

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

Gordon Room, Worthing Town Hall

24 January 2019

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:

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

*Absent

JOSC/18-19/51 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Smytherman declared an interest as a trustee of Coastal West Sussex MIND and as a Councillor of West Sussex County Council

Councillor Waight declared an interest as a Councillor of West Sussex County Council

Councillor Stephen Chipp declared an interest as he was employed in the housing sector

JOSC/18-19/52 Substitutions

Councillor Brian Coomber declared his substitution for Councillor Andy McGregor

Councillor Jane Sim declared her substitution for Councillor Charles James

JOSC/18-19/53 Minutes

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

JOSC/18-19/54 Public Question Time

A member of the public asked the following questions:

How many households have applied to ADC for temporary accommodation in the last 12 months and when the council is satisfied that that the applicants are eligible, homeless or threatened with homelessness, what are the circumstances recorded that caused the the applicants to become homeless or threatened with homelessness?

The Head of Housing responded and told the Member of the public that Households do not apply for temporary accommodation. Households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness can apply for assistance for the local authority. The local authority will decide if they meet the criteria to be placed in temporary accommodation.

The new Housing IT system came into use with the new homelessness legislation, therefore only holds data from 03 April 2017

Between April 2017 and December 2017.

- 129 Households presented to Adur District Council homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- 50 households were placed in temporary accommodation

What are the equivalent figures and reasons for the previous 12 months?

The resident was told that the information was not available on the new housing system. This had been due to the new reporting framework introduced with the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

JOSC/18-19/55 Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items.

JOSC/18-19/56 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

There had been no requests for call-in since the last Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**JOSC/18-19/57 Delivering our Housing Strategy - Review of Progress
2018/19**

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 the signed copy of these minutes as item 7. The Adur and Worthing Councils Housing Strategy 2017-2020 'Housing Matters' outlined a vision for our communities where everyone can have a place they can call home. It was recognised that having a secure and safe home, not just a place to sleep, was one of the most important factors in enabling our communities to be ambitious, prosperous and resilient. The report updated members of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the activities and outcomes that have been achieved to date in delivering this strategy, as well as highlighting challenges and opportunities for the future.

The Executive Members for customer Services were present to answer questions along with the Director for Communities and the Head of Housing.

A Member asked the following question: *Of the 55 families we have been working with can the Executive Member confirm what support is available to those 21 families we are no longer working with? Of the 121 single adults we have worked with at Job Centre Plus can the Executive Member advise what support is available to the 7 adults we haven't prevented from becoming homeless or receiving ongoing support?* Members were told that with regards to those 21 families, their cases had been resolved and that the current situation for cases we are no longer working with will vary dependent on the households circumstances. Some cases would have needed some low level advice or referral to another service, Case Study B demonstrates this. Some households would have been made Homeless, eligible for housing and placed in Temporary Accommodation. The Executive Member explained that results from the success of the service were financially beneficial to both the Authority and the families involved where homelessness has been prevented. The 'Making Homelessness Everyone's Business' project sought to shift how the Councils worked from being solely a demand led/responsive service to a system wide response.

A Member asked if different measures of success were used to assess the outcome of the housing pilot. Members that measurements of wellbeing impacts were considered.

A Member asked the following question: *Whilst I herald all the work being done around the schemes to reduce homeless occurrences, hidden homes and the huge merit in this and I also note the HRA's funds use for repairs. I would like to ask*

about how the concentration on the supply on new homes is going (tools of which are noted in page 12 of 17/20 housing strategy document) - ie point ii) modular and community land trusts v) housing companies and JV's and viii) using empty homes toolkits/grants etc - would the first two points be possible with the recent lifting of the HRA borrowing cap? The Adur Executive member updated the Committee with ongoing social housing projects within the District. Members were told that with regards to the borrowing cap, the Authority needed to make an assessment on whether the borrowing could be financed and the overall viability of a project before committing to a loan. In terms of empty homes and supporting the supply of affordable homes, the council regularly provided small grants to owners and landlords to enable them to bring properties back into use and for the council to secure nomination rights. The Councils had returned 29 units of accommodation back into use in this way with at least a further 12 units due to be available in 2019. The councils had also had recent contact with rural sussex and were exploring options for setting up a land trust.

A Member asked the following question: *Can the Executive Member confirm the Housing Advice pilot will continue if the County Council reduce the financial support to Citizens Advice & Turning Tides?* Members were told that the current project/provision was not dependant upon WSCC funding as it was a contract that was initiated in response to the housing needs identified as part of the A&W Going Local, Social Prescribing project. The current arrangement was in place until May 2019 and options were being reviewed to maintain the project going forward.

A Member asked the following question: *Is there a head of Residents Association for Adur Homes you work with further (post survey) to influence design of services please?* The Committee was told that the Adur Homes Management board had membership from the Adur Consultative Forum. Proposals are shared with the Adur Homes Management board, and will engagement was sought with the widest possible group of Adur Homes residents.

A Member asked the following question: *Can the Executive Member confirm that funding for the Disabled Facilities Grants will continue to meet the demand for the service in the coming year?* The Executive Member told the Committee that the funding would be at least equal to the allocation.

A Member asked the following question: *Can any further factual detail be provided please on the specific effects of County funding withdrawal?* The Committee was told that there was no current information. Officers from across the West Sussex Districts and Boroughs and West Sussex County Council would be meeting in the coming weeks to discuss next steps.

A Member asked the following question: *Can the Executive Member confirm how many HMO properties will require licensing and do we have the capacity to bring these within the licensing regime by the end of the next financial year?* The Executive Member explained that a change in the definition of licensable HMOs came into force on 1 October 2018 meaning that any property with 5 or more persons not forming a single household now required mandatory licensing. A campaign had led to there being a large number of properties signing up to be registered. There were plans to seek out further unlicensed premises.

A Member asked the following question: *Can the Executive Member confirm the numbers of EA new units predicted for the next financial year and whether this is predicted to meet the current and future demand?* Members were told that Work was ongoing to produce up to 56 new units of EA next financial year. However the main focus was on continuing to increase the the number of households prevented from becoming homeless in the first place. This was preferable to placing people in EA. In addition, the team redesign provides additional capacity to work with households to support their move on from temporary accommodation, thereby increasing the turnaround rate of available units.

A Member asked the Executive Member for Adur if consideration was being given to development of garage spaces in Lancing. The Executive member confirmed that there were a number of sites being considered as part of the 'Hidden Homes project'

The Committee agreed that further updates should provided as part of the Committee's work programme.

Resolved: that the report be noted

JOSC/18-19/58 Review of PSPOs

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 the signed copy of these minutes as item 8.

The Worthing Executive Member for Wellbeing and the Adur Executive Member for the Environment were present to answer questions

A Member asked the following question: *We had substantive discussions in the previous JOSC about the relevance of these PSPOs in the overall approach to public space protection. From this report, with the exception of two dog fouling*

notices, no PSPO notices have been issued. Could you please explain how the continued existence of these notices are justified. Members were told that PSPOs had never been introduced with the were used as an overall toolkit as a deterrent and provided a pathway in order that people could be provided with support.

A Member asked the following question: *The report states that there have been no fixed penalty notices issued for dog fouling during the reporting period in Adur. However, like most councillors I have regular complaints from residents that dog fouling is a major issue on our streets and open spaces. This is not a criticism of the Council's dog warden as we only have one employee, who provides a good service but covers a large area. However, the enforcement policy is clearly not working. Is there anything that residents can do to provide evidence that would result in successful enforcement and the issuing of more notices? If so, what evidence and in what form is required? It appears that naming and shaming could be more successful than ongoing education.* The Executive Member told the Committee that there had been a greater focus on compliance rather than the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices. Different options were being considered as to the future of enforcement of the Fixed Penalty Notices. A resident could, on witnessing a breach of a PSPO provide the Council with a witness statement detailing the event, which should include details of what happened, when and where and an identity of the person by their name, address or vehicle registration

The Committee questioned the Executive Members and discussed issues around the measurement of the effectiveness of the PSPOs being linked (by some members) FPNs being issued (or by other members) that the effectiveness of the PSPOs was a deterrent and a gateway in order to direct people to services.

The Committee discussed further the need to keep the item on the Committee's work Programme as a regular quarterly report and it was agreed that the item be removed until such time there was a need for the Committee to look at the issue again.

Resolved:

- i) that the report be noted;
- ii) that the review of PSPO quarterly report be removed from the work programme

**JOSC/18-19/59 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 9.

The Committee discussed the request from Councillor McGregor to introduce a Scrutiny Review looking at a review of the Councils' recycling strategy. It was agreed that the review be added to the work programme as a working group composed of Councillors Andy McGregor, Steve Waight, Lavinia O'Connor and Robert Smytherman.

The committee had also agreed to add a further item on Housing and to remove the PSPO item from the Work Programme

Resolved: that the Work programme be noted as amended

All Adur councillors apart from Cllr Stephen Chipp left the meeting for the discussion of the following item

JOSC/18-19/60 Worthing Budget estimates and Council Tax setting

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 10.

The Head of Financial Services, Executive Member for Resources and The Leader were present to answer questions.

A Member asked the following question: *We have discussed this in a previous scrutiny meeting, but I think that it is important to be clear about the message to the people of Worthing and Adur: There is a contradiction in the report with austerity ending, but Central Government still cutting funding to our Local Authority. Could you please explain why this is?* The Leader told members that the report did not claim that austerity was ending. Reduction in budgets had been happening since 2006.

A Member asked the following question: *Cuts have been made for several years now, and the report looks ahead to 20/21 as a challenging year for the cuts that must be made then on top of what has already been taken. Can you foresee a time in the future when WBC is not having to cut its budget?* the Leader told members that the budget was reviewed every year and that he felt with a degree of optimism that the Council was on the correct course and was moving towards becoming a self funding Council.

A Member asked the following question: *West Sussex County Council are now categorised as a "significant risk" in this report. Do they know this and if so, what was their response?* The Executive Member for Resources told the Committee that there were ongoing conversations with West Sussex but there needed to be an awareness that the County Council was in the same position as other local authorities.

A Member asked the following question: *Are you confident that the strategy of investing in commercial property is still a sound one, noting that several high profile property investors have eschewed these investment opportunities, saying that the Council are not wise to pursue this course of action?* The Executive Member gave the Committee information about purchases under the scheme to date and explained that each purchase went through a thorough risk assessment and provided councils with a net income of £500k per year.

A Member questioned the Executive Member on matters concerning the way that council tax increases were treated and whether they were to stave off further cuts or to invest in services. Members were told that a raised was considered carefully and it was recognised that there was a need to build up the tax base. Members were told that some investment had been identified that would have a positive impact.

A Member asked a question about provision in the budget for theatres and was told about the potential costs involved with moving the theaters into a trust including pension costs and taxation relationships. The outcome of a procurement exercise was expected in March.

Members discussed scrutinising the outcome of the procurement and agreed to add the operation of the contract after six months.

Resolved:

- i) that the report be noted;
- ii) that an item be added to the work programme concerning the scrutiny of the operation of the theatres budget as agreed.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 9.00pm it having commenced at 6.30pm.

Chairman