



3 GILBERTS LANE
HIGHWORTH SN6 7FB
01793 762377

www.highworthtowncouncil.gov.uk

**FULL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY 27th FEBRUARY 2024**

Present:	
Councillors:	A Houghton (Deputy Chairman), S Apps, G Dennis, I Durnin-Duffy, L Gow, F Haines, N Key, J Murphy, P Newton-Smith, G Olley, K Saunders, and R Williams
Town Clerk:	D Rose
Assistant Town Clerk:	C Haines
Representative:	Councillor C Watts - Swindon Borough Council (SBC) Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport R Pearce – Highworth Twinning Association Chairman
Members of the Public:	12
Apologies:	Councillors N Gardiner (Work Commitment), Keith Smith (Family Commitment)
Absent:	Councillor S Weisinger

		Action
90	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: None	
91	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME & CORRESPONDENCE (Maximum 10 Minutes): None	
92	WASTE AND RECYCLING: Councillor C Watts thanked Highworth Town Council (HTC) for inviting him to the meeting and gave the following update on the waste and recycling service: The waste and recycling team have been working hard to bring the service under control. The delays are expected while Swindon Borough Council (SBC) retrospectively clear backlogs and bolster the service with support vehicles. There should be no more than 24 hours delay for recycling as of next week; Anything later than this will need to be investigated and we will need to check the status on the system.	

It is undeniable that the delays in the service, particularly with recycling, have been unacceptable and well documented. We expected teething issues, but the challenges have moved beyond this.

With regards to recycling, the system was ill conceived through the project planning stage in 2022, where many assumptions and calculations were incorrect, to the point of being systemic. Appropriate resources were not assigned to this project at management stage, data used was inaccurate when planning routes, with several thousand properties missing and not enough recycling wagons ordered.

The functionality, inflexibility and capacity of the recycling wagons were not understood. For example, the cardboard compartment is no bigger than a medium size transit van. The plastic/metal compartment has to be compacted approximately every 10 household collections, a process that takes 2 minutes. (For a route that has 500 households, that equates to 1 hour 40 minutes a day and accounts for 25 hours a day across the fleet.) This is not a criticism of the wagons, as they are what they are, but it would have been crucial that these metrics were understood and accounted for in the early planning stage. I do not believe they were properly taken into consideration.

As a new administration the task that we have is to reverse engineer the 2022 project management stage, cleanse the data, re-optimize the routes and re-launch.

The original project management stage identified that 14 recycling wagons would suffice. Subsequently, this was considerably short of the mark, and we believe that 18/19 routes are required. We have ordered additional recycling wagons, and they will be delivered in May/June this year. We have support vehicles to help the service, but these are limited as to their use, i.e. no food pods and can only collect two recycle streams per round. This does help the recycling vehicles but causes confusion to residents and split-collection is not supported by an inflexible back-office system.

We have started the data cleansing process and will be restarting the project planning stage for the implementation of back-office systems that are fit for purpose; I suspect this will be a medium-term project over the next 12 months. I would like to see Customer Relationship Management (CRM) functionality incorporated, that directly messages residents on various media platforms, of any delays or issues. Uber style wagon tracking should be feasible and an associated alternative front-end app available. The system needs to be able to provide instant intelligence, and information that would allow the teams to be more pro-active, as opposed to the reactive back-foot approach we currently have. None of this is rocket science, innovative or cutting edge, but does highlight the lack of resource, imagination, and ambition in 2022 in the planning stage.

I will be creating a Cabinet Member Advisory Group (CMAG) to take us through the next stage of rebuilding the service and revisiting project management that should have been completed in 2022.

I will reiterate that the crews and supervisors have been working extremely hard to minimise disruption, and politically motivated false narrative and exaggerated claims that have been circulated have been very upsetting for them. We must ensure that we show our support for the teams at all times as they continue to work hard for Swindon.

The following questions were asked by HTC Councillors:

- a. *Highworth is the last to hear about collections, it feels like we are forgotten and have our waste collected last.*

Unfortunately, the further you are away from Waterside Park the bigger the impact has been to you. Every time they return to Waterside it has been 2 hours lost in a day. Unloading should take approx. 10mins however if 4 or 5 trucks arrive back together, they are then left waiting in a queue. We have also had problems with vans going into limp mode, however that is now sorted.

b. *When were the lorries ordered?*

Ordered in May 2022, planning took place until April 2023.

c. *How are you going to manage peak times (i.e. Christmas)?*

All the data has been captured from this Christmas, and that has identified a lot of the problems, we can't go out and buy new vehicles, so we use support vehicles to help (the ones with the split back). I have also asked for it to be looked into how Waterside works, for example could a ground crew potentially drop off an empty vehicle to Highworth and collect the full vehicle to avoid going back to Waterside to save time, so they can just continue with the collection to avoid delays. If we can't get it to work, we would have to look at a different system, but ideally, we don't want to be running two systems.

d. *The Truck that does black wheelie bins doesn't get food waste; can you explain why?*

We have had some mechanic issues with the vehicles, so the food vehicles have been going round afterwards. The IT system hasn't been implemented like it should have been, when you start splitting rounds up it has caused problems, the software on the system needs to be used.

e. *You mentioned the vehicles and how hopefully long term it will all be sorted out, what are you going to be doing short term?*

We are going to use the support vehicles currently to support Highworth and Wroughton.

f. *At the Market in Highworth on a Saturday quite a few people have said the main issues is people feel there is a lack of communication. They go onto the SBC website, it tells them the waste is being collected tomorrow and then it doesn't, assuming there are going to be problems for a while yet, what can you do to improve communications?*

I have been giving regular updates to the Borough Councillors, which should be shared with the parishes. Another situation with the communication comes back to the data system, it does have the capability to sign up to messaging, but this has never been implemented, this should have been done so anyone would know what is happening but unfortunately the person allocated to this went on long term sick, left and the position has never been filled.

g. *Last week in Park Avenue a collection was done but, in the street, nearby who would normally be part of the same route are still waiting for their waste to be collected.*

We realised that the knowledge from the drivers and crews is so important. It has come to light that where new streets/houses for example have been built, the drivers just knew where to go as they were familiar with the area, but it's not logged on the IT system, this is a problem if you are a new driver. We have only gone through 6 cycles with the new system but hope drivers will have started to get used to the routes.

h. *I have seen on a Facebook page where you have done lots of responses and updates, so thank you for that. I think as a Council we need to try and support the*

	<p><i>Borough and would like to thank our Grounds Team who have gone out collecting the rubbish that has gone everywhere.</i></p> <p>i. <i>Thanks for everything you have said this evening, and I can see it has been an awful job to try and get implemented, I think communication is important as lots of times Highworth has been missed. The crew that came to get the green bins today left them turned upside down in the middle of a driveway, the whole street had issues with how they had been left. It doesn't help how people feel about the crews and the waste situation when this happens.</i> The green bin collection is separate, but I will pass this information back.</p> <p>j. <i>Regarding the use of the blue bags, some people are still using the white bags, but they are no longer being collected, how do we address this?</i> The blue bags have to be used due to how the rubbish is separated.</p> <p>k. <i>The issue we have is people in the High Street are using white bags and are not aware they have to use blue bags; how do we educate them to use the blue bags and get them delivered to them. At the moment it is left for our Grounds Team to go and dispose of them as SBC refuse to pick them up.</i> I can get blue bags delivered to you at Highworth Town Council, also each of your Borough Councils have been given 30 blue bags to give out to those that need them.</p> <p>The Town Clerk to email Councillor C Watts to request the blue bags.</p>	DR
93	<p>HIGHWORTH TWINNING ASSOCIATION:</p> <p>Highworth Twinning Association (HTA) Chairman Richard Pearce gave the following update:</p> <p>I have been part of the Highworth Twinning Association for 14 years and would like to fly the flag for twinning. It is fun, you go abroad, see the other countries. They have the same problems we do but just deal with them in different ways. Councillor R Williams visited Pontorson, dressed as the Town Crier, and they very much enjoyed it and the gift they received.</p> <p>It also has a serious side and was primarily set up to reconcile France and Germany after the war.</p> <p>Nowadays it is very much about hospitality, there is an annual event each year, it is Wassenberg's turn in May, where all three Towns are represented. We invite Wassenberg and Pontorson alternately to Highworth, and this time it is the turn of Pontorson to come to Highworth in September 2024. I would like to raise the profile of twinning in Highworth and support (not financially) by joining local events, especially when our visitors are with us. I would like you all to travel with us. Everyone who is a resident in our parish is automatically a member of the association, there are no membership fees; We are however looking for new members to join our committee.</p> <p>I would like to pay tribute to Gerry Edwards who was the HTC representative for many years and his wife Annie who visited both Pontorson and Wassenberg.</p> <p>Other support we could ask, in the past we have proposed road names with a twinning theme, but I have been told it is SBC who has the final say in this matter, even though you support it. For example, Backhouse would have been good, so if this comes up again can we propose road names for any new developments, we have a Highworth Square in Pontorson.</p> <p>We now have 34 people visiting Wassenberg in May.</p> <p>On Tuesday 30th April we have a combined music evening being held at the Highworth Community Centre, tickets on sale from Visit Highworth or email Richard Pearce and payment can be made direct to the association. Tickets are £12.00.</p>	

	The Town Clerk asked for HTC email address to be added to the distribution list so information can be forwarded on to the Councillors.	RP
94	<p>MINUTES OF THE MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING:</p> <p>RESOLVED to confirm and sign the Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on Tuesday 23rd January 2024.</p>	
95	<p>COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES:</p> <p><u>Meeting Minutes</u></p> <p>a. Finance & General Purpose – 16th January 2024 b. Neighbourhood Plan Committee – 23rd January 2024</p> <p>The Committee Meeting Minutes were noted.</p>	
96	<p>SWINDON ELECTORAL REVIEW:</p> <p>The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is asking for views on the electoral review of Swindon. The review will agree new ward boundaries across the Council.</p> <p>Councillors agreed to submit individual responses.</p>	ALL
97	<p>D-DAY:</p> <p>RESOLVED by Councillors to take part in the 80th Anniversary D-Day event on Thursday 6th June 2024 with a proclamation and the lighting of the beacon on the Podium. Voting was unanimous and the resolution was duly carried.</p>	
98	<p>OLD GOLF COURSE:</p> <p>The Town Clerk met with Cabinet Members K Small for Finance and J Grant Cabinet for Communities and Joint Working and Highworth Town Councillors J Murphy and K Saunders last week to discuss the Old Golf Course (OGC) proposal.</p> <p>They continue to support the proposal and want to work in partnership to deliver this for the Town, however as part of the plan they advised there needs to be an income generating scheme for the rest of cabinet to approve, the suggestion was a solar farm, but other ideas are welcomed.</p> <p>Part of the OGC is to be designated as Local Green Space (LGS) in the neighbourhood plan review and this was supported by both Cabinet Members K Small and J Grant.</p> <p>A motion will be presented to SBC Cabinet in June 2024 that states SBC are committed to working in partnership with HTC in this project delivery and investigate income generating schemes.</p> <p>A meeting with the OGC Working Party has been arranged for Monday 4th March 2024 at 6.30pm to discuss this further.</p>	

99	<p>COMMUNITY FLAGS:</p> <p>Councillor L Gow confirmed she has followed up with local organisations, including schools, and has around 5 further flags to be provided. A list will be sent to the Assistant Town Clerk. People in Highworth are keen to participate and are proud of the Town they live in.</p>	LG
100	<p>MAYORAL ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday 10 August 2023 – Launch of The Post Mistress Beer, The Wine Bar, Highworth • Friday 11 August – Opening of Art Exhibition in St Michaels Church • Saturday 12 August – Highworth Art & Literature Festival Authors Lunch • Monday 14 August 2023 – receive donated defibrillators for HTC and Aldi Highworth • Wednesday 23 August 2023 – Highworth Community Larder Event • Saturday 8th September 2023 – Highworth Produce Show Award presentations. • Thursday 21st September 2023 – Swindon Local Councils Forum • Friday 22nd September 2023 – RAF Fairford Civic Reception • Saturday 23rd September 2023 – Highworth Volunteer Expo • Tuesday 3rd October 2023 - Institution and Induction by the Venerable Christopher Bryan Archdeacon of Malmesbury of Reverend Philip Goodey • Monday 9th October 2023 – Friends of Wassenberg Ridgeway Walk & Lunch • Monday 9th October 2023 – Friends of Wassenberg Drinks Party • Sunday 12th October 2023 – St Michael’s Church Remembrance Service • Tuesday 17th October 2023 – Letters to Loved ones Post Box unveiling • Sunday 22nd October 2023 – Swindon Telugu Community • Saturday 28th October 2023 – Highworth Road Sweeper Unveiling • Saturday 28th October 2023 – Highworth Country Markets – 40 Years of Trading celebration • Tuesday 14th November 2023 – Southfields School Assembly to introduce proposed Play Areas • Wednesday 15th November 2023 – Westrop School Assemblies to introduce proposed Play Areas • Wednesday 15th November 2023 – Eastrop School Assembly to introduce proposed Play Areas • Saturday 25th November 2023 – Highworth Christmas Lights Event • Saturday 9th December 2023 – Highworth Choral Society Christmas Concert • Tuesday 12th December 2023 – Highworth Camera Club – Mayors Trophy prize presentation • Thursday 1st February 2024 – Highworth Community Larder 1st Anniversary <p style="text-align: center;"><u>CLLR ANTHONY HOUGHTON 2023.2024</u> <u>DEPUTY MAYOR OF HIGHWORTH</u> <u>ATTENDED FUNCTIONS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday 1st June 2023 - Prospect Hospice Rankin Exhibition & Introduction to New CEO • Sunday 25th June 2023 – Malmesbury Town Council – Choral Evensong 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunday 16th July 2023 – RIAT Afternoon Tea, RAF Fairford • Saturday 8th September 2023 – Highworth Produce Show 	
100	<p>REPORTS BY SWINDON BOROUGH COUNCILLORS:</p> <p>Councillor N Gardiner:</p> <p>The Town Clerk read out the following report in Councillor N Gardiner's absence: The past few months have seen a lot of turbulence within SBC as the current administration nears the end of its first year in control. Here in Highworth we've seen continuous impact to missed and delayed bin collections that the borough has struggled to get on top of. Plans are in place to restore service soon and I hope that Chris Watts will already have given you all hope in this meeting. The cold weather has brought about several housing crises in Highworth. On a couple of occasions through January and February, I've been out to meet residents with no heating and young children at home. In each case I have had engineers out as emergency calls and seen heating restored in hours not days. Houses in Queens Avenue had not been included in the window refresh program for 2024, though through working with the project team, I've managed to have all of Queens Avenue SBC tenants included for the ongoing program of window replacements. Working with the Police, we've identified an XL Bully in Home Farm that was not known to SBC or the Police. The owner has all the correct papers in place and SBC housing are in discussions to improve safety to the property boundary. 19 Cases worked since January.</p> <p>Councillor V Manro:</p> <p>There have been the waste recycling issues, let me know if someone needs a blue bag and I will go and deliver one. Flooding issues have happened on Swindon Road, Blunsdon, Hannington and Sevenhampton, some ditches have now been cleared. I have asked SBC to set up enquiries with all the flooding hot spots. I have helped with housing issues, including council tax and housing. The Gladman site, the detailed planning is imminent. I attended the Crime & Police Commissioner meeting and Neighbourhood Policing has been put as a high priority.</p> <p>Councillor S Weisinger:</p> <p>Councillor absent and no report given.</p>	
101	<p>REPORTS BY REPRESENTATIVES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Councillor N Gardiner - Highworth Community Partnership Group (HCPG) – Deferred to the next Full Council due to absence. Councillor R Williams - Highworth Twinning Association – HTA Quiz and Chips Night 21st March 2024. Councillor K Smith - Visit Highworth Limited (VHL) - Deferred to the next Full Council due to absence. 	

d. Councillor L Gow – Swindon Local Council Forum –

Devolution of services – process was originally proposed to be agreed by all parishes by May 2024, to be implemented by October 2024, this has now been deferred for up to 12 months while the details are finalised. Costings for each parish has been requested but has been delayed.

Several options on the table:

- HTC takes on all the work within the parish.
- The services are transferred to the three larger parishes who carry out the work and re-charge each parish.
- SBC continue to do the work and recharge each parish.

Asset transfer – The Town Clerk is awaiting an official request from SBC to consider taking over the Community Centre. There are other assets in the town that we could be asked to consider taking over, so the Town Clerk has asked Swindon Borough Councillor Jim Grant if he can confirm what these will be.

102 **MEMBERS BUSINESS:**

Councillor I Durnin-Duffy: Highworth Amateur Dramatic Society (HADS) have their March production at the Community Centre. They will be performing a Comedy, and food is provided by Andrews Butchers. I would like to thank the Community Centre for their support.

Councillor G Dennis: Wales & West Utility who dug up the path/road to put the tubing in have ruined grass areas. Soil has been dumped this weekend; does anyone know what is happening?

Standing Orders were suspended

Swindon Borough Councillor V J Manro confirmed the utility company will put topsoil down and then seed it.

Standing Orders were reinstated

Councillor N Key: A reminder to all that the community litter pick for March is taking place this Sunday 3rd March 2024 at 10:00am.

Councillor J Murphy: I would like to ask Swindon Borough Councillor V J Manro what was discussed at the meeting with Barrett Homes.

Councillor S Apps: Would like to express thanks to the people that have been picking up rubbish on Swindon Road.

Councillor R Williams: Chris and Heather from the fruit and vegetable stall have decided to retire after 38 years trading in our market, there is a card and collection for them at the market. They are planning to visit the Saturday Market in a couple of weeks, I will be there as Town Crier.

The Town Clerk is to request an update on how Councillor S Weisinger is.

DR

	<p><u>Councillor P Newton-Smith</u>: Do we have any news on replacing the fruit and veg stall? Councillor R Williams advised there have been two enquiries.</p> <p><u>Councillor K Saunders</u>: A Police Surgery was held at the Community Centre on Saturday 24th February 2024.</p>	
Meeting Closed 20:32PM		

Signed:

Date:

DRAFT