

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

Queen Elizabeth II Room, Shoreham-by-Sea

20 October 2016

Stephen Chipp (Chairman)
Joss Loader (Vice Chairman)

Adur District Council:

Carol Albury
George Barton
Kevin Boram
Clive Burghard
*James Butcher
Robin Monk

Worthing Borough Council:

Roy Barraclough
Keith Bickers
Nigel Morgan
*Louise Murphy
Luke Proudfoot
Bob Smytherman
*Jane Sim
Steve Waight

*Absent

JOSC/16-17/25 Declarations of Interest/Substitutions

Councillor Paul Baker declared his substitution for Councillor Louise Murphy

Councillors Bob Smytherman and Steve Waight declared an interest in agenda item 7 as a member of West Sussex County Council

JOSC/16-17/26 Minutes

Resolved that the Minutes of the Committee held on 22 September 2016 be approved as the correct record and signed

JOSC/16-17/27 Public Question Time

There were no questions from members of the public

JOSC/16-17/28 Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items.

JOSC/16-17/29 Consideration of any matter referred to the Committee in relation to a call-in of a decision

There were no items.

JOSC/16-17/30 Joint Scrutiny review - Engagement with young people and the Youth Councils

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital and Resources, a copy of which was sent to all members, a copy of which was attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 6. This report provided a briefing to assist the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) in undertaking its review which was to look at the Councils' engagement with young people and the Youth Councils.

The Executive Members for Health and Wellbeing made a representation to the Committee which is summarised as follows:

- In the past there had not been a functioning Youth Council and Adur but funding from the authority had been put forward and the Youth Council had been extended across Adur and Worthing;
- There were Groups of young people that didn't engage that didn't feel able to come forward to engage with the Councils;
- The Executive Members met with young people in business breakfasts held at the Academies;
- There were projects aimed at improving the wellbeing of young people, such as the 'grub club' initiative;
- The Councils supported groups that ran youth services;
- The Lions club in Southwick had extended support to Fishersgate and the development of a youth facility at the Fishersgate centre;
- Investment had been made in Midnight football in Adur. In Worthing Palantine Park had seen great youth engagement in Football;
- An investment in Crowshaw recreation ground in Lancing had lead to an increase in youth participation at Lancing United Football club;
- Young people attended Joint Action Groups out of which bicycle safety projects had been cemented in Adur and Worthing;
- The Southwick boxing clubs, the allstars music project and wordfest in Adur, the fishing clubs and bicycle projects had been put into action at the behest of young people;
- All Young people should not be tarred with the same brush. At a recent event young people had complained about the behaviour of other young people at a skate park which had generated the creation of the 'be safe, be well project';
- Young people needed to be worked with so that they understood health and wellbeing issues

The Early Help and Neighbourhoods Lead made a presentation to the Committee

- The Council's though specific project work listened to young people and tried to get their voices heard such as 'angling for education'. Anti-social behaviour engagement had revealed that young people wanted somewhere safe to go.
- The council worked with partners to make sure that services were integrated.

A Member asked about the relationship between the Councils and young people. The Early Help and Neighbourhoods Lead told Members that young people should be treated equally as part of society and that they should have their voice heard as well as everybody else.

A Member asked about whether the Councils were proactive or reactive in its approach to young people. The Executive Member for Adur told Members that on some occasions the Councils' had to be reactive because of the complaints of local residents regarding the young people congregating in groups. He told Members that there was nothing wrong with young people congregating if they weren't causing trouble and that sometimes the fear of crime was completely out of balance with reality. The Councils carried out proactive work through the health and wellbeing teams, the Young People and Wellbeing officer spent a long time working with young people in skateparks to get an idea of the needs and wants of those young people.

A Member referred to Monks recreation ground in Lancing and related that whenever groups of young people congregated they were often reported unfairly. The Executive Member stated that there was a small minority of young people causing problems. If there was a safety issue for young people being created by those causing trouble then a more proactive approach needed to be taken. The Committee was told that if a group of young people was moved on then they often just moved somewhere else because they wanted to congregate with their peer group which was often better than being inactive sat at home in front of the TV.

A Member expressed concern that there was not much for young people to do in Worthing. The Committee was told that there was a lot going on but the challenge was making sure that it was known about. There were projects working really well that had grown organically from a need and that creating projects from a need was crucial. The Executive Members were questioned more and the Committee was told that events provided for young people needed to be accessible and affordable.

Representatives from the youth Council made their representation.

- The 'find it out centres' were open at inconvenient times and were not suitable for those attending school;
- There was a lot of sport based activity but not all young people liked sports;
- Young people wanted somewhere to go such as a youth cafe with internet access and something to drink. Members were told of an incident where a young person was moved on from a cafe because they had 'had their time'.

Library's were not relevant for young people.

- Some young people did not want to do activities after school at school premises;
- Regarding consultation with young people, Members were told that some Councillors who attended youth council did not know how to speak to young people;
- There had been one recent case of consultation with some Ward Councillors but it had otherwise been sparse;
- The current youth council facilitator was retiring after a long time and a replacement could not be found. The youth council required that support to continue;
- The Tennis Courts in Worthing are locked but you need to walk a long way to get the key. There needed to be a more efficient way to pay for the use of the courts;
- One day a week young people could get a substantial reduction for a ticket at the connaught. Young people would then spend more money on confectionary;
- Young people would appreciate table tennis and outside chess in the town centre;
- Discounts could be provided for students that was relevant to the shops and transport that they used;
- There were councillors appointed to the youth council as an outside body appointment but one of those appointed had not attended.

Councillors discussed the support provided to the youth council and Members commented that the current youth council facilitator put in a lot of work unpaid and that there should be some recognition that important youth engagement work should be sufficiently funded in the future. It was suggested that the work of the youth council should be embedded within the work of the council and perhaps funding could be found from the money tree.

A Member asked when the last time the youth council was consulted by the full council. Members were told that the last time was for the Worthing Masterplan which had been well received by the youth council. The Committee was told of the importance of feeding back to the youth council when consultation was being undertaken. Members were told that the youth council needed councillors to visit them because it could be intimidating for young people to attend adult council meetings. The best way to consult with the youth council was for councillors to attend a youth council meeting.

Electric Youth Storm were invited to give evidence to the committee which is summarised as follows:

- Some adults needed to look at themselves and their attitude to young people. Young people were sometimes unfairly reported to the police and looked at suspiciously by some adults;
- There were a lot of dedicated good young people in the community who were willing to put in the time and effort to support and volunteer with local

groups;

A Member asked if the youth group knew how to communicate with the council, this question was extended further by another member who asked which media councillors should use to best to get in touch with youth groups. Members were told that the group liked face to face interaction and appreciated it when visits were made during the group's activities.

A Member asked what the council could try to do to counter unfair perceptions of young people congregating in groups. Members were told that it could promote a more positive image of young people because the media often published negative stories about young people. A desire was expressed that more involvement in wider community projects could help.

A Member noted that Electric Youth Storm was a Christian youth group and wondered if this could put off young people from attending. Members were told that the christianity aspect of the group was not central to the group's activities. Christian values were written into the group's rules but it was not a religiously driven group.

A Member asked about recruitment and wondered if wider advertising was needed to increase the group's attendance. Members were told that the group was at full capacity. A recent lottery grant had meant the group might be able to expand further although the building being used had capacity issues. The group's Leader told members that the best method of promoting membership came from existing members and word of mouth.

A Member of the Student Union at Worthing College made a representation to the Committee which is summarised as follows:

- There were a lot of student led youth groups and it was felt that the council could help by promoting them and the work that they carried out;
- They felt that a newsletter combining available youth groups and activities would be helpful for young people;
- Competitions could be arranged for youth to try to engage better with the authority;
- The promotion of youth activity could go some way to tackling a perceived apathy amongst young people;
- It was expensive for young people to travel on public transport and if possible it would be good to try and find reduced cost travel for students.

A Member asked what was the most important thing that the councils could do to improve youth engagement. Members were told that communicating with the youth and promoting youth activities and achievements was the best way to engage with youth across Adur and Worthing.

A representative from new Sussex Clubs for Young People. The group helped with the development of youth workers, the recruitment of youth volunteers, the

development of youth policies and provided support to youth clubs throughout West Sussex. The aim of the group was to support youth clubs to be able to survive and develop.

- There was work undergoing to establish a youth club in fishersgate;
- There was work undergoing with Lions Clubs to help that group support and develop youth club organisations;
- There is a lack of infrastructure supporting youth clubs following the collapse of West Sussex County Council voluntary youth service a few years previously;
- The group were looking to see if they could somehow re-introduce the support provided including the provision of safeguarding advice and the provision of quality assurance that the youth clubs were working safely with young people;
- There were a lot of underused youth centres and the group wanted to support youth workers to develop access therein.
- There was a challenge on the expectations placed upon youth workers. increasingly youth workers were only employed for a number of hours on specific evenings which did not provide for any continuing professional development. There was a developing situation where there were small clubs hiring youth workers on contracts for a short amount of time;
- Members were told of various projects that the group was involved with and attempting to resource;

A Member asked whether the group provided youth workers. The representative told members that they did not although they were looking to take a more direct involvement with projects in Fishersgate and Hassocks.

A Member noted that currently the group was free to join for members and lauded the opportunities that it provided for groups in more deprived areas. The representative confirmed that the group was currently free to join and currently had the resource to run that way, the group was looking at how it could become more financially sustainable for the future.

Cllr Hazel Thorpe made a representation

- Members were told that the Worthing Lions were going into various schools to promote volunteering, and awards given to young volunteers;
- The Maybridge Keystone club had recently become a community asset. Numbers at the clubs had been increasing and some children from the under 12 age group had gone on to be leaders, including those children from difficult backgrounds;
- Children at the Maybridge Keystone club undertook a variety of activities including cooking and gardening. The club was recently funded by costa for a karaoke machine;
- The Maybridge Keystone club reached out to various youth groups to bring young people and older people together including initiatives such as the 'young at heart' programme bringing the elderly with dementia into contact

with young people.

- Members were told that in the past information concerning the diversity of youth groups in Worthing had been collated by West Sussex Council and that it would be helpful to reproduce that information;
- Cllr Thorpe asked that there be a level playing field in relation to bids for the money tree and asked that adults be prohibited from making bids on behalf of young people.

The Committee debated and agreed the following recommendations in response to the information gathered at the committee

Recommendations: That the following be recommended to appropriate responsible bodies:-

That the Councils:-

- i) Continue to source all available funding to support the Youth Council and all youth groups in Adur and Worthing;
- ii) Subject to the availability of continued grant funding, continue to support the services provided to young people in Adur and Worthing and continue to find new proactive ways to engage with young people by researching and assessing how those needs can be met to support young people, their families and their communities;
- iii) Regularly consult with the Youth Council and consider re-introducing 'working with you together' ;
- iv) Consider making clearer a single point of contact for communication by young people, and publish 'how to communicate' on the Councils' website which should include using the website to advertise youth groups and encourage collaboration between them;
- v) Consider the following proposals submitted by the Youth Council at the meeting to help with better youth engagement;
 - Contact West Sussex County Council to suggest that 'Find it Out' centres should also be open on a Saturday rather than just usually open during school time;
 - Listen to opinions even if we don't like them;
 - Write to South Downs Leisure and Impulse Leisure to ask them to make access to tennis courts easier for younger people;
 - Introduce outdoor activities such as chess and table tennis in town centre locations;
 - Engage with young people when investigating regeneration policy;
 - Celebrate young people and promote youth awards locally
 - Seek to influence a reduction in transport costs for young people locally;
 - Introduce cinema concessions at the Connaught Theatre;

- Contact West Sussex County Council about making the libraries more youth friendly and engaging for young people;

Resolved; That a JOSC Working Group be set up to monitor the progress of the recommendations made up of two Councillors from each of Adur and Worthing Councils and the Youth Council.

The meeting adjourned at 8.25pm

The meeting reconvened at 8.35pm

JOSC/16-17/31 Joint Leaders Interview

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital and resources, a copy of which had been circulated to all members, a copy of which is attached to a signed copy of these minutes as item 7. As part of its Work programme for 2016/17, the Committee had agreed to interview the Leaders on their priorities for 2016/17.

The Leader of Worthing made a representation, summarised as follows:

- The strategic document 'Surf's Up' had admirably set out a vision of worthing as a commercially and socially entrepreneurial Borough;
- There was significant evidence that the council was doing comparatively well against a backdrop of reducing resources from Central Government;
- The Leader lauded the councils' work with digital emphasising that the councils were becoming a more modern organisation. The councils had become an exemplar of how to do digital well including providing digital platforms that could be used by the community. Members were told of the use of a council digital platform by Guild Care.
- The Leader informed members that the councils were at the point where the Surf's up document was ready to be refreshed and there would be a greater concentration on developing stalled sites around the Borough;
- The Leader had worked with former Mayors in the previous year and the outcome of the work had given reassurance as to the future of the role;
- As the portfolio holder responsible for communications the Leader stated that the team was now providing both a more responsive and proactive service and a local news editor had complimented the team on its swiftness of response to enquiries;
- Partnership working across the county and on the city deal which had bought a benefit to Worthing;
- Work had been undergoing on devolution.
- Residents of Worthing were supportive of the work of previous years, demonstrated by results at recent elections;

The Leader of Adur District council made a representation to the committee

- The Leader stated that he was excited about the future for the area in spite of a continuing reduction in funding;
- The Leader set out some ambitions for the following year which included having a balanced budget whilst maintaining front line services in the face of the largest cut to resources in the history of Local Government;
- The Leader expressed the desire to begin the development of the Civic Centre site including the demolition of the old building, the construction of office buildings on the current car park and planning for the development of the larger site;
- The Leader explained the importance of completing the Local Plan to control development;
- Members were told of the will to build council housing in the following year;
- The Leader wanted to see a devolution deal, although it was recognised that the prospects of this had been weakened by a political change in Central Government;

A Worthing member explained that he had received emails from local residents stating that they had not known about consultations concerning the Local Plan, he asked what could be done to make sure that as many residents as possible were aware of future consultations and could take part. The Leader of Worthing confirmed that the initial consultation phase of the Local Plan had been conducted. Members were told that it was a difficult task to get people engaged in local issues and drew comparisons with work carried out by local politicians prior to polling day. The Leader detailed the work carried out within the Offington ward to raise awareness of the consultation and how that consultation was carried out. He told members that the council would continue to work to improve in this area and explained that there were encouraging statistics showing how the Council had engaged using a variety of different media. Members were told that there was also a role for ward councillors to play in engaging with residents.

A Worthing Member asked for the Leader to give an update on devolution deals and the impact this had on the Worthing Borough. The Leader explained that there were local infrastructure problems that could not be solved by centralised siloed departments. Genuine devolution of power could help local areas get on and solve those issues. The councils had been involved in two bids for greater devolution. The deals were being held up because of a requirement for directly elected Mayors which made sense for northern cities but not so much for southern rural areas. Members were also told that there had been a change in emphasis from central government and the will to carry out the devolution was not as great.

A Member asked if the Leaders agreed that a the best way to overcome the bureaucracy of a two tier system was to set up a coastal unitary authority. The Member expressed frustration about traffic problems within his ward and the inability to get agreement from the local county councillor. The Adur Leader gave his personal view that he was in support of unitary authorities although he felt that highways england had responsibility for the traffic problems described by the Member and a unitary authority would not necessarily be able to resolve that issue.

The Worthing Leader told members that unitaries were a popular topic of discussion. He was not dead set against unitaries but he was not incredibly in favour of it. He was sceptical about the savings of a unitary, he was not convinced of the ability of unitaries to bring about positive change, rearranging local government would be a distraction from addressing more pressing problems locally. He had not seen a wealth of evidence to suggest the move to a unitary authority would benefit Worthing.

A Member stated that at the County Council, Cabinet Members would be present at scrutiny when it considered important strategic documents which was not the case in Worthing, that there was little opportunity to ask questions of Executive Members at Joint Strategic Committee and opportunities were limited at Full Council. He asked what the leader thought about the limited opportunity to scrutinise Executive Members. The Leader felt that the question was going to the wrong person. If the Committee wanted to invite Executive Members they would attend.

A Worthing member lauded Adur for the desire to build council housing and hoped that the Council would invest money to provide social housing. The Leader stated that the Borough had given a £10m loan to Worthing Homes to build more social houses.

A Worthing Member asked if the Leaders would consider promoting the offer of council tax support for carers within Adur and Worthing via the communications team. The Worthing Leader confirm that he would discuss the issue with the communications team. The Adur Leader stated that he would look into the issue.

Recommendation: that the Leaders report be noted

JOSC/16-17/32 Surf's up Monitoring

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital and Resources a copy of which was circulated to all members, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 8. The report before the committee updated members on progress against the commitments set out in "*Surf's Up*" (a 24 month programme of activity approved by the Joint Strategic Committee on 2 December 2014). It provided an opportunity at the 18 month stage of that programme to take stock of progress and identify what was working well, what was not, and where challenges remain, how best they could be tackled.

The Chief Executive was invited to make a representation to the Committee and he set out the progress of the the Surf's up programme to date.

Responding to a question about achievements the Chief Executive noted that a significant achievement of the councils was 'keeping the show on the road' against a backdrop of austerity. The improved relationship with the local business community was important for the councils and the community. Programmes such

as the IT Junction and programmes to stop young people dropping out of school really changed the lives of individual residents and was really significant. The creation of South Downs leisure trust was successful and in the future the introduction of gigabit technology would significantly benefit the financial and social economies.

A Member asked if the 'daughter' of Surf's up would be a Surf's up extended. Members were told that some of the themes would roll forward particularly around development. The Chief Executive envisioned a greater emphasis on housing and the removal of issues that had been completed.

A Member asked why some of the targets set within 'Surf's up' had not been met. The Committee was told that most of the unfinished targets revolved around wealth generation around developing major projects. He explained that the councils had created a better investment climate and by increasing capacity Members would see a speedier approach, however the councils were in the hands of markets and developers that didn't always behave in the way the councils would like them to.

A Member asked how awareness was being raised with the public about the delivery of 'Surf's Up'. Members were told that the councils engaged people on things they wanted to be involved with rather than the strategy as a whole.

A member asked about residents' use of the website. The Committee was told that there had been just under 4 million hits. Planning, recycling, bin days, car boot sales, council tax and payments to the councils were the most popular sections of the website.

Responding to a question the Chief Executive told members there had been 518 Freedom of information (FOI) requests, an average of about 80 per month. There had been a small backlog which had been recovered. The Councils were developing an online system where people making FOI requests could be directed to the correct information contained within the answers to requests that had been made previously.

The Chief Executive was asked if the communications team had established guidelines to answering press enquiries. The Chief Executive told members of the large volume of press enquiries and the prompt responses to those requests. The Committee was told that the team would have performance indicators in place by the end of the year.

A Member asked about the key infrastructure sites and the dates for commencement on those projects, which he stated had not been met and related that he wanted to ask the Executive Member for Regeneration why this had not happened but he was not present to answer questions. The Chief Executive told members that a major projects board and major projects team had been introduced by the Leaders and the Executive Member. They had argued for and got equity investment into sites to speed up development.

A member noted strides to maximise the property portfolio and the creation of a property investment fund by increasing borrowing. The member stated that he felt the risks of doing so were not adequately covered, he felt that the profits from any commercial venture were uncertain and that the councils were opening themselves up to credit risks. The Chief Executive stated that the original scheme was for each authority to borrow £2M to invest and that the councils had received proper external assessment of the properties and tenants. The Chief Executive stated that he didn't think any of the leasehold purchases made had created any dangerous levels of exposure to the Councils.

A member asked what the Chief Executive's response would be to a comment made by a local businessman that Worthing town centre was in decline. The Chief Executive disagreed and pointed to successful new businesses in town. Members were told that vibrant town centres needed diversity of independent and national retailers which Worthing had. There was a great leisure and cultural offer in Worthing which brought people to the town.

A Member stated that he felt Lancing was not focused on as much a Shoreham or Worthing and asked for greater priority for Lancing. The Chief Executive stated that secondary retail areas were doing well. Lancing vision had been promoting the town. The introduction of markets and the Gorilla Circus had been successful in bringing attention and attraction to Lancing. The Chief Executive told members he felt that the councils could do more and as such the councils had recently submitted to the DCLG and application to create a cultural economies team. This would start bringing retail and creative business partners together to see what could be done including bringing in additional funding.

A Member asked when the Chief Executive envisioned the Theatres becoming financially sustainable. The Chief Executive stated that the situation would look better at the end of the financial year.

Resolved: The the interview be noted

**JOSC/16-17/33 Adur and Worthing Joint Overview and Scrutiny
Committee Work Programme – 2016/17**

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital and Resources, a copy of which was sent to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 9. The report outlined progress on the work contained in the 2016/17 Work Programme.

Resolved: that progress on the work programme be noted

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 10.10pm it having commenced at 6.30pm.

Chairman