

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

Remote Meeting via Zoom

18 March 2021

Councillor Keith Bickers (Chairman)
Councillor Karen Harman (Vice-Chairman)

Adur District Council:

Stephen Chipp
Joss Loader
Carol Albury
Catherine Arnold
Ann Bridges
Brian Coomber
Paul Mansfield
Debs Stainforth

Worthing Borough Council:

Margaret Howard
Charles James
Richard Nowak
Jane Sim
Bob Smytherman
Carl Walker

JOSC/66/20-21 Declaration of Interests

There were no declaration of interests made

JOSC/67/20-21 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members

JOSC/68/20-21 Confirmation of Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the 28 January be approved as the correct record

JOSC/69/20-21 Public Question Time

A Member of the public asked the following question: *Worthing's first mental health/friendship seating bench cluster in West Park, Worthing, was looking distinctly possible, especially after Dr Catherine Howe recently gave her approval, subject to a "light touch" consultation. Following Councillor Val Turner's enthusiasm for such projects in October, despite lacking any real idea or plan as to its workings, but with the caveat of it being unlikely that there was Borough Council funding available for it, this project was placed onto the West Sussex County Council's crowdfunding platform, Spacehive, in order to access the Community Initiative Fund via the Worthing Council Local Committee and leverage in funding in that manner, as is perfectly normal practice. Given that this project was largely dependent on this grant, it is now likely to fail, at best it has been severely undermined by these actions. Is Councillor Turner in agreement with the narrative around this rejection, that this is not something that WSCC should fund and that*

it is a Borough Council funding responsibility? (Despite this being a break with previous convention and putting Worthing CLC out of step with the other CLCs). Will Councillor Turner now, as a matter of urgency, given the funding window for this project closes in a month, arrange a meeting with the Director of Communities, Dr Catherine Howe, and request that Worthing Borough Council now fund the remainder of this project. Would Councillor Turner now agree to formulate a consistent message about the funding of projects that are not a statutory responsibility of the Borough Council, but which are capable of being funded by the Borough Council - and is she in agreement with her colleagues, that this is a Borough funding responsibility? The Executive Member for Wellbeing told members that the Council continued to be supportive of the idea of friendly benches but want to make sure that they were placed where they have broad community support plus the community networks needed to support the befriending aspect of the bench. The Director for Communities had been in touch to discuss the consultation process with respect to West Park which would be designed with stakeholders and the consultation would be key to determining these benches, before any questions about resources can be considered. The councils' position with respect to funding of projects is that it was sought to support community activity where the Council could and in line with strategic objectives. The funding decision was a West Sussex decision and the Council was unable to comment on that matter.

JOSC/70/20-21 Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items

JOSC/71/20-21 Consideration of any matter referred to the Committee in relation to a call-in of a decision

There were no call-ins

JOSC/72/20-21 Delivering 'Platforms for our Places: Going Further' - Progress report July to December 2020

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Communities, a copy of which had been sent to all members, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 7. The Chief Executive introduced the report and gave the committee information relating to the progress of Platforms for our Places.

A Member asked the following question: *You mention the resilience of public systems on page 10 (Paragraph 5.2). In what ways have the extraordinary nature of the last 12 months highlighted areas of strong and weak resilience in our operational delivery to residents?* The Chief Executive told members that Examples of strong resilience during this period include our speedy and responsive work with individuals and communities where we have coordinated and supported volunteering, community organising, running a food depot and food drops and providing support for vulnerable people. We have also for example maintained waste and recycling collections and achieved a 5 percentage point increase in recycling, equal to a 17% increase in recycling levels. Our digital team was able to respond at speed enabling staff to work effectively from home, to maintain democratic decision making and to create digital platforms for our residents and business to access support, advice and grant support. With regard to sustainability and economic development we have taken opportunities to move further and faster in many areas. For example we have been able to progress development at a number of key sites that will support future economic recovery and in many cases, provide much needed housing,

including Lancing Police Station, Teville Gate, Union Place and New Monks Farm. We established our successful Sustainability Assembly digitally and have progressed key projects such as the purchase of New Salts Farm. A key challenge during this period has been the resources available to both keep services running and respond to new service demands created by the pandemic. Our digital resilience in the area has made all the difference, enabling us to work differently and so release resources for these new areas of work. Our approach to working with communities has been very successful but has highlighted some gaps in this area. We are in response developing an asset based approach to our work going forward and seeking to support and strengthen key areas, including food resilience and our engagement with marginalised communities.

A Member asked the following question: *Page 11 Paragraph 6.2 - we have provided strong leadership (jointly with others) - can you provide an update on your work with Greater Brighton Economic Board please?* Adur & Worthing Councils continue to be active partners of the Greater Brighton Economic Board and, currently, are chairing the Board through Cllr Dan Humphreys (WBC). The Board have had a number of successes in the last 12 months, despite the pandemic, this includes the approval of Energy and Water Plans for the region, the continued delivery of the digital / fibre infrastructure and new work strands around inward investment and establishing an innovation ecosystem. We have also actively worked with Greater Brighton in the creation of 10 city region pledges to help tackle the climate change crisis. In using this combined authority, lobbying power, expertise and knowledge Adur and Worthing, through Greater Brighton, is progressing work on a range of environmental issues chiefly concerning water and energy conservation. Finally, the Board has also actively engaged with the Coast to Capital LEP in terms of positioning the region for future investment. All elements will directly contribute to Adur and Worthing.

A Member asked the following question: *What incentives are there to encourage landlords to sell or develop commercial properties that have empty floors above them and convert the space to much needed housing. Would the Council consider purchasing them to undertake the conversion of the upper floors to housing?* Members were told that opportunities to develop housing provision above commercial premises is part of Adur and Worthing's approach to increasing housing supply. The Council has for example had active discussions with two landlords with commercial properties that have empty floors above them for the purpose of creating more affordable residential homes (Beals and Poundland sites). The location and suitability of the property is important especially when seeking to develop such properties for residential accommodation. The option exists to let these properties as permanent homes through the Opening Doors Scheme or use them as temporary accommodation. The Council has bought sites on Rowlands Road, a former care home and Downsview, a former pub in West Worthing and will consider other sites if they are suitable.

A Member asked the following question: *Paragraph 7.6 on page 14 notes that 'the Council has taken the opportunity to show leadership and drive regeneration on the site forward (about Teville Gate) after 'development has been stalled for decades'. Why has this decision been taken now and what number of residents on our waiting list are likely to benefit?* Several years ago the Council went through a competitive process to secure funding from Coast to Capital LEP to make the site 'development ready'. You will recall that this involved a considerable investment to secure the demolition of the former car park to prompt the landowner to formalise plans for development. Planning permission was secured last year, but when the landowner indicated they may not be able to bring these to fruition, the Council stepped in to form a joint venture with a registered partner

able to deliver affordable homes. This imaginative approach involves the Council underwriting an element of risk on the sale of market homes to ensure that even more affordable homes are provided, including a proportion for residents on our waiting lists. The scheme itself and the exact number of new homes and the mix of tenures will be prepared over the coming months.

A Member asked the following question: *Page 13 Prosperous places: Paragraph 7.2 - you state you are supporting micro start ups, can you give examples where in Adur please?* The Small Business Growth Grant has been running for the last 12 months and the Council have supported over 30 businesses to start and grow. Further to this, the Council have supported the recruitment of 8 new apprentices in Adur. Examples included 'The Distillery', 'Forgotten Cuts' and 'Cloth Control'.

A Member asked the following question: *Paragraph 7.3 - Page 13 - The Kickstart scheme offers valuable work experience to young people yet many smaller businesses cannot offer this opportunity because they do not fit the criteria. Are there any plans to expand the Kickstart programme so smaller businesses can offer the same opportunity to our young people?* Members were told that kickstart is indeed invaluable for those under 25 years old at risk of long term unemployment. At the start of the scheme, a business needed to be creating more than 29 placements to apply for access for this funding (or go through a 'gateway' employer) however, this requirement has now been removed so now any business can submit an application directly to DWP. There are several gateway organisations with sufficient capacity to support businesses if they do not wish to apply by themselves - these include Chichester College and the Sussex Chamber of Commerce. Adur & Worthing Councils are creating 45 initial kickstart placements - our first placement will be starting on 29 March 2021. We know that a thorough support plan and robust training is required for these posts to result in the young people moving onto further employment, training or education after their time with us and so are focusing on the support required for these placements. If in time we have the capacity to provide the level of support required to our own placements and the wider business community, we will open up as a gateway organisation to other organisations in Adur and Worthing. However, given that there are other gateway organisations operating well in our area, we are not expanding our programme at this moment in time.

A Member asked the following question: *In Paragraph 7.26, page 19 'Time for Worthing' and 'Find your balance' are mentioned as ways to draw inward investment. How are these schemes likely to draw investment in, how will they be evaluated and what impact are they estimated to have on developing Worthing Town Centre?* Time for Worthing (T4W) has been established to accommodate and showcase opportunities around Invest, Discover and Live. The Time for Worthing Management Group, supported by the Council and using independent advice on domestic and foreign investment approaches has recently finalised an Inward Investment Report (in February 2021) that provides a framework for investment and guides the Council in terms of creating sector clusters, thus strengthening Worthing's economy, including the town centre. The Time for Worthing website will be updated in the Spring to reflect this approach to inward investment. Value propositions will be developed around priority sector clusters, notably Creative and Med Tech Industries, in readiness to actively move into the inward investment market. The Find Your Balance campaign looked to capitalise on the growing trend of businesses / people relocating out of the cities (notably London) as a result of the pandemic and new ways of remote working. Worthing needs to be positioned in this conversation, whilst the town has been referenced in a number of regional and national

articles about this 'quality of life' experience, notably the Guardian in summer 2020. A number of leads have already been established as a result of the campaign.

A Member asked the following question: *Pages 13 - 14 Paragraphs 7.4-7.7 - Regeneration is so Worthing focused, Paragraph 7.8 notes housing only within Adur. The retailers in Adur are crying out for a vision for our town centres, when will Adur benefit from the advice of LCR? We are pursuing a regeneration agenda with a focus on our places in both Adur & Worthing and this is well illustrated in our quarterly magazine Building AW. The vibrancy of the retail offer in Southwick illustrates the potential out there among our local retailers and the support from residents to a strong offer. We will be working closely with retailers in Lancing to improve North Road and strengthen the connections with the Business Park. Our 'And Then' commitments highlight the changing nature of our own and village centres and signal the opportunity we have to acquire land and buildings to assist. You will be aware that the purchase of the former Lancing Police station has now been completed and we look forward to bringing a development forward there to contribute to the regeneration of Lancing.*

A Member asked the following question: *What plans are in place should the developers not come forward to help develop land in areas of Worthing?* Members were told that the Council has developed the capability to work with a range of partners to ensure that appropriate development will come forward. Working in partnership with government agencies to secure public investment where necessary will continue to be helpful as has proven to be the case with Teville Gate and Union Place. Equally important will be the need to send a clear message to private sectors investors about the quality of our places and the importance we attach to stewarding them well. This will help not just in securing investment in new homes, but also in growing the employment opportunities that support our economic well being.

The Chief Executive was questioned further on Electric Charging Points and Adur Homes

JOSC/73/20-21 Interview with the Executive Members for Health and Wellbeing

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Communities, a copy of which had been sent to all members, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 8. The report sets out background information on the Portfolios of the Adur and Worthing Executive Members for Health and Wellbeing to enable the Committee to consider and question the Executive Members on issues within their portfolios and any other issues which the Executive Members are involved in connected with the work of the Councils and the Adur and worthing communities.

The Executive Members for Health and Wellbeing were present to answer questions

A Member asked the following question: *Q1. What has it been like for you being Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing during the pandemic?* The Executive Member explained that it had been an eye opening experience and was humbled by the response by staff to challenges posed by the pandemic.

A Member asked the following question: *Over your last year in the role what would you consider the key strengths and weaknesses of our Councils' health and wellbeing work?* The Executive Member told the committee that there had been a strong community response to the pandemic and staff had worked well to engage and support this. More work needed to be done with regards to Social Inequality.

A Member asked the following question: *What progress has been made implementing a "Chat Bench" scheme for Worthing to tackle Social Isolation?* Members were told that the Councils continued to be supportive of the idea of friendly benches but wanted to make sure that they are placed where they have broad community support plus the community networks needed to support the befriending aspect of the bench.

A Member asked the following question: *Our current public health strategy (Start Well, Live Well, Age Well) expires this year. The current plan articulates 5 strong priority areas, including good mental wellbeing and emotional resilience (at all life stages). Can the member give us an early outline of the priorities of the next strategy and how tackling health inequalities and post-covid recovery may feature in this?* Members were told that the focus would be on good housing, good work and good health and wellbeing. Prevention and early intervention was also important.

A Member asked the following question: *With the consultation out on WSCC family centres and that consultation making it clear the centres of Lancing, Fishersgate, Sompting and Worthing Wave are to close, how do you see this impacting your designated issues of children and young people and family intervention (when so many family liaison meetings take place in these centres).* Members were told that there were a number of buildings that those services and meetings could be delivered from

A Member asked the following question: *What are your 3 priorities in your role?* Members were told that these were opening up communities safely following the pandemic, reviewing the outcome of the pandemic on women and minorities. The Executive Member told the Committee that he would focus on prevention and early intervention.

A Member asked a question about staff wellbeing following the pandemic and was told that the matter was being discussed with the Director for Communities.

JOSC/74/20-21 Crime and Disorder Scrutiny - Adur & Worthing Safer Communities Partnership

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Communities, a copy of which was circulated to all members, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 9. The report provided the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) with information on the work of the Adur & Worthing Safer Communities Partnership (A&WSCP) in order for JOSC to scrutinise the work of the A&WSCP and interview the Executive Members for Health and Wellbeing who represent the Councils on the Partnership.

The Executive Members were present to answer questions from the Committee.

A Member asked what plans there were to tackle anti-social driving and was told that this was an issue for safer roads Sussex although there were such methods as building good relationships with young people and travel plans to reduce traffic.

The Committee discussed street drinking and were told by the Executive Member that not all street drinkers were homeless, great work had been achieved by outreach workers

in this regard. During the pandemic an opportunity had been taken to help some people address their drinking habits although this was a complex issue.

The Committee questioned the Exec Members further on bikeability, anti-social behaviour and the role of the Police and Joint Area Action Groups.

JOSC/75/20-21 A review of the work of the West Sussex Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee during 2020/21 - Report from Councillors Loader and Harman

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Communities, a copy of which had been distributed to all members, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 10. The report before members report provides the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) with background information on the West Sussex Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC) and a summary of the recent work undertaken by the HASC. This information will enable JOSC to question the Councils' representatives on the HASC, Councillors Joss Loader (Adur) and Karen Harman (Worthing), about the work of the HASC and issues affecting Adur and Worthing.

A Member asked the following question: *Have the HASC investigated the post code lottery where Adur & Worthing are excluded from the Commissioning arrangements for Admiral Nurses in West Sussex?* Members were told that Admiral nurses covered all of Sussex and came from different areas

A Member asked the following question: *Can an explanation be given of the " rationale for the continuation of mixed sex wards ", bearing in mind that the Government made a pledge in 2011 to abolish all mixed sex N.H.S. hospital accommodation in England.* Members were told that there was a difference between single sex wards and single sex dormitories.

JOSC/76/20-21 Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2021/22

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.

The report before members outlined progress in implementing the work contained in the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) Work Programme for 2020/21. The report also contains a draft JOSC Work Programme for 2021/22 for consideration.

The Committee discussed the report and programme. Suggestions were made for possible future reviews and it was agreed that these be considered in the new municipal year using the formal application procedure

Resolved:

- that the progress in delivering the JOSC Work Programme for 2020/21 be noted;
- that the JOSC Work Programme for 2021/22 be approved;

- that the proposed JOSC Work Programme for 2021/22 be reported to the Council meetings in April 2021 for approval.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 9.40 pm, it having commenced at 6.00 pm

Chairman