

Salisbury City Council
The Guildhall
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Minutes

Meeting of: Annual Parish Meeting
Date: Monday 27 April 2026
Meeting held in: The Guildhall, Salisbury
Commencing at: 1830 hours

Chair: Cllr John Wells, Mayor of the City of Salisbury

Supported by the Administration Group Leader Cllr S Charleston

Cllrs: C Taylor, J Bolwell, P Beaven, R Rogers, S Rideout, A Riddle, P Sample, S Hocking, S Foster, M Brown

Council Officers: Asa Thorpe and Beth George

Members of the public: 3

Members of the press: 1

1. Mayor's Welcoming Remarks

The Mayor, Cllr John Wells, welcomed all attendees and noted that the Annual Parish Meeting is a meeting of the electorate, not of the City Council. He praised the good turnout of Councillors before introducing the agenda and inviting Cllr Sam Charleston to provide an update on council activities.

2. Update on Current Activities by the Administration Leader

Cllr S Charleston reported that a balanced budget had been achieved and reserves replenished. Work with HMRC regarding the historical VAT debt remained ongoing.

The Council had approved a number of key investments, including Guildhall ceiling repairs, £40,000 per annum for play park repairs, an increase in the accessibility budget to £50,000 per annum, and £280,000 for the refurbishment of the Market Place toilets. An additional £15,000 per annum had also been allocated for cyber security, while CCTV upgrade works continued.

New initiatives introduced during the year included the Christmas Lights event, depot solar battery storage, and a Car-Free Days trial. Asset maintenance works also continued, including phased repairs to the Poultry Cross.

Cllr Charleston further reported that planning for the City's 800th anniversary celebrations was underway and that the St George's Day event had been delivered successfully. Cross-party agreement had been reached to reopen and improve public toilets.

The Council's focus remained on financial stability, effective service delivery, and collaborative working.

Thanks were extended to officers, councillors, and attendees.

3. Open Forum

The Mayor invited members of the public to comment or ask questions.

Question 1:

Andy Milton from Hazel Close raised concerns regarding the declining standard of grounds maintenance over recent years. Issues highlighted included reduced grass cutting, increased weed growth attributed to the cessation of pesticide use, and blocked drainage systems (noting that responsibility is shared and not solely attributable to the City Council).

The resident expressed dissatisfaction with the current no-pesticide approach, stating that it appears ineffective. It was also noted that reports submitted via the MyWilts app are redirected between authorities, leading to frustration.

Particular concern was raised about Westwood open space, which was previously well-maintained and suitable for tree planting. The resident commented that the area no longer reflects its former condition. The introduction of wildflower areas

and reduced mowing was said to limit the usability of the space. The resident also noted a perceived decline in visible wildlife and raised concerns about increased risks from ticks and animal fouling due to longer grass.

The resident requested consideration be given to:

- Increasing the frequency of grass cutting
- Reviewing the use of weed control measures
- Planting additional trees
- Improving overall maintenance standards, including grass cutting and weed clearance

Councillor Charleston thanked the resident and noted that some issues fall under Wiltshire Council, requiring clarification of responsibilities. Concerns regarding the MyWilts app were acknowledged, particularly that it may indicate completion when issues remain unresolved.

Members discussed grass cutting in the context of budget constraints, noting that increased provision would require either higher precept or reprioritisation. Concerns were raised about perceived inequalities in maintenance between areas.

Asa Thorpe advised that additional investment has been made in recent years, including approximately 4.5 cuts per year and increased hand weeding following the decision not to use glyphosate. He acknowledged concerns regarding resource distribution and the challenges of working across multiple authorities and highlighted the “Pride in Place” initiative.

The Chair noted the scale of the work undertaken by operational teams, particularly in larger areas.

Question 2:

A resident who had lived in Salisbury for 30 years raised concerns regarding Salisbury City Council’s role in representing the city within Wiltshire Council, particularly in relation to decisions made in Trowbridge. The resident stressed that Salisbury should have a strong voice on matters affecting local residents.

Concerns were also raised regarding future precept increases, with the resident commenting that residents should not be expected to continually absorb annual rises in council tax.

Parking charges were highlighted as a key issue. The resident expressed concern that the introduction of Sunday parking charges could lead to increased parking on residential streets, affecting permit holders, and hoped that any income generated would be reinvested in Salisbury. The resident also commented

negatively on the Fisherton Street chicane and the temporary COVID-era cycle lane.

Councillor Charleston thanked the resident and agreed that Salisbury should have a say in its own future. He confirmed that Salisbury City Council had responded to the parking consultation and that residents' concerns were being represented to Wiltshire Council. He also outlined the Council's medium-term financial plan, noting that future precept increases were expected to reduce over time.

Councillor Adrian Foster raised concerns about the wider implications of increased parking charges, including enforcement and impacts on local businesses.

Councillor Sample acknowledged concerns regarding both parking and grounds maintenance, noting the need for better communication between Salisbury City Council and Wiltshire Council. He encouraged residents to respond directly to the parking consultation and confirmed that the strength of feeling expressed by residents was being relayed to Wiltshire Council Cabinet members.

The Mayor and officers reiterated that parking decisions rested with Wiltshire Council and encouraged residents to submit comments through the official consultation process.

Question 3:

A resident raised concerns regarding the estimated cost of repairs to the Poultry Cross, commenting that the proposed expenditure appeared very high.

The Chief Executive Officer advised that concerns had also been raised by elected members regarding the projected cost. He explained that quotations and assessments had been provided by heritage specialists and architects and noted that there had been no significant investment in the Poultry Cross for many years.

He stated that Salisbury City Council wished to ensure the monument was repaired properly and advised that the final cost could be lower or higher than the current estimate of £400,000. Appropriate funding had been allocated within the budget.

Further questions were raised regarding whether Salisbury Cathedral had been consulted and whether details of the proposed works would be made publicly available. The Chief Executive Officer confirmed that discussions had taken place with the Cathedral and that details would be presented to the next Environment Committee meeting to allow for public scrutiny and debate.

A question was asked about the timescale for the project. The Chief Executive Officer explained that, while the £400,000 budget had been approved, procurement and governance procedures would need to be followed and therefore

no specific completion date could yet be provided. He confirmed that updates would continue to be reported to the Finance & Governance and Environment Committees, which are open to the public.

Councillor Hocking encouraged greater public engagement with Salisbury City Council, noting that the Annual Parish Meeting provides residents with an opportunity to raise concerns and share views directly with councillors and officers. He commented that, unless residents engage with the Council, it is difficult for councillors to understand local priorities and concerns.

The Mayor reminded attendees that all Council meetings are open to the public and that residents are able to ask questions and challenge decisions. Residents were encouraged to attend committee meetings, where significant Council decisions are made, and to encourage wider community participation.

4. Submitted Questions

Three questions were submitted by the public. These were read by Cllr S Charleston.

Question 1:

How do those City Councillors who are also Wiltshire County Councillors intend to respond if the minority Lib-Dem Wiltshire Council Administration press ahead, following the Public Consultation, with their intention to amend charging hours and days in all pay-and-display car parks to apply all days, 7am to 7pm, and abolish the Sunday all-day flat-rate?

Salisbury City Council has written to Wiltshire Council regarding the proposed parking changes. The consultation response was agreed by the Planning Committee on 20 April 2026 and will be posted on our website following this meeting. Please direct questions to Wiltshire Council who are the decision makers on this.

Question 2:

I wish to raise a concern regarding anti-social behaviour in Salisbury Market Square.

On most visits to the city, I observe groups cycling at great speed through heavily pedestrianised areas, often while wearing face coverings such as balaclavas and/or goggles. This creates an atmosphere that many find intimidating and detracts from the sense of safety in a central public space. It's also extremely dangerous considering the number of tourists, elderly people, children, and dog owners that frequent that space.

I appreciate that Salisbury City Council may not hold direct powers to impose restrictions of this kind. However, I ask that the Council formally engage with Wiltshire Council and Wiltshire Police to explore appropriate action.

In particular, I would welcome consideration of measures such as a Public Spaces Protection Order to address unsafe cycling and behaviours that may cause alarm or distress.

I ask that this matter be noted and progressed in the interest of maintaining Salisbury as a safe and welcoming city.

Noted. The Council will engage with relevant stakeholders, including Wiltshire Police and Wiltshire Council, where appropriate.

Andy from the BID advised that the issue was being monitored and that individuals causing concern in the city centre were being dispersed where possible. He noted that the Police were actively investigating reports involving bikes and balaclavas, supported by CCTV and patrols.

Councillor Bolwell confirmed that a meeting was being arranged with Wiltshire Police and Wiltshire Council to discuss the ongoing issue further.

Question 3:

I am appalled and astonished regarding the proposed huge increase in parking charges in Salisbury. Wiltshire Council have already managed to bring the City to its knees so if these outrageous increases are implemented which looks as if that decision has already been made it will finish the job. Salisbury is a cathedral city and as such people come to worship on a Sunday but if they have to pay through the nose they will not do so. The tourist companies will think twice and as for the hospitality and retail trade I would think many of them won't bother to open on a Sunday as am sure their trade will be knocked for six particularly the eateries who rely quite heavily on Sunday trade, people will just think twice and go elsewhere where parking is free.

Apart from endless coffee shops, Salisbury has very little to offer regarding retail.

I am a very angry and disappointed resident. Democracy in this country is non-existent!

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The meeting closed at 1942 hours.