

SWINDON CHURCHES TOGETHER

COUNCIL MEETING - JANUARY 18th, 2018



Held at The Willows, Prospect Place, Swindon, SN1 3LQ

MINUTES

Present:

Tony Barnes	(Chiseldon Methodist)
Elaine Burrell	(Bethel Apostolic Church Swindon)
Martyn Cook	(Upper Stratton Baptist)
Rev Moyra Davies	(Central Church)
Judith Furse	(Central Church)
Vernon Griffiths	(Swindon Quakers)
Rev Owen Green	(The Stowe)
Rev Stephen Henderson	(Great Western Hospital & Gorse Hill Baptist)
Ian Howard	(Gateway Church)
Canon Michael Johnson	(Swindon Deanery)
Bob Manning	(Central)
Marion Manning	(Swindon Commercial Chaplaincy)
Rev Simon Stevenette	(Christ Church)
Lorna Tucker	(Bethel Apostolic Church Swindon)
Elsbeth Wollen	(Swindon Quakers)

Apologies

Mr Andy Bissex	Bible Society
Andrea Hughes	
Rev Robert Jordan	(Immanuel URC)
Celia Lee	(St Johns, Walcot)
Dr Martin Lee	(St Johns, Walcot)
Rev Steve Robinson	(Gorse Hill Baptist)
Rev Nicola Such	(Wroughton Parish Church)
Sheila Wright	(Swindon Commercial Chaplaincy)

There were 15 attendees

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

The Chairman, Rev Canon Michael Johnson, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from 8 people.

2. **Opening Devotion**

The date of the meeting was the first day of the Week of Prayer for Christin Unity. This year the theme is Welcoming the Stranger. The Chairman read from **Leviticus 19.33-34 - You shall love the alien as yourself**, and led the meeting in thoughts on this passage, Welcoming the Stranger in our midst, the alien in our Land. The Chairman then led the meeting in prayer.

3. **Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the Council Meeting held on November 16th, 2017 were agreed with the addition to Paragraph 7 of "and agreed" after the words "Ian Howard. The corrected minutes were signed by the Chairman.

4. **Matters Arising:**

Churches Together in Church Planting and Development - Middle and East Wichel. The Rev Owen Green, Joint Minister of The Stowe reported on the recent developments and working with Wroughton Parish church. A copy of his report is attached as Appendix 1.

5. **Future of Swindon Churches Together - Discussion on draft Constitution**

The Chairman introduced the discussion by saying that currently Swindon Churches Together relies on a Mandate that was drawn up by Bishop Michael Doe many years ago. There was now a need to put SCT on a better footing. The Executive have considered the discussion at previous meetings and the written comments made in response to the proposed constitution and had redrafted the constitution that was before the meeting this evening.

Concern was expressed that comments made had not seemed to translate to the latest version. It was important that we get it right because it is the future of SCT. Concerns expressed about the proposed constitution were :

- it does not consider the independent Churches who are not covered by the membership of Churches Together in England.
- the status of groups like The Quakers was unclear.
- it does not allow for non-Church Christian organisations, e.g. Swindon Commercial Chaplaincy and Bible Society.
- The position of the Swindon Churches for Justice (SC4J) group was not covered
- there would be issues with Council Meetings being quorate, given the number of representatives who have who have attend meetings for the last 2-3 years.
- whilst the Sponsoring Body would be formally incorporated into SCT it was not stated how and who appointed the members of the Sponsoring Body.
- the current mandate requires SCT to consider the wider work of the Church in Swindon and within the town to provide a link to ensure the voice of the disadvantaged were heard and to inform encourage and resource initiatives for social justice.

There is a need to ensure that churches or organisations that join SCT are committed to the Basis, Aims and Object of this body. There is a responsibility to ensure that Christian reputation of the Church in Swindon isn't compromised.

The Executive felt that SCT needed to be a comprehensive expression of the diverse constituency of the Church in this town. That did not restrict SCT or its member churches in being flexible in fulfilling the mission of the Church. It was not a group of Christians. Membership should mean investment and commitment to ensure that SCT is something that is valued and be seen as a public declaration in covenanting together, seeking to build relationships and should be a means.

What is needed for SCT is a new and bigger vision, so that we do not do apart what we can do together. SCT has to ask itself whether it was still necessary, and the impact SCT has within Swindon compared to Good News for Swindon.

The Treasurer expressed the view that SCT operates solely on a basis of Trust, which whilst good leaves SCT open to being taken over by any group who come along, that currently there is no formal membership of SCT, since churches have not been asked for membership subscriptions since 2014 and that we accept anyone who attends Council meetings as a representative of a church, which again leaves SCT vulnerable. The low numbers attending Council Meeting was very disappointing given there are 88 churches listed on the SCT website and 180 people are e-mailed with details of the meetings. SCT had to be more than a new Constitution. There is a difference between agreeing a Constitution and implementing it. Since only 11 churches were representative at the meeting it was suggested that the Executive should write to all Christian churches and organisations in Swindon asking their views on the proposed Constitution and whether they would join SCT in exploring new and more effective and responsive ways of churches working together. SCT should also invite Tom Price, the leader/organiser of Good News for Swindon (GN4S) to come to a meeting to talk about GN4S and the work they are doing and any possibility of the two organisations working together for the benefit of the Gospel of Christ.

It was agreed that the Executive :

- (1) Write to all Christian churches and organisations in Swindon asking for their views on the proposed Constitution and whether they would join SCT in exploring new and more effective ways of bringing the Gospel to our town.
- (2) Invite Tom Price, the leader/organiser of Good News for Swindon (GN4S) to come to a SCT Council Meeting to talk about GN4S and the work they are doing and any possibility of the two organisations working together for the benefit of the Gospel of Christ.

6. Chairman's Updates

The Chairman has nothing to report but brought to the meeting notice of a meeting that the Bishop of Swindon is holding on January 31st. The morning session was for Church of England clergy. Leaders from Churches across Swindon have been invited to attend the afternoon session about the possible bringing of a 'Resource Church' to Swindon.

7. Report from Sponsoring Body

In the absence of Rev Robert Jordan, Chairman of the Sponsoring Body there was no report.

8. SCT Website Project Update

Rev Steve Henderson reported that project was the working towards unfreezing the current website. The Project Team are working to develop an engaging portal, that will convey who SCT is with information on the various bodies represented, with links both to Facebook and Twitter. They will be talking to Jill Johnson (the person who developed and supports the current website) about the cost of redevelopment. It was important that the new website could be administered by a small group of people to ensure it was regularly updated.

9. Finance

9.1 SCT Accounts year to date for 2017

The Treasurer presented a report on the SCT accounts year to date for 2017. A copy of the report is included in these minutes as Appendix 2.

9.2 GDPR - General Data Protection Regulations

The Treasurer raised the subject of the new general data protection regulations that come into force on May 25th, 2018. These will affect all Churches. The Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers are holding a seminar in Taunton on March 24th. The Treasurer would like to attend on behalf of SCT to ensure that SCT will be compliant in holding personal data. He will make all those on the SCT mailing list aware of the seminar so that if they want to attend they could share travel costs.

It was agreed that the Treasurer should attend, and the cost of the attending would be reimbursed by SCT.

10. Report from Swindon Churches for Justice (SC4J)

Tony Barnes reported on behalf of SC4J. An edition of the Grapevine Magazine was being finalised and would about to go to print. The magazine will be available on the SCT website. The next meeting of SC4J will be on January 25th at 7.00pm at 162 Clifton Street.

11. Date of Future Meeting

The date of the meetings already circulated were agreed :

10.1 Thursday April 19th, 2018 - AGM

10.2 Thursday July 12th, 2018

10.3 Thursday October 11th, 2018

All of the above meetings will be held at The Willows, Prospect Place, Old Town, Swindon, SN1 3LQ, commencing at 7.30pm

12. Closing Prayer

The meeting was closed by saying The Grace together.

**APPENDIX 1 - CHURCHES TOGETHER IN CHURCH PLANTING AND DEVELOPMENT
MIDDLE AND EAST WICHEL.**

REPORT BY REV OWEN GREEN, JOINT MINISTER OF THE STOWE

A meeting at the end of January 2018 with Rob Powe and Emma Leake (employees of Swindon Borough Council), of The Forward Swindon Wichelstowe Project Team will be held to discuss the possible relocation and connection to services of the SCT owned Portacabin, and how it could be used.

A previous inspection reveals that the portacabin is in good overall condition internally however a spring clean and a coat of paint would be good idea. Siting could possibly be in its current space but fenced off from the yard and open to the road possibly laying down artificial grass to provide a walkway and outside play space for groups.

Discussion about the use of the portacabin is only valid as an outcome of good relationships and an understanding of the call of God. As such Wroughton Parish Church and The Stowe have and continue to meet to pray together and to wonder together what it is that God is calling us to together. We have meet to pray monthly as 'Morning Prayers' in the café at Waitrose, now renamed 'prayer and pastries!'. We also meet monthly as a wider group than can make 'prayer and pastries' to get to know each other, pray together and share stories of what God has been doing in our faith communities. This has laid the groundwork for wondering what might come next, recognising each other's gifts and that there will be things we do together and things we do separately.

In a recent report to the West of England Baptist Association (WEBA) I wrote, '*we have begun working in partnership with Wroughton Parish Church. God has been good to us here too. What could potentially have been a challenging relationship has seen us recognise, around the communion table, that it is God's mission to which he calls us both, it is his table to which he invites us to come as we are, that his provision is abundant, that it is Christ in us that is the hope of glory, not The Stowe or Wroughton Parish Church, and that there is still space at the table for others to join.*'

We pray for the appointment of a new Priest in Charge at Wroughton Parish Church and hope to be present at the installation service. We support Wroughton Parish Church in accessing further support for building faith communities in new housing areas.

At a church wide level, in June 2018, we will do the "Walk through the Bible" day together.

It is out of this relationship we can begin to wonder what God might call us to use the portacabin for.

The activity that takes place is secondary in importance to the expression of values that lie behind the activity. For The Stowe being; called to bless, outward looking, friends and joining in the spirit, laying down our lives, and engaging with The Spirit, are the DNA behind all we do. This is true for us now and in the future as we consider the portacabin. Since the moment The Stowe as a Church community covenanted together around this DNA we were invited with Wroughton Parish Church to partner with Swindon Borough Council; through Rob and Emma, in being present at the Middle Wichel Consultation event in Waitrose. We collected peoples hopes and dreams for the development attaching them as bunting to our "Dream Boat". These are our prayers as we wonder what "Life in all its fulness" or "Living the life you've always wanted" as the official Wichelstowe literature says, looks and sounds like. Already we've developed a relationship with Freeman retirement homes regarding chaplaincy provision, with the Waterways Chaplaincy about Canal Chaplaincy, with canal side housing regarding community gardening support, and we have representation on the governing body of the new Deanery Secondary School. Critically we have people ready to lay down their lives and move in to live incarnationally.

Praise God for answered prayers as the ground work continues; to God be the glory, great things he hath done!

APPENDIX 2 - FINANCE REPORT - YEAR TO DATE TO DECEMBER 31st, 2017

SWINDON CHURCHES TOGETHER

REPORT TO COUNCIL MEETING - JANUARY 18th, 2018

ACCOUNTS 2017 - YEAR TO DATE TO DECEMBER 31st, 2017

FUND	INCOME	EXPENDITURE	BALANCE	NOTES*
General Fund	3432.00	3469.93	33,927.65	
Subscriptions	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Sponsoring Body	0.00	50.00	-50.00	
Flame	0.00	0.00	-4,069.39	
SC4J – General	0.00	17.50	571.91	
SC4J – Grapevine	10.50	0.00	205.31	Includes £2.10 cash held by Treasurer
Projects	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Loans	0.00	0.00	0.00	
TOTALS	3,442.50	3,537.43	30,585.48	

Balances include carried forward amounts as at 01/01/2017