

**Minutes of a Meeting of the
Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee of
Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils**

Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Shoreham-by-Sea

29 September 2015

Councillor James Butcher (Chairman)
Councillor Stephen Chipp (Vice Chairman)

Adur District Council:

Ken Bishop
Ann Bridges
Liz Haywood
Rod Hotton
*Emily Hilditch
Liza McKinney

Worthing Borough Council:

Roy Barraclough
Keith Bickers
Charles James
Mary Lermite
Nigel Morgan
Luke Proudfoot
Vino Vinojan
Keith Sunderland

*Absent

Also present:

WBC Councillors: Councillor Bryan Turner

ADC Councillors: Councillor Pat Beresford

JOSC/15-16/19	Declarations of Interest/Substitutions
Councillor Liz Haywood declared a non-pecuniary interest in the interview with the Chairman of HASC as she had a clinical role within the NHS and was a member of the foundation trust.	
JOSC/15-16/20	Minutes
Resolved that the Minutes of the Committee held on 16 July 2015 be approved as the correct record and be signed by the Chairman.	
JOSC/15-16/21	Public Question Time
Mr Clark of Worthing asked a series of questions as detailed in the attached document.	
Members referred the first part of Mr Clark's question to the Executive Member for the Environment to respond to and were informed that questions relating to FOI and EIR regulations were being dealt with by an Officer within the Council. Members attention	

was drawn to the information document provided by Mr Clark and were told that the relevant Officers had been made aware of the document and that Mr Clark was in contact with an Officer of the Council on related matters. It as asked that Members of the Committee be included on responses sent to Mr Clark.

JOSC/15-16/22	Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions
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There were no urgent items.

JOSC/15-16/23	Consideration of any matter referred to the Committee in relation to a call-in of a decision
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There were no items.

JOSC/15-16/24	Interview with the Chairman of the West County Council Health and Adult Social Care Committee (HASC) (Margaret Evans)
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The Chairman of HASC was accompanied by the Democratic Services Manager of West Sussex County Council, Helen Kenny.

The Democratic Services Manager gave a presentation to the Committee on the role and powers of HASC and provided examples of work HASC had undertook and was about to undertake.

The Chairman was quizzed about the involvement of the HASC in the musculoskeletal contract and how the Scrutiny of the situation had developed.

The Committee investigated the role of HASC and how the Committee could involve itself with HASC without duplicating work that was already being undertaken. The Chairman of HASC explained the role of the Borough HASC representatives and that to make the best use of resources work should be funnelled through those representatives.

JOSC/15-16/25	Interview with the Executive Members for Customer Services (Jim Funnell ADC, Heather Mercer WBC)
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Before the Committee was a report by the Chief Executive, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 7. As part of its work programme, the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee had determined to interview the Executive Members of Adur & Worthing Councils on their portfolio responsibilities and priorities for 2015-16.

The Adur Executive Member was asked the following questions

- How much available stock do we have for Council tenants? Is there a waiting list and if yes, how many are on that list? - Members were told that there were

2600 properties with 1313 people on the waiting list, members were given further information on the amount of those in temporary accommodation. The Executive Member was asked about the management of long term maintenance of Adur Homes properties. Members were told that a housing stock survey had recently been commissioned which would help the councils develop a detailed planned maintenance programme for internal and external repair.

- What progress, if any, has Adur Homes made in the past 12 months? - The Executive Member listed the following achievements: A 12 month introductory tenancy for new tenants had been put in place; the Adur Homes management conference had been positive and as a result there were plans to bring forward a customer charter survey; An Adur fun day had been organised which had been attended by over 1000 people; There had been void problems earlier in the year (67 in february) but this was being overcome and the number had reduced to 17 properties; There had been the introduction of Estate walkabouts with local ward members; Garage sites were being surveyed to see if there was a potential for development space. Upon further questioning the Executive Member explained the balance involved in the turnaround of properties, new residents were keen to move into their homes but it was the Council's responsibility to make sure that the homes were at a good standard before being handed over. The industry standard was for there to be a 1% void stock at any one time and the 17 properties currently voided represented a figure well below 1%.
- Had there been an increase in rough sleepers? - The Executive Member informed Members that rough sleepers were counted twice a year and the last time that count took place there were no rough sleepers recorded in Adur and 18-19 in Worthing. However those figures only represented a snapshot of when the survey was undertaken.
- The Executive Member was questioned about how empty properties were identified. The Committee was informed that the empty properties officer usually found out about properties from the Council Tax team. Members were told of the difficulties in bringing some homes back onto the market.

The Worthing Executive Member was asked the following questions:

- When on the Theatres Review Group, we were assured the financial figures for year end 2016 would be in balance. It now appears there will again be a substantial overspend. As the new Executive Member with responsibility for this area please advise why there will still be a debit balance? The Executive Member explained that there had been a year on year reduction in the deficit which had been accompanied by good news such as the arrival of big names in the theatres. Figures were based on a first quarter projection and it was expected that the financial position would improve moving forward. Members

were told that the catering manager and staff had resigned following a comment made and reported at JOSOC which had contributed a reported £40k to the overspend. Responding to a follow up question the Executive Member stated that the Council couldn't have predicted the resignations so it was difficult to build in resilience to deal with that situation.

- Worthing Symphony Orchestra (WSO) receives a large subsidy of £20,000 from the Council's theatre budget. Given the large overspend in the budget, does she think that it may be time to end or lower this subsidy? The Executive Member for Worthing explained that it was the Council's goal to help organisations become independent, the WSO would be given a number of years of consistent funding in order that they be able to stabilise. Members were informed further that £7500 of the subsidy was in cash and the rest was 'in kind' in the form of things such as room hire.
- What is the Executive Member doing to ensure that developers are either building 30% or more on site affordable housing or contributing sufficient funds for off-site affordable housing? Members were told that the production of affordable housing available for rent was slowing, however some properties would come onto the market in relation to the West Durrington development. Members were told of the Executive Member's concern about Central Government's decision to reduce social rents by 1% per annum which would leave Housing Associations less able to invest in development. Upon further discussion Members were told about the valuation tribunal process.
- What is Worthing Borough Council doing to ensure that those carrying out benefit fraud in Worthing are caught and prosecuted? And is the Council looking into methods of best practice from other councils? The Executive Member explained the process of investigating Fraud and the involvement of HMRC records and that most investigation had moved to the DWP. Members were also told about regular meetings with Bailiffs and the safeguards put in place for vulnerable residents.
- The Executive Member was asked about upcoming cuts to benefits and if the Council had planned to deal with the outcome of reduction of income that some residents may find happening to them. The Executive Member explained the ways in which the council supported people with housing difficulties and that the Council was working to help people get back into work. Members were also told that the Council provided support to the CAB. The Executive Member stated that the Council would need time to see what the impact of the cuts would be.
- A Member asked if the presentation of Worthing Theatres' accounts would be easier to digest. The Executive Member stated that the accounts were being presented in a meaningful way.
- the Executive Member provided the Committee with an update on the Syrian refugee situation and the potential role of Districts and Boroughs.

JOSC/15-16/26

Worthing Theatres Budgets Review

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Economy, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to a signed copy of these minutes as item 8. The report updated the Committee on the works undertaken following the Worthing Theatres Scrutiny Report compiled by a working group and completed in March 2015.

The Chairman of the Worthing Theatres Budgets Review group introduced the report to the Committee and set out the progress in implementing recommendations from the working group's report.

The Head of Culture was present to answer questions from the Committee. A Member commented that there was a need for some of the facilities to be refurbished to attract more customers. The Head of Culture confirmed that refurbishment was important but subject to available funding streams.

A Member noted that the service was seeking to recruit volunteers and asked what the function of the volunteers would be. The Head of Culture informed Members that the volunteers would be asked to help the marketing team as well as help with front of house duties.

A Member asked why the concentration of advertising had shifted to digital media and suggested that cinema listing information previously shown in local newspapers made it easier to find out was was on. The Head of Culture told members that cinema schedule hard copies were available however advertising space in the local newspapers was prohibitively expensive (over £2K per month) and the use of more electronic media could better support customers. Members were told that use of the cinema had greatly increased.

Resolved: that the report be noted

JOSC/15-16/27

The 'Surf's Up' Programme - Update

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital and Resources, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to a signed copy of these minutes as item 9. The report provided the Committee with an opportunity to review the progress being made in delivering the commitments contained in 'Surf's Up' which was agreed by the Councils in December 2014.

The Chief Executive introduced the report to the Committee and Members were made aware of how the Councils had made significant progress with the three 'wave catchers' and how significant progress on Surf's Up and Catching the Wave had been made in the preceding year.

The Chief Executive was asked what the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee could do for 'Surfs Up'. The Chief Executive suggested that the Scrutiny Committee could help to make sure that the high level of ambition was maintained and that as

the things moved on there would be a need for a refresh and that the Committee could help to identify new key issues.

A Member asked about progression with infrastructure projects with regards to the Adur District. The Chief Executive detailed the successful funding bids for flood relief schemes and the benefits that those schemes would bring the District. He explained that part of 'Surfs Up' was not about what initiatives the Council was funding but about the ability of the Council to find where there were gaps and to talk with other bodies about how those shortfalls could be met.

The Chief Executive was asked about improvements to the A27. It was relayed that improvements to the A27 could significantly improve the local economy. The Councils were a significant consultee and was part of a lobby group that included business representatives.

A Member noted the recent restructure of third tier management and asked why it appeared that some managers had wider areas of responsibility than others. The Chief Executive explained that although some portfolios looked smaller than others they contained incredibly complex responsibilities.

The Chief Executive was asked if he was confident that there was capacity to complete the Adur Local Plan. Members were told that the Chief Executive was happy that Officers had done a good job and a delay had been caused by late engagement by landowners. however this would lead to a better plan.

The Committee discussed major development sites and the need to deal proactively with developers to get the best use of major sites.

Resolved: that the report be noted.

JOSC/15-16/28

1st Revenue Budget Monitoring 2015/16

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital and Resources, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to a signed copy of these minutes as item 10. The report updated the Joint Strategic Committee with the latest expenditure and income projections for each Council in the financial year 2015/16.

The Chief Financial Officer introduced the report to the Committee and set out the key challenges and financial projections.

Resolved: that the report be noted.

JOSC/15-16/29

**Adur and Worthing Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Work Programme – 2015/16**

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital and Resources, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to a signed copy of these minutes as item 11. The report outlined progress on the work contained in the 2015/16 Work Programme.

A Member explained that there was currently a commissioning of the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) in Adur and Worthing and felt that JOSOC should look at the issue. The Committee agreed that it would add an item to the work programme.

The Committee also agreed to remove the following items from the work programme

- economic recovery review;
- HASC updates
- theatre budgets review;

The Chairman of the Committee spoke to Members about looking at how meetings would progress in future including the use of issue led agendas.

Resolved: that the work programme be amended as agreed

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 9.02pm it having commenced at 6.30pm.

Chairman