

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

**Remote meeting via Zoom**

**23 July 2020**

Stephen Chipp (Chairman)  
Joss Loader (Vice Chairman)

**Adur District Council:**

Carol Albury  
Catherine Arnold  
Kevin Boram  
Ann Bridges  
Paul Mansfield  
Debs Stainforth

**Worthing Borough Council:**

Keith Bickers  
Karen Harman  
Margaret Howard  
Charles James  
Richard Nowak  
Jane Sim  
Bob Smytherman  
Carl Walker

\*Absent

**JOSC/10/20-20      Declaration of Interests**

Councillors Kevin Boram and Carol Albury declared an interest as trustees of Impulse Leisure

**JOSC/11/20-20      Substitute Members**

There were no substitutions made

**JOSC/12/20-20      Confirmation of Minutes**

**Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting of the 25 June 2020 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman

**JOSC/13/20-20      Public Question Time**

There were no public questions

**JOSC/14/20-20      Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions**

There were no urgent items

**JOSC/15/20-20      Consideration of any matter referred to the Committee in relation to a call-in of a decision**

There were no call-ins

**JOSC/16/20-20      Joint Leaders' Interview**

The Committee had before it a report attached as item 7, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members, a copy of which is attached to a signed copy of these minutes. The report sets out background information on the Portfolios of the Adur and Worthing Leaders to enable the Committee to consider and question the Leaders on issues within their portfolios and any high-level strategic issues which the Leaders are involved in connected with the work of the Councils and the Adur and Worthing communities. This interview also provides the Committee with the opportunity to discuss with the Leaders how the Councils have been responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Leaders gave a brief introduction on their work to the Committee.

A Member asked the following question: Whilst Worthing Council did a great job in securing emergency accommodation for the homeless and rough sleepers at very short notice at the start of lockdown, and again when the local hotels were unable to continue this, the limited support and monitoring has led to a huge increase in Anti-Social behaviour, in particular in some residential areas. This has resulted in many residents and communities suffering damage to their property and feeling threatened. What measures have been put in place to support these people going forward to avoid further ASB occurring? The Leader stated that he was sorry that some people were experiencing difficulties. He told the committee that all anti social behaviour was not caused by homeless people and all homeless people did not cause anti-social behaviour. The Councils were working with the police to resolve individual issues as they were the body responsible for enforcement. In terms of moving forward the Councils were building up a workforce and the number of places for emergency accommodation.

A Member asked the following question: Platforms for our places sets out the Councils' vision for our town, and has been the guide book for a number of years now, in light of the post covid-19 world we find ourselves facing, how has this vision for our area been adapted, specifically to Platform 1: Prosperous Places, Platform 2: Thriving People and Communities, Platform 3: Tackling Climate Change and Supporting our Natural Environment. Has consideration been given to allowing greater personal spacing for people using retail and social spaces by providing extended outdoor opportunities to trade, reducing traditional motor traffic in our town centres, or encouragement given to the use of electric powered shuttle busses to and from off centre transport hubs? The Leader from Worthing explained that there were a number of linked processes including the cycling and walking action groups and the creation. To some areas formally allocated to vehicles there had been accelerated temporary measures to close these areas off for hospitality businesses. The Councils had long term ambitions with regards to buses including the moving of the depot to a more appropriate location and the introduction of more environmentally friendly vehicles.

A Member asked the following question: The Chief Scientific Officer Sir Patrick Vallance has indicated that a reasonable worst case scenario for a second Covid-19 outbreak this Winter would be 120,000 deaths which would no doubt also be accompanied by a

second significant lock-down. Although the Council has performed magnificently to get through the first outbreak despite staffing and financial pressures, given the Leaders close knowledge of the situation, what operational pressure points do the Leaders feel may emerge from a second more significant and perhaps longer outbreak and what plans do they feel should be put in place now to prepare for such an eventuality? Members were told of work with the Sussex resilience forum and the partnership with West Sussex County Council in dealing with the pandemic. It was reported that should there be a 'second wave' the same situation would exist along with lessons learned from the first lockdown.

A Member asked the following question: The 'And Then' document contains a number of strong strategic place-based activities to think through the next phase of recovery from Covid for the town. I was interested in moves for each platform in the event of a second wave. Cases of Covid 19 are relatively low at the moment, but the BMJ among others have warned that the country must now begin intended preparations for a second wave of coronavirus. Can the leader speak a little about what these strategic moves would look like? The Worthing Leader told the Committee that the Councils' digital work had allowed the Council to be adaptive such as mass working from home and carry on its democratic functions. There had been an increased need for temporary accommodation which the council had been able to fulfill safely and would be able to do so in the future. Digital advancements had meant that large participatory democratic events such as the citizen's assembly would carry on in a remote setting.

A Member asked the following question: 'And Then' points to a repurposing of existing space to provide flexible space for start-ups, small businesses, those needing move on space. In light of some challenges coming our way in continued threat from and fall out from Covid, not least in terms of unemployment, housing and very significant associated issues of wellbeing, can you give a sense of any change in emphasis on how our assets will be used or developed to address community health and wellbeing specifically? We are working with partners to review not only the use of our own assets but also privately owned spaces to provide start up, move on and community space. Each space provides its own opportunities as well as limitations, therefore how the space is used and the type of tenant (even on a temporary basis) is on a case by case basis. Current emphasis is about increasing these types of spaces, working with organisations like Community Works to identify organisations that can add both an economic activity (eg independent retail) whilst promoting a community offer/service (eg volunteering or an information point/raise awareness of a health/wellbeing topic).

A Member asked the following question: As Leader what will you do to ensure smoother communications between Adur and WSCC should a second pandemic spike occur and ensure we are at the table in major decision making? Members were told that the Councils were developing this work with WSCC's Public Health Team. Data is being looked at on a daily basis about the number of cases. In the case of an outbreak, our staff will be notified and asked to support in the event of an outbreak. The approach to this was set out in the new WSCC Local Outbreak Management Plan. From a Leadership point of view members were told that bi-weekly West Sussex Leaders meetings were held where challenges could be faced and that the working relationship had functioned well.

A Member asked the following question: I would like to know the top 3 objectives for our joint working with Greater Brighton Economic Board for this budget year and any challenges you might foresee? Members were told that the investment in public broadband

and wifi infrastructure, a green focused recovery and the challenge of mass unemployment, particularly around the Gatwick area.

A Member asked the following question: Worthing's Mutual Aid networks are a real testament to the communities and neighbourhoods in the town. And Then talks about new approaches to participative and deliberative democracy and how we strengthen democracy across our places. Can you give us a sense of what these look like and how we build on these community connections going forward? Members were told that officers were doing what they could to keep relationships with these groups going.

A Member asked the following question: I understand that, in light of Covid, there will be an expediting of the next phase of the excellent Opening Doors scheme. Can you give us some concrete details on what this will look like? Members were told that there would be a bigger promotion package and a bigger human resource attributed to the programme.

The Leaders were also asked about Impulse Leisure and the location of test and trace facilities.

A Member of the Committee asked if there could be more detail in future about the Greater Brighton Economic Board. The Worthing Leader agreed that this could be provided in some form in the future.

**Resolved:** that the Leaders' interviews be noted

#### **JOSC/17/20-20      Scrutiny Request on Disposal of Council Owned Land and Assets**

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for the Economy, attached as item 8. The report before members responded to the request from the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee to explain the consultation processes undertaken for the disposal of publicly owned Council land and assets following scrutiny a request relating to the disposal of land at Shoreham Beach Green, Shoreham.

The Head of Major Projects and Investment introduced the report to the Committee and explained the required consultation and set out important definitions and criteria for selections relating to disposal.

A Member asked how the 'one public estate' programme worked in conjunction with West Sussex County Council. The idea of the scheme was explained. Members were given an example where the car park area of the town hall was being used as a health hub for the local area.

The Committee asked questions about the disposal of land and how bids for the land were assessed, in particular if maximum value was sought when disposing of land and was market value achieved. Members were told that there were a number of variables that were taken into account when coming to a decision which may not necessarily include price. These could include amongst other things: the plans for the site, the viability of the plans, community benefits of the proposals. Where disposal was made at under market value the benefits of the scheme needed to be demonstrated.

Members asked questions relating to consultation carried out regarding the disposal of land and were told that at the very minimum statutory requirements were met but officers sought to do more than that.

A Member asked how those bidding for disposed land were assessed. Members were told that a number of measures were undertaken which included a track record, funding and ability to deliver.

**Resolved:** that the report be noted

## **JOSC/18/20-20      Financial Performance 2019/20 - Revenue Outturn**

The Committee had a report before it attached as item 9, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members, a copy of which is attached to a signed copy of these minutes. The report before Members outlined the revenue financial monitoring position for the end of the 2019/20 financial year for Joint Strategic Committee, Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils. At the time of publication of this report, the Statements of Accounts were completed and with the audit scheduled to commence on 4th August 2020. Any adjustments that emerge as the audit proceeds will be reported to members later in the year

A Member asked the following question: The outturn report highlighted an £87,000 shortfall in expected income for Worthing crematorium. As she will be aware this comes at a time when we have experienced increased mortality due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a BBC report that Worthing has the highest cremation fees in the UK, and a major Competition & Markets Authority investigation into the high cost of funeral services in the UK which is due to report in 2021. The report on the impact of Covid-19 (Agenda Item 10) comments (page 72 of the Public reports pack) "Further work regarding the position of the crematorium will be undertaken over the next months". Would the CFO please provide a verbal update on the financial performance of Bereavement Services, including the crematorium, in the current financial year to date and indicate, in the light of a possible second Covid-19 outbreak this Winter twice the size of the first one whether she has cause for concern regarding any financial aspects of the cremation service or its attendant pricing model? Members were told that the Coronavirus act limited the services that could be delivered by the bereavement services to funeral only services - consequently during this time we have experienced a fall off in memorial income as we were unable to offer these types of service (£100k shortfall). However, the service did see an increase in demand for funeral services, particularly for cremation only services in the early part of the financial year, undertaking cremations on behalf of other Crematoriums where there were significant service pressures. The additional provision was managed by staff volunteering to work at the crematorium over the weekend from across the organisation, although overtime was paid to these volunteers. Overall in the first quarter of the year, Worthing Borough Council had an overall upswing in the amount of income of £16k, although against this the costs of overtime and other associated additional costs (utilities, supplies and services) needs to be offset. Consequently there has been no net gain from the emergency. The prices are regularly reviewed by the crematorium manager to ensure that the services remain competitive.

A Member asked the following question: Please explain what MRP is and why there was a re profiling and the big difference between the figures? Members were told that the Minimum Revenue Provision is a statutory set aside from the revenue budget to provide resources to repay debt. The calculation is based on the actual debt required to finance

the capital programme and the main change from the budget to the actual in any given year will be due to the spend on the capital programme in the previous financial year - in this case 2018/19. There are two potential reasons why the MRP is different from the budget: Capital expenditure is reprofiled to a future year, Changes in the financing plans due to additional grants and capital receipts. In 2018/19 several large schemes were reprofiled to 2019/20 which reduced the Council's need to borrow - and the need to set aside resources for the repayment of debt.

A Member asked the following question: Please can you explain why no underspend was projected in Q3 and then we actually had a £68k underspend? Members were told that as a result of the LGA peer review, inflation provisions were held centrally and released only when the pressure materialises. Finance had been over cautious about reporting the potential underspend in 2019/20.

A Member sited the cost of £383k for agency staff in Waste and Cleansing and was told that agency staff were employed to cover sickness and leave and explained the impact of Covid and self isolation on those figures.

A Member asked for Housing Revenue Account projections going forward. Members were told that it was in deficit and would be so in the future, particularly due to a necessary drop in debt collection and a rise in the cost of maintenance.

A Member asked the following question: Were the unbudgeted extra bin costs over what you had set aside and do you see this continuing demand in 20/21? Members were told that the 2019/20 saw the roll out of alternative weekly collection. The Council experienced an upswing in the demand for larger bins as a result of the service change. However, changes of this type are unusual and so we would not expect to see this level of demand continue on for a significant period of time.

Resolved: That the report be noted

**JOSC/19/20-20      Impact of Covid 19 on the Council's finances - Update on current financial performance and developing a revenue budget for 2012/22**

The Committee had a report before it attached as item 10, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members, a copy of which is attached to a signed copy of these minutes. The report before members updated members on the impact of the pandemic on the Council's budgets in the current financial year briefed members on the possible impact on future years of the issues identified and to propose a budget strategy for the development of the 2021/22 budgets.

The Head of Finance was at the meeting to present the report and recommendations

A Member asked the following question: If we do enter a second wave of Covid in the winter, with a possible second lockdown, what will be the specific key financial challenges of a second-wave be to the Council finances? Members were told that it was difficult to answer as much would depend on the actions taken by government and the effectiveness of the track and trace programme - however it could be seen from the first lockdown that there would be significant impacts on car parking income and income streams from local businesses (Trade Waste). However, the Government has now

committed to funding 75p in the £ of any losses from fees and charges so to a certain extent the financial risk will be mitigated by government funding for lost income.

A Member asked the following question: The report talks of clear focus on driving efficiency. Is it time to have a good review on outsourced services to see if they are fit for purpose and whether we could run our own and sell out to other business and generate income back into the Council? Members were told that the Councils had very few outsourced services - most services are run in-house (waste, street sweeping, grounds maintenance...). There were some smaller services outsourced, internal audit for example, where due to the size of the organisation, it is not possible to attract the full range of audit expertise needed within a small cohort of staff (e.g IT, contracts ...) and so contracting out enables the Councils to access the full range of audit services needed.

A Member asked the following question: The Corporate Landlord Model is a wide programme of improvements to how the Council manage, invest and operate in our properties. which is proposed for managing our property estate has recommended £125,000 is released to help plan a disposals programme and appraisal of investments and sites. Can we be advised what this money will be used for? Is it to fund staff or for a consultant or to pay for appraisals? Members were told that the sum of £125,000 will be used to pay for a mixture additional staffing resource within the estates team as well as costs incurred in proceeding with disposals. These other costs are likely to include, agency or auctioneer fees, advertising costs, as well as costs which may add value to properties in advance of disposal for example planning advice and consents, architectural feasibility studies, refurbishment or enabling works to drive value from the estate, in order to meet best consideration from the sale of the councils' assets.

A Member asked the following question: The report clearly outlines the longer term impact of Covid in the medium term in a number of areas, such as council tax support, commercial income and commercial property. Is it possible at this stage to get a sense of the combined financial impact of the long term financial costs of the first Covid period combined with any potential emergency costs coming from a second phase? The committee was told that This was Very difficult to know at this time, however the Government had committed to funding the costs of the emergency and have now guaranteed a level of support for lost income.

A Member asked the following question: Item 5 - page 71 Emergency spend - With many redundancies announced do we feel that this service may be needed again soon or have the newly formed foodbanks/community groups fulfilled this need? The covid-19 community response remains in operation, albeit at a scaled back version whilst demand has been low during the release of the lock down. Emergency food provisions were stopped - as planned - after 12 weeks, and the councils were now working with food banks and food providers and directing all referrals to them. The Councils plans were not to reopen emergency food provisions, but to continue to work with the newly formed food partnership. New funding had been announced for WSCC for support from August for an additional 12 weeks and there was work undertaken to determine any additional support that might be required for our communities.

A Member asked the following question: Where can Councillors view the list of assets owned by the council? Members were told that the information could be found on the Councils' website.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted

**JOSC/20/20-20      JOSC Working Group on the review of the Adur & Worthing Refuse and Recycling collection service - Post September 2019**

The Committee had a report before it attached as item 11, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members, a copy of which is attached to a signed copy of these minutes. The report before members set out the recommendations from the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) Working Group which was created as part of the JOSC Work Programme to review the implementation of the Adur and Worthing new alternate weekly refuse and recycling collection service.

A Member of the working group set out the report before members and commended the recommendations for approval.

The Committee discussed the report before it and debated the information and methodology that was used by the working group. A Member opined that there needed to be more public voices in the report and asked that this be done prior to a report being submitted to the Joint Strategic Committee. On a vote the recommendation was not carried. Members discussed reconvening the working group to discuss appropriate timelines for completion of recommendations and the Chairman indicated that this was more appropriate to discuss under the work programme item.

On a vote members approved the recommendations of the report

**Resolved:** That in consideration of the report and recommendations from the Refuse and Recycling Working Group the JOSC refer the recommendations to the Joint Strategic Committee (JSC) for consideration in due course.

**JOSC/21/20-20      Joint Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2020/21**

The Committee had a report before it attached as item 11, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members, a copy of which is attached to a signed copy of these minutes.

Members discussed a proposal to reconvene the Working group on recycling and it was agreed not to take the matter forward.

The Committee discussed a request in relation to fox control. The Chairs recommended that the matter not be added but that the issue be sent to environmental services.

Resolved: that the report be noted

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 9.30 pm, it having commenced at 6.30 pm

**Chairman**