



STRATEGY



Swindon Borough Council

Let's Talk Swindon: Community Engagement

Following the change in administration to a Labour Council at the May 2023 elections, the Council embarked on the creation of a new corporate plan – The Swindon Plan 2024 – 2027. The plan sets out how the Council will respond to the financial challenges it faces and how it will deliver on the three decade long missions – Fairer Swindon, Better Swindon and Greener Swindon.

Following internal work to develop this, the Draft Swindon Plan was presented to Cabinet in December 2023. In 2024, the Council developed 'Let's Talk Swindon' – an ambitious engagement programme to gather feedback on the Draft Swindon Plan. This is in line with the Council's aim to widen engagement with residents, colleagues, partners and stakeholders, underpinned by shared principles of honesty and transparency. The Council held a number of resident engagement sessions, a session with partners, visits to local groups and set up a new online engagement hub.



Following this extensive engagement, the Council adopted the Swindon Plan 2024-2027 in July 2024. Feedback obtained through the Let's Talk Swindon engagement led to multiple changes to the plan, as well as seeking views on how the Council could achieve its Missions. This led to a comprehensive Performance Framework where each Mission was split into different Themes and Objectives. Each Objective is supported with a set of deliverables (the actions the Council will undertake to achieve the Objective), and Measures (how the Council will track and measures delivery of the Plan).

The Council acknowledged the Plan cannot be achieved in isolation by the Council itself and the Let's Talk Swindon engagement led to developments in how the Council could work with residents, partners, Parish Councils and colleagues within the Council. The public engagement gathered a number of ideas that, whilst the Council could see the value in, were not in a position to adopt or prioritise. Therefore, a report was produced outlining any changes that were made to the plan including new additions, or ideas the Council would not include – and a rationale for why.

The Let's Talk Swindon events were jointly facilitated by Council Officers and Councillors. Council Officers presented the plan and facilitated discussions. Councillors took part in table discussions to learn from residents and engage with them.

The use of 7 face to face resident roadshows, 1 partner event, events with local groups, drop in sessions, online engagement and the production of a [video](#) from the perspective of residents showed an innovative and new approach to the development of a Corporate Plan. This approach shows the Co-operative values of:

- Social Partnership – Building a shared understanding of the challenges, responsibilities and opportunities
- Democratic engagement – Fully engaging with residents, partners and colleagues and creating a plan based upon their feedback and ideas
- Co-production – Identifying opportunities to work with residents and partners according to their needs and setting priorities to address them
- Community leadership and a new role for councillors – Facilitating discussions with communities, identifying opportunities for networking and information sharing
- New models of meeting priority needs – Shifting the approach of Councils doing things to people, to doing things with people

- Innovation – A new way of creating a Corporate Plan in conjunction with communities
- Learning – Learning from the original events, to develop a second round of events to improve them. Learning from attendees and partners to design approaches to deliver the Council Missions.



The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge recognised the value of Let's Talk Swindon. Their report states that the Council should reflect with pride on the Let's Talk Swindon engagement exercise and the resulting plan. It highlighted effort made to embed an open, transparent and collaborative culture and noted the Council has built its reputation and credibility with stakeholders. It also highlighted the positive relationship that is ever important as the Council works through where to focus time, energy and resources as it navigates a challenging financial position.

As a result of the first round of events, and the adoption of the Swindon Plan, the Council ran a second round of events in 2025 which focussed on the Council's financial position, the results of the resident survey and plans for the Town Centre 'Vision for the Heart of Swindon' and the Council plans to continue these engagement events to gather feedback on current priorities and challenges. The Council has also seen an improvement in many questions asked in its annual Resident Survey around acting on the concerns of residents, trust in the Council, residents feeling informed and speaking positively about the Council. The Let's Talk Swindon engagement was also a key factor in Swindon Borough Council being shortlisted in the 'Most improved council' category of the 2025 LGC Awards run by the Local Government Chronicle.



Video QR code

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