

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Council held at the  
Town Hall Chapel Road Worthing on**

**20 October 2015**

The Mayor, Councillor Michael Donin  
The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Sean McDonald

Councillor Noel Atkins	Councillor Mary Lermite
Councillor Roy Barraclough	Councillor Heather Mercer
Councillor Keith Bickers	Councillor Nigel Morgan
Councillor Joan Bradley	Councillor Louise Murphy
Councillor Callum Buxton	*Councillor Mark Nolan
Councillor Michael Cloake	Councillor Luke Proudfoot
Councillor Edward Crouch	Councillor Clive Roberts
*Councillor James Doyle	Councillor Bob Smytherman
*Councillor Norah Fisher	Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes
Councillor Diane Guest	Councillor Keith Sunderland
Councillor Alex Harman	Councillor Bryan Turner
Councillor Lionel Harman	Councillor Val Turner
Councillor Joshua High	Councillor Vicki Vaughan
Councillor Paul High	Councillor Vino Vinojan
Councillor Daniel Humphreys	Councillor Vic Walker
Councillor Charles James	Councillor Tom Wye
*Councillor Susan Jelliss	Councillor Paul Yallop
Councillor Kevin Jenkins	

\*=absent

**C/024/15-16 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fisher, Jelliss and Nolan.

**C/025/15-16 Declarations of Interest**

Members were invited to make any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests, the following interests were declared:

Councillors Vic Walker and Ed Crouch as Directors of Worthing Homes - item 9 Leader's Report.

Councillors High, Smythman and Turner as West Sussex County Councillors - item 7D.

**C/026/15-16 Questions and Statements from the public**

The Mayor informed Council that no questions to the Executive had been received from members of the public although he invited those present in the gallery to ask questions or make any statements to Council.

Mr Morris of Lancing questioned the recommendation in item 7B (Review of the salary of the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service). Mr Morris made reference to the

proposed increase in salary of £20K against the 1% increase to other staff. These other staff were subject to restructure and redundancies, reductions in working conditions and the enormous pressure and stress to deliver services. Mr Morris appealed to councillors to look at their own allowances which totalled £300K suggesting that they should not claim, with the money being saved used to reinstate redundant staff.

The Mayor stated that he would respond to Mr Morris within 3 working days.

### **C/027/15-16 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 21 July 2015, be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Mayor.

### **C/028/15-16 Announcements by the Mayor, Leader, Executive Members, Head of Paid Service**

Councillor Val Turner paid tribute to the work and effort put in by both the emergency services and council staff in the aftermath of the Shoreham Air Show Tragedy; from the instigation of the emergency plan to the on going community support.

The Leader echoed the tribute made by Councillor Turner. The Leader announced that the previous day the Director for Digital and Resources had accepted an award for digital innovation; the key acknowledgements of the award was the work the Council was undertaking to shape the future of the Council and Worthing as the place to be.

The Leader announced that he was making a change to the Licensing Committee membership, Councillor Walker was leaving the committee to be replaced by Councillor Lionel Harman. Councillor Jenkins would be the substitute for Councillor Val Turner on the Sussex Police Crime and Panel, replacing Councillor Wye.

Council noted and agreed these substitutions.

The Mayor presented to council the TS Vanguard Mayoral Cadets for 2015- 2016: · Leading Cadet Kieron Ford from Tarring representing the Sea Cadets and Lance Corporal Christopher Emery from Lancing representing the Royal Marines Cadets. The Cadets addressed Council, both were looking forward to being Cadets for the year and the opportunities it offered.

The Mayor spoke about Worthing hosting the Street Velodrome in August, Rowena (female amateur category) and Gavin (male amateur category) were selected to progress to the Super Finals in London. Selection was through qualifying, race performance and public vote. At the finals both Rowena and Gavin had to win through knockout rounds to their respective finals, unfortunately Gavin was eliminated when he crashed out in his semi final although Rowena went to the final and won, being crowned the ASDA Street Velodrome amateur female champion for 2015. Neither Rowena and Gavin are unable to be at the Council meeting. The Council placed on record its congratulations to Rowena on her successful Gold medal in the Street Velodrome finals 2015 and also to Gavin for his efforts in reaching the semi finals.

On the same weekend as the Street Velodrome the Mayor XI v Officers XI Cricket Match had taken place; set a target of 99 by the officers, the councillors were beaten by 6 runs. Together with a race night, £459 was raised for my Mayoral Charities. Chief

Executive, Alex Bailey collected the winner's Shield on behalf of the Officers, whilst Councillor High accepted the wooden spoon. Man of the match was Stewart Williams for his bowling skills.

At a ceremony in Leicester the previous evening, Adur and Worthing Councils were announced winners of the SOCITM Digital Innovation Award 2015. SOCITM is the representative body for IT professionals working across the whole public sector. The category was very tight, with a number of strong contenders, but the panel selected Adur and Worthing as winners, recognising the ground-breaking work in introducing the latest technologies for the benefit of residents, members and staff.

Adur and Worthing received particular attention for creating a new citizen platform that means our services will be rapidly digitised over the next few years. A range of digital products are currently being rolled out for our waste and recycling services, the contact centre is getting state of the art technology, and the digital team are busy building a number of other services; helping the council services get bang up to date and deliver customer satisfaction and savings efficiencies. The Council agreed that this was fantastic recognition of the work of Paul Brewer and his digital team to innovate and provide great services for residents.

The Mayor announced some events to support Monday 2 November – Opening of the Field of Remembrance, Sunday 8 November – Remembrance Service and Parade and Wednesday 11 November – Armistice Day – 2 minute silence . The Mayor's Christmas Carol Service would be on Sunday 6 December at St Andrew's Church Tarring starting at 4pm.

The Head of Paid Service had no announcements

### **C/029/15-16 Items raised under the urgency provisions**

There were no urgent items for Council.

### **C/030/15-16 Recommendations from the Executive and Committees to Council**

Council had before it recommendations from the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Joint Governance Committee and the Joint Strategic Committee, as detailed as item 7 on pages 5 to 11 of the Council agenda.

#### **Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 16 July 2015 Item A Annual Report**

Councillor Barraclough as the Joint Chairman presented the Committee's recommendation item 7A on page 5 of the agenda; it was seconded by Councillor Bickers.

Councillor Barraclough, as Chairman of the Joint Committee was asked to inform Council what he felt was the significant achievement of Scrutiny under the executive system. Councillor Barraclough responded that the work of challenge had increased so that there were 2 additional meetings in each year enabling more time for questioning Executive members, invited others and other work; particularly this year he felt at the interview with Katy Bourne, Sussex Police Crime Commissioner had been enlightening on the impact of the budget cuts and how the Police would be working 'smarter' in the

future as more office based work was undertaken - particularly in the rapidly increasing area of cyber crime.

Other members rose to support scrutiny, and it's role in developing policy, particularly the successful Worthing Age of Transfer and overseeing the Council's work on shared services with Adur District Council.

On a vote the following was noted: For: 31 Against: 0 Abstention: 1

**Resolved** that the Annual report 2014/15 as submitted be approved.

*(The Chief Executive left the meeting prior to the following item, only returning when the vote had been taken and the decision made by Council)*

### **Joint Senior Staff Committee - 17 September 2015**

#### **Item B - Review of the salary of the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service**

Councillor Humphreys of the Committee presented the Committee's recommendation 7B on page 5 of the agenda; the recommendation was seconded by Councillor Proudfoot.

The Leader of the UKIP Group challenged the independence of the report presented to the Committee with the resulting recommendation for a large increase in salary when staff had only received 1% or below. He felt that independent scrutiny with verifiable and accountability would lend more credibility to the recommendation. Further it was necessary to use reserves to meet the recommended increase as there was no budget, he felt there were more worthwhile uses of the reserves, he did not support the motion.

Members rose in support of the motion acknowledging that it would be helpful in future to have an independent author to the report however this did not remove the evidence that the current salary was low compared with other shared service councils, and by having a shared chief executive the cost to Worthing was £52K per year. Comment was made on the achievements of the postholder and also a plea for the Council not to slip back into the past but to move forward for the benefit of the Town.

On a vote the following was noted: For: 30 Against: 1 Abstention: 2

**Resolved** that

- 1) the proposed increase to the salary of the Chief Executive to £115,000 effective from 1st April 2015 be approved by Worthing Borough Council;
- 2) the revised job description for the role of Chief Executive, provided in Appendix A to the report presented to the Joint Committee, be adopted by Worthing Borough Council.

### **Joint Governance Committee - 29 September 2015**

#### **Item Ci - Recording of Council meetings**

Councillor Sparkes, Joint Chairman of the Committee presented the Committee's recommendation 7Ci on page 5 of the agenda; it was seconded by Councillor Bickers.

Councillors were in agreement with the move to digitally record and publish onto the website Council meetings and to extend this to Committee meetings. Members feeling this aided transparency and the opportunity to engage with wider audiences. Some concerns were expressed about the recording of exempt discussions when personal information could be broadcast.

On a vote the following was noted: For: 31 Against: 0 Abstention: 2

**Resolved** that the Council

- 1) noted the outcome of the trial of digital voice recording of the Full Council meetings of Worthing Borough Council and approved the digital recording of Full Council meetings, and uploading of such recordings onto the website, on a permanent basis;
- 2) (related to Adur District Council)
- 3) agreed that Worthing Borough Council's Committee meetings, including Part B Exempt Information Reports, be recorded.

### **Item Cii - Public speaking time at Planning Committees**

Councillor Sparkes, Joint Chairman of the Committee presented the Committee's recommendation 7Cii on page 10 of the agenda; it was seconded by Councillor Smytherman.

Members were fully supportive of the increase in the time limit from 2 minutes to 3 minutes for public speaking within the current rules. It was raised that the letters sent to residents should have this new speaking time included and also advice on what information the Committee could take into consideration - planning matters not public feeling.

On a vote the following was noted: For: 30 Against: 0 Abstention: 2

**Resolved** that the amended planning public speaking rules as recommended to the Council be adopted.

### **Joint Strategic Committee - 8 October 2015**

#### **Item D - Devolution of Highways powers, Licensing of A boards, tables and chairs**

The Leader of the Council presented the Committee's recommendation item 7D on new pages 11 and 12 of the agenda; the recommendation was seconded by Councillor Roberts.

Members were supportive of the acceptance of these devolved powers and the proposed trials which would provide a clear path for visually impaired and improve the street scene by the regulation and/or removal of clutter. Members looked forward to a roll out across the Town at the end of the trial.

On a vote the following was noted: For: 31 Against: 0 Abstention: 2

**Resolved** that Council

- 1) agreed that the final detail of the scheme, including charges, be delegated to the Executive Member for Regeneration in respect of Worthing Borough Council.

### **C/031/15-16 Annual Pay Statement**

Council had before it the Annual Pay Statement as item 8, the report from the Director for Digital and Resources was on pages 12 to 23. The report was proposed by the Leader, seconded by Councillor B Turner.

A member rose to correct the statements at paragraph 4.2, incorrect wages for those under 21 were quoted, and also to point out that the salary for the chief executive quoted in the report was incorrect suggesting that Council accept that changes would be included in the revised document before publication.

**Resolved** that once amendments were made the Pay Policy Statement 2015/16 set out in Appendix 1 to the agenda be approved.

### **C/032/15-16 Leader's Report on decisions taken by the Executive**

The Leader of the Council presented his report on decisions taken by the Executive since the last Ordinary meeting of the Council; which were detailed in Item 8, on pages 17-20 on the agenda.

The Leader indicated he had nothing to add to the decisions taken.

No questions were asked of the Leader or the Executive Members.

### **C/033/15-16 Members Questions under Council Procedure Rule 12**

The Proper Officer had received two questions from Members under CPR 12, from Councillors Sunderland and Murphy.

Councillor Sunderland addressed the Leader:

‘Whilst we applaud the aim of the Prime Minister to make companies pay good wages rather than getting the taxpayer to supplement them, even the Institute for Fiscal Studies suggested that the planned "National Living Wage" would come nowhere near to compensating for the impact of tax credit cuts, and added that free childcare and a cut to social rent would not affect the outcome.

‘According to the Resolution Foundation with the new cuts in Child Tax Credits:

- \* over two-thirds of the families affected would be in-work;

- \* families with two children would lose up £1,690 a year; (140 per month)

- \* almost two-thirds of the cut would be borne by the poorest 30 per cent of households; and

- \* almost none of the cut would fall upon the richest 40 per cent of households.

'In Worthing this will affect 1,494 people. HB-only or HB & CTS claims include an income of either Child or Working Tax Credit (or both)

'107 people who have CTS-only claims include an income of either Child or Working Tax Credit (or both)

'In addition due to the Welfare cap it is estimated that there 449 households potentially at risk of having some or in some cases all of their housing benefit stopped as other benefits received will exceed the £385 per week cap. This represents almost half of the households currently living in family sized accommodation where there is currently some housing benefit paid towards the rent.

'There will be consequently be very real problems created for these people being unable to afford rent, council tax and heating. Causing a great deal of misery, depression and possibly anti-social behaviour.

'This will have a knock on effect for the council in supporting people made homeless and chasing council rents. There will also be costs incurred for managing mental illness and crime.

**'Could I therefore ask that there is a further £60,000 (in addition to the remnant £40,000 left from last year's £80,000 set aside to help with the Council Tax increases for the poorest) be set aside in the upcoming budget to cushion the effects of this round of cuts for mainly working people?'**

'We cannot wait until 2020 when the New Minimum Wage reaches a more reasonable rate. We must do something now for the working poor who do not have saving to tide them over'.

The Leader responded by acknowledging that the subject of the question was close to the speaker's heart. The Leader explained that the Council already offers a range of support to vulnerable residents. The Council administers Discretionary Housing Payments which are awarded to those on Housing Benefit to prevent homelessness, there was the Think Family programme, Council Tax had been frozen and emphasis had been put on regeneration and rejuvenation in the Town to create jobs leading to lower levels of unemployment. It was not possible for the Council to step in everywhere as local government did not have the money. The Council was facing cuts in the Council grant of £.13M, the comprehensive spending review was looming and possible changes to business rates to make the suggested increases in the budget, cuts would have to be made elsewhere - he questioned where these could be made.

Councillor Murphy addressed the Executive Member for Customer Services:

"It was recently reported on the BBC News that there are just over 5000 vacant homes across Sussex (5361 to be exact).

'Given the acute shortage of housing in the South East and elongated waiting times for social housing, can the Cabinet Member for Customer Service Cllr. Dr. Heather Mercer provide clarity on how many vacant properties there are in Worthing and what work is being done through the Council and the Worthing Homes Housing Association to bring these houses back into use?'"

The Executive Member for Customer Services responded by explaining that the Council's performance in respect of reducing the number of long-term empty (LTE) properties is in part based on the CTB1 return made by Council Tax to central government. This indicates the number of residential dwellings that are registered as being empty for longer than 6 months on the first Monday in October. The number of LTE properties in Worthing in 2014 was reported as 387.

The Empty Property Officer, supported by the Private Sector Housing team, works closely with the Council Tax department who supply monthly reports on properties that have been empty for more than six months.

Several hundred owners of LTEs are contacted each year by the Empty Property Office to ensure that properties are brought back into use as quickly as possible through a combination of advice, assistance and enforcement. The Council has a budget which funds a toolkit of options to deal with empty homes, including grants, interest free loans, enforced sales and even demolition of derelict properties to open up land for development.

Recently, Worthing Borough Council provided grants of £5,000 each for two flats within a dilapidated building to provide habitable 1-bed and 2-bed dwellings. This is in addition to other co-funded projects to improve empty properties and the Council retains nomination rights for the grant-assisted accommodation for 5 years, which helps local people in housing need and reduces the pressure on the housing waiting list.

The reduction in LTE also attracts a New Homes Bonus from central government of £1300 per property per year for 5 years (while the scheme lasts). This equates to £68,900 per year or £344,500 over the 5 years.

### **C/034/15-16 Motions on Notice**

Council had before it a Motion on Notice submitted to the Proper Officer under Council Procedure Rule (CPR) 14, a copy had been circulated as item 11 on page 27 of the agenda. The Mayor advised that once proposed and seconded, and in accordance with the CPR 14.5.2 the Motion would be referred to the Joint Governance Committee without discussion and would appear on the agenda for the November meeting. Councillor Wye as proposer of the Motion had the right to address that committee to answer questions and hear the debate.

Councillor Wye addressed Council to propose his Motion, mentioning a previous occasion when as a new councillor he had been caught up in a confidential decision, he disliked 'gagging orders'. In 2014 the Council had accepted a 'gagging' order but he had resigned rather than be subject to it. He did not believe that the Council should be committed to confidentiality agreements.

The Leader did not wish to speak on his seconding of the Motion.

**Resolved** that the Motion on Notice be referred to the next meeting of the Joint Governance Committee in November 2015 where Councillor Wye would be able to attend, answer questions and hear the debate.

The Mayor declared the meeting closed at 8.25 pm, it having commenced at 6.30pm.

Mayor