



FAIRER

BETTER

GREENER

2024 - 2027

SWINDON PLAN

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Introduction

FROM CLLR JIM ROBBINS, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

“It’s the noise, the passion, the feeling of belonging, the pride in your city.” - Sir Bobby Robson.

Swindon is a fantastic place, home to over 230,000 residents. It welcomes people from all over the world who choose to settle here. I wasn’t born here, but I can’t imagine living anywhere else. However, the town is not perfect, far from it. There are areas where the town looks tired and run down and we haven’t invested in new facilities at the rate that we have built houses in the town. Whilst I’m always amazed by the generosity of residents and their willingness to help their neighbours, there are areas of hardship in the town and places where it is difficult for people to reach their potential.

To help ensure Swindon and everyone in the community can flourish and thrive in the future, we are focussing relentlessly on three big priority missions over the next decade:

- **Build a Fairer Swindon** – make Swindon a fairer place, reduce disadvantage and reduce big disparities in life expectancy, education levels and social justice.
- **Build a Better Swindon** – create a town ready for the challenges of the coming decades. Where possible, lead town centre improvement and create more affordable housing in partnership with the private sector.
- **Build a Greener Swindon** – fully play our part as a council and a town in combatting climate change. Work with communities to find new ways of doing things that help, not hinder, the natural environment.

Without doubt these are big, tricky challenges. There are no quick fixes. But we believe that these are the three most important missions that demand the Council’s focus and effort, working alongside residents and our partners, in the coming years. For each mission, this plan sets out how we will measure performance along with initial actions to deliver progress over the next three years.

Given the pressure on public finances, you might be wondering whether progressing these priorities is merely aspirational rather than achievable? The reality is that some of the initial activity over the next couple of years is already budgeted for and underway. Meanwhile, the plan makes clear where progress is dependent on securing additional funding from central government or external partners. Undeniably, public finances will remain extremely tight for the foreseeable future, which is why we’re focussing on and committing to three long-term missions.

We want to be a child-focused council, using the views of children and young people to inform service provision and policy decisions that make a meaningful difference to their lives. Around 80 per cent of the Council’s budget is currently spent on meeting the growing demand in Swindon for adults’ and children’s services. So first and foremost, the Council must operate and deliver its statutory services in a way that is financially sustainable before looking outward to drive forward regeneration in the town and ensuring that we are building the Swindon that we want to live in. To support that, we are reviewing the Council’s structure and operating model, to ensure both are fit for the future.

The 2023 Swindon Resident Survey results told us loud and clear that the Council needs to do much more to involve and engage residents in its plans and thinking. The ‘Let’s talk Swindon’ engagement events that we held in January and February 2024 for residents, partners and council colleagues built on those results and gave us a really clear steer about what you want from the Council. The Swindon Plan has changed drastically from the draft plan that we went out to consultation with and now really reflects what you want to see from the Council. We can’t deliver it all ourselves but you have my commitment that we’ll galvanise support around this plan to deliver a fairer, better, greener Swindon for everyone.

“Swindon welcomes people from all over the world who choose to settle here.”



Making Swindon a fairer place, reducing disadvantages and reducing big disparities in life expectancy, education levels and social justice.

BUILD A FAIRER SWINDON

OUR THEMES

Stronger and safer communities

Improve health and wellbeing

Improve education and skills



Creating a town ready for the challenges of the coming decades. Where possible, leading town centre improvement and creating more affordable housing with the private sector.

BUILD A BETTER SWINDON

OUR THEMES

Support everyone to have a decent home

Swindon is a place where business can thrive

Define the future of our town centre

Protect Swindon's heritage, leisure and open spaces

Keep Swindon moving



Fully playing our part as a council and a town in combatting climate change. Working with communities to find new ways of doing things that help, not hinder, the natural environment.

BUILD A GREENER SWINDON

OUR THEMES

Leading the way towards a net zero borough by 2050

Greener planning and transport

Protect the environment

Keeping on track for a net zero Council



HOW THE PLAN IS INFORMED



Swindon's context



Resident insight and engagement



HOW THE PLAN IS ENABLED



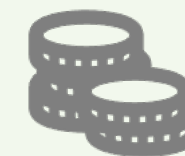
High performing teams



Our transformation programme



HOW THE PLAN IS MANAGED



Within the parameters of the Council's budget



HOW THE PLAN IS MEASURED



The plan's performance framework



Residents' insight and experience



SWINDON PLAN 2024 - 2027

The Borough of Swindon

Located in the north-east of Wiltshire, the thriving town and borough of Swindon is home to over 230,000 people. It has seen population growth outstrip the national average over the past decade, with people coming to live and work here from all over the world.

People come to and stay in Swindon because of the employment opportunities, competitive house prices, good schools and access to beautiful parks and surrounding countryside. Here, your money goes further and you have access to an excellent road and rail network.

Swindon's great location brought Isambard Kingdom Brunel's Great Western Railway in 1843, transforming it from a small market town into the world's largest railway works. Since then, Swindonians have continued to roll up their sleeves as the economy diversified and Swindon became one of the fastest growing towns in Europe post-war. Businesses benefit from ideal access to the M4 corridor and an adaptable workforce.

People here get involved in their local community, put their hand up to volunteer and support local events. Swindon has always celebrated its diversity and is home to a range of strong ethnic and religious communities.

There are some local issues that the Borough has to grab by the horns. Some parts of Swindon show contrast with the rest; these areas have additional needs and are where we must focus our attention. Despite this, our communities are strong, committed and self-sufficient.

Public agencies are working across their organisational boundaries and with the community to make Swindon a fairer place, reducing disadvantage and disparities in healthy life expectancy, education levels and social justice.

And while the town is an area of high productivity and employment, many residents are in low-skilled jobs. Local businesses identify a shortage of recruits with higher level skills as a barrier to growth, which has led to investment in Swindon's technical educational and training offer.

Like most towns and cities across the country, Swindon's high street is adapting to a future less reliant on retail to one providing more homes, work spaces, amenities and leisure. Investment is already underway in better public transport links with the surrounding area, cycle routes and the public realm.

Swindon has a history of reinvention. While coal-powered steam trains are the reason the town has grown; its future rests on embracing renewable energy and sustainable living. We want to be at the forefront of new infrastructure, technology and innovation, to establish a greener world.

“Swindon has always celebrated its diversity and is home to a range of strong ethnic and religious communities.”





SWINDON PLAN 2024 - 2027

Our commitment to working with you

The missions that we have set out in this plan cannot be achieved by Swindon Borough Council alone.

We recognise that our role across Swindon is increasingly that of an enabler, a convenor and a place shaper. We must use our special democratic mandate to bring other public bodies, residents' groups, parish councils, voluntary organisations, businesses and individuals together to ensure that we're making the most of the talent and support within Swindon. Although there are challenges and issues that we must address, it is really important that we don't lose sight of the strength and positivity that exists across the Borough.

The role of the Council is changing. We are no longer able to provide all of the services we would like to. A little later in this plan the financial challenges facing the Council are outlined and those challenges mean we can no longer run all of the non-statutory services we were able to provide in years gone by. This means we will need to sometimes get out of the way, creating the conditions for other organisations and groups to fill the gaps that we leave behind.

As a result, our approach needs to change and everyone across the Council knows this. We know from our Annual Resident Survey that the Council is perceived by some as aloof and out of touch and that we need to build greater levels of trust with you.

We want to do something about this. We believe part of the answer is in the way we work and engage with you and that is why we have gladly adopted the Better Swindon engagement principles. These are:

- Being committed to raising standards by supporting what is best for Swindon and challenging what is not
- Encouraging more open discussion and shared decision making
- Treating everyone as an important part of our town's future by promoting openness, fairness and transparency
- Transforming the relationship between the Council and the community to one of equality, trust and respect
- Expecting our elected representatives to act with integrity and be accountable
- Recognising examples of best practice and promoting positive initiatives, to improve the quality of life for the people of this town

These principles accord with the Council's Values which were adopted by council colleagues in 2023. They are:

1. At Swindon what we do really matters

2. At Swindon we do things right

3. At Swindon we make it happen together

These values are explained in more detail later in the plan.

So, in summary, the Council's relationship with its residents and its communities has to change to become more equal, more respectful and more trusting. We are absolutely up for the challenge and hope you are too. This plan starts to set out how we will deliver our side of the bargain and we look forward to a much better relationship with Swindon residents.

“The Council's relationship with its residents has to change to become more equal, more respectful and more trusting”



SWINDON PLAN 2024 - 2027

The Council's budget position

It is well documented that public services are struggling with a lack of available resources and funding. This has been the case for several years. Swindon Borough Council is no different. Ongoing inflation and demand pressures in areas such as adults and children's social care means that balancing the books over the next couple of years is going to be really challenging. A fundamental factor in the pressures facing the Council is the long-term reduction in funding for local government.

The Local Government Association estimates that councils' core spending power fell by 23 per cent in real terms from 2010/11 to 2024/25. In Swindon, savings of over £200m have been delivered since 2010 and the amount of money the Council receives from central government has reduced from 29 per cent of its overall budget in 2010 to just three per cent in 2024/25. During the same period the Council has not only had to deal with the implications of reduced budgets but also significantly increased service demands. For example, demand for emergency accommodation to prevent homelessness has increased by 18 per cent in the last 12 months alone. Our 2024/25 budget requires us to spend an extra £13m (26 per cent more than we spent in 2023/24) on keeping children safe from harm.

In order to deliver the missions, the Council is going to have to be increasingly inventive in its use of resources. It may seem counterintuitive to outline a set of ambitious plans as part of the Swindon Plan, while being forced to make savings to a lot of our services. The Council's base budget is under tremendous pressure and that's why we need to reduce the cost of the things we need to pay for year in and year out. That's why we're reluctantly having to propose significant budget cuts and raise Council Tax and the fees and charges for some services.

But there are things we can do with grant money from the Government, or by working with other public and private organisations to leverage our resources. And we believe we must remain ambitious for the Borough while making difficult decisions about what we can fund ourselves.

We are clear though that we can't keep balancing our budget by service cuts alone. We need to fundamentally change the way the Council operates, the way it works with partners in the private, public and voluntary sector and work really hard with them to reduce the need some families have for our services. We currently spend 83 per cent of our budget on adult and children's services. Supporting families and residents before they need council services is a key focus of our transformation programme, which is outlined in the next few pages of this plan. Doing that will lead to better outcomes for all concerned and will reduce inequality across the town, leading to a fairer Swindon for everyone.

"We believe we must remain ambitious for the Borough while making difficult decisions about what we can fund ourselves."





SWINDON PLAN 2024 - 2027

The changes we plan to make

The challenge facing us is to identify and make more budget reductions in the next couple of years at the same time as working to create a council that is able to work better with partners to deliver our 10 year missions for Swindon.

Although we have financial pressures, this is not the only reason we need to make changes. Modern customer expectations, new technology and an ageing population with greater care needs are driving some of the changes we need to deliver.

Our focus will be on working together with communities and partners to make the best use of our resources so we deliver a better Swindon, within our financial means. We will work together as one team for one purpose; to help residents get the right information and support, at the right place, at the right time.

We have identified the areas of focus for the next three years that will help us meet our immediate budget challenges as well as driving the key changes to the way we work. We will also start building the foundations for the longer term, the deeper changes we need to make to become a modern council which is financially stable. Inevitably, this will mean facing some difficult choices about council services and the way they are provided. We are confident that by changing the way we work we can still provide good quality services that are affordable to our tax payers.

We recognise that we need to join up better across our services and with other parts of the public sector and that this requires us to listen, have good working relationships and reach agreements on priorities in the best interests of the people who live in Swindon. This will enable us to jointly refocus our efforts on early intervention and prevention activity that will reduce high support costs in our communities.

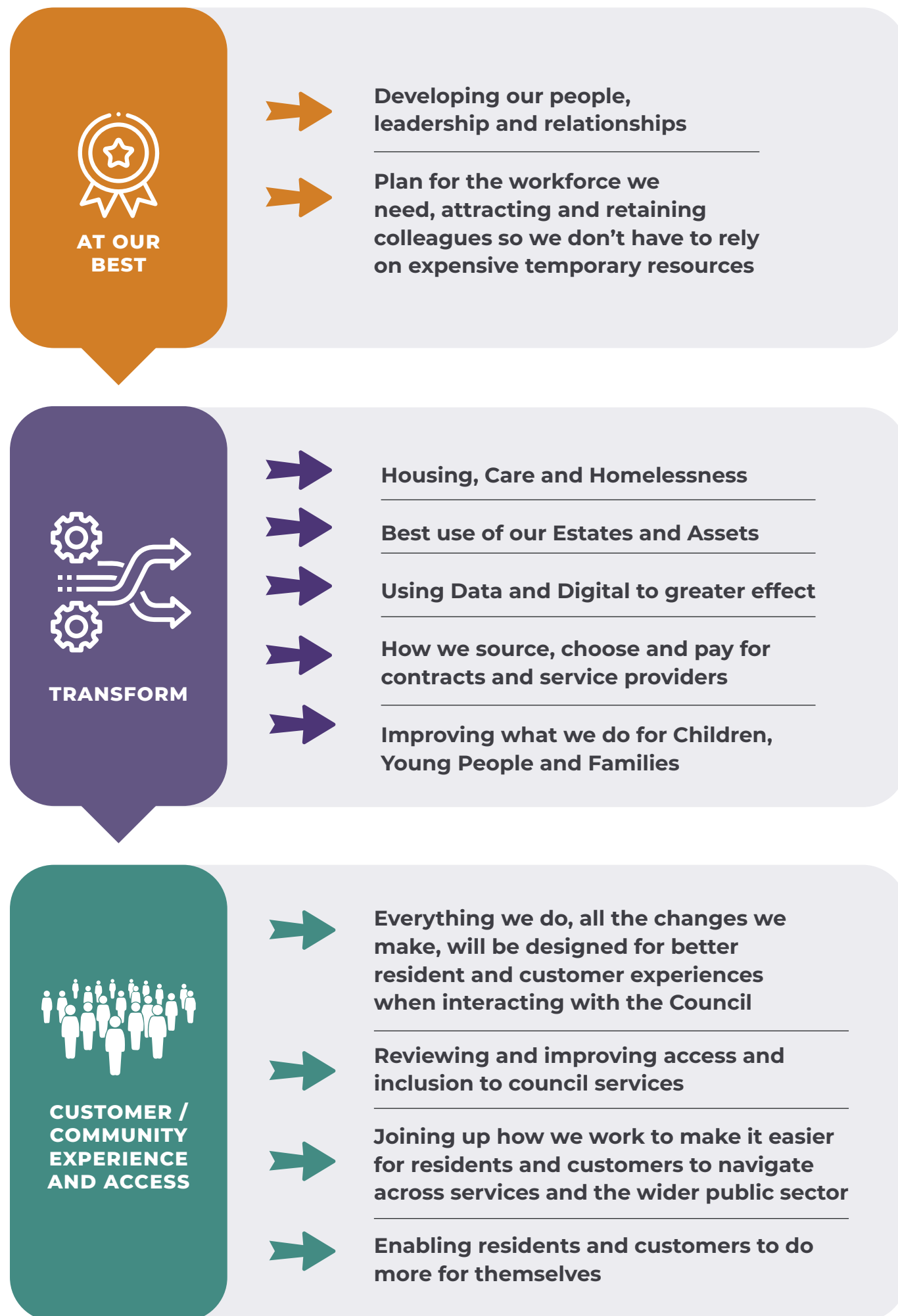
We also know that we have to improve our everyday activities, to get the basics right, so that it does not escalate into bigger and more expensive issues to resolve. We want to improve the trust our residents have in the Council ensuring they have consistent and positive experiences when interacting with the Council, whether that's online, on the phone or in any of our in-person conversations.

The places that residents go to get advice and information will be reviewed to ensure they are delivering for local people. We will ask residents for their views and work with partners to design customer focussed provision. Technology enables us to work closer with residents within communities. We can provide our staff, who work directly with residents, the access to the information they need. This will provide an opportunity to rethink how we work in communities.

We will focus our efforts on cross-cutting themes that, when delivered together, will improve our financial position and modernise the way we work. These changes will require us to work across services in a total 'one council' approach. The Council has done well in previous years to make savings, through service specific improvement plans. We must now change our approach to deliver the cross-service changes needed to make the level of savings required and rethink how we work together to deliver on the new 10-year missions set out in this Swindon Plan.

During January and February 2024, we listened and discussed with partners, residents, councillors and colleagues what our missions for the Borough need to be and what needs to be different at the Council to make them happen. With thanks to all those involved, we have arrived at the areas of focus for our three-year transformation programme as we start our journey towards the 10-year missions. This programme should provide a shift in the way the Council works and a significant step forward towards our missions.

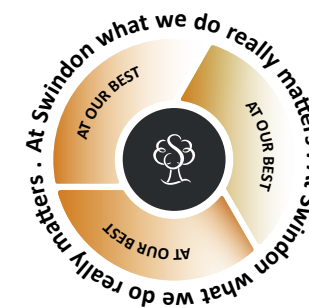
"We want to improve the trust our residents have in the Council through consistent and positive experiences when interacting with the Council."



At Our Best

This is the foundation for the success of both the Swindon Plan and our change agenda. Our colleagues are our greatest asset and are key to ensuring that transformation is successful and that we embed a different way of working with residents, partners and each other.

At the heart of the At Our Best programme is developing our culture. We can do this by promoting our behaviour framework and co-designed values:



At Swindon what we do really matters

We love 'our' Swindon. We want the best for it. We turn up each and every day to have impact, a place and people to be proud of.



At Swindon we do things right

We are accountable to our residents and ourselves to make the best decisions we can, to try new things to make Swindon thrive now and in the future.



At Swindon we make it happen together

We work together, with our communities, across the Council and with our partners to get the best we can collectively for Swindon.

We will develop a detailed programme of activity that aims to equip our colleagues with the skills they need, encourages development and supports the delivery of our missions.

We also need to focus on our workforce planning so that we can attract the staff we need and keep them. We know our partners and the people that use our services benefit from a stable workforce so that relationships can be built and valued.

Transform

There are some specific areas that we know need targeted effort; to collectively rethink how we can deliver better outcomes and value for money.

Housing, Care and Homelessness

We need to redesign how we work between our Housing, Care and Homelessness services. We can use our council housing stock better and make homes available for those that need them quicker. This area of transformation will consider our policies, how we work together and how we can identify and plan ahead for the future housing requirements of people needing social care.

In order for us to make better use of our housing stock we first need to address some aspects of how our Housing service operates. We need to get better at turning around empty properties and adapting them to the requirements of the residents that need them.

We also need to reduce the amount of money we are spending on housing people in temporary accommodation. We need to review the places we are using and look to our own properties or invest in the right places so that we can reduce these costs.

Best use of our Estates and Assets

The Council owns many buildings and places across the Borough. We need to review what buildings we have and what we use them for. We can then make decisions about what we need and plan for the future so that we maximise their use and/or value.

This is a complicated programme of work as it links up our Build a Better Swindon ambitions, our housing needs and is also critical for us to understand the best access points to services across the Borough. Balancing all these requirements and aligning all the different policies is essential for us to plan our investment in maintaining our current assets, disposing of anything surplus and acquiring any new ones.

Using Data and Digital to greater effect

We live in a digital-first world and our services rely on technology to deliver services. We have a complex set of systems that support the Council. Some of these systems could connect better so that services can join up and staff can view information together to better help customers. Technology is always advancing and is expensive. We need to keep up to date with modern customer needs but also make best use of what we have. We need a roadmap so we set out our digital journey and make sure we invest in the right systems that provide the best value for money.

We have so much data within our systems and we know that we could make better use of it to get the intelligence we need to understand our communities, their needs and predict future demands.

This programme of work will set out our data and digital roadmaps and the activity needed to provide our customers and staff with improved digital services and the business intelligence to drive the Council's ambitions forward.

How we source, choose and pay for contracts and service providers

The Council has many contracts worth many millions of pounds and these represent a big proportion of the Council's overall budget. This is, therefore, an essential part of our transformation programme. This piece of work will cut across services to get the right processes and monitoring in place to ensure the very best value for money and outcomes from our contracts, with particularly detailed attention on our social care commissioning arrangements.

The Council does not always directly provide care for residents that need support. The Council identifies requirements and then sources and creates contracts with providers of care services, this is called commissioning.

Improving what we do for Children, Young People and Families

We need to improve the quality of our support for children and the support from other partners and communities within Swindon to enable children, young people and families to achieve better outcomes.

We started this improvement journey in 2023 following an Ofsted inspection. We must continue this essential programme of work and ensure that our wider transformation efforts enhance and accelerate the necessary improvements in Children's Services.

“We have so much data within our systems and we know that we could make better use of it to get the intelligence we need to understand our communities, their needs and predict future demands.”

Customer / Community Experience and Access

We need to re-think how we, and our partners and communities, enable families and residents to better access and use our collective resources. This area of transformation will look at how we work together in the broadest sense; from support in the community and how you access council services when you need them, to our internal enabling services that support the whole council.

All our transformation activity work will be undertaken with customers at its core. Re-imagining how we work with partners to provide services that are consistently good, rather than those that are hard to navigate.

We want to design-out ‘failure demand’ where customers have repeat contact with us because they are chasing us for action and we want to design-in prevention activity that enables us to provide early help before small problems get worse.



This is a big change to the way the Council works and will require teams and services to be innovative and make best use of our technology so that we can support residents better and make the Council more efficient. We will undertake activity and projects that will include:

-  **Accessible and joined-up information and advice, so that residents have what they need from us to make their own arrangements.**
-  **Increased support for self-help, early help and prevention.**
-  **The relationships and environments that promote and support (where needed) communities to develop their own solutions.**
-  **The working arrangements needed for Public Health and Housing to be at the centre of how we support our residents.**
-  **Improved partnership working, for example with health colleagues, parish councils and the voluntary sector.**
-  **New ways of listening to and engaging with communities, families and residents.**



SWINDON PLAN 2024 - 2027




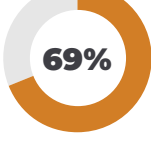


What you have told us

The Council exists to serve residents and the community, which is why we run an Annual Resident Survey to get feedback. This asks residents about issues such as:

-  Satisfaction with their local area as a place to live
-  Satisfaction with the way the Council runs things
-  Value for money
-  Council responsiveness
-  How well informed the Council keeps residents
-  Trust in the Council
-  Satisfaction with services

In 2023, we sent a letter to a random sample of 7,803 households inviting them to participate. The sample was selected to ensure each ward in Swindon was proportionately represented. The survey was also opened up to residents who did not receive a letter and was promoted through various communication channels.

We received 3,222 responses in total of which 1,112 came from those that had received a letter. The full results are available online within the [December 2023 Cabinet Paper](#) and [appendix](#) but some key findings are:

-  **64%** of respondents are very or fairly satisfied with their local area as a place to live
-  **49%** of respondents are very or fairly dissatisfied with the way the Council runs things, compared to 27 per cent who are very or fairly satisfied
-  **52%** of respondents strongly or tend to disagree that the Council provides value for money, compared to 18 per cent who strongly or tend to agree
-  **69%** of residents said the Council doesn't act on the concerns of local residents very much or at all, compared to 31 per cent who said it acts a great deal or fair amount
-  **66%** of residents said they don't trust the Council very much or at all, compared to 34 per cent who trust it a great deal or fair amount
-  **46%** of residents are very or fairly dissatisfied with the level of engagement the Council offers residents, compared to 18 per cent who said they are very or fairly satisfied

The three most important things to households remain the same as those identified in the 2022 Annual Resident Survey:

parks and open spaces, health services, and the level of crime.

The three things that households feel most need improving are:

road and pavement repairs, the town centre offer and the level of crime.

The feedback from the resident survey led us to create the draft Swindon Plan that went to Cabinet in December 2023. During January and February 2024, we organised engagement events and activity called 'Let's talk Swindon' to hear feedback on the draft plan from residents, businesses, partners and colleagues in the Council.

It was a great opportunity for us to explore views on the draft plan and has led to us making a number of changes to reflect what people need from the Council. A paper went to March 2024 Cabinet that provided an overview of the key feedback and an overview of the engagement activity we conducted. Some of the changes that have been made include changes to the wording of the missions and objectives, whereas others are significant in terms of adding new objectives, for example, adding an objective around improving mental health and wellbeing. We have also developed our narrative within the plan to explain what we are already doing, what is within the control of the Council, and what our areas of focus are.

Council Missions

In July 2023, the Council's Cabinet agreed to prioritise three 10-year missions. These missions will underpin the work of the Council and drive everything that the Council does. Following the engagement activity on the draft plan, the names of the missions have been updated but their focus remains:



Making Swindon a fairer place, reducing disadvantages and reducing big disparities in life expectancy, education levels and social justice.

BUILD A FAIRER SWINDON



Creating a town ready for the challenges of the coming decades. Where possible, leading town centre improvement and creating more affordable housing with the private sector.

BUILD A BETTER SWINDON



Fully playing our part as a council and a town in combatting climate change. Working with communities to find new ways of doing things that help, not hinder, the natural environment.

BUILD A GREENER SWINDON

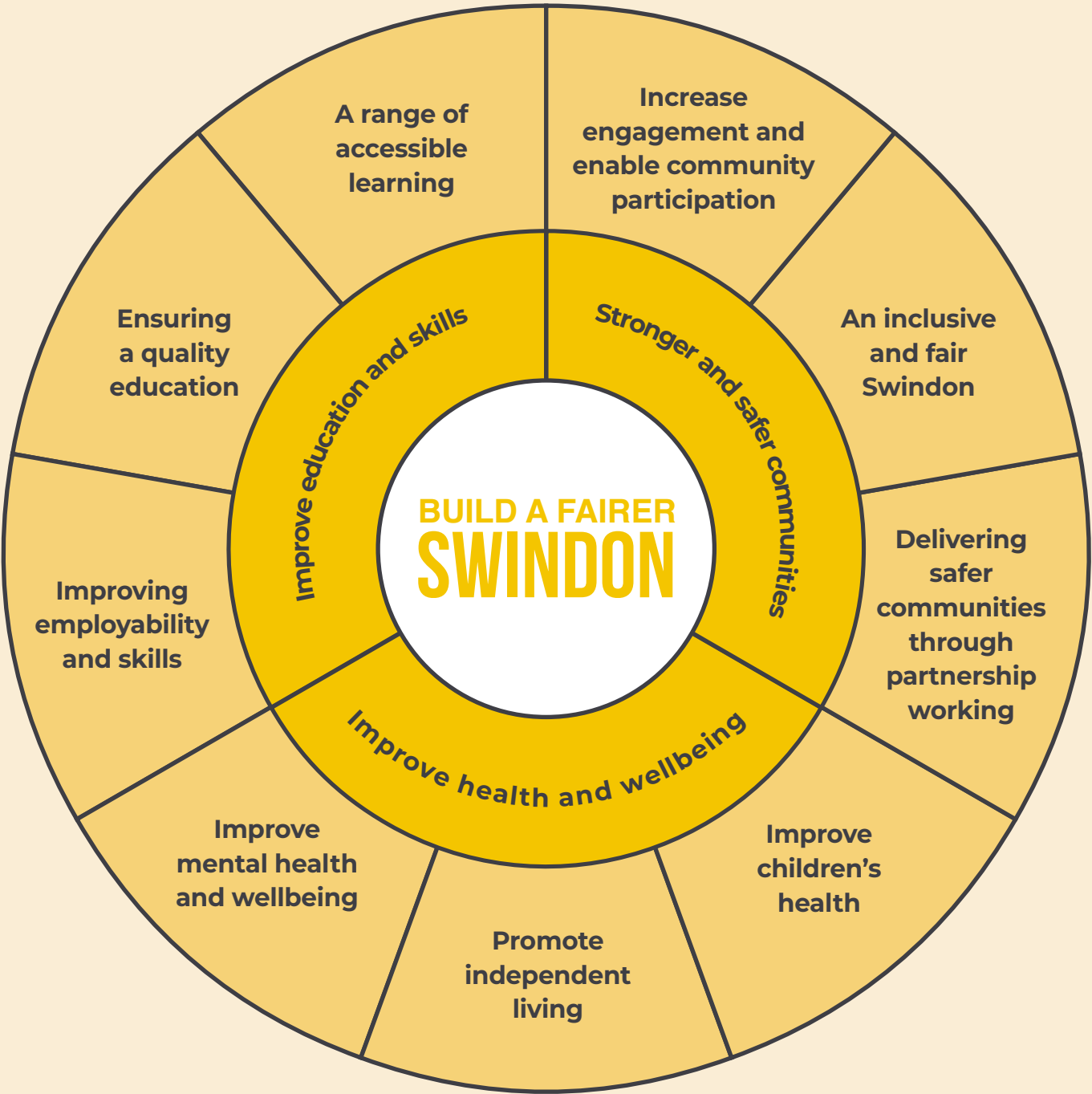
Each mission will be addressed through themes and objectives. Progress against each of these objectives will be monitored through performance measures and progress against deliverables.

We recognise that the missions are interlinked and support each other. There are some actions that fit across multiple missions.



Build a Fairer Swindon

“Make Swindon a fairer place, reduce disadvantage and reduce big disparities in life expectancy, education levels and social justice.”



Stronger and Safer Communities

Increase engagement and enable community participation

It is important for the Council to understand the communities of Swindon so that the policies and services we develop meet their needs. By working together, we will understand the capacity and skills of communities and prioritise our resources to maximise opportunities. We want communities to participate in democratic processes to influence and contribute to the future of Swindon. Our aspiration is to make Swindon a place where people are proud to live and where people have the opportunities to live fulfilling lives within their communities, which in turn reduces demand on statutory services.

To achieve this, we need to increase our focus on community engagement and relationship building. We must use every opportunity when working with people to understand their perspectives, priorities and strengths. We will create a new Safer and Stronger Communities directorate to bring together a number of teams and services to maximise our efforts to engage and enable participation.

Our focus will be on the development of a strategy which sets out our intention to work collaboratively with communities, partners, residents, parish councils and the voluntary and community sector. We will need to get a better understanding of the building and assets available across the Borough and ensure they are being used to the greatest effect, improving the experience of customers who need council services. This will include how libraries in Swindon play an important role in delivering information and support services to residents. This could involve lifelong learning to help everyone develop the right skills for jobs for life and offer free support for job seekers and universal credit claimants.

It will be important to develop the 'Let's talk Swindon' programme to continue the discussion with communities on how we can work together. We will need to bring together internal and external networks of colleagues and partners as well as ensuring that people with lived experiences contribute to service and policy design.

An inclusive and fair Swindon

We must focus our efforts on ensuring all Swindon residents are treated fairly and equally. Our aspiration is to ensure that Swindon is a welcoming place where diverse populations settle and contribute to community life. Together with residents and partners, we will seek to identify, understand and address inequality across the Borough and promote inclusivity. Social exclusion can occur when not everyone has equal access to the opportunities and services that allow them to lead a good life.

Our long-term goal is for Swindon to be recognised as a place where people feel proud to live and where everyone is welcome, including those seeking sanctuary, regardless of their background or personal circumstances. We want residents to enjoy a healthy and fulfilling life where they feel their contribution matters. People will feel connected, supported and have a sense of purpose and belonging.

Our focus will be to embed equality, diversity and inclusion across the Council where we learn from those with lived experiences to design services and ways of working to suit their needs. To achieve this, we will need to work on how we listen to and understand the perspectives of people with protected characteristics, this includes those that are care experienced which has been adopted as a protected characteristic by the Council. We aim to gain accreditation as a Borough of Sanctuary through the National City of Sanctuary Awards Programme. One means of addressing inequality is through financial inclusion and the Council will work with key partners to support people to improve their financial wellbeing, developing a Financial Wellbeing Partnership and embedding cost of living support across the Council.

Delivering safer communities through partnership working

Crime negatively impacts people's quality of life and harms communities. We are committed to working together to tackle crime and help Swindon residents feel safer, while looking at how we can tackle the causes of crime with our partners in Wiltshire Police. It is important that residents feel safe in their local communities and we protect those most in need. The Council provides a key role in assisting and facilitating the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) which brings together the local authority, Wiltshire Police, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service, the Integrated Care Board and Probation to collectively focus on reducing crime and disorder.

The CSP has groups which focus on Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls, Safer Communities, Prevent, the Combatting Drugs Partnership and the Violence Reduction Group. The CSP Strategy prioritises protecting people at risk of harm, tackling violence (serious and organised), and preventing crime and keeping people safe. The CSP needs to be agile and respond to government funding opportunities such as the Safer Streets Round of funding to draw in money and deliver against its priorities.

The main areas of focus will be a series of engagement events and activities to hear from residents about crime in Swindon and will be used to shape the next Community Safety Strategy. There will be focused conversations on the issues that matter to people, including serious violence and knife crime, anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse. The structure and functions of the CSP will also be reviewed to ensure the partnership is providing the best offer to residents and those most in need.

Improve Health and Wellbeing

Improve children's health

Our two areas of focus for this objective are to improve children's oral health, and to help children under five to achieve a healthy weight. Children with health needs have an increased risk of developing further and more severe health conditions in later life.

In Swindon, one in five reception aged children are classified as overweight and obesity in young children can increase the risk of diabetes, heart disease and some cancers in later life. Excess weight can affect a child's physical development and impact their emotional and social development. Childhood obesity places a significant burden on the healthcare system and, therefore, preventing obesity can reduce these costs. Swindon is a negative outlier in the number of people, particularly children, requiring hospital tooth extractions with the Borough having significantly higher rate than both the South West and the national average which points to issues with poor diet, poor oral hygiene and poor access to NHS dentistry.

We aim to work collaboratively with partners to create supportive environments to address the underlying factors contributing to obesity and poor oral health. The wider determinants of health such as income, access to green spaces and the food environment can create inequalities for individuals and communities. Therefore, it is important we help make healthy eating, physical activity and oral health an easy choice at every stage of life.

Oral health is a priority for the Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB). The ICB funds acute care and has recently taken on commissioning of dentistry. However, oral health is more than just about access to dentistry. In terms of healthy weight, a whole systems approach to healthy weight action plan has been published. Both of these areas require co-ordination and strong relationships with our partners including using available funding to deliver interventions.

The main objectives will focus on enhancing our pre-existing services, implementing evidence-based interventions, ensuring these meet the needs of residents, prioritising support in areas of greatest need and ensuring we have a strategic plan to embed a sustainable approach to health promotion and prevention.

Promote independent living

In social care, the primary goal is to support people at the earliest opportunity to help them manage their wellbeing and quality of life before their needs become more acute and they require more intensive services. At every stage a person may come into contact with the Council we must signpost and support them so that we can focus our resources on those in our communities that need them most. This will range from children first coming to our attention through Early Help services, those transitioning in and out of our services such as children looked after leaving our care, and adults requiring reablement support to manage their health needs.

In terms of adults, independence is a fundamental aspect of human dignity and quality of life. It is essential that we facilitate individuals to live as independently as possible within their own homes and communities by supporting them to maintain and improve their quality of life after a short or long-term illness or injury. This approach supports people to manage their health needs at home rather than needing more intensive support in residential care home settings. This is delivered through reablement services and occupational therapy services which are offered to people in our communities, or those being discharged from hospitals. In terms of care delivered to residents at home, we want to improve their ability of moving and handling through the use of equipment and specialist techniques. This will reduce the number of carers required to complete a task and support people to live at home safely for longer. Outcome measures play a pivotal role in evaluating the effectiveness and impact of interventions, therefore we measure people's perceived levels of independence to help them become more self-reliant. Key areas of focus will be to increase the availability of reablement within the community, ensuring professionals can access this easily, increasing support for mental health and engaging with those who have a lived experience of care and Early Help services.

For our children, there are two main points where it is important to support children to live independent lives. The first is through our early help and intervention services and could be when concerns are raised through health visiting, through schools or referrals made to the Council. Our aim is to meet the needs of the child and their family at the earliest opportunity to prevent them needing more intensive support and interventions. Therefore, we need a strong universal offer that provides parenting support, ensures children are ready for school and have their health needs met. We must ensure that our support services are accessible and provide signposting and positive activities to support emotional wellbeing. Our focus will be to ensure that resources and support are available in communities and to equip groups, charities and schools with the support and training they need to help families. The Council will also deliver a new youth provision at the Lyndhurst Centre in Park North utilising funding from the Youth Investment Fund.

We must also support children as they start to live their lives as an adult. We want to help children and young people prepare for the rest of their lives so they can continue to live a stable, healthy and fulfilling life. This is achieved through good personalised planning to ensure that the right support is put in place as they leave care. Our focus will be on ensuring we have a range of housing options available to meet their needs. We will refresh and embed our ambitions as corporate parents across the Council, exploring how we can effectively extend support for care experienced young people up to the age of 25, and supporting young people into education, employment or training.



“Our aim is to meet the needs of the child and their family at the earliest opportunity to prevent them needing more intensive support and interventions.”

Improve mental health and wellbeing

Mental health is key to healthy life expectancy and how people feel about themselves. Mental ill-health can affect anyone and have a significant impact on the lives of individuals, their families, communities and wider society. Local people highlight that mental health influences their individual behaviour (for example the ability to go out, socialise, eat well etc.) and is also the health condition they feel is most important. We therefore need to develop the right support programmes in Swindon as it is one of the main priorities in Swindon’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The work of partners in Swindon is largely responsive and there is a need for more pro-active prevention work. The majority of the community mental health services in Swindon are commissioned by the Integrated Care Board, but the Council does contribute to the voluntary sector to support community provision. The Council’s Public Health team plays a role in working with partners to promote good mental health and the proactive prevention of mental ill-health. They are working with the Integrated Care Board to develop a mental health and wellbeing training offer to shift the focus of services towards more structured interventions that enable early help.

The key priorities of the Mental Health Strategy are suicide and self-harm prevention, and supporting the mental health of boys and men. These priorities form the basis of the Public Mental Health action plan and will require working more collaboratively to ensure resource is prioritised on those needing most support.



Improve Education and Skills

Improving employability and skills

It is important people have the skills and education to meet their ambitions and aspirations. Swindon has a higher proportion of people without at least a Level 2 qualification (GCSE Grade 4 or above) compared to national figures as well as a higher proportion of residents with no qualifications. However, employment is high within low level jobs.

A main area of focus is to support young people leaving statutory education at 16 to access Education, Employment or Training (EET), to ensure that all young people have access to good quality careers education and advice. This will, in turn, reduce the number of young people who become NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) and develop more inclusive pathways for young people such as supported employment, while also promoting the Swindon offer for high levels skills and education.

Our Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Corporate Parenting policies also outline our commitments to supporting children and young people with SEND or those who are care experienced.

Adult Community Learning is a key focus, by helping residents without formal qualifications, or the confidence, to start learning. Courses are targeted at residents who are least likely to engage in more traditional education, such as those with no or low-level qualifications, low confidence, mental ill-health or learning disabilities or difficulties. The goal of the service is to build the confidence of learners to support them into further learning at a higher level, volunteering, employment or improvements in their health and wellbeing. By achieving the benefits of learning, the service can support people to reduce inequality and increase their ability to support themselves.

**“THE BENEFITS OF
LEARNING CAN SUPPORT
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TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES”**



Ensuring a quality education

We are ambitious for our children and will focus on the importance of learning as a platform for change. We want all our children to access high quality settings and schools at every phase of their education, which will support the qualifications and skills they need for their future, whatever their aspirations.

We want all children to attend a school which is 'Good' or 'Outstanding' and to achieve qualifications in line with their peers nationally. We want parents to feel confident in their local schools and to know their child is safe, in education, learning and progressing. We will work in collaboration with our early years settings and schools to create strong sustainable partnerships, able to support all aspects of improvement and inclusion for the most vulnerable children.

We have much work to do as Swindon is recognised by the Department for Education as one of 55 Education Investment areas. These are the third of local authorities in England where educational outcomes were the weakest based on sustained low performance across key stage 2 and key stage 4. We also have improvements to make as not all children in Swindon are attending school every day.

We will work with partners to enhance the quality of learning and outcomes through excellent inclusive teaching and learning, revitalising learning within families and communities. This will help to ensure that lifelong learning creates a platform for economic development and cultural prosperity, focusing on learning for work and in work, while harnessing the use of technology in supporting learning.



A range of accessible learning

Access to learning begins in early years settings like nurseries and this is crucial for determining future positive earning outcomes, emotional and mental well-being and positive healthy relationships as well as supporting children to be ready for school. The Early Years service aims to raise awareness of entitlements to support parents and carers to work and provide their child or children with access to learning. The focus for the service will be to implement new government policy to extend childcare from nine months for working parents and offer wraparound childcare before and after school to ensure that any parent that wants to can access high quality provision local to their home or workplace.

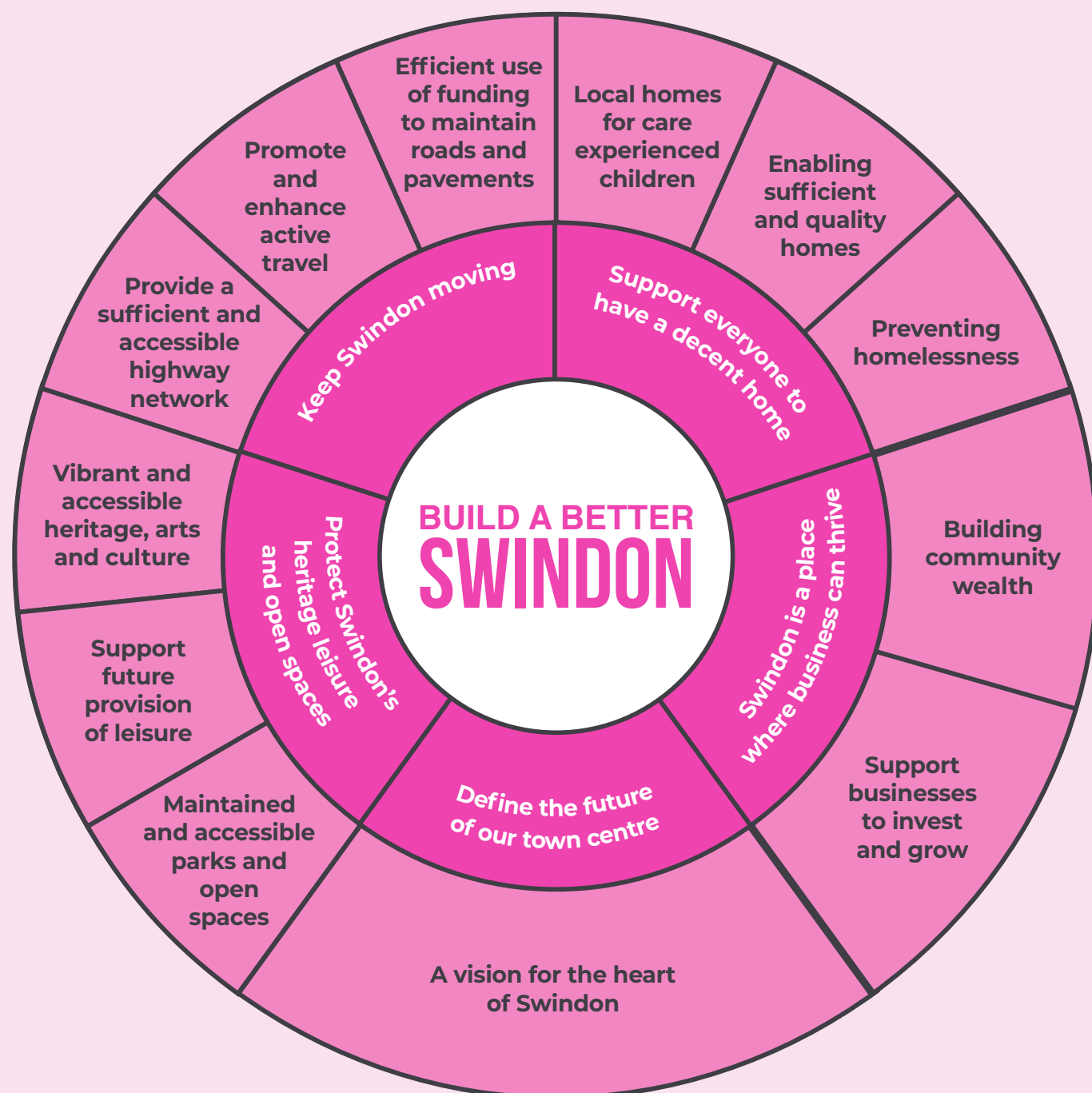
A key element to ensure that there is sufficient provision of education in Swindon is through our School Place Planning and School Admissions policy. In Swindon, parental preference is high with 99.8 per cent receiving one of their preferences for September 2024 and we aim to maintain this by ensuring there are sufficient local schools for children. However, Swindon has a higher number of children moving into the Borough and it is a growing town. This means we must continually assess capacity so that sufficient places are available. A key area of focus is on forecasting the amount of provision required in Swindon for the next 10 years across all school phases as well as SEND sufficiency. We need to ensure that children and young people with SEND have access to equitable high-quality education that meets their needs and this forms one of the core priorities of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), Inclusion and Alternative Provision Strategy.

Libraries in Swindon will ensure they are safe, open and welcoming spaces for people to meet, learn, have fun and realise their potential. They offer a range of accessible reading options as well as co-ordinating the BookStart programme to provide free book packs to every new-born child and term-time weekly Story and Rhyme Times.

Learning opportunities are essential for personal growth, empowerment, and social and economic inclusion. While this holds true for all adults, it becomes even more critical for adults with learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities. These individuals face unique challenges in acquiring knowledge, skills, and life competencies. We recognise that every adult, regardless of their abilities, deserves equal access to education and skill development and that learning opportunities should be inclusive, accommodating and diverse, able to meet all learning styles and needs. We are committed to removing barriers to education and training for all adults by developing learning environments that embrace diversity and foster understanding and empathy.

Build a Better Swindon

“Create a town ready for the challenges of the coming decades. Where possible, lead town centre improvement and create more affordable housing in partnership with the private sector.”



Support everyone to have a decent home

Local homes for care experienced children

Entering care is a difficult and impactful time for children. We need to ensure that where it is safe to do so, they are able to maintain relationships with their family, friends and school, by remaining in the local area.

Currently 37 per cent of children who are looked after live more than 20 miles from Swindon. In some instances, this will be for appropriate reasons but, for others, this will be because of limited provision in the area. We want to work to increase the number of care placements within Swindon. This will be achieved by increasing our own number of placements, alongside building relationships with private sector providers to improve access to local homes.

Enabling sufficient and quality homes

A good home is vital to maintaining a good quality of life. Swindon residents, as well as those looking to move here, should have access to a range of good quality housing options including affordable and social housing. The demand to build in Swindon is high and it is important that we ensure that development takes places in the right places as well as protecting our natural assets.

There are sites and planning permissions in place to deliver over 15,000 new homes within Swindon. We will be working hard with our partners to unlock barriers and accelerate the delivery of much-needed high quality and affordable housing within the Borough. Our planning services will act as a commercially-focused catalyst, which recognises the need for pace and earlier certainty from our partners in the challenging macro-economic climate.

We will also be widening the range of homes built to include new housing typologies/models and higher density urban housing within the heart of Swindon. We will also provide opportunities for smaller developers and local builders, which strengthen the circular economy in Swindon.

Preventing homelessness

The best way to tackle homelessness is to prevent it from happening. Access to housing is vital to ensure our residents lead healthier and more stable lives. Prevention also reduces the need for the Council to use expensive Bed and Breakfast (B&B) type accommodation. Our long-term aspirations are to ensure we have a wide range of affordable and suitable accommodation to end rough sleeping and end the use of B&B accommodation. We also need to provide accessible advice for residents threatened with homelessness to support them to stay in their homes.

The number of people becoming homeless is increasing, which means we are needing to use more temporary accommodation. Our response is to create a bespoke offer of support, however, with a large number of people waiting for social housing and an expensive private rental market, the options can be limited.

Our focus will therefore be on providing robust prevention work to reduce evictions, working with partners to ensure the right advice is given at the right time and working to create a more attractive private rented sector offer for Swindon landlords. We will also work on improving access to services through an in-person service and improving the ability to access support independently.

“Our long-term aspirations are to ensure we have a wide range of affordable and suitable accommodation to end rough sleeping and end the use of B&B accommodation”

Swindon is a place where business can thrive

Building community wealth

Our goal is to deliver a more inclusive economy which works to keep more of the Swindon pound in Swindon and ensures investment coming into Swindon benefits all residents. This new approach will help unleash the potential of residents, businesses and the voluntary sector because they are the source of wealth and talent that will drive a fairer and more prosperous Swindon. Our approach will be underpinned by the principles of economic, social and environmental justice; so Swindonians benefit from long-term prosperity, wellbeing and fairness.

Our long-term aspirations are to lead by example in using our purchasing power and influence to keep wealth in our local economy through our procurement policies and encouraging other partners locally to do the same. We will support businesses to increase the number of higher skilled, higher paid and better-quality jobs for Swindon residents. We need to champion corporate understanding and behaviours of council officers to tap into local supply chains and encourage (and support) local businesses to bid for procurement tenders so that our social value procurement ambitions are realised and outcomes promote our circular economy with little to no economic leakage.

We will work with partners to compile an updated Business Directory for Swindon and look at ways to support small and midsize enterprises (SMEs) become more productive and greener, as well as encouraging the payment of the national living wage to their workers. The investment in the town centre will be critical, with a number of business-led regeneration schemes requiring facilitation and coordination. The ongoing redevelopment of the former Honda site by Panettoni is a key economic driver and we must ensure we develop key skills and training pathways for this sector. We will also need to ensure internal working relationships between procurement, planning and skills/training are embedded to best support wealth and skills building activities within our local community.

Support businesses to invest and grow

We will develop partnerships with our business community we build enthusiasm, interest and opportunities which support inward investment and job creation in Swindon.

We recognise the need to engage with businesses on wider issues beyond business rates and regulatory regimes and will work with stakeholders at Business West, the Department for Trade & Business, Western Gateway and local business forums such as the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Through recent engagement with key industry leads as part of our vision for the heart of Swindon, we have recognised the need to blend experience and knowledge within the private sector and public sector to strengthen and build relationships with businesses. A key emerging theme has been the need to support businesses and their employees to successfully grow by strengthening the wider 'place' offer within Swindon. This includes building collaborative offers to support our arts and cultural sectors, growing our leisure and night-time economy offer, diversifying our housing mix to meet modern business needs (especially for multi-national headquartered companies) and the opportunities to support exercise and healthy lifestyles.

Working with our education providers we will ensure training pathways, skills development and professional support networks have a platform to maximise opportunities to have the greatest benefit for local residents.

We will be supporting organisations across Swindon to succeed and enable them to embed community wealth building practices in their daily activities to build a strong, resilient and self-sustaining local economy.



Define the future of our Town Centre

A vision for the heart of Swindon

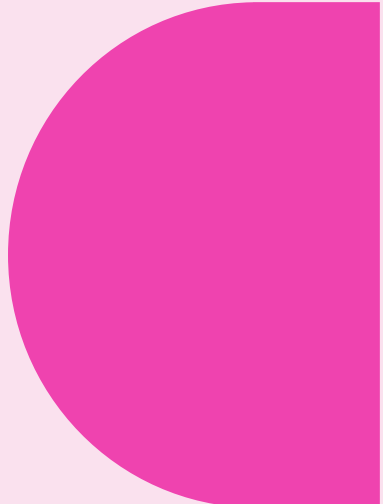
A number of complex and interacting trends linked to wider economic impacts continue to affect town centres across the country. These pressures include changes in the retail industry and people's shopping habits, changes in the use of office space and a reduction in face-to-face consumer spending power. Swindon town centre is not immune from these UK-wide trends. That's why the town centre offer – what attracts people to visit, live, relax, play and work – has to adapt to and meet the changing demands and needs of our wider community.

We have long-term aspirations to deliver homes to address demographic imbalances such as younger people and first-time buyers. We also want to encourage and support the diversification and vibrancy of our town centre by improving the leisure offer and making creative spaces to increase footfall. We need to support job creation and economic growth so that the town centre is an important space for businesses and offices. This ambitious vision will create confidence in the wider market for inward investment and support the Swindon economy.

Much of the land in the town centre is owned or managed by private landowners, developers, investors and retailers. Therefore, it is the Council's role to attract investment to the town centre by leveraging buildings and land that it controls and use planning policy to unlock key sites to create inward investment opportunities.

Our main focus will be to develop the high-level vision for the heart of Swindon which pulls together all the key themes, deliverables and opportunities. We will need to ensure we have sufficient resource in our regeneration function to facilitate this, while also working collectively with the private, public and voluntary sector to unlock our key ambitions.

“Our main focus will be to develop the high-level vision for the heart of Swindon which pulls together all the key themes, deliverables and opportunities.”



Protect Swindon’s heritage, leisure and open spaces

Maintained and accessible parks and open spaces

Through the Resident Survey, you have told us how important country parks and open spaces are to your enjoyment of the area as well as your health and well-being. Swindon is well serviced by open spaces and has fabulous parks with open access. The more people can be encouraged to use our parks and open spaces, the healthier and more fulfilled they will be.

We own and manage parkland at Lydiard, Stanton, Coate and Mouldon Hill with many other open spaces being transferred to our parish council partners. The Council is a landowner and is able to consider the use of its assets for recreational purposes. Through the Local Plan and planning policy, we ensure that we have the appropriate quality and quantity of open space and playing field provision as well as securing contributions towards them. Investment is important to ensure that our parklands are maintained. It is also important we have plans in place for our parks based on community engagement to co-ordinate investment in a way that protects nature and enhances them, including making them more accessible.

While some improvements can be funded through developer contributions, we will remain alert to opportunities for external funding for improvements and maintenance. Through this approach we have been able to invest in an accessible play area at Coate Water as well as the re-opening of the splash park.

Support future provision of leisure

We recognise the importance of having leisure facilities for the enjoyment, health and well-being of residents. In order for leisure facilities to be sustainable, maintained and affordable, we need to ensure that they use less energy to reduce running costs and the use of carbon.

Currently, GLL, a social enterprise company, operates the six council-owned leisure facilities. We have been strengthening this relationship through our contract arrangements as well as creating a £2m leisure fund to support work to reduce the cost of running the facilities. We also continually look for funding opportunities through various bodies to invest in our leisure facilities. This has led to the delivery of the Moredon Sporting Hub as well as securing funding to deliver a major refurbishment of the Health Hydro. The Oasis is an important asset to the Borough and the Council has reached an agreement with Seven Capital to refurbish the Oasis and will work with them to confirm an operator to enable its re-opening.

We will need to continue to look at funding opportunities to improve and expand future leisure provision as well as using the Local Plan to secure capital contributions from future developments. We also work with Sports England and Wiltshire and Swindon Sports to assist with opportunities for leisure provision within areas with higher than average levels of deprivation and lower levels of physical activity.

Vibrant and accessible heritage, arts and culture

Swindon has a wealth of heritage, particularly in some of its buildings and key museums including STEAM. It is important that these facilities are accessible to Swindon’s residents and visitors as well as supporting access for education and learning. To protect Swindon’s historic buildings, we are keen to re-invent vacant historic buildings and provide viable new uses that reflect their heritage. Swindon has also been recognised by Arts Council England as a Priority Place for arts and culture. Swindon hosts a varied cultural and entertainment events programme at the Wyvern Theatre. However, the Wyvern is an ageing building which was designed to service smaller audiences than Swindon now has the potential to accommodate. It will be essential to create an up-to-date, flexible entertainment venue which will support the wider regeneration of the town centre.

Our long-term aspirations are to have a shared vision for Swindon’s art and cultural sector, to re-invigorate our cultural and entertainment offer, improve the accessibility and quality of core museums and ensure that as many of our historic buildings are open to operate with viable uses.

To achieve this, we can control the use of the land and buildings we own but, with stretched resources, work to secure funding will be vital, particularly in finding viable uses for historic buildings. A project to focus on a bespoke venue for arts and entertainment is underway, the Museum & Art Swindon facility is opening at the Civic Offices. We are also collecting resident input to inform a heritage strategy to safeguard the future of the Health Hydro, Carriage Works and wider Railway Village area, which have already benefited from external funding from the Towns Fund, Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.



Keep Swindon Moving

Provide a sufficient and accessible highway network

The Borough’s road network is the principle means by which people move around Swindon and it is crucial people can use it safely and with confidence. An effective network is one in which homes, work, leisure and other destinations can be accessed smoothly, quickly and safely. Without appropriate highways solutions being programmed and delivered, new developments will put undue pressure on the existing network leading to congestion and pollution.

To deliver an effective network we must develop our traffic modelling to support future highway schemes and improvements to facilitate developments within the Local Plan. We will use the Local Transport Fund to undertake an annual programme of improvement schemes as well as maintaining the network. At a strategic level, council-managed schemes have been put in place to enable the delivery of developments including Wichelstowe and the New Eastern Villages. Beyond the Local Transport Fund, any additional schemes would be funded through developer contributions or bespoke government grants.

As a highways asset owner, we are responsible for all adopted roads in the Borough except the M4 and A419. We set the Highways Capital programme and manage contractors but cannot control utility providers and their infrastructure which can often increase scheme costs and timescales. Therefore, our relationships with contractors and utility providers are critical as well as the relationship with highway users. The main focus areas for strategic schemes will be the completion of the Fleming Way improvement scheme in the Town Centre and the Southern Connector Road to enable access to the New Eastern Villages.

Promote and enhance active travel

Promoting and enhancing active travel infrastructure is essential for fostering healthier and more sustainable communities. By prioritising walking and cycling we reduce congestion, improve air quality and promote physical activity. Active travel also enhances accessibility, social equity and a quality of life for residents. Our aspiration is to implement the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and create a comprehensive network of safe and convenient routes throughout the Borough.

We are committed to promoting and enhancing active travel within existing budgets, while exploring opportunities for additional funding which may include external grants or private sector partnerships. Through the Local Plan we have control and influence over land use and transport policies and by prioritising active travel in our planning decisions, we can create environments that support and

encourage walking and cycling as viable options. This will require us to build strong relationships with stakeholders including residents, businesses and other agencies.

Our main focus will be on expanding and improving the active travel infrastructure, enhancing the safety and accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists, and promoting behaviour change through education and communication. We also recognise the need to work differently by prioritising active travel in transportation planning.

Efficient use of funding to maintain roads and pavements

Maintaining high standards of roads and pavements is crucial for ensuring the safety, accessibility and functionality of Swindon’s transport infrastructure. Well-maintained roads facilitate smooth travel but also contribute to economic growth, public safety and quality of life for residents and businesses. Our goal is to establish a resilient and sustainable road network that meets the needs of our growing population and changing mobility patterns. We will need to invest in innovative technologies, materials and maintenance practices to prolong the lifespan of our infrastructure.

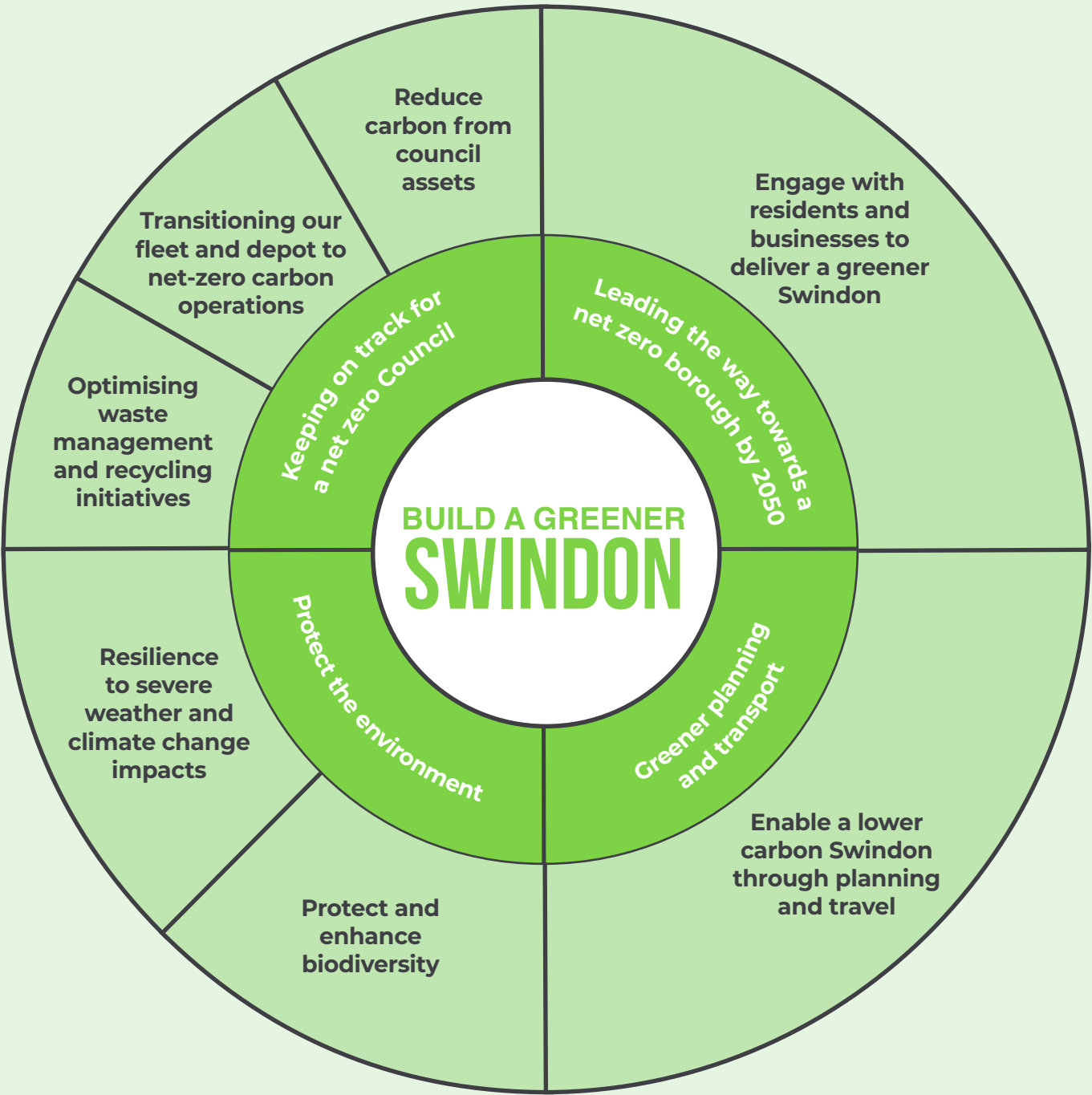
While we are committed to maintaining high standards within existing budgets, it is essential to assess the reality of our resources and explore efficient means to slow the deterioration of roads and pavements whilst exploring opportunities for additional funding. We have control over how we efficiently manage the budgets and resources allocated for roads and pavement maintenance within the external control of government policy and funding. By optimising our maintenance practices and prioritising strategic projects we can maximise the impact of our resources.

Our focus is to deliver a fully integrated, dynamic, efficient and effective highways asset management service to provide a safer, more sustainable and resilient highway network. This will include enhancing our practices, optimising our strategies and implementing cost-effective solutions. We recognise the need to work differently to embrace innovation and streamline processes.

“Maintaining high standards of roads and pavements is crucial for ensuring the safety, accessibility and functionality of Swindon’s transport infrastructure.”

Build a Greener Swindon

“Ensuring we fully play our part as a council and a town in combatting climate change. Working with communities to find new ways of doing things that help not hinder the natural environment.”



Leading the way towards a net zero borough by 2050

Engage with residents and businesses to deliver a Greener Swindon

Addressing the climate emergency and working towards achieving net zero is paramount. It is not just about environmental responsibility; it is about ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come. By reducing emissions, mitigating the impacts of climate change, and fostering resilience, we protect our communities, economy, and ecosystems.

Over the next decade, our aim is to significantly reduce carbon emissions and transition to a net zero economy. We want cleaner air, healthier communities, and a more sustainable way of life. This includes decarbonising transportation, energy production and buildings, as well as enhancing green spaces and biodiversity.

We have a Net Zero Emissions Action Plan in place and will need to focus on assets within our control, but also supporting residents and organisations in the Borough to work towards a greener Swindon. We recognise that we have significant influence over local policies, practices, and partnerships. By leveraging our strengths and collaborating with stakeholders and residents, we can amplify our impact and drive meaningful change.

We acknowledge the challenges posed by limited resources and funding constraints. While we are committed to achieving our goals within existing budgets, additional funding through external grants and reprioritisation may be necessary in the future. We will pursue partnerships and innovative financing mechanisms to bridge the gap and ensure progress.

The main aims are to raise the profile of climate change for residents and organisations in Swindon, showcase the contribution that residents and organisations are already making to reduce their emissions, and making it easy for residents and organisations to act through signposting information and resources.

“By collaborating with stakeholders and residents, we can amplify our impact and drive meaningful change”

Greener Planning and Transport

Enable a lower carbon Swindon through planning and travel

Inefficiency in buildings and transport emissions are two of the main sources of carbon and, if not addressed appropriately, will undermine our aspirations for a zero carbon Swindon. The planning process has a critical role to play in ensuring that development takes place in the most appropriate locations which are supported by more sustainable modes of transport and that the buildings themselves meet the most up-to-date construction standards to minimise carbon use and demonstrate energy efficiency.

Through our Local Plan we will develop a focussed approach to energy planning, ensuring that new development meets stringent criteria which support and deliver energy efficiency with reduced carbon footprints. This may take the form of carbon offsetting alongside efficient design and prudent use of recycled materials, and will be supported by local open space provision and protected green assets.

The Local Plan is due to be submitted in spring 2025 after which it will proceed to Examination. Even with policies in place, the development industry is facing challenging viability issues due to rising construction costs. We will re-prioritise planning resources to ensure that we are more effective and efficient in our ability to secure low carbon development. The new Local Plan provides the opportunity for a wider conversation on carbon reduction through the development process and will be critical in ensuring that we can move towards a zero carbon Swindon. With the backing of local policy, we will be in a much stronger position to require low carbon development and, in the meantime, we will engage proactively with developers and investors on this agenda to be absolutely clear as to our requirements.



Protect the Environment

Protect and enhance biodiversity

Biodiversity is critical to support life on earth. It provides a natural mechanism to respond to climate change, helps to ensure our air and water are clean, supports food security and reduces the need for artificial products which bring with them a carbon footprint. This has been recognised internationally as Biodiversity Net Gain.

We will ensure that a minimum of 10 per cent biodiversity net gain is achieved on developments through our planning processes. This would ideally be achieved on site, but may be achieved off site within the Borough. We will continue to offer our own assets for biodiversity offsetting. One means of achieving biodiversity and carbon offsetting is through tree planting and we are a member of the Great Western Community Forest where we work with local communities to deliver public accessible woodland, forest parks, parkland tree planting and new nature habitat creation.

The Local Plan allows us to protect and enhance the Borough's wide range of ecological and habitat assets including nature reserves and parks. We must work closely with developers to be clear on expectations on biodiversity and build relationships with partners in the Great Western Community Forest, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and Natural England.

Resilience to severe weather and climate change impacts

Ensuring Swindon is resilient to severe weather, including flooding, is crucial for safeguarding the well-being, safety, and prosperity of our community. With the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as floods, it is imperative that we take proactive measures to mitigate risks, protect infrastructure, and enhance adaptive capacity. Additionally, addressing air quality issues such as pollution is essential for protecting public health and minimising the impacts of climate change. By investing in resilience-building initiatives and air quality improvement measures, we can minimise the negative impacts of climate change and pollution, preserve our natural environment, and enhance quality of life for current and future generations.

Over the next decade, our aspiration is to build a resilient Swindon that is capable of withstanding and adapting to the impacts of climate change, including flooding, while also improving air quality. We have a Flood Risk Assessment and, as the Lead Local Flood Authority, we will co-ordinate flood risk management with our partners. We envision a future where infrastructure is designed to be resilient to extreme weather events, communities are equipped with the knowledge and resources to

respond effectively to emergencies, and air quality is improved through targeted interventions. By integrating climate resilience and air quality considerations into all aspects of planning and decision-making, we aim to create a more sustainable and resilient Swindon for the long term. We acknowledge the challenges posed by limited resources and funding constraints and therefore it is essential to explore opportunities for additional funding. This may involve seeking external grants, leveraging partnerships with other government agencies and organisations, or reprioritising budget allocations to support resilience-building initiatives and air quality improvement measures.

Our main areas of focus will include enhancing infrastructure resilience to flooding, improving air quality through targeted interventions, and enhancing community engagement and capacity-building initiatives. We recognise the need to work differently by adopting an integrated approach to resilience planning and air quality improvement, prioritising investments in high-risk areas, and leveraging data and technology to inform decision-making.

“BY INTEGRATING CLIMATE RESILIENCE CONSIDERATIONS INTO ALL ASPECTS OF PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING, WE AIM TO CREATE A MORE SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT SWINDON”



Keeping on track for a net zero Council

Optimising waste management and recycling initiatives

Optimising waste management and recycling initiatives is crucial for ensuring a sustainable future for Swindon. By reducing waste sent to landfill, maximising recycle materials and embracing sustainable waste practices we can create opportunities for innovation, job creation, and economic growth. Over the next decade, our aspiration is to transform Swindon into a model of sustainable waste management and recycling excellence. We envision a community where waste is viewed as a valuable resource, with high diversion rates from landfill and robust recycling infrastructure. Our goal is to achieve significant reductions in overall waste generation and carbon emissions, contributing to a greener, healthier and more resilient Swindon.

Swindon has recently rolled out food waste collections to further our efforts to reduce waste and increase recycling. While we are committed to optimising waste management within existing budgets, it is essential to assess the reality of our resources and explore opportunities for additional funding to support transformation opportunities. This may involve pursuing external grants, partnerships or reprioritising budget allocations to align with our waste reduction goals. Some factors may be beyond our control, such as market fluctuations in recycling commodity prices, but we acknowledge that we have significant influence over local waste policies, practices and partnerships. By implementing effective waste reduction programmes, promoting sustainable behaviour change and collaborating with our communities, we can drive positive outcomes and lead by example in the region.

Our main areas of focus will include enhancing our waste diversion programme, improving recycling infrastructure and implementing innovative waste reduction strategies. We recognise the need to work differently by embracing technology, investing in education and outreach, and fostering partnerships with our communities.

Transitioning our fleet and depot to net-zero carbon operations

Transitioning our fleet and depot to net-zero carbon operations is important for mitigating climate change, reducing air pollution and enhancing environmental sustainability. By adopting cleaner fuels, electrifying vehicles and improving operational efficiency, we not only lower greenhouse gas emissions but also minimise our ecological footprint and contribute to a healthier community.

Over the next decade, our aspiration is to achieve a fully sustainable fleet and depot operation, with net zero carbon emissions and minimal environmental impact. We envision a future where all vehicles are powered by renewable energy sources and depot operations are optimised for energy efficiency and resource conservation. By leading the way in low-carbon transportation and infrastructure management, we set a positive example for our community and inspire others to follow suit.

Presently, we acknowledge the challenges posed by limited resources and funding constraints. While we are committed to transitioning to low carbon operations within existing budgets, it is important to ensure that any infrastructure investment provides value for money for Swindon. It is therefore essential to assess the reality of our resources and explore opportunities for additional funding. This may involve seeking external grants, incentives or reprioritising budget allocations to support investments in clean technologies and infrastructure upgrades

Our main areas of focus will include upgrading our vehicle fleet to low emission alternatives, implementing energy-saving measures in depot operations and investing in infrastructure for alternative fuels. We recognise the need to work differently by prioritising sustainability in procurement decisions, investing in staff training and development, and exploring innovative financing mechanisms.

Reduce carbon from council assets

Reducing the amount of carbon produced by council buildings and houses ensures that we are leading the way to build a greener Swindon, as well as working towards a sustainable future and reducing energy costs for buildings.

We aim to reduce as far as possible the amount of carbon produced by council buildings. Surveys have been carried out and are in the process of being finalised to identify how to reduce the amount of energy consumed at STEAM and the Civic Offices and move from gas to electric heating, recognising these are both key listed buildings and are high energy consumers.

The cost of carbon reduction measures and moving from gas to electric only consumption will be significant and the ability to generate savings to pay back the cost is challenging. Funding can be sought, for example 'through the Public Sector' Decarbonisation Fund, but the Council will still have to identify funding towards the cost of work.

Our main areas of focus will be on producing business cases on the cost of carbon reduction measures at STEAM and Civic Offices to assess whether there is a basis

to seek funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. The Estates and Assets work of our transformation plan will confirm the buildings needed for future council use and we will carry out heat surveys on all these buildings. We will align the condition surveys of key buildings to understand any other work needed alongside carbon reduction work to ensure buildings are properly maintained.

In terms of council housing, we will use the stock condition data, to revise the overall investment priorities and spend profiles within the Housing Revenue Account for planned and capital works. By taking steps to bring stock up to an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) band C rating or better there will be considerable reductions in carbon outputs. Investment will initially start in 2024/25 to complete and evaluate a 'whole house' approach to improving insulation values. There is an initial budget of £5m approved to improve some 114 Unity homes in Park South. The Council has attracted 33 per cent of the budget costs from the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. Once this project is complete, investment will initially then be focused on windows, doors, roofs and insulation initiatives, including the wider installation of solar panels. All actions should reduce carbon outputs year on year. With a stock of over 10,000 homes this will be a significant opportunity to Build a greener Swindon.

“Over the next decade, our aspiration is to achieve a fully sustainable fleet and depot operation, with net-zero carbon emissions and minimal environmental impact.”



Performance Framework

In July 2023, the Council's Cabinet agreed that a performance framework would be developed to form the basis of a performance report to Cabinet twice a year.

A performance framework provides a structure to monitor progress against the Council missions to ensure that we can measure our performance, whether we are on track to achieve our objectives and to communicate progress internally, to councillors and to Swindon residents.

The approach to the performance framework:

- Each of the three missions has been split into themes and objectives. For example, under the mission 'Build a Fairer Swindon' we have three themes – 'Stronger and Safer Communities', 'Improve Health and Wellbeing' and 'Improve Education and Skills'. Within each of these three themes there are a set of objectives.
- Performance measures will be used to track progress against the objectives. Where possible, measures will have set targets or benchmarks which could include the national average, statutory timescales or making steady improvements.
- Our deliverables are the key milestones we will undertake to achieve each objective. These will be developed further into set deliverables with clear outcomes and dates for completion. Each quarter we will collect narrative on progress made against deliverables and provide a rating of 'On Track' or 'Off Track'.
- Progress against deliverables will be monitored quarterly through the Corporate Management Team and then twice a year into Cabinet with a paper available for residents to view progress.
- Throughout our performance conversations and decisions, we will use the insights and experience of residents and service users to ensure we are delivering for the residents of Swindon.

