

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

**Gordon Room, Worthing Town Hall**

**29 November 2018**

Roy Barraclough (Chairman)  
Keith Bickers (Vice Chairman)

**Adur District Council:**

Carol Albury  
\*Catherine Arnold  
Kevin Boram  
Stephen Chipp  
\*Paul Mansfield  
Andy McGregor  
Joss Loader  
\*Lavinia O'Connor

**Worthing Borough Council:**

Rebecca Cooper  
Karen Harman  
Charles James  
Sean McDonald  
Bob Smytherman  
Steve Waight

\*Absent

**JOSC/18-19/41    Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest

**JOSC/18-19/42    Substitutions**

Councillor Lee Cowen declared his substitution for Councillor Lavinia O'Connor

Councillor Les Alden declared his substitution for Councillor Catherine Arnold

**JOSC/18-19/43    Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Committee held on 18 October 2018 be approved as the correct record and signed by the Chairman

**JOSC/18-19/44    Public Question Time**

There were no questions from the public

## **JOSC/18-19/45    Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions**

There were no urgent items.

## **JOSC/18-19/46    Consideration of any matter referred to the Committee in relation to a call-in of a decision - Request for the call-in of an Executive Decision**

Before the Committee was a report by the Monitoring Officer, a copy of which had been provided to all members, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 6.

The Councils' Joint Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules provide that where the Monitoring Officer receives a request to call-in a decision of the Executives, and rejects that request, they must report to the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee with details of the request and reasons for the rejection. A request for call-in had been received and rejected.

The Monitoring officer introduced the report to members and set out the reasons as to why the call-in had been rejected.

Members questioned the Monitoring Officer on the suitability of the rules surrounding call-in given the failure of two call-in recently. The Monitoring Officer was also questioned about specific details relating to the call-in in particular concerning consultation and legal notifications relevant to the subject of the call-in. Members were told that the constitution was reviewed regularly and that the Monitoring Officer was satisfied that the principles of decision making were fit for purpose. The Monitoring Officer explained the legal opinion that the decision in question was in conjunction with the decision making principles as set out in the constitution.

**Resolved:** that the report be noted

## **JOSC/18-19/47    Financially Sustainable Councils: Budget update 2019/20 - 2023/24 and savings proposals**

Before the Committee was a report by the Director of Digital and Resources, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 7. The report before members provided an overview of the Councils financial strategy for 2019/20, along with details of the proposals that would help deliver a balanced budget for the next financial year and beyond.

Members of the Worthing and Adur Executive were present at the meeting to answer questions.

A Member asked the following question: *The reports refers to an extra £100,000 for potential impact of Theatres procurement. Can the Executive Member advise what this refers to and the likeliness of this additional budget being required?* Members were told that experience of moving leisure to South Down Leisure had informed future plans for theatres. There were some principle reasons for £100k which included potential increases in pension costs. The Council could reclaim all VAT paid on supplies and services, an external supplier may not be able to reclaim as much VAT on services used in the delivery of VAT. It was expected that any provider would price in a margin in order to build a reserve fund and there would be lost business rate income if the new contractor had a charitable status and was entitled to business rate relief.

A Member asked the following question: *Firstly, I would like to congratulate the Officers for producing a Five Year Forecast which secures the financial future of both Councils. I know many Councils are struggling to balance the books and some are facing a grim financial future. One of the areas which secures that financial future is the outstanding income forecast from Commercial Investment. However, I do know that Labour members voted against this programme and I wonder if alternatives were investigated due to this opposition. I imagine that the opposition must have put forward alternative sources of income or savings as part of their opposition to the Commercial Investment programme. 1. I would like to know what other sources of income or savings were investigated as an alternative to the Commercial investment programme? 2. If other areas were investigated, what kind of income or savings could we have expected? 3. If savings were the only alternative to balance the books, what impact would delivering those savings have had on jobs?* The Adur Executive Member for Resources told the Committee that the property investment strategy was only part of the a bigger programme of income generation which included expanding commercial income and generating business efficiency. An example was given that partnership working was generating £3m of savings annually. With regards to impact on jobs the Executive Member explained that the property investment brought in about £600k annually which was on average about 24 full time equivalents.

A Member asked the following question: *By 2020, councils will be reliant on 100% retention of business rates for funding. The Chancellor announced in the budget giving even more of them away in tax reliefs. I wonder if this might be another financial black hole for local government opening up but I cannot see it addressed in this document?* The Adur Executive for Resources told members that Adur did

not rely on 100% of its income from business rates. The Executive Member told the committee that he agreed with business rate relief as it helped local businesses.

A Member asked the following question: *Can the Executive Member please indicate the latest figures for homelessness to show how much the "deeper," "customer centred change" has achieved? And could we please have information about future targets - will they be reducing based on the success of this work?* The Executive Member for Customer Services told the Committee that the housing team focused on homelessness prevention. Members were given statistics around current levels of homelessness and told that levels of need and complexity were increasing. There were an increasing number of individuals and families presenting as homeless whom the council had a duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act to either prevent homelessness or relieve homelessness. There were currently about 156 families and individuals placed in emergency accommodation. 15 of those families would be moving into permanent accommodation hopefully before Christmas. Data showed that focus on prevention was having an impact, although demand had not decreased. Therefore it was not feasible to have 'targets' for reducing homelessness beyond those that sought to increase the ratio of those where the councils were able to prevent homelessness as opposed to having to relieve homelessness.

A Member asked the following question: *The table on page 35, Revenue Budget Summary, shows significant adjustments to the Baseline funding. Is it possible to use reserves to spread the impact of these to provide a more stable budget?* Members were told that small amounts of reserves were used from time to time. The purpose of reserves were to mitigate the risk of unforeseen circumstances.

A Member asked the following question *The Adur Civic Centre Car park site - This development was strenuously opposed by Labour members at the planning stage and I would just like everyone to be assured that we made the right decision in giving the plans the green light? 1. Could you provide details about the contribution made to the five year budget by this development, specifically what income Adur is forecast to receive from that commercial investment over the next five years? 2. Can you also update us regarding the promised retention of the Company "Focus Group" and the associated 250 jobs? 3. Finally, can you update the Committee on the additional 200 local jobs which are forecast to be created by this development?* Members were told that the building had secured 'Focus' as tenants and that it would house about 300 or so employees, the company was growing and the building had room for that growth. Members were told that the building would generate a net income of £100k and would provide an asset for the Council.

A Member asked the following question: *What is the Executive Member doing to mitigate the impact from loss of business rates as a result of properties being redeveloped or converted to residential and what is the current projected loss for 2019/20?* The Executive Member for Regeneration gave the Committee information about the Council's planning policies and explained issues around permitted development rights. He told Members that converting spaces above commercial properties to residential could revitalise shopping areas. Members were told that the Councils budgeted for a loss of £500k per year which could also include a combination of issues including losses and appeals. Members were told that where buildings were converted into accommodation, whilst the Council would 'lose' business rate income, it would eventually benefit from increased Council Tax income, over which the Council had far greater control. Members were told of Columbia House which would deliver 102 new flats with potential Council Tax income of £15k per year. Responding to a supplementary question the Executive Member told members about the relative good health of small business within the town.

A Member referenced the report (Page 31 - Appendix 3 Increase in price of Garden Waste Bins from £80-£85 Increase Garden sack from £1.20p to £1.25p) and asked the following question: *How does that comply with your newly found environmental agenda? Isn't putting up prices just going to further discourage recycling?* The Executive Member for Resources told the Committee that the Council was not discouraging recycling and that the demand for the service was increasing year on year (for a service that was discretionary). Green waste was collected weekly and the cheaper bag service was available for residents who did not need to use the service regularly. The proposed increase for the service amounted to about 10p per week. In responding to a supplementary question the Leader of Worthing Borough Council commented that residents who had no need for the service should not be asked to pay for those residents that did.

A Member asked the following question: *Will the Leader of the Council condemn the Leader of the County Council for cutting housing funding in Worthing, and requiring the Borough Council to subsidise the County by putting more money in?* The Leader of Worthing Borough Council told Members that the Council would continue to maintain a consultation and work to find a way through it. He told Members that in his opinion, the original proposal in the WSCC plan as worded would have been counter-productive and wouldn't have been a budget saving. As a supplementary it was asked whether the Borough would pick up the costs should the plans go ahead. The Leader told Members that there would need to be an assessment of which statutory duties laid with which authority. The best process was to sit down with the County Council to work out a process that was beneficial to residents.

A Member asked the following question: *Can the Executive Member confirm when the initial plans for reconfiguration of waste services was discussed and do you regret the recent service redesign that resulted in the loss of key members of the team that would have been well placed to lead the Communication Strategy of the new service?* The Executive Member for the Environment (Worthing) explained that there had been initial conversations in the Summer. He gave some examples of schemes that the Council was involved with to promote recycling and explained that the Communications team would lead the project relating to the change in the service.

A Member asked the following question: *Are you confident that the budget will be enough to enable the new service to include the collection of Food Waste?* Members were told that this had already been calculated into the budget.

A Member asked the following question: *Does the Executive Member agree with me that it would be better to defer proposing a further increase to Garden Bins & Sacks until after the changes to recycling collections have been introduced to minimise the impact to our residents?* The Executive Member told the Committee that the service was non-statutory and was apportioned fairly and that those using the service paid for it directly. The cost ensured a balanced budget and met the needs of a well used service.

A Member asked the following question: *With reference to the upcoming Council Tax increase - Bearing in mind that there has been concern expressed by residents about the change in refuse collection and queries about how the savings from this change will be used, it is clear from this report that it will not be a reduction in Council Tax. Would the Leader please outline what benefits the people of Worthing can expect to see as a result of this increase?* Members were told that the Councils were facing a £1.4m budget shortfall. The tax rise accounted for just 12% of the money needed to balance the budget. The tax rise contributed to achieving a balanced budget in order to deliver 'Platforms for our Places'. The Leader listed achievements and plans that were being delivered despite reductions in funding. Responding to a supplementary question the Leader told the Committee that a deficit created by previous government had led to the funding reductions and was responsible for the need to .

A Member asked the following question: *Will the Leader(s) now accept that the changes in the waste service are simply to save money as described in this paragraph? (The previous paragraph describes meeting the recycling target as a "financial target")* The Committee was told that The Leader did not accept the proposition of the question. The issue was about increasing recycling and the

paragraph did not describe the change as a way to save money. The savings were generated by a predicted rise in recycling and as such the two issues were linked. The Adur Executive Member for Resources told the Committee that the report was a finance report and as such referenced financial figures and numbers and not the wider strategy.

A Member asked the following question: *Will the Leader(s) please explain how "no prospect of any easing of financial pressure for the next few years" fits in with the Prime Minister's announcement that austerity is ending?* The Leader told the committee that the Prime Minister's statement reflected an increase in public funding, however he thought that statements made about ending austerity did not apply to local government.

A Member referenced financial figures within the report and asked about projected raises in recycling rates. To reach the 50% target required it was suggested that a move to fortnightly collection alone would not be enough. The Committee was told that moving to fortnightly collection was part of a wider programme to increase recycling rates. Members were also given information about oscillation in the Medium Term Financial Plan and factors influencing figures within the report such as food waste preparedness form WSCC.

**Resolved:** that the report be noted

#### **JOSC/18-19/48      Responses of the Executive to reports of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Before the Committee was a minute extract of the meeting of the Joint Strategic Committee that took place on the 6 November 2018 in relation to the JOSC Review of Consultations.

The committee discussed the extract and agreed that a review of the matter should be added to the work programme in six months time

**Resolved:** that the minute extract be noted and the matter be added to the work programme in six months time

#### **JOSC/18-19/49      Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2018/19**

Before the Committee was a report by the Director of 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 8. The report outlined the work programme of the committee for the 2018/19 Municipal year.

In accordance with the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules there was a requirement for both Councils to review the changes to the Work Programme mid term so there was a requirement for the Work Programme as amended to be submitted to the Council meetings in December

The Scrutiny and Risk Officer introduced the report to the Committee, which was subsequently approved by members and recommended to Council for noting.

**Resolved:**

i) That the progress in implementing the Work Programme for 2018/19 be noted; and

ii) That the meetings of Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council in December 2018 note the changes made to the Work Programme since it was agreed by both Councils in July 2018.

**JOSC/18-19/50      Scrutiny - Worthing Town Centre - Approach to car parking provision**

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 the signed copy of these minutes as item 9. The report before members had previously been considered by the Joint Strategic Committee on the 6 November and provided the details of a proposed strategy for parking re-provision in Worthing town centre and refurbishment projects across Worthing Town Centre to ensure the continued strength of the town centre as a retail, leisure and business location.

The Executive Member for Regeneration was present to answer questions from the Committee.

A Member asked the following question: *What consideration has been given to finding alternative funding for the car park refurbishments instead of borrowing such as seeking expressions of interest from private sector providers to take on the management and financial liability of the car park estate?* The Executive Member relayed past experience of handing car parks over to private companies stating that NCP charges had a negative impact on the Town centre

A Member asked the following question. *Could we have additional information as to how this strategy fits in with making a significant effort to improve active transport options in Worthing, and the feasibility of a Park and Ride option?* The Executive Member stated that he recognised that reliance on cars had not significantly reduced. Car parks planned for the Civic Centre and Lyndhurst road created capacity just outside of the centre. Members were told of work with groups to improve sustainable transport.

A Member asked if the Executive Member if the proposals would be significant enough given that there was an overall reduction in capacity. The Executive Member gave a breakdown of capacity and occupancy of the car parks as they were. If those working in the Town Parked in parkes located at the civic centre and lyndhurst road the town centre car parks capacity would have the capacity to manage shoppers and visitors coming to the town.

**Resolved:** that the report be noted

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 8.45pm it having commenced at 6.30pm.

**Chairman**