

CENTRAL SWINDON NORTH PARISH COUNCIL

Larger Parishes Joint Procurement Project (LPJPP)

1. Recommendation for Finance & General Purposes

- To **NOTE** the update, minutes and agreed terms of reference for the Larger Parishes Joint Procurement Project. (LPJPP)

2. Report Details

Introduction

In response to ongoing financial pressures facing parish councils, particularly those with facilities and large scale grounds operations, Swindon's larger parishes are considering innovative ways to optimise and consolidate provider costs while maintaining or improving the quality of services offered to residents.

Larger parishes, such as South Swindon, Central North Swindon, West Swindon, and Stratton St Margaret, now manage significant resources, services, and teams. This could expand further in 2025 should the second tranche of devolution progress.

However, there are growing concerns around rising operational costs, inflation, and the potential for reduced non-statutory services from SBC, which may place additional financial pressure on Parish Councils.

In light of these challenges, with Best Value consideration the LPJPP has enabled parishes to collaborate and look into sharing resources, exploring joint procurement initiatives and achieve cost savings to improve service delivery.

This programme is designed to help parish councils minimise precept spend, reduce duplication of effort, and ensure long-term sustainability.

Programme Summary

The project aims to foster collaboration between Swindon's larger parishes to identify areas where joint working can produce tangible benefits. The terms of reference broadly identifies these areas of work:

1. Shared Knowledge and Resources:

- **Skills and Equipment Inventory:** The project will facilitate the exchange of information regarding available skills and equipment in each parish. This knowledge will form the basis of identifying areas where equipment or services could be shared, reducing the need for individual parishes to purchase expensive items or duplicate expertise.

2. Cost-Saving Opportunities:

- **Shared Equipment and Services:** Parishes can achieve significant cost savings by sharing equipment and service provisions across boundaries. For example, a single piece of specialised grounds equipment may be used by multiple parishes rather than each council purchasing its own where it'll rest idle for weeks or months a time.
- **Joint Procurement Initiatives:** By pooling purchasing power, parishes will be able to negotiate better deals on essential equipment and services, leading to reduced costs/economies of scale.

3. Improved Efficiency and Service Quality:

- **Collaborative Working Models:** Beyond procurement, the Working Group is exploring more efficient ways of delivering services, with the aim of improving the quality of those services while reducing operational costs.
- **Adoption of Best Practices:** Parishes will share their experiences and adopt proven best practices, which will enhance overall efficiency and service delivery to residents.

4. Stronger Representation to SBC:

- **SBC Engagement:** The Working Group will create a stronger, collective voice to engage with SBC on issues that affect all larger parishes, not just on procurement. By working together, parishes can better influence policy decisions and ensure that our specific needs are considered.

5. Potential Benefits:

i. Financial Savings:

- Joint procurement and equipment sharing will allow parishes to leverage economies of scale, which can lead to significant savings in capital and operational costs.

ii. Enhanced Service Delivery:

- By pooling resources and adopting best practices, parishes can enhance the quality of services they provide to residents, ensuring higher standards and consistency across the borough.

iii. Sustainability and Long-Term Viability:

- In the face of budgetary constraints and growing responsibilities, collaborative efforts will help ensure the financial sustainability of parishes, enabling them to continue delivering vital services without excessive precept increases.

iv. Flexibility:

- The programme allows parishes to decide how much they wish to participate, offering flexibility to tailor involvement according to each parish's unique circumstances.

v. Better Representation and Advocacy:

- Working together as a larger group of parishes will strengthen the collective ability to advocate for shared interests with SBC, ensuring that the needs of parish residents are addressed.

Proposed Timeline:

LARGER PARISHES JOINT PROCUREMENT PROJECT

