

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

Gordon Room, Town Hall, Worthing

Tuesday 22 November 2016

Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes (Chairman)

Adur District Council:

Councillor George Barton
Councillor Kevin Boram
*Councillor Carol Albury
Councillor Ken Bishop
Councillor Jim Funnell
Councillor Paul Graysmark
*Councillor Emily Hilditch
*Councillor Barry Mear

Worthing Borough Council:

Councillor Paul Yallop
Councillor Paul Baker
*Councillor Joan Bradley
Councillor Alex Harman
Councillor Lionel Harman
Councillor Steve Wills
Councillor Mark Withers

*Absent

JGC/16-17/027 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

JGC/16-17/028 Minutes

The minutes of the Joint Governance Committee meeting held on the 27 September 2016 and the Joint Governance Sub-Committee meeting held on the 17 October 2016, were agreed as correct records.

JGC/16-17/029 Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public.

JGC/16-17/030 Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items raised.

JGC/16-17/031 Annual Audit Letters

Before the Committee were the Annual Audit Letters from the External Auditors, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and copies are attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 5.

Tom Wilkins and Paul King from Ernst & Young presented the Annual Audit Letters to the Committee. The Committee were informed that there was a typographical error on page 13 of Adur's Annual Audit Letter - in 2015/16 Adur District Council actually reported an overspend against budget of £128k.

A Member questioned whether there was anything else the Councils needed to do in regards to the management override of controls. The external auditors advised they hadn't identified anything significant that the Councils weren't already doing.

The auditors were asked whether any comments had been received from members of the public. The Committee was informed that no comments had been received this year but they had been in the past. It was noted that themed objections were often received nationally, this year a number of Councils had received objections in relation to Lend Option / Borrow Option Loans.

A Member sought assurance that the budget was balanced for 2017/18 without the use of reserves. Officers advised that the 2016/17 budget had been balanced without the use of reserves but there was currently a small projected shortfall in the 2017/18 budget, although work was still ongoing. The Committee were informed that Adur's reserves were lower than Councillors would like and that stringent financial management was required. However, the Council's strategic direction was to prioritise frontline services rather than maintain reserves.

Resolved,

The Joint Governance Committee noted the contents of the Annual Audit Letters.

JGC/16-17/032 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 6.

The report outlined the performance of the Internal Audit Section up to the 31 October 2016 and provided a summary of the key issues raised in final audit reports issued since the last report to this Committee. Three reports had been concluded with one receiving a Full Assurance level and two receiving Satisfactory Assurance levels. None of these audits identified Priority 1 recommendations.

The report also provided the current status of the follow-up on the agreed audit recommendations made in final audit reports and a summary of fraud work conducted at the Councils.

The Committee also noted that the Audit App was operational and working well.

A Member asked whether Internal Audit had been doing any targeted work regarding 'cash collection'. Officers advised that the levels of cash collection across Council services had been reducing but it was still an area of focus.

Resolved,

The Joint Governance Committee

- noted the performance of the Internal Audit Section;
- 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;
- noted the summary of fraud work.

JGC/16-17/033 Employment Rules for Senior Officers

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 provided details of a review of the Councils' existing arrangements for the recruitment, appointment, discipline and dismissal of its Senior Officers, with a view to ensuring an efficient, streamlined, independent and fair process and had made proposals for change. It was noted that current procedures lacked consistency and feedback from Members had been that Member involvement could be onerous in terms of time commitment.

The Committee was informed that various options had been put forward but the option proposed was preferred by the Councils Leadership Team.

It was noted that if the proposals were adopted by the Councils, they would be subject to consultation with Unison, and consequential changes would need to be made to the Officer Employment Procedure Rules and the Terms of Reference of Staffing Committees within the Councils' Constitutions. Further, it was likely that the Committee structure would change, with the abolition of the Joint Senior Staff (Appeals) Committee. Further, consequential changes would need to be made to the Councils' Recruitment & Selection and Disciplinary Policies.

A Member expressed support for the proposals stating that Members were not best qualified to deal with these issues.

A number of other members disagreed and raised their opposition to the proposals on the grounds that the report contained an insufficient range of options for the Committee to make a balanced decision. A view was also expressed that Members were elected to make such decisions.

The Monitoring Officer advised that the Committee could propose an alternative, should they wish to. However, Members were reluctant to put forward an alternative proposal without knowing what options were available as employment law was complex and the Councils required robust procedures.

It was proposed and seconded that the item be deferred to the Joint Governance Committee meeting in January 2017, in order for Members to consider a range of alternative options.

Resolved,

The Joint Governance Committee agreed to defer consideration of the item to its meeting in January 2017.

JGC/16-17/034 Amendments to the Constitution

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 8.

The report updated members of the Joint Governance Committee with recent amendments made to the Councils' Constitutions by the Monitoring Officer.

A Member asked whether the Executive Member for Resources had been consulted regarding the amendments. The Monitoring Officer advised that Worthing's Executive Member for Resources had been consulted about the changes and that regular reports would be brought to the Committee in future for transparency.

Resolved,

That the Joint Governance Committee noted the contents of the report.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 7:15pm, it having commenced at 6:30pm.

Chairman