

Item 14: Notice of Motions

Motion submitted for debate at the Council meeting on the 27 November 2025

- (a) The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor David Marsh:**

Swift bricks

Council notes that swifts, one of the oldest species on earth, fly thousands of miles (spending up to three years on the wing) to breed in the UK. Increasingly, they are finding their nesting sites blocked up. Their ancient forests with nest hollows now gone, they rely on cavities in buildings, but these too are disappearing, leaving this iconic creature on the RSPB “red list” of endangered species.

Swifts just need a brick with a hole in it to nest. The average two-storey new house contains 20,000 bricks and swift bricks– costing an estimated £30 each – can help save swifts, as well as other small nesting birds. The Labour government, having promised in opposition to incorporate a swift brick nest box into new buildings by law, has reneged on this pledge.

Council further notes, however, that a number of local authorities, with all-party support, have adopted policies requiring swift bricks to be included in new developments. These measures have proved popular with residents as well as local wildlife charities.

Council therefore resolves that:

Swift boxes will be installed at suitable council-owned properties, including providing audio lures to attract breeding pairs, before the next nesting season in May 2026.

At least 50% of homes on new developments in West Berkshire shall be required to have at least two swift bricks installed. New commercial and industrial developments shall be required to have at least three swift bricks installed per appropriate unit.

This condition will be attached to all relevant planning permissions for new buildings, in line with Local Plan policy SP11, Biodiversity and Geodiversity, the Council's Environment Strategy (refreshed May 2025), the Berkshire Biodiversity Strategy, and other initiatives to maintain, restore and increase biodiversity in West Berkshire.

This is in addition to any biodiversity mitigation or enhancements normally requested through the planning process.