

**Minutes of a Meeting of the
Joint Governance Committee of
Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils**

Council Chamber, Adur Civic Centre, Shoreham-by-Sea

Tuesday 29 September 2015

Councillor Rod Hotton (Chairman)

Adur District Council:

Councillor Ann Bridges
*Councillor James Butcher
*Councillor David Donaldson
Councillor Paul Graysmark
Councillor Emily Hilditch
*Councillor Fred Lewis
Councillor Barry Mear

Worthing Borough Council:

Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes
Councillor Paul Yallop
*Councillor Joan Bradley
Councillor Michael Cloake
Councillor Alex Harman
Councillor Lionel Harman
Councillor Louise Murphy
*Councillor Bob Smytherman

*Absent

JGC/15-16/011 Declarations of Interest / Substitute Members

Councillor Keith Sunderland substituted for Councillor Bob Smytherman.

JGC/15-16/012 Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public.

JGC/15-16/013 Minutes

The minutes of the Joint Governance Committee meeting held on the 4th June 2015, were agreed as a correct record.

JGC/15-16/014 Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items raised.

JGC/15-16/015 ISA260 Reports for ADC, WBC and JSC

Before the Committee was a report by Kate Handy, External Auditor (Ernst & Young), copies of which had been circulated to all Members and copies are attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 5.

The Committee received revised Adur and Worthing reports, which were tabled at the meeting and was advised that the audits had taken longer than expected which would result in an additional fee to the Councils.

For Worthing Borough Council, the auditors determined planning materiality to be £1.5m (Adur £1.075m and JSC £641k) and the reporting threshold was on all audit differences in excess of £75.5k (Adur £53.8k and JSC £32k). Medium Term planning recognised difficulties in the financial outlook and Worthing's reserves were in the lowest 10% of comparable authorities (Adur's were in the lowest 20% of comparable authorities). It was noted that the auditors had not identified any uncorrected misstatements in any of the audits and corrected misstatements were outlined in each report.

Members were pleased with the expected unqualified opinions on the financial statements but expressed concerns at the number of errors identified and the additional costs incurred as a result of delays in responding to auditors queries. Officers advised that 4 members of staff had been on long-term sickness and 3 vacancies had been held open pending a restructure. Resources had been stretched due to exceptional circumstances which could not have been anticipated.

The Committee noted that vacancies would be filled following a restructure of finance providing greater resilience. In addition, there wouldn't be a requirement to prepare a formal set of accounts for the Joint Strategic Committee in the future.

Resolved,

The Joint Governance Committee noted the updated ISA260 Reports for Adur, Worthing and the Joint Strategic Committee.

JGC/15-16/016 Revised Statement of Accounts 2014/15 ADC, WBC and Joint Strategic Committee

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital and Resources, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and copies are attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 6.

The Committee was informed that the audit of the Joint Strategic Committee's, Adur District Council's and Worthing Borough Council's 2014/15 Statements of Accounts was complete.

The External Auditor's Report to those charged with Governance (ISA 260), contained the External Auditor's recommendations and the "Key Message" section of the report summarised the findings which arose from their audit. At the time of going to print, there were no qualification issues to report.

The 2014/15 financial statements had been adjusted in respect of the External Auditor's findings as at 18 September 2015. The report sought approval for the three sets of amended Statements of Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2015 and the letters of representation.

During discussion, the Committee raised a number questions including:-

- what was the Treasury's view on streamlining and simplifying the statements of accounts process?
- where did the £430k variation attributed to 'the impact of job evaluations' arise?
- what was the cost to taxpayers of underwriting the £184k Theatres overspend?
- which Councillors had not returned their related party transactions forms?

Officers advised that the format of the accounts was statutory and it was a requirement of the treasury to follow the format. The £430k variation resulted from the completion of outstanding job evaluations in one service area and associated back pay. The figures relating to the cost of underwriting the Theatres overspend would be provided in writing and Councillors Buxton and Cloake had not returned their related party transaction forms.

A Member highlighted that Adur and Worthing Councils contributed nearly half the Census ICT budget and questioned the future direction of the service. Officers advised that a project was being undertaken to establish whether our ICT could be hosted off site. Early indicators suggested the Councils could at much lower cost. A report would be produced in the next 4-6 weeks identifying what was possible and the level of associated savings.

Resolved,

The Joint Governance Committee:-

- approved the amended Adur District Council, Worthing Borough Council and Joint Strategic Committee Statements of Accounts for the financial year ended the 31 March, 2015;
- delegated authority to the Adur Chairman of the Joint Governance Committee to approve any further amendments to the Statement of Accounts for Adur District Council;
- agreed that the letters of representation be signed by the Joint Chairmen of the Joint Governance Committee.

JGC/15-16/017 Annual Treasury Management Report 2014/15 ADC & WBC

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital and Resources, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and copies are attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 7.

The report asked Members to note the Treasury Management performance for Adur and Worthing Councils in 2014/15.

The Committee was informed that Adur District Council will cease to be over-borrowed in 2016/17 and that Worthing Borough Council had consistently under-borrowed. Benchmarking with other authorities had shown that Adur and Worthing had performed well in comparison to others.

Resolved,

The Joint Governance Committee noted the report.

JGC/15-16/018 Internal Audit Progress Report

Before the Committee was a report by the Acting Head of Internal Audit, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and copies are attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 8.

The report noted the performance of the Internal Audit Section for the period 1 to 31 August 2015 against the agreed 2015/16 Annual Internal Audit Plan. It also provided a summary of the key issues raised in final audit reports issued since the last report to the Joint Governance Committee and provided the current status on the follow-up on the agreed audit recommendations made in final audit reports.

The Chairmen of the Joint Governance Committee advised Members that at the Committee's last meeting, they had been asked to seek improvements in the implementation of outstanding audit recommendations from the Councils Leadership Team. A successful meeting had taken place with the Chief Executive and a significant improvement in implementation had been noted since, which had not gone unnoticed by the auditors.

The Director for Digital & Resources informed the Committee that he had been given reassurance that the Disaster Recovery work was underway and that a plan for the works was close to completion. It was noted that the Business Continuity Group met frequently and that CLT had been tasked with carrying out business impact assessment work. This would enable the business to understand how it could cope with the loss of various ICT services. Members were advised that in the future, the solution would be highly resilient infrastructure, held off site, enabling the whole issue to be addressed in a different way.

The Committee requested that the Head of Census ICT bring a report to the November meeting regarding Disaster Recovery.

Resolved,

The Joint Governance Committee:-

- i) noted the performance of the Internal Audit Section for 1 to 31 August 2015 against the 2015/16 audit plan;
- ii) noted the summary of the key issues raised in final audit reports issued since the last report to this Committee and the current status on the follow-up on Internal Audit recommendations made as a result of audits completed during 2013/14 and 2014/15.

JGC/15-16/019 Recording of Council Meetings

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Communities and the Solicitor to the Council, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and copies are attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 9.

The report reviewed the effectiveness of the digital voice recording trial of Worthing Borough Council's Full Council meetings and considered the future digital voice recording of all Adur and Worthing Councils' Full Council and Committee meetings.

The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 and the impact on the public right to film, record and blog from Council and Committee meetings was also reviewed.

A Member requested that the recordings of meetings be indexed in such a way that the listener could skip to any part of the meeting they were interested in. Officers agreed to investigate how this could be achieved.

Members debated the merits of audio and visual recordings and discussed the cost and practicality of live streaming. Officers anticipated that Digital Apprentices, from Northbrook College, could support the filming of meetings.

Concerns were raised about the recording of meetings in closed session. A Member sought assurances that these would be managed sensitively and securely. Officers advised that future recordings would need to be separated into open and closed session and reassured Members that all recordings of meetings in closed session would be managed accordingly.

It was proposed and seconded, that from January 2016, all Adur and Worthing Council & Committee meetings be recorded.

Resolved,

That the Joint Governance Committee:-

- 1) noted the outcome of the trial of digital voice recording of the Full Council meetings of Worthing Borough Council and recommend to Worthing Borough Council the approval of digital voice recording of Full Council meetings, and uploading of such recordings onto the website, on a permanent basis;
- 2) recommended to Adur District Council the approval of digital voice recording of Full Council meetings, and uploading of such recordings onto the website, from January 2016;
- 3) recommended that all Adur and Worthing Council Committee meetings, including Part B Exempt Information Reports, be recorded.

JGC/15-16/020 Public Speaking Time at Worthing Planning Committee

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for the Economy, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and copies are attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 10.

The Committee noted that Worthing Planning Committee had received a report (at a meeting on the 26 August 2015) setting out proposals to amend the public speaking times at the Planning Committee from 2 minutes to 3 minutes, and to amend the Constitution to allow additional speaking time at the Chair's discretion on contentious major applications and to allow the public to speak on enforcement reports.

A minute extract from the meeting had been circulated providing a summary of the main points of discussion and the resolutions from the Planning Committee.

Members expressed their support for the proposals, acknowledging the importance of facilitating the public having their say at Planning Meetings, albeit only on planning related matters.

Resolved,

That the Joint Governance Committee recommended that the proposals, as amended by the Worthing Planning Committee, be recommended to Worthing Council for adoption.

JGC/15-16/021 Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review 2015

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Customer Services, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and copies are attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 11.

The report reviewed the Annual Review letters of the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) relating to Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council for the year ended 31 March 2015 and provided further analysis on other complaints which the LGO had received as part of the new reporting year 2015/16, since March 2015.

The Committee was informed that Officers were undertaking a comprehensive review of the complaints / compliments policy and were on target for completion in December 2015.

Members complimented the format of the report and accompanying data and stated that it would be interesting to see how the figures compared with other authorities, both locally and nationally.

Resolved,

That the Joint Governance Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed to receive a further analysis of Local Government Ombudsman complaints in March 2016.

JGC/15-16/022 Unsigned minutes - authority to sign

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Communities, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and copies are attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 12.

The report informed the Committee that six sets of unsigned minutes had been identified following the review of the Constitutions last year, associated revisions to the committee structure and through ongoing work in compiling minute books for binding.

The Local Government Act 1972 required that minutes of a meeting be signed at a subsequent meeting of the committee (or subcommittee) to provide a complete written record of the decisions made at the meeting.

The Councils Constitutions had provisions for dealing with unsigned minutes where the committee or subcommittee had ceased or the functions subsumed in another Committee's terms of reference, under Council Procedure Rule 26.1.(e).

Therefore, it was proposed that the Chairmen of the Joint Governance Committee sign the unsigned minutes.

Resolved,

That the Joint Governance Committee:-

i) agreed that the Chairmen of the Joint Governance Committee both sign the following sets of unsigned minutes:

- Joint Standards Subcommittee - 14 August 2014
- Joint Standards Subcommittee - 24 July 2014
- Joint Members Appointments Committee - 30 September 2011
- Joint members Appointments Committee - 20 September 2012
- Joint members Appointments Committee - 5 August 2014
- Joint Planning Committee - 25 September 2015

ii) agreed that the above sets of minutes, once signed, be added to the minute book for this committee and bound as part of this committee's record.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 8.15pm, it having commenced at 6:30pm.

Chairman