

In Attendance

Councillor John Perks – Mayor,
Cllr Simon Ward-Leader Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council,
Olive O’Sullivan –Chief Executive Officer,
Steve Hollingworth-Head of Open Spaces and Environment,
Jon Lord-Head of Regeneration and Sustainability,
Mary Watkins-Head of Finance,
Jessica Johnson – Projects Manager,
Natalia Gorman – Projects Manager.

There were sixty members of the public present.

1 Welcome Address by Councillor John Perks, Town Mayor

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

- [Welcome Address](#)

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th May 2024 be signed as a true record.

3 Report on the work of Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council during 2024/2025

Councillor Simon Ward delivered a report on the work of the Town Council in 2024/25.

- [Report](#)

4 Open Forum

Members of the public were invited to ask questions and make comments.

- 1) A resident raised concerns about the Town Council sharing an artist impression of the McCarthy Stone development, stating that the development is monstrous, and raised concerns around mature trees being felled asking the Town Council to be more active in defending and preserving the town’s trees.

Cllr Ward responded that the maintenance of trees on the highway and in Parks is the responsibility of Birmingham City Council, and there will be a robust inspection regime and a replacement policy. He said that Councillors cared about Sutton Coldfield and are the voice of residents to the City Council and urged residents to raise their concerns with their local Councillor.

The resident moved a resolution that asked the Town Council to make a statement on their love of trees and seek national press coverage of the statement. This was amended by another resident to include that the Town Council prepare a proper policy on trees. Cllr Pears noted that there would be some constraints as it would need to tie in with legislation on Tree Protection Orders and trees in conservation areas.

Resolved that the Town Council be requested to make a statement on their love of trees and agree to prepare a tree policy.

- 2) A resident congratulated the work of the Town Council across the whole area and noted the Town Council's spend towards regeneration for the year. They asked how much time and money had been spent on homelessness, with a suggestion to give homeless people jobs to get them off the streets.

Cllr Ward responded that significant funding had been committed to regeneration to fundamentally act as a catalyst for future investment. The Town Council also funded festive lights, florals, free public Wi-Fi and subsidised festival travel during 2024 to help create a more attractive environment. Cllr Ward said that homelessness was a heartbreaking topic and thanked the resident for trying to improve the lives of others. People who find themselves homeless, often have very complex issues and needs that require specialist advice and support and the kind of support needed is more appropriately provided by agencies other than town and parish councils –who could potentially exasperate matters with well-meaning involvement. Birmingham City Council (BCC) have a statutory duty to help homeless people to secure suitable accommodation. BCC has established a town centre task group to work with homeless people to try and find solutions and accommodation, the CEO is involved in that group on behalf of the Town Council. The CEO added that a lot of intensive support is being provided by BCC and other agencies with the aim to find accommodation and that some people do not wish to take up the offer of help and this decision also needs to be respected.

- 3) A resident asked if Vesey Gardens had now passed to the Town Council from BCC and asked if the Town Council had responsibility for maintenance of the Mere Green traffic island that needs urgent landscaping and redevelopment. They also added that the traffic island on Birmingham Road near the parade could be improved and that some of the welcome to Royal Sutton Coldfield signs need repairs. Another resident noted that the flowers at Boldmere and Antrobus Road had died due to lack of water and asked about the maintenance of the floral scheme.

Cllr Ward responded that the transfer of Vesey Gardens was awaiting final approval from the Bishop of Birmingham. One damaged welcome sign has already been removed and Officers are currently in the process of procuring new signs across the gateways to the town. Sadly, the traffic islands are not the Town Council's to maintain but the Officer team will look at these islands and how they can be improved. The CEO said there is an agreement with BCC for supply and maintenance of floral displays and lack of watering would be addressed with them. The CEO also advised that provision and maintenance of florals will be included in the grounds maintenance contract from February 2026.

- 4) A resident spoke about the different landholders in the town centre and asked if Birmingham City Council (BCC) were aware of the Town Centre Masterplan when considering planning applications.

Cllr Ward responded that BCC is a signatory on the Masterplan, along with the Town Council and Transport for West Midlands (TfWM). BCC is also actively involved in the Town Centre Regeneration Partnership (TCRP) and is a key land holder as owners of the Red Rose Centre and Newhall Walk.

- 5) A resident asked which other stakeholders would be consulted in addition to residents on the Plan For Neighbourhoods (PfN) and if the PfN meetings would be open to the public.

Cllr Ward clarified that the PfN is not part of the Town Council and the PfN Board are working on behalf of the town. The Chair of the Board is very keen to engage with residents and will be holding regular sessions for residents to meet with him and other Board members.

The PfN aims to improve all aspects of the town and there will be an extensive programme of community engagement, meetings will not be held in public, but all minutes and decisions will be published.

- 6) A resident asked who was involved in working together for the future of Sutton Park and for details on the timetable and plan. They also asked if the Town Council action could come quick wins for example, improving the play area at Town Gate or linking the Park to the town centre with signage.

Cllr Ward responded that Officers of the Town Council, Birmingham City Council (BCC) and BCC Commissioners are in dialogue around an acceptable joint solution for Sutton Park and this includes reviewing governance arrangements to unlock national funding to maintain and enhance the park. Timescales are driven by BCC and their priorities and it is important that the Town Council ensures that proper plans are in place before any funds are committed.

In response to a follow up question from a resident on quick wins that could improve the walk between the train station and the Park, the CEO stated that Friends of the Spaghetti line and especially, the Friends of Wylde Green Station had already carried out improvements at the train station with the installation of a pocket park and plans to improve signage, which the Town Council had supported. The CEO agreed that improvements could potentially be extended along the route from the Town Centre to the Station.

In response to a follow up question on the national body involved in a trust for Sutton Park and the liabilities, Cllr Ward agreed that some liabilities (e.g. water and dams) would remain with the appropriate authorities and the trust membership should have representatives from BCC, the Town Council and a national body, for example the National Trust, as well as funding organisations.

- 7) A representative from Friends of Hill Hook Local Nature Reserves asked for an update on the devolution deal to transfer over 14 open spaces to the Town Council from Birmingham City Council and the funding to manage them.

Cllr Ward responded that conversations are positive and the transfers were likely to happen in a staged way, as there are different complexities with each site. The ongoing maintenance of the sites has been included in the five-year Town Ranger grounds maintenance contract from February 2026.

- 8) A resident asked about the bus system in the town centre and raised concerns that if it remains at the same location, it will have the same problems, including lack of clear signage and limited pavement space.

Cllr Ward responded that the initial plan was to move the buses from the Parade, but this was not possible with the funding available. The scheme will need to be future proofed and detailed work will be carried out to make sure the town centre is as accessible as it can be. The Town Council will continue to push the bus operators and TfWM to make sure that the Gateway compliments everything else and can be changed in the future if needed.

- 9) A resident asked if the Red Rose development would release more space to make room for a bus station and about the future of the library service currently located in the centre. They also

asked what will happen with the proposed parking charges in Sutton Park by Birmingham City Council (BCC) if new governance arrangements for Sutton Park are progressed.

Cllr Ward responded that the proposed parking charges in Sutton Park by BCC are ill thought through and show no appreciation for how unique the park is and the impact of parking displacement on surrounding roads. In addition, the financial is lumped into other park parking schemes across the city and income would not necessarily come back to Sutton Park. He stated there are alternative ways to raise money for the Park that do not restrict how people access it.

In relation to the Red Rose Centre, Cllr Ward advised it is owned by BCC and they have announced that they are closing the town centre library as the statutory library service for Sutton Coldfield will be delivered from the library in Mere Green. The Town Council has made a financial contribution of £137k per year for the last six years to keep the town centre library service open and it is hoped that there may be an opportunity in the medium term for a town centre civic centre that could include library provision.

- 10) A resident said the town was car dominated and there are not enough safe crossings for pedestrians or cycle opportunities and asked when there would be progress on delivering the Active Travel Plan.

Cllr Ward responded that while he was unable to confirm when there could be spades in the ground on some of the initiatives within the Active Travel Plan, the Town Council is pushing forward.

- 11) A resident asked if the Town Ranger service could be expanded to incorporate repairing potholes as many roads across Sutton Coldfield are in desperate need of repair, particularly Belwell Lane.

Cllr Ward responded that unfortunately as the highways are the statutory responsibility of BCC the Town Council is unable to commission work on the highways. Cllr Ward reiterated that residents should raise these issues with their local Councillors who will raise with BCC on their behalf.

- 12) A resident asked what the plans are for the site between the Nationwide Building Society and McDonalds in the town centre that is currently behind blue hoardings. They also asked if the Town Council is involved in any stage on discussions with the owners of the Gracechurch Centre on its redevelopment.

Cllr Ward responded that the site behind the blue hoarding is in private ownership and while they do have planning permission for the site it does not appear that they are actively redeveloping it and they may be awaiting the outcome of the future of the Red Rose Centre, that is owned by BCC.

The Gracechurch has changed ownership recently and the new owners (BPG and SAV Group) have come forward with an initial planning application which will now change following consultation and the Harvey Norman lease. Masterplan envisages mixed usage in the Town Centre and the Gracechurch owners will be submitting a new planning application in due course.

In response to a question about Section 106 developer contributions for apartments built in the town centre, the CEO confirmed that details around developer contributions are some way off but could potentially be generated for use in the town centre.

- 13) A resident asked about play provision for children and asked about a previous consultation on playgrounds in Vesey Ward.

The CEO responded that there was a very comprehensive consultation for play provision in the Vesey Ward and the various suggestions put forward were not viable at that time. What did come out was a desire for a destination play provision that could only be provided at Town Gate due to the size and scale. This was costed at over £3m at that time and the Town Council did not progress it.

The CEO further confirmed that the Town Council had funded improvements and new play equipment at a number of BCC parks across the Town and would consider smaller scale improvements at suitable locations.

- 14) A resident asked why the Town Council would improve a traffic island but not spend the £480k in the bank reserved for Sutton Park and if the Town Council would fund a free parking sticker for each resident if BCC introduced parking charges in Sutton Park. The resident also asked if BCC are to close the town centre library, why the Town Council is not saving it.

Cllr Ward responded that residents pay a precept, that the Town Council consulted with residents on the Strategic Plan, asking what residents think we should be doing more of and set a budget to fund. It is not fair that the residents' precept should be used for things that should be provided by BCC. Town Council reserves are allocated funds and need to be deployed in the proper way, providing additionality above and beyond what BCC should be providing.

It was noted that if each household in Sutton Coldfield were issued an annual parking pass at £52 per year this would cost £2m and would use most of the precept.

- 15) A resident asked how the Town Council could support activities for older children and young people in the town.

The CEO responded that the Town Council supports a number of local organisations that provide family support services and services for young people. The Annual Report contains a breakdown of Community Grant recipients for the year.

- 16) A resident commented that many people parking within Sutton Park are not park users but use it as a free car park while at work. They suggested that some parking enforcement could discourage non-park users from using it.

- 17) A resident raised concerns around parking near schools and the dangers to children.

Cllr Ward responded that the Town Council had supported the Mode Shift Stars scheme in schools that promotes a partnership approach to road safety and that membership of the scheme was a pre requirement of BCC to carry out parking enforcement.

- 18) A resident asked if the BCC parking charges in Sutton Park were going ahead and who was responsible for the fencing surrounding the park.

Cllr Ward confirmed that BCC will consider the proposal on 13th May and if approved it would likely commence in November 2025. BCC are the custodians of Sutton Park and responsible for maintenance of the fencing.

Cllr Pears stated that the report going to BCC cabinet on 13th May includes costs and charges applicable and there would be a full discussion at that meeting. If approved, there will be a four-

week consultation process around the Traffic Regulation Orders and he encouraged residents to engage in this consultation.

- 19) A resident asked about practical strategies to decrease pollution and maintain cleaner streets.

Cllr Ward responded that the clean and green agenda is at the core of the Town Council and the Town Ranger service provides additionality to clear alleyways and remove graffiti. The Town Council is working to make sure that the future design of regeneration is future proof and in keeping with the Royal Town.

The CEO reported that three questions had been submitted by residents not in attendance and these would be responded to in writing.

The CEO summarised the questions and responses:

- 20) A resident asked about defibrillators, bleed kits and a proposal for long term funding of Boldmere festivals. The CEO responded that the Town Council work in partnership with the Community Heartbeat Trust to provide managed solution defibrillators across the town and the Amenities, Leisure and Community Services Committee consider any new requests from potential host organisations.
- 21) A resident asked about supporting young people. The CEO responded that this had already been covered in other responses.
- 22) A resident asked about providing support to residents living with dementia and cared for at home. The CEO responded that this is part of the statutory service offer for adult social care and people can be signposted to organisations that can help.

The Meeting ended at 8:18pm.