

Minutes of a meeting of the
Worthing Council
14 July 2020
at 6.30 pm

Councillor Lionel Harman (Chairman)
Councillor Sean McDonald (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Hazel Thorpe	Councillor Richard Mulholland
Councillor Noel Atkins	Councillor Louise Murphy
Councillor Paul Baker	Councillor Richard Nowak
Councillor Roy Barraclough	Councillor Helen Silman
Councillor Mike Barrett	Councillor Jane Sim
Councillor Keith Bickers	Councillor Dawn Smith
Councillor Ferdousi Henna Chowdhury	Councillor Sally Smith
Councillor Rebecca Cooper	Councillor Robert Smytherman
Councillor Edward Crouch	Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes
Councillor Jim Deen	Councillor Val Turner
Councillor Karen Harman	Councillor Nicola Waight
Councillor Paul High	Councillor Steve Waight
Councillor Margaret Howard	Councillor Paul Westover
Councillor Daniel Humphreys	Councillor Carl Walker
Councillor Charles James	Councillor Steve Wills
Councillor Kevin Jenkins	Councillor Tim Wills
Councillor Martin McCabe	Councillor Mark Withers
Councillor Dr Heather Mercer	

C/18/20-21 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence received.

C/19/20-21 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Louise Murphy declared a personal interest as a non-Executive Director of Worthing Homes.

Councillor Noel Atkins declared a personal interest as an elected member of West Sussex County Council.

Councillor Paul High declared an interest in item 9 as he was appointed to the Worthing Public Realm Board and the Community Infrastructure Levy Board as a West Sussex County Councillor.

C/20/20-21 Confirmation of Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2020 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Mayor.

C/21/20-21 Questions from the Public

The following question had been received in advance of the meeting.

Mr Ian Davey, a resident of Worthing asked;

At the June Joint Strategic Committee meeting I asked if the council would consider reallocating road space to create outdoor seating areas to help small independent cafes and restaurants reopen with safe social distancing. Since then Montague Street (west) has been subject to a partial road closure. Could Cllr Humphreys please say what the council's intentions are for the closed off section, and that immediately to the west, to help people and the numerous cafes, bars and restaurants take advantage of the reductions in traffic.

The Leader of Worthing Borough Council replied that Following the Joint Strategic Committee in June, and in response to the easing of lockdown, the Councils undertook an audit of Worthing town centre to identify key pinch points (or those areas where social distancing couldn't be maintained). Since then a number of roads, including Montague Street West, had been closed to support social distancing but equally to support business.

In the last couple of weeks, the Government had announced the new Pavement Licencing scheme which allowed retailers, specifically cafes, restaurants and bars, to safely trade outside. The Council was actively encouraging businesses to make contact via the Licencing team to express an interest in gaining a licence. The final legislation would confirm these licences on 20th July but the Council wished to be proactive and were asking businesses to highlight their interest ahead of time. We hope a number of businesses located in Montague Street West will take advantage of this opportunity and trade outside for the summer period.

Mr Davey asked a supplementary question regarding the messaging displayed on signage blocking entry to areas within the town centre, requesting that it be made clearer to convey that businesses were open for business. In addition, he also suggested the replacement of barriers with planters and no motor vehicle entry signs.

The Leader of Worthing Borough Council responded by highlighting the Council's work on the Public Realm Scheme, covered in the Leaders Report later on the agenda, which would improve the look and feel of the town centre. The Leader advised that the Council was looking to expedite some of the expenditure to fund a number of long term initiatives, including some of those highlighted by the questioner.

C/22/20-21 Petition submitted to Worthing Borough Council - Wilding Worthing

A petition was received by the proper officer on the 21st June 2020 from Ms Emma Cameron which contained 1029 signatures.

Ms Cameron attended the meeting and presented her petition which proposed the designation of a number of green areas around Worthing for rewilding.

The Leader of the Council proposed the following motion in response to the petition which was seconded by Councillor Kevin Jenkins;

'The Council welcomes the petition. We reaffirm our commitment to map Council owned land for opportunities for community growing projects for rewilding and tree planting and to report on progress in December, as part of the Chief Executive's six monthly progress update report to both the Joint Strategic Committee and Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee'.

An amendment to the Leader's motion was proposed by Councillor Helen Silman, seconded by Councillor Sally Smith, but not supported by Council.

Members thanked Ms Cameron for presenting her petition, advising that progress was being made and that the Council was committed to doing this and increasing biodiversity.

The Leader's proposed response to the petition was approved unanimously.

Resolved

That Worthing Borough Council welcomed the petition, reaffirming its commitment to map Council owned land for opportunities for community growing projects for rewilding and tree planting and to report on progress in December, as part of the Chief Executive's six monthly progress update report to both the Joint Strategic Committee and Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee'.

C/23/20-21 Announcements by the Mayor, Leader of the Council, Executive Members or the Head of Paid Service

The Mayor informed the Council of the volunteering work that he had been doing throughout the lockdown period, whilst acknowledging the great work of local charities and volunteers.

He also wished to place on record his thanks to the Council Staff and Volunteers who had helped to clean the beach following a surge of visitors to the Town after the lifting of Covid 19 restrictions.

The Mayor highlighted some of the events he had attended, in person and virtually, since the last Council meeting, advising that his programme of charity events would hopefully commence in October with the rearranged inaugural dinner.

The Leader of the Council wished to reiterate the thanks to the community, fellow Councillors and Council Staff for all of their work. The case had been made to the government that the Council would need assistance. The Leader welcomed the reassurances provided in relation to funding but acknowledged that further clarity was required to enable the Council to plan effectively for 2021/22 and beyond.

There were also announcements from the Executive Members for Customer Services, Digital & Environmental Services and Regeneration. The Executive Members wished to place on record their thanks to staff and volunteers for all of the work and paid special tribute to Turning Tides who had been awarded the Queen's Award. The Executive

Member for Customer Services wished to underline Turning Tide's incredible work with the homeless during lockdown and congratulated the team.

C/24/20-21 Items raised under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items.

C/25/20-21 Recommendations from the Executive and Committees to Council

Council had, before it, recommendations from the Joint Strategic Committee.

Extracts of these minutes had been circulated as items 8A(i), 8B(i) & (ii) and 8C(i) to (iv).

Item 8A(i) Joint Strategic Committee - 9 June 2020

Chief Executive's use of Urgency Powers during the Covid-19 Global Pandemic

The Leader of the Council presented the recommendation from the Joint Strategic Committee meeting held on 9 June 2020.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes.

The substantive motion was supported on a vote:

For 35, Against 0, Abstentions 2

Resolved

That the Council noted and endorsed the decision to increase the Treasury Management limits.

Item 8B(i) Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 25 June 2020

Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2020/21

The Chairman of the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee presented a recommendation from the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 25 June 2020.

The proposal was seconded by Cllr Clive Walker.

A Member highlighted the quality of debate during meetings of the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee over the past year.

On a vote: For 34, Against 0, Abstentions 3

Resolved

That the Council approved the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2020/21, as amended.

Item 8B(ii) Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 25 June 2020

Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2019/20

The Chairman of the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee presented a recommendation from the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 25 June 2020.

The proposal was seconded by Cllr Richard Nowak.

On a vote: For 35, Against 0, Abstentions 2

Resolved

That Worthing Borough Council approved the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for 2019/20.

Item 8C(i) Joint Strategic Committee - 7 July 2020

Financial Performance 2019/20 - Revenue Outturn

The Leader of the Council presented the recommendation from the Joint Strategic Committee meeting held on 7 July 2020.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes.

During debate on the item, Members considered the level of return from the investment portfolio, the loss of income from Car Parks and the risks associated with commercial investments.

The substantive motion was supported on a vote:

For 24, Against 10, Abstentions 3

Resolved

That the Council

(a) noted the overall final outturn for 2019/20;

(b) approved the net appropriations to General Fund Reserves in the year as detailed in paragraph 6.2 totalling: Adur District Council £1,072,315, **Worthing Borough Council £905,486;**

(c) agreed the net carry over of revenue budget to 2020/21 funded from reserves as detailed in appendix 6: Adur District Council £80,700, **Worthing Borough Council £157,500.**

Item 8C(ii) Joint Strategic Committee - 7 July 2020

Financial Performance 2019/20 - Capital and Projects Outturn

The Leader of the Council presented the recommendation from the Joint Strategic Committee meeting held on 7 July 2020.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes.

Members debated the status of major projects, including the timescales for their completion and their importance in relation to the delivery of housing for the town.

The substantive motion was supported on a vote:

For 23, Against 12, Abstentions 2

Resolved

That the Council

noted the overall capital final outturn for 2019/20;

(b) agreed the net carry over of General Fund Capital underspends for Worthing Borough Council as detailed in paragraph 5.10;

(c) approved the financing of the Worthing Borough Council 2019/20 Capital Investment Programme, including the use of capital receipts as set out in paragraphs 5.7 and 5.8;

(d) approved the carry forward of Council resources underspends to fund budget pressures as detailed in paragraph 4.2.2. And to fund a contingency budget as detailed in paragraph 5.13 and summarised in paragraph 5.14;

(e) approved the use of capital receipts to fund redundancy costs associated with the Environmental Services restructure and the resulting Capital Flexibilities Strategy as detailed in paragraph 5.9.

Item 8C(iii) Joint Strategic Committee - 7 July 2020

Impact of Covid 19 on the Council's finances - Update on current financial performance and developing a revenue budget for 2021/22

The Leader of the Council presented the recommendation from the Joint Strategic Committee meeting held on 7 July 2020.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes.

During debate, Members thanked Officers for their work, acknowledged the deficit in Council funding and noted the channels used for the lobbying of central government by the Leader of the Council.

The substantive motion was supported on a vote:

For 33, Against 2, Abstentions 2

Resolved

That the Council approved the Budget Strategy for 2021/22.

Item 8C(iv) Joint Strategic Committee - 7 July 2020

Becoming financially sustainable - Capital Strategy 2021/24

The Leader of the Council presented the recommendation from the Joint Strategic Committee meeting held on 7 July 2020.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes.

During debate of the item members considered the work undertaken in partnership with West Sussex County Council, the levels of funding provided to Local Authorities and the strategic aims of the Council's Commercial Investment Strategy.

The substantive motion was supported on a vote:

For 23, Against 12, Abstentions 2

Resolved

That the Council approved the Capital Strategy for 2021/24.

***The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 8.36pm. The meeting reconvened at 8.49pm. C/26/20-21 Report of the Leader 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 9.

Questions were asked regarding the Portland Road Public Realm Scheme, the timescales for implementing the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and Citizen's Wifi.

C/27/20-21 Members Questions under Council Procedure Rule 12

The Mayor announced that the Proper Officer had received 9 questions from Members in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12. He advised that one supplementary question could be asked which must arise out of the original question, or, the reply.

Questions would be asked in rotation of the Groups represented in the Chamber and there was 30 minutes allowed for questions with 9 rotations of speakers possible. At the end of 30 minutes the Mayor explained that he would extend the time to conclude the current rotation of questions.

The Mayor announced that the following Councillors had submitted questions:

Councillors Carl Walker, Dawn Smith, Sally Smith, Margaret Howard and Jim Deen

First rotation:

Question from Councillor Carl Walker to the Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing

Lockdown left millions in the UK feeling isolated, with young people most likely to experience loneliness. What specific measures are being put in place in Worthing to alleviate both short and long-term loneliness?

The Executive Member replied that the Council and its partners did undertake work in the last 18 months around loneliness and thrive in relation to what loneliness means, its impact and which profiles are most affected by it with young people experiencing this most acutely.

During covid-19, the Council's focus had been on connecting people (over 18) with local volunteers for check-in and chats in the short term and working with local mutual aid groups to connect people to local residents where possible, knowing this could help connect people into their communities in a more effective way. In the longer-term the Council would be seeking to develop a more participatory approach to address loneliness and also had the Social Prescribing and Wellbeing Hubs service that worked with people around health and wellbeing and loneliness.

Regarding young people, the Council was developing a young people's framework through the Safer Communities Partnership, to develop a more systemic approach to health, wellbeing and safety (including connectedness). This would include a mentoring programme (year 6 pupils) and a community-led approach, which also included the work of Find it Out Plus as a service/ approach for young people around their wellbeing and mental health.

Councillor Carl Walker asked a supplementary question regarding specific public health planning around young people's loneliness and mental health in the event of a second lockdown in the autumn or winter.

The Executive Member replied that most of the issues raised fell under the remit of West Sussex County Council and their responsibilities towards children, however, the Council did work with other agencies in order to support people of all ages in the town.

Second rotation:

Question from Councillor Dawn Smith to the Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing

Is there sufficient and adequate PPE for all front line Council staff as part of a contingency plan in place for a potential local lockdown, or second Wave of the Coronavirus?

The Executive Member replied that the Council currently held 1000 masks, 25 litres of sanitiser and 100's of gloves. The type of PPE was sufficient for the work undertaken and this approach had been agreed across all Sussex Local Authorities Health and Safety advisors. The Council had established accounts with multiple suppliers for resilience. The stock was closely monitored and refreshed as and when required. Notably, when there

was a change in Government advice or horizon scanning suggests that a local outbreak was possible.

The Council also had access to a central stock managed by the Sussex Resilience Forum for additional supplies. Currently there was enough stock to meet current demands for over 365 days in most cases and this was also monitored on a weekly basis by the logistics and supplies cell.

Third rotation:

Question from Councillor Dawn Smith to the Executive Member for Customer Services

Can you please confirm the current number of recorded rough sleepers in Worthing?

The Executive Member for Customer Services replied that there were currently 22 rough sleepers identified in Worthing.

Councillor Smith asked a supplementary question in relation to planning for the provision of safe accommodation for vulnerable rough sleepers in the event of further outbreak.

The Executive Member for Customer Services replied that planning for the winter and any second spike of infections had already commenced in Worthing and across Sussex more widely.

Fourth rotation:

Councillor Sally Smith to the Executive Member for Customer Services

Could you please advise how many residents are currently on the Worthing Borough Council Housing Register and if there has significantly increased in applications since March due to the impact of coronavirus?

The Executive Member for Customer Services replied that as at 14 July 2020, there were 1,433 households on the Housing Register. COVID-19 had not had an impact on the housing register applications. At the end of the last quarter March 2020, there were 1,405 households on the housing register.

Councillor Smith asked a supplementary question regarding the numbers of people on the Housing Register who were in temporary accommodation.

The Executive Member agreed to provide a written response.

Fifth rotation:

Question from Councillor Margaret Howard to the Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing

The Council very generously set up a Food Depot in the Assembly rooms to help coordinate distribution of food to food banks and people in need during Covid19. The current advertised price to hire the Assembly room, Richmond room and Reception from the Trust ranges from £25 to £30,000 per week.

The Council is bound by Freedom of Information Law so can we be advised how much the Council paid the Trust for the use of the premises for the food depot per week and for how many weeks?

The Executive Member replied that the Assembly Hall was made available for no fee, however the Council did pay a contribution towards the running costs.

The total cost was £2094 which was broken down as follows:-

- *Electric cost was £926.62;*
- *Water cost £360.42; and*
- *The bill for gas had not yet been received. As the last bill the Council paid was for £1346.13; it was agreed to pay 60% of the bill which was estimated to cost £807.68.*

The food depot was open 20 April to 12 June 2020 (8 weeks).

Councillor Howard sought clarification as to whether the figures provided were per week or for the period of use.

The Executive Member replied that it was for the period of use.

Sixth rotation:

Question from Councillor Margaret Howard to the Executive Member for Customer Services

Worthing Theatres and Museum Trust have issued a letter to staff offering redundancies and reduced hours, an email to patrons confirms the redundancies and an article in the Herald also tells us that the new Trust is in serious danger of becoming insolvent. This may have serious consequences for the operation of Cultural Services.

The contract between the Council and Trust says that there will be annual as well as quarterly reviews of the operation of the Trust.

The Trust can serve a Contractor Notice of Change on the Council and likewise Section the Council can serve a Council Notice of Change.

In view of the latest developments can we be advised if:

- a) Any reviews have taken place?
- b) Has a Notice of Change been served by either party?

The Executive Member replied that the regular quarterly reviews had taken place. At the most recent quarterly review meeting in March 2020, the Trust provided the Council with financial and service provision updates for delivery against its annual business plan.

A Notice of Change was to enable the Parties to adopt a flexible approach, enabling the Parties to agree a variation to the current business plan, having regard to the prevailing economic and social conditions. No Notice of Change had been served by either Party and none would be expected at this stage, as the Trust put together its plans for recovery.

Councillor Howard asked whether the Council had been asked to provide additional funds or take back any venues as a supplementary question.

The Executive Member replied that it had not.

Seventh rotation:

Question from Councillor Margaret Howard to the Executive Member for Customer Services

Worthing Theatres and Museum Trust are contractually obliged to inform the Council of any changes in its management & operation of Cultural Services. The Invitation To Tender informed us that before the transition that Worthing theatres supported 129 full-time equivalent jobs in the local Worthing economy.

The Trust is not bound by Freedom of Information but the Council is, can we be advised how many full time equivalent redundancies are currently planned?

The Executive Member for Customer Services replied that WTM had already issued the following public statement:

The proposed staff changes included redundancies and reduced hours. WTM had a staff of 150 and had sadly added 19 staff members, from across all departments but weighted towards public facing, to a redundancy consultation list. A further 29 staff members would be facing a temporary reduction in hours and pay.

Eighth rotation:

Question from Councillor Jim Deen to the Executive Member for Digital & Environmental Services

In view of the very clear and urgent need to make Worthing, and particularly the town centre, as attractive as possible to residents and potential visitors, to encourage them to spend more time there and support the very hard-pressed retail and hospitality businesses to recover lost revenue as a consequence of the Covid 19 lockdown, does he regret the decision he took to cancel the contract for the floral displays in hanging baskets and containers which has left the town centre and the roads leading into it, looking drab and unattractive?

The Executive Member replied that there were several reasons for cancelling the contract this year, and it was not a decision that was taken lightly. Consideration had been given to the fact that the Council risked spending £60k on hanging baskets that nobody would ultimately see due to Covid. Retailers closed, and nobody was on the highstreets. The decision was taken to steer clear of these risks and use the money for more sustainable

planting projects that needed minimal maintenance - i.e. the bedding at Beach House park, which is looking beautiful, and the public had been enjoying daily.

There were also practical reasons for the cancellation. Nurseries and garden centres went into lockdown early, furloughing staff and closing their doors. Bedding plants were not available for some time as there were no staff to raise or tend stock. Also, the Council's contractor was not available to install or tend to any baskets or troughs, so even if the Council wanted to persist with the contract, it would have been unlikely that it could be delivered.

Cllr Deen asked a supplementary question seeking confirmation of there being a contract to remove the infrastructure that supported hanging baskets and floral displays in Worthing. Cllr Deen also wanted to know whether the hanging baskets and floral displays would be returning next year.

The Executive Member for Digital & Environmental Services agreed to provide a written response to the question.

Ninth rotation:

Question from Councillor Jim Deen to the Executive Member for Resources

Could she confirm whether the Centre of English Studies and other English language schools for foreigners based in Worthing will be given a financial lifeline in the current Covid 19 crisis by granting them exemption from Business Rates, something which neighbouring local authorities have committed themselves to for similar businesses in their areas.

The Executive Member replied that the principal of CES in Worthing had written to her outlining their situation and requesting business rate relief for 2020/21. Only one neighbouring authority, Brighton & Hove City Council, had committed themselves to business rate relief.

The CES in Worthing received a response to their request from the Executive Member for Regeneration, advising that the Council could only work within the guidance set by central government. However, Cllr Jenkins also gave an undertaking to look at the specific circumstances again, without prejudice, taking into account the circumstances that had been set out.

Following discussions with both the Revenues and Benefits Team and Legal Services, Cllr Jenkins wrote to the CES in Worthing on the 11 June, advising that the initial response to their request was upheld. The case was assessed against the criteria provided by MHCLG on 2nd April when business rate relief had been expanded to Leisure, Retail and Hospitality. Language Schools did not fall within the categories set out in the guidance.

The CES in Worthing did receive a communication from the Council last week, referring them to the Discretionary Grant Funding which had been made available to local businesses who had not been able to apply for the initial round of grant funding. This was followed up by another email from Cllr Jenkins encouraging the CES in Worthing to apply, as the Council was keen to distribute the full amount of grant funding available.

The Executive Member had been advised that disappointingly, as of yesterday, the CES in Worthing had not applied for the funding. The deadline for such applications was Sunday 19 July.

Cllr Deen asked a supplementary question regarding the making of representations to central government as this was a situation that had seemingly slipped through the gaps between the classification of different businesses.

The Executive Member replied that a number of businesses had not been able to apply for any kind of grant funding, or anything discretionary, but there was now a pot of money available for those businesses and the Council welcomed applications.

C/28/20-21 Motions on Notice

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Communities, which had been circulated to all members and a copy of which is attached to the signed version of these minutes.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Helen Silman and seconded by Councillor Sally Smith.

During debate, Members expressed support for the motion whilst acknowledging that other organisations also warranted the Council's recognition.

The motion, as proposed, was approved unanimously.

Resolved,

That Worthing Borough Council congratulates Turning Tides on being one of the 230 organisations to be awarded the 2020 Queen's Award for Voluntary Service - the highest award given to organisations delivering exceptional service within their communities. The Queen's Award offers a chance to highlight the outstanding contribution Turning Tides makes in Worthing and recognises the crucial role it has played to support vulnerable people during the coronavirus pandemic.

C/29/20-21 Motions on Notice

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Communities, which had been circulated to all members and a copy of which is attached to the signed version of these minutes.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Paul High and seconded by Councillor Val Turner.

During consideration of this item, the live stream of the meeting was stopped before any resolution was made.

Therefore, the Mayor adjourned the meeting at 10.14pm

The meeting ended at 10.14 pm
