

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

QE2 Room, Shoreham Centre, Shoreham-by-Sea

27 July 2017

*Stephen Chipp (Chairman)
Joss Loader (Vice Chairman)

Adur District Council:

Carol Albury
*George Barton
*Kevin Boram
Ann Bridges
Clive Burghard
Robin Monk

Worthing Borough Council:

Roy Barraclough
Keith Bickers
Sean McDonald
Nigel Morgan
Louise Murphy
Luke Proudfoot
Bob Smytherman
Steve Waight

*Absent

JOSC/17-18/10 Declarations of Interest/Substitutions

There were no declarations or substitutions made

JOSC/17-18/11 Minutes

Resolved that the Minutes of the Committee held on 29 June 2018 be approved as the correct record and signed by the Chairman

JOSC/17-18/12 Public Question Time

There were no questions from members of the public

JOSC/17-18/13 Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items.

JOSC/17-18/14 Consideration of any matter referred to the Committee in relation to a call-in of a decision

There were no items.

JOSC/17-18/15 Play Area Prioritisation Review - Adur and Worthing

Before the Committee was a report by the Director of Communities, a copy of which was sent to all Members, a copy of which was attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 7

The report advised and updated Members on the process in place to determine how the current Council managed play areas are prioritised for refurbishment, via the Capital programme or via developer's Section 106 contributions. Furthermore the report focused on the methodology which used a set of criteria to provide determination of which play areas were prioritised for improvement across the District and Borough.

The Executive Member for The Environment (Worthing) and the Director for Communities were present to answer questions.

A Member asked what involvement individual Ward Members had in the prioritisation process of the play area provision? *The Executive Member explained how Ward Members were involved and told the Committee that she was currently in contact with two Ward Members about ongoing work. When asked if a cross party working group could be set up on the matter of prioritisation the Executive Member told Members that it was not necessary as the system was robust and that Ward Members could approach the Executive Member regarding play areas in their wards.*

Resolved: that the Committee notes that:

- The prioritisation process and prioritisation of Adur and Worthing's respective play areas for refurbishment and improvement;
- The current prioritisation is appropriate and suitable for identifying and reacting to funding opportunities and improvement as and when funding opportunities present themselves.

JOSC/17-18/16 Towards a Sustainable Future - Budget Strategy for the 2018/19 Budget

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 8. The report before Members set out the how the Councils aimed to continue to address the changing financial climate over 10 years, outlining the revenue forecast and setting out a strategic response, creating the conditions to be self-financing by 2020/21. With the detailed budget proposals for 2018/19 coming forward to Joint Strategic Committee in December, the reports set out the broader context for the detailed work that will be undertaken over the intervening months.

The Worthing Leader and the Chief Financial Officer were present to answer questions. The Committee was told that the Adur Executive Member for Resources was not able to make the meeting and would answer any questions in writing after the meeting.

Responding to a question the Leader explained that the Council was unlikely to benefit from a fair funding review because of the type of functions it undertook and its geographical area.

A Member asked when Worthing Borough Council would know the outcome of the NHS Trusts' claim for mandatory business rate relief appeal which could result in a potential loss of income to the council totalling £719k. *The Leader told Members that he was not aware of when the case was due to end but that the LGA was co-ordinating the case on behalf of councils and there was confidence that Local Authorities had a strong argument.*

A Member asked if there were any other outstanding re-evaluations for WBC in relation to Business Rate Relief? *The Leader told Members that there were no outstanding re-evaluations of significance.*

A Member asked when it would be known if WBC were going to post a surplus or deficit for this financial year? *The Leader told the Committee that a better picture would emerge following the second quarter outturn report (december Joint Strategic Committee).*

A Member asked the following question 'In relation to the reform of the business rates system it's quoted within the report that "for the purposes of planning, it is assumed that the change will be largely neutral" – who has made this assumption and how did they come to this conclusion.' *Members were told that it fed out of work conducted by CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountability).*

A Member asked the following question 'In relation to Reserves – why does the report contain estimated figures and not actual figures? Is there a difference between the two?' *The Leader told Members that the Council did not think that there would be a difference but the accounts needed to be signed off by External Auditors hence the term 'estimated'.*

A Member asked if the Leader would do all that he could to ensure that the weekly waste collection is retained in future years? *The Executive Member for the Environment told Members that the purchase of the new fleet demonstrated the Councils' intention to maintain weekly refuse collections.*

A Member asked if when looking at commercial properties to invest in, is the council casting a wide net and looking for opportunities across the country? *The Leader told members that the focus of investment for Worthing Borough Council had been to acquire properties which not only provide the Councils with a financial return but which will also support broader economic regeneration objectives.*

The Leader was asked if funding from Central Government is decreased and pressures on our budgets increased, would the council be looking at protecting funding for statutory duties and decreasing funding for things we are not legally obliged to fund, such as theatres? *The Leader explained that he wouldn't want to take a 'race to the bottom' approach. Members were told that the terms statutory or discretionary were not meaningful and that elected Members decided the priorities for the Borough. The Borough was not well served by not pursuing non statutory obligations.*

A Member drew the Leader's attention to Para 6.2 (page 51) which listed four avenues for income generation, two of which relied on the development of the major infrastructure sites. In view of the failure to deliver any of the major infrastructure sites identified in 'Surfs Up' or, to date, in 'Platforms for Places' the Leader was asked what action the Executive was taking to assist Officers to develop the major infrastructure sites. *The Leader set out the groups that the Executive was working with to pull in funding to help move developments forward.*

A Member asked the following question: 'Can the Leader confirm whether consideration has been given to an investment scheme similar to the one adopted by Eastleigh BC at the Ageas Bowl where the Council built a hotel that is now operated by Hilton and created 500 jobs plus a steady revenue stream for the Council. Would the Leader consider a similar scheme for Teville Gate or Stagecoach which would clearly benefit from a joint approach to see the sites be redeveloped and support the Council's wider economic development objectives?' *The Leader noted that the Ageas Bowl development was built in a different economic environment, however the Councils' would consider joint ventures if it was of a benefit to do so.*

A Member asked if there was a risk strategy in place to deal with economic variables that could affect income from the strategic property investment fund. *The Chief financial Officer told Members that the Council had recruited a specialist officer to manage the fund and that the Council was seeking to invest in quality buildings with quality tenants but would take comments about a risk strategy onboard.*

A Member asked the following question of the Worthing Leader: 'Reserves Position: It is both councils policy to maintain a minimum level of 6% and maximum of 10% net expenditure for the reserve position. Currently Worthing have met the minimum target but Adur have not. With this in mind, is WBC a guarantor to ADC so may be called upon to make up the shortfall in reserves for ADC?' *Members were told that worthing would not be a guarantor for Adur.*

Answering a question about the building of Skateparks, the Leader told members the process of getting items accepted onto the Capital Strategy.

Resolved: That the report be noted

JOSC/17-18/17 Revenue Outturn 16/17

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Communities, 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 9. The report outlined the revenue financial monitoring position for the end of the 2016/17 financial year for Joint Strategic Committee, Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils.

The Worthing Leader and the Chief Financial Officer were present to answer questions. The Committee was told that the Adur Executive Member for Resources was not able to make the meeting and would answer any questions in writing after the meeting.

A Member asked the following question: 'Homelessness / Emergency Accommodation Provision: in a previous report to JOSC (possibly the Budget) the provision for Emergency Accommodation has (had) been set at ~£520k / year for the next 5 years. Given the current overspend of £278k, will the budget allocation be adjusted to reflect the increased demand? Providing Emergency Accommodation is a statutory duty of any local authority but so it producing a balanced budget – if the provision for Emergency Accommodation is inadequate which inevitably leads to an overspend, in this case £278k, does the Budget need to be re-balanced?' *The Leader told the Committee that the Councils were working to prevent homelessness more was being spent and the Councils had reacted well to an increased demand. The 2017/18 budget was increased by £360,000 which was sufficient to accommodate known pressures.*

A Member asked the following question: 'Para 4.2 (page 76) Worthing Theatres: This paragraph states 'Theatres financial performance against the approved budget has improved significantly over the past 4 years. This is the result of good event planning and proactive marketing.....' What contribution do you think that the increase in the Theatres budget of £421,970 (+35%) between 2014/15 and 17/18 has had in the reduction of the overspend from £484,000 to £25,000 (2013/14 to 16/17)'. *The Leader told Members that inflation and other legal obligations such as*

increased National Insurance contributions had led to the increase in budget and that theatres had increased their performance in a number of areas.

A Member asked the following question: 'What would the Worthing Outturn have been if the one off overpayment provision and the MRP technical changes had been excluded from the figures?' *The Leader told members that the figure would be £253k although there were other one off overspends and unexpected budgetary pressures such as an unexpected increase in the level of homelessness, there was a recycling service overspend for the first time in many years due to the age of the vehicles which were being replaced and the Council had to fund a public enquiry into the planning application for Grand Avenue*

A Member asked if there was a need for a memorial services review. *The Worthing Executive Member for the Environment explained to the Committee that the Crematorium was the third highest used in the country, some investment was needed but that had been budgeted for.*

Resolved:that the report be noted

JOSC/17-18/18 Adur and Worthing Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual report 2016/17

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 10.

As part of good practice and a requirement in the Council's Constitution, the Councils were required to produce a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee annual report for 2016/17 for approval by the Committee and thereafter by full Council.

The Committee discussed the annual report and were happy that it was an accurate reflection of the Committee's work.

Resolved: That the report be endorsed by the Committee

Recommendation: That the meetings of Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council approve the Adur and Worthing Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual report 2016/17.

JOSC/17-18/19 JOSC Work Programme 2017/18

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 11. The report updated the Committee on the work contained in the 2017/18 Work Programme.

The Committee discussed the programme and agreed a programme of Executive Member invitations for the rest of the municipal year.

Resolved: That the progress in implementing the Work Programme for 2017/18 be noted

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 7.45pm it having commenced at 6.30pm.

Chairman