation process would seek to understand the potential impacts for these groups in more detail and explore potential mitigations.
- 5.12 Other groups have been identified who do not have protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 but who may be particularly affected by the proposed strategy include users of a single library site (including the mobile library), those with a low Financial Economic Status, those communities who are facing high levels of deprivation in terms of education, skills and learning particularly around IT access. It is not known which users are would be affected by the proposed strategy or to what extent so it is proposed to consult thoroughly with users to understand what these effects might be and any mitigations which could be considered.
- 5.13 During the consultation, alongside general engagement sessions in each library, specific targeted discussions will be offered to key groups with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 or their representative bodies to understand any potential adverse impacts and to consider what measures could be considered to mitigate these impacts. This will include engagement with schools, pre-schools, older people's groups and various groups or individuals with characteristics of an equality protected group including; Sexual orientation, Gender identity, Race / Nationality, Older people, Religion and Disability.
- 5.14 Potential mitigations could include increasing the reach and role of the home library service to provide enhanced services and support. Whilst development of community-led local library services will be

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enabled, they will not form part of the SBC statutory provision, but could form appropriate ways for local people to access community based services and activities in their local area, including a library service offer.

- 5.15 The Diversity Impact Assessment for the proposed Library strategy will be considered as the strategy develops through the consultation process and any adverse impacts will be identified and mitigated where appropriate.
- 5.16 A Diversity Impact Assessment relating to staff has been initiated and whilst it is too early to understand what any specific impacts will be, the DIA will be updated as the strategy develops.

Risk Management

- 5.17 Any risks arising from the recommendations of this report will be managed as these are taken forward.

6. Consultees

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

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 Cabinet Report 10 February 2016 – Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services
- 7.2 Libraries Needs Assessment – February 2016
- 7.3 Libraries Emerging Model - 2016

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Public Engagement Report – Phil Back and Associates
- 8.2 Draft Libraries Strategy and Delivery Model

9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan

- 9.1 This is a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for July 2016.

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The future of Swindon's Libraries

Report on engagement work, 2016

**A report by Phil Back Associates Ltd
for Swindon Borough Council
May 2016**

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Executive summary

1. This report sets out the results of an engagement process undertaken online and on paper, in the early part of 2016, to which 2,688 responses were received. The questionnaire was accompanied by an informative leaflet and sought views on an 'emerging model' for the future of the library service.
2. Although people of all ages have responded, there is a predominance of older people, and disproportionate numbers of women in the response. As a result of the age profile, there are also more disabled people than might be expected from their presence in the population, and a large proportion who have no children at home. Very few respondents are gay, lesbian or transgender; most are white, and speak English as a first language.
3. There has been a strong response to the survey in some areas, most noticeably from Highworth but also from North Swindon, Wroughton and Covingham; response is patchier from South Marston, Penhill, Pinehurst and Parks/Walcot.
4. Almost all respondents are users of Swindon libraries. Three quarters used their local library within the week prior to completing the survey, and half say they visit every week; most of the rest visit at least once a month. The libraries most often used by respondents are Central, Highworth, North and West, but all libraries are represented to some extent.
5. Book lending by adults is the principal transaction undertaken by respondents or their families at libraries, well ahead of any other activity, but finding information and children's lending are also well-used services. Computers are mainly used for research and homework. Use of the library for social networking or game-playing, or for IT help, are very limited. Several library activities are only used regularly by quite small proportions of customers.
6. A fairly substantial minority of customers use e-services, including renewals online and ordering items through the catalogue, but very few stream media or download e-books electronically.
7. The service is regarded as very important both to respondents and even more so for their wider communities. The service areas regarded as most important include book lending, information and children's lending; among services regarded as less important are newspapers and magazines, and minority language publications.
8. All times of the week appeal to at least some respondents, but weekday afternoons and weekend mornings are the most favoured times, with weekend evenings by far the least popular.
9. Over half of respondents see possible advantage in co-location; relatively few reject this approach. Half are willing to at least consider volunteering, with many willing to help serve customers or in administrative support.

10. Age is a significant factor in the way people respond. Younger adults are the most frequent visitors to libraries, make far more use of e-services, and are less likely to use libraries for newspapers or information. Older adults are more likely to be participants in community activities based at the library, and place a higher importance on its social dimension. Older people also prefer weekday opening, whereas younger adults are more positive about weekend opening. Older people are very much more likely to offer as volunteers.
11. Although there is some backing for the emerging model, and support for elements of it (especially the ideas of co-location and expansion of the mobile service), the predominant response is a strong and vehement opposition to the proposals. People do largely recognise the financial benefit of the model, but nevertheless urge the authority to reconsider.
12. The main objection to the emerging model is the loss of local libraries in favour of a Central Library service that people believe will be difficult to access, especially for less mobile users, parents with young children, and older residents. Many people draw attention to the distance between town centre bus stops and the library. Others raise the difficulty of parking in the vicinity of the Central Library. Many people say they are unlikely to use this alternative.
13. There are also questions about the capacity of the Central Library to handle the volume of traffic the model suggests would have to go there. Respondents ask whether the library has sufficient seating, desks or computers to meet the expected demand, and whether the quality of service will be damaged.
14. A large number of people note the reliance of the emerging model on e-services, and suggest that there are large numbers of older users in particular who have no internet access at home. Some add that they are in fact dependent on the local library for their internet access. Several people welcome the convenience of e-services, but others emphasise the importance of browsing 'real' books, especially for children, and draw attention to the difficulties some e-readers have with illustrations.
15. There is a recognition that co-location could have advantages, not least in containing costs and enabling local service to be maintained, as well as in possible cross-fertilisation between services. However, others question the possibility of inappropriate co-location that may threaten comfort and safety of users.
16. The reliance on volunteers is challenged. Some see advantages in giving communities responsibility for local provision, but a majority are nervous about reliance on volunteers who will not have the training or professional expertise, and who may be unreliable in the longer term.
17. Many respondents highlight adverse impacts from the proposals. In particular, they are concerned about the loss of a facility that acts as a focal point for the community, providing social benefits for otherwise isolated people as well as formal library services. There is a widespread belief that children will be disadvantaged by these proposals, with

consequences for future literacy, and that older people, who use the service extensively, will also be impacted negatively. There are also concerns about the impact on well-being, and potential consequences in health and mental health.

18. Several respondents campaign for the retention of their own local library. Particularly prominent among these are people responding in support of Highworth library, which they believe is too far from the Central Library to make the model workable, and too important to the local community to be lost. They also point out that the library benefits from a peppercorn rent arrangement. Other libraries, including (but not limited to) Wroughton, North and West Swindon, also have their advocates. Some people suggest a compromise which allows retention of some larger libraries, allowing others to close or become dependent on volunteers.
19. Suggestions as to alternative approaches are very limited; a large number of responses call for no change, and many admit they don't know what might work. The most frequent suggestions are key elements of the emerging model - co-location and e-service expansion - alongside reduced opening hours, or charging for some services (PCs are the most often mentioned, but some are willing to pay for book loans, or to pay an annual membership fee).
20. The key considerations the service should take into account focus on impacts on different groups of people who, respondents believe, will be disadvantaged by the proposals. These include children and older people, but also the vulnerable, isolated and disabled. It is suggested that inequalities may be deepened by the proposed approach, and that the service should be one that is provided on an equitable basis to all the Borough's residents. The Council is also asked to take travel costs, times, and practical difficulties (such as children in pushchairs, or carrying bags of books) into consideration.
21. There is also a view that Swindon will be diminished by this proposal, with damage to the Borough's wider reputation as well as to its cultural life. Several respondents urge the authority to look at approaches taken by other authorities facing the same difficulties but without the severity of this solution.

1 Introduction and methodology

Swindon Borough Council operates a total of 15 libraries in the Borough, and is aware that these are valued and widely-used services. But the Council is also aware that the way in which people use services like those provided by libraries is changing, with an increased use of new technology to support fundamental activities including access to information, downloading books for electronic readers, and the streaming of music and films.

At the same time, the Council is under severe pressure to reduce the amount it spends on providing public services, and has therefore had to review its library budget proposals in the light of these pressures. A new library strategy is being drawn up that will reflect both the need to respond to technological change and the reduced levels of funding available for the library service. To inform the development of this strategy the Council has undertaken a programme of engagement with citizens, aiming to provide information about the circumstances facing the library service and to allow people to express their views about the ways in which the Council might respond to these pressures.

The engagement process has included:

- the preparation of an FAQ leaflet seeking to explain the background to the need for changes in the way the library service is provided, and discussing an 'emerging model' which the service is keen to obtain views on. This information has been circulated both in paper form and electronically through the Council website;
- a series of drop in sessions at libraries, and public meetings, in which people were given an opportunity to give their views on the fundamental questions about the library service, including by writing them on post-its and placing them on posters developed for this purpose;
- a questionnaire survey, made available online and also on paper, through which people were invited to provide information about their use of the service, their priorities for its future, their views on the 'emerging model' and its impacts, and suggestions for other models the Council might usefully explore.

In addition, several letters and emails have been received expressing opinions on the issues raised in this engagement process.

This report sets out the results of the questionnaire survey in some detail, and also reports on the opinions expressed in post-its and in other correspondence.

The survey was made available online and on paper, and ran from 22nd February 2016 until 29th April 2016, a timescale of almost ten weeks. Questionnaires were made available in local libraries and at other main Council outlets, whilst the online version was promoted through the Council website. By the end of the survey interval, a total of **2,688** questionnaires had been submitted; 619 of these were submitted online, with 2,069 completed on paper.

The methodology used was designed to be as inclusive as possible in enabling a wide range of people, including library users as a particularly important group, to participate in the engagement process. Not everyone answered every question, and each data tabulation therefore includes information about the level of response being examined. Readers may also wish to note that some questions allowed respondents to give more than one answer, and the results of these do not add up to 100%. No weightings have been applied to the data. Where a total represents less than half of 1%, an asterisk (*) is used to signify this.

The public meetings generated a total of 198 post-its, and a further 25 letters and emails from groups and from individuals are also included in the analysis that follows.

The questionnaires used in the engagement were designed jointly by Council officers and by myself as an independent research professional; the online version was created using Survey Gizmo software. The data analysis and the report have been undertaken from a completely independent perspective. As with any engagement exercise of this nature, the report presents the views and perspectives of respondents, regardless of how well-informed or justified these opinions may be.

All the data presented in this report is subject to a guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity, and care has been taken not to allow any person participating in the engagement to be identifiable from their response.

2 Respondent Profile

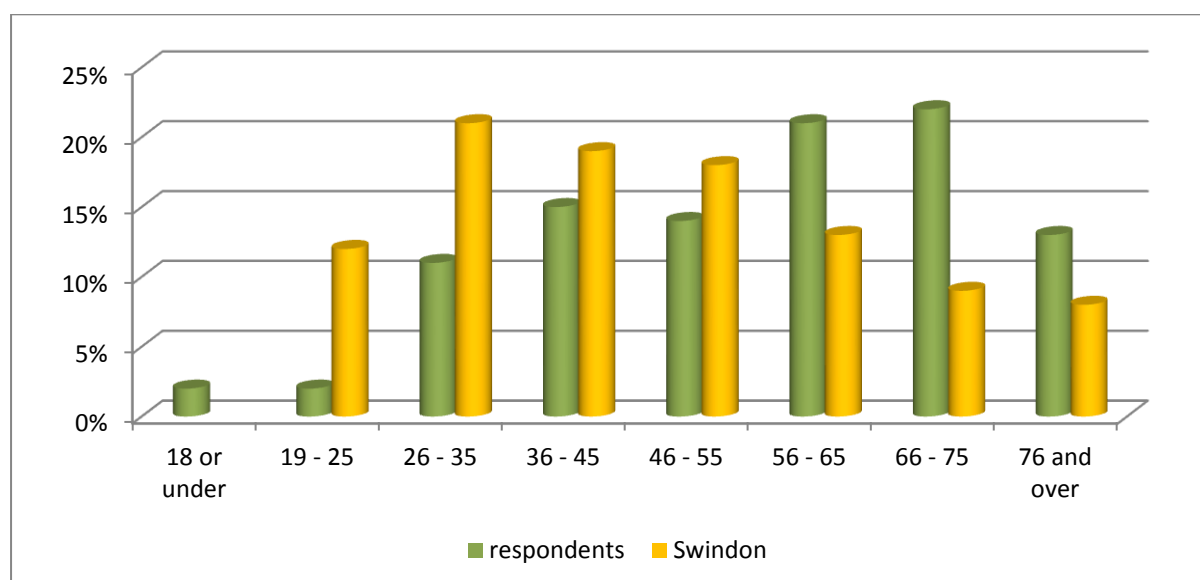
2.1 Age

Respondents were asked to disclose their age, and the results have been grouped into broad age bands, as in this table:

Table 1: Respondent age

| Age-group | Proportion of respondents | Proportion of adults in Swindon ¹ |
|------------------|---------------------------|--|
| 18 or under | 2% | |
| 19 - 25 | 2% | 12% |
| 26 - 35 | 11% | 21% |
| 36 - 45 | 15% | 19% |
| 46 - 55 | 14% | 18% |
| 56 - 65 | 21% | 13% |
| 66 - 75 | 22% | 9% |
| 76 and over | 13% | 8% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | <i>2,470</i> | <i>162,633</i> |

Chart 1: Respondent age



Although there are respondents from all age-groups, there is a clear preponderance of response from older sections of the library community. A third of those taking part in the survey are aged 66 or over, and two-thirds are over 46 years of age. Although there are

¹ All population data in this chapter are drawn from Neighbourhood Statistics, 2011 Census, for the Borough of Swindon.

participants from younger age-groups, including a small number of responses made from, or on behalf of, children, just 15% of those taking part are under 35 years of age.

Comparison with the proportions of adults in Swindon's population indicates a disproportionate response from the older age-groups within the local community. The proportions of people in the survey aged over 55 are significantly higher than their presence in the community as a whole, and this is especially true among younger retired people, who are between two and three times more likely to be present in the survey database than their presence in the population would suggest. In contrast, the participation of under 35s is much lower than a representative figure would be, and this is especially the case among under 25s.²

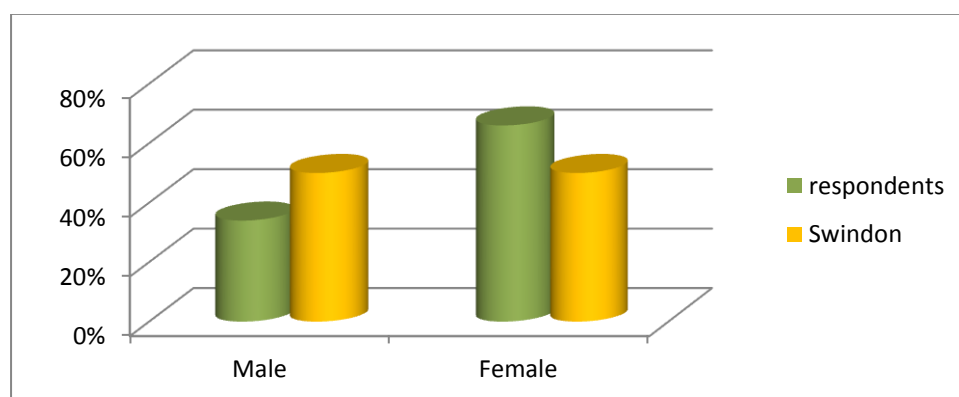
2.2 Gender

This table shows the split of response by gender:

Table 2: Respondent gender

| Gender | Proportion of respondents | Proportion of adult population |
|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Male | 34% | 50% |
| Female | 66% | 50% |
| Transgender | * | |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | 2,510 | 162,633 |

Chart 2: Respondent gender



A third of respondents are male, while two-thirds are female. In the adult population, there is an even split between males and females in the Borough, so the survey response includes a much higher proportion of females than might be inferred from population data. A small

² This comparison is not strictly accurate, due to the presence in the survey response of a small number of non-adults; but the picture of uneven response across adult age-groups is nevertheless clear.

number of transgender people have identified as such in the survey, less than 1% overall; no data exists to assess how representative this proportion may be of the wider population.

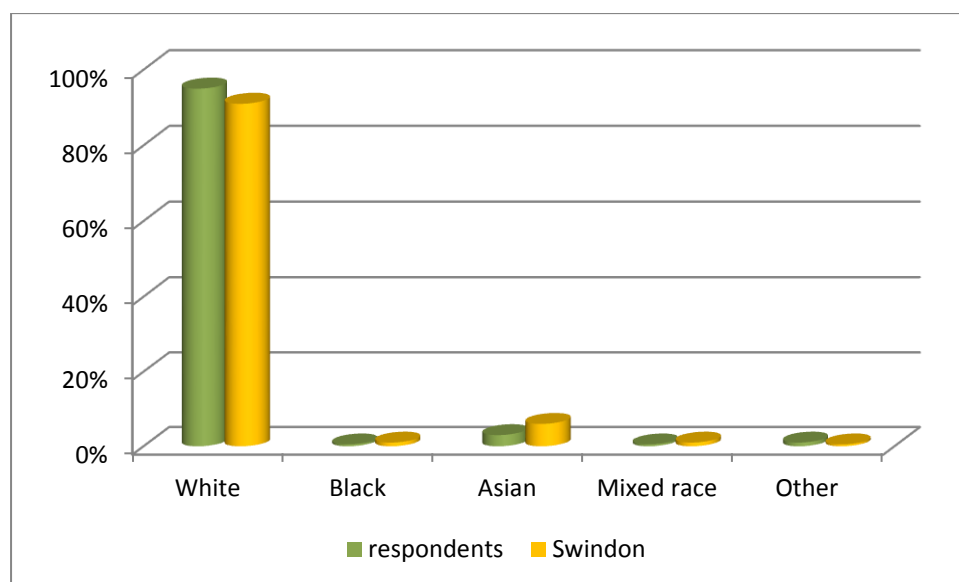
2.3 Ethnicity

The ethnic origin of respondents is shown here:

Table 3: Respondent ethnicity

| Ethnicity | Proportion of respondents | Proportion of adult population |
|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| White | 95% | 91% |
| Black | * | 1% |
| Asian | 3% | 6% |
| Mixed race | * | 1% |
| Other | 1% | * |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | <i>2,388</i> | <i>162,633</i> |

Chart 3: Respondent ethnicity



The response is heavily concentrated in the white population of the Borough; nineteen of out twenty responses come from this part of the community. Other ethnicities are represented, nevertheless, although the comparison indicates that non-white respondents are proportionately fewer than might have been expected from their presence in the local population.

A closer analysis of responses in this regard indicates a small but highly diverse BME population in the Borough, with people from a wide range of different backgrounds, cultures and languages. Although most ethnically white people are native British, there are also small population groups who identify as Irish, as well as people from elsewhere in Europe and from the Old Commonwealth. Similarly, the Asian community includes both Indian and Pakistani elements alongside Goans and Bangladeshis. Most of the small black community response is from Caribbean or other black individuals, whilst the small group identifying as 'other' are primarily ethnic Chinese.

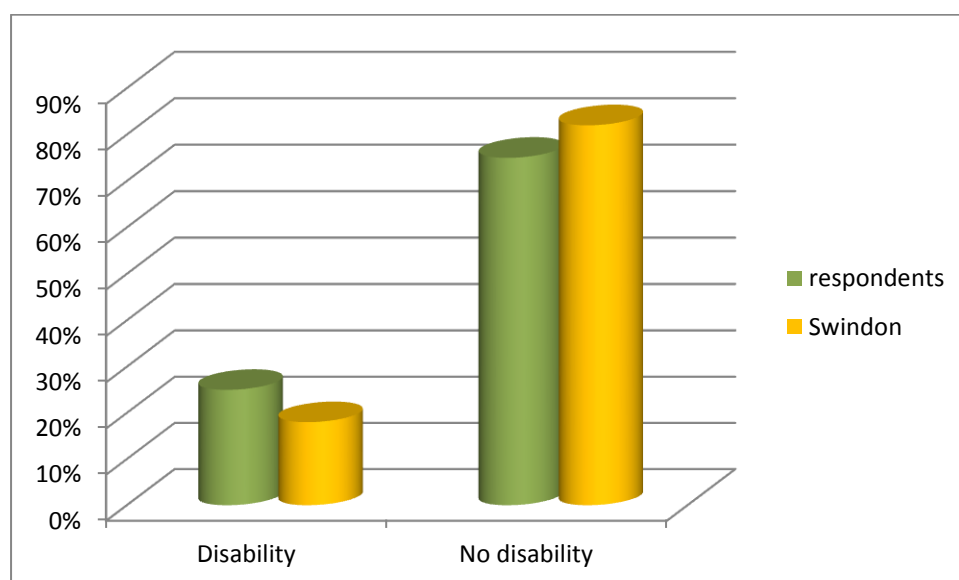
2.4 Disability

Levels of disability in the response are shown in this table:

Table 4: Respondent disability

| | Proportion of respondents | Proportion of adult population ³ |
|------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Disability | 25% | 18% |
| No disability | 75% | 82% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | 2,266 | 167,774 |

Chart 4: Respondent disability



³ Because of the way Government statistics on disability are presented, this column actually includes 16 and 17 year olds as well as adults, hence the slightly higher base number than in other comparisons we have made.

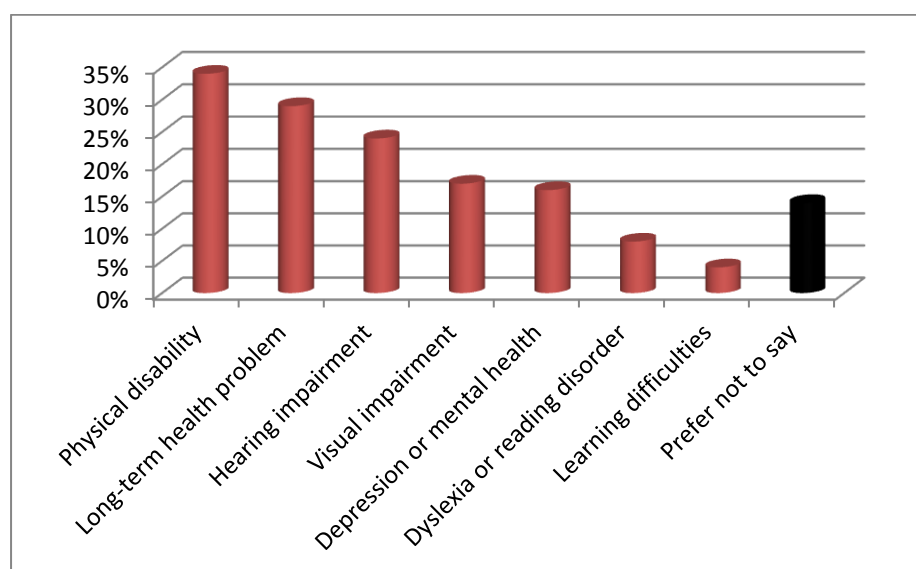
One in four respondents identifies themselves as having some form of disability. The proportion of people with disabilities is higher than would be expected from the general population data, but this is certainly influenced to some extent by the age profile of respondents, as older people are more likely to be experiencing disability.

This table explores the different dimensions of disability among respondents:

Table 4a: Respondent disability by type of disability

| Disability | Proportion of respondents who have a disability | Proportion of all respondents |
|------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Physical disability | 34% | 8% |
| Long-term health problem | 29% | 7% |
| Hearing impairment | 24% | 6% |
| Visual impairment | 17% | 4% |
| Depression or mental health | 16% | 4% |
| Dyslexia or reading disorder | 8% | 2% |
| Learning difficulties | 4% | 1% |
| Prefer not to say | 14% | 4% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | <i>561</i> | <i>2,266</i> |

Chart 4a: Respondent disability by type of disability



Several respondents have more than one area of disability or impairment, so the proportions add up to more than 100%. The most common aspect of disability among respondents is a

physical disability, which affects around a third of all those who declare themselves as disabled. Just under a third report long-term health problems (which include diabetes), while a quarter have hearing issues and one in six struggle with eyesight. One in six are currently experiencing mental health problems including depression. Respondents also include smaller numbers of people with dyslexia, or with learning difficulties.

Respondents to the paper questionnaire were asked to indicate how their disability affects their use of the library. The responses here vary widely and range from the obvious issues of mobility for those with physical impairment, and reading difficulties for those with visual impairment, to less obvious issues such as anxiety which limits the capacity to go outside the home at times, fear of crowds that is a factor in choosing destinations, or extreme tiredness which worsens over the course of the day, making evening use difficult. Some individuals have to use libraries with level access, whilst others find their carrying capacity limited, meaning they visit the library more often. For some respondents, their disability mandates the use of local facilities that do not require a long walk or a bus ride they may not feel confident about, or alternatively a location where nearby parking can be found. Others are unable to visit the library without an escort, or require public transport to be able to access the service.

Specific issues within libraries include the ability to stand, and the related difficulties of browsing books on the higher shelves from a wheelchair or mobility scooter. Chairs are also important in providing places for people to rest during their visit.

Some people see disability and access issues as an important part of the case for local library provision, and some use their library to access information about their disability. Alongside these issues, though, it must be noted that a large number of disabled people say their disability has no effect at all on their use of the library.

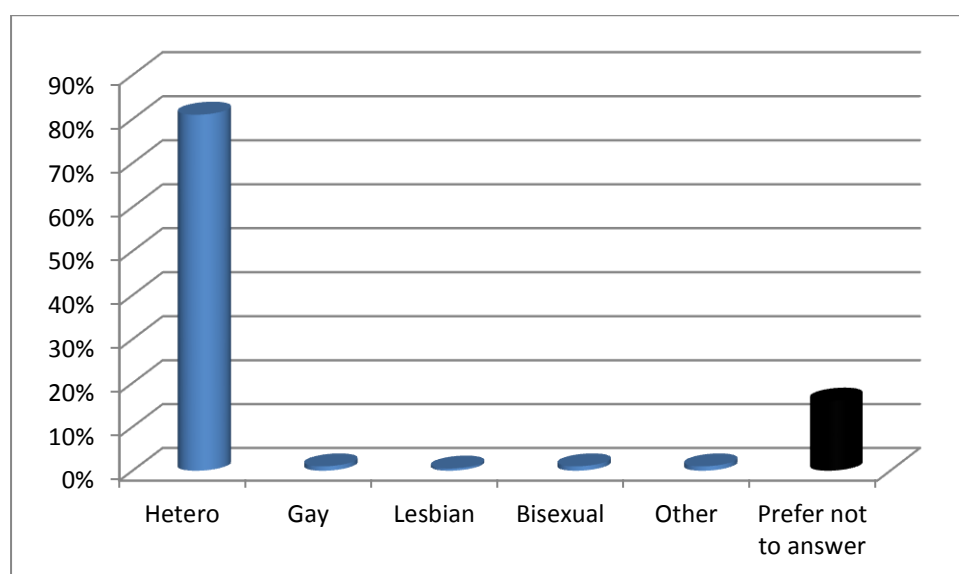
2.5 Sexual identity

Respondents were asked to indicate their sexual identity, and answer as follows:

Table 5: Sexual identity

| Sexual identity | Proportion of respondents |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Heterosexual/straight | 81% |
| Gay | 1% |
| Lesbian | * |
| Bisexual | 1% |
| Other | 1% |
| Prefer not to answer | 16% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | 2,336 |

Chart 5: Sexual identity



The overwhelming majority of respondents are heterosexual in terms of their sexual identity; 97% of those willing to disclose this characteristic identify as heterosexual. Whilst there are no national data that would allow a precise assessment of the representativeness of this result, there is a strong suggestion that gay, lesbian and bisexual people are a relatively low proportion of the response to this survey compared to their presence in their population.

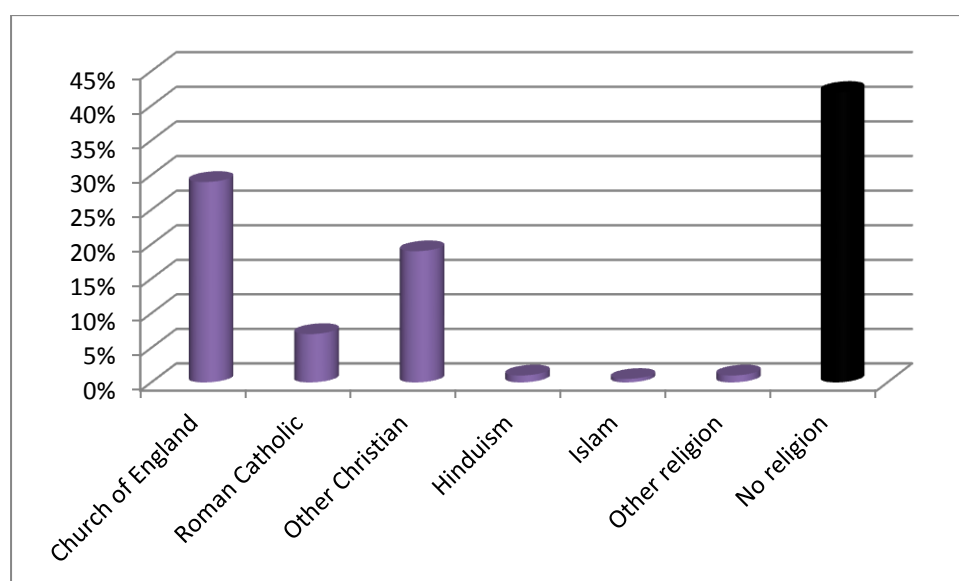
2.6 Religion

Asked to indicate their religion, respondents answer as follows:

Table 6: Religion

| Religion | Proportion of respondents |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Church of England | 29% |
| Roman Catholic | 7% |
| Other Christian | 19% |
| Hinduism | 1% |
| Islam | * |
| Other religion | 1% |
| No religion | 42% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | 2,386 |

Chart 6: Religion



Over half of all respondents to the survey have some religious affiliation, though it is clear that this is stronger for some than for others. The largest single group among these are in Christian denominations, who account for 55% of all respondents; over half of these are adherents of the Church of England, while the rest spread across a range of religious preferences that include Catholicism, Methodism, Evangelicalism and Baptists, as well as several who simply describe themselves as 'Christian'.

There are adherents of other religions in the response, but their numbers are very small. Hinduism is the largest, but there are also small numbers of Muslims, and also some Buddhists, Pagans and Pantheists in the dataset. Three in seven people claim no religious affiliation at all.

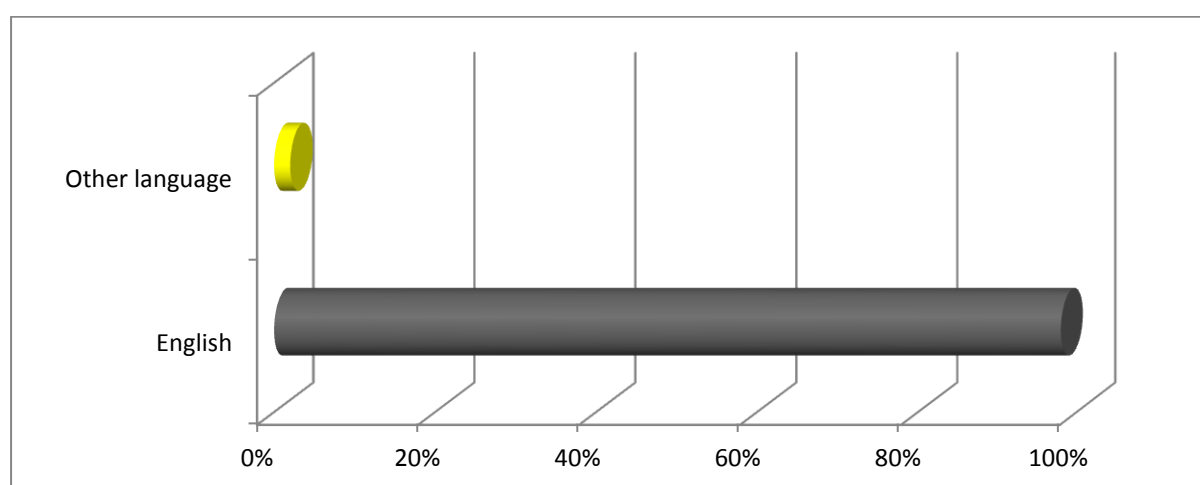
2.7 Language

Respondents were asked to provide their main language, and answer thus:

Table 7: Language

| Language | Proportion of respondents |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| English | 98% |
| Other language | 2% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | 2,456 |

Chart 7: Language



The vast majority of respondents have English as their main language.

Among the very small proportion whose main language is not English, there are around 35 different main languages, indicating an enormous degree of diversity; the most frequently mentioned are the main European languages of French, Spanish, German and Italian, with many other European languages (including Welsh and Irish) mentioned. There are also speakers of Asian languages including Tagalog, Sinhala, Gujarati, Tamil and Urdu as well as Mandarin Chinese, Arabic and Japanese.

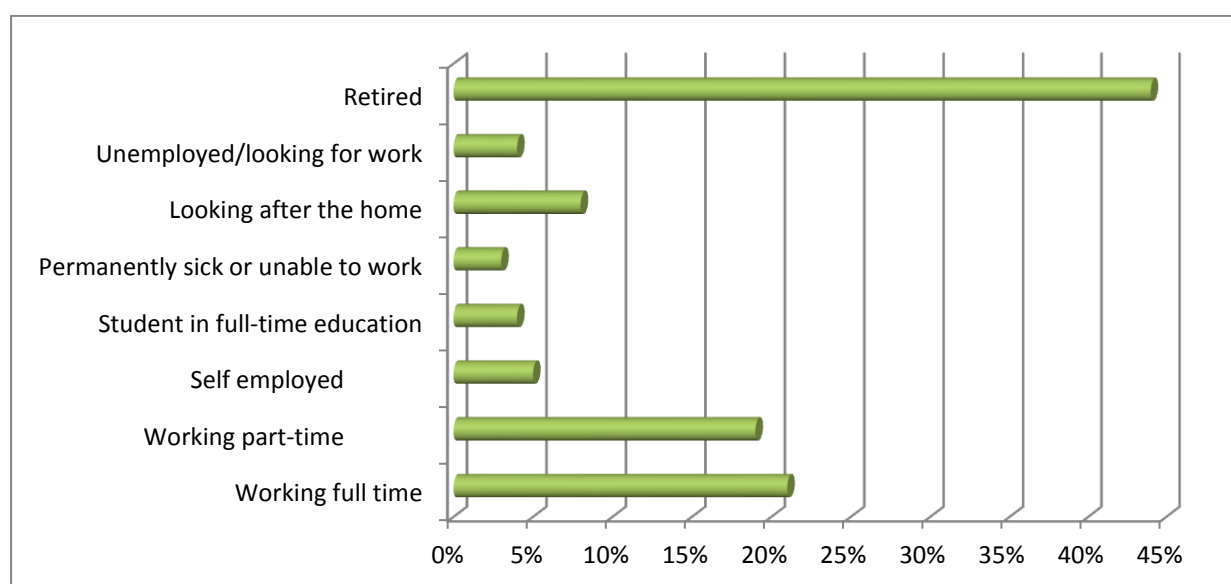
2.8 Working status

The working status of respondents is shown in this table:

Table 8: Working status

| Employment status | Proportion of respondents |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Working full time | 21% |
| Working part-time | 19% |
| Self employed | 5% |
| Student in full-time education | 4% |
| Permanently sick or unable to work | 3% |
| Looking after the home | 8% |
| Unemployed/looking for work | 4% |
| Retired | 44% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | <i>2,486</i> |

Chart 8: Working status



Almost half the respondents to the survey are working in some form; the proportions who work full-time or part-time are almost equal, with a small group of self-employed people making this group add up to 45% of respondents. Almost all the remainder are retired people, who account for an almost equal proportion of the response. Although there are people from the other employment status groups in the survey, their numbers are relatively small in comparison.

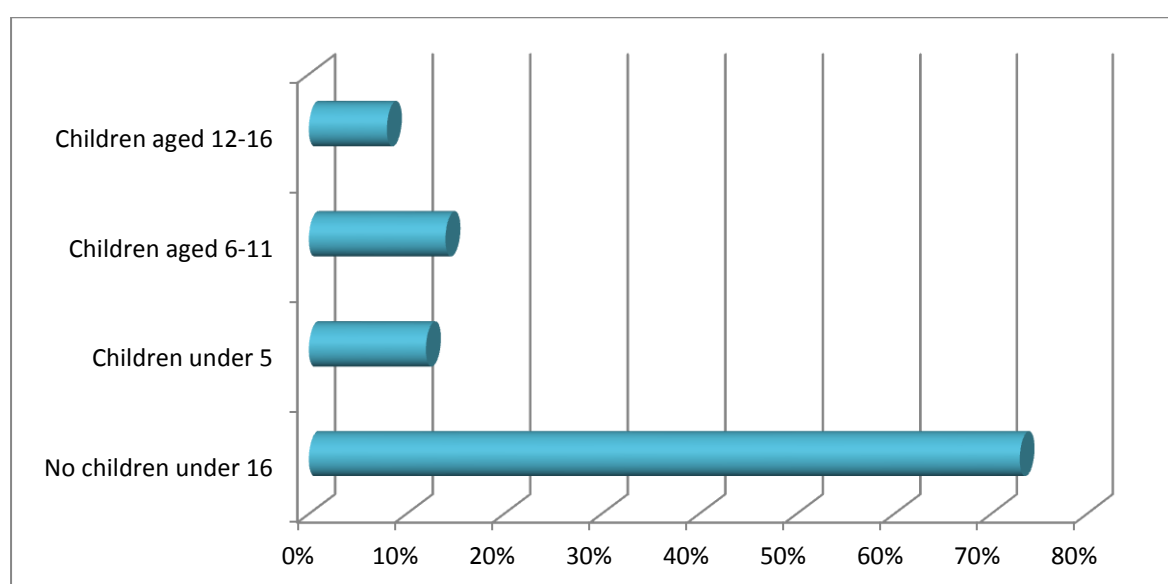
2.9 Household composition

The composition of respondents' households is shown in this table:

Table 9: Household composition

| Household with... | Proportion of respondents |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| No children under 16 | 73% |
| Children under 5 | 12% |
| Children aged 6-11 | 14% |
| Children aged 12-16 | 8% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | <i>2,441</i> |

Chart 9: Household composition

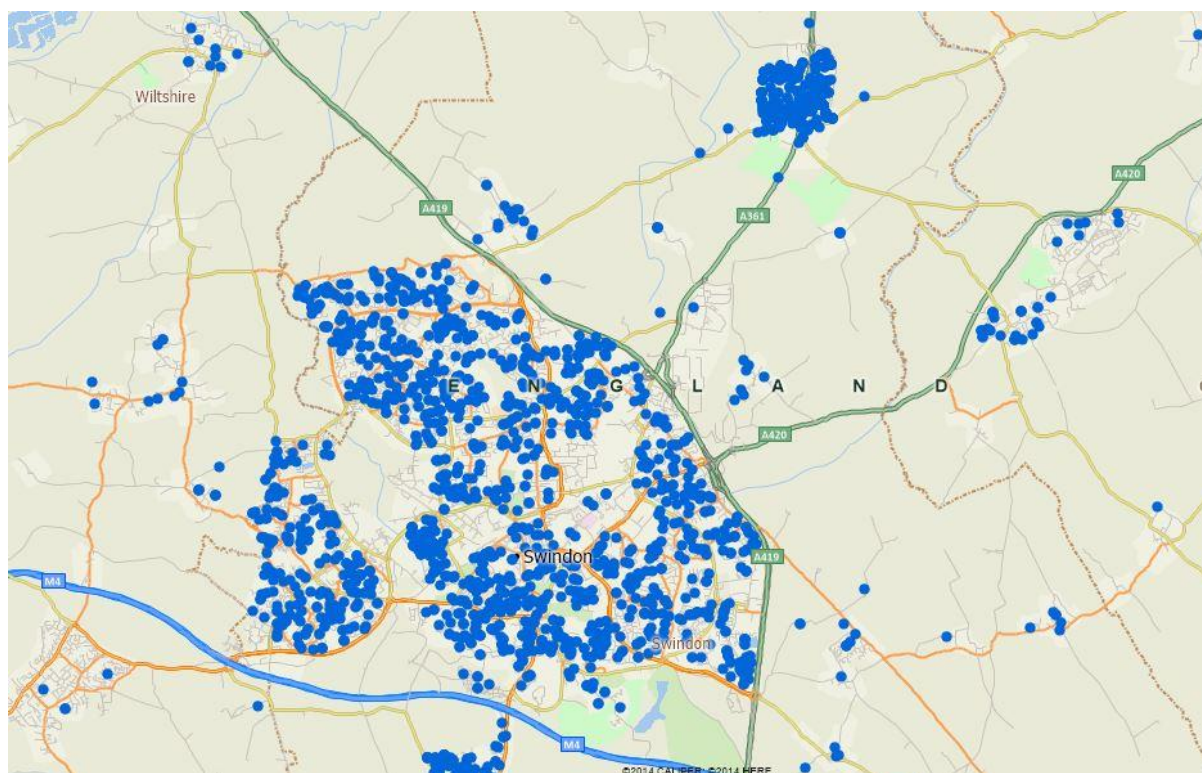


Some households have children in more than one category, so the totals exceed 100%. Three-quarters of the households represented in the survey are 'empty nests' with no children living at home, leaving just over a quarter where children are present. This reflects the age profile of the response, where older people predominate. Half of the households with children have under fives at home, and a similar proportion have children of primary school age. About a third of those households that have children in them include one or more teenagers.

2.10 Geography

Respondents were asked to supply a postcode, and those who gave enough information in this respect (1,466 respondents) have been included in the map below:

Map 1: Geography of response



The distribution of response shows participation from most of Swindon, albeit with differences in the concentrations of response. The concentrations are especially marked in Highworth, and in Wroughton, while there are also high volumes of response from North Swindon and Covingham. In contrast, response is more patchy (but still present) from Penhill, Gorse Hill, Pinehurst, Walcot and Parks, and South Marston, and from Swindon town centre. It is also noticeable that the survey has attracted interest from outside the Borough, with a scattering of responses from villages outside the boundary but for which Swindon or Highworth might represent a local library, especially for those residents who work, study or shop in Swindon. A smaller-scale map would also reveal a small number of individual contributions from as far away as Nailsworth, Stonehouse, Winchester and Evesham.

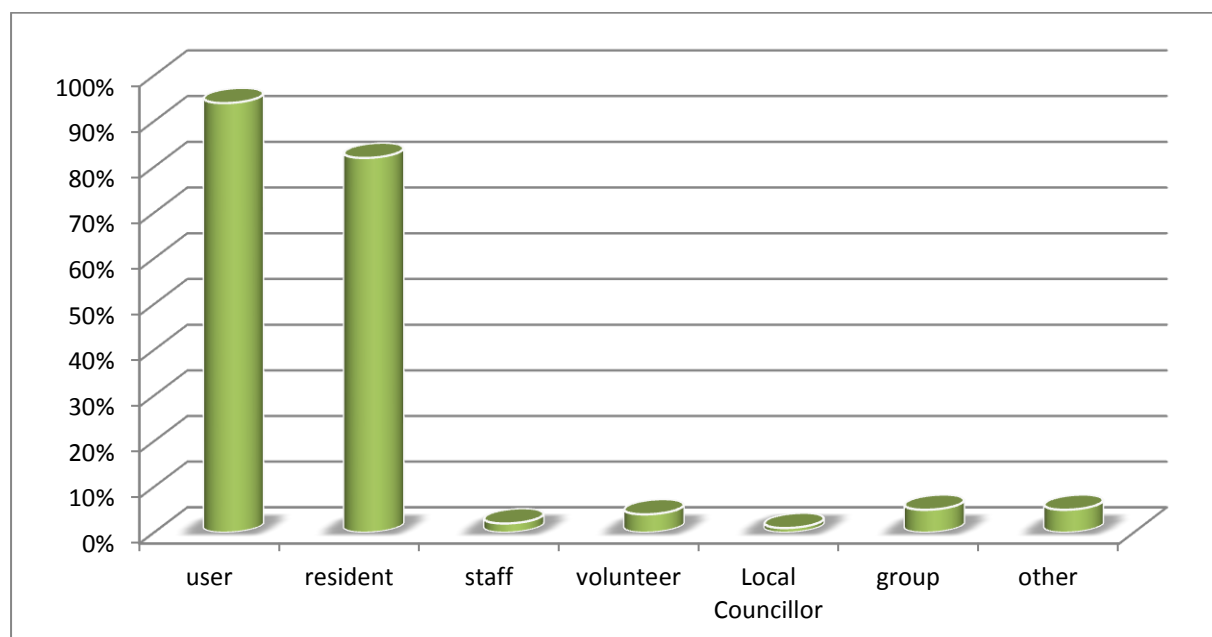
2.11 Nature of interest in the survey

Respondents were invited to indicate the nature of their interest in the survey, and respond as follows:

Table 10: Nature of interest in library survey

| Interest | Proportion of respondents |
|--|---------------------------|
| User of Swindon's libraries | 94% |
| Local resident | 82% |
| Library staff | 2% |
| Library volunteer | 4% |
| Local Councillor | 1% |
| Representative of a group/organisation | 5% |
| Interested in some other way | 5% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | <i>2,677</i> |

Chart 10: Nature of interest in library survey



The response is dominated by library users; very few people who do not use libraries have taken part in the survey. This is at least partly due to the distribution method chosen, which relied on local libraries, but also reflects the likelihood of greater interest in the topic from those most likely to be affected by any decision about the service.

Four-fifths of respondents identify themselves as local residents, and the map shows that not all participants live in the immediate area of the Borough. However, comparison with postcodes indicates that most of those who do not identify as local residents are, in fact, resident within the Borough.

Other groups are much less well represented in the survey. Staff, volunteers and local Councillors (Council and Parish) are all present, but in nothing like the same proportions. The organisations taking part include Parish Councils, residents' and community groups, political parties, faith groups, charitable bodies in a variety of fields, and several friends groups of individual libraries.

Those who declare other interests in the subject include several taking the opportunity to make known their concerns about the future of the service and the availability of its facilities. They also include people whose family members use the service, and group leaders/members who use space in the libraries for their activities, as well as others who express issues with the threats posed to library services across the country.

3 Using the library service

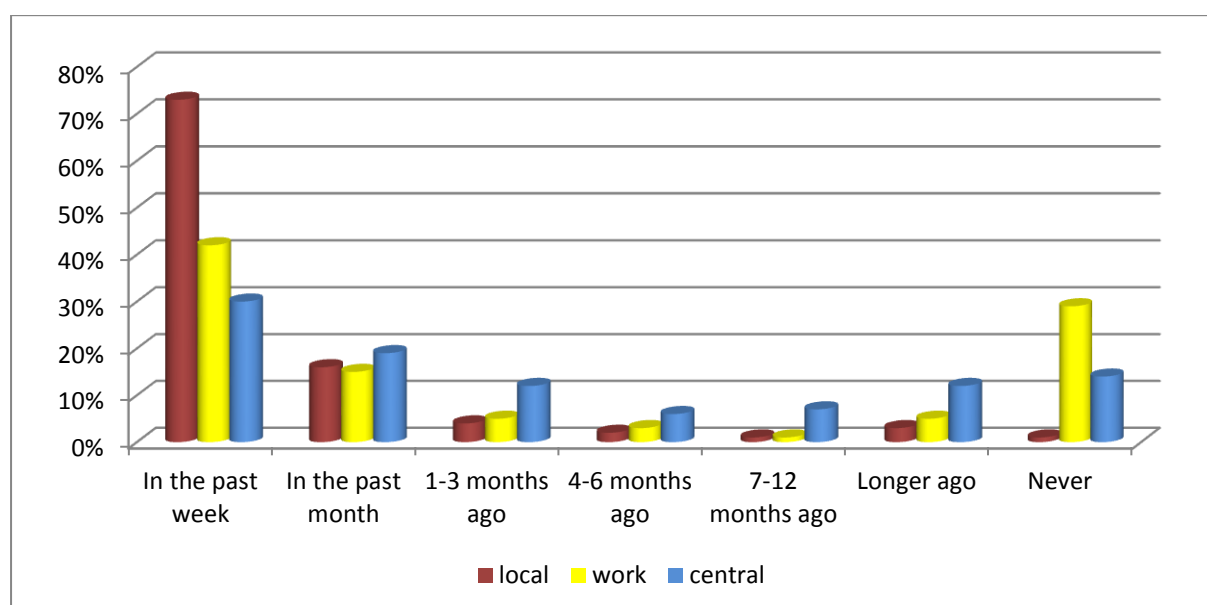
3.1 Frequency of use of libraries

Respondents were asked when they last visited the library local to their home, and also the library nearest to their workplace, if any, and the Central Library in Swindon. The results are shown here:

Table 10: Last visit to libraries

| Last visit | Proportion of respondents | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| | Local library | Library near workplace | Central library |
| In the past week | 73% | 42% | 30% |
| In the past month | 16% | 15% | 19% |
| 1-3 months ago | 4% | 5% | 12% |
| 4-6 months ago | 2% | 3% | 6% |
| 7-12 months ago | 1% | 1% | 7% |
| Longer ago | 3% | 5% | 12% |
| Never | 1% | 29% | 14% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | 2,526 | 1,311 | 2,131 |

Chart 10: Frequency of using libraries



Most respondents have relatively recent experience of the library nearest their home. Three quarters have visited within the week prior to completing the questionnaire (many will have filled in the survey during a visit to the library) and nine out of ten have been to their local library within the past month. Very few people say they have never visited their local library,

and there are also relatively few people taking part who have only occasionally visited. The views in this survey are thus largely those of people who use their local library regularly.

The numbers who regularly use a library near their workplace are much lower. A large proportion of respondents did not answer this part of the question; of those who did, only two in five use the library near their workplace in the past week, and around three in five visited in the past month. A large proportion, over a quarter, say they have never visited the library nearest to their workplace.

As for the Central Library, although half of all respondents have been there in the past month, and just under a third have visited in the past week, a quarter of respondents say that they have not been there in the past year, and half of these have never visited the premises.

The older a person is, the more likely they are to have visited the library in the past week; the proportion rises from 67% of under 18s in the survey to 80% of those aged 76 or over. Women were more likely than men to have visited in the past week, while those households with teenagers present were slightly more likely to have visited in the past week. People with disabilities were also a little more likely to have visited in the past week.

Visits to a library near the workplace were, naturally, more likely among those of working age, but men and women were equally likely to have visited in the past week, and again the parents of teenagers were more likely to have visited in that interval.

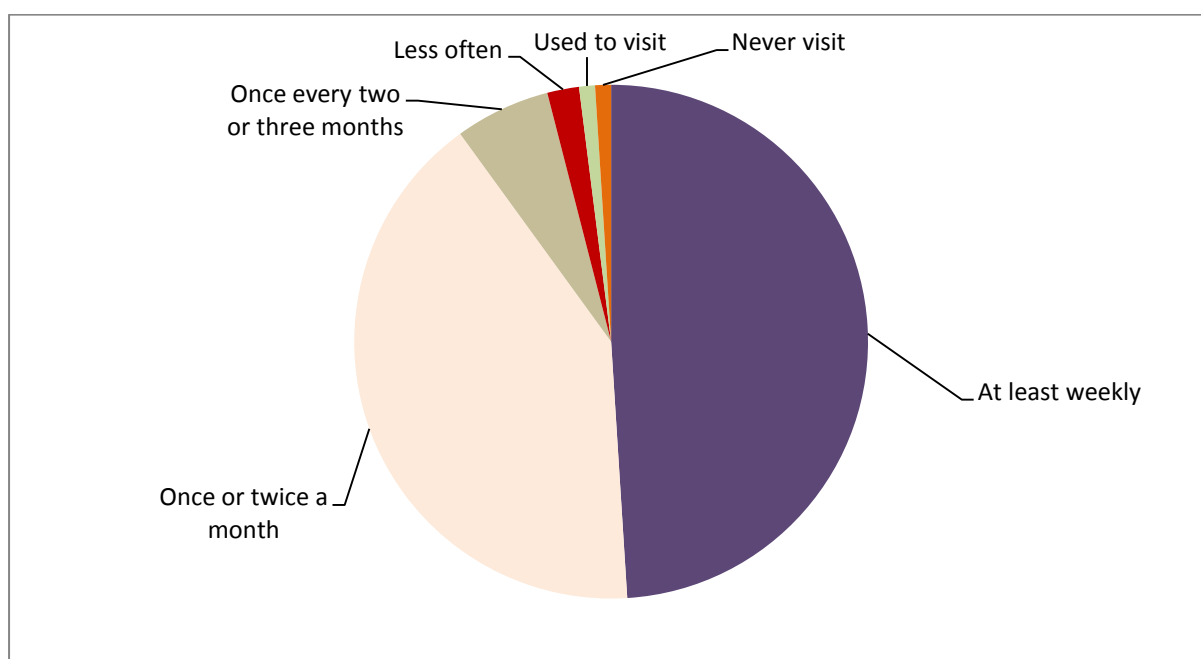
Use of the Central Library was rather different. The most likely age-groups to have visited in the past week were under 25s, and especially 19-25 year olds, 43% of whom had visited in the that time. Visiting the Central Library fell to just 21% of those aged 36-45. Men were much more likely to have visited the Central Library in the past week, as were those with no children at home; people with disabilities were also more likely to have been in the past week.

This table shows how often respondents visit a Swindon library of any type:

Table 11: Frequency of visiting

| Frequency | Proportion of respondents |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| At least weekly | 49% |
| Once or twice a month | 41% |
| Once every two or three months | 6% |
| Less often | 2% |
| Used to visit, but no longer | 1% |
| Never visit | 1% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | <i>2,640</i> |

Chart 11: Frequency of visiting



Half of those taking part in the survey are frequent library users, visiting at least once a week; some evidently visit more often than this. Almost all of the remainder use their preferred library at least every month. More occasional library users do exist, but most of those taking part in the survey are regular patrons of the service.

Although over 75s are the most likely age-group to have visited in the past week, they are not the most frequent visitors; these are the 19-25s, 55% of whom visit weekly. The least frequent are those aged 18 or under, who are more likely to visit fortnightly or monthly than to do so weekly. As this age pattern suggests, the most frequent visitors are also those who have under-fives at home, with over half of these visiting at least weekly. Men and women tend to visit with similar levels of frequency, and people with disabilities visit a little more often than their counterparts with no disability.

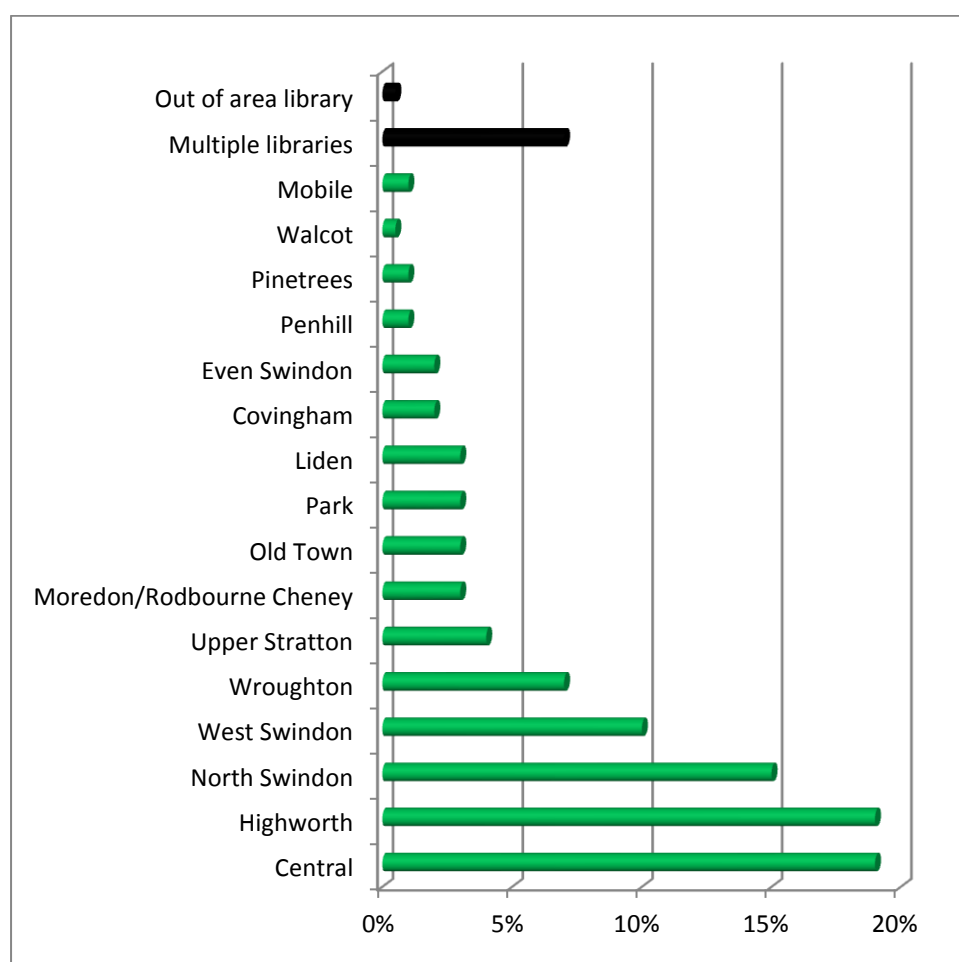
The libraries people use are listed here:

Table 12: Individual libraries visited most often

| Library | Proportion of respondents |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Central | 19% |
| Highworth | 19% |
| North Swindon | 15% |
| West Swindon | 10% |
| Wroughton | 7% |
| Upper Stratton | 4% |
| Moredon/Rodbourne Cheney | 3% |
| Old Town | 3% |
| Park | 3% |

| Library | Proportion of respondents |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Liden | 3% |
| Covingham | 2% |
| Even Swindon | 2% |
| Penhill | 1% |
| Pinetrees | 1% |
| Walcot | * |
| Mobile | 1% |
| Multiple libraries | 7% |
| Out of area library | * |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | <i>2,571</i> |

Chart 12: Individual libraries visited most often



This table indicates patterns of response, rather than patterns of use; no doubt the service can make comparisons with its own usage figures to see the extent to which the survey mirrors actual levels of take-up at individual premises. In this study, there is some evidence of campaigning on the behalf of some libraries, with high levels of response from users of Highworth and Wroughton relative to their populations, and perhaps also from North and West Swindon. There are in contrast several other libraries where users have not participated to any significant extent.

Although the question asked people to record the one library they most often use, several respondents were unable to do this and mention multiple libraries; these amount to 7% of the total, and a variety of different combinations are covered. The most frequent are combinations of a local library with the Central Library, but there is also evidence that some people use two local libraries in different parts of town on a more or less equal basis.

Highworth library seems especially favoured by older people; overall, 19% record this as their preferred library, but this rises to around a quarter of those participants aged over 60. In contrast, under 35s were rather less likely to prefer Highworth, with only around one in eight under 35s in the survey naming Highworth as their preference. Wroughton is more evenly spread but again is more popular with respondents aged over 60. At North Swindon, this picture is reversed; whilst popular with all age-groups, North Swindon is more likely to be preferred by those aged 26-45 and is correspondingly less popular with older people in the survey.

As this would suggest, Highworth library is also more likely to be utilised by those with no children, while North Swindon is less popular with such households and more popular among those with children, especially those with under 5s at home. Just 12% of homes with no children prefer North Swindon, compared to over 20% of those homes with children, and 22% of those with under 5s.

Differences as to gender in this respect are not especially marked, other than for Old Town which is almost twice as popular for women than for men, and at Central Library, which is twice as popular with men.

Differences as to disability suggest that Covingham, North Swindon, and Old Town are less popular with disabled people, while Moredon and Park appeals more to those with disabilities than to their counterparts.

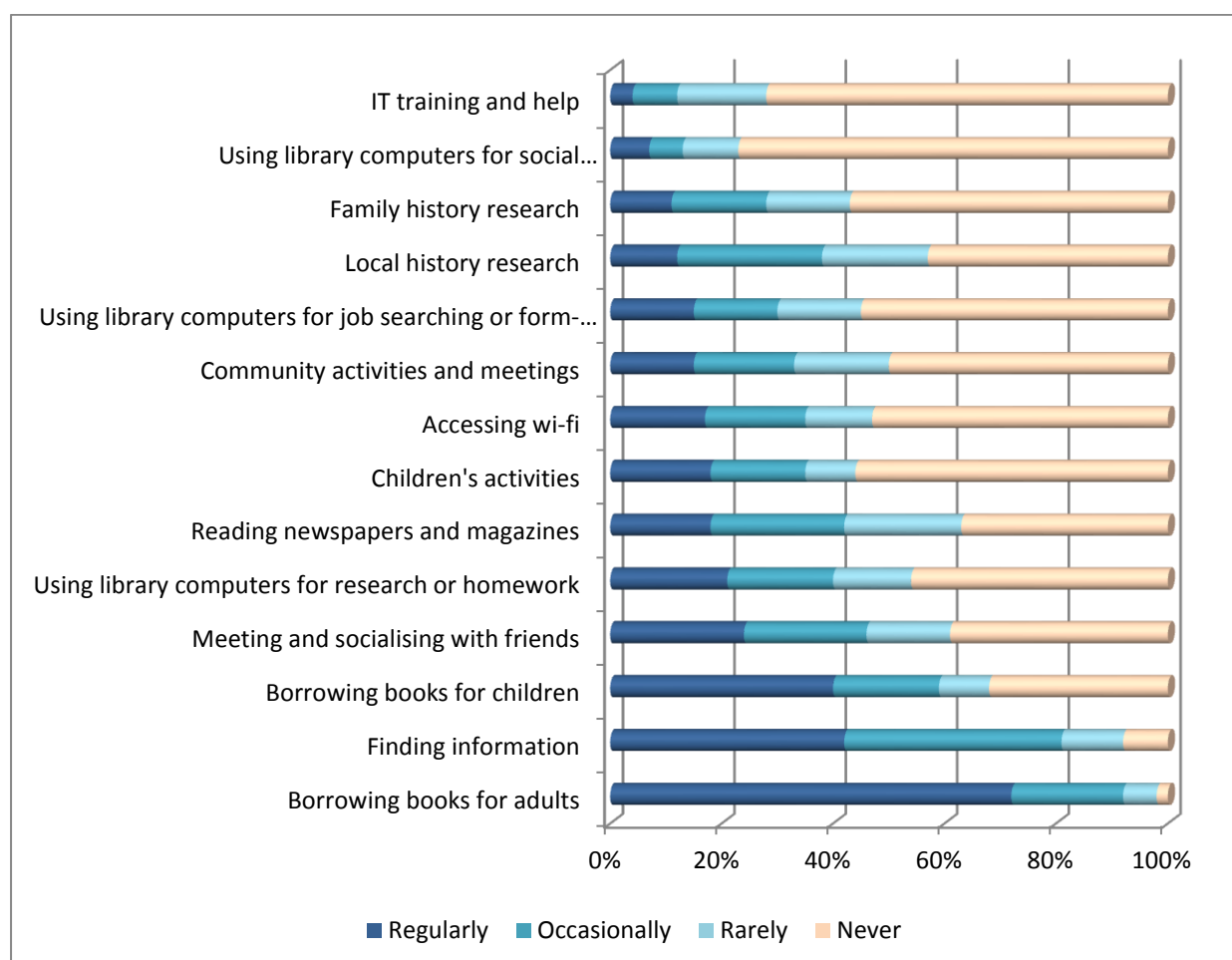
3.2 Library services used

The table below shows the frequency with which different library services are used, by the respondent or by members of their family.

Table 13: Library services used

| Service | Proportion of respondents | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------|-------|
| | Regularly | Occasionally | Rarely | Never |
| Borrowing books for adults | 72% | 20% | 6% | 2% |
| Finding information | 42% | 39% | 11% | 8% |
| Borrowing books for children | 40% | 19% | 9% | 32% |
| Meeting and socialising with friends | 24% | 22% | 15% | 39% |
| Using library computers for research or homework | 21% | 19% | 14% | 46% |
| Reading newspapers and magazines | 18% | 24% | 21% | 37% |
| Children's activities | 18% | 17% | 9% | 56% |
| Accessing wi-fi | 17% | 18% | 12% | 53% |
| Community activities and meetings | 15% | 18% | 17% | 50% |
| Using library computers for job searching or form-filling | 15% | 15% | 15% | 55% |
| Local history research | 12% | 26% | 19% | 43% |
| Family history research | 11% | 17% | 15% | 57% |
| Using library computers for social networking/games | 7% | 6% | 10% | 77% |
| IT training and help | 4% | 8% | 16% | 72% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | <i>Ranges from 1,791 to 2,533</i> | | | |

Chart 13: Library services used



The most frequently used service, by a considerable margin, is the **borrowing of books by adults**. Three quarters of respondents to the survey say they, or their family members, use this service regularly, and most of the remaining respondents use it at least from time to time. Very few library users take no interest in the book stock. **Borrowing books for children** is much less prominent in this table, but even so two in five library users make use of this service regularly, and another one in five use it occasionally; however, a third of users and their family members never borrow children's books.

The library's traditional role as a source of **information** remains a strong feature of its service. Two in five respondents make regular use of this service, and a similar proportion use it from time to time; just one in five respondents say they only rarely, or never, use this service. Respondents also emphasise the **social importance** of the library, with a quarter of them saying they use it regularly as a meeting place, and a similar proportion doing so occasionally, although two in five people say the library does not fulfil this role in their lives.

As far as these respondents are concerned, library computers are most likely to be used for **research and homework**; one in five people say they, or family members, use the library for

this purpose regularly, and a similar proportion do so occasionally. Almost half of respondents never use library computers for this purpose however. Use of computers for **form filling or job searching** is much more limited, although no doubt important for the 15% of respondents who use the PCs regularly for this purpose. Over half of respondents never use the PCs for this type of activity. When it comes to **social networking**, three quarters of library users never use the computers for this, and just one in eight use the PCs regularly or occasionally. Taking these three uses together, two in five respondents say they never use library computers for any of these purposes.

One in six respondents say they, or their family members, make use of **free wi-fi** in the libraries on a regular basis, indicating that they use their own PCs rather than those provided by the service. A similar proportion make occasional use of this service, but over half say they never use this. Take-up of **IT training and help** among respondents is very limited, and three-quarters say they never use this service.

Several library activities are only used regularly by quite small proportions of customers. One in five respondents read **newspapers or magazines** regularly in the library, and a quarter do so occasionally, but over half of respondents do this rarely at most. **Children's activities** are used regularly by one in five respondents, and occasionally by a further one in six, but are never used by over half of respondents. Accessing children's activities is thus much less regular than borrowing books for children. Around one in seven respondents is a regular attender at a **community meeting** in the library, and a similar proportion attends occasionally, but half never do so.

Using the library for research is more likely for those interested in **local history** than for **family history**. Although the proportions making regular use of the service are similar, more people make occasional use of local history resources than of family history materials.

Not surprisingly, age is a factor in the use of different services. Adult book borrowing is more frequent among those over 55 years of age, and is highest among those aged over 65. Children's book borrowing, on the other hand, is much more likely among under 45s, and falls away rapidly among older people. Storytime, unsurprisingly, follows the same pattern. Using the library as an information source is much less likely for those under 45, as is the use of newspapers and magazines.

Take-up of PCs shows no particular pattern by age, except that those aged over 65 are much less likely to be making use of these facilities. IT training is limited regardless of age-group, but wi-fi access is more important to people of working age, and especially to the younger adults in the survey.

The **informal social aspect** of the library is similarly important regardless of age, but involvement in **community activities** is much more likely among older respondents, especially among those aged over 65. **Research** is a more frequent activity for older respondents than among their younger counterparts.

Men and women borrow adult books with a similar frequency, but women are rather more likely to be borrowing children's books. Men make a little more use of newspapers and magazines, and use library PCs more often; the difference is less marked when it comes to using wi-fi, however. Meeting friends, and attending community activities (including children's activities) are more frequent features of female use of the library.

Borrowing children's books is similarly frequent regardless of the age of the children, but children's activities are much more frequently taken up by parents of under fives than by those of older children. People with disabilities are a little more likely than their counterparts to be using library computers and related services.

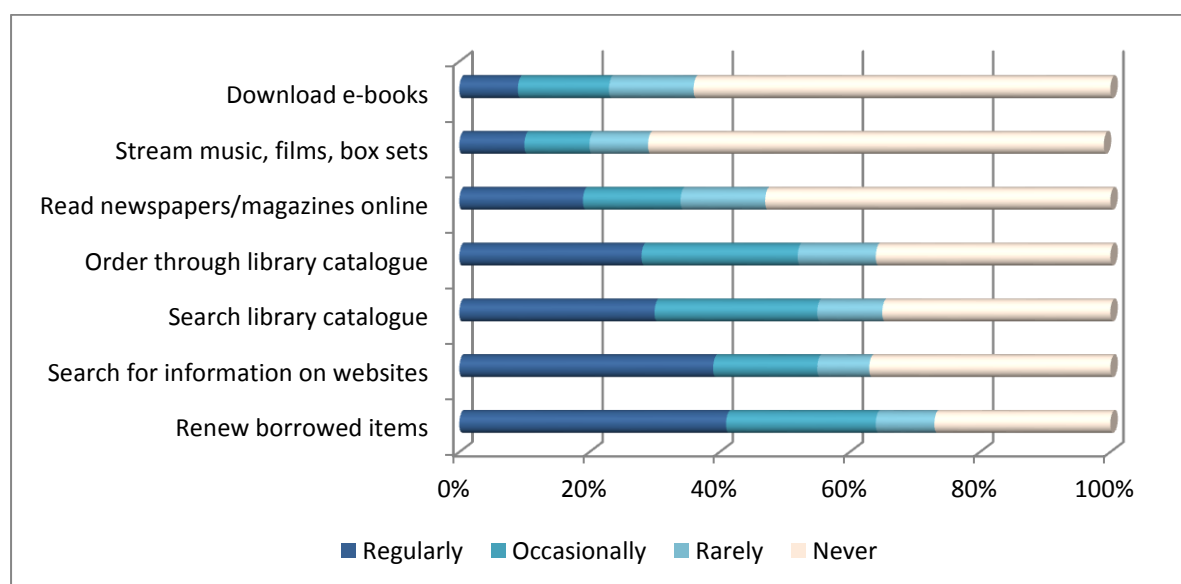
3.3 Online access

Some of these services are available online, and the table below shows how often respondents access them using computers, tablets or smartphones, but not in the library.

Table 14: Online access to services

| Service | Proportion of respondents | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------|-------|
| | Regularly | Occasionally | Rarely | Never |
| Renew borrowed items | 41% | 23% | 9% | 27% |
| Search for information on websites | 39% | 16% | 8% | 37% |
| Search library catalogue | 30% | 25% | 10% | 35% |
| Order through library catalogue | 28% | 24% | 12% | 36% |
| Read newspapers/magazines online | 19% | 15% | 13% | 53% |
| Stream music, films, box sets | 10% | 10% | 9% | 70% |
| Download e-books | 9% | 14% | 13% | 64% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | <i>Ranges from 2,167 to 2,398</i> | | | |

Chart 14: Online access to services



The most frequent use of online facilities is for **renewal of borrowed items**, and two in five say they use this service regularly, with two thirds of respondents making at least occasional use of this service. Use of the internet to **search for information** is also a regular activity for two in five people, but occasional use of this outside the library is much less frequent, and two in five respondents say they never use the internet for information gathering.

Use of the online **library catalogue** for searching and for ordering attracts a similar level of use, and both activities show regular use by over a quarter of all respondents, and non-use by just over a third.

Other online activities are pursued by a minority of respondents. One in five regularly reads **newspapers or magazines** online, but only half this proportion use online services to **access media or e-books**. Well over two-thirds of respondents say they never download books or media online.

Age is again a major determining factor here. Use of all the e-services is more frequent among younger respondents, although the catalogue and the online renewal service attract a following across all age-groups. E-book take-up is significantly higher with younger respondents, and media streaming especially so. Women are a little more likely to be using the e-catalogue, but gender differences are not especially marked. People with disabilities are less likely to use e-services than their non-disabled counterparts.

3.4 Not using the library

Relatively few people taking part in the survey never visit the library, but those who say they never go were asked why this is. The numbers involved here are small and must therefore be treated with circumspection, but the reason most commonly given is that the people concerned find the library inconveniently located, and that they prefer to buy their own books, music or films. Lack of time and unsuitable opening hours are less significant factors in non-use. Few people avoid the library because the PCs are inadequate in either quantity or quality, and fines also seem to have little deterrent effect on take-up. Other reasons given for non-use include excessive age disability, distance or travelling difficulties, bad experience with the service, and the noisy environment they encounter in libraries.

4 The future of the service

The engagement process looked not only at current patterns of use, but also explored respondents' perceptions of the likely importance of the service as a whole, and the different components of the service, for the future, as regards themselves, their families and their wider community.

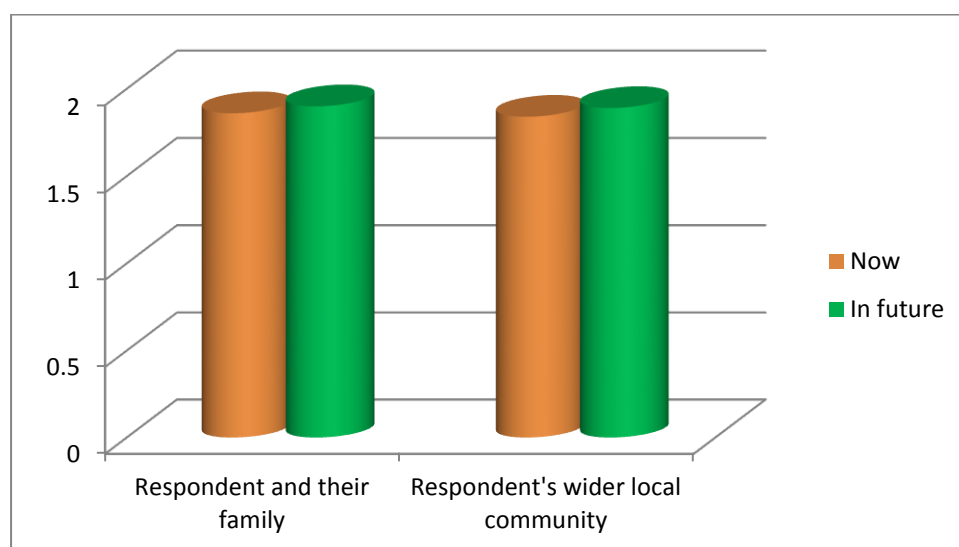
4.1 The importance of the service

This table explores the perceived importance of the service both now and in the future. The answers people gave have been converted into mean scores for ease of comparison.⁴

Table 15: The importance of the service

| Importance to... | Mean score | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| | Now | In future |
| Respondent and their family | 1.86 | 1.90 |
| Respondent's wider local community | 1.84 | 1.89 |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | <i>Ranges from 2,357 to 2,433</i> | |

Chart 15: The importance of the service



⁴ The mean score assigns a value to each answer, and then uses the value to generate an average score for each question. It can also be used to compare the responses of different groups of people. In this case, a response of 'very important' is assigned a score of +2, and a 'fairly important' response is given a value of +1. 'Not very important' and 'not at all important' are assigned scores of -1 and -2 respectively, with don't knows and blank answers removed from the base. The result is a score which lies between +2 and -2 and which can be interpreted both in terms of the direction of opinion (positive or negative) and the strength of the view.

Given a possible maximum score of +2, it is clear that the service is regarded as very important both now, and into the future, and both for the individual and their family and for the wider community. The scores for the wider community are a little higher, indicating a view that the service is even more important to others than it is for the user themselves; this is a highly valued service, at least as far as these respondents are concerned.

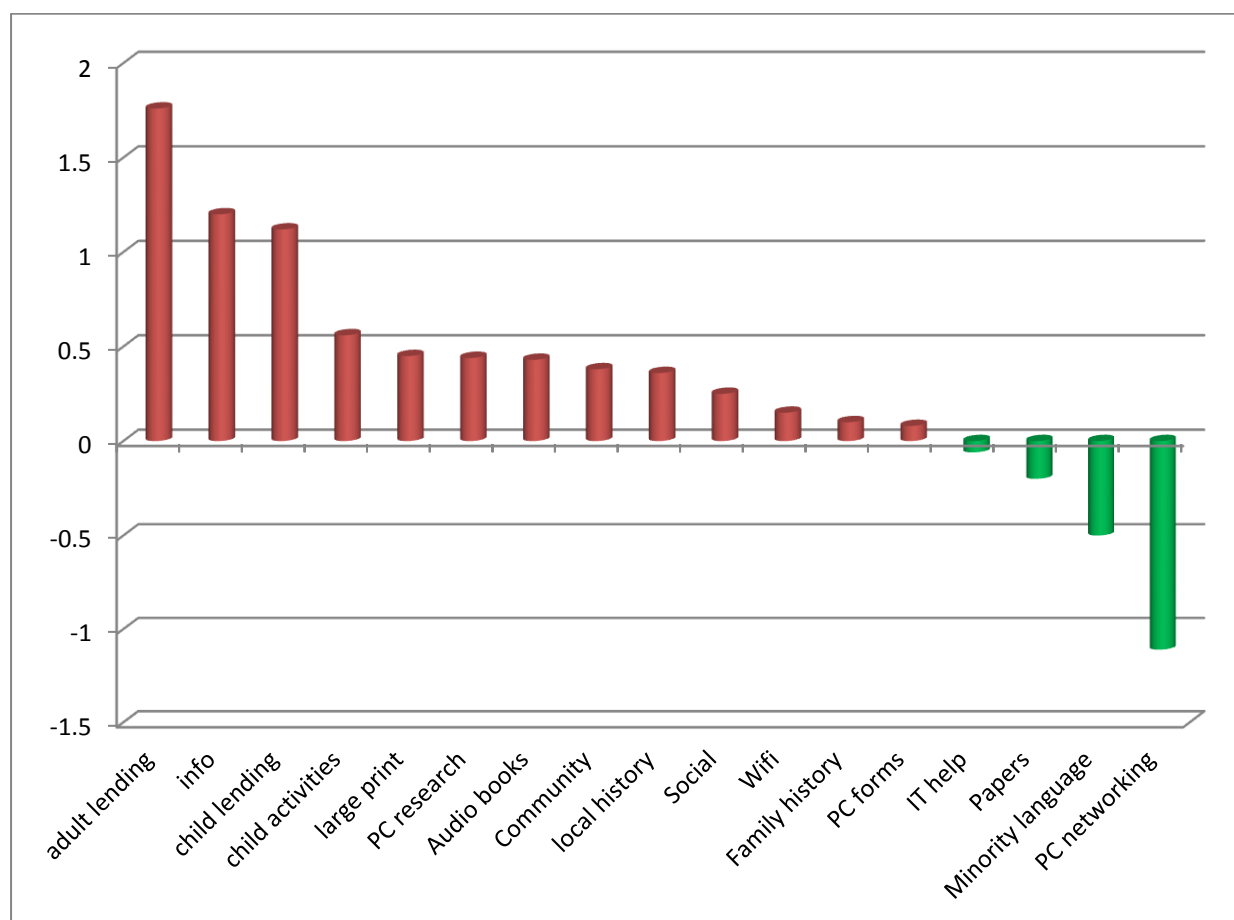
This high value pertains across all age-groups, both for the present value and also for the future, and for both men and women, although women place a slightly higher importance on the service than men do.

The table below shows the relative importance for the future, again using mean scores, of the different components of the service:

Table 16: Future importance of service components

| Service area | Mean score |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Borrowing books for adults | 1.76 |
| Finding information | 1.20 |
| Borrowing books for children | 1.12 |
| Children's activities | 0.56 |
| Large print material | 0.45 |
| Using library computers for research or homework | 0.44 |
| Audio books | 0.43 |
| Community activities and meetings | 0.38 |
| Local history research | 0.36 |
| Meeting and socialising with friends | 0.25 |
| Accessing wi-fi | 0.15 |
| Family history research | 0.10 |
| Using library computers for job searching or form-filling | 0.08 |
| IT training and help | -0.06 |
| Reading newspapers and magazines | -0.20 |
| Books etc. in minority languages | -0.50 |
| Using library computers for social networking/games | -1.11 |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | <i>Ranges from 1,792 to 2,400</i> |

Chart 16: Future importance of service components



Book-borrowing is set to remain the most important service provided by the library into the future; almost everyone in the survey rates this as very important, enabling it to achieve a very high score overall. No other library service approaches this in significance, but information and children's book-borrowing both attract a score that averages out close to 'fairly important' for the future.

Most of the remaining services score positively, but there are four services which are regarded by the respondents as unlikely to be important to them in the future. These include IT training, newspapers/magazines, and books in minority languages, all of which attract low negative scores. However, the use of library computers for social networking and games is scored very negatively and is assessed as being relatively unimportant to respondents for the future.

Age is of course a major factor in the scoring of these different service components. **Book borrowing for adults** attracts a high score in all age-groups, but especially among older respondents; **borrowing for children**, however, is much more important to those respondents below 45 years of age. **Information** scores highly in all age-groups, but is most important to those aged over 55.

In the mid-ranking services, **children's activities** are given a positive score in all age-groups, but are especially important for those aged 26-35. **Local and family history** are both a little more important to older respondents, while **audio and large print** services are considered more important by those who are older, while still given some importance by their counterparts. The **social aspect** of the library gets a higher score from younger respondents, as is less highly rated by those who are older. **Computer use** is negatively rated by older people, and given modest positive ratings by those who are younger.

Among the lowest scoring service areas, **newspapers** score poorly in all age-groups, but especially so among younger respondents, while **minority languages** are also unimportant to most respondents regardless of age, other than the youngest adults in the sample. **IT training** is positively scored for the youngest and oldest respondents, but is scored negatively across the board between 26 and 65. Use of library computers for **social networking** attracts a negative score in all age-groups, but this rises steadily with age and reaches a fairly high negative score for over 75s.

Differences between the genders on these services are generally small, but it is noticeable that women rate the newspaper/magazine service much less important than do men, while women place a much higher rating on children's activities and children's lending. Women also give a much higher score to the possibility of meeting friends in the library, something men actually rate negatively.

People with disabilities give a low positive score for newspapers, but those without disabilities rate this service negatively. The computers are also more important to people with disabilities, as is the social aspect of the library. Disabled people give a modest positive score to IT training, in contrast to their non-disabled counterparts who assign a negative score. Services like audio books and large print are rated much more positively by people with disabilities.

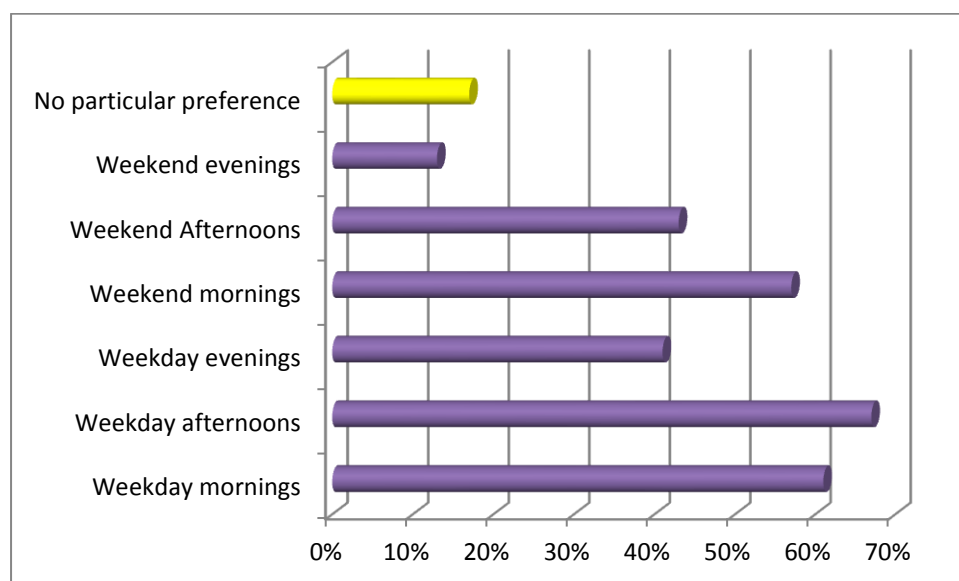
4.2 Service availability

This table shows respondents' preferences for library service availability:

Table 17: Service availability preferences

| Timing | Proportion of respondents |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Weekday mornings | 61% |
| Weekday afternoons | 67% |
| Weekday evenings | 41% |
| Weekend mornings | 57% |
| Weekend Afternoons | 43% |
| Weekend evenings | 13% |
| No particular preference | 17% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | 2,608 |

Chart 17: Service availability preferences



One in six respondents has no preference as to opening times, but for those who do have a view on this, weekday afternoons are the most popular time, favoured by two thirds of those taking part in the survey. Three in five favour weekday mornings, and two in five would like their library to be available on weekday evenings. The picture at the weekend is a little different; the numbers wanting weekend opening are a little lower generally, and the morning is more likely to be preferred than the afternoon. There is a limited appetite for evening opening at the weekend; just one in eight respondents ask for this. One in twelve respondents (8%) would like the library to be open at all these times.

There are again differences in view according to age. Younger adults are more likely to favour weekend opening, especially in the afternoon; they are also the most likely to look for opening on weekend evenings. On weekdays, those aged 26-45 vote primarily for weekday afternoons, but prefer weekend mornings and afternoons. Those aged over 65, however, are much more in favour of weekday opening, and interest falls away sharply at the weekend; weekday afternoons attract a slightly stronger appeal for those aged 65 - 75, but over 75s prefer the mornings. The implication is that the market for library users varies according to the time of day, and also the time of the week.

There are also differences by household composition. Those with no children at home prefer weekday daytimes, and so do those with under fives in the home, though the parents of under 5s also like weekend mornings. Those with school age children prefer weekday afternoons, and weekend mornings, but also like weekday evenings and weekend afternoons. No group is enthusiastic about weekend evening opening.

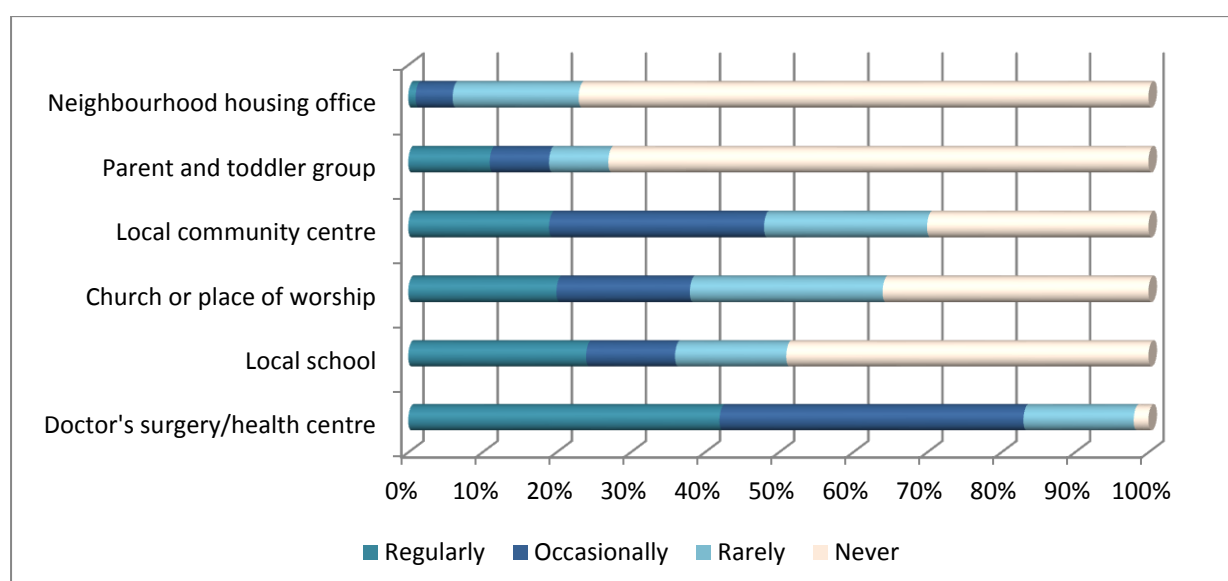
4.3 Co-location potential

The emerging model seeks to explore opportunities for possible co-location of library and other services, and respondents were asked how often they visit each of these other facilities that are generally provided on a locality basis.

Table 18: Use of localised services

| Service | Proportion of respondents | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------|-------|
| | Regularly | Occasionally | Rarely | Never |
| Doctor's surgery/health centre | 42% | 41% | 15% | 2% |
| Local school | 24% | 12% | 15% | 49% |
| Church or place of worship | 20% | 18% | 26% | 36% |
| Local community centre | 19% | 29% | 22% | 30% |
| Parent and toddler group | 11% | 8% | 8% | 73% |
| Neighbourhood housing office | 1% | 5% | 17% | 77% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | <i>Ranges from 2,326 to 2,573</i> | | | |

Chart 18: Use of localised services



Of these services, the one used most frequently by respondents to this survey is the doctor's surgery; two in five attend their doctor regularly, and a similar proportion go occasionally, whilst hardly anyone never visits the doctor. A quarter visit their local school regularly, but half never go there.

Although there are churchgoers in the response, over a third of people never attend church (or any other place of worship) and nearly two-thirds are at best rare attenders. The local community centre attracts more occasional visiting, but overall around half of all respondents

use it to some extent. Three quarters of people never contact their neighbourhood housing office, and a similar proportion never attend a parent and toddler group, though the latter does appeal to at least some extent to one in five respondents.

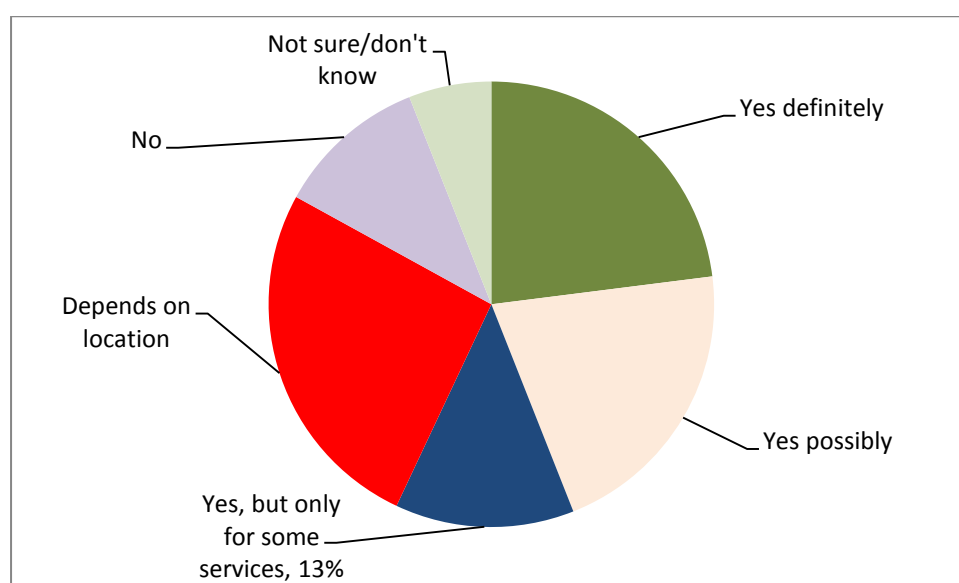
There are age-related variations here. Surgery attendance is high among younger respondents and among the recently retired, whilst churchgoing is relatively level across all age-groups over 25, achieving its highest level in those aged 66-75. Younger adults are most likely to contact the housing office, whilst under 18s and 35-45s are the groups most likely to use parent and toddler groups. Community centres are used by all age-groups but local schools are most likely to be visited by people with school age children. Women are more likely to visit parent and toddler groups and local schools, but otherwise gender differences are small.

Asked about the value of co-location, respondents answer thus:

Table 19: Co-Location

| Is there value... | Proportion of respondents |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Yes definitely | 23% |
| Yes possibly | 21% |
| Yes, but only for some services | 13% |
| Depends on location | 26% |
| No | 11% |
| Not sure/don't know | 6% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | <i>2,608</i> |

Chart 19: Co-Location



Just one in nine respondents say there is no value in co-location, whilst five out of seven are willing to go along with co-location to a certain extent at least. A quarter are quite positive and a quarter a little less so, while one in eight is willing to accept the idea depending on the services in question, and a quarter say it depends on the location chosen.

Older respondents are those who are keenest on co-location; almost a third of over 75s are definitely positive about this idea; in contrast, adults of working age are the least enthusiastic, though those who oppose the idea remain a small minority in all age-groups. Men are a little less enthusiastic than women, and those with older children are less keen than those with younger children.

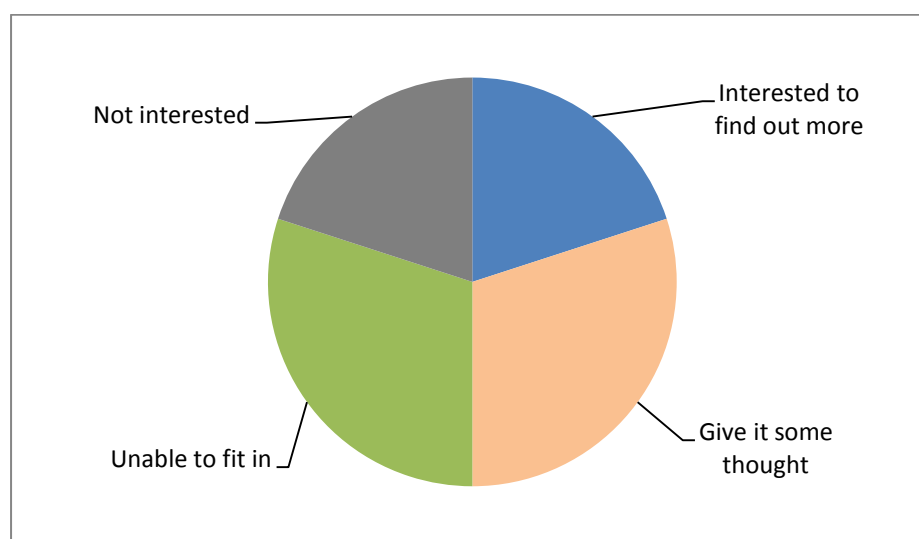
4.4 Volunteering

The emerging model calls for an increased involvement of volunteers, and respondents were asked about their predisposition to volunteer in support of this service. The results are shown here:

Table 20: Readiness to volunteer

| Readiness | Proportion of respondents |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Interested to find out more | 20% |
| Give it some thought | 30% |
| Unable to fit in | 30% |
| Not interested | 20% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | <i>2,220</i> |

Chart 20: Readiness to volunteer



Half of all respondents express a measure of interest in volunteering in support of the library service, and two-fifths of these are sufficiently interested to want to find out more. The other half of the respondent base are unable, or unwilling, to act in this way.

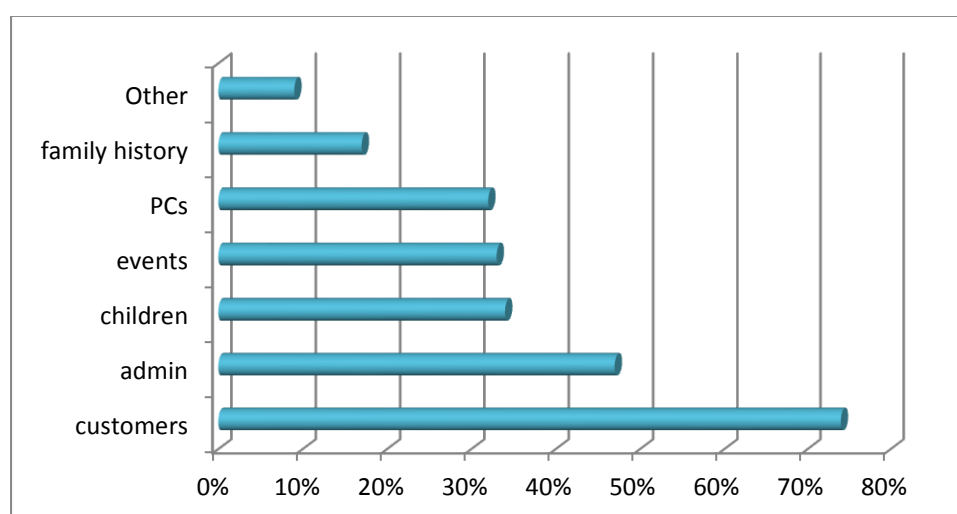
There is interest in volunteering in all age-groups, but enthusiasm is strongest among under 18s and those aged 66-75, with 56-65s more likely to be willing to think about it. Adults of working age are much more likely to be unable to fit this in alongside other commitments, and a third of over75s say they are not interested in helping in this way. Women seem a little more predisposed to volunteer than men, and those without children at home are more likely to respond positively to this suggestion.

Those who expressed a willingness to volunteer were asked to indicate what are they might be willing to help with, and answer in this way:

Table 20a: Area of volunteering

| Area of volunteering | Proportion of those interested in, or thinking about, volunteering |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Helping customers, issuing books | 74% |
| Helping with administrative work | 47% |
| Helping with children's activities | 34% |
| Helping with events etc. | 33% |
| Helping with computers | 32% |
| Helping with family history | 17% |
| Helping in other ways | 9% |
| N (=100%) | 1,213 |

Chart 20a: Area of volunteering



Many people expressed an interest in helping in more than one area of the service, so the figures exceed 100%. Three quarters of those willing to consider volunteering are interested in customer-facing work, helping customers, issuing books and the like, and half of all those expressing interest are willing to help with library admin. A third offer to help with children's activities, and a similar proportion say they might be able to help with special events and activities. One in six say they can help with family history.

Those offering to help in other ways offer a range of possibilities, including those listed in the question but also more specialist activity including literacy support, fundraising, teaching and music, but also more routine tasks such as re-shelving books, making tea and cleaning. There are also some willing to help with the home library and chatting with customers, and a number who offer their services in any area where they can help. Some, however, qualify their willingness to volunteer by linking it to the retention of their preferred library.

Alongside these are a small number who object to being asked to support a service in this way, without pay or other reward and at the expense of paid staff posts.

In the online survey, organisation representatives who took part in the survey were asked whether their organisation might be able to help with libraries. Thirteen organisations have responded to this, and seven say they are unable, or unwilling, to help. Of the remainder, three say they are supportive of libraries and imply a willingness to work with the service to find acceptable solutions, and three others already have a form of engagement with the service that they are keen to retain and develop. The remaining response is incapable of interpretation.

5 Comments and Observations

Three opportunities were provided in the questionnaire for people to respond, in a free-text format, to questions about the emerging model and the overall future of the library service. A substantial proportion of people took the opportunity to express their opinions on these matters, and raised a variety of observations - some brief, some lengthy and detailed - covering a fairly wide range of issues that are of importance to them. We have deconstructed these comments and identified a number of broad thematic areas to which they relate, and this chapter presents the resulting analysis.

In this analysis, each comment is broken down into its component parts; some comments make a single observation, and are counted once, while other more wide-ranging comments may appear multiple times in the analysis, although only once in respect of each theme they cover.

5.1 The Emerging Model

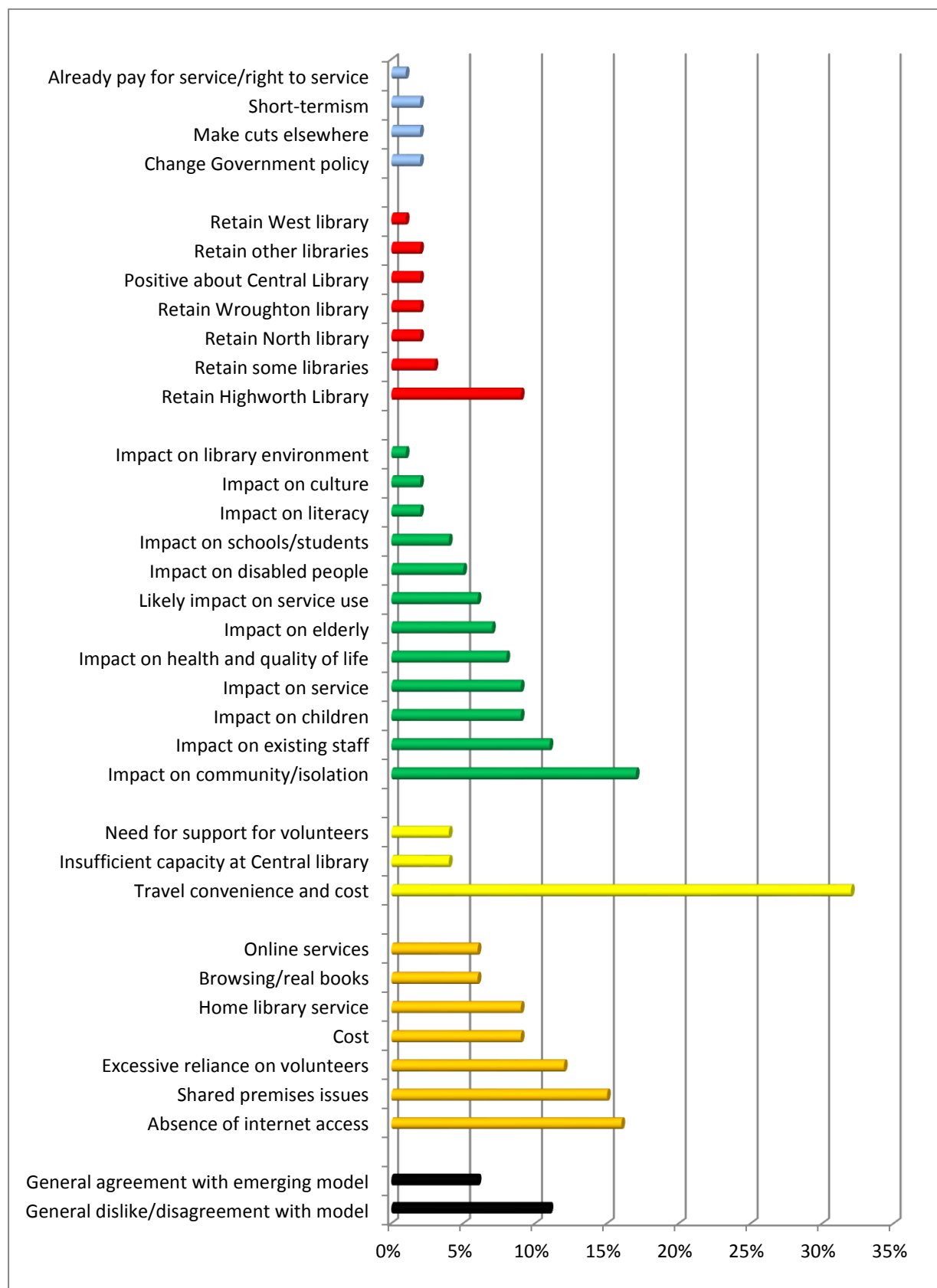
The first of these questions relates to the emerging model described in the questionnaire and accompanying material, which would be based on the provision of a core library service from the Central Library, enhanced by some targeted services focussed on areas and groups with the highest levels of need. Possible inclusions in this model are 24/7 online access to library services, home library services, targeted support to the most disadvantaged communities, and support for community responsibility for the maintenance of local services, perhaps in shared premises alongside other public services.

Respondents were asked to identify what they see as the advantages and disadvantages of this model, and the results are summarised in the table below. It should be noted that the only prompt given here was the detail of the emerging model; the numbers shown as commenting do not necessarily amount to a total who might agree with these comments.

Table 21: Advantages and disadvantages of emerging model (issues attracting 20 or more comments)

| Area of comment | No. of comments | Proportion of respondents making comments |
|--|-----------------|---|
| General perceptions | | |
| General dislike/disagreement with model | 167 | 11% |
| General agreement with emerging model | 86 | 6% |
| Comments on aspects proposed in model | | |
| Absence of internet access | 250 | 16% |
| Shared premises issues | 241 | 15% |
| Excessive reliance on volunteers | 189 | 12% |
| Cost | 142 | 9% |
| Home library service | 137 | 9% |
| Browsing/real books | 96 | 6% |
| Online services | 91 | 6% |
| Comments on practicalities | | |
| Travel convenience and cost | 506 | 32% |
| Insufficient capacity at Central library | 56 | 4% |
| Need for support for volunteers | 55 | 4% |
| Impacts | | |
| Impact on community/isolation | 264 | 17% |
| Impact on existing staff | 175 | 11% |
| Impact on children | 148 | 9% |
| Impact on service | 136 | 9% |
| Impact on health and quality of life | 130 | 8% |
| Impact on elderly | 117 | 7% |
| Likely impact on service use | 99 | 6% |
| Impact on disabled people | 71 | 5% |
| Impact on schools/students | 65 | 4% |
| Impact on literacy | 38 | 2% |
| Impact on culture | 35 | 2% |
| Impact on library environment | 22 | 1% |
| Cases for libraries | | |
| Retain Highworth Library | 134 | 9% |
| Retain some libraries | 44 | 3% |
| Retain North library | 37 | 2% |
| Retain Wroughton library | 29 | 2% |
| Positive about Central Library | 30 | 2% |
| Retain other libraries | 25 | 2% |
| Retain West library | 22 | 1% |
| Policy | | |
| Change Government policy | 29 | 2% |
| Make cuts elsewhere | 28 | 2% |
| Short-termism | 25 | 2% |
| Already pay for service/right to service | 20 | 1% |
| N (=100%) | | 1562 |

Chart 21: Advantages and disadvantages of emerging model



Several people chose to express a **general opinion** of the emerging model, either favourably or otherwise, which they may or may not have gone on to elaborate upon or explain. There is a certain amount of support for the model, with 6% of all those making a comment expressing general support for the idea; but twice as many, around one in nine of all those offering a comment, express dissatisfaction or disagreement with the proposal, some doing so with evident strong feeling.

Several aspects of the model are commented on in depth. The most common of these is the understanding that the service will become much more dependent on **personal internet access**, a perception that around one in six commenters express a view on. A very high proportion of these draw attention to the fact that a significant proportion of the population do not have, and in many cases cannot afford, private internet access, and will thus be excluded from the model as they interpret it. There is a widespread perception that this will especially disadvantage elderly people, who are widely thought to be unable or unwilling to engage as fully with the internet as the model will require, and several people point out that the service provided by the library in this respect is invaluable to this group of people precisely because it is free of charge, and comes with staff support when this is needed.

The idea of **sharing premises** attracts a mixed bag of responses. For many commenters, this is a sensible way of reducing the costs of local provision, and there is an extent to which people are willing to concede space if this is the way of retaining a more local service. Others note the possibility of cross-fertilisation between services if they are under one roof, with the customers of one service having the potential to also become customers of other co-located services, and also welcome the convenience that this one-stop shop approach might introduce. However, for others there are disadvantages in sharing premises, including the loss of space but also questions of inappropriate combinations of services that might threaten safety, confidentiality or personal comfort for library users.

The model is understood as placing significant **reliance on volunteers**, and many people commenting - around one in eight of those responding - say they believe the expectations of volunteers in the model are unrealistic. They argue that volunteers are not easy to find, especially with changes in the retirement age, and that the experience of other volunteer-dependent services such as charity shops is not encouraging; they also contend that volunteers can be unreliable, prone to unplanned or lengthy absence, and cannot deliver the quality of service that they expect in the library, for instance in relation to customer safety and security.

Cost is raised by one in nine respondents. In most cases it is cited as an advantage generated by the model - usually the only identified advantage against a longer list of disadvantages. However, the financial benefit to the authority of the proposal is nevertheless clearly seen, although not always believed in its entirety, as some respondents foresee unrecognised costs in delivering the model.

One area where clarity is missing, however, is the **home library service**. Several respondents cite this as a lifeline service, either for themselves or for those who benefit from

the service, but there is a certain amount of confusion as to whether this service is provided at the moment or not. The idea is viewed positively, and it is thought large numbers of people would benefit from such a service especially with an ageing population, but this is also an area where doubts about cost emerge, especially around sustainability in the face of rising need.

A number of people emphasise the value they place on being able to browse, or to hold, **'real' books** - by which they mean non-electronic editions. For these people, browsing is preferable to electronic catalogue selection because it allows them to make a more informed choice - perhaps based on sampling the contents, or reading the blurb - whilst a real book is a traditional joy that is not matched by the e-reader experience. The point is made especially in relation to illustrated books generally, and children's books specifically, which do not always transfer satisfactorily to e-readers, and this is deployed as an argument against the e- service perceived at the core of the model.

On the other hand, a large number of people do welcome the idea of the **e-service**, and the possibility of completing library transactions online at their own convenience and using electronic resources. They like the idea of having the books they order delivered to a convenient local collection point, and not being tied to the limited opening times of physical libraries. There is nevertheless a recognition that this will not suit many library users without internet access, and there are also concerns over the quality of the service, ease of use, and compatibility with e-reading devices.

Several commenters raise issues that are essentially to do with practicalities of the emerging model. By far the most prominent of these - and the single issue most often raised by respondents to the engagement survey - is the issue of **access to the Central Library**, if this is to become the only staffed resource available for the service. One in three commenters raises this as a concern, interpreting the model as obliging them to use the Central Library as the only place where they, or their accompanied children, will be able to access the books in the way they wish to, or continue their use of the service. The problems associated with this include the time needed to travel in and out of Swindon, the costs associated with travel to and from the library on public transport, the costs and expected difficulties in parking (not least for disabled people), and having to carry heavy books in addition to shopping. In addition, several people mention that although they can catch a bus into Swindon, this service stops well short of the Central Library, leaving what they feel is an excessive walk between the bus stops and their destination. For many people, the corollary of these transport and access issues is that they feel they are unlikely to make use of the Central Library.

The related question of **capacity at the Central Library** also emerges under this heading. One in 25 people suggests that the Central library is already quite busy at certain times, and that it will not be able to absorb the additional traffic generated by the model, as there are not enough seats, not enough computers, and not enough space to accommodate the demand that will result.

One in 25 people also raise concerns over **support for volunteers**. These are not in essence negative about the voluntary approach indicated in the model, but rather the practical issues of adequate training, supervision and management of a voluntary labour force that they feel need to be recognised in costing the model.

Several respondents identify (almost always negative) impacts they expect to result from the approach being suggested by the Council. The most prominent among these, raised by one in six commenters, is the fear that the closure of local libraries will, in some way, **damage the local community**. Many feel that the local library serves as a meeting place as well as a public service, and that its role in building community cohesion should not be overlooked. Some make a point of giving their own experience in this respect, identifying that they will lose contact and become isolated if the library closes, although most argue from a more general position that the library is part of what defines a community, and that closure will irreparably damage this.

The staff are one dimension of this, and it is clear that many library users value the staff, not only for their friendliness and warmth but also for their help and professionalism. One in nine commenters is concerned about the impact of the proposals on staff numbers, some because they fear for the staff concerned and their jobs, others because they place high value on the availability of professional and trained staff who can help customers with queries.

A substantial number of commenters fear an **adverse impact on children** - often their own children, but also their grandchildren, or children more generally. They refer to their own experience as children, or as parents, of using the library to create a love of books and reading among their offspring, or they note how popular the libraries they use are with families supporting their children in reading. The impact on 'future generations' is frequently mentioned and the need for a physical library to protect children from this impact is strongly stated. Closely related to this is a perceived **impact on students**, including children who do their homework in the library (especially those with no computer at home) but also older students using the library for reference or as a quiet study space. The suggestion that there will be an **impact on literacy** is also child-focussed in the main, but links to a more general concern over **cultural life** in Swindon where the libraries, some think, have an important contribution to make.

One in twelve respondents suggests the emerging model will have consequences in terms of **impact on health and quality of life**. The main factor in this is the problems the model creates for older people who will find they can no longer access their local library, and who will not be able to travel to the Central Library nor to use the 24/7 online service. Several respondents think that older users risk isolation as a result, with one of their main weekly activities removed, and that this in turn will have damaging effects on health (no longer walking to the library), mental health (isolation, loss of personal interaction) and more general quality of life issues.

Alongside children, though, many people fear the new model will have negative impacts on **elderly people** in Swindon, mainly because they will be denied access to the service through its relative remoteness, their lack of internet access, and their inability to access the

Central Library. Many of those commenting here include **people with disabilities** among their perceived impacts as well, for similar reasons.

More generally, there are fears that service quality will suffer under the emerging model; that the service will simply not be able to achieve its **current level of quality**. This is attributed primarily to the loss of physical presence and the replacement of professional staff with less well-informed volunteers, but there are also concerns over reduced opening hours, more limited stock, and the pressure on space created by sharing premises, together with large print and other special items squeezing out the general stock. There are also concerns at the loss of convenient access to services such as copying and scanning. The concern over the **library environment** embraces issues related primarily to noise levels, especially with increased demand at Central Library.

For these reasons, one in sixteen people indicate that they will **no longer use the service** if these changes are implemented.

Several people respond to the emerging model's advantages and disadvantages in terms of the **impact on their own local library**, or the one they most often use. Feelings in this respect run especially high in **Highworth**, where there is evident anger and frustration at the possibility of closure; one in eleven of those commenting in any way is protesting the impact on Highworth library. They argue that Highworth Library is well-used, has an important role in its community, hosts a number of community-related activities which could be put at risk, is too isolated from central Swindon to make the Central Library a viable alternative, benefits from a low rent arrangement with the local Co-operative, and serves a separate community that is sufficiently large to merit its own library. They also point out the benefit to other smaller communities which relate to Highworth and use its facilities.

Some respondents urge consideration of a **compromise** whereby smaller libraries are closed, but a small number of larger or remoter libraries (usually including Highworth, North and West Swindon) are retained, alongside the Central facility.

Other libraries also attract their advocates. Prominent among these is **Wroughton**, where the numbers making representations on its behalf are substantial relative to the volume of users; **North and West Swindon** also have protagonists who argue that their location, take-up facilities, and proximity to transport and local services make good arguments for retention. The numbers arguing cases for retention of other libraries are relatively small, but include devotees of Liden, Old Town and Even Swindon. There are also a number of people who take the opportunity to praise provision at the **Central Library**, and to make positive comments about the facility.

There are small numbers of respondents who take the opportunity of this question to criticise Government policy, which they see as responsible for this situation, and to urge the Council to fight the Government on this, or to make cuts elsewhere, especially in reducing the amounts spent on what they see as 'vanity projects'. Some feel the emerging model is a short-term approach that will not prove sustainable in the longer term, while others believe their Council Tax already pays for the service, and that they have a right to it accordingly.

Observations made by smaller numbers of people, that do not appear in the table, include the view that it will be good for communities to take responsibility for their own libraries, but also the view that the service is being badly led and managed, and that there will be an impact on civic pride in Swindon if the proposals go through. Some think the engagement process is flawed and that the decision has already been made., but others think that any model that keeps the service going is better than nothing, while there are some who see advantage in widening access through the 24/7 approach and through the added convenience of shared premises.

In summary, although there are some who see the emerging model in a positive light, or at least prepared to accept it as way forward in difficult circumstances, these are far outnumbered by those who reject it, and who have no difficulty in marshalling a range of arguments in support of this position.

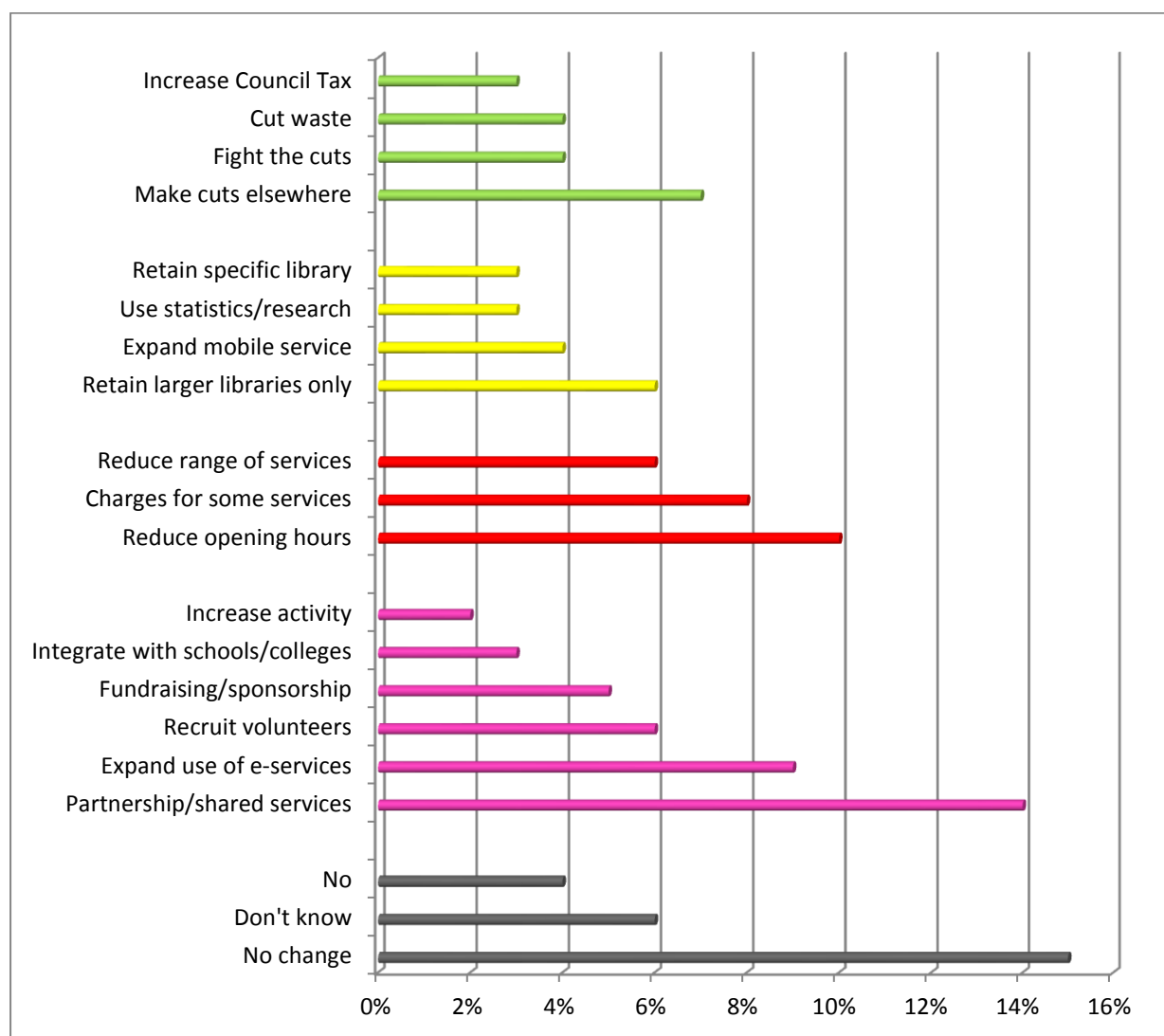
5.2 Other approaches worth considering

A second free text question asked respondents if there were other approaches that the Council should consider, bearing in mind the financial pressures it is experiencing at present. This table summarises the response to this question:

Table 22: Other ways of delivering the service the Council should consider (issues attracting 20 or more comments)

| Area of comment | No. of comments | Proportion of respondents making comments |
|--|-----------------|---|
| No change/no contribution to make | | |
| No change | 173 | 15% |
| Don't know | 71 | 6% |
| No | 50 | 4% |
| New ways of working | | |
| Partnership/shared services | 161 | 14% |
| Expand use of e-services | 108 | 9% |
| Recruit volunteers | 71 | 6% |
| Fundraising/sponsorship | 62 | 5% |
| Integrate with schools/colleges | 36 | 3% |
| Increase activity | 22 | 2% |
| Operational changes | | |
| Reduce opening hours | 111 | 10% |
| Charges for some services | 89 | 8% |
| Reduce range of services | 64 | 6% |
| Provision changes | | |
| Retain larger libraries only | 66 | 6% |
| Expand mobile service | 42 | 4% |
| Use statistics/research | 40 | 3% |
| Retain specific library | 34 | 3% |
| Policy changes | | |
| Make cuts elsewhere | 79 | 7% |
| Fight the cuts | 49 | 4% |
| Cut waste | 49 | 4% |
| Increase Council Tax | 32 | 3% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | | <i>1,153</i> |

Chart 22: Other ways of delivering the service the Council should consider



Although the question sought opinions on alternative approaches to the emerging model, that recognise the situation the Council faces, most people struggled to come up with additional ideas; one in sixteen of those responding say they don't know, while a further 4% say there are **no other ways** of delivering the service. The largest proportion, though, 15% of all respondents to this question, say that the existing model should not change; the way the service is provided now is thus their alternative to the emerging model.

There are nevertheless some who can identify **new ways of working** that will support provision of the service within financial constraints. The most prominent among these are the people who see the benefit of **shared service provision**, usually through co-location of the library with other services, primarily (though not always) other public services. Mostly, this is about sharing a common address but with services separated within the premises, but

there are some who see possibilities in widening the range of services available through the library, and up-skilling the staff to provide these.

People also see potential in expanding the **use of e-services**, and the increased deployment of a **volunteer labour force**, both of which (like co-location) are aspects of the emerging model that seem to attract a measure of support, even if the model as a whole is not endorsed fully. There are also suggestions that the service should increase its level of activity, by which people mean a larger number of events and special activities that might attract new customers, and for which a charge could be levied. New ideas mentioned in this context also include **fundraising and sponsorship**, and the possibility of integration with the libraries in **local schools and colleges**.

One in ten respondents would prefer the service to look at **reducing opening hours** rather than outright closure, and one in twelve people suggest **making charges** for some services, especially the use of PCs; many of these indicate that they would themselves be willing to pay for book loans, or for membership by subscription, to help support the service. Others suggest a **more focussed service** is the way forward, though there is limited consensus on which services should be dropped; everyone wants book lending to continue, but some would drop DVD/CD rentals, PC usage, or other library services as a way of saving money.

The alternative option most frequently put forward is the compromise whereby some libraries are saved from closure, **reducing but not eliminating** altogether the out-of-centre properties so as to ease travel and co-location alike. An expansion of the **mobile service** is called for, mainly as a mitigator for the impact of the closures on the less mobile library users, while opportunity is again taken to make the case for **retention** of specific libraries, especially Highworth. A small number of people urge the Council to carry out more **thorough research** into levels and patterns of use of libraries before making cuts.

Substantial numbers of people do not believe the Council should accept the situation it faces; they say that the **Government should be challenged** on the austerity agenda, or that if cuts must be made that these are **prioritised elsewhere**. This includes, if necessary, in care and education budgets, although senior management and Councillor expenses are more popular options for trimming. There is also frustration that the Council spends money on what are seen as **frivolous projects** instead of prioritising frontline services like libraries, and in some quarters a willingness to **pay increased tax** to secure the service's future.

Other observations that failed to achieve the support needed to appear in the table include a wish to see management changes in relation to the service, staff reductions, and the possibility that the Central library should close, so as to allow retention of other libraries. There are also some who want to prohibit some activities, such as the use of library PCs for social media activity, or who believe that cuts in services such as cleaning, window cleaning, or heating would make a contribution to the savings needed.

In summary, there is very little new here; many people have simply nothing to add, or wish only to reiterate the points already made in the previous question. There is a level of support for co-location, albeit grudging at times; presumably possibilities like opening hours have

already been rejected as not offering the level of savings needed, and the ideas that emerge here most strongly are those already put forward by the service in its emerging model.

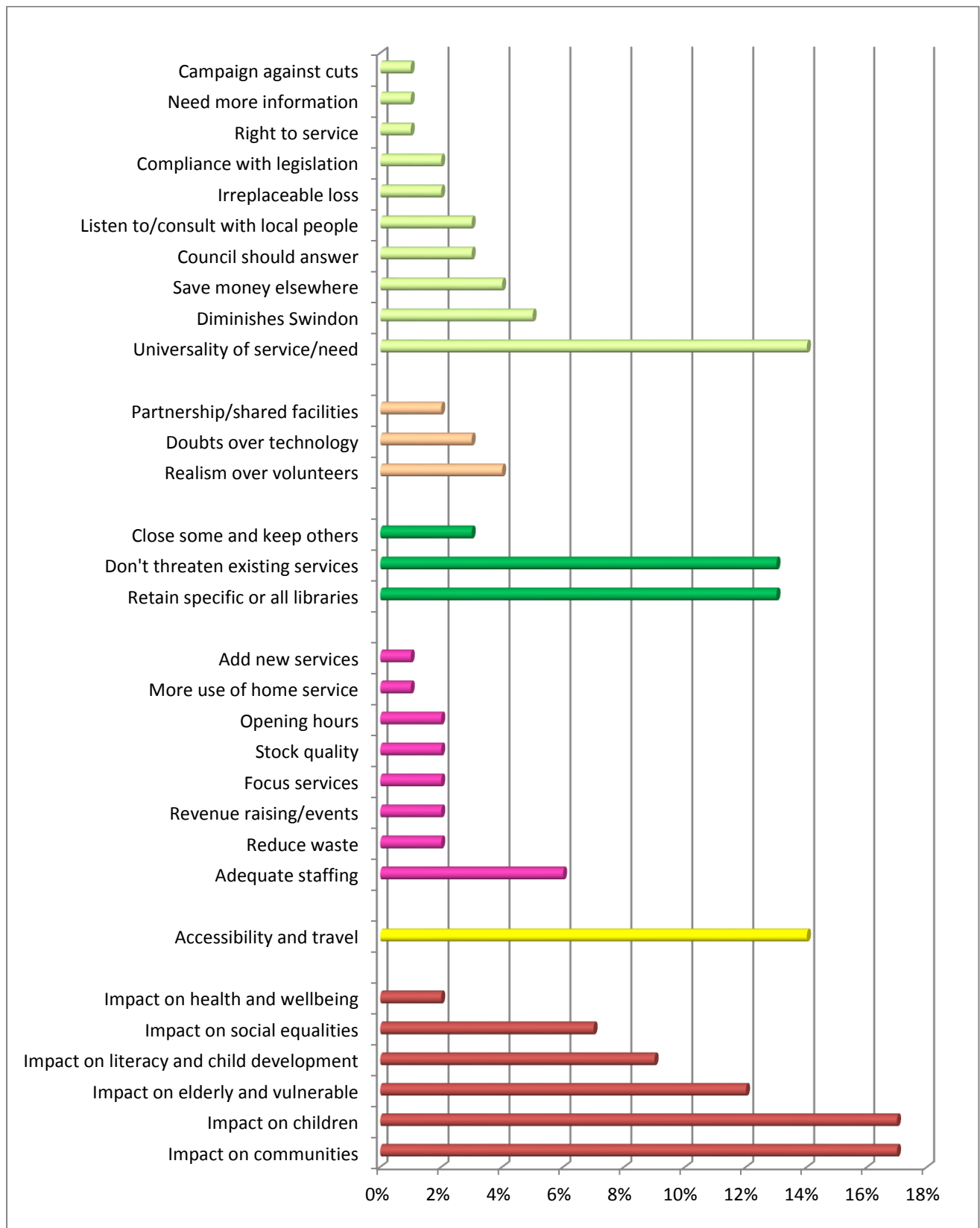
5.3 Key considerations

A third open ended question sought people's views on the key considerations the Council should bear in mind in pondering changes to the library service. The answers are summarised here:

Table 23: Key considerations (issues attracting 20 or more comments)

| Area of comment | No. of comments | Proportion of respondents making comments |
|--|-----------------|---|
| Impacts on groups of users | | |
| Impact on communities | 284 | 17% |
| Impact on children | 280 | 17% |
| Impact on elderly and vulnerable | 193 | 12% |
| Impact on literacy and child development | 154 | 9% |
| Impact on social equalities | 109 | 7% |
| Impact on health and wellbeing | 31 | 2% |
| Practical issues | | |
| Accessibility and travel | 232 | 14% |
| Operational issues | | |
| Adequate staffing | 94 | 6% |
| Reduce waste | 40 | 2% |
| Revenue raising/events | 33 | 2% |
| Focus services | 30 | 2% |
| Stock quality | 28 | 2% |
| Opening hours | 26 | 2% |
| More use of home service | 23 | 1% |
| Add new services | 21 | 1% |
| Retention of service | | |
| Retain specific or all libraries | 210 | 13% |
| Don't threaten existing services | 207 | 13% |
| Close some and keep others | 52 | 3% |
| Emerging Model issues | | |
| Realism over volunteers | 69 | 4% |
| Doubts over technology | 54 | 3% |
| Partnership/shared facilities | 39 | 2% |
| Policy and reputational issues | | |
| Universality of service/need | 230 | 14% |
| Diminishes Swindon | 88 | 5% |
| Save money elsewhere | 62 | 4% |
| Council should answer | 48 | 3% |
| Listen to/consult with local people | 46 | 3% |
| Irreplaceable loss | 36 | 2% |
| Compliance with legislation | 28 | 2% |
| Right to service | 24 | 1% |
| Need more information | 23 | 1% |
| Campaign against cuts | 21 | 1% |
| <i>N (=100%)</i> | | 1,626 |

Chart 23: Key considerations



For all the size of this table, reflecting again the range of comments offered in response to this question, there is relatively little here that has not already been considered in relation to the earlier questions. The Council is thus urged to give due consideration of the needs of specific socio-demographic groups, especially children and the elderly, with the ramifications of damage to health, well-being, and literacy restated alongside. It is also encouraged to drop, or to significantly amend its plans, retaining at least some, if not all, of the existing libraries, while the doubts over technology and technological exclusion, volunteers, and the possibilities of shared facilities, are rehearsed here.

There is also a relatively long list of operational suggestions, most of which have already appeared in answer to the first two questions. There is a newly expressed view, though, that the Council should maintain the quality of the **book stock** as a key consideration, with smallish groups of people making other revenue-saving or revenue-raising suggestions.

Access reappears as a major consideration the Council should take into account. One in seven of those giving any response to this question raise issues of accessibility, especially but by no means uniquely in relation to access from Highworth.

Some new themes arise under the broad heading of policy and reputational issues. A major one, expressed by one in seven people, is that the library service is one of very few public services from which **everyone can benefit**, regardless of age, or other personal characteristic, and deserves to be treated accordingly as an important service that potentially impacts across the demographic board. There is also a view that the emerging model in particular, and closure of libraries more generally, **diminish Swindon** culturally and also in the eyes of those outside the town, damaging its reputation or even giving it a negative reputation viewed from outside.

There is a strand of thought that believes that the **Council should be answering** these questions, rather than the public, as they are privy to the information that is needed to make a proper assessment. In contrast, there are others who urge the Council to pay more attention to what **local people are saying** about the proposals, and others who do not believe they have had **sufficient information** about the proposals to give an informed view (several of these complained they had not seen the FAQ leaflet). The over-riding need for the Council to **comply with legislation** is mentioned by some, who either expressly or by implication suggest that the emerging model is non-compliant, whilst others draw attention to the fact that, once the service is gone, it is **unlikely ever to return**.

Other observations made by smaller numbers of people urge the Council to use cost-effectiveness measures to evaluate its approach, or to consider raising money through taxes, charges or subscriptions. There are also concerns that the model adopted by the Council must be sustainable into the foreseeable future, implying that the model currently being offered is not.

6 Additional material

In addition to the survey response, this report also includes an analysis of comments and observations made on post-it notes at a series of engagement events organised by the Project Team, and also some correspondence received from individuals and organisations linked to the issues raised in the engagement process. These are now considered in turn.

6.1 Engagement event material

A series of engagement events took place, essentially during the same period as the survey itself, in which libraries were a discussion topic. In this report, only the library feedback is reported, although other topics were also raised by participants. It should be noted, however, that it is likely that some who attended will also have contributed through the survey. It is also the case that a very large proportion - around 80-85% - of the comments analysed here originate in Highworth alone.

The events posed three questions on libraries to those attending, namely:

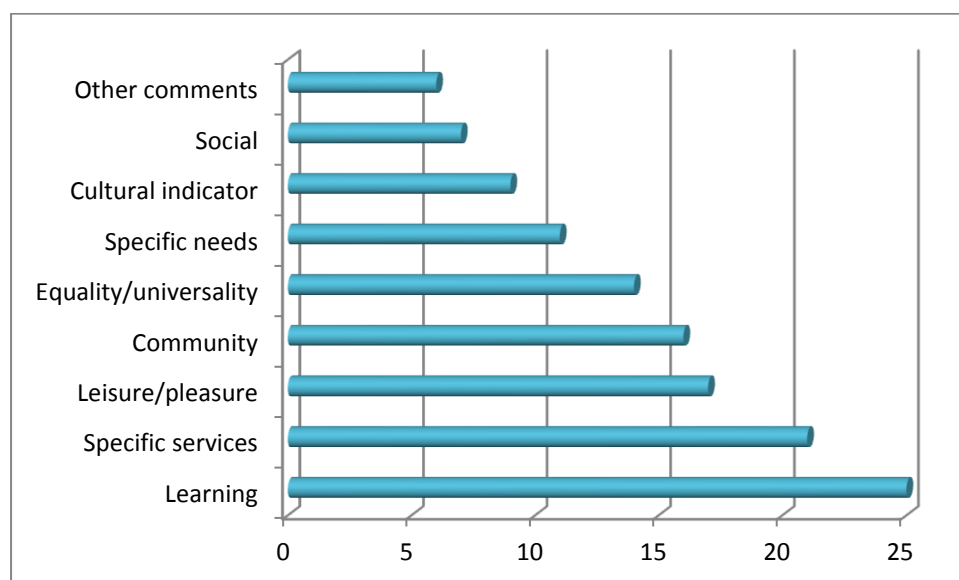
- Why are libraries important?
- Who are libraries important for?
- What should libraries be like in the future?

The response to the first question is summarised here:

Table 24: Why are libraries important?

| Area of comment | No. of comments |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Learning | 25 |
| Specific services | 21 |
| Leisure/pleasure | 17 |
| Community | 16 |
| Equality/universality | 14 |
| Specific needs | 11 |
| Cultural indicator | 9 |
| Social | 7 |
| Other comments | 6 |
| <i>N</i> | 67 |

Chart 24: Why are libraries important?



A variety of reasons is given, but the most commonly expressed opinion is that libraries contribute to **learning**. This is often focussed specifically on child development, and the promotion of literacy, but some comments also note the importance of adult and lifelong learning. Libraries are also important because of **specific services** they provide - most frequently lending of books, but also the availability of computers for those who have no provision at home, the access to information, and other services as well. Libraries are associated, for several people, with **pleasure and leisure**, and the importance of reading in people's leisure activity is noted.

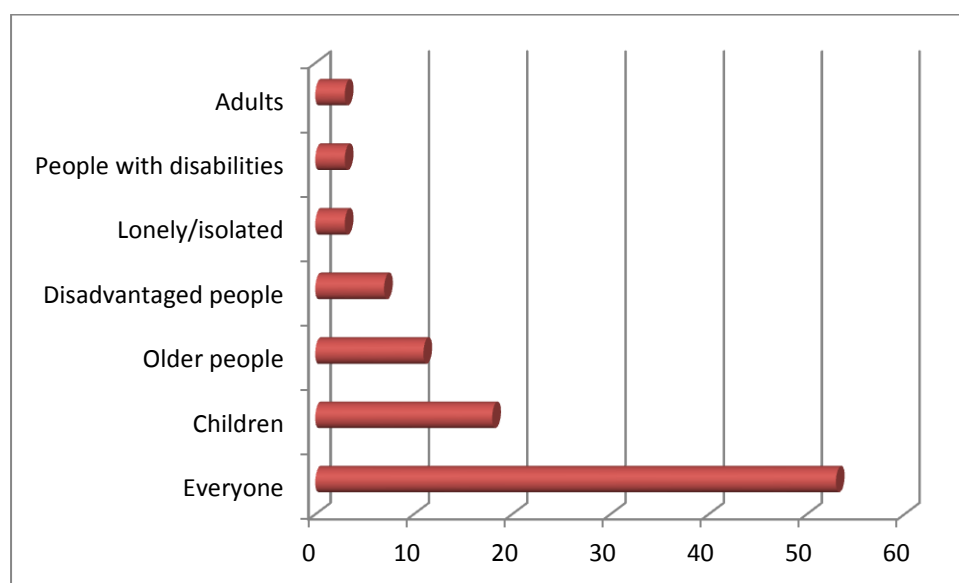
The importance of the library as a **community focus**, or as a marker of a community, is mentioned several times, and so too is the idea that the library is **free to be used** by anyone who chooses, regardless of status or means. Nevertheless, the library is also important for **specific groups of people**, with children the ones most often mentioned, but also the elderly and those with special needs. Several people suggest that the presence of a library is a **cultural indicator**, contributing to the overall local quality of life, to self-improvement and to personal and communal growth, whilst others value the **social** dimension of the library.

Other comments include the quiet space the library provides, the physical appeal of handling books, and the value of a library in making a place attractive to locals and newcomers.

Table 25: Who are libraries important for?

| Area of comment | No. of comments |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Everyone | 53 |
| Children | 18 |
| Older people | 11 |
| Disadvantaged people | 7 |
| Lonely/isolated | 3 |
| People with disabilities | 3 |
| Adults | 3 |
| Students | 2 |
| <i>N</i> | 66 |

Chart 25: Who are libraries important for?

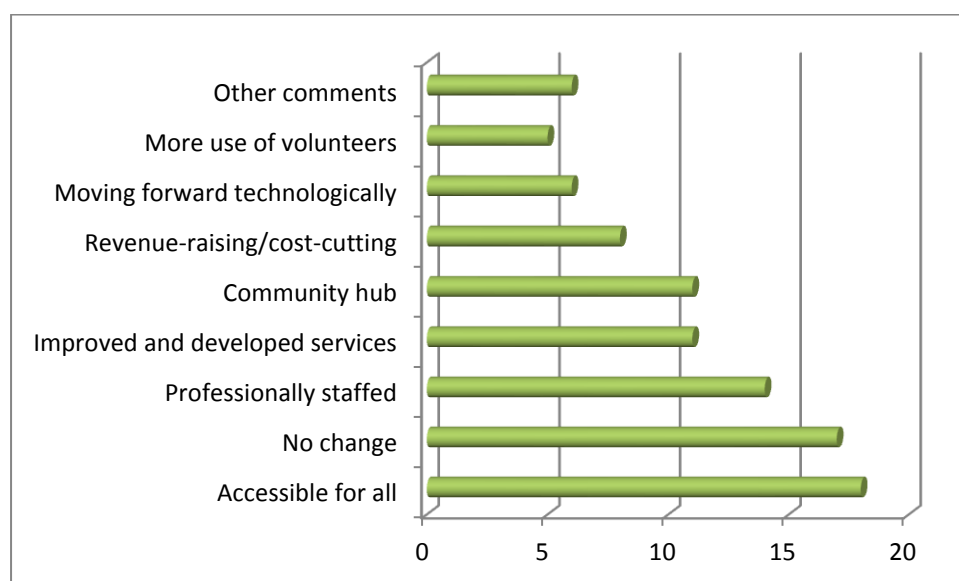


There is a consensus here that libraries are a universal service, available to and potentially benefiting everyone in the locality. Among specific people groups, children are the most often mentioned, but libraries are also seen as especially important for older people and for those whose circumstances limit the availability of books, IT equipment or information at home. They are also seen as valuable for people who are lonely or isolated, as a place to access and meet others.

Table 26: What should libraries be like in the future?

| Area of comment | No. of comments |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Accessible for all | 18 |
| No change | 17 |
| Professionally staffed | 14 |
| Improved and developed services | 11 |
| Community hub | 11 |
| Revenue-raising/cost-cutting | 8 |
| Moving forward technologically | 6 |
| More use of volunteers | 5 |
| Other comments | 6 |
| <i>N</i> | 65 |

Chart 26: What should libraries be like in the future?



There are two principal responses to this question: the idea that libraries should continue to be accessible to everyone who wants to use them, and the preservation of the status quo, especially as regards Highworth library, whose users dominate this response. There are also calls for libraries to be professionally staffed, although some would welcome a wider deployment of volunteers in support of paid staff, and for them to be considered and supported as a community hub. Some people have suggestions about the development of services, both in terms of maintaining and expanding existing services and also developing new activities, and keeping pace with technological change. Some suggest revenue-raising or cost-cutting measures, which includes the idea of a community trust to take over library management.

6.2 Correspondence received

In addition to the survey responses, the Council has received a number of letters and emails - 25 in total - addressing the issues raised in the engagement process. These include contact from individuals with concerns about the proposals, and from groups that represent specific interests affected by the future of the service, either directly or indirectly. This correspondence has all been read in detail by the responsible officers, but is summarised here in the interests of presenting a comprehensive picture of response to the emerging model.

Correspondence from groups and representatives

Four pieces of correspondence have been received from representative bodies (in one case a local Councillor). All are detailed and cover a wide ground; all are also opposed to the proposals implicit in the emerging model, and urge reconsideration.

The **Save Swindon's Libraries Campaign** have submitted detailed correspondence in which they argue against the emerging model on several grounds, contending that the library strategy should not be based on this approach. Their views are informed by visits to, and knowledge of, libraries across the Borough, which have (amongst other things) indicated that libraries often have catchment areas that are wider than the obvious.

The group argues that the proposed budget for the service articulated by the authority will be insufficient to provide a service that complies with the legal duty enshrined in the relevant legislation, and call instead for a professional and accessible, Borough-wide service. They recognise the pressures created by austerity policies and are concerned at the possible privatisation of services. But they insist that a single model for consultation is insufficient and assert a need for fully costed options to be put before the public. They also urge the Council to look at how other authorities, including Devon, York and Suffolk, are confronting the same issue, and to seek constructive partnership with neighbour authorities.

On volunteering, they cite the example of Walcot library, and highlight its diminishing levels of usage over recent years, backing this up with evidence from Wales and Scotland (both referenced) indicating that lower investment in libraries and increased reliance on volunteers will impact adversely on levels of public usage.

The group also adduces OECD evidence concerning the importance of reading for pleasure in child development, and in later economic potential. It notes the popularity of reading groups that support isolated and lonely people to meet socially as well as to read, as well as children's groups, and believes these will not be supportable through the Central Library, due to its relative distance from the customer. Bus services into town are not necessarily helpful, due to the distance involved in travelling beyond the bus terminus, especially if carrying heavy books, and the affordability issue especially for the young user.

The group recognises the potential in e-services to enhance customer choice, but points out that internet access is far from universal and that alternatives to e-service are still needed, including the need for help in using mandatory e-forms to claim benefits and other Government services. Carers may also suffer because their limited time windows may not permit access to the Central Library. The group foresees adverse impacts on homework, and on the vulnerable; it also suggests that some may be made more vulnerable by the loss of an accessible library service, not least in the arena of mental health where depression and isolation may be compounded.

Save Swindon's Libraries places great importance on professional library staff, because of their knowledge and skills, their accountability as employees, and their governance. They point out that the Government has given an undertaking not to run libraries on a voluntary basis, and that this has been endorsed locally, at least in respect of Highworth.

The group are not convinced that all options have yet been fully explored and ask questions about revenue raising possibilities such as sharing of space and catering services. They also want opening times to be discussed with users, so they can be optimised, and they want an adequately funded library service that provides physical access for people local to where they live.

Correspondence from the **Friends of Covingham Library** references earlier contact from this group which has apparently not been acknowledged and which is now re-sent. The group note that Covingham Library's catchment area includes other districts of Swindon as well as two outlying communities, and also draw attention to the consultation undertaken in 2014 which covered similar ground to the present survey. The group wishes to contribute its thoughts to inform a draft Library Strategy, with its starting point being that no library should close, nor should any opening hours be reduced. Neighbourhood libraries are an asset, not a burden, to the Borough.

As to Covingham Library specifically, the group draws attention to its level of use, its cost-effectiveness, its range of well-supported activities and its valuable links with the community, not least through the Friends Group itself. The group is willing to see volunteer deployment as a means of retaining libraries, but in support of rather than in place of paid staff; there may also be scope for volunteer-led additional activities using library space. Access to the Central Library will be difficult as there is no nearby parking, and public transport terminates at some distance from the facility; access will deteriorate further as development around the town hall area progresses. Covingham Library is co-located in the local church centre, and operates a self-issuing system which the group would like to see extended to embrace other Council services. They would also like to see stronger relationships, perhaps sponsorship, with local business such as the new supermarket, both for Covingham and Liden.

The **Swindon Heritage** Team direct their focus towards the local studies collection at the Central Library, fearing that it may be at risk through this review; they are not writing about the wider issue of library services. They strengthen their argument by reference to the town's heritage as a source of civic pride, and as an attractor to new investment and residents.

The group draw attention to the expert knowledge of staff who act as custodians of the collection, which they fear may be lost in the re-shaping of library services, having already been eroded in the past. They believe this is inconsistent with Swindon's other heritage and cultural plans, notably the Museum and Art gallery project, which has yet to gain full popular support; they suggest that failure to properly manage the Local Studies collection into the future will undermine the credibility of the Museum bid, and will diminish a heritage sector that is of growing importance to the local economy, with several major heritage bodies located in the vicinity.

Correspondence from individuals

Twelve letters from individuals all raise concerns specifically about the retention of Highworth library, and the damage and loss to the community that would arise from its closure. They raise several observations, including the benefit the library provides to groups of people within the local community, including its children, families, older people and disadvantaged residents, as well as the impact on surrounding communities for which Highworth acts as a hub. The correspondents include two who have donated materials to the library in the past.

The arguments against closure of Highworth include its importance to the community as a local service that contributes to the strength of the local High Street, its social importance as a place where people can gather freely, and its high level of usage by local people, indicating its value to the local populace. The cost-effectiveness of the library, which occupies low-rent property provided by a local trader, is a further argument against closure, and so too is its quality and service, which several correspondents do not feel could be matched by a volunteer workforce. One correspondent argues strongly, and in some detail, that Highworth library should be retained if the authority is to meet its legal obligations to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service.

There is also correspondence urging the retention of Wroughton library, on the grounds of the remoteness of the Central Library, and the levels of use Wroughton attracts, including its impact on local children and families. Covingham library's retention is also urged, with reference to its importance to a local family.

Other correspondence is less specific about keeping individual libraries open, but rehearses arguments against closures. Correspondents urge the authority to rethink the approach, avoid short-termism, and to look at the approaches being adopted - apparently with a measure of success - in other authorities facing budget pressures. Library users reference the benefits they and their family have enjoyed from using Swindon's services, and want these to continue for present and future generations, and for the advantage of those who cannot afford alternatives. A local GP urges a reconsideration of the approach, fearing that it will cause further disadvantage to those who already struggle to improve their lot in life.

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Proposed Libraries Services Vision and Delivery Model

Context

1. Swindon has historically been a pioneer for library services. Predating the first public lending libraries in the 1850s, a lending library was established in 1843 when toolmakers in the Great Western Railway works organised the circulation of donated books. In 2016, Swindon's Library Service currently comprises 15 Libraries and a Mobile Library Service, including a brand new Central Library opened in 2008. The service supports over a million visits per year and around 36,000 registered Library users. Swindon's Library service ranks in the top quartile of near neighbours in the total number of libraries, and number of libraries per 100,00 population and its revenue expenditure on the service is around average.
2. The library service is in the top quartile of its comparator authorities (4th out of 16) in terms of active borrowers and engaging with library users and the service has continued the tradition of innovation in service delivery. This includes 24/7 online services, e-books, e-audio and e-magazines, self-service technology, free wifi, and improving life opportunities through the Universal Offers (Reading, Information, Digital Literacy, Health, and Learning)
3. Across the UK, patterns of Library usage are changing, and the role Libraries play in the 21st century is subject to debate at national level. Recent reports (the independent Library Report for England of 2014, the DCMS Libraries Ambitions publication of 2016 and others) have all highlighted common themes regarding the future role and relevance of Libraries in supporting literacy and learning, promoting digital inclusion, supporting community health and wellbeing, and as important venues for social interaction in communities, all of which contribute to achieving Council's Vision for Swindon
4. At the same time, as with all Council services, Libraries are facing unprecedented financial pressures in the context of Local Government financing. Swindon's financial context has been set out in recent Cabinet reports, and the Cabinet report of 10 February 2016 described the detailed implications for Swindon's Libraries and set out a requirement to achieve savings in the service of £1.5million by 2020, reducing service costs from £2.6m to £1.1m.
5. The same report of 10 February also set out a detailed needs assessment for Library services, proposed an emerging model for Swindon's Library Service which identified services that support participation in Swindon's growing economy as a particular driver arising from the needs assessment.
6. In responding to these drivers, and following extensive public engagement that has taken place since February 2016, this strategy sets out a vision of Swindon's Libraries that responds to need in Swindon, and proposes an innovative delivery and resourcing model that through partnership, aims to secure a sustainable future for Library services in Swindon.

Swindon Libraries Vision

7. In the context of the Council's Vision for Swindon, and its Priorities and Pledges, the Swindon's Library Service vision is:
To build communities through literacy and learning, to encourage a love of reading, and to provide access to information that inspires enjoyment and learning, and that increases health, wellbeing and economic participation. We will connect communities by providing welcoming spaces to meet, socialise and learn through a core network of Libraries, and support a wider network of community-led provision and resources. By 2020, we aim for Swindon's Library services to be recognised nationally for the quality of its services, innovation in the way services are delivered, cost effectiveness and the outcomes it achieves for early years, for adult learners, for active citizens and for active ageing.

Delivery Model

8. The Libraries vision will be delivered through a core provision comprising:
 - A network of 4 Libraries of Central, West Swindon, Highworth and North Swindon, supported by investment in technology that allows self-service access beyond staffed hours.
 - Professional Library services, delivered by professional Librarians and trained Library staff including service development, learning and outreach, local studies, information and digital literacy, stock management and volunteer co-ordination
 - Enabling support to develop community-led local Library services, including transitional funding, a menu of optional free and paid-for services
9. The Council is committed to sustaining and developing a network of Library services in Swindon, and it is clear that with pressures on its resources, it cannot do it on its own. Achieving this requires a radically different delivery approach to that which exists today and depends on the active contribution of partners, local communities and volunteers. This will require change both in the Council's approach, and in the role of the users and communities that Libraries serve. This strategy sets out how the Council proposes to work with Library users, communities, partners and all stakeholders to bring wide resources and contributions to the service, and collaboratively develop Library services over the months and years ahead.
10. The strategy and delivery model is founded on a principle of partnership in the design and delivery of Library services, and to secure their ongoing sustainability. The Council will fund expert, professional and innovative Library services, supported by local partnerships and income generation that help meet the costs of the service. This builds on a number of recent discussions where partners have stated their willingness to work with the Council to develop solutions that secure the accessibility of Library services. This principle is also consistent with the aims of the Council's Community Assets Review that is exploring a range of options for the co-location of services and income generation for the Council's community buildings.
11. The delivery model proposed for Library services has been informed by the needs assessment and emerging model for the service published in February 2016, and the results of subsequent public engagement. In developing this model, the Council has sought to balance competing criteria of (i) service reach and accessibility (ii) community need and (iii) affordability. This model proposes some amendments to the previous emerging model in terms of core provision and sets out additional measures to support its implementation.
12. The delivery model comprises the following:

Core Network

- Library Services will be directly delivered from a core network of Libraries comprising Central, West Swindon, Highworth and North Swindon. The proposed core network of Libraries meet 74% of current visits, and means 80% of current Library users and 85% of Swindon's households live within 2 miles of a Library.
- Opening hours of the core network of Libraries will be maintained or extended through the adoption of self-service technology that enables Libraries to be accessed at times when Libraries are unstaffed

- Staffed hours have been costed at 47.5hrs per week for the Central Library, and the equivalent of 15 hours per week at West, Highworth and North. The distribution of those staffed hours will be determined in partnership with local communities based on the analysis of when services are most accessed, local priorities and efficient staffing requirements

Professional Library Services

- The services will be delivered by a core staff comprising professional Librarians and trained Library staff, learning and outreach services, local studies, professional stock management and volunteer co-ordination
- Libraries staff will develop a hub of reading, information, digital, health and wellbeing, and learning offers that will continue to support valued services ranging from story and rhyme time, Read Ahead, summer Reading Challenge, reading for pleasure, books on prescription, free e-books and magazines, access to information, provision of IT to support benefits applications, housing bids and job searches, free wi-fi, adult and community learning, visitor information, cultural and heritage activities.
- The core Library service will include dedicated work to more effectively support literacy and learning in those communities with higher levels of deprivation, and lowest levels of education, skills and training. The Library service will develop need-led, targeted literacy and learning programmes via repurposed learning and outreach services. These programmes will be developed in co-ordination with service users and partners and develop in ways that meet the needs of local communities
- Depending on demand from users, the Library service will also develop a paid for reserved item delivery service to enable books reserved online or by telephone to be delivered and returned to defined community locations across the Borough. This service will be self-funded through charges for reserved items, and developed in conjunction with local communities.
- The Library Service will work with RVS to sustain and develop the home library service to ensure that people with limited means at all of accessing library services can continue to do so

Enabling services for Community-led provision

- The Council is committed to enabling community-led provision to be self-managed, resourced and operated by local communities, partners and volunteers, as part of co-located offers in public and community buildings.
- The Council will support community organisations who wish to sustain local libraries in their communities by providing transitional funding that supports the development community-led local arrangements and:
 - Professional guidance and support to new and existing “Friends of” and volunteer groups who wish to maintain library services in their communities to develop viable plans for local action
 - Connections to other community venues and groups to enable Library provision to be dovetailed to other community activity at local level
 - Advice on forming and constituting community groups
 - Support with financial planning, income generation and fundraising
 - Transitional funding to support the development of local solutions

- A free donation of a core collection of books to community locations
- Paid for services can include a regular refresh of new book stock for community (eg a rolling top up of recent or most popular books), to community locations at c£3,000 per location, per annum and options to extend Public Network IT access at cost

Implementation

Stage 1 – 2017/18

13. New arrangements for core provision to be implemented between April and July 2017. Where partners and communities wish to contribute funding that helps sustain and complement the Council's core provision, the Council will work with those partners to ensure a common implement timetable.
14. The Council will actively seek, encourage and support the development of local arrangements that ensure continued access to Library services. Transitional funding of £500k has been reserved to support this work, which may be used to support the one-off costs of establishing local solutions, for example, to meet equipment costs, IT investment, the temporary funding of facilities whilst local funding arrangements are sought, and the training and development of local organisations and volunteers.
15. To progress the development of new forms of local provision, in parallel with the public consultation on this strategy, discussions will take place with ward councillors, local partners, community organisations, and local residents to identify and initiate local interest in establishing the provision of community-led services, with a view to local solutions taking effect from 1 July 2017.
16. Council funding will not extend to maintaining book stock, building costs, public network IT or paid staff in Libraries beyond the four Libraries proposed in this delivery model. Given the pressing need to reduce Library costs, it is envisaged that funded services will be withdrawn from all other Libraries with effect from 30 June 2017.

Stage 2 – 2017-2020

17. For the Council's core provision, consideration will be given to different governance models, additional shared services and the generation of additional income streams to further reduce costs to ensure services are delivered within the Council's 2020 affordability limit of £1.1m.

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Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Authors: | Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, and Board Director, Resources |
| Wards: | All |
| Locality Affected: | All |
| Parishes Affected: | All |

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This report presents the 2016-17 revenue forecast out-turn at the end of May 2016, the expected financial position for the coming years.
- 1.2 The effective management of financial resources through robust financial management processes underpins the Council's ability to achieve its plans and priorities.
- 1.3 Responsible budget management underpins the Council's strategic objective of consistently making the best use of all available resources as well as providing focus for its change programmes.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the projected Revenue Budget out-turn position for 2016-17 set out in Table 1 and Appendices 1 and 2,
- 2.2 Approve the virements set out in Appendix 3;
- 2.3 Approve the allocation of one-off resources of £2.6m to fund the estimated in-year cost of the waste processing and disposal service managed by PPS Ltd., that was previously funded from profit on solar schemes,
- 2.4 Authorise officers to progress with PPS Ltd the matters set out in paragraph 4.12;
- 2.5 Request the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, and the Board Director Resources, to bring a report back to Cabinet in September 2016 setting out a plan to manage the pressures within the 2016-17 Budget;
- 2.6 Endorse the Swindon schemes being put forward for consideration through the Local Growth Fund 3, noting that any requirement for match funding or additional revenue support will be reported to Cabinet in January 2017 for consideration as part of the 2017-18 budget;
- 2.7 Approve the additions to the capital programme detailed in section 8.

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3. Detail

2016-17 Projected Out-turn

- 3.1 The General Fund projected out-turn as at the end of May 2016 is an overspend of £2.9m which is mainly due to above budgeted service costs in both the Children and Adults Services, details of which are set out later in the report.
- 3.2 Over and above this projected overspend, the Council also needs to meet the cost of waste processing and treatment costs amounting to £2.6m that were previously offset by profit within the PPS company earned on photovoltaic schemes.
- 3.3 In response to the in-year pressure on the Council's Budget, an action plan is being prepared to respond to the challenge and an update on the position will be reported to Cabinet in September 2016.
- 3.4 The budget and projected out-turn by Department at this early stage in the year is set out in Table 1 below and a more detailed analysis is set out in Appendices 1 and 2.

Table 1 – Projected Out-turn By Department

| Department | Budget 2016-17 £'000 | Full-Year Projected Out-turn £'000 | Projected Variance £'000 | Movement since last report £'000 |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---|
| Chief Executive | 7,342 | 7,681 | 339 | 339 |
| Resources | 17,639 | 17,639 | 0 | 0 |
| Corporate | (15,276) | (15,276) | 0 | 0 |
| Adult Services | 72,380 | 73,503 | 1,123 | 1,123 |
| Children Services | 27,420 | 28,791 | 1,371 | 1,371 |
| Service Delivery | 25,721 | 25,818 | 97 | 97 |
| Total General Fund | 135,226 | 138,156 | 2,930 | 2,930 |

4. Department Summaries and Explanation of Key issues

Chief Executive

- 4.1 The Chief Executive's Department is currently projecting an overspend of £339k. The main reason for this variance is the impact on the timing of savings being delivered through the Council's Going Local and Commercialisation programmes

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being pushed back to allow for an increased period of public consultation and engagement. These mainly relate to libraries.

- 4.2 Other variances relate to a cost pressure on the cremator servicing contract partly mitigated by vacancy savings.

Resources and Corporate

- 4.3 The Resources and Corporate budgets are currently projecting a balanced position. Within the Corporate budget the Council is holding around £1m of contingencies available to help mitigate the current projected overspend plus further cost pressures that may emerge before the end of the Financial Year.

Adult Services

- 4.4 The service is currently projecting a year-end overspend of £1.1m due to demand pressures, particularly relating to hospital discharge. Commissioners are exploring ways in which the pressures can be managed effectively including increasing capacity to undertake reviews.

Children Services

- 4.5 The service is experiencing pressures which indicate a possible overspend by the end of the year of around £1.4m due to an increase in demand for children's placements and on-going agency support requirements for Children's social care vacancies. The current forecast does not contain any assumptions relating to the potential increase in the number of unaccompanied child asylum seekers.

Service Delivery

- 4.6 The Department is projecting a £97k overspend. Within this there are cost pressures arising from legal costs due to planning application challenges, landscape architect costs due to complexity of schemes and a reduction in the projected income from the Public Services Protection Order (PSPO) and the introduction of parking charges at Lydiard Park and Coate Water to reflect the likely level of income during the pilot period.
- 4.7 This pressure has been offset by savings from vacancies, fleet financing costs and home to school transport.

Public Power Solutions Limited (PPS)

- 4.8 In 2012 and 2013, the Council advanced its former wholly owned limited company, Swindon Commercial Services Limited, a loan to build a waste to energy plant at Cheney Manor to manage its waste to reduce the amount being sent to landfill.

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- 4.9 Since the plant became operational, the Council has been benefitting from waste disposal gate fees well below the market rates saving it around £3m per annum for the last three years. This is mainly due profits made by PPS on other aspects of its business focused on energy and power.
- 4.10 In addition, the plant has enabled waste to be redirected away from landfill with 95% of waste now being processed through the plant, recycled or composted with only 19% of this ultimately going to landfill as a waste product from the process.
- 4.11 Due partly to changes in solar tariffs by Central Government and the resulting less profitable pipeline of solar schemes in future, in 2016-17 the Council will need to pay a greater share of the actual costs of waste disposal.
- 4.12 Within this context, Members are asked to agree the following:-
- 4.12.1 That officers are authorised to renegotiate the Plant gate fee rate from the current £82 up to just below the market price with effect from 1st April 2016 which still remains cheaper than the cost of landfill (£123 per tonne) and other available alternatives;
- 4.12.2 That officers are asked to review the waste contract and operating processes at the plant to try to bring down the gate fee for the Council. This joint work between the Council and PPS should include:-
- Considering extending the length of the waste services contract to PPS beyond the current 8 years to enable the depreciation/loan repayment costs to be spread over a longer period;
 - Converting some of the plant depreciation costs within PPS into loan repayments to enable future interest costs to be reduced;
 - Improving processing methods within the plant;
 - Reducing the operating costs of the plant;
 - Increasing the proportion of waste diverted from landfill;
 - Improving disposal rates;
 - Increasing the level of external work charged at above the marginal cost rate;
 - Reducing operating costs/generating new income through the household waste recycling centre (HWRC).
- 4.12.3 That officers are asked to work closely with PPS to help conclude solar and power projects within shorter timescales within the 2016-17 Financial Year in order to maximise the amount of profit made by the company to
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allow it to continue to subsidise the Council's waste disposal costs. To support this, funding of £60k is approved to fund an additional post;

4.12.4 That officers progress joint work with PPS to develop a business case on the longer-term options for the plant to include potentially converting the waste material into energy to be fed back into the electricity grid or to produce a product that can be sold, rather than paid for to dispose of;

4.12.5 That a report be brought back to Cabinet in October 2016 to update Members on the above work;

4.12.6 That a one-off budget of £2.6m be allocated for 2016-17 and an on-going pressure of this magnitude be allowed for within the Council's medium term resourcing plan until an updated position is reported to Cabinet in October 2016.

5. Virements

5.1 Since setting the 2016-17 Budgets, there have been some virements to reflect changes to the allocation of costs across business units. Members are asked to agree these virements as set out in Appendix 3.

6. Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

6.1 HRA Budget Managers are currently forecasting an underspend of £124k as at the end of May 2016.

6.2 The key variance relates to an underspend on staffing budgets within the Repairs Teams of £122k due to vacancies within the trades. Additionally, there is a small saving of £2k on staffing within the Sales Team.

7. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

7.1 The DSG budget is predicting a net underspend of £359k. This comprises of a reduction in the grant of £0.769m from that originally budgeted, offset by savings of £1.128m. Further details are provided in the paragraphs below.

7.2 The DSG receivable for early years funding (£769k) is lower than budgeted due to a reduction in anticipated pupil numbers, which is offset through a reduction in costs of £881k.

7.3 A High Needs Contingency budget of £252k is available to help offset any overspends within the High Needs block.

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8. Capital Programme – additions to the current programme

- 8.1 Members are asked to approve the following additions to the capital programme that are all funded from section 106 deposits.

Grounds Maintenance Enhancement

- 8.2 Members are requested to approve a transfer of £22.5k to Wroughton Parish Council to pump-prime training costs for a young person in grounds maintenance work to enable an on-going enhancement in service standards within the parish with the on-going costs being met by the Parish Council. The Parish Council have taken over responsibility from Swindon Borough Council for grass cutting together with the maintenance of trees and shrubs. The Parish is proposing to employ a young person who will be trained to undertake these tasks. The cost of this proposal will be funded from section 106 contributions.

Relocation of CCTV Room

- 8.3 Members are requested to approve a budget of £36k to relocate the CCTV control room to the Plus One centre on the civic campus. This proposal would centralise the Police and the Council's Security resources in one place and will provide improved ground floor access to the new control room. This proposal is supported by the Home Office Assistant Surveillance Commissioner with the costs being funded from section 106 contributions for CCTV.

STEAM - Operations and Retail Management System

- 8.4 Members are requested to approve a budget of £39k to replace the current front of house ticketing and retail software. The current systems are over 16 years old and are not supportable beyond this Summer. The museum therefore needs to seek an alternative product to carry out all of its on-site and internet transactions. The new solution will enable an enhanced customer experience, and is scalable to meet the needs of other Council operations. The costs will be funded from section 106 contributions.

9. Local Growth Fund 3 Bids

- 9.1 At its meeting in June, Cabinet authorised the Head of Highways and Transport in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainability, highways and transport to work with the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) to submit a bid to the Large Local Major Schemes Fund for development funding for the Thamesdown Drive to Barnfield Link.
- 9.2 The SWLEP is the strategic body through which SBC bids for monies through the Local Growth Fund and other sources. The main funding sources through the LEP are as follows:
- Local Growth Fund (LGF);

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- European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF);
 - City Deal, the SWLEP Higher Futures programme.
- 9.3 These funds support the Councils and the SWLEP in delivering the objectives of the Strategic Economic Plan, the strategy for growth in the SWLEP area. This was first produced in April 2014 to support the LGF1 bid, and has recently undergone a refresh with the participation of officers across both Councils.
- 9.4 The Local Growth Fund is the function by which the department for Business, Innovation and Skills, (BIS), in conjunction with the Department for Transport (DfT), grants funding to Local Authorities (and increasingly other public and private sector bodies) to create jobs, homes and transport improvements which unlock employment sites and promote economic growth. As a result of the Round 1 bid, SWLEP secured approximately £130m, the lion's share of which went to Swindon projects.
- 9.5 Along with various other funding tranches (for example Higher Futures) this is known collectively as the Growth Deal and is negotiated at LEP level with government. The process has differed somewhat with each round.
- 9.6 SBC schemes to be considered for this process were agreed through consultation with Heads of Service and going through existing work/capital programmes to identify schemes which were deliverable in the timeframes but required further capital support. These were then worked up into submissions through the process set out below.
- 9.7 The new Growth Deal announcement was made as part of the March 2016 Budget Statement. Headlines were as follows:
- **£475m for transport majors.** (It was made clear that over £100m of this had already been allocated and that in all likelihood more of this sum had been allocated in devolution deals).
 - **£2bn for housing under the direction of HCA** in the form of a loan scheme to developers. Further detail is awaited on whether this is new money and how the funding will work.
 - **£1.8bn general LGF fund** (this is the fund to which bids will be submitted). The bidding process is competitive with no set application form.
- 9.8 While the official announcement of LGF 3 has only recently been released, it has been anticipated for some time by the Council and the LEP and work was done to prepare the two Councils for submission of schemes likely to come forward in the bid funding window (2017/18 to 2020-21). Following on from the production of
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a new SWLEP Assurance Framework a new process for selection was created, within the broad themes of Skills, Transport and Place Shaping.

9.9 The final bids submission date to government is 21st July 2016. Challenge sessions attended by a Minister have been scheduled by government for the period 20th June-21st July; as yet no exact date has been given for the SWLEP. The successful bids will be announced in the Autumn Statement.

9.10 Swindon schemes included in the SWLEP's proposed submission are:

- Swindon Higher Education Centre - £7.5m
- Swindon College Centre for Excellence in Sustainable Technologies - £9m
- Swindon Station Regeneration Package - £5.5m

9.11 Cabinet is requested to endorse the Swindon schemes being put forward for consideration through the Local Growth Fund 3, noting that any requirement for match funding or additional revenue support will be reported to Cabinet in January 2017 for consideration as part of the 2017/18 budget.

10. Alternative Options

10.1 Cabinet could choose not to approve the virements as set out in Appendix 3.

11. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

11.1 Where there are specific financial implications these have been reflected in the body of the report.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

11.2 All legal and human rights considerations have been taken fully into account in compiling this report. It is considered that the recommendations of this report are compatible with Convention rights.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

11.3 There are no such direct implications.

Diversity Impact Assessment

11.4 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has not been done as this report does not make any new recommendations that would have a detrimental impact on services.

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Risk Management

- 11.5 None other than those highlighted in the body of the report. Individual schemes will have individual Risk Assessments and DIAs.

12. Consultees

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

13. Background Papers

- 13.1 None

14. Appendices

- 1.1. Appendix 1 – Forecast Out-turn by Directorate 2016-17

- 1.2. Appendix 2 – Forecast Out-turn by Service 2016-17

Appendix 3 – Proposed Budget Virements 2016-17

15. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan

- 15.1 This is not a key decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme / Forward Plan for July 2016.

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| Fund | Tier 1 Pillar | Tier 2 Function | Budget 2016/17 £'000 | Full-Year Projected Out-turn £'000 | Projected Variance £'000 | Commentary on Reasons for Variance |
|--------------|-------------------|--|----------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--|
| General Fund | Chief Executive | Internal Audit | 376 | 376 | 0 | Cost pressure relating to the cremator maintenance contract partly mitigated vacancy savings. Delay in the delivery of library savings to allow a longer period of engagement |
| | | Law & Democratic Services | 3,825 | 3,864 | 39 | |
| | | Libraries & Localities | 3,139 | 3,439 | 300 | |
| | | Performance, People & Engagement | 2,108 | 2,108 | 0 | |
| | | Economy & Regeneration | (2,106) | (2,106) | 0 | |
| | Resources | | 7,342 | 7,681 | 339 | Demand pressures on older people services particularly around hospital discharge are the prime reason for the reported overspend. Commissioners are exploring ways in which the pressures can be managed effectively including increasing capacity to undertake reviews. |
| | | Finance & Change | 5,017 | 5,017 | 0 | |
| | | Corporate | (15,276) | (15,276) | 0 | |
| | | IT | 5,247 | 5,247 | 0 | |
| | | Business Services & Support | 7,375 | 7,375 | 0 | |
| | Adult Services | | 2,363 | 2,363 | 0 | |
| | | | 60,292 | 61,414 | 1,122 | |
| | | Adult Services | | | | |
| | | Public Health | 12,088 | 12,089 | 1 | |
| | Children Services | | 72,380 | 73,503 | 1,123 | |
| | | Management | 441 | 381 | (60) | |
| | | Skills & Attainment | 2,214 | 2,248 | 34 | |
| | | Children, Families and Community Health Services | 24,765 | 26,162 | 1,397 | |

| Fund | Tier 1 Pillar | Tier 2 Function | Budget 2016/17 £'000 | Full-Year Projected Out-turn £'000 | Projected Variance £'000 | Commentary on Reasons for Variance |
|--------------------|-------------------------|--|----------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--|
| | Service Delivery | Streetsmart | 27,420 11,193 | 28,791 11,133 | 1,371 (60) | One off saving on fleet financing costs due to the timeframe for the delivery of the new vehicle fleet for Refuse and Recycling, this is mitigating increased fleet hire costs and a pressure on Coate Water car parking income reflecting the likely level of income during the pilot period. . |
| | | Infrastructure Assets excluding HRA | 13,674 | 13,557 | (117) | There have been a number of minor changes across Infrastructure assets. The largest savings have come from Transport, where they are forecasting staff savings due to delays in recruitment and also savings from home to school Transport. |
| | | Planning & Regulatory | 520 | 786 | 266 | Pressures on Lydiard car parking income reflecting the likely level of income during the pilot period and from Planning Services arising from legal costs due to planning application challenges, staffing pressures and an increase in Landscape architect charges. |
| | | Housing Services | 334 | 342 | 8 | Shortfall in income achieved on Public Space Protection Orders partly offset by savings on vacant posts. |
| | | | 25,721 | 25,818 | 97 | |
| General Fund Total | | | 135,226 | 138,156 | 2,930 | |
| Health | Health Commissioning | Health Adults | 37,456 | 37,456 | 0 | Pressures on health budget supporting nursing & residential child placements. CCG will be asked to provide the additional funding needed to meet this pressure. |
| | | Health Children's | 3,627 | 3,693 | 66 | |
| | | Swindon CCG Funding | (41,083) | (41,083) | 0 | |
| | Health Service Delivery | Children's Health Delivery Services | 1,460 | 1,460 | 0 | |
| | | Funding from CCG | (1,460) | (1,460) | 0 | |
| Health Total | | | 0 | 66 | 66 | |
| | | | | | | |

| Fund | Tier 1 Pillar | Tier 2 Function | Budget 2016/17 £'000 | Full-Year Projected Out-turn £'000 | Projected Variance £'000 | Commentary on Reasons for Variance |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---|
| Dedicated Schools Grant | DSG Commissioning | DSG Skills and Attainment | 84,424 | (1,128) | (1,128) | The early years expenditure forecast has been reduced based on the lower than anticipated spring census. DSG funding expected has been reduced because the Early years census is lower than previously anticipated in both 2 year old and 3&4 year olds. |
| | | DSG Skills and Attainment | (84,424) | 769 | 769 | |
| | | Dedicated Schools Grant Total | | | 0 | |
| Housing Revenue Account | Housing Revenue Account | Supervision & Management | (36,830) | (36,832) | (2) | Anticipated additional income for Right To Buy fees & sale of land adjacent. Staff vacancy saving due to difficulties in recruiting tradesmen. |
| | | Special Services | 209 | 209 | 0 | |
| | | Repairs | 11,133 | 11,011 | (122) | |
| | | HRA Capital Financing | 25,488 | 25,488 | 0 | |
| Housing Revenue Account Total | | | 0 | (124) | (124) | |
| | | | | | | |
| Grand Total | | | 135,226 | 137,739 | 2,513 | |

Budget Management 2016-17 - Projected Out-turn By Service

Appendix Two

| Service Area | Budget 2016/17 | Full-Year Projected Out-turn | Projected Variance | Movement since last report |
|--|----------------|------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 |
| Culture, Leisure & Libraries | 4,061 | 4,575 | 514 | 514 |
| Education and Other Children Services | 7,996 | 7,869 | (127) | (127) |
| Environmental & Regulatory | 16,908 | 17,009 | 102 | 102 |
| Highways & Transport | 258 | 245 | (13) | (13) |
| Housing GF | 3,126 | 3,034 | (92) | (92) |
| Planning & Development | (3,349) | (3,261) | 88 | 88 |
| Public Health | 11,849 | 11,849 | 1 | 1 |
| Revenues & Benefits | 1,625 | 1,625 | 0 | 0 |
| Social Care - Adults | 57,640 | 58,845 | 1,205 | 1,205 |
| Social Care - Children | 22,566 | 23,968 | 1,402 | 1,402 |
| Corporate & Support: | | | | |
| Central Services | 1,536 | 1,388 | (148) | (148) |
| Adult Services | 507 | 507 | 0 | 0 |
| Debt Management (Debt Charges & Investments) | 10,503 | 10,503 | 0 | 0 |
| Total General Fund | 135,226 | 138,156 | 2,930 | 2,930 |
| Total DSG | 0 | (359) | (359) | (359) |
| Total Health | 0 | 66 | 66 | 66 |
| Total HRA | 0 | (124) | (124) | (124) |
| Grand Total | 135,226 | 137,739 | 2,513 | 2,513 |

| | Chief Executive £'000 | Resources & Corporate £'000 | Commissioning £'000 | Adult Services £'000 | Children Services £'000 | Delivery £'000 | Contingency Fund £'000 | Total General Fund £'000 |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Council 10/02/16 | 4,435 | 6,206 | 96,632 | 0 | 0 | 27,446 | 507 | 135,226 |
| <u>Post budget report virements to allocate proposals across Groups:-</u> | | | | | | | | |
| January 15 virements - Previously approved by Cabinet | 8 | (8) | | | | | | 0 |
| Allocation of centrally held budget for increase in employer's superannuation contribution, changes in national insurance rates and inflation | 283 | (1,732) | 881 | | | 568 | | 0 |
| Alignment of employee budgets to correct service areas to reflect posts moving between management teams | 252 | (8) | (80) | | | (164) | | 0 |
| Budget for new Performance Management system transferred to People and Development | 20 | (20) | | | | | | 0 |
| Saving on building maintenance costs linked to Children's Nursery closure allocated to correct service area | (13) | | 13 | | | | | 0 |
| Reallocation of small budgets to the correct Department following the formal Budget setting process in February | (23) | 38 | 11 | | | (26) | | 0 |
| Allocation of the element of the saving relating to the changes to the operation of the Localities Fund (Streestmart and Highways hours) to Service Delivery. | 80 | | | | | (80) | | 0 |
| Virement to reflect revised fleet and pool car recharges | 1 | 17 | 23 | | | (41) | | 0 |
| Allocation of saving on Public Space Protection orders to correct function | | | (127) | | | 127 | | 0 |
| Change in departmental budgets following insourcing of ICT services. | 98 | (98) | | | | | | 0 |
| Allocation of Big Screen savings to correct function | (65) | | 65 | | | | | 0 |
| Increase in Public Health grant following the conclusion of the consultation on the funding formula to reflect new responsibilities, an associated costs, that transferred to the Council. | | (2,000) | 2,000 | | | | | 0 |
| Increase in Better Care Grant and associated spend as a result of negotiations with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) | | (201) | 201 | | | | | 0 |

| | Chief Executive £'000 | Resources & Corporate £'000 | Commissioning £'000 | Adult Services £'000 | Children Services £'000 | Delivery £'000 | Contingency Fund £'000 | Total General Fund £'000 |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Virement to reflect the increase to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) recharge following the removal of General Fund subsidy for control room staffing | | (166) | 166 | | | | | 0 |
| Loss of rent from sold commercial property resulting in increase in increase in investment income | 14 | (14) | | | | | | 0 |
| Alignment of agreed budget reduction on Arts Grants to correct function | (10) | | 10 | | | | | 0 |
| New Travel Advisor funded from Special Education Needs (SEN) savings | | | 24 | | | (24) | | 0 |
| Alignment of Flex system savings to correct function | | (12) | | | | 12 | | 0 |
| Investment income from Solar Farm allocated to Treasury budget | 70 | (70) | | | | | | 0 |
| One-off funding for Childrens Centres funded from Transformation Grant | | (76) | 76 | | | | | 0 |
| Transfer of budgets for Libraries and Swindon Museum and Art Gallery (SMAG) to reflect new management arrangements | 2,431 | | | | | (2,431) | | 0 |
| Transfer of budgets for Community Health and Wellbeing to reflect new management arrangements | (239) | | 239 | | | | | 0 |
| Virements to reflect organisation structure changes agreed by Special Committee on 25th April 2016 | | | (100,134) | 72,380 | 27,420 | 334 | | 0 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Cabinet 13/07/16 | 7,342 | 1,856 | 0 | 72,380 | 27,420 | 25,721 | 507 | 135,226 |

Fixed Penalty Notice Enforcement Policy

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Author: | Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness |
| Wards: | All |
| Locality Affected: | All |
| Parishes Affected: | All |

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1. This report seeks to formalise and confirm the Council's approach to issuing Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for 'low level' offences covered by a range of legislation.
- 1.2. An adopted policy to enforce these offences through FPNs is an essential building block in implementing Public Space Protection Orders, (PSPO's). This policy provides clarity over how FPNs will be used to deal with relevant public order offences.
- 1.3. The recommendations support the Council's Vision priority to "ensure clean and safe streets and improve our public spaces and local culture."

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the range and extent of offences that are appropriately dealt with through FPNs, and
- 2.2 Commend the FPN policy, attached at Appendix 1, to Full Council for approval.

3. Detail

- 3.1 The Council undertakes a wide range of enforcement activities, ranging from formal action through Courts of Law to the issuing of FPNs for minor offences.
- 3.2 In recent years, FPNs have been applied elsewhere to give police and public authorities in England and Wales a realistic weapon against anti-social behaviour. FPNs are designed to reduce paperwork for police and council officers by allowing low-level anti-social behaviour to be dealt with on the spot. Newer types of notice exist for disorder, environmental crime, and noise. A fixed penalty notice does not necessarily result in a fine and does not constitute a criminal conviction, though the recipient can opt for the matter to be dealt with in court instead of through payment. However, if the recipient neither pays the penalty, nor opts for a court hearing in the time specified, the penalty may be increased and registered against the recipient as a fine. It may then be enforced by the normal methods used to recover unpaid fines, which could ultimately lead to imprisonment in the most severe of circumstances.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Kathryn Ashton, ext.6113 or kashton@swindon.gov.uk.

Fixed Penalty Notice Enforcement Policy

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

-
- 3.3 An FPN offers the recipient a chance of a reduced fine for early payment within 14 days. This is in accordance with national guidance and reflects best practice with other local authorities, to enable the lower level offences to be dealt with out of court. This avoids lengthy and costly hearings at court for offences that the perpetrator has accepted.
 - 3.4 Currently, the Council's Licensing Section issues FPNs for smoking in public places and public vehicles such as taxis under the relevant legislation. A locally adopted enforcement policy to support this would provide additional rigour to existing and future practices regarding the issuing of FPNs.
 - 3.5 FPNs are intended to be the main tool in enforcing PSPOs, under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act, 2014. An approved FPN Enforcement Policy is essential in backing our activities in implementing PSPOs and will ensure that our enforcement activities are undertaken within the rigour of an approved framework. It is anticipated that the Policy will assist in avoiding unnecessary subjectivity around the FPN process and provide clarity to action taken. As such it will provide a robust mechanism should we resort to court action for non-compliance.
 - 3.6 The FPN policy covers the serving of FPNs for littering, smoking in public places and vehicles, breach of PSPOs and small scale fly tipping. All Enforcement Officers within the Council will be able to serve these notices and this power will also be available to Police Support Community Officers and Wiltshire Police Officers.
 - 3.7 Bespoke training will be arranged for all Officers to undertake before being authorised to serve FPNs. Wiltshire Police have been engaged in the consultation and drafting of the policy and the Chief Constable will be notified of the adopted policy in order that police officers are equipped to enforce the policy.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Cabinet could decide not to adopt a policy for issuing FPNs, though this would mean that a number of low level offences would not be covered by an adopted enforcement regime and would therefore either not be enforced, or would be enforced with a greater risk of successful challenge. Currently FPNs are issued through delegated authority but outwith a formal, agreed Council wide policy.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 FPNs attract a fine as mentioned earlier. Legislation \ Guidance requires that any monies raised through FPNs are re-invested in the service that they are cover. There are small scale financial pressures associated with the administration of issuing FPNs though these will be covered by the monies raised through the issuing of the notices.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Kathryn Ashton, ext.6113 or kashton@swindon.gov.uk.

Fixed Penalty Notice Enforcement Policy

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 All legal and human rights considerations have been taken fully into account in compiling this report. It is considered that the recommendations of this report are compatible with Convention rights.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 The purpose of the policy is to reduce low level crime and disorder and to enable a modest re-investment in activities that deal with these offences. There are small scale staffing implications in that a range of staff will be expected to issue FPNs as part of their day to day duties and training will be provided for this purpose.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 A DIA has been prepared to support this Policy and is available from the report author.

Risk Management

- 5.5 The FPN Policy seeks to reduce risks arising from enforcement activities. Any risks arising from the proposals contained within this report will be managed through their implementation.

6. Consultees

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

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Operational Policy for issuing FPNs

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APPENDIX 1



Operational Policy for Issuing Fixed Penalty Notices

1st June 2016 - Draft

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Enforcement activity through fixed penalty notices provides a means by which local authorities can visibly, proportionately and effectively respond to low level crime. The Government has, and continues to, encourage their use.
- 1.2. This policy is supplementary to the Council's Generic Enforcement Policy. The aim of this policy is to set out the principles that apply when authorised officers of the Council issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for particular offences as contained under the following acts:
 - Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Breach of a Public Spaces Protection Order
 - Health Act 2006 – Smoke-Free Premises, Places and Vehicles
 - Environmental Protection Act 1990 – Littering
 - Environmental Protection Act 1990 – Fly-tipping

For a breakdown of offences, fines and how monies raised are able to be re-invested in service improvements and efficiency see Appendix A.

- 1.3. The purpose of the guidance is to establish standard fixed penalty procedures to be adhered to when issuing fixed penalties for breaches of the above legislation, with appropriate guidance on the circumstances in which a fixed penalty notice may be issued.
- 1.4. Payment of the penalty by the recipient discharges their liability to conviction for the offence for which the FPN was issued.

2. Authorised Officers

- 2.1. This policy is to be implemented by appropriately trained officers who have decided that the issuing of a FPN is the most appropriate course of action to address anti-social activities under the above legislation.
- 2.2. All officers, who issue FPNs shall be appropriately authorised in accordance with the provisions of the Council's Constitution and under appropriately delegated authority.

3. How FPNs are issued

- 3.1. FPNs are designed to deal with low-level offending. When considering a case, officers should carefully evaluate the nature and severity of the breach.

3.2. A FPN may only be issued where an officer has reason to believe a person has breached legislation by committing a penalty offence and the officer considers there to be admissible evidence to support a successful prosecution. Admissible evidence shall include that witnessed by an authorised officer, as well as that provided by a reliable witness testimony.

Normally breaches of legislation resulting in a FPN will be witnessed directly by the officer and issued at the time of the incident and suspected offenders may be interviewed under caution on scene or invited to attend a subsequent interview.

Although an officer may consider it appropriate to issue a FPN to a suspect if they have not directly witnessed the breach, they may only do so if supported with reliable witness testimony.

3.3. There is no fixed time in which FPNs must be served, however, to avoid allegations of abuse of process; FPNs will normally be served within 14 days of the date of the breach. This may be particularly relevant for young people

3.4. Electoral register lists, DVLA checks and Police support may be used as a means of verifying names and addresses provided by people suspected has having breached the law. Those issued with a FPN will have a period of 14 days to pay. Unpaid FPNs, which have been served appropriately, are likely to be pursued through the courts.

3.5. An officer withholds the right to issue advice and guidance to the person suspected of breaching the law in place of issuing a FPN.

4. The Offender

4.1. A FPN should be issued only where;

- There is a clear breach of the above legislation. A FPN is a proportionate response.
- There is sufficient evidence as to his/her identity and place of residence. It is an offence for a transgressor to refuse or fail to give correct personal details when being reported.
- The person in breach of law understands why the FPN is being issued and is compliant. FPNs must be issued to and received by the person in breach of law.

4.2. A FPN will not be appropriate where:

- It is inappropriate or disproportionate for the breach of law.
- Prosecution is more suitable.

- No satisfactory address exists for enforcement purposes. This may be where the officer has reason to believe that the person in breach is homeless or sleeping rough.
- A penalty offence is known to have been committed in association with another non-fixed penalty offence that is enforceable under a different regime.
- The person in question is exempt, e.g. a registered assistance dog is taken into a dog exclusion area.
- A person in breach of law is threatening, abusive or violent to the officer. Where this occurs, the officer should ensure their own safety and seek help from the police. The offender may then be dealt with by way of prosecution, either by the police or the Authority.

4.3. Where the person in breach of law has a record of repeat offending, consideration should be given to an alternative disposal (e.g. prosecution and/or police involvement).

A FPN may not be appropriate where it is known that the person in breach of law has a previous relevant conviction or caution, or has previously been issued with an FPN (for the offence), particularly if they have not paid. In these cases they should be informed that he/she will be reported with a view to prosecution.

5. Issuing the FPN

5.1. The officer will approach the person suspected of being in breach of law, identify him/herself and make the person aware that their actions have been seen, and constitute an offence in breach of the relevant legislation. The officer will then obtain the relevant personal information from the person. These details will be verified as far as practicable and the officer will make a decision whether to issue an FPN or provide the person with advice and guidance. These details are required for processing purposes. Documentary evidence of identity and place of residence will be requested, but not demanded, and will be preferable to non-physical checks such as the electoral register. Failure to identify a suspect could invalidate enforcement. Police assistance will be sought where necessary.

5.2. When the FPN is issued, the officer should explain that it provides an opportunity to avoid liability to prosecution, and will draw the person's attention to the relevant points about making payment and prosecution in the event of non-payment.

6. Appeals and withdrawals

6.1. There is no right of appeal against a FPN as this constitutes a summary offence which can only be defended via the Magistrate's court. Consideration for cancellation or withdrawal of a FPN will only be given on the following grounds:

6.2. Cancellation of an FPN:

- Where a person issued with a FPN falsely provides the identity details of another person, and that person successfully challenges the notice on that basis; and/or
- Where further information comes to light about the personal circumstances of the recipient of a fixed penalty notice, and which provides justification or mitigation for the breach of law.

6.3. Withdrawal of an FPN:

- Where the FPN has been served incorrectly; and/or
- Where it subsequently transpires that the evidence is insufficient to support a prosecution.

6.4. Full details of all decisions shall be recorded and appellants will be informed of the decision within 10 working days.

Where cancellation or withdrawal is refused the appellant shall be informed within 5 working days of the decision and the original payment terms, including the opportunity to pay the charge at the discounted rate, shall apply from the date of the letter notifying the person on whom it was served of the results of the decision.

7. Vulnerable Adults

7.1. If there is any doubt, or it is brought to the Authority's attention, that the person who has committed an offence is not capable of understanding that their actions constitute an offence; are mentally impaired in any way or are clearly unable to pay (e.g. homeless or rough sleeping), then a FPN will not be issued. An educative approach may be taken or the individual asked to rectify their actions under such circumstances.

8. Young People

8.1. FPNs will not be issued to children below the age of 10.

- 8.2. For young people between the ages of 10 and 17 a warning will be issued for a first breach and the matter reported to their parents or guardians. Only where an officer has evidence to confirm that the young person has been previously warned and the alleged offender has acknowledged wrong doing will consideration be given to the issuing of a FPN. In the event of any doubt, the officer will seek the advice of the Youth Offending Team
- 8.3. In situations where FPNs are issued to 15-17 year olds, the Youth Offending Team will be notified and the offender will be informed of this at the time of the incident.
- 8.4. In all cases, a FPN shall only be issued to young people in the presence of their parent or legal guardian.

9. Information sharing and storage

- 9.1. Information collected or recorded as part of the Council's enforcement activities which will also include decisions taken about the choice of enforcement options; and will be securely retained in a paper and/or electronic format; in line with the Councils Retention and Disposal Policy
- 9.2. The identity of a person providing the Council with information about other people committing crime will remain confidential unless prior agreement by the person is obtained. An exemption to this is where the Council work with other government organisations that have Regulatory or Enforcement functions and personal information may be shared with these organisations on a case-by-case basis.
- 9.3. Personal data held manually or as computer records will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA).

Appendix A

| Description of Offence | Act and section | Fee | Reduced fee (paid in 10 days) |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Depositing litter | Environmental Protection Act 1990, Section 77 and Section 78 | £100 | £75 |
| Failure to comply with a Public Space Protection Order | Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, Section 63 and Section 67. | £100 | £75 |
| Smoking in workplace | Health Act 2006 Section 7 | £100 | £75 |
| Fly-tipping | Environmental Protection Act 1990, Section 77 and Section 78 | Various £150 min. to £400 max. | Various |

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Education Transport Policy 2017/18

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

Author: Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Head of Education

Wards: All

Locality Affected: All

Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 To present to Cabinet the results of the consultation on the Education Transport Policy for the academic year 2017/18.
- 1.2 To seek Cabinet's approval of the arrangements within the Education Transport Policy for the academic year 2017/18.
- 1.3 This report particularly links to the Council's updated study of long-term school place planning. It also relates to the Vision, priority 2: "Offer education opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs in the right places."

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the responses to the consultation as summarised in the body of the report and set out in full at Appendix 2.
- 2.2 Approve the Education Transport Policy 2017/18 (Appendix 1), having regard to the responses within the consultation attached as Appendix 2 of the report.
- 2.3 Authorise the Head of Education to implement the Transport Policy for 2017/18.

3. Detail

Background

- 3.1 The Local Authority funds home to school transport assistance from its Core Budget to assist pupils with attendance at school, where the travelling distance exceeds the national statutory limit or is unsafe to walk.
- 3.2 The Local Authority has a legal duty to consult on and determine its Education Transport policy for 28 days before the applications for the year are made. Applications for a place at school for September 2017 can be made from the start of September 2016.
- 3.3 Home to school transport assistance is provided for by the Education Act 1996 and this was extended in 2006 to increase the rights for children from low-income families.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Peter Nathan, 01793 463067, pnathan@swindon.gov.uk.

Education Transport Policy 2017/18

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- 3.4 Swindon Borough Council supports schools in developing School Travel Plans to encourage the use of sustainable methods of transport, including walking and cycling.

Consultation Process

- 3.5 The Local Authority carried out its consultation between the 13th May and 28th June 2016.
- 3.6 The Local Authority publicised the consultation on its website and through all local schools and 16-19 establishments in the area. The consultation was also sent directly to Governing Bodies, neighbouring Local Authorities, Town and Parish Councils, Locality Teams, Transport providers, the MPs for Swindon, Parent and Carers Group, Independent Parental Special Education Advice (IPSEA) and the Admissions Forum.
- 3.7 The consultation sought views on the proposed transport policy and could be made in writing or by using an online survey tool. There were 24 responses made to the consultation which are included in Appendix 2. A large number of the responses were made by parents.

Outcome of the Consultation Process

- 3.8 The main issues identified in the consultation were:
- 3.8.1 A number of comments questioned compliance with the Education Act 1996 Schedule 35B).
- 3.8.2 A comment was raised concerning a presumption that because a child has an Education Health and Care Plan or Statement of Special Educational Needs that they are automatically entitled to transport provision.
- 3.8.3 A request that children currently attending Chiseldon Primary School living in Badbury Park should receive transport assistance when they attend secondary school.
- 3.9 The Council has recognised the concerns and has addressed them as follows:
- 3.9.1 When preparing the draft policy, Counsel's advice was sought in relation to the Education Act 1996 Schedule 35B and the policy is compliant. **See response 1 in the Appendix 2**
- 3.9.2 Not all children are eligible for transport assistance by the virtue of them having an Educational Health and Care Plan or Statement of Special Educational Needs. **See response 4 in Appendix 2.**
- 3.9.3 The designated transport areas have not changed since their creation. As such those children living within the area of Badbury Park fall within the

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Peter Nathan, 01793 463067, pnathan@swindon.gov.uk.

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Date: 13th July 2016

designated transport area for The Dorcan Academy and as such would not be eligible for transport to The Ridgeway School unless they qualify on low income grounds.

Mainstream Transport Policy

- 3.10 The Council's proposed Education Transport Policy 2017/18, as legally required, provides for free home to school transport to be offered to those pupils who meet all the following criteria:
- 3.10.1 Are of statutory school age (5-16)
 - 3.10.2 Attend their designated appropriate school; and
 - 3.10.3 Live more than 3 miles from their designated area school (or two miles if under eight years of age) or do not have a safe walking route when accompanied by an adult to their designated appropriate school.
- 3.11 In addition, the Education and Inspection Act 2006 widened statutory home to school transport for pupils from low-income families, in certain circumstances. Low income families are defined as those who are entitled to free school meals or are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit. These provisions are therefore as follows:
- 3.11.1 Primary – the nearest suitable school is beyond 2 miles (for children over the age of 8 and under 11);
 - 3.11.2 Secondary – the school is between 2 and 6 miles (if aged 11-16 and there are not three or more suitable nearer schools);
 - 3.11.3 Secondary - the school is between 2 and 15 miles and is the nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief (aged 11-16).
- 3.12 The designated appropriate school is defined by the designated transport areas established by Cabinet in 2013 for September 2014 onwards. These are used to determine the designated appropriate school to which transport is provided to, subject to the eligibility criteria described above. It is not proposed to change these areas for 2017/18. The maps of the areas are available within the current 2016/17 policy and on request.
- 3.13 If a parent chooses to send their child to a school other than the designated appropriate school, then (apart from the provisions of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) transport assistance is not normally provided and the parent is responsible for any travel costs.
- 3.14 Parents are asked to consider how their child will get to school as part of the decision making process when applying for a place at a primary or secondary
-

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Peter Nathan, 01793 463067, pnathan@swindon.gov.uk.

Education Transport Policy 2017/18

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Date: 13th July 2016

school. Information regarding the policy is provided within the composite admissions guides.

Special Educational Needs Transport Policy

- 3.15 There are no specific statutory provisions relating to the transport of children with special educational needs. This covers children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Children with SEN are covered by the same legislation as all other pupils, as mentioned above, and so the same general eligibility criteria are applied. However, the child's SEN Needs will also be taken into account.
- 3.16 The placement of a child with special educational needs in a mainstream, special school or special resource provision does not automatically result in the provision of transport assistance. The SEN Panel will undertake an assessment of the child's needs and apply the general and SEN specific criteria to determine whether transport should be provided. It is important to note that the provision of a Statement of SEN or an EHCP does not automatically result in the provision of assistance with transport.
- 3.17 If assistance with transport is agreed to be necessary because of the child's SEN needs, it will be specified by the appropriate SEN panel. The assistance with transport provided will be subject to an Annual Review and the type of transport assistance may change to reflect the changing needs of the pupil. The provision of transport assistance may cease to be necessary as the child grows older and if they become more independent. Such decisions will be taken on an individual basis.
- 3.18 The policy has been updated and rewritten in sections in line with legislation, in order to clarify the policy to make it clearer and easier to understand. This has been in line with advice sought by legal counsel.
- 3.19 The revisions made have not affected any entitlement for students currently receiving transport assistance including those with Special Educational Needs.
- 3.20 Full details of the proposed policy are set out in Appendix 1 to the main report.

Independent Travel Training (ITT) and Personal Travel Budgets (PTB) for children / young people with SEN

- 3.21 Swindon Local Authority is committed to providing the best and most appropriate travel assistance for families of children with SEN and it has been working on providing other forms of assistance that might be more appropriate for some students with SEN such as Independent Travel Training (ITT) and Personal Travel Budgets (PTB). An SEN Travel Advisor was also appointed on a temporary basis in order to progress this work within Swindon.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Peter Nathan, 01793 463067, pnathan@swindon.gov.uk.

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Independent Travel Training (ITT)

- 3.22 For students with SEN in secondary and post 16 / 19 settings Swindon Local Authority identified that in order to promote independence for students with SEN independent travel training would be key for those students where this would be appropriate in order to prepare for adulthood. Swindon Borough Council commissioned WITTS and SEQUEL to deliver independent travel training to named delegates within certain settings in Swindon with the agreement that once travel trained they would identify and train students with SEN within their settings that would be appropriate for ITT. Ten delegates were trained and also two pilot groups of students were identified. To date two settings in Swindon have added ITT into their timetables for students in order to progress this as part of the established offer for students with SEN. The delegates have formed an Independent Travel Trainer Group to share their experience and the intention is to enable all secondary schools, post 16 and 19 providers to have a named travel trainer in place so that their students with SEN could benefit from this programme in the near future.

Personal Travel Budget

- 3.23 A PTB is a sum of money provided to parents or carers of children and young people with SEN that are eligible for transport assistance. They enable families to arrange the transport for their child directly, and if they choose, to work with other families to achieve the best possible travel arrangements for the students. Swindon has been running a pilot scheme of PTB's since April and initially two pilot groups were identified and PTB's were offered to all these students, with 6 families agreeing to take up the PTB. This has not only given greater independence to those families in choosing the best option to transport their child to school, but has also made a considerable financial saving for the Council on that individualised transport. Parental feedback received so far on PTB's has been very complimentary. In the next academic year we hope to have an uptake of 10% of PTB's and we have written a number of promotional leaflets and guides to promote this, all available on the Local Offer website at <http://children.mycaremysupport.co.uk>.
- 3.24 In order to support sustainability a bike could be purchased through the PTB.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Local Authority is required to determine and publish the Education Transport Policy to ensure arrangements exist to support pupils who require assistance to attend school. If a policy is not determined, the Council could be open to legal challenge and increased costs in respect of home to school transport.

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5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 The overall home to school transport budget for 2016/17 financial year amounts to £2,765,900.

5.1.1 Mainstream Transport - £728,900

5.1.2 Special Transport - £2,047,000

- 5.2 The following table shows the number of children eligible for transport during 2015/16 academic year

| | Number of pupils (2015/16) | Cost during 2015/16 financial year |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Mainstream transport and Post-16 | 685 | £643,566 |
| SEN transport | 659 | £2,832,178 including escorts |

- 5.3 Savings are being made year on year by the removal of discretionary transport and efficiency measures as previously approved by Cabinet. The precise impact on the budget is difficult to predict as it depends on parental preference.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.4 Legal and Human Rights considerations have been fully taken into account in compiling this report and it is believed that the recommendations are in compliance with Convention Rights.
- 5.5 Under Section 508B of the Education and Inspection Act 2006, Local Authorities have a duty to make such travel arrangements as they consider necessary, to facilitate attendance at a school for eligible children as those categories of children in the area but for whom travel assistance will always be required. This includes children of compulsory school age attending the nearest available school who live beyond the statutory walking distance and children who do not have a safe walking route when accompanied by an adult to their designated school. It also includes low-income families in certain situations.

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All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.6 The proposals for education transport comply with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, to develop school policy to maximise school attendance.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.7 A diversity impact assessment has been completed. No adverse implications were identified to the proposal; no adverse impacts were identified on the basis of ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, marital/civil partnership status, or pregnancy/maternity. The policy decision identified as a positive impact for disabled young people. The assessment is available from the author on request.

Risk Management

- 5.8 The policy ensures the safeguarding of children by ensuring that children who are required to attend a school which is greater than the statutory walking distance or is an unsafe route, are provided the relevant transport assistance.

6. Consultees

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

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Proposed Education Transport Policy 2017/18
8.2 Appendix 2 – Consultation survey questions and results

9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan

- 9.1 This is a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for Month Year.

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**Education Transport Policy 2017-18
Consultation**

For consultation

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the Local Authority's duties and responsibilities on school transport.
- 1.2 The aim of this document is to set out policies and approaches that provide the very best service to our customers by producing information in one document that is widely available to all parties with an interest in school transport.
- 1.3 It therefore clarifies the Local Authority's responsibilities for the delivery of mainstream, Special educational needs and post-16 transport and includes additional policies on transport for students, school transport operations in extreme weather conditions, behaviour and drugs and alcohol policy on school transport.
- 1.4 The policy is reviewed on a regular basis in consultation with other Council directorates and stakeholders, including schools, transport providers, neighbouring Local Authorities and Diocesan Authorities.
- 1.5 This policy only applies to those students living within the borough boundary of Swindon.
- 1.6 **This document has been reviewed in line with the Home to School travel and transport guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE) in July 2014.**
- 1.7 For the purposes of this document, the Local Authority (LA) is defined as the department **within** Swindon Borough Council that administers Education.
- 1.8 For further information and advice on this document, please contact:

School Admissions Manager or
SEND Commissioning Manager

School Admissions
Swindon Borough Council
Wat Tyler House
Beckhampton Street
Swindon
Wiltshire
SN1 2JH

Telephone – 01793 445500

Email – schooladmissions@swindon.gov.uk
senat@swindon.gov.uk

2. Legislation

- 2.1 The Education and Inspections Act 2006 inserted sections 508(b) and 508(d) into the Education Act 1996. These sections place a duty on Local Authorities to ensure that suitable travel arrangements are made where necessary to facilitate the student's attendance at school.
- 2.2 The duty applies for home to school travel arrangements made at the **start** of the day and school to home travel arrangements at the **end** of the day for students of compulsory school age. It **does not** relate to travel between educational institutions during the school day.
- 2.3 Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. However section 444 of the Act outlines the situation where a parent may have a defence in law against prosecution by a Local Authority for their child's non-attendance at school. Section 444(3)(b) provides a defence if he or she provides that:
- a. The qualifying school at which the student is a registered student is **not within** the statutory walking distance.
 - b. No suitable arrangements have been made by the Local Authority for boarding accommodation at or near to the school
 - c. No suitable arrangements have been made by the Local Authority for enabling the student to become a registered student at a qualifying school near to his/her home
 - d. The Local Authorities has a duty to make travel arrangements in relation to the student under section 508(b) and has failed to discharge that duty.
- 2.4 The definition of eligible students (s.35 (b) of the Act) is "those categories of students in an authority's area for whom travel arrangements will always be required".
- 2.5 Section 508(b) prescribes that every feature of these arrangements **must be** provided free of charge. In the case the students do not qualify for free transport, section 508(c) provides a discretionary power for authorities to provide assistance by paying all or part of the student's reasonable travel expenses. Each authority decides whether and how to exercise these powers.
- 2.6 The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014 section 53) indicate that the following **must be** published in the local offer in relation to transport assistance. Schedule 2(14) Transport arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs or a disability to get to and from school or post-16 institution, or other institution in which they are receiving special educational provision or training provision including—

- (a) arrangements for specialist transport;
- (b) arrangements for free or subsidised transport;
- (c) support available in relation to the cost of transport, whether from the local authority or otherwise.

For consultation

3. Mainstream School Transport Policies

Eligibility

- 3.1 Students will be entitled to free transport from a suitable pick up point near to their home to a suitable set down point near the school they attend if:
- a. They attend the designated appropriate school
- and either**
- b. They are aged between five and seven years old and live more than 2 miles (3.218688 kilometres) from the school they attend;
- or**
- c. They are aged between eight and sixteen years old and live more than 3 miles (4.828032 kilometres) from the school they attend;
- 3.2 Distances will be measured by the safest walking route as agreed with the Road Safety Officer.
- 3.3 To qualify for transport assistance the student **must be** attending the designated appropriate school **AND** qualify under the distance criteria.

The designated appropriate school

- 3.4 The designated appropriate school for the purposes of assessing eligibility is the school **within** the **designated transport area** for the home address in **Appendix 4**.
- 3.5 When such a school is unavailable (i.e. there is no space in the relevant year group), the designated appropriate school will be considered to be the next nearest school with a place available. The next nearest school is measured as a straight line between the Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) address point of the applicant's home address and of the school with those living closest to school receiving higher priority.

Home address

- 3.6 Transport to and from school will be determined and approved from a single permanent residence. This is the one where the student spends most time with the parent/guardian and has been used for admission purposes and the school.
- 3.7 Transport provision will normally cease if there is a change in the home address that would lead to attendance not being at the designated appropriate school for the new address.

- 3.8 In exceptional circumstances, where there is a change in the student's home address, or placement if in public care, the Local Authority may consider the continued attendance at the current school to be the student's best interest. Consideration will be given to whether the change of address was entirely outside any parental control.
- 3.9 Recognised exceptions to the rules given above are as follows
- 3.9.1 In some cases of temporary disability of the student on the advice of the Local Health Authority. Evidence of this would be required.
- 3.9.2 For some students resident in Swindon in Year 10-13 whose families move out of the designated area for the Swindon school they are attending and live more than three miles by a safe walking route and receive Income Support or income-based Job Seeker's Allowance, to help them complete a GCSE or A-level Course.
- 3.9.3 Where a student studies somewhere other than the designated appropriate area school, sixth form or college to follow a course that is not provided, in broadly similar terms by the designated area colleges and the student's family receive Income Support or income-based Job Seeker's Allowance.

Road Safety

- 3.10 Transport is assessed for a safe walking route using "Assessment of Walked Routes to School Guidelines" published by Road Safety GB which identifies hazards and the assessment of risk of walked routes to school.

The assessment of a safe walking route

- 3.11 As it is the duty of parents to ensure that students attend school, the law on safe walking routes assumes that a responsible adult will accompany students to and from school.
- 3.12 A safe route will be on footpaths along the majority of its length. Short sections of road with a speed limit of 30mph or less may be acceptable, subject to assessment by the Road Safety Officer.
- 3.13 Crossings of major routes, including all routes with a speed limit of more than 30mph, will either be by controlled crossing or by under- or over-pass. This can legitimately involve a diversion or even doubling back on a route, but any additional distance will be included in the route measurement.
- 3.14 In determining entitlement to free transport, the route used in assessing the distance is the shortest safest available walking route following footpaths with street lighting.
- 3.15 Except for short sections and driveways of homes and schools, the route will be well lit. Unlit pathways across parklands, fields or playing fields will not be acceptable safe routes for this purpose.

Primary School Aged Students

- 3.16 Transport can be provided, on road safety grounds if the journey to the designated appropriate school would involve the use of roads without footpaths or lighting.

Secondary School Aged Students

- 3.17 There are a number of criteria that need to be met for Secondary School students to receive transport on road safety grounds. The following criteria are based on the expectation that parents will accompany their children to and from school where they consider it necessary:

- a. There is no footway, or;
- b. Students have to walk along a dual carriageway with a speed limit of 40 mph or higher, and they have to cross a dual carriageway, and there is no safe crossing point available. A safe crossing point is defined as any of the following:

Light Operated Crossings
Zebra Crossing
Pedestrian Refuge
Foot Bridge
Underpass
School Crossing Patrol in Operation

Students unable to walk to school by reason of their disability, or mobility problem (including temporary medical conditions).

- 3.18 Where a student is attending their nearest qualifying school (or designated school if this is not the nearest) which is **within** the relevant walking distance (i.e. **within** 2 miles if aged under 8, and 3 miles if aged over 8), but is unable to walk to that establishment (accompanied as necessary) by reason of their SEN and/or disability, he or she will be eligible for transport assistance.
- 3.19 Transport may be provided to the designated appropriate school on medical grounds for either short-term provision, where a student has a temporary medical problem or on a long-term basis if the student has a particular long-term condition. In both cases recommendations **must be** received from the Local Health Authority.
- 3.20 Evidence would be required and any application would be considered on a case by case basis. In all cases recommendations **must be** received from an appropriate medical officer from the Local Health Authority. This should be a Consultant looking after the student.
- 3.21 If assistance is granted this would be reviewed termly, with the need for new evidence to be submitted. If assistance is granted the LA, in the first instance would seek to provide petrol expenses. If a parent cannot provide evidence from the Local Health Authority, the LA will remove that assistance.

The Nature of Transport Arrangements

3.22 The arrangements for assisted travel which may be made under this policy will be at the LA's discretion and are made on the most cost-effective basis. These arrangements may take the form of:

- a. Travel pass for use on public transport (season ticket);
- b. A parent consenting to use their car in return for a mileage allowance;
- c. Travel pass or other authorisation for use on private contract services;

3.23 Rail passes for public service routes will be issued to students where appropriate and at the discretion of the LA.

Parental preference

3.24 The Local Authority has no duty to provide transport where parents exercise their right to express a preference for their child to

- a. Attend a particular school other than the school which the LA has designated as serving the area where they live, or
- b. Attend a particular school other than the designated appropriate school.

Education and Inspections Act 2006

3.25 The Education and Inspections Act 2006 provides extended right for students from low income groups.

3.26 Low income groups are defined as where the student is entitled to free school meals or where the parents receive the maximum Working Tax Credit are entitled as follows

- a. Students aged between eight and eleven years old – where the nearest suitable school is beyond two miles
- b. Students aged between eleven and sixteen
 - i. To one of the three closest schools to the home address between 2 and 6 miles, or
 - ii. To a school between 2 and 15 miles where preferred on the grounds of religion or belief

3.27 The LA may review all eligibility for transport on a yearly basis. If the student is no longer eligible for transport assistance on these grounds then the transport will be withdrawn.

3.28 There is a right of appeal for parents to the Education Transport Appeals Sub-Committee for transport on road safety grounds, in relation to the issue of their ability to accompany their children to school. (The need for parents to be at work would not usually be considered as a reason why transport should be provided). Details of the Appeals process are set out later in the document.

4. Mainstream School Transport – Discretionary

The Key policies involving discretionary transport are:

Students of pre-statutory school age

- 4.1 Transport may be provided for students of pre-statutory school age where transport is already running and where there are spaces available on current transport.

Education other than at School (EOTAS) and elective home education

- 4.2 Where parents, in conjunction with the school if appropriate, have chosen to educate their child other than at school, no assistance will be available from the LA in connection with any transport need arising.

Education other than at School (EOTAS) and referral units

- 4.3 Where the LA arranges for a student to have education other than at school, the LA will provide transport subject to normal eligibility rules on home to school transport.

Students without Statements of Special Educational Needs or Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP)

- 4.4 All transport for students without statements of special educational needs or EHCPs who are attending mainstream schools will be provided on the basis of normal eligibility criteria.
- 4.5 If a Local Authority places a student at a school or unit this will be deemed as the **designated appropriate school** for school transport purposes irrespective of the Local Authority's normal zoning arrangements

Children in the care of the Local Authority

- 4.6 The school at which a student is placed by the LA will be deemed the **designated appropriate school** for school transport purposes irrespective of the LA's normal zoning arrangements in order to provide continuity of educational provision for such students. The allocation of a school place will be reviewed as part of the student's regular Care Plan review.

Continuity

- 4.7 Where students resident **within** the Borough move home during Years 10 and 11 out of the designated area for the current Swindon school in which they are studying, the LA may provide free home to school transport.
- 4.8 This is applicable when the current Swindon school is more than 3 miles from home and the parents are in receipt of the relevant qualifying benefits, (Income support or income-based Job Seeker's Allowance). This is to assist the student to complete their GCSE courses.
- 4.9 Any entitlement under continuity grounds **must** fulfil all the criteria in the paragraph above.

School Transport Appeals

- 4.10 Parents have a right of appeal to the Education Transport Appeals Sub-committee of Swindon Borough Council set out in part 8 of this policy

For consultation

5. Special Educational Needs Transport Policy

- 5.1 Students with special educational needs have the same entitlement to transport assistance under legislation or policies agreed by Swindon Borough Council as all other students (please see section 3 of the policy, Eligibility). The special educational needs of the student may also be taken into account (please refer to page 6 of section 3).
- 5.2 However, where a student has special educational needs the nearest appropriate school/ establishment (i.e. that provides education suitable to the age, ability and aptitude of the student, including any special educational needs) may well be different than that for other student.
- 5.3 Where a School is named by the Local Authority on a student's Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or Statement of Special Educational Needs, that school will be deemed to be the student's nearest appropriate school for the purposes of transport eligibility, unless named as a result of parental preference, and in the Authority's view, the child's needs could be met at a nearer school, which has also been named in the Statement or EHCP.
- 5.4 The appropriate transport provision for a student with special educational needs will be determined by the Council based on the student's needs.
- 5.5 Parent/carers may chose a different school to the nearest suitable school, as long as the school will still meet the needs of the student as outlined in the statement / EHCP. However, the parent/carers will then become liable for the transport costs to that school.
- 5.6 If the Local Authority names a residential school at some distance from the parent / carer's home, the SEN code of practice states that the Local Authority should provide transport or travel assistance. The frequency of such journeys will be determined at time of placement and reviewed as appropriate.
- 5.7 All transport arrangements will be subject to an Annual Review for those children with an EHCP or statement of SEN. The type of transport or level of support may change to reflect the changing needs of the student. The provision of transport may change or cease to be necessary as the child grows older, and if they become more independent. Such decisions will be taken on an individual basis and will take full account of the child's needs.
- 5.8 When a student with an EHCP transfers to post 16 provision they will then be assessed using the post 16 transport policy (section 6).
- 5.9 Transport assistance will not be provided for:
- 5.9.1 Parents or students to attend extra-curricular activities
 - 5.9.2 Students to attend doctors, dental or any other appointments
 - 5.9.3 Students to attend breakfast or after school clubs / activities
 - 5.9.4 Students excluded during the school day
 - 5.9.5 Students to attend work experience placements

5.9.6 Students that are unwell and have to be collected from school during the school day

Students undergoing Statutory Assessments in Special Schools

5.10 The assessment period will not exceed more than the statutory 20 weeks by which time the assessment should have been completed and a decision made as to whether the student has an EHCP.

Provision of Escorts

5.11 An escort will only be provided following the outcome of an assessment of the student's Special Educational Needs, in order to reduce risk as far as is reasonably practicable, in the provision of transport arrangements. This determination will be made by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Assessment Team, in liaison with the Passenger Transport Team taking into account:

5.11.1 Where an individual student's needs create a clear danger or health and safety risk to themselves and other passengers on the vehicle

5.11.2 Where an assessment of the students on the vehicle and the journey to be undertaken highlight a clear danger or health and safety risk to all passengers on the vehicle.

5.11.3 A student's medical needs, particularly where rescue medication is required. Escorts do not administer medication, so if there is a need identified by a qualified medical professional to medicate during the school journey, then alternative arrangements would need to be considered. This may include provision of a specialist healthcare for the journey.

5.12 The consideration for escorts will be made by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Assessment Team and Passenger Transport Team based on evidence received from all relevant parties and will be reviewed regularly, where appropriate and whenever a contract is re-tendered.

Change of address

5.13 If a student changes address, even temporarily, their entitlement to transport assistance will need to be reassessed. Parents /carers **must** inform the Special Educational Needs and Disability Team well in advance of the moving date to ensure the student's case is re-assessed for transport assistance, and if they are not informed in good time, parents / carers will be responsible for the student's transport to school until new arrangements can be made.

Travel arrangements made by the local authority or other bodies/persons:

5.14 Other bodies or persons making travel arrangements might include:

- A parent consenting to a personal travel budget to enable travel arrangements for the student.
- A parent consenting to use their car in return for a mileage allowance
- A school or group of schools reaching an agreement with a local authority to provide transport in minibuses owned by the school;

- Or a transport authority providing free bus passes for all children under the age of 16.
- 5.15 Swindon local authority may otherwise provide transport in one of the following ways, according to the needs of the student.
- Provision of a pass for a public service bus or other means of public transport.
 - Provision of a seat on a bus or minibus provided by the local authority
 - Provision of a seat in a taxi where more individualised arrangements are necessary

Personal Travel Budgets

- 5.16 The option of a personal travel budget (PTB) is available if the parent/carer would prefer to make their own arrangements and consent to this.
- 5.17 A PTB is a sum of money provided to parents or carers of students with SEN who are eligible for travel assistance. PTBs enable families to arrange their student's transport directly and, if they choose, to work with other families to achieve the best possible travel arrangements for the students. Ways in which the PTB can be used include:
- Purchasing a travel pass for a parent or a trusted adult to accompany the student on public transport
 - Paying for an escort for the student to walk to school or to travel by public transport. Parents or carers may also choose to do this themselves.
 - Covering the cost of parents driving or cycling with their child to school
 - Arranging shared travel arrangements with other parents, such as shared driving responsibilities, walking buses or joint taxi bookings
 - Overcoming barriers that may prevent parents accompanying their child to school, e.g. travel/childcare arrangements for siblings.
- 5.18 Personal Travel Budgets are voluntary. Parent/carers can stop them if their circumstances change as long as six weeks' notice is given in order that an alternative form of travel assistance can be determined. They do not have any impact on any other benefits. Parents will be required to sign an agreement with the local authority and provide bank details in order that monthly payments can be made.
- 5.19 For more information on PTB's go to <http://children.mycaremysupport.co.uk/>

Independent Travel Training.

- 5.20 Swindon local authority is committed to providing the best and most appropriate travel assistance for families. In the future, if the circumstances are right, other forms of travel assistance may be more appropriate for children with SEN such as Independent Travel. Students will be identified by their school as being ready to learn to travel independently. The local authority SEN travel advisor will then work with families and education providers to ensure a smooth transition takes place where appropriate.
- 5.21 Travel support may be available as set out in section 5 above for students attending residential special schools on a weekly or termly boarding basis.

Students attending special school on a termly boarding basis may be eligible for support at the beginning and end of each term and at any weekend when the school is closed.

School Transport Appeals

Parents have a right of appeal to the Education Transport Appeals Sub-committee of Swindon Borough Council set out in part 8 of this policy

For consultation

6. Post 16 (16-18) Education transport policy

- 6.1 This policy aims to ensure access to further education opportunities to all 16-18 year olds living in the Borough of Swindon, as required under the Education Act 2002.
- 6.2 Given the urban nature of the Borough, Swindon offers good transport accessibility **within** its boundaries. This presents very few barriers to learning for the majority of mainstream students, however, for those living on the rural boundaries of the borough (or those with an Education, Health and Care Plan, disabilities and/or learning difficulties), support with transport to ensure access to learning will be considered.
- 6.3 The policy contains the current legislation and benefit eligibility.

Policy

- 6.4 In accordance with section 1.5 the policy applies to students aged 16-18 and to students with an Education Health and Care Plan or disabilities and / or learning difficulties aged 16-25.
- 6.5 There is no legal requirement for Local Authorities to provide transport beyond the completion of Year 11. However Swindon Borough Council will continue to provide discretionary transport to Post 16 students who meet the policy eligibility criteria upon receipt of an application and payment of the relevant contribution.
- 6.6 The Council considers any application for transport assistance for a person of sixth form age against this policy.

Eligibility

- 6.7 A subsidised bus pass is available to students aged 16-18 inclusive who attend the nearest provider which covers the main essentials of a course required for higher education i.e. more than 50% of the course **within** the Borough, **and** who live more than 3 miles from that 16-18 provider, measured by the shortest available walking route. For example if a student is studying A Levels and 3 of the 4 can be studied at their nearest sixth form then this establishment would be classed as their nearest provider.
- 6.8 If the student's parent or carer is in receipt of one of the following qualifying benefits, the pass is provided free of charge:
- Income support
 - Income-based Job Seeker's Allowance
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Support, under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
 - Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)

- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
 - Universal Credit
- 6.9 A post-16 provider includes mainstream schools with sixth form provision, Special Schools with post-16 provision, Sixth Form Colleges, Specialist Further Education Colleges, Independent Training providers with Swindon Borough Council or where necessary **outside** of the Borough.
- 6.10 Students who are under 19 at the start of their course and eligible for transport assistance will receive continued assistance while they attend that course until the end of the academic year in which they turn 19. This only applies to students who are continuing their course and is not valid if the student changes their course part-way through the academic year in which they reach their 19th birthday.
- 6.11 Students wishing to study for a government funded approved 16-18 course through a 16-18 provider **outside** of the Borough which is wholly available through a provider **within** the Borough, will **not be** entitled to assistance with transport under this scheme.
- 6.12 Students wishing to study for a Government funded approved 16-18 course through a 16-18 provider **outside** the Borough for the reason that the optional modules or other elements of the specification for accreditation are different from those on a course offered through a 16-18 provider **within** the Borough, **will not** be entitled to assistance with transport under this scheme.
- 6.13 If a student is studying a course at a 16-18 provider **outside** the Borough and the student's parent/carer is in receipt of the benefits listed above, then a contribution at a reasonable cost may be charged to the parent/carer to support the transport assistance of the student.
- 6.14 If a student's parent or carer is in receipt of a non-contributory benefit (as noted above) and the student needs to participate in a particular Government funded approved 16-18 course which is not available through a 16-18 provider **within** the Borough but is necessary for entry to a specific course at a higher education provider, apprenticeship or a specific area of employment or employment with training, then a transport application for attendance at a provider **outside** the Borough will be considered.
- 6.15 Students applying for transport to a 16-18 provider **outside** the Borough **must** send in as much supporting evidence as possible with the application to avoid delays in assessment.

Supporting evidence should include:

6.15.1 Why it is necessary to study the particular course

6.15.2 Evidence that the course is not available **within** the Borough (e.g. a copy of the prospectus page)

6.15.3 Proof of being entitled to a non-contributory benefit as outlined above.

- 6.16 The transport assistance provided to eligible students should be the most cost effective to the Council.
- 6.17 In all cases, the Borough will ensure that the type of transport provided is public transport. Taxi provision will not be considered except in cases where it is deemed appropriate on the basis of their special educational needs, disability or mobility problems. Taxi provision will be considered alongside other options including Independent Travel Training or a Personal Transport Budget.
- 6.18 Please also note that children may have to walk to the specified bus stop and this may be up to 1.5 miles. This may not be applicable to students with special educational needs, disability or mobility problems.
- 6.19 The legal requirement to provide education transport where the route is deemed unavailable to be walked, accompanied as necessary, only applies to students of statutory school age. Therefore, such circumstances will not constitute an entitlement to transport assistance for post 16 students.
- 6.20 Where the course a student is studying is on a split site, transport will only be provided to eligible students to the main site.

Change of Address

- 6.21 If a student changes address during their post 16 course, even temporarily, their entitlement to transport assistance will need to be reassessed using their new address details. They **must** inform the Special Educational Needs and Disability Team and Passenger Transport Team well in advance of the moving date to ensure their case is re-assessed for transport assistance, and if they are not informed in good time. If the chosen establishment is no longer the nearest offering the course the student will no longer be entitled to transport assistance.

Age

- 6.22 To be eligible for transport assistance a student **must** be under 19 years of age at the beginning of the first year of their course. For courses starting in the autumn term, the academic year starts on 1st September. For the avoidance of doubt, a student who has already attained or will attain the age of 19 on or before the 31st August in the calendar year of their first application for assistance with Post 16 transport will not be eligible for support from the scheme. Any student aged 19 or over on 31st August in the calendar year of their application, will only be eligible to apply for transport assistance if they can demonstrate explicitly that their course is a continuation of one of which they have already successfully completed in the first year of study, having started the course prior to attaining age 19. The onus will be on the student to prove continuous study.
- 6.23 If a student is 19 or over and is attending a course as part of a formal or informal care plan, and is not eligible for support from the Post 16 transport

scheme, they will need to seek support from an alternative funder / provider for the transport necessary to enable them to access that course.

Raising Participation age (RPA)

- 6.24 The Education and Skills Act 2008 increases the minimum age at which young people in England can leave learning, requiring them to continue in education or training until their 18th birthday.
- 6.25 A person ceases to be of compulsory school age on the school leaving date of the academic year in which they turn 16. The school leaving date is currently set as the last Friday in June. Raising the participation age **does not** affect the compulsory school age; however, its effect is that a person who ceased to be of compulsory school age but has not yet reached the age of 18 is under a duty to participate in one of the following:
- 6.25.1 Full time education, such as a school, college or home education
 - 6.25.2 Work-based learning, such as an apprenticeship or traineeship
 - 6.25.3 Part-time education or training if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering for more than 20 hours a week
- 6.26 The Government has legislated through the Education Act 2011 for enforcement not to be applied against young people and their parents who choose not to continue in education or training. It is hoped that young people will participate because they recognise the benefits it will bring and because the reforms to education and training will create a system that caters for the needs and aspirations of every young person. There is currently no duty placed on the Government to extend the pre-16 transport duty to cover young people of sixth form age in further education or training when the participation age is raised.

16-19 Bursary Funding

- 6.27 The 16-19 Bursary funding replaced the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and is the scheme intended to provide financial support to help the most vulnerable 16-19 year olds participate in full-time education
- 6.28 Bursary funding is available for the following categories of vulnerable students, some which may be used to support transport costs to enable participation in post-16 training:
- Young people aged 16 & 17 in care;
 - Care leavers, aged 16,17 & 18;
 - Students in receipt of Income Support; Disability Allowance and Employment Support Allowance;
 - Additional students recognised by their post-16 Provider to need financial support for transport through a discretionary bursary.
- 6.29 Bursary funding is allocated by the post-16 provider, according to the need of the student.
- 6.30 A student **must** declare any Bursary funding for transport support when applying for any other transport subsidies from Swindon Borough Council and

this may exclude the student from any further transport subsidies in that academic year.

- 6.31 Post-16 providers will not consider Bursary funding for transport support if the student is already receiving transport subsidies through Swindon Borough Council funding.

Students with Education Health and Care Plans or disabilities and/or learning difficulties

- 6.32 Students with Education Health Care Plans continuing in education post-16 or students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties, are subject to the same entitlement for post 16 transport assistance as mainstream students above but their special educational needs or disability and / or learning difficulties will also be considered.
- 6.33 Students with Education Health Care Plans or disabilities and/or learning difficulties will have annual individual assessment of transport requirements.
- 6.34 Where a post 16 student has a Statement of SEN or an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) and is attending the school named **within** their Statement / Plan as the nearest appropriate school for their post 16 education, public transport will be promoted for this group and travel training referrals will be made for all students (where appropriate) with the expectation that they will be assessed for suitability for training by the end of the first term of post 16 education.
- 6.35 For students with a current Statement of SEN or EHCP, the school named in the Statement or Plan will be considered the appropriate establishment to the students home address provided the school named in the Statement or Plan was determined by the Special Educational Needs Assessment and Disability Team. Where parents have asked for a school to be named, transport will remain the responsibility of the parent or carer.
- 6.36 If a student has been entitled to transport to a specialist school for their statutory school years, and they are continuing their education at that school they will continue to be entitled to transport as it will be considered that this school is the nearest establishment that offers the course the student is pursuing and that can best meet their needs.
- 6.37 Where a parent has decided that they do not wish for their child to go to the school or college that the Special Educational Needs Assessment and Disability Service has decided can meet the students needs and decide to seek a placement at an alternative establishment, transport will not be provided.
- 6.38 It is important to note that although a student may have a Statement of Special Education Needs or an Education Health and Care Plan or may have had one whilst at school, this **does not** automatically entitle the student to travel assistance once in post 16 provision and they **must** apply under the post 16 policy.

- 6.39 Parents or carers submitting an application for transport assistance should provide relevant evidence to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Assessment Team to support their application for the assessment for transport assistance as noted above.
- 6.40 Students attending a college or an independent training provider and who qualify for specialist transport assistance e.g. tail-lift or taxi will be required to pay the appropriate post-16 contribution in the second and subsequent years of a course, unless the parents are in receipt of the qualifying benefits listed above.

Timetable and process for applications

- 6.41 Application forms are available from colleges, schools and Swindon Borough Council from April/May each year.
- 6.42 Applications for current school transport to a sixth form should be returned by the 30th June each year to Passenger Transport.
- 6.43 Applications for providers other than sixth forms, should be returned by the 31st July each year.
- 6.44 Swindon Borough Council will accept application forms after this time, however the Council cannot guarantee transport will be available for the start of the academic year.
- 6.45 Where a student is attending an FE college, Scholar Season Tickets will be available from Student Services on the first day of term where transport is awarded.

7. Other Key Policy Areas

Other relevant, key policies are set out below:

- 7.1 The home address given on the application form must **be** the address where the child resides for most of the week with their parent or carer. Where a child has a joint address or the parents have dual responsibility, then the address that the child benefit is paid will be taken as the child's home address. The LA may ask parents or carers to provide proof of these circumstances.
- 7.2 Free transport will not normally be granted in cases where parents choose to send children to a school over the prescribed distance but it may be considered in exceptional circumstances.
- 7.3 Students may be required to walk up to one mile from home to the pick-up point and, where students use public service routes, they may be required to walk up to one mile from the setting-down point to the school or 1.5 miles to a 16-18 provider.
- 7.4 Requests for changes in transport arrangements will be considered but changes, such as additional stops, are not always possible for reasons of safety and timing.
- 7.5 Students aged eight years of age who are entitled to free transport under the distance criteria will continue to receive free transport until the end of the academic term in which they reach the age of eight.
- 7.6 In determining free or subsidised home-to-school transport as a result of errors in measurement, such free or subsidised transport will be withdrawn at the end of the academic year during which the error is discovered.
- 7.7 Where, for any reason, transport facilities have been approved in error, the LA reserves the right to withdraw that provision at any time convenient to the LA, and will normally do so, after giving due notice of its intention to do so.
- 7.8 The '3 for 2' rule which allows three children to share a double seat under the PSV (Carrying Capacity) Regulations 1984 will no longer be applied on vehicles irrespective of whether they are operated by the LA, contractors, schools or if they are hired or borrowed. Each child will, therefore, have their own seat. The exception to this would be where students use public service buses where the Local Authority **does not** contract any seats. In such cases students may have to stand on the vehicle if no seats are available and the relevant vehicle is legally able to operate with standing passengers.
- 7.9 Students who submit late applications and who do not receive a travel pass on the first day of term and who, therefore are obliged to meet the cost of travel to college from their own resources, will be limited in the level of reimbursement. This will only commence after 15 working days have elapsed following receipt of the application form from the LA.

- 7.10 Transport is only provided if the student attends the nearest education establishment offering the qualification irrespective of the module content.
- 7.11 Students who do not have a current Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education Health and Care Plan but who are deemed to have a level of special needs below that required for a formal statement, would not normally be entitled to free transport but would have the right to appeal for transport to the Education Transport Appeals Panel.

For consultation

8. School Transport Appeals

- 8.1 In accordance with the revised guidance for transport appeals, since September 2016, the LA has adopted a 2 stage review and appeal process.
- 8.2 This appeals policy is applicable to children who live **within** the Borough of Swindon that are attending mainstream and special schools. This appeals policy applies to children with or without a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Right to Appeal

- 8.3 Where a parent has been refused transport assistance they can challenge the decision for the following reasons
- 8.3.1 The nature of the transport arrangements offered
 - 8.3.2 Their child's eligibility
 - 8.3.3 The distance measured in relation to statutory walking distances; and
The safety of the route

Stage 1

- 8.4 **Within** 20 working days from the receipt of the local authority's home to school transport decision, a parent can make a written request asking for a review of the decision.
- 8.5 A parent will be advised of the right for a review **within** the decision letter.
- 8.6 The request for review should be made by completing the Transport Decision Review Form. The parent should state the reason why the decision should be reviewed and given details of any personal and/or family circumstances the parent believes should be considered when the decision is reviewed.
- 8.7 **Within** 20 working days of the receipt of the parent's written request a senior officer will review the original decision and will notify the parent by way of detailed written notification of the outcome of the review.
- 8.8 The decision letter will contain the following
- 8.8.1 The nature of the decision reached;
 - 8.8.2 How the review was conducted (including any standards followed e.g., Road Safety GB)
 - 8.8.3 Information regarding other parties consulted
 - 8.8.4 What factors were considered
 - 8.8.5 Information how the parent can escalate their case to stage 2 if appropriate

Stage 2

- 8.9 Following the receipt of the local authority's stage one decision notification, a parent can **within** 20 working days submit a request to escalate the matter to Stage 2.
- 8.10 A parent should complete a Transport Appeal Form and send this to the Appeals Clerk
- 8.11 **Within** 40 days of receipt an appeal will be scheduled with the Education (Transport) Appeals Sub-Committee who will consider both written and verbal representation from both parents and officers involved in the case.
- 8.12 The parent will be notified of the outcome by telephone following the outcome of the appeal panel and will receive formal notification of the outcome **within** 5 working days. The notification will include
- 8.12.1 The nature of the decision reached;
 - 8.12.2 How the review was conducted (including any standards followed e.g., Road Safety GB)
 - 8.12.3 Information regarding other parties consulted
 - 8.12.4 What factors were considered
 - 8.12.5 If refused, information about how the parent can refer to the case to the Local Government Ombudsman
- 8.13 Where an appeal is upheld, this **does not** guarantee funding throughout the school life of the child, and the circumstances under which the appeal was upheld would be kept under review.

Education Transport Appeals Sub-Committee

- 8.14 An Education Transport Appeals Sub-Committee will meet to consider transport appeals. The membership of this Sub-Committee is made up of three Councillors selected from a pool appointed by the Appeals Committee. These Councillors will not have been involved with the case previously and should not have any close connection with the appellant. If one of the Councillors **does** have a remote connection with the appellant, they may be allowed to take part in the hearing if neither the LA's representative nor the appellant objects
- 8.15 The Education Transport Appeals Sub-Committee will consider case papers for each appeal consisting of the reasons as to why the LA have refused to provide transport assistance, any other relevant information and the parents appeal giving reasons as to why they are appealing against this decision.
- 8.16 Each Councillor will remain a Committee member for at least one year but there will be no limit on how long they wish to continue as a member providing there is no conflict of interest in the areas mentioned above.
- 8.17 All Councillors on the Appeals Committee will undertake training on the Transport Policy at least once per academic year to ensure that Councillors become 'expert' in this field.

- 8.18 The Education Transport Appeals Sub-Committee will consider all appeals on their individual merits. The decision of the Sub-Committee is final with no further rights of appeal.
- 8.19 The Education Transport Appeals Sub-Committee **must** operate **within** the Transport Policy at all times.
- 8.20 The Education Transport Appeals Sub-Committee **must** take into consideration the cost of transport should the appeal be upheld.
- 8.21 If the Education Transport Appeals Sub-Committee agrees to uphold an appeal, it **must** indicate the length of time for which the transport has been agreed.
- 8.22 Once the appeal has been heard the Education Transport Appeals Sub-Committee will make its decision that day and the Committee Officer will endeavour to contact the parent by telephone the same day to give the result of the appeal. A decision letter outlining the Education Transport Appeals Sub-Committee decision and its reasons will follow usually **within** one week.
- 8.23 If parents are not happy with the decision of the Education Transport Appeals Sub-Committee then they are able to contact the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will only be able to look at the way the appeal was conducted and establish whether the LA followed all its processes in the correct manner.
- 8.24 If the Appeal is in relation to a placement made by order of an SEN & Disability Tribunal, the Appellant and the Local Authority may be bound by any decision relating to travel that the Tribunal has made. The SEN and Disability Tribunal may have specifically come to a decision about placement based on the inclusion of travel costs.
- 8.25 For appeals on the grounds of road safety, parents can only appeal if they believe that they are unable to accompany their child to school. However, the Appeals Sub-Committee will not usually accept the need for parents to be at work as the reason why transport should be provided.
- 8.26 The Education Transport Sub-Committee is able to consider applications for assistance from parents of children receiving nursery education as per the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Grounds Under Which the Education Transport Appeals Sub-Committee can Uphold an Appeal

- 8.27 The grounds under which the Education Transport Appeals Sub-Committee can allow / uphold an appeal are:
- 8.27.1 The Transport Policy has not been applied properly.
- 8.27.2 There are discrepancies in the way the application has been handled.

8.27.3 The individual circumstances put forward by the applicant outweigh the normal policy considerations and are considered to be exceptional circumstances.

8.28 Examples of exceptional circumstances are:

8.28.1 If there are exceptional circumstances **within** the immediate family unit where the child lives that affects the child ability to attend their designated school such as domestic violence. Evidence would be required to support this.

8.28.2 Death or serious illness of parent with whom the child has been living.

8.28.3 In cases of students with Special Educational Needs – additional evidence of need that the Education Transport Appeals Sub-Committee is asked to consider.

9. Spare seats policy

- 9.1 This refers to spare seats on home to school/ college transport routes.
- 9.2 These are routes that are operated for the benefit of those who are entitled to transport assistance to and from school. The key points regarding this scheme are set out below:
- 9.2.1 The Council cannot guarantee that a young person will keep the seat for longer than one term;
 - 9.2.2 Fare prices are reviewed annually;
 - 9.2.3 The parent **must** complete a Spare Seat application form.
 - 9.2.4 Payment is required in advance;
 - 9.2.5 The price charged covers a return journey for every school day of the relevant period;
 - 9.2.6 There will be no rebates for those deciding to travel for fewer than the maximum number of possible journeys per term, for example there is no rebate if a young person decides to use his/her bus pass for morning travel and returns by some other private means in the afternoon;
 - 9.2.7 The route of the journey is home to school / college and only operates as per the timetables set by the Council.
 - 9.2.8 No guarantee can be given that the transport will continue to run throughout a young person's time at a school / college, or that the place on the bus will not be withdrawn at some future date if the place is required for a young person who is entitled to transport assistance.
 - 9.2.9 If a place on transport is needed, the last child offered the place will be given notice of 2 weeks that their place is no longer available. There is no route to appeal this decision.
 - 9.2.10 When there are more requests to pay for seats on a particular route than there are seats available they will be allocated in the descending order of priority shown in the table "Priority for Spare Seats":

Priority for Spare Seats / places

- 9.3 Priority for spare seats determined as follows
- 9.3.1 **Priority 1** - Those with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education Health Care Plan naming the school.
 - 9.3.2 **Priority 2** - Looked After Children
 - 9.3.3 **Priority 3** - Year 11, if there is no service or train link
 - 9.3.4 **Priority 4** - Those who travelled on the route the previous term and then first come first served

10. Contacts

Subsidised Season Ticket

Swindon Borough Council
Passenger Transport Services
Wat Tyler West, 3rd Floor
Beckhampton Street
Swindon SN1 2JH
Email:
passengertransport@swindon.gov.uk

Young Persons' Travelpass

Thamesdown Transport Travel Shop
11 Fleming Way
Swindon SN1 1BZ
Tel 01793 428428
Open 0900-1730, Mondays to Fridays
and 0900-1700 on Saturdays.
www.thamesdown-transport.co.uk

Bus operators and information

Thamesdown Transport Limited
Barnfield Road
Swindon SN2 2DJ
Tel 01793 428428
www.thamesdown-transport.co.uk

Stagecoach in Swindon

Bus Station,
9 New Bridge Square,
Swindon, SN1 1EA
Tel 01973 522243
www.stagecoachbus.com

Traveline

Comprehensive bus, coach and rail
information
Tel 0871 200 22 33
www.traveline.info
Website includes journey planner and
links to other public transport sites.

Concessionary Travel for People with Disabilities

Swindon Borough Council
Concessionary Travel Office
Civic Offices
Euclid Street
Swindon SN1 2JH
Email :
concessionarytravel@swindon.gov.uk
www.swindon.gov.uk

Transport for People who are Severely Mobility Impaired

Swindon Dial a Ride and Community
Transport
Newcombe Drive
Hawksworth Trading Estate
Swindon
SN2 1DZ
Tel 01793 616050
Email:
transport@dialarideswindon.org.uk
www.dialarideswindon.org.uk

Maps

www.thamesdown-transport.co.uk
Swindon Urban Bus Services
Swindon Town Centre Bus Stops
<http://193.113.179.211/roadsandtransport-cycleways>
www.swindonbus.info
www.traveline.info
Swindon Cycle Map

Appendix 1 - Guidance for parents: School Transport operations in extreme weather conditions

When there is snow, ice or flooding, school transport may be disrupted. If the bad weather occurs overnight it may not be easy for a parent to find out whether school transport is running. Local radio stations give out information on school closures and school bus cancellations. If a child travels on a school bus contract, then it should be ensured that they have a contact telephone number for the bus/coach operator so they can contact them direct for information.

Alternatively, parents/carers can telephone the school, or check the school website for updated information.

If parents/carers cannot find out for certain and school transport is over 20 minutes late then it should be assumed that the school bus is not operating at all. If a parent decides to take their child into school themselves, they **must** also be able to collect their child in the afternoon because school transport may still not be able to operate.

When there is very bad weather, parents' should not assume that their child will be taken to school. They need to make sure that their child knows what to do if transport **does not** run. If their child cannot return home, arrangements should be made so that he or she can go home with a friend or relative.

Where very bad weather is forecast or prolonged, the LA will make a decision after 2 p.m. the previous day as to whether to provide transport. In these instances information will be available on the local radio station and Council website.

Further information is available from:

Passenger Transport Manager at passengertransport@swindon.gov.uk or on 01793 46621

Appendix 2 – Behaviour on school transport

The majority of students travelling to and from school behave well. For a few, this is not so and these few can make the journey very unpleasant for other passengers (students and members of the general public), road users and the driver of the bus or coach.

Behavioural problems on school transport have increased and in the past students may have been seen as misbehaving on the school bus, but behaviour has deteriorated in some instances as to be considered dangerous. Allegations of bullying on the bus journey to and from school, also appears to be an increasing trend. Unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated. In all instances of unacceptable behaviour the school and parents of those concerned will be contacted. Bullying, vandalism or unruly behaviour can result in exclusion from transport.

The Local Authority has in place a Behaviour on School Transport Policy which is intended to give both students and parents/carers information/guidance on how good behaviour on school transport can be encouraged, and the way incidents of poor behaviour will be managed.

Part of the process will include the issue of a guide to students and parents to help define the operator's expectations of passengers, whilst travelling to and from school.

These guides will also help parents/carers and students to define their expectations of home to school transport.

The Public Transport Network Coordinator is responsible for receiving and investigating complaints from schools, parents/carers or students regarding home to school transport provided by private vehicle operators. Concerns should be raised directly to the Passenger Transport Services office by telephoning 01793 466213.

Further details can be obtained from:

Passenger Transport Services
Swindon Borough Council
Wat Tyler House
Beckhampton Street
Swindon
SN1 2JH
Tel: 01793 466213

Information provided to students and parents/carers

Students

When traveling by bus:

- Please be at the bus stop 5 minutes before the bus is expected.
- Treat the Driver with respect and follow their instructions.
- Students who have a right to travel on school buses also have a responsibility to behave well. In the interests of **safety** it is of paramount importance that all students behave in an acceptable manner.
- Wait for the bus in an orderly manner without disturbing others.
- Take care when getting on and off vehicles.
- Remain seated throughout the journey, and wear seatbelts where provided.
- Do not shout or disturb the driver, except in an emergency.
- Only use the emergency exits if there is a genuine emergency or when told to by the driver.
- Do not throw things inside the vehicle or out of windows.
- Do not intimidate or be rude to other passengers and respect the rights of other students to travel without fear of bullying.
- Students are not allowed to eat or drink during the journey.
- They should carry out any instruction given by the driver.
- Smoking is not allowed.
- Do not drop any litter.
- Do not damage the bus, if it is damaged the police will be contacted and your parents or carers may have to pay for the damage.
- If the bus breaks down or is in an accident, follow the driver's instructions and stay with the bus until another one arrives.
- Always try and set a good example for younger passengers.
- If you see others behaving inappropriately tell the driver and your school.

Your Travel Pass:

- Carry your travel pass with you when you travel to and from school.
- Be ready to show your pass. If you are unable to show it you may not be able to travel.
- Only use your pass to travel on the route it is for.
- Do not use anyone else's pass or let them use yours or it may be confiscated.
- If you lose your pass contact the school office for a replacement for which a fee will be charged.

Your Pick Up Point:

- You and your parents or carers are responsible for making sure that you get to the pick-up point safely.
- Arrive at the pick-up point at least five minutes before the bus is due. It runs to a timetable and cannot wait if you are late,
- When waiting at the pick-up point do not go onto, or damage, private property
- You should always follow the Green Cross Code when you're walking to a bus stop or station.
- If a bus is late only wait at the pick-up point for 20 minutes and agree with your parents what to do if the bus does not arrive. This could be going home or going to a friend's house to arrange another way to get to school.
- If there is a storm or snow, listen to the local radio stations or phone your school for advice before setting out. If your parents or carers take you into school in the morning because they are not sure if the bus is running, they **must** also be prepared to collect you in the afternoon, if the weather is still bad.

Keeping Safe:

- Queue sensibly for the bus, and stand well away from the edge of the road.
- Don't push or trip others.
- Don't try to open the doors of the bus yourself.
- Let other passengers get off before you get on.

- Get on and off in a sensible way so you don't hurt yourself or other people. Do not try to get back on the bus once you have got off.
- Be careful not to get coats, bags or scarves caught in doors.
- If you need to cross the road once you have left the bus, wait until the bus has driven away so you can see other vehicles and their drivers can see you.
- Where a seatbelt is provided please wear it - as from September 2006 it is the law.

Younger Children:

- Ensure that young children are taken to the bus stop in good time and at least 5 minutes before the scheduled pick up time. Take and collect young children on the same side of the road as the bus collects and sets them down.
- Once the vehicle arrives please encourage your child to find a seat. Where seat belts are provided they **must be** worn
- Ensure that young children are met when the bus returns from school. It is not the bus driver or schools responsibility to ensure that the children return home safely after they have got off the bus.
- If an adult is not available to take care of the student the driver may take the child, for their own safety, to a local police station or social care establishment. It will be your responsibility to arrange for them to be collected.

Students picked up from home by small vehicles:

- Your child needs to be ready before the transport arrives so that others are not held up and made late for school/college, or late getting home.
- The drivers and escorts are not able to leave the immediate vicinity of the vehicle as they have to supervise the passengers on board. Please ensure that you are watching for the vehicle.
- The student **must not** go near the vehicle until it has stopped, do not run towards it, or around it.
- Please ensure that the student puts their seatbelt on in the vehicle.
- The students **must** listen to the driver and escort where applicable and do as he or she says.
- Students **must** always, when they are in the vehicle, stay in their seats at all times when the vehicle is moving.

- The student **must not** engage in horseplay, or play silly games on the transport, as this is dangerous and could cause an accident.
- **Must not** eat and drink on the transport.
- **Must not** cause damage, including graffiti, **must not** spit, or interfere with doors or window mechanisms or leave litter in the vehicle.
- **Must** take care that their coats, scarves or bags are not caught in the door as they enter or leave the vehicle.
- **Must** make sure that they have all their belongings as they leave the vehicle, If they have forgotten something, telephone the taxi company that operates the vehicle

The Response to Students Who Fail to Observe this Policy:

- All reports of misconduct will be investigated and appropriate disciplinary action taken which might include:
 - a. Official warnings
 - b. Exclusion
 - c. Withdrawal of transport
 - d. Payment for any damage caused
- Criminal damage or behaviour will be reported to the Police.
- Parents/carers will be contacted if:
 - a. A student smokes on the bus
 - b. A student's behaviour falls below the standards required
 - c. A student's actions put the safety of other passengers and road users at risk
 - d. A student's actions cause the driver of the bus to become distracted
 - e. A student's bus pass is confiscated.
- You need to be aware that many bus operators monitor the behaviour of passengers using CCTV. CCTV footage will be used as evidence if drivers or passengers are hurt or the bus damaged.

What constitutes serious misbehaviour?

The list below is a guide to what would lead to an instant ban or a much longer ban than normal:

- Vandalism
- Arson

- Tampering with CCTV equipment
- Bullying both physical and verbal
- Carrying weapons
- Abusing the Driver
- Fighting
- Drug or solvent abuse
- Using derogatory, offensive language
- Anything liable to seriously endanger yourself or others

This list is not exhaustive, your school may have other ideas and they will guide us. Each incident reported to us will be dealt with in its individual merits.

Parents/Carers

- We would like you to encourage your child to behave well on school transport.
- We would like you to co-operate with the School, the LA and the Operator if your child is having any problems.
- We would like you to make other arrangements for your child to travel to school if transport is withdrawn, because of your child's conduct.
- If you move house please let us know in advance as this may affect your child's entitlement to transport or they may need to be on a different bus. If you have any queries about the area you are moving into please contact us and we will be able to tell you the catchment areas for the school your child attends.

Schools

- Make sure that children understand the rules for safety on buses and other transport.
- Ensure children understand the consequences of misbehaviour on transport and at bus stops.
- Work with parents/carers, drivers, escorts and LA staff in cases of problem behaviour.
- Consider appointing transport prefects or assisting the operator to draw up a seating plan if needed.
- Provide adequate supervision at set down and pick-up points, and advise operators of any special parking arrangements at your school.
- Wherever possible, make sure that private cars do not obstruct bus stops outside schools.

- Agree contingency plans with the LA in case of bad weather or other emergencies, ensure that the LA is aware of inset, or early finish days.
- Should the school transport fail to arrive, contact the Passenger Transport Department. Keep children together wherever possible.
- Ensure that students understand that season tickets or passes, where issued, **must be** produced when requested by operators, drivers or LA Representatives.
- Notify the Passenger Transport Department of any changes to students' circumstances, e.g. change of address, moving away from the area or leaving the school.

Special Needs Vehicles

Please refer also to the Special Educational Needs section of the Transport Policy.

- If an escort is provided on the vehicle they will work together with the driver and aim to provide an enjoyable journey to and from school.
- Any medication to be taken during the school day can be handed to the escort for safekeeping on the journey but **must** not ask the escort to administer medication.
- The driver and escort should not leave the vehicle when there is still a student on board. Unless otherwise specifically instructed the escorts duties are restricted to the supervision of the students on the vehicle. They cannot be expected to escort children across roads.
- Escorts should have a Local Authority identification badge, which shows their picture and name.
- A parent, carer or other responsible adult **must** be at home at the times the transport calls to collect or deliver the student.
- You have to take your child to and from transport, if they need you to do this, the escort or driver cannot do this for you.
- Details of the child's special needs provided by the Local Authority Children's Services Directorate will be given to the escort, however please talk to them about anything important that we may not know about, such as any medication your child may be taking, or any medical conditions.
- If you are going to move house please inform Children's Services in advance in writing. This may affect your transport entitlement and we may not be able to make new arrangements in less than 10 working days notice.

- Wheelchairs are checked by Passenger Transport to see if they are safe to use on transport. If you know that your child is getting a new one you **must** phone 01793 466215 to ask for it to be checked. At least 5 working days notice is needed. Less notice could mean that it cannot be transported until it has been checked that it is safe.
- If your child has a special seat or harness provided by the Council then they **must** use it. These seats and harnesses belong to the LA and **must not be** removed from transport.
- Safety of your child and others may be affected if allowed to travel using other equipment. Escorts and drivers have been told not to allow any changes without permission from Passenger Transport.

Appendix 3 – Drugs and Alcohol on Swindon School Transport

The Local Authority recognises its responsibility to provide a safe and healthy journey to and from our education establishments for students using our transport and that this can be put at risk by students or other passengers, who use illegal drugs, misuse other drugs or misuse alcohol.

- In accordance with the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, use of illegal drugs will not be tolerated at any time.
- The Licensing Act 2003 states that it is an offence to sell alcohol to a young person under the age of 18, and to buy alcohol if you are less than eighteen years of age. The Confiscation of Alcohol (Young Persons) Act 1997 allows the police to confiscate alcohol from individuals less than eighteen years of age who are drinking in public and to contact their parents.
- If an individual is found using illegal drugs, alcohol or misusing drugs on any transport provided by the Local Authority, the following procedure will be followed:
 - a. The individual should be challenged, unless there are real concerns about personal safety of the driver, escort, individual or other passengers. In such a setting, the behaviour should be challenged at the earliest opportunity or the relevant school/college informed.
 - b. The individual should be instructed to cease the activity immediately. Where possible, the controlled drug or alcohol should be confiscated, but only in circumstances where personal safety is not put at risk.
 - c. If the individual refuses, the driver or escort should report to the senior member of staff at the school/college attended by the individual, who has designated responsibility for the management of drug and alcohol related incidents. This should be done immediately on arrival at the school/college premises or, if the incident occurs on a return journey, immediately the following day. The individual should be informed of this course of action, and reminded that the school/college may opt to involve the parents and the police in this matter.
 - d. Should any controlled drug or alcohol be found or seized on the transport by the driver or escort, these should be passed to the proprietor of the company operating as our contractor or in the case of the Local Authority Fleet Transport the Fleet Operations Manager who should place them if drugs in a sealed, lockable cabinet in the first instance. Alcohol should be stored on the premises and depending on what action is to be taken should be disposed of if it is no longer required for evidence, or returned to the owner if required to do so by the Police or Local Authority. Small quantities should not be destroyed, but placed in a sealed bag (preferably a self sealing evidence bag to be supplied by the Police) and placed in a lockable metal cabinet. This should be recorded and witnessed by the

person who found the substance and a member of the Companies or LA senior management team. At the earliest opportunity, Wiltshire Police should be contacted to arrange for the collection of the substance. If the contractor or the Local Authority Fleet Transport Operations Manager or their delegated representative takes the confiscated substance to Wiltshire Police, they should ring ahead to ensure the duty desk is aware of their intentions. The contractor and any Local Authority staff **must** not dispose of any substance themselves. Drugs should only be confiscated where possible, and if personal safety is not put at risk.

- e. If this is the first instance, the individual should be warned that future incidents will be dealt with more robustly e.g. immediate involvement of Wiltshire Police.
- f. Following the incident, other senior staff, drivers and escorts should be informed and asked to be vigilant for reoccurrence.
- g. The individual may still be in illegal possession of controlled drugs. They should be reminded that this means that they are committing an offence under the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971), and informed of the legal risks this carries.
- h. If there is more than one incident while using education transport concerning an individual, then the Local Authority's Fleet Transport and Transport Contracts Teams may in conjunction with the Education Welfare Team instigate a behaviour contract between student, parents/carers, school/college and transport contractor. Failure to abide by this behaviour contract may lead to the child being permanently excluded from education transport. This would also include the situation if a student has been excluded permanently from one school and needs to travel to another using education transport
- i. Where quantities of drug or packaging suggest supply may be taking place, Wiltshire Police should be involved immediately.
- j. Any drug or alcohol-related incident **must** be recorded immediately on the Contractor/Local Authority Fleet Transport incident report form and reported to a line manager and supervisor and to the Passenger Transport Team who commission the transport on behalf of the Local Authority.
- k. If this is a recurring problem, more robust action should be taken, including direct involvement of Wiltshire Police where appropriate, but always in consultation with the school/college concerned.
- l. The contractor and Local Authority vehicle fleet **will** provide information and publicity about drugs and alcohol information and local treatment services through posters in buses and other transport provided by them on behalf of the Local Authority.

- m. The Local Authority reserve the right to seek and employ other enforcement and deterrent procedures including use of CCTV and police interventions (e.g. searches, use of passive drugs dogs etc) to identify persistent offenders, working with and on the advice of Wiltshire Police.
- n. The Local Authority and its contractors should ensure any incident relating to drugs, alcohol or other substances is addressed and managed in partnership with the school/college concerned (in conjunction with schools drugs policies) and with the appropriate Wiltshire Police School/College Liaison Officer, to ensure consistency of approach and clarity for students regarding drugs and alcohol incident procedures.

Appendix 4 – Designated transport areas

The maps outlining the designated transport areas are found in a separate document to be read in association with this document.

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Appendix 2 – Responses to the Consultation

1. Respondents

There were 24 responses to the consultation.

The responses were made by the following groups (respondents could indicate more than one response)

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|----|--------|
| Local Resident | 8 | 34.78% |
| Parent (of primary aged children) | 11 | 47.83% |
| Parent (of secondary aged children) | 6 | 26.09% |
| Interested in education | 2 | 8.70% |
| Transport providers | 0 | 0.00% |
| Parish/Ward Councillor | 1 | 4.35% |
| School | 3 | 13.04% |

Does the respondent have a child who accesses transport assistance?

| | | |
|-----|----|--------|
| Yes | 14 | 58.33% |
| No | 10 | 41.67% |

The ethnicity of the respondent

| | | |
|-------------------------------|----|--------|
| White British | 19 | 86.35% |
| Asian Indian | 1 | 4.55% |
| Mixed other | 1 | 4.55% |
| Mixed White & Black Caribbean | 1 | 4.55% |

Does the respondent have a disability?

| | | |
|-------------|----|--------|
| Yes | 1 | 4.55% |
| No | 18 | 81.82% |
| No response | 1 | 13.65% |

2. Comments made

| | |
|----|--|
| 1. | <p>The policy fails to make note of the duty of section 35B to the 1996 Act which sets out who eligible children are.</p> <p>Paragraph 2 of this schedule says that disabled children and children with SEN of compulsory school age who live within school walking distance but cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school are all eligible.</p> <p>If a school is named in the statement or EHCP, it will be deemed the most suitable school for that child's SEN /needs.</p> <p>A parent can request the school but very often it is termed as "choice" by the LA when in fact it is the most appropriate for this child's needs.</p> <p>This is a used as a reason for refusing transport and is therefore unlawful.</p> |
| | <p><i>Swindon Borough Council has considered schedule 35B of the Education Act (Paragraph 2 of that schedule) and has also sought advice of Counsel on this. The wording suggested by Counsel has been included in the draft policy which is being consulted on.</i></p> <p><i>This has been addressed in section 3.18 of the proposed policy which states:</i></p> <p><i>"Where a student is attending their nearest qualifying school (or designated school if this is not the nearest) which is within the relevant walking distance (i.e. within 2 miles if aged under 8, and 3 miles if aged over 8), but is unable to walk to that establishment (accompanied as necessary) by reason of their SEN and / or disability, he or she will be eligible for transport assistance."</i></p> <p><i>In relation to the named school in the EHCP, section 5.3 of the proposed policy refers to this and states:</i></p> <p><i>"Where a school is named by the Local Authority on a student's Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or Statement of Special Educational Needs, that school will be deemed to be the students nearest appropriate school for the purposes of transport eligibility, unless named as a result of parental preference, and in the Authority's view, the child's needs could be met at a nearer school, which has also been named in the Statement or EHCP."</i></p> |
| 2. | <p>In order to consult properly guidance from the Supreme Court on consultation should be sought. Secondly all cuts and decisions must be taken in accordance with the public sector equality duty in section 149 of the equality act 2010 which requires "due regard to be given to a series of specified needs. The most relevant need in such a case is the need to "advance equality of opportunity" for disabled people compared with others. See section 149 (1)(b). You will need to understand therefore how many disabled people would be affected, analysed and see what the impact and considered ways in which the impact could be mitigated or avoided. For reference there is extensive case law in the section 149 duty which places a heavy burden on LA's who are seeking to cut services which are valued by disabled people. You also fail to make note of the duty of section 35B to the 1996 Act which sets out who eligible children are. paragraph 2 of this schedule says that disable children and children with SEN of compulsory school age who live within school walking distance but cannot reasonably be expected to walk school are all eligible. If a school is named in the statement or EHCP, it will be deemed the most suitable school for that child's SEN /needs. A parent can request the school but very often it</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | is termed as "choice" by the LA when in fact it is the most appropriate for this child's needs. Any attempts to short change children and parents out of the duty by the LA and I am sure that there will be willing solicitors to make a JR case law for this borough. |
| | <i>Please see response to 1 above referring to Schedule 35B of the Education Act. An equality impact assessment has been carried out which will be considered by Cabinet when deciding on the proposals</i> |

| | |
|----|---|
| 3. | You seem to be forgetting about S35 about SEN eligible for transport due to SEN. |
| | <i>Please see response to 1 above referring to Schedule 35B of the Education Act.</i> |

| | |
|----|--|
| 4. | The policy being proposed is unfair and unjust and seems to be aiming only at cost saving mechanism for the local council by exploiting the vulnerability of the families and children with special needs. The fact that these children (primary, secondary and post 16) have an EHCP is indicative enough evidence that, these pupils have needs which are bigger and complex enough to state they need extra support, supervision during their commute to their primary place of education from their residence immaterial of the party who chose the educational establishment. EHCP being a legally binding contract between both parties and the content of the EHCP therefore agreed by both, a door to door transport to the named educational establishment from their primary residence is the EHCP holders right and therefore LAs duty to provide |
| | <i>If the student is eligible for transport assistance, and a school is named by the Local Authority in the EHCP or Statement, that school is deemed to be the students nearest appropriate school for the purposes of transport eligibility. Parent/carers may chose a different school to the nearest appropriate school, as long as the school will still meet the needs of the student as outlined in the statement / EHCP. However, the parent/carers will then become liable for the transport costs to that school. This is not a change in policy as this has been part of the Transport Policy for many years and is common practice amongst many other Local Authorities. This is also applicable for mainstream students also, in that if parents choose a different school other than their designated appropriate school then they will be liable for all transport costs. Eligibility for an EHCP does not automatically mean eligibility for transport assistance. This is assessed on an individual basis.</i> |

| | |
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| 5. | My son uses school transport to take him to the best school for his educational needs without the transport he would not be able to go and it would be detrimental to his schooling |
| | <i>We are not proposing any changes in the policy to the eligibility criteria.</i> |

| | |
|----|---|
| 6. | I am concerned that when my son who has SEN goes to secondary school in Sept 2017 that school transport maybe an issue as he needs a secondary school that can cope with his complex SEN needs. We have looked at our closest mainstream school which has an SRP, but didn't feel confident or like the way the unit was set out etc. So a school further away from home was the best option. |
| | <i>Where a school is named by the Local Authority on a student's Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or Statement of Special Educational Needs, that school will</i> |

| | |
|----|---|
| | <i>be deemed to be the students nearest appropriate school for the purposes of transport eligibility, unless named as a result of parental preference, and in the Authority's view, the child's needs could be met at a nearer school, which has also been named in the Statement or EHCP. Parents may choose a different school to the nearest suitable school as deemed by the Local Authority, but the parents / carers will then be liable for the transport costs to that school.</i> |
| 7. | <p>Teaching colleagues within our organisation have become increasingly concerned by the poor organisation and supervision during the transportation of some of our most vulnerable children. Parents have also expressed their frustration and concern at the lack of organisation and reliability of transport for their children. Our pupil's experience at the point where the policy translates into action has been characterised by a lack of cohesion and consistency which has resulted in distress</p> <p><i>We have not been made aware of any regular transport issues concerning this school. We have checked our records and are not at this time aware of any issues concerning transport. We were only providing one social care route to this school which was not for the length of the whole school year. This route was an escorted route and did not always complete its journeys due to the child/family not always being available when the transport called. So if there are concerns we are not aware of, we would be happy to be made aware of them so we can investigate.</i></p> |
| 8. | <p>The catchment for Ridgeway School in Wroughton does not look like it has changed, nor does the catchment for Chiseldon Primary school but there is a new area called Commonhead which includes all the areas up to the Motorway and includes Coate Village and Badbury Park. This is in the catchment for Dorcan comprehensive. We welcome the change of the new area called Commonhead.</p> <p>At the moment a number of children go from the Badbury Park estate by mini bus to Chiseldon Primary school and make friends. We would like the Borough Council to keep the current arrangement that when they move on to senior school they have the option to go to Ridgeway rather than Dorcan. These children from Badbury Park should go to Liden primary school which is across the Marlborough Road but this school is currently full. Its catchment area for senior school is Dorcan. At present we have not got a primary school built at Badbury Park, this will only happen when 750 homes are built and there is some question over the location of the school.</p> <p>When this school is built and in use this will revert back to the senior children attending this school moving on to Dorcan Comprehensive.</p> <p>As a Parish Council we would like the option to be available to parents for the children to either go to Ridgeway or Dorcan Comprehensive school.</p> <p><i>The designated transport areas were created in September 2014 in anticipation of the new development area at Badbury Park, this has not changed for the 2017 consultation. The Designated Transport Area for Badbury Park is Commonhead (Primary) and The Dorcan Academy (Secondary).</i></p> <p><i>There is currently no primary school within the designated transport area for Commonhead, however Liden is the closest school. Parents have the right to express a preference for any school when making a transport application, schools such as Liden will be closer to the home address than Chiseldon. Liden is not full at the current time in any of its year groups. The transport being provided from children</i></p> |

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| | <p><i>living in the development to Chiseldon is being put on by the school and not directly by the Council.</i></p> <p><i>Parents living in the area when selecting a secondary school have the right to express a preference of Ridgeway School, however they will not be eligible for transport assistance to the school through the mainstream transport provisions as their designated appropriate school is The Dorcan Academy.</i></p> |
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Council Tax Discretionary Discounts & Premiums

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Author: | Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member Finance, and Corporate Services Director Law & Democratic Services / Head of Revenues and Benefits |
| Wards: | All |
| Locality Affected: | All |
| Parishes Affected: | All |

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This report recommends the delegation of authority to grant Council Tax Discretionary Discounts and exemptions from the Council Tax empty homes premium.
- 1.2 The recommendations help in delivering the Council's Priority of helping 'people to help themselves while always protecting the most vulnerable.'

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Authorise the Head of Revenues and Benefits in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services, the Director of Law and Democratic Services and the Board Director, to determine applications for Council Tax Discretionary Discounts.
- 2.2 Authorise the Head of Revenues and Benefits in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services, the Director of Law and Democratic Services and the Board Director Resources, to determine applications for exemption from the Council Tax Empty Homes Premium.

3. Detail

Discretionary Discounts

- 3.1 As a result of a recent judgement at Council Tax Valuation Tribunal Hearings, it has been recommended that Councils should have guidelines to help in determining where it may be appropriate to grant discretionary discounts.
- 3.2 The following Discretionary Discounts have already been granted:
 - 3.2.1 Council Tax Support (formerly known as Benefits)
 - 3.2.2 Empty property Discounts

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Andy Stevens, (01793) 464661, anstevens@swindon.gov.uk.

Council Tax Discretionary Discounts & Premiums

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

- 3.2.3 Properties subject to flooding
- 3.2.4 Units at the Women's Refuge
- 3.3 The Tribunal has advised that consideration and guidelines should be made for granting discounts in the following other circumstances:
 - 3.3.1 Exceptional Financial Circumstance (No income or assets). It is rare, but there may be occasions where an individual has been prevented from receiving any Department of Work and Pensions Benefits, and so has no income. If such individuals have no assets, then they may not be able to pay the 20% Council Tax contribution that working age claimants are asked to pay as a minimum.
 - 3.3.2 And that all other requests must be considered
- 3.4 A draft of the Discretionary Discounts Policy is attached in appendix 1. This shows how applications will be considered. Each case will be considered on its own merits by the Head of Revenues and Benefits, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services, the Director of law and Democratic Services and the Board Director Resources. The consultation will be carried out by way of the Cabinet Member Briefing Note process.

Empty Homes Premium Exemption

- 3.5 If a property has been empty and unfurnished in excess of 2 years, a 50% premium is charged in addition to the 'usual' Council Tax. At the full Council Meeting in December 2012, it was determined that the Council would adopt or charge such premiums, in order to encourage such properties to be brought back into use.
- 3.6 Guidance issued by the DCLG suggests that Councils should consider occasions when the Premium should not be adopted, particularly where the owners of such empty properties have genuine reasons why they cannot sell the Property. Since it would be difficult to specify every such reason, it is suggested that these matters should be considered on a case by case basis by the Head of Revenues and Benefits, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Services, the Director of Law and Democratic Services and the Board Director Resources. The consultation will be carried out by way of the Cabinet Member Briefing Note process.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Following the decision of the Tribunal Hearing it is recommended that all local Councils should adopt Policies for Discretionary Discounts. Various other Discounts could be specified should the Council wish to do so.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Andy Stevens, (01793) 464661, anstevens@swindon.gov.uk.

Council Tax Discretionary Discounts & Premiums

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 The costs of any Discretionary Discounts granted will have to be met by the Council's General fund. It is not anticipated that there will be many discounts granted.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Legal and Human Rights considerations have been taken fully into account in compiling this report. It is considered that the steps taken by the Council in relation to Council Tax discounts are proportionate and compatible with convention rights.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 The Policy will assist in delivering the Council's Priority of helping 'people to help themselves while always protecting the most vulnerable.'

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 A Diversity Impact Assessment has been undertaken and no adverse impacts have been found.

Risk Management

- 5.5 The Agreement to the Policy removes the risk that the Council has not formerly agreed such a 'full' policy.

6. Consultees

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

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 Recording of Officer Decisions.

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 - Discretionary Discounts Policy

9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan

- 9.1 This is a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for July 2016.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Andy Stevens, (01793) 464661, anstevens@swindon.gov.uk.

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Swindon Borough Council

Discretionary Council Tax Reductions

VERSION CONTROL

| Version | Date | Author | Comments |
|----------------|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | 1 st April 2013 | Andy Stevens | Local CTS scheme begins |
| 2 | 20 th November 2015 | Andy Stevens | Update to reflect other circumstances |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | | | |
| 5 | | | |

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Discretionary Discounts

1. Introduction

1.1 Section 13A 1c of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, provides the Council with additional discretionary powers to enable it to reduce the council tax liability, where statutory discounts, exemptions and reductions do not apply.

1.2 These discretionary awards can be given to:

- Individual Council Taxpayers;
- Groups of Council Taxpayers defined by a common set of circumstances;
- Council Taxpayers within a defined area: or
- To all Council Taxpayers within the Council's area.

1.3 When deciding on whether to grant a discretionary award, the Council will consider each application on its merits. Principles of reasonableness will apply in all cases with the authority deciding each case on relevant merits.

1.4 Any decision made will be without reference to any budgetary considerations notwithstanding the fact that any awards must be balanced against the needs of local taxpayers who will ultimately pay for an reduction in Council Tax income.

1.5 Likewise the period of any reduced liability will be considered in conjunction with the circumstances of the Council Taxpayer

2.0 Categories for Consideration

Mainly for the purposes of administration the following categories shall be used when considering cases.

2.1 Council Tax Support Scheme for Working Age Claimants

The Council has agreed a scheme under which low income households are awarded reductions. There are set calculations and rules, which are followed. A national statutory scheme awards reductions to pensioners.

2.2 Council Tax Empty Property Discounts Scheme

The Council has also agreed a scheme under which discounts are awarded to the Council Taxpayers responsible for empty properties for limited periods.

2.3 Properties Uninhabitable due to Flooding & Fire

The Council also allows exemptions for those who cannot reside in their homes following flooding. It can take several months or years in order to repair such properties and exemptions will be allowed, providing the Council Taxpayer is ensuring that work is undertaken to bring the property back into

use. Similar consideration should be given to fire damaged properties, if the Valuation Office Agency (HMRC) has not removed the property from the Council Tax banding list.

2.4 Exceptional Financial Hardship

2.4.1 In accordance with Section 13A 1a of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council has a Council Tax Reduction Scheme which provides support, through a discount, to those deemed to be within financial need. The Scheme has been designed to take into account the financial and specific circumstances of individuals through the use of applicable amounts, premiums and income disregards.

2.2 Applications may be made under this part of the policy for people who have qualified for support under the Council Tax Reduction Scheme but who are still experiencing severe financial hardship and other taxpayers who can show that they are experiencing financial hardship.

2.3 As part of the process of applying for additional support, all applicants must be willing to undertake **all** of the following:

- a. Make a separate application for assistance;
- b. Provide full details of their income and expenditure;
- c. The taxpayer is able to satisfy the Council that they are not able to meet their full Council Tax liability or part of their liability;
- d. Accept assistance from either the Council or third parties such as the CAB or similar organisations to enable them to manage their finances more effectively including the termination of non essential expenditure;
- e. Identify potential changes in payment methods and arrangements to assist the applicant;
- f. Assist the Council to minimise liability by ensuring that all discounts, exemptions and reductions are properly granted
- g. The taxpayer is able to demonstrate that all reasonable steps have been taken to meet their full Council Tax liability, including applications for employment or additional employment, if that is appropriate, or using alternative, legal and appropriate lines of credit;
- h. The taxpayer has no access to assets that could be realised and used to pay the Council Tax, and
- i. Maximise their income through the application for other welfare benefits, cancellation of non-essential contracts and outgoings and identifying the most economical tariffs for the supply of utilities and services generally.

2.4.4 The Council will be responsible for assessing applications against this policy and will consider the following factors when making any recommendations:

- a. Current household composition and specific circumstances including disability or caring responsibilities;
- b. Current financial circumstances;
- c. Determine what action(s) the applicant has taken to alleviate the situation;
- d. Consider alternative means of support that may be available to the applicant by:
 - i. re-profiling council tax debts or other debts;

- ii. applying for a Discretionary Housing Payment for Housing Benefit (where applicable);
- iii. maximising other benefits;
- iv. determining whether in the opinion of the decision maker the spending priorities of the applicant should be re-arranged

2.5 Other Circumstances

2.5.1 The Council will consider requests from Council Taxpayers for a reduction in their liability based on other circumstances, not specifically mentioned within this document. However the Council must be of the opinion that the circumstances relating to the application warrant further reduction in their liability for Council Tax having regard to the effect on other Council Taxpayers.

2.5.2 No reduction in liability will be granted where any statutory exemption or discount could be granted.

2.5.3 No reduction in liability will be granted where it would conflict with any resolution, core priority or objective of the Council.

2.6 Units at the Women's Refuge

The 22 separate units at the Women's Refuge were granted 100% discounts by full Council in December 2012.

3 Changes in Circumstances

3.1 The Council may revise any discretionary reduction in liability where the applicant's circumstances or situation has changed.

3.2 The taxpayer agrees that he/she must inform the Council immediately either by phone or in writing about any changes in their circumstances which might affect the claim for under this policy. Failure to do so may result in the withdrawal of the reduction granted for the year and the requirement to repay any outstanding amount to the Council. All changes in circumstances should be notified within 21 days in accordance with the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 as amended.

3.3 Where a reduction in liability has been granted incorrectly or in error either due to a failure to provide the correct or accurate information to the Council or some other circumstances, the Council Taxpayers account will be adjusted in the normal way.

4 The award and duration of a reduction in liability

4.1 Both the amount and the duration of the award are determined at the discretion of the Council, and will be done so on the basis of the evidence supplied and the circumstances of the claim.

4.2 The start date of such a payment and the duration of any payment will be determined by the Council. Awards will usually be made up to the end of the financial year in which the award is given, but consideration can be given of the likelihood for extending awards.

5 Payment & Notification

In line with legislation, any award shall be granted as a reduction in the liability of the Council Tax Payer thereby reducing the amount of Council Tax payable. The Council will notify the outcome of each application in writing and this may be via the issue of a revised bill.

6 Appeals

6.1 Appeals against the Council's decision may be made in accordance with Section 16 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

6.2 The Council Taxpayer must in the first instance write to the Council outlining the reason for their appeal. Once received the Council will reconsider its decision and notify the Council Taxpayer accordingly.

6.3 Where the Council Taxpayer remains aggrieved, a further appeal can then be made to the Valuation Tribunal. This further appeal should be made within 2 months of the decision of the Council not to grant any reductions. Full details can be obtained from the Councils website or from the Valuation Tribunal.

7 Fraud

7.1 The Council is committed to protecting public funds and ensuring funds are awarded to the people who are rightfully eligible to them.

7.2 An applicant who tries to fraudulently claim a reduction in liability by falsely declaring their circumstances, providing a false statement or evidence in support of their application, may have committed an offence under The Fraud Act 2006.

7.3 Where the Council suspects that such a fraud may have been committed, this matter will be investigated as appropriate and may lead to criminal proceedings being instigated.

Adoption and Implementation of Financial Inclusion Policy

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Author: | Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member Finance, and Corporate Services Director of Law & Democratic Services / Head of Revenues & Benefits |
| Wards: | All |
| Locality Affected: | All |
| Parishes Affected: | All |

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 Following the appointment of the Social Inclusion and Welfare Manager, as agreed and funded by the One Swindon Board, seek Cabinet support for the adoption of the Financial Inclusion Policy. This Policy along with the projects being developed will help residents maximise their income and make the most of their money, helping them to live free from the harmful effects of poverty. Poverty can adversely affect wellbeing and health.
- 1.2 The report also seeks support to increase the numbers of residents who are members of Credit Unions. Credit Union membership increases the financial support available and repayment does not cause undue hardship.
- 1.3 The Council's Priority number four is to help people to help themselves, while always protecting the most vulnerable children and adults and Financial Inclusion helps meet this priority. The recommendations also contribute directly to the delivery of pledge 24 of the Council's Vision: to provide early support for people in debt so that we significantly reduce the need to use bailiffs to recover Council Tax and other debts.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended:

- 2.1 Adopt the proposed Financial Inclusion Policy attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Authorise the Head of Revenues & Benefits to:
 - 2.2.1 Encourage residents to join Credit Unions, to ensure that if residents require financial support it is available and can be repaid, without causing hardship.
 - 2.2.2 Take the necessary steps to develop the projects summarised and set out in Appendix 1 and bring back to Cabinet for adoption as may be required.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Andy Stevens, (01793) 464661, anstevens@swindon.gov.uk.

Adoption and Implementation of Financial Inclusion Policy

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

3. Detail

Financial Inclusion

- 3.1 Swindon Borough Council has been running a successful programme to reduce the use of Enforcement Agents (bailiffs) for Council Tax arrears since August 2014 (Cabinet Minute 23, 2014/15 refers). Within the first year of operation, the Council had reduced the number of summons issued by 3,008 compared to 2013/4. At the same time the Council Tax collection rate improved by over 0.3% to 97.73. (Cabinet Minute 36, 2015/16 and associated report refers). During 2015/16 the number of summonses issued reduced by a further 1,600 and the number of Enforcement Agent (bailiff) referrals reduced by 1,899 (further information on this can be found in the Annual Debt Management Report).
- 3.2 In addition, in September 2015, Council adopted Priority number four, to help people to help themselves, while always protecting the most vulnerable children and adults. This included pledge 24, a commitment to reduce further the use of bailiffs (Council Minute 33, 2015/16 refers). Cabinet subsequently adopted the Council Plan to achieve these pledges and set a target to reduce the annual percentage of arrears cases leading to bailiff referrals.
- 3.3 A study into Financial Deprivation in Swindon using Financial information, and data from Council Tax, Housing Benefits, Housing rent and from the Swindon Emergency Assistance Fund, undertaken in October 2015, showed that those households in arrears and those requiring support were often the same. A number of these households were shown to have children. Following this study a business case was made and agreed by the One Swindon Board which led to the Appointment and funding for a Social Inclusion and Welfare Manager for a period of 17 months.
- 3.4 The Social Inclusion and Welfare Manager started work at the end of March 2016 and commenced working with partners and other Council officers in delivering a number of projects and has produced, in discussion with others the attached Financial Inclusion Policy.
- 3.5 If adopted by Cabinet, the list of suggested projects to be undertaken include:
 - 3.5.1 Maximise income and respond to welfare reform. This would ensure that residents claim their benefit entitlement and support is needed for those that need it to make their claims.
 - 3.5.2 Support residents to manage their debt by promoting and increasing the budgeting and debt advice that is available.
 - 3.5.3 Help residents to train, gain, and remain in employment through increasing the support available to support, coach and train those residents who need assistance.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Andy Stevens, (01793) 464661, anstevens@swindon.gov.uk.

Adoption and Implementation of Financial Inclusion Policy

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

- 3.5.4 Promote the expansion of affordable credit options, as an alternative to expensive payday loans or illegal money lending by increasing and promoting membership of credit union in Swindon and discourage the use of pay day loans and prevent the operation of 'loan sharks'.
- 3.5.5 Increase skills in money management, reduce fuel poverty, increase financial resilience, and promote access to bank accounts by assisting residents to switch energy suppliers and assist in the switch to credit meters. Promote eating well for less courses and access to bank accounts.
- 3.6 Further details of the projects are set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.7 These projects were presented and discussed at the Benefits and Welfare Reforms Strategy Cabinet Member Advisory Group on the 25th May 2016. The same meeting also received information on the work to prioritise emergency assistance awards to those with the greatest need and the development of additional communication via the Council's website and Facebook.
- 3.8 Attendees at the meeting noted the work being undertaken. Comments were made regarding what additional help could be provided to help individuals suffering with depression or mental health concerns. Further work on this is being undertaken and this will alter the delivery of some of the projects.
- 4. Alternative Options**
 - 4.1 Cabinet could request that officers investigate alternative projects and resubmit them for consideration. However, this policy statement has already benefited from contributions of external partners through the Benefits and Welfare Reforms Strategy Cabinet Member Advisory Group.
 - 4.2 Cabinet could choose not to adopt a policy, but this would delay or undermine achieving the relevant parts of the Council's Vision.
- 5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management**
 - Financial and Procurement Implications
 - 5.1 The cost of the Social Inclusion and Welfare Manager post is being met from the successful One Swindon bid and there have been no other costs identified with the Financial Inclusion work. Where successful Financial Inclusion work may prevent cost being incurred elsewhere in the Council or Public Sector, where the early intervention has prevent residents from falling into greater need and dependency.

Adoption and Implementation of Financial Inclusion Policy

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Legal and Human Rights considerations have been taken fully into account in compiling this report. It is considered that the steps taken by the Council in relation to Financial Inclusion are proportionate and compatible with convention rights.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 An additional member of staff has been employed by the Council using the One Swindon bid money. Financial Inclusion will help the Council in achieving Priority four, which is to help people to help themselves, while always protecting the most vulnerable children and adults.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) in respect of the Policy has been undertaken and no adverse impacts have been found. Consideration will be given as to how the projects will be delivered to all parts of the community, to maximise the benefits and how monitoring of this will be undertaken.

Risk Management

- 5.5 Risks of the individual projects will be considered as part of their delivery.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Board Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.
- 6.2 The Benefits and Welfare Reforms Strategy Cabinet Member Advisory Group

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Financial Inclusion Policy

9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan

- 9.1 This is not a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for July 2016.

Swindon Borough Council

Financial Inclusion (FI)

- POLICY STATEMENT -

VERSION CONTROL

| Version | Date | Comments |
|---------|----------------------------|----------|
| 1 | 14 th June 2016 | AH |
| 1.2 | 15 th June 2016 | AS |
| 3 | | |
| 4 | | |
| 5 | | |
| 6 | | |
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1. Financial Inclusion (FI): Overview & Current Active Projects

1.1 Overview

We want to help our residents to maximise their income and make the most of their money helping them to live free from the harmful effects of poverty. We know that poverty and money worries adversely affect wellbeing and health and can separate people from the community, so we want to do all we can to prevent financial crisis and promote social justice. We desire to make ***“financial inclusion”; “everyone’s business”***.

Our approach to helping people to become “financially included” is based on providing information, advice and support to help people understand and manage their own finances.

We are working to make the information and advice that is needed; accessible, consistent and credible nurturing honest relationships that help people manage in these times of welfare reform and increasingly shrinking council budgets.

This is an ongoing initiative which focuses on the following key objectives intended to limit the effects of poverty by supporting those who experience it:

- Maximise income and respond to welfare reforms
- Support residents to manage their debt
- Increase skills in money management and expenditure
- Help residents to train, gain and remain in employment
- Promote the expansion of affordable credit options and access to bank accounts
- Stop loan sharks and discourage “door to door” lending
- Reduce fuel poverty

This points us towards a set of outcomes that we would like to achieve going forwards:

- Adopt a “Fair Finance Pledge”
- Secure all legitimate benefits for residents
- Reduce residents’ problem debts and ensure they can meet ongoing commitments
- Help people into employment
- Credit unions to loan more money to more residents.
- Move people from prepaid to credit energy deals
- Stop loan sharks

- Limit the number of high street “pay day lenders”, high APR credit based retailers and pawn brokers
- Publish a “where to get computer and internet access, training and support in Swindon” guide. The list to detail free IT access points across the Borough and the organisations offering IT training
- Secure funding from the Big Lottery on behalf of “partners” to support our plans for collaborative working
- Encourage partners to increase the provision of household items to set up home
- Encourage partners to increase the provision of crisis; food, fuel, clothing and travel expenses

1.2 Current Active Projects

1.2.1 Swindon Emergency Assistance Fund (SEAF)

Monitoring of the service has led us to make some enhancements (from beginning of May) to ensure that the limited budget that we have is used in the most appropriate manner:

- Proof of circumstance is now required
- Ratification of need by an appropriate third party for expensive capital items
- Tailored response: E.g. amount of gas/electricity top up provided in line with next “pay day”

Early indications are that we will deliver within budget this financial year while ensuring that those in most need are fully supported.

We are currently about to implement a pilot project with Swindon Citizen Advice Bureau using the SEAF as a referral source in regard to:

- Debt advice
- Maximising benefit entitlement
- Switching energy suppliers

1.2.2 Communications

We have adopted a brand: “Swindon Money Matters”: Used as a “wrapper” in regard to Information for use by residents and frontline staff.

Our website will contain further pages covering:

- Benefits Cap
- Universal Credit

- Managing Debt
- Maximising Benefits Income
- Fuel Poverty
- Credit unions
- Loan Sharks & High Cost Lending

A new Facebook Page: “Swindon Money Matters” will be designed as a vehicle for:

- Articles linking to our website content
- Notification of changes to our website
- Finance tips
- Advertising: Applicable training courses etc.

1.2.3 Affordable Credit

Increase the usage of credit unions and discourage the use of doorstep/pay day lenders and loan sharks

- Discussions with Clivey and Wiltshire Savings and Loans
- Expand and promote collection points
- Set up SBC as first “save as you earn” employer; target GWH as second
- Anti-loan shark campaign
- Launch “Money management courses” for 5-11 and 11-19 year old in schools across the borough

1.2.4 Action on Fuel Poverty

We are looking to deliver a switching service initially to our council residents and eventually to all SBC residents.

- 6,300 council houses have PAYG meters
- PAYG optimisation circa £150/household/year
- PAYG to credit meter could save nearly £500/household/year

2. FI: Our Guiding Principles

To make the best use of the Borough's collective resources we must seek to build consensus about how to make a measurable difference to financially excluded residents, by focusing on the following principles:

2.1 Understand the local demographic: We know that financial exclusion is closely linked with poverty and deprivation so we wish to promote an honest dialogue that helps people to own their rights and responsibilities.

2.2 Align budget processes to support the most vulnerable: Despite reduced public sector funding services need to be maintained to mitigate the worst aspects of poverty. Part of this must include residents receiving expert housing, welfare rights and debt advice.

2.3 Develop Borough wide consensus and partnership responses: To facilitate this we have developed the Welfare Advisory Group and we may wish to consider developing a tighter integration via a "Swindon Advice Compact" at a future date and to publish timely reviews of proposals and activities. Through this initiative we seek to reduce duplication and improve the targeting of resources while providing partners the opportunity to share information and plan together.

2.4 Target support to protect the most vulnerable and to prevent crisis: Particularly preventing homelessness and ensuring that families, disabled and elderly people secure their full benefit entitlements.

2.5 Provide universal information and advice to prevent people becoming vulnerable: To provide a range of information and self-help materials for the public, council departments and agencies providing support.

2.6 Monitor and review the above with partners to create continuous improvement: The council and its partners have limited resources so we have to show how effective our interventions are.

2.7 Understand the balance between the individual and structural causes of financial exclusion: At times national policy can make it difficult for individuals to respond in their local context e.g. the "under-occupancy changes" highlighted the problems people faced in securing smaller accommodation or employment to offset the reductions in housing benefit.

To help partners to work together we propose a financial inclusion action plan which translates the above objectives, targets and principles into actions and consolidates our partnership approach by creating a common focus. Progress towards actions needs to be monitored and reported on a timely basis to provide accountability and demonstrate the difference we are making.

3. What Financial Inclusion Means and Why We Need To Promote It

Financial inclusion is about people feeling in control of their finances and being less vulnerable to exploitation. Most of us experience financial exclusion to some degree e.g. when we face hidden charges or struggle to understand complex tariffs. Fortunately many of us can cope with the costs of financial exclusion caused by complex, confusing and competitive processes. However the adverse impact increases with poverty for the obvious reason that the less you have the more it matters when you have to pay more.

We can help people to become more financially included by providing free and impartial advice and information about financial services and products, to support them to manage their money, plan for the future and avoid financial crisis. These services will help residents to overcome and address many of the challenges that financial exclusion creates.

Financial inclusion is closely linked to “financial capability”: This is a term used to describe the understanding, skills and knowledge which allow residents to make more confident and informed decisions about their money.

People who are at risk of financial exclusion are also more likely to experience poverty and social exclusion. Many people living with poverty cope amazingly well and can be experts at managing limited finances. However, when people are living on tight budgets it doesn't take much for financial exclusion to have an adverse impact on individuals, families and the wider community by increasing disadvantage and placing people at risk of homelessness.

Being financially excluded can make it more difficult for people to plan for the future and cope with crises like long-term sickness, unemployment or family breakdown. It can also mean that people pay more for everyday essential items such as utility costs and credit. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has estimated that the ‘poverty premium’ paid by poor people for such essential items can be as much as 10p in every pound¹.

Financial worries can also affect mental health and wellbeing. In 2013 the national debt charity; StepChange was contacted by an average of 5,000 people per month experiencing problems of debt coupled with anxiety and/or depression². The stress which can be caused through money worries has also been cited as a major cause of relationship breakdown.

The impacts of financial exclusion are worsened by poverty and although Swindon is relatively prosperous there are parts of Swindon that are relatively poor, with 6% of residents living in the 10% most deprived areas in the country³. A further 15.2% of people in Swindon live in areas amongst the 20% most deprived nationally.

Benefit changes introduced under the welfare reforms has had an impact on some residents' finances. We estimate that the impact of welfare reforms to date (with the impact of more to follow) has cost Swindon as much as £4 million per year. The Government aims for its welfare reforms to

¹ <http://www.jrf.org.uk/blog/2013/06/poor-paying-more-utilities-financial>

² <http://www.theguardian.com/money/2013/may/15/charity-debt-mental-health-stepchange>

³ 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation

reduce “welfare dependency” and to ensure that “work will always pay”. This is predicated on there being sufficient jobs and that the people affected by the reforms will be able to access these jobs. In January 2016 the UK unemployment rate was 5.1%, and in Swindon it is lower. It is difficult to say whether there is or is not a surplus of work in Swindon and in any case some long-term unemployed people need more support to become work ready. This may mean that some people will feel alienated when they cannot find a way to secure sufficient income to live on through work whilst benefit entitlements are being cut. Some examples of the impact of welfare reforms in Swindon:

- The implementation of the “under-occupancy changes for social sector claimants” resulting in a reduction in Housing Benefits.
- Local Council Tax Support reduced entitlement for working age claimants
- The Benefits Cap of £26,000 per annum (and due to reduce to £20,000)
- Changes to Tax Credits within the context of universal credit will affect a significant proportion of the tax credit claimants in Swindon over the next two years
- A number of jobseekers in Swindon are sanctioned each month

4. Swindon's Approach to Financial Inclusion

Our approach to financial inclusion must focus on coordinating activity to make the best use of all of our collective resources. We can do this through our Welfare Advisory Group which represents a number of partners but this group needs to continue to grow and become better consolidated (A Swindon Compact?). This way of working should help us to develop a simplified and consistent offer for residents. We know that financially excluded people are vulnerable to seductive marketing, so we want to use our networks to assure residents that they can be trusted to counter this.

The key objectives of the group should be to:

- Develop a Borough wide consensus about how we can best use our collective resources
- Reduce the duplication and improve the targeting of resources
- Provide partners the opportunity to share information and plan together.
- Develop joint campaigns
- Promote an honest dialogue that helps people to meet their rights and responsibilities
- Improve our understanding of financial inclusion and of the difference we are making
- Tackle key issues in a coordinated way across the Borough.

The group has the capacity to bring together the Borough's specialist advice agencies to coordinate work to maximise incomes and reduce problem debt. Improved coordination helps us to reduce people's fear and uncertainty and to maximise our resources to maintain the foundations for stability. The group can facilitate partners to respond to poverty and inequality by supporting them to be part of identifying and preventing the risks their clients face due to financial exclusion. The group's overall approach to financial inclusion can be built on integrating three tiers of Support:

Primary prevention activities encourage partners to make financial inclusion 'everyone's business'. This involves supporting non-specialist staff to routinely talk to residents about financial inclusion issues and know how to refer to appropriate agencies for advice.

Secondary prevention activities are our direct specialist information, advice and accommodation services. These are specialist services that can be accessed by staff and residents when additional support is needed.

Crisis services are available to residents when community and preventative support fails to prevent crisis. Crisis services provide acute support for people facing destitution.

5. Our Financial Inclusion Priorities for 2016/18

To help us achieve the five objectives stated in the introduction they are expanded upon in our action plan alongside performance monitoring.

5.1 Objective 1: Maximise income and respond to welfare reform: By maximising benefit entitlement, tackling the barriers to take up (including digital inclusion) and contributing towards mitigating the impact of any adverse aspects of the welfare reform programme.

Priorities for 2016/18:

- Support and encourage residents to claim their full benefit entitlement
- Raise awareness of welfare reform changes
- Prepare for universal credit by enhancing the “local support services framework”
- Support residents to get online by increasing access to free or low cost PCs and opportunities to access free or low cost training

Performance will be measured by:

- Number of clients seen and benefits gained by “The Partnership”
- IT, welfare reform and benefit training sessions held
- Increase in the number of access points to hardware for free / low cost internet access

5.2 Objective 2: Support residents to manage their debt: By promoting free and impartial debt advice to prevent money worries from reaching crisis point and to increase homelessness prevention.

Priorities for 2016/18:

- Increase the prevention of homelessness through debt advice
- Promote free debt advice services
- Provide training to non-specialist staff on completing a household budget
- Provide debt and budgeting advice to Work Programme clients
- Develop a financial capability programme to support care leavers (young people & long-term mental/physical health patients)
- Provide feedback to support the Swindon Borough Council Debt Management and Fair Debt policies

Performance will be measured by:

- Number of clients seen by “The Partnership”
- Value of debts resolved by “The Partnership”
- % of care leavers provided with financial capability support.

5.3 Objective 3: Help residents to train, gain and remain in employment: By developing holistic packages of support.

Priorities for 2016/18:

- Build better links between Work Programme providers and:
 - Other agencies able to add to the education & training mix
 - Potential Employers
- Provide face to face employment support within the most deprived wards in the Borough
- Support young care leavers to enter into training, apprenticeships and employment.

Performance will be measured by:

- Number of people supported into employment
- Number of jobs people are supported into
- Number of young care leavers supported into training, apprenticeships and employment

5.4 Objective 4: Promote the expansion of affordable credit options: As alternatives to expensive payday loans or illegal money lending.

Priorities for 2016/18:

- Increase credit union membership by promoting the benefits of regular saving and encourage businesses in Swindon to adopt payroll deduction schemes
- Discourage people from turning to loan sharks
- Develop a strategy to dispose of loan shark activity and limit the emergence of high street pay day lenders/pawn brokers/high APR credit based retailers

Performance will be measured by:

- Credit union membership.
- Credit union increase in savings.
- Credit union loans granted.

5.5 Objective 5: Increase skills in money management, reduce fuel poverty, increase financial resilience and promote access to bank accounts.

Priorities for 2016/18:

- Promote the idea of securing the best energy deal; providing support and guidance for those wishing to find out more
- Identify people on prepayment meters and provide support for replacing with credit meters
- Promote budgeting, money saving ideas and “eat well for less” courses in target wards and provide online support guidance/materials
- Ensure the availability of “good”, easy access, simple bank accounts alongside in bank education reference the value of credit unions

Performance will be measured by:

- Referrals received in regard to “energy services”
- Number of people for whom we reduce their energy costs
- Number of people attending courses
- Number of “good” bank account providers & uptake of accounts

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References from Other Council Bodies Health and Wellbeing Board

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

Author: Cabinet Member for Adult Health and Social Care
Director of Law and Democratic Services

Wards: All

Locality Affected: All

Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 To consider a reference from the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board held on 25th May 2016.
- 1.2 In particular, Cabinet is asked to note and endorse the findings of the Swindon Suicide Audit and to agree that the revised Suicide Prevention Strategy be adopted.
- 1.3 In Swindon a Suicide Audit has been carried out regularly since 2009 and the findings used to review and update a Swindon suicide prevention strategy. This work is overseen by the multi-agency Swindon Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Group.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to consider Minute 63(2) of the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting held on 25th May 2016, concerning the latest profile of suicide in Swindon, and outlining the actions being undertaken to prevent the occurrence of suicide, and to:

- 2.1.1 note and endorse the findings of the Swindon Suicide Audit
- 2.1.2 agree that the revised Suicide Prevention Strategy be adopted.

3. Detail

- 3.1 At its meeting on 25th May 2016, the Health and Wellbeing Board considered a report providing an update on the latest profile of suicide in Swindon, and outlining the actions being undertaken to prevent the occurrence of suicide. The key recommendations to reduce the suicide rate were as follows (Appendix 2, part 4):
 - 3.1.1 Ensure that all those working with high risk groups continue to have access to appropriate training on suicide and self-harm, including those working in schools and colleges, emergency departments, other emergency services, primary care, care environments and the criminal and

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Steve Jones, Direct Dial Telephone Number – 01793 463602, email - stevejones@swindon.gov.uk.

References from Other Council Bodies Health and Wellbeing Board

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

youth justice systems. Six, two day ASIST suicide prevention training courses will be rolled out over 2016-2018.

- 3.1.2 Focus mental health promotion and suicide prevention interventions on boys and men. Interventions should be targeted through community locations as well as health settings. The aim is to engage more effectively with men including those who are homeless or suffering from substance misuse issues. This would include Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide initiative to engage more with men bereaved by suicide.
- 3.1.3 Review the Self-Harm Register in the Great Western Hospital Emergency Department and use data to inform the Swindon suicide audit and prevention strategy. This will include a register for Children and Young People. In conjunction with this a task group to reduce emergency hospital admissions for self harm will be set up to tackle the high rates in Swindon. This should include service user feedback from attenders on what could make a difference.
- 3.1.4 Review substances used for self-poisoning and where possible reduce access to these substances.
- 3.1.5 Ensure that mental health needs are given equal consideration to physical health needs in those with a long-term health condition, and provide support for self-management and self-care which supports mental wellbeing as well as physical health.
- 3.1.6 Support campaigns and initiatives to reduce loneliness and social isolation.
- 3.1.7 Work with planners and developers in Swindon to include suicide risk in health and safety considerations when designing multi-storey car parks, bridges and high-rise buildings that may offer suicide opportunities.
- 3.1.8 Address the suicide risk associated with homelessness through the establishment of Homelessness forum and links to the homelessness strategy 2016-21.
- 3.1.9 Provide better information and support to those bereaved or affected by suicide; support the media in delivering sensitive approaches to suicide and suicidal behaviour and support research, data collection and monitoring including:
- 3.1.10 Work with the local media in Swindon to encourage responsible reporting of stories around suicide and self-harm and to provide information about sources of support and helplines when reporting suicide and suicidal behaviour.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Steve Jones, Direct Dial Telephone Number – 01793 463602, email - stevejones@swindon.gov.uk.

References from Other Council Bodies

Health and Wellbeing Board

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

- 3.1.11 Ensure that interventions implemented as a result of these recommendations are evaluated and learning shared in Swindon and nationally in order to develop the evidence base on what works in suicide prevention. Capturing the views of those who have attempted suicide on what could make a difference.
- 3.1.12 Thematic Lessons learnt from agencies route cause analysis of deaths by suicide are shared where appropriate with relevant agencies.
- 3.2 Following its consideration of the report, and the Swindon Suicide Audit, Strategy and Recommendations for 2016-2018, set out in Appendix 1 to the report, the Board resolved:
- (1) To note the findings of the Swindon Suicide Audit and endorse the strategic recommendations.
- (2) To recommend to Cabinet and the Clinical Commissioning Governing Body that they note the Swindon Suicide Audit findings, endorse the recommendations and adopt the strategy
- 3.3 The original report considered by the Health and Wellbeing Board is available on the Council's website, via the following link, or on request from Committee and Members Services (*the clerk's contact details are set out below*).
- <http://ww5.swindon.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=933&MId=7298&Ver=4>
- 4. Alternative Options**
- 4.1 It is a matter for Cabinet as to whether the recommendations of the Health and Wellbeing Board, are supported or not.
- 5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management**
- Financial and Procurement Implications
- 5.1 This report has no financial or procurement implications. The report to the Health and Wellbeing Board advises that any recommendations made in that report could be resourced within current budget allocations and that, where additional resources might be required, an appropriate business case would be prepared.
- Legal and Human Rights Implications
- 5.2 Legal and Human Rights considerations have been taken fully into account in compiling this report. It is considered that the recommendations of this report are compatible with convention rights.
-

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Steve Jones, Direct Dial Telephone Number – 01793 463602, email - stevejones@swindon.gov.uk.

References from Other Council Bodies Health and Wellbeing Board

Cabinet

Date: 13th July 2016

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 This report has no other specific implications.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) is not required in respect of this report. The report to the Board advises that all key diversity groups have been considered whilst undertaking the review and that the report specifically highlights issues regarding gender, age, disability (particularly long term conditions), sexual orientation which have specific implication for suicide prevention.r.

Risk Management

- 5.5 There are no identified unmitigated risks.

6. Consultees

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

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None.

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Minute 63 of the Health and Wellbeing Board – 25th May 2016.
- 8.2 Appendix 2 - Swindon Suicide Audit, Strategy and Recommendations 2016 – 2018

9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme/Forward Plan

- 9.1 This is not a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme / Forward Plan for June 2016.

CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 13TH JULY 2016

MINUTE FOR CONFIRMATION

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

WEDNESDAY, 25 MAY 2016

63. Suicide Prevention

The Board considered a report providing an update on the latest profile of suicide in Swindon, and outlining the actions being undertaken to prevent the occurrence of suicide.

Frances Mayes, Senior Public Health Manager at Swindon Borough Council, introduced the report and highlighted how suicide prevention is a long standing Public Health responsibility that is now the responsibility of the Local Authority. She noted that in Swindon a suicide audit has been carried out regularly since 2009, with the findings being used to review and update a suicide prevention strategy. She outlined the national policy context, the high risk groups, and the local suicide prevention governance arrangements, and confirmed that in all measures the rate for Swindon is slightly higher than England and the South West, but not statistically significantly different.

Following the presentation of the report, and the Swindon Suicide Audit, Strategy and Recommendations for 2016-2018 in Appendix 1, Board members discussed the matters raised, including:

- The measuring of repeat self-harming which is measured the same way across the country. The Board noted that there are a small number of people within Swindon who can be categorised as such, and that there has been a reduction this year in the number of children in this category. It was agreed that an item to discuss self-harming would be added to the Board's Work Programme.
- The Board were advised that adults do not currently have as many support services in place as children, but that a risk panel is now set up following each suicide attempt to determine the support required. Data from each panel will be analysed following at least 15 months of operation to help redress this imbalance.

Resolved – (1) To note the findings of the Swindon Suicide Audit and endorse the strategic recommendations.

(2) To recommend to Cabinet and the Clinical Commissioning Governing Body that they note the Swindon Suicide Audit findings, endorse the recommendations and adopt the strategy.

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Swindon Suicide Audit, Strategy and Recommendations 2016 – 2018

Frances Mayes

Senior Public Health Manager

Debbie Stott

Public Health Intelligence Analyst/Project Co-ordinator

On behalf of the Suicide Prevention Group.

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1. Introduction

Suicide is a major issue for society and a leading cause of years of life lost. In England one person dies every two hours as a result of suicide. When someone dies by suicide, the effect on their family and friends is devastating and many others involved in providing support and care will feel the impact. Suicides are not inevitable. An inclusive society that avoids the marginalisation of individuals and which support people at times of personal crisis will help to prevent suicides (DH 2012a).

Definition of Suicide

In England and Wales, suicide is defined as a death given an underlying cause of intentional self-harm or injury/poisoning of undetermined intent. (Suicides in England and Wales by Local Authority 2002-2014, ONS 2016) The underlying cause of death is coded by the Office of National Statistics using the World Health Organisations International Classification of Diseases codes (ICD codes) X60-X84 and Y10-Y34. These are based on death certificate. These are the codes used in the Primary Care Mortality Database which has been used extensively to analyse the data (see section 2).

The National Policy Context

A national suicide prevention strategy “Preventing suicide in England: a cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives” was published in September 2012. The strategy outlines two main objectives:

- to reduce the suicide rate in the general population in England
- to provide better support for those bereaved or affected by suicide.

The strategy emphasises the importance of a cross-sector approach to suicide prevention. It highlights six key areas for action to support delivery of its objectives:

1. Reduce the risk of suicide in key high-risk groups
2. Tailor approaches to improve mental health in specific groups
3. Reduce access to the means of suicide
4. Provide better information and support to those bereaved or affected by suicide
5. Support the media in delivering sensitive approaches to suicide and suicidal behaviour
6. Support research, data collection and monitoring.

High Risk Groups

Some groups of people are known to be at higher risk of suicide than the general population. The national suicide strategy highlights reducing the risk of suicide in these key high-risk groups as a priority area for action.

The groups at high risk of suicide are:

- young and middle-aged men
- people in the care of mental health services, including inpatients
- people with a history of self-harm
- people in contact with the criminal justice system
- specific occupational groups, such as doctors, nurses, veterinary workers, farmers and agricultural workers

Local Suicide Prevention Governance arrangements

In Swindon a suicide audit has been carried out regularly since 2009 and the findings used to review and update a local suicide prevention strategy. This work is overseen by the Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Group, chaired by Public Health which reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board. Safeguarding issues are reported to the Adult Safeguarding Board through the Chair of the Suicide Prevention Group who represents the Director of Public Health on the Adult Safeguarding Board. Suicides of those under 18 are reviewed through the Wiltshire and Swindon Child Death Overview Panel. There are also links to the AWP Suicide Prevention Group, Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat Group, Perinatal Mental Health Group and Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Strategy Steering Group.

2. Suicides in Swindon

Key points:

- Although the rate of suicide in Swindon appears to have risen between 2010-12 and 2012-14 the rise is not statistically significant.
- The suicide rate in Swindon is in line with the South West, England and Comparator Area's rates.
- The Suicide rate in Swindon has risen faster than in South West and England although year on year data indicates that it may be falling in the last two years.
- Nearly three quarters of deaths by suicide occur in men.
- Compared to England and the South West the rate of deaths for men between the age of 15 -34 years is higher in Swindon and the rate for women over the age of 74 is also higher in Swindon.
- However, the most common age of suicide was 30 -34 year olds and 45 – 49 year olds.
- Nearly half of those who died by suicide were single and only 17% were married.
- 26% of those who died by suicide had ingested alcohol at the time of their death. Many of those identified as having a substance misuse problem were not known to services
- Swindon has significantly high rates of emergency admissions for self-harm compared to England. 11% of those who died by suicide had a record of self-harm within the last 12 months.
- 30% of those who took their own lives had reported suicidal thoughts and 10% had clear intention and plans
- Data on deprivation is inconclusive. In the top 6 wards with the highest crude rate of suicide 3 were in the 4 most deprived wards. However, review of LSOA showed 28% of deaths occurred in the 3 most deprived areas compared to 38% in the 3 least deprived wards. Mosaic data indicated that those who took their own lives may have been economically challenged.
- Statistics from Men's Health Forum show clearly that on many measures men appear to have difficulties, distress and disconnection and that they do not engage as readily as women with mental health services and are less likely to be diagnosed with common mental health conditions.

Death data are usually presented by the date of registration. This is because the death will not be listed in official statistics until it is registered. Many reasons cause a delay in date of occurrence of death to date of registration, for example if the death is investigated by a coroner. It may sometimes be more meaningful when retrospectively examining deaths by suicide to look at the year the death actually occurred to identify if there any trends emerging. However, as the number of people who take their own lives is relatively quite small it can be

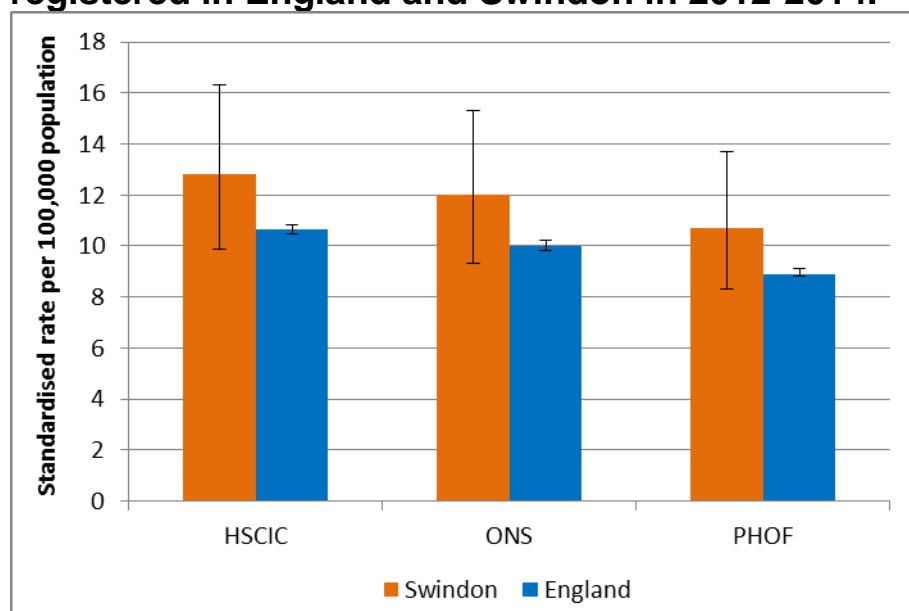
difficult to make statistical inference that the trend has any underlying cause. Throughout this audit, data will be presented by either year of death or year of registration as appropriate and will be labelled clearly.

Official statistics for rates of suicide

National official suicide statistics use directly standardised rates per 100,000 population. This takes into account the age profile of the population so that you can make direct comparisons between the local and national rates and between different areas.

Nationally, there are several organisations that collate information on how many suicides take place across the country. In order to make comparisons between areas, a rate is calculated which takes into account the population structure of an area. The chart below shows 3 different sources of Official Statistics showing the 3 year suicide rate for deaths registered in 2012-2014.

Different sources for age standardised suicide rates for deaths registered in England and Swindon in 2012-2014.



HSCIC = Health & Social Care Information Centre

ONS = Office for National Statistics

PHOF = Public Health Outcomes Framework

The vertical lines at the top of each of the bars on the chart above are confidence intervals and they show the range in which the true suicide rate is likely to lie with 95% certainty. Where the lines overlap there is no statistically significant difference between the two rates.

These different sources use slightly different age ranges to analyse the deaths data and calculate rates which explains the slight variation. Rates from different sources should not be compared to each other. All three sources show Swindon has a statistically similar rate to England.

HSCIC show the highest rates: the rates per 100,000 population are 12.8 for Swindon and 10.6 for England.

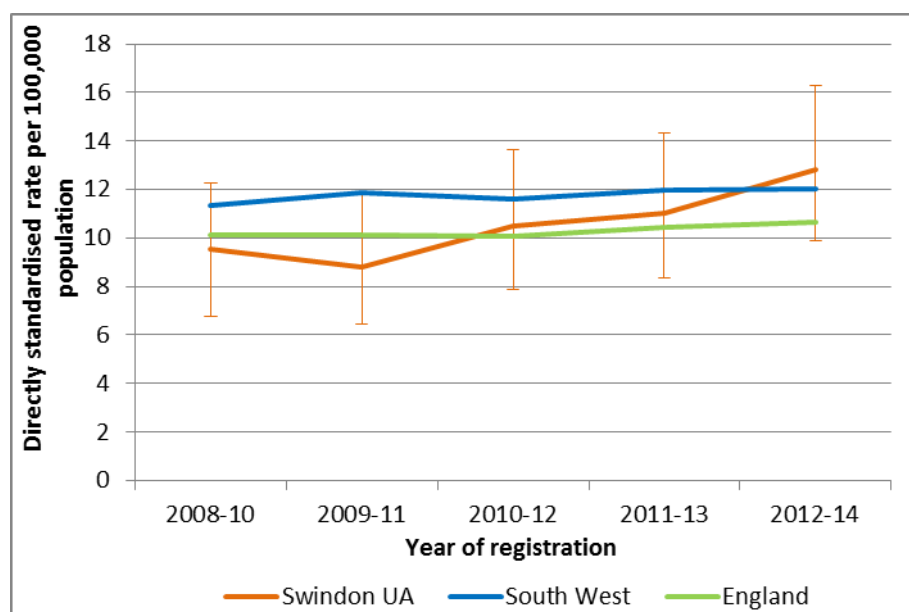
ONS: The rates per 100,000 population are 12.0 for Swindon and 10.0 for England.

PHOF: The rates per 100,000 population are 10.7 for Swindon and 8.9 for England.

This audit will use the HSCIC rates for comparison as these statistics are available for more rigorous analysis at a local level. The graph below shows how the suicide rate has changed between 2008-10 and 2012-14, by year of registration. Although the rate in Swindon has been rising over the past three periods it should be noted that the change is not statistically significant. The chart also shows that the rate has been increasing in England as well.

Because of the relatively low numbers of suicides by unitary authority suicide rates are usually presented as a three year rolling average. This makes it easier to see trends in suicide rates.

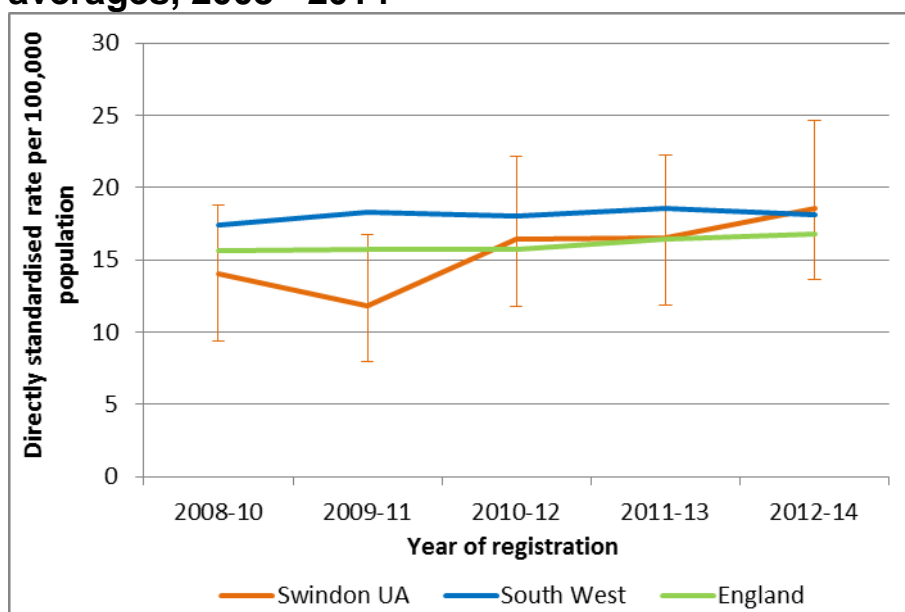
Suicide rates in England, South West and Swindon, 3 year averages, 2008-2014. (All persons)



Source: HSCIC

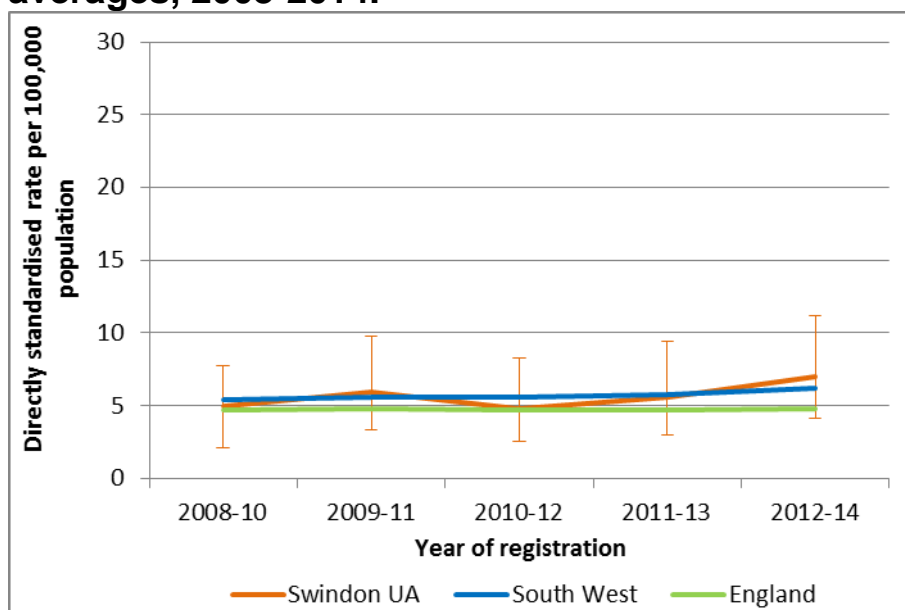
Further analysis by gender has been undertaken below. It should be noted that the Swindon rate for female is not very robust due to the small number of deaths involved. Below the charts show that the suicide rate has risen for both males and females.

Suicide rate in males in England, South West and Swindon, 3 year averages, 2008 - 2014



Source: HSCIC Time trend for directly standardised suicide rate

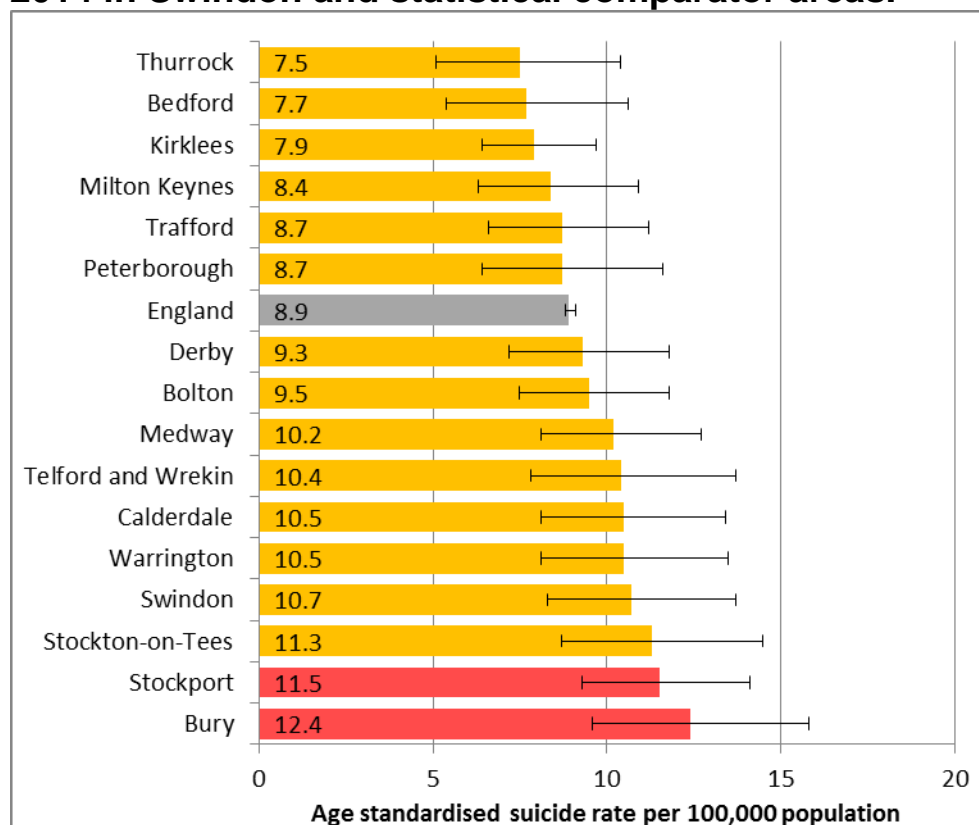
Suicide rate in females in England, South West and Swindon, 3 year averages, 2008-2014.



Source: HSCIC Time trend for directly standardised suicide rate

Below the Swindon rate is compared to areas which are most similar to Swindon population profile. This shows that the suicide rate in Swindon is not statistically different to our comparator areas.

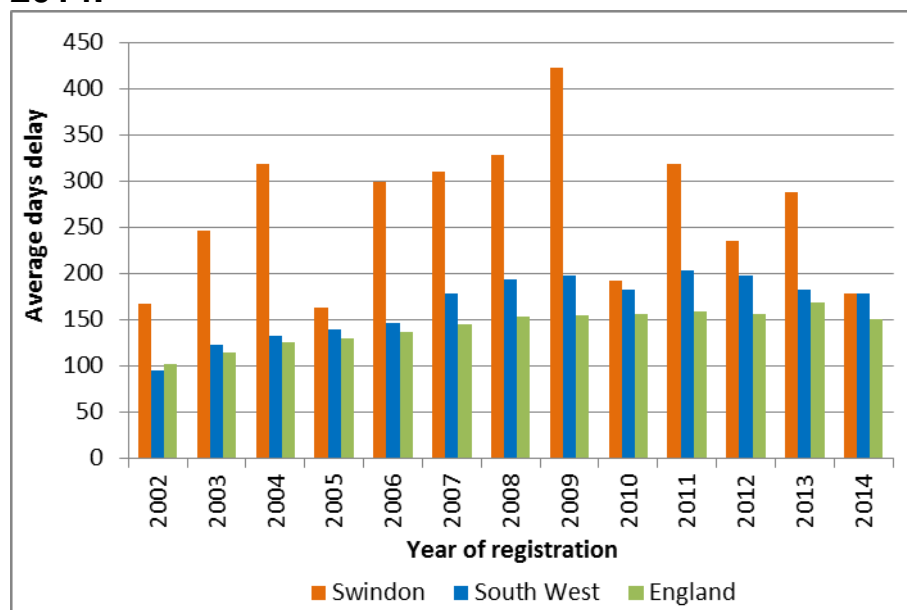
Standardised Suicide rate in persons for deaths registered 2012-2014 in Swindon and statistical comparator areas.



Source: Suicide Profiles, Public Health England. www.fingertips.phe.org.uk

The suicide rate in Swindon increased between 2008-10 and 2012-14. Interpretation of low rates in past years was complicated by a large number of days delay in registration of a death by suicide. The delay in registration is measured by ONS and reported upon by local authority and is the difference in days between the date the death occurred and the date it was registered. The chart below shows the average number of days delay for Swindon, South West and England. From 2010, the average delay for Swindon has been closer to the national and regional averages. However, in 2009 and the period 2002 to 2008, the delays to registration were commonly averaging over 300 days and far above the regional and national values.

Annual average number of days delay from date of death to registration of the death, Swindon, South West and England, 2002-2014.



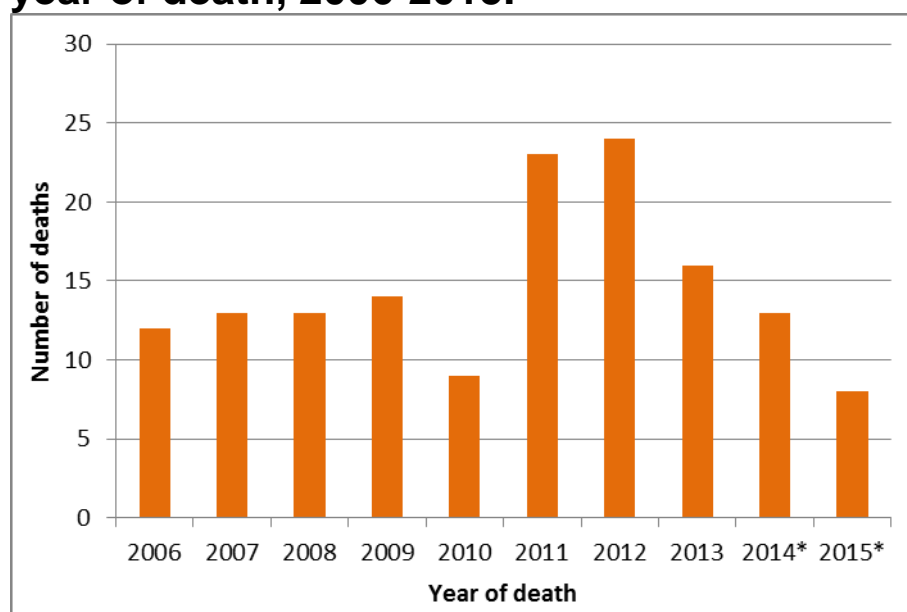
Source: ONS

Swindon suicide audit data

Further analysis of deaths by suicide in Swindon has been undertaken using a combination of the Primary Care Mortality Database (PCMD) and the Swindon Suicide Audit Database. The Swindon database uses information collected from the coroner, the GP, drug and alcohol services, mental health and acute trusts, and Lift Primary Care Psychology service.

The coroner for Swindon and Wiltshire informs the Swindon Borough Council Public Health team when a suicide occurs. The Public Health team then send out requests for information from GPs, psychiatric services, Great Western Hospital (GWH) and drugs and alcohol services. When comparing the number of deaths in the Swindon database to the number in the PCMD, for the deaths taking place in the years 2006-2015, the Public Health team were informed of 76% (n=110) out of a total of 145.

Number of deaths by suicide in Swindon, annual total by year of death, 2006-2015.



*It is likely the data for these years are not complete because not all deaths in these years will be registered at the time of writing this report.

Source: PCMD

The chart above shows that since 2012 the number of suicides per year has decreased. Although the figures for 2014 and 2015 may not be complete the signs are encouraging: this data is not yet included in the three year rolling reporting by national organisation as periods reported earlier in this document.

Gender

Data from the PCMD shows that of deaths from suicide occurring between 2006 and 2015, 73% were men, 27% women.

Number of deaths by suicide in Swindon, 2006-2015, male and female totals

| | Male | Female | Total |
|-----------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| 2006-2015 | 106 (73%) | 39 (27%) | 145 |

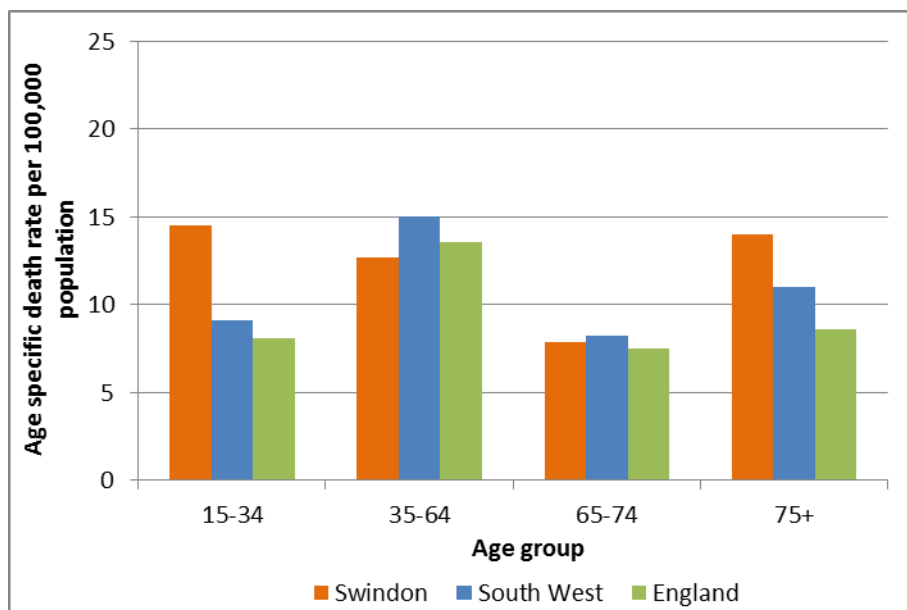
Source: PCMD aggregated by year of death

Age

The PCMD data shows that, for 2006-2015 (date of death), the age at death ranges from 15 to 85 years old. The average age at death for females is 45 years and 44 years for males.

The chart below compares age specific death rates for Swindon, the South West and England for deaths registered in 2012-2014.

All-persons age specific suicide rate in Swindon, South West and England, deaths registered in 2012-2014.

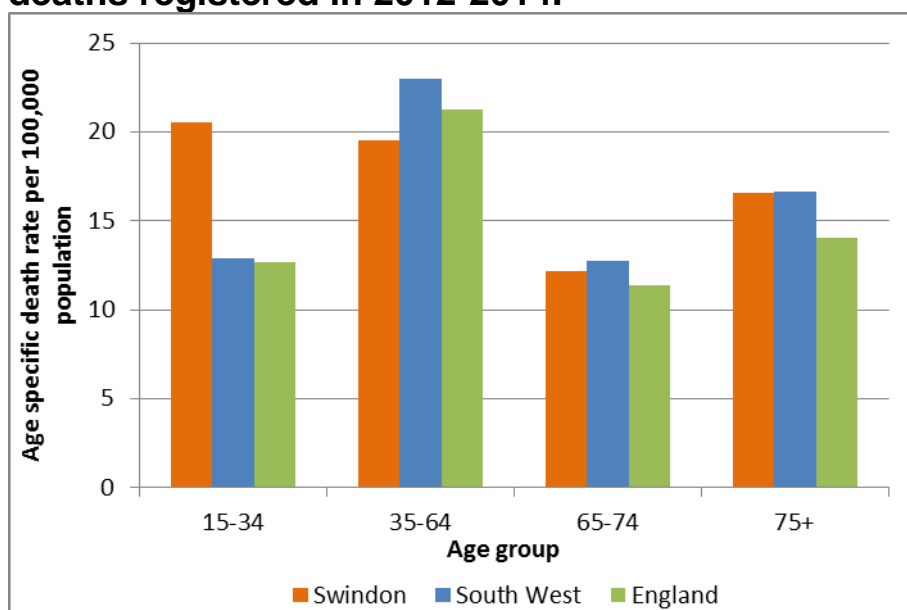


Source: HSCIC

Note: the size of the age ranges varies

For 2012-14 the chart shows that in Swindon there were slightly higher rates for the younger and older age groups but the number of deaths is small and care should be taken when interpreting these findings. The chart below shows that the picture is consistent for males and females, although there is a slightly higher rate for women over the age of 75 than for men of the same age.

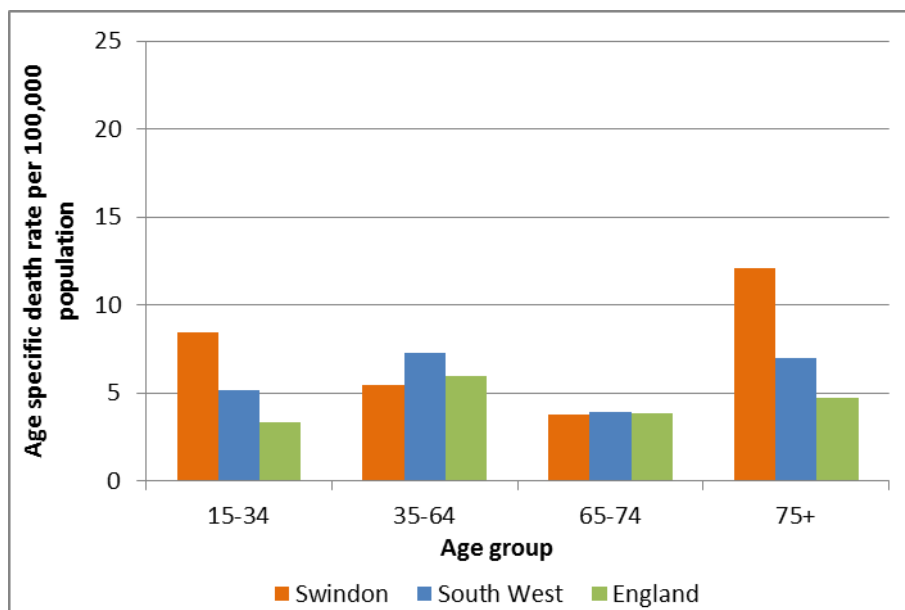
Male, age specific suicide rate in Swindon, South West and England, deaths registered in 2012-2014.



Note: the size of the age ranges varies

Source: HSCIC

Female, age specific suicide rate in Swindon, South West and England, deaths registered in 2012-2014.



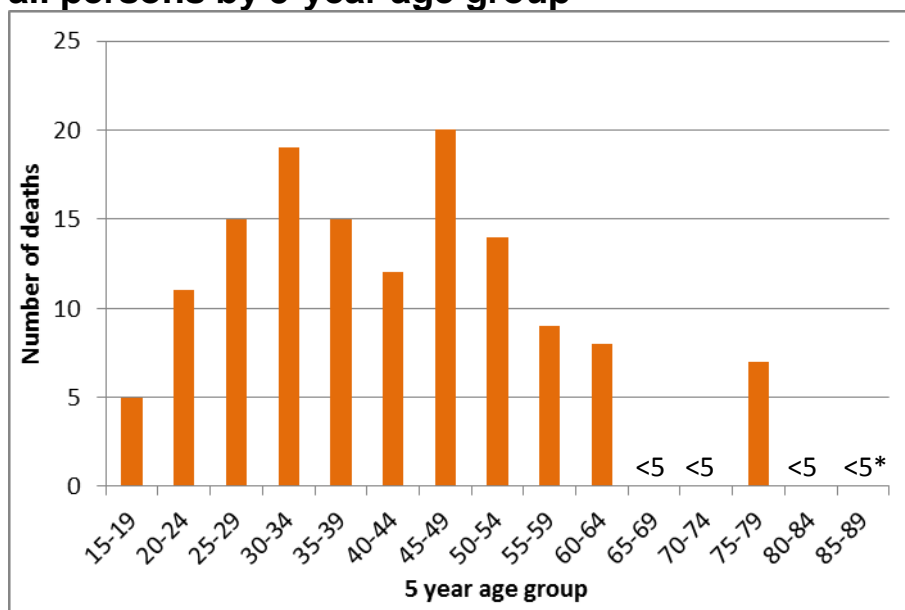
Source: HSCIC

Note: the size of the age ranges varies

*the validity of this rate is uncertain due to the small numbers of deaths involved in the rate calculations.

Further analysis of the suicides by age shows peaks between the age of 30 -34 and 45 -49 years.

Number of deaths by suicide in Swindon, 2006-2015 (year of death), all persons by 5-year age group



Source: PCMD

*suppressed due to data confidentiality these are less than five incidents per category

Method of suicide

Swindon suicides by year of death for the periods from 2006-2015 have been compared with suicides in England registered in 2014

Proportion of deaths by method of suicide

| | England (2014) | | Swindon (2006 - 2015) | |
|-------------------|----------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Drowning | 4.1% | 5.6% | * | * |
| Fall and fracture | 4.1% | 4.2% | * | * |
| Poisoning | 19.4% | 36.6% | 33% | 36% |
| Hanging | 55.4% | 42.0% | 50% | 44% |
| Other | 17.0% | 11.6% | * | * |

Source: ONS & PCMD

*suppressed due to data confidentiality these are less than five incidents per category

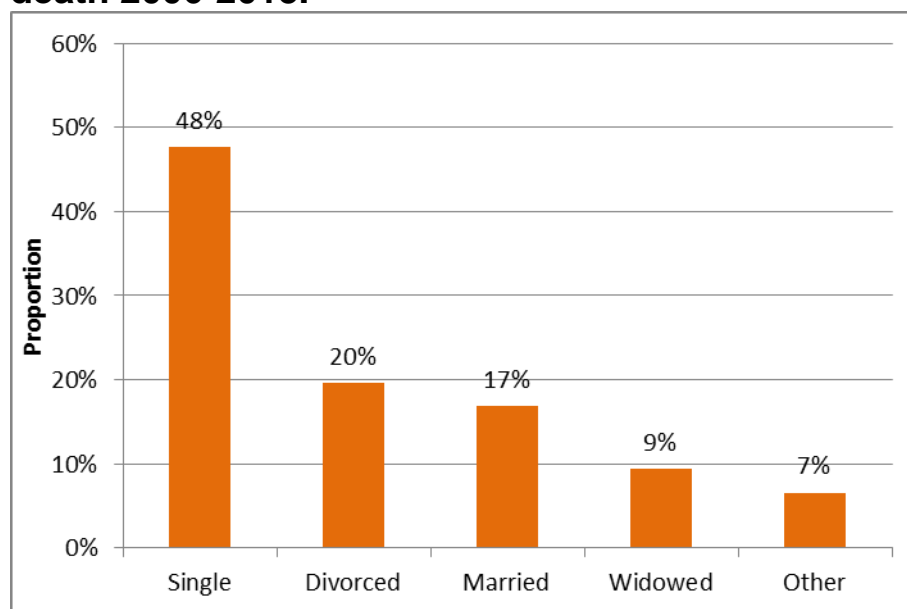
The leading causes of death in Swindon are the same as in England with hanging/strangulation the leading cause of death for both men (50%) and women (44%), followed by poisoning (men 33%, women 36%).

Marital status

74% (n=107) of deaths occurring in 2006-2015 had information recorded for the deceased's marital status. Of this sample:

- 48% (n=51) were single,
- 20% (n=21) were divorced,
- 17% (n=18) were married,
- 9% (n=10) were widowed.

Marital status, (n=107) for deaths by suicide in Swindon, by year of death 2006-2015.



Source: Swindon Suicide Audit Database

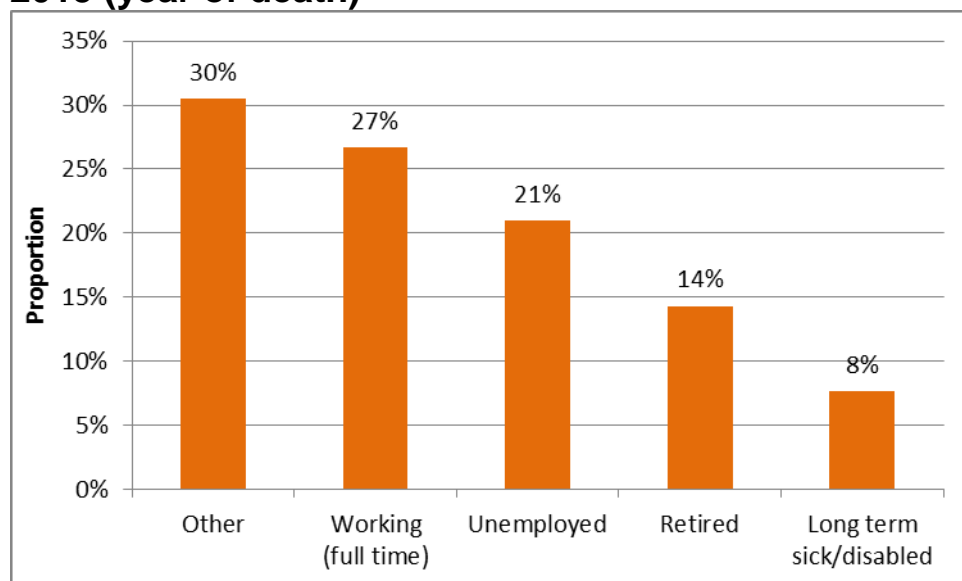
Similar to finding from national data, 17% (n=18) of people in Swindon who took their own life were married, 79% (n=85) were single, separated, divorced or widowed.

Occupational status

72% (n=105) of deaths occurring in 2006-2015 had information recorded on the deceased's occupation. Of this sample:

- 30% (n=32) were other,
- 27% (n=28) were employed full time
- 21% (n=22) were unemployed,
- 14% (n=15) retired,
- 8% (n=8) long term sick or disabled.

Occupational status, (n=105) for deaths by suicide in Swindon, 2006-2015 (year of death)



Source: Swindon Suicide Audit Database

Alcohol

74% (n=108) of the deaths occurring in 2006-2015 had information recorded for whether alcohol was a factor in the suicide. Of this sample, 26% had ingested alcohol around the time of death.

Of the 9 individuals that the GP data highlighted as having a drug or alcohol problem the majority were not known to substance misuse services. However, it should be noted that those who die who are known to substance misuse service may be classified as a drug related death rather than suicide.

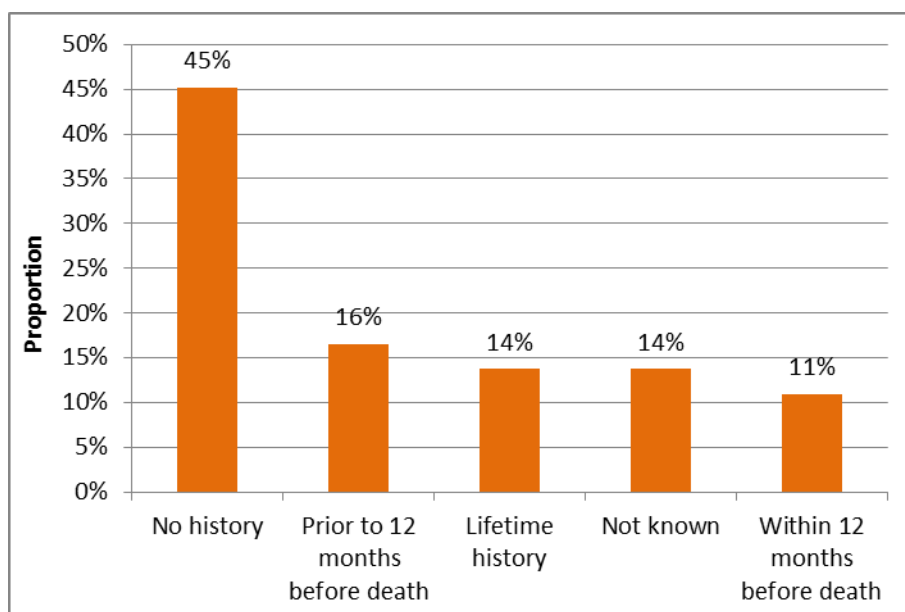
Self-harm history

Data was combined from primary care and psychiatric services to construct a person's history of self-harm. 73 individuals (or 50%) had information recorded on their history of self-harm. This represented 50% of the total on the register.

Of this sample:

- 45% (n=33) had no history of self-harm,
- 16% (n=12) had incidence of self-harm more than 12 months prior to their death,
- 14% (n=10) a lifetime history,
- 11% (n=8) had incidence of self-harm within 12 months of their death.

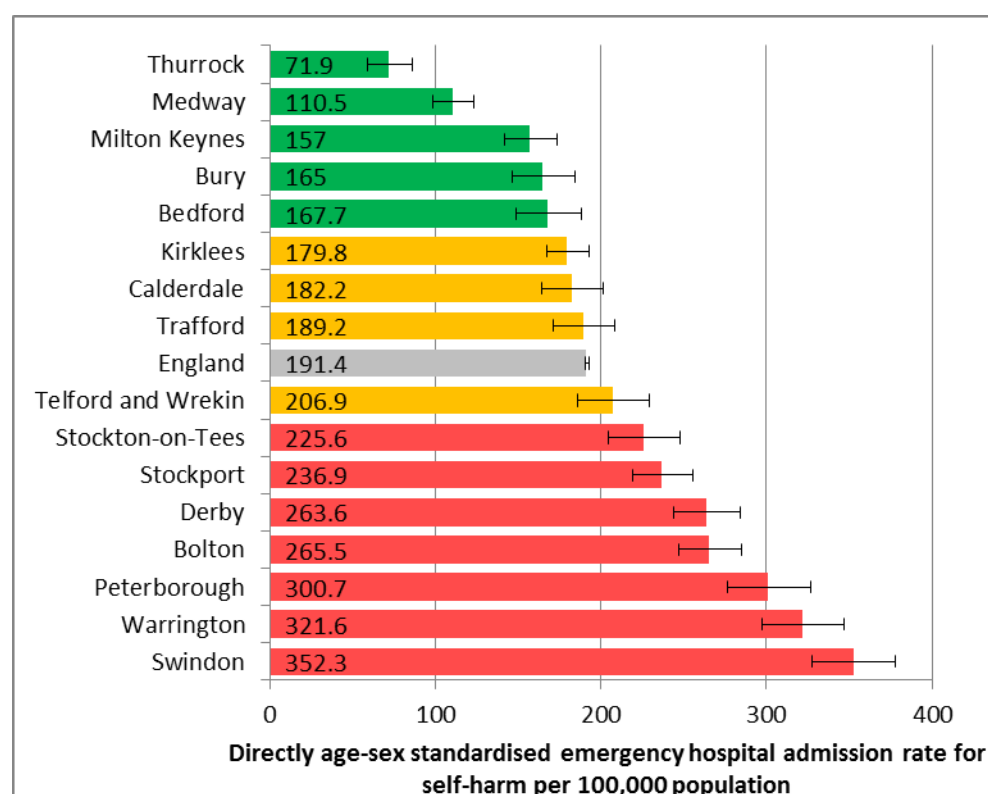
Self-harm history for deaths by suicide in Swindon, 2006-2015 (year of death)



Source: **Swindon Suicide Audit Database (n=73)**

The chart below from the Suicide Prevention Profiles from Public Health England shows the level of emergency admissions due to self-harm. The age-sex standardised rate for Swindon is significantly higher than the England rate and is the highest out of Swindon's statistical neighbours.

Emergency admissions due to self-harm, for Swindon and statistical comparator areas, 2014/15.



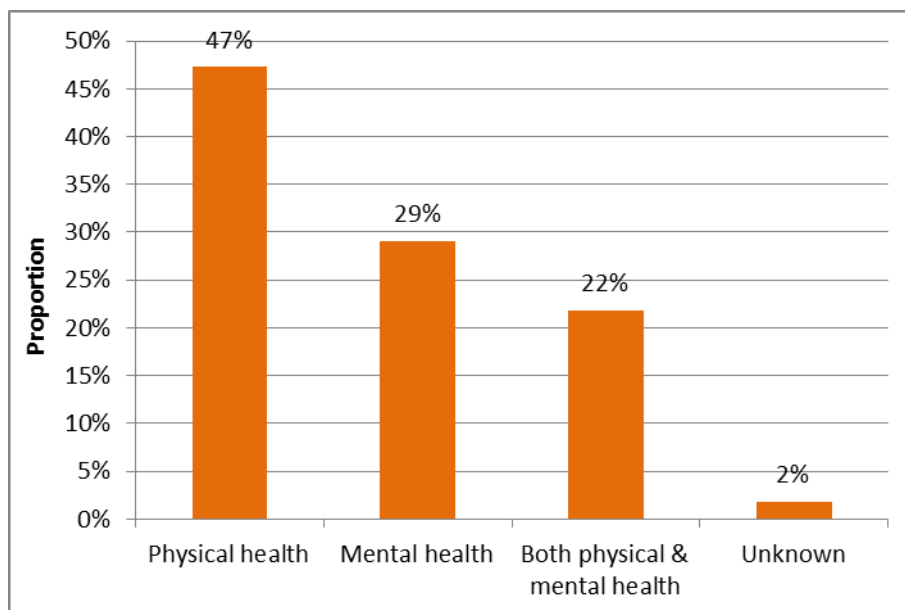
Source: Suicide Profiles, Public Health England age-sex standardised rate per 100,000 population

Contact with GP

45% (n=65) of the deaths occurring in 2006-2015 had information recorded for the date and reason of last visit to their GP. Of this sample, 85% (n=55) were seen by their GP within their last year of their life. Of the people seen in the last year of their life:

- 47% (n=25) for physical health.
- 29% (n=16) were seen for a mental health reason,
- 22% (n=12) for both mental and physical health,

Contact with GP in the last year of life, for deaths by suicide in Swindon, 2006-2015



Source: Swindon Suicide Audit Database (n=55)

Documented suicide risk

41% (n=60) of the deaths occurring in 2006-2015 had information recorded by their GP regarding their suicide risk. Of this sample:

- 68% (n=41) reported no thoughts of suicide or intent,
- 20% (n=12) reported thoughts of suicide but no intent,
- 10% (n=6) reported clear intent and plans.

GP and Psychiatric diagnosis

Data was combined from primary care and secondary psychiatric care to form a summary of diagnoses recorded. 46% (n=66) had information recorded for a diagnosis. Of this sample:

- 44% (n=29) had depressive illness recorded as a diagnosis,
- 11% (n=7) had an alcohol or drug misuse diagnosis recorded,
- 9% (n=6) had another form of mental health diagnosis recorded
- 20% (n=13) had no mental health disorder recorded.

Mental health assessment date, at GP

32% (n=47) of the deaths occurring in 2006-2015 had information recorded by their GP whether a mental health assessment had been completed or not. Of this sample, 77% (n=36) had an assessment date recorded and of these 36 people, 26 (72%) had their assessment completed within the last year of their life.

Contact with acute trust

41% (n=60) of the deaths occurring in 2006-2015 had information recorded for reason for an attendance (attendances include contact at the hospital such as outpatients appointments, inpatient admissions and A&E attendance) at GWH. Of this sample 52% (n=31) had an attendance in the last 12 months of their life and of these 31 people, 12 (39%) attended due to injuries caused from self-harm.

Psychosocial assessment at acute trust

46% (n=67) of the deaths occurring in 2006-2015 had information recorded for whether a psychosocial assessment was completed in GWH. Of this sample 24% (n=16) did have an assessment completed and 20% (n=15) had taken place within their last year of life.

Contact with psychiatric services

17% (n=24) of the deaths occurring in 2006-2015 had information recorded for whether the person was in contact with psychiatric services. Of this sample, 71% (n=17) had contact with psychiatric services within the last year of their life.

Electoral ward of residence of those who died by suicide

Geography –Crude rate based on 2013 ward populations

| Ward name | Crude suicide rate | Deprivation rank within Swindon (1=most deprived) |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| Walcot and Park North | 143 | 1 |
| Lydiard and Freshbrook | 124 | 8 |
| Gorse Hill and Pinehurst | 116 | 3 |
| St Andrews | 106 | 18 |
| Haydon Wick | 98 | 15 |
| Liden, Eldene and Park South | 96.8 | 4 |
| Eastcott | 96.8 | 9 |
| Rodbourne Cheney | 95 | 6 |
| Covingham and Dorcan | 86.3 | 10 |
| Mannington and Western | 82.7 | 7 |
| Wroughton and Wichelstowe | 74.5 | 11 |
| Central | 67 | 5 |
| Priory Vale | 65.2 | 19 |
| Old Town | 62.9 | 14 |
| Penhill and Upper Stratton | 62.2 | 2 |
| Shaw | 44.5 | 17 |
| St Margaret and South Marston | * | 13 |
| Chiseldon and Lawn | * | 16 |
| Ridgeway | * | 20 |
| Blunsdon and Highworth | * | 12 |

Source: PCMD, ONS 2013 ward population estimates, Index Multiple Deprivation 2015
(Department for Communities and Local Government)

Deprivation – based on the LSOA deprivation decile national ranking for residence of the deceased.

| Deprivation decile | Number of deaths | Proportion of deaths |
|---------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 1 (most deprived) | 10 | 7% |
| 2 | 21 | 14% |
| 3 | 10 | 7% |
| 4 | 18 | 12% |
| 5 | 13 | 9% |
| 6 | 9 | 6% |
| 7 | 8 | 6% |
| 8 | 22 | 15% |
| 9 | 28 | 19% |
| 10 (least deprived) | 6 | 4% |

Source: PCMD and Index Multiple Deprivation 2015 (Department for Communities and Local Government)

Location of death

All of the deaths occurring in 2006-2015 had a place of death recorded on the PCMD. This data was combined with Swindon audit data to identify the location of the suicide, for example, if the person later died in hospital. This was analysed and coded to the following categories; home (including parent's home), transport route (road or railway), car park, wooded area in Swindon, other and location unknown as the person died in hospital. The table below shows that over two thirds of people who died by suicide, took their own life at home.

| Location | Number of deaths (and proportion) |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Home | 99 (68%) |
| Other | 17 (12%) |
| Wooded area | 12 (8%) |
| Location unknown (died at GWH) | 7 (5%) |
| Transport route | 5 (3%) |
| Car park | 5 (3%) |

Source: PCMD and **Swindon Suicide Audit Database**

Stonewall Mental Health Briefing on lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Research undertaken by Stonewall (2011) shows that gay men are more than six times as likely to attempt to take their own lives as all men. This rises to 10 times as likely for gay men from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and also bisexual men and 14 times for gay and bisexual men with a disability. The report showed that 27% of gay men had thought about taking their own lives in the previous year. This increased for those from BME backgrounds (35%), bisexual men (38%) and gay and bisexual men with a disability (47%). This compares to just 4% for all men.

Research taken out by Stonewall in 2008 found that in the previous year 5% of lesbians and bisexual women say they have attempted to take their own life. This increases to 7% of bisexual women and BME women and 10% of lesbian and bisexual women with a disability. In the previous year 33% of lesbian and bisexual women that thought about taking their own lives. This increased for bisexual women (39%), 41% of black and ethnic minority women and 52% of lesbian and bisexual women with a disability.

The Stonewall School Report 2012 found that nearly one in four (23%) lesbian, gay and bisexual young people have tried to take their own life at some point. Girls are more likely to attempt this than boys (29% compared to 17%). Gay young people who experience homophobic bullying are much more likely to attempt to take their own life than gay young people who are not bullied. The Samaritans report that 7% of all young people have ever attempted to take their own life.

The suicide ideation rate for this group is also very high. 71% of lesbian and bisexual girls, 57% of gay and bisexual boys, 76% of gay and bisexual boys who are black or minority ethnic have considered taking their own life. This compares to 20 -45% of young people in general.

In Swindon we do attempt to collect data on sexual orientation of those who have taken their own lives but the data quality is poor and often not known. With the number of suicides in Swindon being relatively small it is difficult to target interventions specifically at this group. However, individual agencies should ensure that their services are meeting the needs of all diverse groups.

Mental Health Men and Boys – Findings from the Men’s Health Forum

The Swindon and national suicide audits have shown that men are particularly at risk of suicide.

The Men’s Health Forum state that common mental health conditions¹ are diagnosed more frequently in women than in men. At any one time, one in woman in five is believed to meeting diagnostic criteria for a common mental health condition compared with one man in eight. Women are also more likely to receive treatment for a common mental health condition: 29% of women have received treatment compared with 17% of men. For depression specifically, the gap is even wider with one in four women receiving treatment for depression at some point in her life compared to just one man in ten.

However, it is often suggest that for a variety of socio-cultural reasons, men may be less likely than women to recognise emotional and psychological distress in themselves and less likely to seek treatment.

The Men’s Health Forum state that:

“Certainly, there is a case to be made that strong evidence for men’s poorer help-seeking and unacknowledged mental health problems can be found by looking at population data instead of at individual level data. Many population-level indicators suggestive of difficulty, distress and disconnection reveal men to be the majority affected. For example:

¹ Common mental health conditions include anxiety, depression, phobia and obsessive compulsive disorder.

- Over three quarters of those who take their own lives are male (better evidenced in the data not here)
- 73% of adults who 'go missing' from home are men
- 87% of rough sleepers are men
- Men are nearly three times more likely than women to become alcohol dependant (8.7% of men are alcohol dependent compared with 3.3% of women)
- Men are three times more likely than women to report frequent drug use (4.2% and 1.4% respectively)
- More than two thirds of drug related deaths occur in men
- Men make up 95% of the prison population. 72% of male prisoners suffer from two or more mental disorders
- Men are nearly 50% more likely than women to be detained and treated compulsorily as psychiatric inpatients
- Men have measurably lower access to the social support of friends, relatives and community
- Men commit 86% of violent crime and are twice as likely to be victims of violent crime.
- Over 80% of children permanently excluded from school for behavioural difficulties are boys
- Boys are performing less well than girls at all levels of education from primary school to university.”²

Source: Men's Health Forum 2015

Mosaic Analysis

An analysis has been undertaken of the deaths by suicide (2006 – 2015) using Mosaic. It should be noted that low numbers may affect this analysis but there are three main groups who have been identified as having a higher rate of suicide than the others in terms of proportion of households affected.

Mosaic is an Experian product that allows you to examine the demographics, lifestyle, preferences and behaviours of households. It is used by many companies, government departments and local authorities amongst others and is comprised of many datasets modelled together – the Census for example is one major component. Mosaic has 15 groups (the letters) and underneath these, there are 66 types (the numbers). Mosaic uses a descriptor title to describe a particular group and then identify key features of that group. The particular types in Swindon listed below account for about 1 in 5 deaths in Swindon:

O63: Streetwise Singles: Hard-pressed singles in low cost social flats searching for opportunities

Key features:

Singles and sharers
Low cost social flats
1 or 2 bedrooms
Urban and fringe locations
Routine occupations
Shortage of opportunities

² How to make mental health services work for men. Men's Health Forum 2015

L52: Mid-life stopgap: Maturing singles in employment who are renting short-term affordable homes

Key features:

In employment
Homesharers and singles
In employment
Don't have children
Average age 45
Privately renting affordable homes
Mostly terraces

J45: Bus route renters: Singles renting affordable private flats away from central amenities and often on main roads

Key features:

Aged 25 to 40
Living alone or sharing
Rent lower value flats, often 1 bed
Often live near main roads
Further from central amenities
Sourced mobile on Internet

These profiles are interesting particularly when reviewed in relation to the deprivation data above. Whereas there appeared to be no particularly link between deprivation and suicide in Swindon that may be because there maybe individual pockets of deprivation within LSOAs. The three groups described above have commonalities in that they are singles, young/middle aged and are economically challenged.

In terms of numbers of deaths, rather than the rate or deaths, there are two further Mosaic groups which have experienced a high number of deaths but this may be because there are a high proportion of these household in Swindon. Again these two groups are economically challenged.

H: Aspiring homemakers: Younger households settling down in housing priced within their means

Key features:

Younger households
Full-time employment
Private suburbs
Affordable housing costs
Starter salaries
Buy and sell on eBay

M: Family Basics: Families with limited resources who have to budget to make ends meet

Key features:

Families with children
Aged 25 to 40
Limited resources

Some own low cost homes
Some rent from social landlords
Squeezed budgets

3. Key actions and achievements

Can this very long list be broken down into categories or themes? It would help highlight where a lot of work has been done and perhaps where there are gaps?

Key suicide prevention activities and achievements in Swindon include:

Training and resources

- **Mental Health First Aid Courses** which raise awareness of mental health problems and give front line workers more confidence to discuss mental health with clients have been commissioned and are regularly delivered in Swindon by Swindon Mind
- The development of a **suicide risk assessment tool and care pathway** for primary care by Public Health and LIFT Psychology. Distribution of risk assessment tool to all GP Practices in Swindon and training offered to in its implementation. Most practices have taken up the offer of training. The risk assessment tool with training has now been distributed to agencies including substance misuse services and supported housing providers.
- **Self-harm guidelines** for professionals working with young people in Swindon have been developed by Swindon CAMHS and TaMHS and are available with on-going training provided.
- **The Mindful Employer Network** promotes mental health within the workplace and has delivered a workshop on suicide prevention and bereavement to raise awareness of impact for employers. The event was fully booked with 85 attendees from a range of employers in Swindon. The evaluation was very positive which organisations reporting they had taken positive action following the event.

Other Initiatives

- **Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat** was signed in Swindon by a range of different organisations working together to improve how organisations will work together to make sure that people get the help they need when they are having a mental health crisis. These organisations include Swindon CCG, Swindon Borough Council, AWP Mental Health Foundation, Trust, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, Wiltshire Police, South West Ambulance Service, MIND, CRI Substance Misuse Service, GWH NHS Foundation Trust, Seqol and the Wiltshire Police and Crime Commissioner.

It focuses on four key areas:

- **Access to support before crisis point** – making sure people with mental health problems can get help 24 hours a day and that when they ask for help, they are taken seriously.
- **Urgent and emergency access to crisis care** – making sure that a mental health crisis is treated with the same urgency as a physical health emergency.
- **Quality of treatment and care when in crisis** – making sure that people are treated with dignity and respect, in a therapeutic environment.

- **Recovery and staying well** – preventing future crises by making sure people are referred to appropriate services.

An action plan was developed and a working group established to oversee the implementation of the plan, led by Swindon CCG.

- **The Zero suicide initiative** has been led in the South West by the South West Zero Suicide Collaborative led by Dr Adrian James. The collaborative has provide opportunities for those with lived experience and those involved in preventing suicide to come together and learn about successful suicide prevention initiatives. The concept is that one death by suicide is a death too many. Swindon has been represented at this collaborative and initiatives such as the men only lift course and SOBS Engaging Men project have, in part been influenced by the collaborative.
- **Review of Car Parks** and the closure of the top floor of Wyvern Carpark and subsequent demolition. The work of Swindon Borough Council relating to this was sighted as good practice in national guidance on tackling suicide hotspots.
- **Self-Harm register developed in GWH** – evaluation is currently being undertaken. An information pack has been developed for distribution to adults and young people who self-harm and present at the Accident and Emergency Department . All adults attending A&E for self-harm are offered to take part in the Postcard project which enables the Psychiatric Liaison Service to send a follow up postcard once a quarter for a year to those attending. Evidence from Australia found that this reduced hospital re-attendance.

The CCG has also been working with both Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and Avon and Wiltshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to ensure care plans are in place for those who regularly attend ED for self-harm to ensure alternative more appropriate support is provided.

Mental Health Services

- The Mental Health Liaison Team at Great Western Hospital (GWH) have been working towards the Commissioning for Quality and Innovation (CQUIN) to improve diagnosis and re-attendance rates of patients with mental health needs in Emergency Departments

The CQUIN payment framework enables commissioners to reward excellence, by linking a proportion of English healthcare providers' income to the achievement of local quality improvement goals.

The work to support the scheme has included:

- Improved, co-produced (with the patient) relapse prevention care plans. It has been our intention that every patient assessed by the Mental Health Liaison Team at GWH following an episode of self-harm, has, on discharge from the hospital, a crisis and contingency plan that describes what follow up (if any) has been arranged and what they can do if they feel unsafe and/or need additional support.
- A program of training for the general hospital staff has been undertaken. The guidelines from the CQUIN were to ensure Emergency Department staff receive training in mental health awareness, assessment and signposting to liaison mental health teams, including basic biopsychosocial self-harm assessments as described in NICE guidance (NICE self-harm CG16). (Two sessions of training were to be offered to all ED departments – this has been far exceeded).
- Access to relevant information through increased AWP access to the Summary Care Record and exploration of local systems to share relevant patient information. The Mental Health Liaison Team document the summary of their assessment in the general hospital notes that includes the discharge plan.

The milestones for achieving the CQUIN targets have been the delivery of training to the Emergency Department staff, a reduction of re-attendances to GWH within 7 days and improved results in clinical audit of crisis and contingency care plans.

- **Discharge planning AWP** are developing an 'inpatient suite' as part of their existing online clinical toolkit for inpatient staff. This will include pre-discharge planning, plus the piloting of a discharge safety checklist.

- **Perinatal mental health**

Some mothers can be at risk of suicide ideation during pregnancy and after the birth of their baby. A multi-agency steering group has been established to develop a perinatal mental health pathway. This pathway has included: Public Health; Swindon CCG; AWP NHS Foundation Trust; GWH NHS Foundation Trust midwifery and obstetrics departments; Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust; Health visiting; Lift Psychology; GPs/Primary Care; NSPCC

This pathway outlines the roles and responsibilities of different functions and will be implemented and reviewed throughout 2016 – 18 during which additional training will be rolled out.

- **LIFT Psychology service** continues to provide psychological services in Swindon including courses; one to one support; computer based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Books on Prescription.
- **LIFT men only course** - LIFT Psychology has set up a Men's Stress course to engage men with mental health difficulties. The course runs for 2 hours a week for four weeks. The content of the course is aimed at helping men to explore, understand and to express their emotions, with the emphasis on male specific difficulties. The course covers stress; depression; anger and anxiety and discusses helpful ways of coping with emotions. Other areas covered are men's 'rules for living' and ways to soften rules and myths of masculinity. There is space in each session to allow discussion and exploration of difficulties. Three courses were run during 2015/16 and the courses

have been well attended with good retention and the feedback has been good with attendees reporting that the sessions are relaxed, informative and engaging, with practical techniques suggested. Attendees thought it was helpful to focus on the subject from a male perspective.

- **LIFT Psychology Support for those with Long Term Conditions.** LIFT provides psychological support for people with long-term health conditions both within the community and in primary care and also within the GWH.

Over the past few years, the service has developed various community-based self-management courses targeting a range of conditions, including chronic pain, fibromyalgia, stroke, multiple sclerosis, diabetes, and most recently Parkinson's disease. These courses run on a regular basis, in various venues in the community to help improve access. They are based on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and aim to improve people's mental and physical health. All LIFT clinical staff receive in-house training and supervision within this field to enable them to work effectively with this client group. Increasingly numbers of people in Swindon living with long-term health conditions have been accessing LIFT for psychological support over the years, in both an individual and group setting, and are signposted by various disciplines and services locally. There has been excellent feedback from service-users and this form of support is very much valued. LIFT has a good national reputation for this innovative development.

Within GWH, psychological support is funded within the following services: oncology, diabetes, pain management, and the bariatric service. As within the community provision, the support provided is a mixture of group and individual therapy, usually on an out-patient basis but sometimes also for in-patients. The clinical psychologists work closely within the different multi-disciplinary teams, drawing on a range of psychological models to inform their practice, and they also provide psychological training and consultation to their colleagues. It is hoped that the psychology provision within GWH will continue to develop over the coming years, to enable other services there to benefit from this support.

- **Prescribing** – from our audit we saw that 21 were self-poisoning using medication. 7 of these involved Paracetamol either alone or in combination with other substances. The others were a range of difference medications include many for mental health conditions. All prescribers should be aware of the suicide risk of the medications they prescribe. AWP are currently reviewing their policies and protocols around the prescribing of certain medications. This may also be reviewed using information from the self-harm register.
- **Transition** from childhood to becoming an adult is always a challenge. For those with mental health problems who are used to receiving a holistic mental health and wellbeing service it can be particularly challenging. Following the Children and Young People's mental health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment a Mental Health Transitions Group has been established to improve transitions from Children's to adult mental health services and provide support for those who do not will not benefit from adult secondary care services but need some support during transition to adulthood. This group will now link into the wider transitions work taking part in the Council.
- **Street Triage.** The Street Triage project is being piloted for one year from September 2015 – 2016. Essentially it involves mental health professionals working in partnership with police with the aim of:

- Improving access to appropriate services for people experiencing mental health problems
- Improvement in the quality of care received by people experiencing mental health problems and their carers
- Reducing the amount of police time spent dealing with these situations
- Sharing of appropriate information between agencies to ensure that safe and appropriate action is taken
- The inevitable reduction in the amount of inappropriate detentions under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act
- More efficient use of resources by both agencies

In Wiltshire the pilot was initially set up with experienced mental health nurses working alongside police officers and call handlers at their central control room. The team have access to current health records and are able to share relevant, appropriate and proportionate information regarding a person's risk to themselves and/or from others, what support they already access, advance directives, and risk management plans, for example. The Street Triage nurse advise police officers directly and speak with patients, and their carers, and liaise with other health professionals, as appropriate, to ensure that the person is directed towards the correct care pathway by the shortest possible route. From 21st March 2016 the team will be based solely at the Communications Control Room from 08:30 until midnight, 7 days a week. The pilot runs until September 2nd 2016, and subject to evaluation it is hoped that funding can be secured to commission a substantive service beyond this date.

Other Services

- **Swindon and District Samaritans** provide a number of local services on top of the core Samaritans telephone service. Swindon Samaritans is open six days a week and certain times for those who prefer to drop in. Swindon outreach service also visits the Job Centre once a week to offer support to job seekers. They also visit local schools speaking to 15 -16 year olds to raise awareness of the Samaritan's service. The Swindon Samaritans also link with AWP mental health trust psychiatric liaison service at GWH offering follow up phone calls for patients who have attended A&E in emotional distress. Samaritans outreach also work with Earlstoke Prison offering support to the peer listening service offered by prisoners. They also provide cordless phones for both prisoners and the prisoner listeners to contact the Samaritans. Swindon and District Samaritans are a member of the Suicide Prevention Group.
- **Localities** within Swindon Borough Council has three teams that as, part of their work, have a specific aim to improve the mental health of its clients, some of whom speak of suicidal thoughts. The Health Ambassadors, Community Navigators and Circles of Support Team offer a free and confidential service that works with someone on individual goals. Some of the biggest challenges that we face can be devastating on our wellbeing, these include loneliness, feeling disconnected from our community, coping with a crisis, living a chaotic life and deteriorating physical health.
 - **The Health Ambassadors** offer six 1:1 sessions to improve physical health and this includes: healthy eating, reducing alcohol, stopping smoking and learning new skills. Nearly all clients to date have been monitored and have expressed improved wellbeing by the end of the service. Befrienders are also used to support people access community events and help them gain confidence.

- **Community Navigators** are based in GP surgeries and work with people with long term health conditions. They offer 1:1 support to facilitate improved self-care and self-management of their condition(s) to improve quality of life and reduce demand on statutory services. The Community Navigators meet clients in their own home and build a picture of how long term health conditions impact on a person and their family/friends. Through supported goal setting and introduction to new voluntary support resources and community networks, clients are empowered to make positive change and improve their health and wellbeing.
- **Swindon Circles** is a volunteer befriending scheme which seeks to support isolated older people across Swindon primarily those in social housing. Volunteers offer regular social contact with an emphasis on connecting with other people, local groups and services and getting out and about, where this is possible and practical. Many of the Swindon Circles clients may be in a state of anxiety exacerbated by their social isolation and some report feeling of uselessness, depression and low mood. Clients can be recently bereaved or experiencing physical health issues that are impacting on their ability and confidence to be amongst others or getting out and about. Many relay that their volunteers make an essential difference through the social contact, brightening their day and giving them something to look forward to. Volunteers often report a positive mood change and new outlook from their clients.
- **Treehouse Wiltshire** was launched in October 2015 as an independent charity providing bereavement support to those aged 0 – 25 yrs and their families living in Swindon or Wiltshire. They offer:
 - Telephone advice and support to parents and professionals
 - Direct work with children and young people either at home or school
 - Opportunities for children and families to meet and share their experiences at group events
 - Referrals for more specialised help
- **British Transport Police** have joined our local suicide prevention group which has given us links into suicide prevention opportunities on the railway line running through the Borough of Swindon. Although there have been no fatalities within the Borough of Swindon in the last two years there have been 8 threats or attempts. 8 in 2014 and 4 in 2015. There is now British Transport Police presence at Swindon Station.
- **Swindon Street Pastors** go out into Swindon town centre on Friday and Saturday nights usually from 10pm – 4am. The aim is to be a visible presence on the street contributing to a safer Swindon. Swindon Street Pastors work in partnership with the local council, statutory agencies and the local churches. A typical night involves 4 street pastors walking the streets of the town centre engaging with people of all ages in the pub and club scene. Street pastors spend time listening to people and offering practical assistance where appropriate. Practical assistance can include giving 'space blankets' to those who are cold, 'lollipops' to young people, safety alarms to women, 'flip-flops' to those struggling with high heels at the end of a night and by assisting vulnerable people to get home. Swindon street pastors will help those who are homeless usually by signposting to other appropriate organisations such as the Swindon Night Shelter. We also signpost those with addiction or relationship problems to appropriate organisations. In the last year we have put in over 2,592 patrol hours, over a 1,000 glass bottles picked up, given out over 216 flip-flops and an estimated 3,000 people cared for, listened to and helped home safely.

- **Swindon Mind Self Harm Counselling Service (formerly PASH)** is a free confidential service, supporting individuals with self-harm issues from the age of 16 years. There is an initial offer of a 10 week 1-1 counsellor which can be extended for a further 10 weeks if required. Patients can re-refer if their self-harming behaviour returns but the emphasis is on recovery, resilience and discharge from the service. The service sees, on average 100, clients per year. The service also raises awareness and understanding about self-harm in the community and provides advocacy on behalf of some clients.
- **SOBS (Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide) group** is now well established. In the past two years they have welcomed 70 referrals to their groups. Currently there are two groups that run on a monthly basis, an evening group on the first Thursday and a morning group on the third Thursday of each month. SOBS also run regular workshops for survivors. Swindon SOBS pioneered an **Engaging Men initiative** which aimed to provide support for men. This is now run in Gloucester but men from Swindon are invited to take part. Swindon SOBS have also been instrumental in supporting other areas such as Weston-Super-Mare and Bath to set up their own groups. SOBS are also working to raise awareness and provide support for homelessness. This includes an advent project providing necessities for homeless people in Swindon, support to the Tree house Bereavement Service. A memorial tree has been planted at Swindon crematorium in memory of all those who have lost their life to Suicide in Swindon. Swindon SOBS have in a short space of time become a leader in support for those bereaved by suicide advising on the Swindon and Wiltshire Suicide Prevention Groups and speaking at regional conferences on the topic.

For the last two years 2014 and 2015 SOBS have hosted a Suicide Prevention Conference in Swindon

- **The Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB)** provides advice and guidance to many individuals many of who have debt problems. Of the 8,000 plus people CAB work with every year between 3,000 and 3,500 people each year report debt problems. Around 40% of their clients report disability or long term health problems (16% categorise these as mental health related). The specialist benefits caseworkers primarily assist people to appeal decisions in relation to disability benefits and are seeing a continued trend towards people with mental health problems being initially turned down for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) but being put into the support group on appeal. This is one area where without specialist help the client is unlikely to be able to overturn an initial decision. The four biggest debt issues reported currently are: Council Tax arrears 16%; Rent arrears 12% and rising); Credit Cards 8% and unsecured personal loans 7% (and rising).

At Risk Groups

- **Homelessness** in Swindon has increased over the last few years. The Swindon Homelessness strategy has been developed 2016 -2021 has been agreed and within this strategy there are strong links to mental health and substance misuse issues. One of the recommendations of the strategy is to re-establish the Homelessness Forum – a multi-agency forum to oversee the implementation and effectiveness of the strategy. This will include the Suicide Prevention Lead.
- **Family Debt** During 2013 National Welfare Reforms were introduced which potentially had a financial impact on individuals and families. Swindon Borough Council and its

partners have been supporting claimants who have been impacted. The main changes have been the reduction in Council Tax Benefit, the under-occupancy changes in Housing Benefits for claimants in the Social Rented Sector, the Benefits Cap of £20,000 and the commencement of Universal Credit. The claimants impacted have been offered support in finding employment from Job Centre Advisors, budgeting support from the Citizens Advice Bureau, college courses on employment skills and budgeting, assistance in using online applications from the Libraries, support from Benefits Officers, Housing officers and welfare advisors employed by other Social Landlords, Local Welfare Payments from the Council and an increase in Discretionary Housing Payments granted (using Housing Revenue Account Funds). There is currently a further Welfare Reforms Bill going through Parliament and the Swindon Welfare Benefits and Strategy Group will be discussing what other support can be offered to anyone impacted by any further changes over the next few months.

- The **Alcohol Support and Advice Project (ASAP)** started in March 2015 and has been funded by One Swindon. The project is hosted by CRI. ASAP is an innovative programme modelled on the success of other ambassador and champion projects to provide a sign-posting outreach initiative providing peer support, motivation and guidance or help in recognising alcohol misuse and the impact it has on others. We have a Recovery Co-ordinator and 4 volunteer part-time Recovery Motivators who are working in North Swindon, Parks and Highworth to provide support and advice to those affected by Alcohol. This group can be particularly susceptible to suicide ideation. The volunteers are all previously unemployed or receiving benefits and have experience of alcohol misuse either directly or indirectly. They are paid for a few hours a week below the benefits threshold.
- The **Street Drinkers Project** secured funding from One Swindon in 2015 -16 to tackle the impact of street drinking on individuals, communities and businesses. Street drinkers have multiple needs and issues that are addressed by a spectrum of public services and third sector organisations. This project will employ an experienced Recovery worker who will use multi-agency intelligence to identify and target persistent street drinkers and work with partners to provide support regarding accommodation; alcohol and drugs; finance, benefits and debt; children and family issues; mental and physical health; education, training and employment; attitude, thinking and behaviour. In addition a Doctor and Nurse led drop-in (referral only) wet clinic will be provided with a designated area where individuals can consume restricted amounts of alcohol in a safe environment and can receive help and support to address their alcohol or other issues. Outcomes that will be monitored include reduction in alcohol and drug use, reduction in individual arrests, reduction in reported Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), and reduction in hospital admissions for the cohort. This project is due to start in early 2016/17.
- A **dual diagnosis** (substance misuse and mental health) care pathway has been developed for mental health and substance misuse services and primary care. There is an established Dual Diagnosis Group that meets quarterly to discuss dual diagnosis issues which arise for services. This group has provided training for all staff working with this client group. There is also a practitioner group that meets regularly to discuss individual cases and concerns.

The Drug Related Death and Harm Reduction Group reviews all drug related deaths and links with the Suicide Prevention Group through the joint chair. Records show that at least 20% of those who died from a drug related death were either in contact with or had been in contact with mental health services.

Safeguarding and Risk Management Development in Swindon

- In 2014, taking the learning from a Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) Swindon identified a number of findings, including 'The lack of a recognised and understood multi-agency framework for case planning and decision making in Swindon leads to inconsistent and reactive practice; resulting in inconsistent and ineffective support to vulnerable people'. In response to the findings, the partners within the Local Safeguarding Adults Board have established the development of a multi-agency risk assessment process to ensure effective case planning and decision making to promote safety and wellbeing of high risk adults in relation to adults with multiple needs.
- **Swindon Risk Enablement Panel (REP)** The agencies in Swindon recognise that there are a small number of individuals who have multiple needs and maybe at risk of significant harm but fall outside of the criteria for Adult Safeguarding investigations or who have made capacitated decision not to engage with enquire. In the first instance it remains the responsibility of each professional to engage with the individual and offer interventions in a persistent and effective manner. The multi-agency process will only be enacted when all other interventions have not produced an improvement in outcomes for the individual adult.

The Risk Enablement Panels purpose is to support the individual and staff to reach agreement around risk decisions and management of those risks which can be managed. The Risk Enablement Panel acts in an advisory capacity and can make recommendations on what would be reasonable in terms of managing risks while balancing the rights of all concerned. The REP does not seek to reverse decisions that may have been previously assessed and agreed by staff and managers, rather it offers a reflective space for consultation, reconciliation, problem solving and agreement in cases where the levels of risk raises concern.

4. Recommendations and actions for 2016 - 18

The recommendations set-out below have been informed by the findings of this Swindon suicide audit and build on the work undertaken to-date in Swindon. They have been informed by the national suicide strategy "Preventing suicide in England: a cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives" in September 2012 (DH 2012a) and the evidence this document sets out for interventions that work locally.

An overarching recommendation is to continue to improve the mental health of the population of Swindon as a whole and to ensure access to high quality mental health services for all those who require them, and particularly those with a history of self-harm and/or recorded suicide intent. This should be done through the implementation of recommendations from the two Swindon Mental Health Joint Strategic Needs Assessments - one for adults and one for children and young people, as well as the national mental health and suicide prevention strategies. The needs of those with a non-heterosexual orientation should be a particular consideration as this report highlights the higher rates of suicidal ideation and attempts for these groups.

Specific recommendations to reduce suicide rates in Swindon from 2016 - 18 are to:

1. Ensure that all those working with high risk groups continue to have access to appropriate training on suicide and self-harm, including those working in schools and

colleges, emergency departments, other emergency services, primary care, care environments and the criminal and youth justice systems. Six, two day ASIST suicide prevention training courses will be rolled out over 2016-2018.

2. Focus mental health promotion and suicide prevention interventions on boys and men. Interventions should be targeted through community locations as well as health settings. The aim is to engage more effectively with men including those who are homeless or suffering from substance misuse issues. This would include SOBS initiative to engage more with men bereaved by suicide.
3. Review the Self-Harm Register in the GWH Emergency Department and use data to inform the Swindon suicide audit and prevention strategy. This will include a register for Children and Young People. In conjunction with this a task group to reduce emergency hospital admissions for self harm will be set up to tackle the high rates in Swindon. This should include service user feedback from attenders on what could make a difference.
4. Review substances used for self-poisoning and where possible reduce access to these substances.
5. Ensure that mental health needs are given equal consideration to physical health needs in those with a long-term health condition, and provide support for self-management and self-care which supports mental wellbeing as well as physical health.
6. Support campaigns and initiatives to reduce loneliness and social isolation.
7. Work with planners and developers in Swindon to include suicide risk in health and safety considerations when designing multi-storey car parks, bridges and high-rise buildings that may offer suicide opportunities.
8. Address the suicide risk associated with homelessness through the establishment of Homelessness forum and links to the homelessness strategy 2016-21.
9. Provide better information and support to those bereaved or affected by suicide; support the media in delivering sensitive approaches to suicide and suicidal behaviour and support research, data collection and monitoring including:
 - Work with the local media in Swindon to encourage responsible reporting of stories around suicide and self-harm and to provide information about sources of support and helplines when reporting suicide and suicidal behaviour.
10. Ensure that interventions implemented as a result of these recommendations are evaluated and learning shared in Swindon and nationally in order to develop the evidence base on what works in suicide prevention. Capturing the views of those who have attempted suicide on what could make a difference.
11. Thematic Lessons learnt from agencies route cause analysis of deaths by suicide are shared where appropriate with relevant agencies.

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