

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Joint Strategic Committee of
Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils**

QEII Room, Shoreham Centre, Shoreham-by-Sea

Tuesday 5 December 2017

Councillor Neil Parkin (Chairman)

Adur District Council:

Councillor Angus Dunn
Councillor Brian Boggis
Councillor Emma Evans
Councillor Carson Albury
Councillor David Simmons

Worthing Borough Council:

Councillor Daniel Humphreys
Councillor Kevin Jenkins
Councillor Edward Crouch
Councillor Diane Guest
Councillor Heather Mercer
*Councillor Val Turner

*Absent

Other Members Present

Adur District Council:- Councillors Les Alden, Lee Cowen

Worthing Borough Council:- Councillors Rebecca Cooper, Louise Murphy & Paul Westover

JSC/064/17-18 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

JSC/065/17-18 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes from the Joint Strategic Committee meeting held on 7 November, be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

JSC/066/17-18 Public Question Time

The following question was received from Margaret Harris, a Worthing resident:-

I note from Appendix 3 that out of a total of 3492 customers in Worthing who pay the £5 per week, 1704 are disabled, 205 are carers and 2426 are in receipt of income support, job seekers allowance or employment and support allowance.

I also note from Appendix 4 that 647 Liability Orders have been issued and (as at 16 November 2017) £70,860 has been raised in court costs.

Why is Worthing Borough continuing with a policy that is clearly hitting the most vulnerable groups in our society and why on earth would Adur Borough want to introduce it?

The Leader of Worthing Borough Council replied:-

That Worthing Borough Council had not decided to keep the scheme yet, it would be discussed later in the meeting and require a recommendation to Full Council. The figures quoted were challenged as some of the people in receipt of the support were not people who had newly been asked to pay. The Council had taken the decision to set up a Discretionary Fund and Officers had been asked to take a very measured approach when following up on arrears.

The Chairman replied:-

That it was Adur District Council not Adur Borough Council and that the Council Tax Support Scheme would be discussed later on the agenda.

A supplementary question asked Adur District Councillors if they were absolutely clear about the costs of a Council Tax Support Scheme in regards to administrative costs, potential court costs and uncollected taxes. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation had found that councils like Worthing Borough Council had far higher levels of uncollected council tax than councils like Adur District Council.

The Chairman replied that consideration of Council Tax Support Schemes would take place during under Item 9 on the agenda. He also clarified that Worthing Borough Council had a higher collection rate than Adur District Council.

The following question was received from Luke Angel, a Worthing resident:-

Why is this scheme disingenuously named the 'Council Tax Support Scheme' when it involves taxing the poorest members of society?

The Chairman replied:-

That the name of the scheme was agreed at the time of implementation and most Councils in the country had a similarly named scheme.

It was suggested that residents were unaware of how to claim the hardship fund and therefore would end up being fined or put into more debt and criminalised. As a supplementary question, Mr Angel asked why the Councils were asking people on the lowest income, the most vulnerable in society, to pay council tax to cover the Councils funding deficit, caused by a national government? Why were the Councils not asking those with the broadest shoulders to pay more for example, how many landlords of empty households had the Councils demanded to pay full council tax to increase revenue and bring those empty properties back into use?

The Chairman replied that a written response to the question would be provided in the time period permitted.

The following question was received from Jillian Guest, a Worthing resident:-

How is it possible for a Public Consultation that could result in major changes being made to Council Tax Benefit result in just 17 people replying in Adur and 91 replying in Worthing.

The poor response to this Public Consultation has therefore failed to do what is supposed to do - that is Consult with the public.

Could I therefore request that a further consultation process takes place using easy to understand straightforward questions, giving a longer time scale and using better publicity methods before any changes are made to council support.

The Chairman replied:-

That paragraph 5.2 of the report that Joint Strategic Committee would be considering under item 9, detailed the ways in which the consultations were publicised. The Questions in the consultation had been refined following a decision at the Joint Strategic Committee meeting on 12 September 2017 (i.e. for Adur in conjunction with the Leader and for Worthing in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Customer Services).

The Committee would discuss the consultations during consideration of item 9, later on the agenda.

A supplementary question sought reassurance from Members that due consideration would be given to the introduction of a restriction in Adur, or an increase in the restriction in Worthing which would coincide with the introduction of Universal Credit.

The Chairman advised that this would form part of the discussion during consideration of item 9, later on the agenda.

The following question was received from Pauline Fraser, a Worthing resident:-

'Referring to the Draft Homelessness Strategy Agenda Item 11, I note one of the bps in Priority One is:

- *Positive use of enforcement powers to discourage rogue landlords and improve housing conditions.*

In light of this bp, has the council set time-limited targets for:

- a) a reduction in the number of tenants evicted from private rented accommodation and as a consequence becoming homeless*
- b) the upgrading of poorly-maintained properties so that they reach the required standard for habitable accommodation*
- c) monitoring the effectiveness of this strategy and*
- d) when will the council report back on this strategy?'*

The Chairman replied:-

That the legislation currently in place meant that landlords could legally issue Notice to Quit to tenants two months before the end of their assured shorthold tenancy without having to give a reason. Therefore a time-limited target for reducing such evictions could not be set.

The Councils were engaging with private sector landlords to reduce evictions particularly due to rent arrears and no fault evictions, which were the 2 highest reasons for evictions from the private rented sector.

A supplementary question regarding the timescales outlined in the Community Homelessness Strategy 2017-22 Action Plan. In particular, what were the timescales for assessing the effectiveness of the strategy and reporting back on the strategy.

The Chairman replied that a written response to the question would be provided in the time period permitted

A question was received from a Shoreham-by-Sea resident regarding a community charge.

Do recent rises in food prices, rents, energy prices and rising inflation provide the evidence to vote against the implementation of a weekly restriction?

The Chairman replied:-

That this would form part of the discussion during consideration of item 9, later on the agenda.

A supplementary question was asked regarding the ethical conduct of Council Leaders and their moral obligation to help both the poor and the weak.

The Chairman replied that this would form part of the discussion during consideration of item 9, later on the agenda.

The following question was received from Katy Parsonage, a Worthing resident:-

Why has no equality impact assessment / study been carried out on the effects of forcing those on the lowest incomes to pay council tax?

The Chairman replied that a written response to the question would be provided in the time period permitted.

The following supplementary question was asked:-

Is the Council going to start taking seriously their role to conduct equality impact assessments to show that they do actually care about the impacts of the decisions that they make on the people that appointed them?

The Chairman replied that a written response to the question would be provided in the time period permitted.

JSC/067/17-18 Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions

There were no items raised under urgency provisions.

JSC/068/17-18 Mid-year Review of Treasury Management 2017-18, Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital & Resources, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 5.

The report asked Members to note the Treasury Management mid-year performance for Adur and Worthing Councils at the 30 September 2017, as required by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003.

Decision,

That the Joint Strategic Committee noted the report and recommended that Adur and Worthing Councils approve increases in the Prudential Indicator limits for the Operational Boundaries and the Authorised Limits for borrowing, due to the approved strategies for additional expenditure on the purchase of strategic property.

Call In:

There is no call-in for recommendations to Council.

JSC/069/17-18 Sustainable Councils: 5 Year Forecast 2018/19 – 2022/23 and Savings Proposals

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital & Resources, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 6.

The report provided an overview of the continuing success of our Sustainable Councils Financial Strategy, along with the detailed proposals for 2018/19 to deliver a balanced budget.

The report outlined the medium term financial challenge through to 2022/23, and set out performance in the key strategic areas of commercialisation, digital transformation and strategic property investment.

The Committee was informed that the Sustainable Councils Financial Strategy aimed to ensure that the Councils were fully community funded by 2020. The digital programme had delivered £379k in annual savings, the commercial strategy had added £1.5m income

annually to the budget and the Councils prudent strategic property investment approach had added nearly £0.5m of income in the current year.

A forecasting and market analysis exercise was being undertaken, using external experts, to determine the Councils expected income growth over the next 3 to 5 years as well as exploring additional business opportunities.

The Councils financial strategy recognised pressures around rising demand for temporary accommodation, reducing grant income and the impact on income by the major developments coming forward.

Members noted that it had been necessary to find additional savings in 2018/19 which were set out in Appendix 3. This included significant efficiencies which had been driven by the merger of environment and waste management teams as well as a large saving identified as a result of the Councils strategy to move to the cloud.

A Member proposed reducing the savings identified from the Adur Grants fund to £40k as it had never been more important to support the work of the voluntary sector. The proposal was seconded.

Decision:

The Joint Strategic Committee

- i) noted the current 5 year forecast;
- ii) noted the committed growth items as set out in appendix 2;
- iii) approved the proposed savings set out in appendix 3 as amended (Adur Grants savings to reduce to £40k);
- iv) recommended to Council to use the following capital receipts to fund redundancy costs associated with the savings proposals outlined in appendix 3:
 - Adur: £14,000
 - Worthing: £300,000
- v) delegated to the Executive Members for Resources to release the funding when any redundancy proposals which generate savings to the revenue budget were approved.

Call In:

The call-in deadline for decisions will be 5.00pm on 15 December 2017.

There is no call-in for recommendations to Council.

**JSC/070/17-18 Investing in Service Delivery: Capital Investment Programme
2018/19 to 2020/21**

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital & Resources, copies 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.

The report recommended the schemes for inclusion in the overall Capital Investment Programme for the three years 2018/19 - 2020/2021 for Adur District Council, Worthing Borough Council and the Joint Strategic Committee. The report informed Members of the resources available for future capital investment, and updated Members about the financing of the proposed three-year programmes.

A Member welcomed initiatives to increase the supply of affordable housing and sought clarification around the numbers of new affordable homes to be delivered. The target for bringing empty properties back into use was also challenged. It was noted that the Councils were awaiting an announcement from the DCLG in relation to affordable housing and that the target set for empty properties being brought back into use was achievable but the Councils would be hoping to deliver an increased number.

The Committee acknowledged that Officers had linked capital schemes to equality issues in the report including; Affordable Housing Schemes, Disabled Facilities Grants, Home Repair Assistance Grants and the replacement of play area and outdoor fitness equipment, designed to be more accessible and inclusive.

Decision,

The Joint Strategic Committee:-

- (a) considered the three General Fund Capital Investment Programmes for the three-year period 2018/19 to 2020/21 and confirmed the schemes to be included for 2018/19 and 2019/20 as detailed in Appendix 2, 3 and 4;
- (b) noted the approved Adur Housing Renovation Programme for 2018/19 as detailed at Appendix 5;
- (c) agreed the amendments and additions to the reserve lists as detailed in Appendices 6 and 7; and
- (d) recommended the full programmes for approval by the respective Councils on the 14 December 2017 (Adur) and 19 December 2017 (Worthing) as detailed in Appendices 8 and 9.

Call In:

The call-in deadline for this decision will be 5.00pm on 15 December 2017.

There is no call-in for recommendations to Council.

JSC/071/17-18 Business Rates Discretionary Relief

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital & Resources, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 8.

The report provided the results from the public consultation, outlined in Appendix 6, and asked Members to recommend to the respective Full Councils the criteria that should be applied to enable the local discretionary schemes to be implemented in Adur and Worthing.

Members expressed disappointment at the low number of responses received in response to the consultation and their support for option 4.

Decision,

The Joint Strategic Committee

- noted the content of the report;
- agreed that Option 4 (including pubs) should be recommended to the meetings of the Full Councils on 14 and 19 December 2017 in respect of the rules to be applied to the discretionary award schemes for Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council respectively for 2017/18; and
- agreed that the criteria detailed in paragraphs 5.6 and 5.7 of the report should be recommended to the meetings of the Full Councils on 14 and 19 December 2017 in respect of the rules to be applied to the discretionary award schemes for Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council respectively for 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21.

Call In:

There is no call-in for recommendations to Council.

JSC/072/17-18 Council Tax Support Schemes for 2018/19

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital & Resources, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 9.

The report outlined the costs of the 2017/18 Council Tax Support schemes and provided an analysis of the responses that were received to the public consultations which were conducted during October 2017 in respect of options for the schemes for 2018/19.

The Committee was asked to recommend to their respective Full Councils the Council Tax Support Schemes in respect of 2018/19.

In light of an earlier public question regarding empty properties, Members sought guidance around levying 100% Council Tax on empty properties. Officers advised that they were

awaiting guidance following an announcement in the budget and clarified that it was not possible to claim council tax support in respect of a property that wasn't occupied. There was already a 50% premium on properties unoccupied for more than 2 years, in both Adur and Worthing.

A Member queried the proportion of the £80k Discretionary Budget that had already been spent. Officers advised that the Council had committed well over £60k and would provide the exact figure in writing after the meeting.

An Adur Member challenged the suggestion that Adur District Councillors did not consider these types of matters carefully or without due regard to those whom decisions might affect or those who have to pay the bill. It was noted that the Adur Council Tax Support Scheme would cost just over £0.5m, if left as is, in 2018/19.

The Committee considered the low number of responses to the consultation whilst acknowledging that it had been publicised via a number of channels. Members questioned whether the consultation could be sent out with council tax bills or conducted through street surveys. Officers advised that the council tax bills were issued in February which was the wrong time of year to send out the questionnaires.

Members suggested that a JOSC Working Group be established to investigate how to maximise responses to Council consultations. The proposal was seconded.

Decision,

The Joint Strategic Committee:-

- (i) requested that JOSC establish a Working Group to investigate how to maximise responses to Council consultations;
- (ii) recommend to Adur District Council that
 1. the Council Tax Support scheme for Adur District Council in respect of working age customers for 2018/19 should be based upon the scheme for 2017/18 with no restrictions;
 2. no other changes should be made beyond necessary technical amendments required to keep the scheme consistent with the national rules in respect of Housing Benefit;
 3. A further public consultation should be conducted during the summer of 2018 to inform the decision in respect of the scheme to be implemented in respect of 2019/20.
- (iii) Recommend to Worthing Borough Council that:
 1. The Council Tax Support scheme for Worthing Borough Council in respect of working age customers for 2018/19 should be based upon the scheme for 2017/18 with
 - a. the £5.00 weekly restriction retained; and

- b. the discretionary budget to support those in severe financial difficulties retained; and
 - c. no other changes made beyond necessary technical amendments required to keep the scheme consistent with the national rules in respect of Housing Benefit.
2. A further public consultation should be conducted during the summer of 2018 to inform the decision in respect of the scheme to be implemented in respect of 2019/20.

Call In:

There is no call-in for recommendations to Council.

JSC/073/17-18 Adur and Worthing Economic Strategy 2018-2023

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for the Economy, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 10.

The Committee was informed that the Economic Strategy focused on key issues and opportunities, presented under the following three headings:

- The Power of Place
- Prosperity and Productivity
- The Potential of our People

The Strategy included an Action Plan that focused on the following three transformational solutions.

- Superconnected Worthing
- Adur Applied Technologies Centre
- Technology Futures: Skills for Innovation

These ensured that priorities would be addressed in a coherent and mutually-reinforcing way, help to build resilience, create distinctiveness and deliver significant economic impact.

The report requested Member approval of the Economic Strategy 2018-2023 and endorsement of the three transformational solutions recommended in the Action Plan.

The Committee welcomed the strategy, stating that it presented a clear pathway forwards whilst delivering a very strong, clear message. The strategy was ambitious and contained a number of good solutions, such as the provision of gigabit-speed digital infrastructure.

Decision,

The Joint Strategic Committee approved the Adur and Worthing Economic Strategy 2018-2023 and endorsed the three transformational solutions recommended in the Action Plan.

Call In:

The call-in deadline for this decision will be 5.00pm on 15 December 2017.

JSC/074/17-18 Delivering our Housing Strategy - the draft Adur and Worthing Community Homelessness Strategy

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Communities, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 11.

The report highlighted the plans of the Councils and their partners to work collaboratively to tackle an increase in homelessness in Adur and Worthing. The Councils' sought to place customers and communities at the heart of delivering homelessness prevention initiatives, and draw on the expertise within our communities.

Members acknowledged the importance of identifying residents at risk at the earliest opportunity and bringing agencies together to tackle the problem and were requested to recommend the adoption of the Community Homelessness Strategy, to Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils.

The Committee discussed the difficulties around measuring outputs of the strategy identifying a need to focus on measuring the reduction in risk of homelessness rather than measuring a reduction in homelessness itself. It was also noted that there were a number of variables associated with homelessness which were outside of the Councils control.

Decision,

The Joint Strategic Committee recommended the adoption of the Community Homelessness Strategy to both Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council.

Call In:

There is no call-in for recommendations to Council.

JSC/075/17-18 Delivering our Housing Strategy - Discretionary Funding for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Communities, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 12.

The report asked the Joint Strategic Committee to adopt the Interim Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy, which enabled the Council to grant discretionary funding and maximise how the Disabled Facility Grant system was used to help people access adaptations to keep them safe, warm, independent and living well in their homes.

Decision,

The Joint Strategic Committee:-

- (i) approved the draft Interim Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy for implementation as part of the wider West Sussex Partnership;
- (ii) delegated authority to the Executive Members for Customer Service to approve amendments to the policy and the eligible schemes, following evaluation of the partnership project and the operation of the Interim Policy.

Call In:

The call-in deadline for this decision will be 5.00pm on 15 December 2017.

*** At 7.58pm Councillors Angus Dunn, Carson Albury, Brian Boggis, Emma Evans and David Simmons left the meeting prior to consideration of Item 13 in accordance with the Joint Committee Agreement.*

JSC/076/17-18 Delivering High Quality Public Realm in Worthing Town Centre

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for the Economy, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 13.

The report sought approval of the initial design options and materials palette identified in the Options Appraisal Study. In addition, to confirm Worthing Borough Council's preference for the Option 3 designs for Portland Road and South Street (north and south) and that these should form a first phase of public realm works; subject to the outcome of further refinement and consultation on preferred options for each of the eight areas identified.

Members expressed support for the proposals whilst acknowledging the importance of secondary shopping areas.

Decision,

The Joint Strategic Committee:-

- approved the development of the initial design options and materials palette identified in the Options Appraisal Study for Worthing Town Centre Public Realm, attached as Exempt Appendix A;

- confirmed the Council's preference for Option 3 designs for Portland Road and South Street (north and south), and that these form the first phase of works; subject to the outcome of further refinement and consultation on preferred options for each of the eight areas identified;
- authorised Officers to continue to work in partnership with West Sussex County Council to progress options to a detailed design stage and support the preparation of a business case, funding and phase plan, for further consideration and approval at a future meeting of the Joint Strategic Committee.

Call In:

The call-in deadline for this decision will be 5.00pm on 15 December 2017.

JSC/077/17-18 Delivering a New Vision for Worthing Seafront

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for the Economy, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 14.

The report recommended that Members approve the Seafront Investment Plan, which set out a vision and delivery framework to shape future investment on Worthing Seafront.

The plan complemented the proposals in the Worthing Investment Prospectus and the emerging Worthing Town Centre Public Realm Strategy. Together those documents provided a coherent and ambitious blueprint for the regeneration of Worthing Town Centre and Seafront.

Members welcomed the proposals which would be delivered in partnership with West Sussex County Council and developers.

Decision,

The Joint Strategic Committee approved the Worthing Seafront Investment Plan.

Call In:

The call-in deadline for this decision will be 5.00pm on 15 December 2017.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 8.19pm, having commenced at 6.30pm.

Chairman