

Public Document Pack

Minutes of a meeting of the
Worthing Council
23 February 2021
at 6.30 pm

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

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

*Absent

C/61/20-21 Apologies for Absence

The Mayor advised that he had received apologies from Cllr Paul Baker.

C/62/20-21 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Daniel Humphreys declared an interest as a Board Member of the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership.

Councillor Louise Murphy declared an interest as a Non-Executive Director of Worthing Homes and a pecuniary interest in Item 7C as an employee of HSBC with a minor shareholding in HSBC. Cllr Murphy left the meeting during consideration of Item 7C.

Councillor Noel Atkins declared an interest in Item 9 as an elected member of West Sussex County Council.

Councillor Ed Crouch declared an interest as his partner worked for Worthing Homes.

Councillor Val Turner declared an interest as a Trustee for South Downs Leisure.

Councillor Steve Wills declared an interest as a Non-Executive Director of Worthing Homes.

C/63/20-21 Confirmation of Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2020 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Mayor.

C/64/20-21 Questions from the Public

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

1) Question submitted by Mr Cothard, Friends of West Worthing Park Chairman

For the Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing

Friendship/Chat benches

Following October's statement of being "only too happy to help" community groups with such a proposal WHY has the reality been anything but?

Firstly, we are signposted to The Friendly Bench CIC, but they only operate in central England and can only support 2 benches nationally, will that recommendation be officially withdrawn?

Secondly, why has there been no progress on a council approved template design involving local businesses which can be publicised and would make life much easier for community groups interested in the scheme?

Thirdly, I have been met with nothing but obstacles trying to get my proposal up and running - such as outdoor spread out seating being Covid risk (despite the council continuing with their own projects involving seating and enclosed places), ASB (despite the ward having a rate of 60% of the national average), questions over my group's constitution (despite it being the own council's template c/o Andy Edwards) and Consultation (despite none being required for the council's own seating or memorial benches plus no indication given as to whether the council would consult or when).

Fourthly, why has the Member failed to either respond or acknowledge polite correspondence from myself and other councillors seeking a way forward and clarity? I find this unprofessional, unhelpful and unkind.

The Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing replied that the Council would like to reiterate that officers were only too happy to help with these offers, and would also reiterate that suggestions and advice given in the pursuit of these improvements was with the best intentions, based on the Council's experience of the park in question and of similar projects. As custodians of open spaces, on behalf of Worthing residents and park users, the Council had a duty to show that there had been due consideration to the governance required to install such features. ASB, covid, constitutions of decision making bodies, and the testing of public opinion were all valid lines of inquiry, and the Council must make sure that all of those points were adequately satisfied before progress could be made.

The proposal with this project specifically was to do a light touch consultation exercise that meant the Council could make sure that it had listened to all voices to help decide what happened next. The Council would work with stakeholders such as Friends of West Worthing, to make sure that the design of this process was appropriate. This would happen as soon as possible, and in order to make sure the opportunity for funding of this project did not slip by, the Council had taken steps to speak to WSCC to safeguard those funds should the consultation exercise prove that the project was indeed the best option for the park's greater good.

2) Question submitted by Mr Loggenberg, a Worthing Resident

For the Leader of the Council

Regulation 4(1) of the Health Protections regulations regarding the Wearing of Face Coverings, has built in protections for persons who cannot wear a face covering.

Regulation 5(9) of the same regulations specifies persons with powers as set in regulation 5(2)(a) and (b) if a person was in contravention of Regulation 3 of the same Regulations

Given that Regulation 3 includes the provision, "without reasonable excuse", and reasonable excuses under regulation 4(1) includes matters of personal health even a disability one is not obligated to disclose — it also being a choice to wear a lanyard if you wish as opposed to a must,

- does the Council agree that "No Mask No Entry"- notices are inconsistent with the law and discriminatory against persons with a disability and or a valid excuse, that such places must in their notices include to state "Unless you have a valid exemption"

in order to make reasonable adjustment as an Equality Act and a Disability Discrimination Act requirement...and what will the Council do to ensure businesses do comply with that requirement and to discourage business discharging powers under regulation 5(2) if they are not a relevant person pursuant to regulation 5(9) when the person not wearing a face covering has done nothing but merely given a valid excuse?

The Leader replied that the Regulations stated that "No person may, without reasonable excuse, enter or remain within a relevant place without wearing a face covering." It did not state that signs needed to be erected to enforce this, it was up to the individual premises to determine how best to comply with the Regulations. Unfortunately, there was no defined or approved standard for such signage.

The Council's Covid Information Officers were liaising with businesses and providing advice and guidance where applicable. This issue would be considered by them when giving out such guidance.

In terms of the 'relevant person' question, the Council would need to consider this further, however, the Council would be pleased to receive information on any specific premises causing issues in that regard.

3) Question submitted by Mr Loggenberg, a Worthing resident

For the Leader of the Council

On 20th October 2020 at the Council Meeting, I asked the Leader of the Council who was taking leadership to ensure people of Black Ethnicity's Suffering and Death would be equally reflected on the War Memorial at Steyne Gardens and when the actions were being taken in that respect. The Leader of the Council said that he took leadership on the matter and that he was acting on the matter within the subsequent weeks and that he'd also contact me thereto.

I appreciate the leader of the Council, like many of us, has limited hours in his day and many other matters to attend to — would he be so kind as to update me on progress whether by way of a short address in the meeting or in writing.

The Leader replied that he hadn't said that the Council would amend the memorial but that he had received an email from the Museum who were amenable to a conversation on the topic. The Leader advised that it would be a while until the Museum was open for business again and therefore he would take up the conversation in the summer.

C/65/20-21 Announcements by the Mayor, Leader of the Council, Executive Members or the Head of Paid Service

The Mayor informed the Council on his work as Armed Forces Champion, thanked the Worthing Food Foundation for their invitation to visit and see the work being undertaking and updated Members on the virtual events he had attended since the last Council meeting, including the Holocaust Memorial Day commemorations.

There were no announcements from the Leader or the Chief Executive.

The Executive Member for Digital & Environmental Services updated the Council on investment in the Town Centre. A new team had been created in house to reinstall the floral displays in the town.

C/66/20-21 Items raised under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items raised under the urgency provisions.

C/67/20-21 Recommendations from the Executive and Committees to Council

Council had, before it, recommendations from the Joint Governance Committee, the Worthing Executive and the Joint Strategic Committee.

Extract of these minutes had been circulated as items 7A, 7B and 7C.

Item 7A Joint Governance Committee - 26 January 2021

Scheme of Officer Delegations

The Chairman of the Joint Governance Committee presented the recommendation from the Joint Governance Committee meeting held on 26 January 2021.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Steve Wills.

On a vote: For 33, Against 0, Abstentions 3

Resolved

That Worthing Borough Council noted the Joint Governance Committee's consideration of the comments of the Worthing Planning Committee, recommending proposed changes to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers, and approved their adoption as part of the Constitution to Worthing Borough Council.

Item 7B Worthing Executive - 1 February 2021

Budget Estimates 2021/22 and setting of 2021/22 Council Tax

The Mayor informed the Council that the recommendations from Worthing Executive would be considered under Item 9 on the agenda.

Item 7C Joint Strategic Committee - 9 February 2021

Joint Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24, Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council

The Leader presented the recommendation from the Joint Strategic meeting held on 9 February 2021.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes.

On a vote: For 22, Against 4, Abstentions 9

Resolved

That the Council

- a) noted the TMSS and AIS for 2021/22 to 2023/24, incorporating the Prudential Indicators and Limits, and MRP Statements, including the increase in the counterparty limit for the UK bank Handelsbanken from £3m to £4m for both Adur and Worthing Councils; and
- b) approved the Prudential Indicators and Limits, and MRP Statements.

C/68/20-21

Suspension of Council Procedure Rules

The Council was asked to suspend Council Procedure rules where they conflicted with the budget procedure rules in accordance with paragraph 7.2 of the budget procedure rules.

Having been proposed by Councillor Kevin Jenkins, seconded by Councillor Noel Atkins the Council unanimously agreed to suspend Council Procedure Rules for the consideration of Item 9 on the agenda.

C/69/20-21

Council Tax 2021/22

The Mayor introduced the item explaining that item 7B, the recommendation from the Executive, would be considered as part of this discussion with the full proposed recommendation being contained in the papers circulated with the agenda.

As required by the Regulations there would be a recorded vote on any amendments to the proposed budget together with a final vote.

The Mayor clarified that the item would be dealt with under the budget procedure rules and therefore, ordinary rules of debate did not apply.

The Mayor invited the Leader of the Council to address the Chamber.

The Leader of the Council introduced the budget and setting of the council tax to members and a copy of the Leaders budget speech is appended to these minutes as Appendix A.

The proposal was seconded by the Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes.

The Leader of the Labour Group on the Council, Councillor Beccy Cooper, addressed the Council and proposed 11 amendments to the budget, details of which are appended to these minutes as Appendix B.

The proposed amendments were seconded by Councillor Jim Deen.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group on the Council, Councillor Robert Smytherman, addressed the Council.

The Independent UKIP Member on the Council, Councillor Mark Withers, addressed the Council acknowledging the need for Councillors from all parties to work together

Members in the Chamber debated the proposed budget and budget amendments.

In accordance with Budget Procedure Rules, the Leader of the Opposition and the Executive Leader were given rights of reply.

The Mayor put each of the amendments to the Council for a vote. Recorded votes were taken, the results of which, are set out below:-

Amendment 1

For (13): Councillors Barrett, Chowdhury, Cooper, Deen, Howard, McCabe, Mulholland, Silman, D Smith, S Smith, Smytherman, Thorpe and Walker.

Against (22): Councillors Atkins, Barraclough, Bickers, Crouch, K Harman, High, Humphreys, James, Jenkins, McDonald, Mercer, Murphy, Nowak, Sim, Sparkes, Turner, N Waight, S Waight, Westover, S Wills, T Wills and Withers.

Abstentions (1): Councillor L Harman.

Resolved that amendment 1 was not supported.

Amendment 2

For (14): Councillors Barrett, Chowdhury, Cooper, Deen, Howard, McCabe, Mulholland, Silman, D Smith, S Smith, Smytherman, Thorpe, Walker and Withers.

Against (20): Councillors Atkins, Barraclough, Bickers, K Harman, High, Humphreys, James, Jenkins, McDonald, Mercer, Murphy, Nowak, Sim, Sparkes, Turner, N Waight, S Waight, Westover, S Wills and T Wills.

Abstentions (2): Councillors Crouch and L Harman.

Resolved that amendment 2 was not supported.

Amendment 3

For (13): Councillors Barrett, Chowdhury, Cooper, Deen, Howard, McCabe, Mulholland, Silman, D Smith, S Smith, Smytherman, Thorpe and Walker.

Against (22): Councillors Atkins, Barraclough, Bickers, Crouch, K Harman, High, Humphreys, James, Jenkins, McDonald, Mercer, Murphy, Nowak, Sim, Sparkes, Turner, N Waight, S Waight, Westover, S Wills, T Wills and Withers.

Abstentions (1): Councillor L Harman.

Resolved that amendment 3 was not supported.

Amendment 4

For (14): Councillors Barrett, Chowdhury, Cooper, Deen, Howard, McCabe, Mulholland, Silman, D Smith, S Smith, Smytherman, Thorpe, Walker and Withers.

Against (21): Councillors Atkins, Barraclough, Bickers, Crouch, K Harman, High, Humphreys, James, Jenkins, McDonald, Mercer, Murphy, Nowak, Sim, Sparkes, Turner, N Waight, S Waight, Westover, S Wills and T Wills.

Abstentions (1): Councillor L Harman.

Resolved that amendment 4 was not supported.

Amendment 5

For (14): Councillors Barrett, Chowdhury, Cooper, Deen, Howard, McCabe, Mulholland, Silman, D Smith, S Smith, Smytherman, Thorpe, Walker and Withers.

Against (21): Councillors Atkins, Barraclough, Bickers, Crouch, K Harman, High, Humphreys, James, Jenkins, McDonald, Mercer, Murphy, Nowak, Sim, Sparkes, Turner, N Waight, S Waight, Westover, S Wills and T Wills.

Abstentions (1): Councillor L Harman.

Resolved that amendment 5 was not supported.

Amendment 6

For (14): Councillors Barrett, Chowdhury, Cooper, Deen, Howard, McCabe, Mulholland, Silman, D Smith, S Smith, Smytherman, Thorpe, Walker and Withers.

Against (21): Councillors Atkins, Barraclough, Bickers, Crouch, K Harman, High, Humphreys, James, Jenkins, McDonald, Mercer, Murphy, Nowak, Sim, Sparkes, Turner, N Waight, S Waight, Westover, S Wills and T Wills.

Abstentions (1): Councillor L Harman.

Resolved that amendment 6 was not supported.

Amendment 7

For (13): Councillors Barrett, Chowdhury, Cooper, Deen, Howard, McCabe, Mulholland, Silman, D Smith, S Smith, Smytherman, Thorpe and Walker.

Against (22): Councillors Atkins, Barraclough, Bickers, Crouch, K Harman, High, Humphreys, James, Jenkins, McDonald, Mercer, Murphy, Nowak, Sim, Sparkes, Turner, N Waight, S Waight, Westover, S Wills, T Wills and Withers.

Abstentions (1): Councillor L Harman.

Resolved that amendment 7 was not supported.

Amendment 8

For (12): Councillors Barrett, Chowdhury, Cooper, Deen, Howard, McCabe, Mulholland, Silman, D Smith, S Smith, Smytherman, and Walker.

Against (22): Councillors Atkins, Barraclough, Bickers, Crouch, K Harman, High, Humphreys, James, Jenkins, McDonald, Mercer, Murphy, Nowak, Sim, Sparkes, Turner, N Waight, S Waight, Westover, S Wills, T Wills and Withers.

Abstentions (2): Councillors L Harman and Thorpe.

Resolved that amendment 8 was not supported.

Amendment 9

For (14): Councillors Barrett, Chowdhury, Cooper, Deen, Howard, McCabe, Mulholland, Silman, D Smith, S Smith, Smytherman, Thorpe, Walker and Withers.

Against (21): Councillors Atkins, Barraclough, Bickers, Crouch, K Harman, High, Humphreys, James, Jenkins, McDonald, Mercer, Murphy, Nowak, Sim, Sparkes, Turner, N Waight, S Waight, Westover, S Wills and T Wills.

Abstentions (1): Councillor L Harman.

Resolved that amendment 9 was not supported.

Amendment 10

For (14): Councillors Barrett, Chowdhury, Cooper, Deen, Howard, McCabe, Mulholland, Silman, D Smith, S Smith, Smytherman, Thorpe, Walker and Withers.

Against (21): Councillors Atkins, Barraclough, Bickers, Crouch, K Harman, High, Humphreys, James, Jenkins, McDonald, Mercer, Murphy, Nowak, Sim, Sparkes, Turner, N Waight, S Waight, Westover, S Wills and T Wills.

Abstentions (1): Councillor L Harman.

Resolved that amendment 10 was not supported.

Amendment 11

For (13): Councillors Barrett, Chowdhury, Cooper, Deen, Howard, McCabe, Mulholland, Silman, D Smith, S Smith, Smytherman, Walker and Withers.

Against (21): Councillors Atkins, Barraclough, Bickers, Crouch, K Harman, High, Humphreys, James, Jenkins, McDonald, Mercer, Murphy, Nowak, Sim, Sparkes, Turner, N Waight, S Waight, Westover, S Wills and T Wills.

Abstentions (2): Councillors L Harman and Thorpe.

Resolved that amendment 11 was not supported.

As none of the amendments were supported, the Mayor put the substantive motion to the Council for a vote. A recorded vote was taken, the results of which, are set out below:-

For (21): Councillors Atkins, Barraclough, Bickers, Crouch, K Harman, High, Humphreys, James, Jenkins, McDonald, Mercer, Murphy, Nowak, Sim, Sparkes, Turner, N Waight, S Waight, Westover, S Wills and T Wills.

Against (14): Councillors Barrett, Chowdhury, Cooper, Deen, Howard, McCabe, Mulholland, Silman, D Smith, S Smith, Smytherman, Thorpe, Walker and Withers.

Abstain (1): Councillor L Harman.

Resolved that

- 1) The Council noted that on 1st February 2021, the Executive calculated the Council Tax Base 2021/22 as 39,131.0 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the “Act”)];
- 2) That the Council Tax requirement for the Council’s own purposes for 2021/22 was £9,681,400.
- 3) That the following amounts be calculated by the Council for the year 2021/22 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
 - (a) **£79,535,819** being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.
 - (b) **£69,584,419** being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
 - (c) **£9,681,400** being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R), in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).
 - (d) **£247.41** being the amount at 3(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.
 - (e) **£0.00** being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
 - (f) **£247.41** being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.
- 4) That the Council noted that for the year 2021/22 the West Sussex County Council and The Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex had issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council’s area as indicated in the table below:-

All of the Council’s Area 2021/22	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£

Worthing Borough Council	164.94	192.43	219.92	247.41	302.39	357.37	412.35	494.82
West Sussex County Council Total as split below:	1,007.04	1,174.88	1,342.72	1,510.56	1,846.24	2,181.92	2,517.60	3,021.12
West Sussex Council – Core	893.91	1,042.90	1,191.88	1,340.87	1,638.84	1,936.81	2,234.78	2,681.74
West Sussex County Council – Adults Social Care element	113.13	131.98	150.84	169.69	204.40	245.11	282.82	339.38
The Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex	143.27	167.15	191.03	214.91	262.67	310.43	358.18	429.82

- 5) That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the amounts shown in table shown above, as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2021/22 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
All of the Council's Area	1,315.25	1,534.46	1,753.67	1,972.88	2,411.30	2,849.72	3,288.13	3,945.76

*** The meeting was adjourned at 9.28pm and reconvened at 9.38pm
C/70/20-21 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 10.

A question was received in relation to the release of s106 monies for schemes in Tarring Ward. The Executive Member for Regeneration agreed to provide a written response following the meeting.

C/71/20-21 Schedule of Meetings 2021/22

Before the Council, was the schedule of meetings of the Council and joint meetings for 2021/22.

Council was invited to formally approve the dates for its Meetings during this period whilst noting the proposed dates for other committees.

The Schedule of Meetings for 2021/22 was proposed by Councillor Daniel Humphreys, seconded by Councillor Noel Atkins and unanimously supported.

Resolved

That Worthing Borough Council approved the Schedule of Meetings for 2021/22.

C/72/20-21 Members Questions under Council Procedure Rule 12

The Mayor announced that the Proper Officer had received 18 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 were 30 minutes allowed for questions with 11 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 Bickers, Chowdhury, Deen, Howard, James, Murphy, Nowak, D Smith, S Smith, Walker, T Wills and Withers.

First rotation:

Question from Councillor Henna Chowdhury to the Executive Member for Customer Services

What are the council doing to encourage landlords to bring empty properties back into use and how many of those they know about?

The Executive Member for Customer Services replied that owners or landlords could make use of the Landlord's Repair Grant Assistance or the Opening Doors scheme to obtain funding to bring properties (including empties) up to standard and give the Council nomination rights.

The latest figures showed that in October 2020 there were 398 properties in Worthing that had been empty for longer than 6 months (Long-Term Empty (LTE)). This compared with 402 in October 2018 and 336 in October 2019 and equated to 0.95% of the total housing stock in Worthing. The range for local authorities (according to Action on Empty Homes figures) ranged between 3.66% and 0%.

LTE as defined did not include properties under probate and so the reported figures were the nationally accepted number of LTE.

Question from Councillor Mark Withers to the Executive Member for Digital & Environmental Services

My Ward Northbrook has been known as one of the poorer or more deprived areas of the Borough. It has come to my attention from a constituent in the past a perception that in wealthier areas of the Borough such as around Grand Ave and its surrounds for instance

there is constant sweeping of pavements and gutters whereas less affluent areas like the Tyne area south of Columbia Drive have not seen any cleaning for many years. This leads to a perception that residents of such areas are being treated as second class citizens although subject to the same taxes payable to the borough. What answer or reassurance would the council give to any constituents with such perceptions?

The Executive Member for Digital & Environmental Services replied that Adur & Worthing Environmental Services carried out street sweeping to clean up rubbish and debris on Worthing's streets. The sweeping regime was based on level of need by taking account of pedestrian traffic, proximity to shops and fast food outlets etc.

The Council did not sweep areas based on the affluence of an area, or indeed the differing expectations of residents. Each area was additionally inspected by officers with the work being allocated accordingly. The Council sometimes found it difficult to sweep areas where cars were parked long-term, but in those instances the Council was happy to work with residents to leaflet drop vehicles to ask them to move on a designated date to facilitate sweeping.

Councillor Withers asked a supplementary question regarding the coordination of street sweeping with areas that were the responsibility of Worthing Homes.

The Executive Member for Digital & Environmental Services replied that he was not aware of joint arrangements between Worthing Homes and the Council's Cleansing Teams. However, if Councillor Withers emailed examples he was happy to take them forward.

Question from Councillor Tim Wills to the Executive Member for Regeneration

We have all agreed that our town centre is the beating heart of the borough of Worthing. The council's plans to regenerate and rejuvenate the town late last year were well known and the progress reported over the year, not least the planning permission for Union Place, was very welcome. But the pandemic had exacerbated a crisis for high streets all over the country and the town centre businesses needed urgent support to ensure that people were able to access the town as safely as possible. Could the Executive Member for Regeneration advise us what the council did, to support the opening up again of the town centre, ahead of last Christmas to support local businesses and attract people into the town?

The Executive Member for Regeneration replied that as well as the continuation of the business support grants, the Council had added greater resources to inform local businesses of the guidance associated with 'opening up' through direct mail and information on the Council's website. The Council was recruiting Information & Support Officers to provide face to face support.

The Council's Public Health and Regulation Team were working with businesses to ensure they had good access to information and help and support with Covid-safe practices.

With regard to the work the Council undertook over the Christmas period, the #WinterWelcome campaign promoted independent retailers and encouraged residents (and visitors) to shop safely in the local area. The approach included creating Festive Thursdays (a shop and dine offer), the Laser Light City spectacle to drive footfall into the

town centre where over 6,000 experienced this event. The Council also invested in three Christmas trees in South Street (thanks to Empire Construction for sponsoring this tree), Montague Place and the Town Hall which, again, supported the overall Christmas lighting provided by the TCI. The Council also provided free parking in the Town Hall car park for all Saturdays in the run up to Christmas.

Finally, the Council continued to work flexibly with businesses that wished to trade outside, whether this be through granting pavement (table and chair) licences and having the ability to construct outside spaces.

Councillor Wills asked a supplementary question regarding plans for reopening in the Spring.

The Executive Member for Regeneration stated that the Roadmap had been very welcome and that a cautious approach was required. Although it was very much early days, the Council's approach would need to benefit the town and guarantee the safety of residents.

Second rotation:

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

In light of the published decision being made on 17/2/21 regarding the Housing Related Support Service could you please tell us what the funding shortfall will be to the service once the Borough and District Councils have made their contributions? Also, how will the service users' needs be met with demands for the service increasing, but funding being reduced? Are there specific identified service users who will no longer be eligible for support?

The Executive Member for Customer Services replied that the West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) housing related support budget decision created an opportunity for a wide variety of stakeholders, including Councils, to review how they delivered housing related support to residents and ensure that available funding was used effectively.

The previous service for those living independently was tied to specific accommodation and continued even after the resident no longer needed it, was unscalable and was restricted to working age adults. The new service was age and tenure neutral, which meant it was available to people regardless of their type of accommodation, including owner occupiers. It was also designed to be responsive and flexible, and build the confidence and resilience among vulnerable people. Delivering housing related support to those living independently in this way ensured that more people could get the support they need, when they need it and for as long as they need it, regardless of where they lived.

This service was fully funded by WSSCC and boroughs and districts in West Sussex for the length of the contract. This service was targeted at those living independently and it was separate from other accommodation based and specialist housing related support services funded by WSSCC.

Question from Councillor Louise Murphy to the Executive Member for Customer Services

Recent weeks have brought us some very cold and hard weather conditions that we're not used to in sunny Worthing. It will have been especially challenging to those who are most vulnerable in our community. Can the Executive Member for Customer Services confirm that emergency provision was put in place to ensure that there was a warm bed available for anyone in Worthing who needed it?

The Executive Member for Customer Services replied that the Council continued to provide accommodation to anyone who found themselves rough sleeping using MHCLG Winter and Next Steps Accommodation Funding. The Council was currently housing 43 individuals under this provision. During the recent cold weather periods the Council activated SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocols) making further offers of accommodation to five individuals who had been rough sleeping, two of these accepted the accommodation and remained accommodated. The Councils had two rough sleepers in Worthing and one in Adur, the outreach team continued to engage with them and an offer of accommodation remained open to them. For those who did not accept the accommodation offered, the Council's Outreach Teams along with the Worthing Soup Kitchen carried out welfare checks every day and night which included provision of hot food and drinks and army grade winter 'kit'.

As well as the Single Homeless Team, Outreach Team and Rough Sleeper Initiative funded specialist support staff (complex need and mental health) with Turning Tides the Council had recruited 3 additional members of staff with funding to provide inreach and outreach support. The Council was part of a Public HE funded pilot providing a housing advisor in Worthing A&E and a CGL (Change Grow Live substance misuse) nurse in the community who outreach/in-reaches with the team and attends the drop in for homeless and rough sleepers that the Outreach Team run 7 days a week with support of St Mary of the Angels and Salvation Army. The Council was also delivering a pilot with WSCC funding providing specialist support for those with dual diagnosis with support of United Response and Turning Tides. The provision of this support had been critical in helping those with complex needs maintain their accommodation and not return to rough sleeping.

Third rotation:

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

Regarding Customer Services portfolio page 62

£2,329,230 is listed against Culture Client, which I assume is the Worthing Theatres and Museums Trust.

The Council outsourced the Theatres and Museum to the Trust in Nov 2019 and the Fixed Service Fee set out in the contract for 20/21 was for £1,460,010 excluding VAT. Yet in February 2020 the estimated cost for the Cultural offer overall for 2020/21 was £2,329,230 an extra £869,220. Presumably there are ongoing costs to the Council even though the service is outsourced. This year the estimate for 21/22 has increased by a further £135,790.

One reason for the increase appears to be for employees at £37,460. These were not on last year's budget so it is not clear why we are employing staff for an outsourced service.

On further inspection the Support element has increased by £83,270 and the Supplies and Services element has increased by £26,410.

The government has given grants for businesses affected by Covid so what are these increases for and why are their staff costs for the Cultural client on the Council budget?

The Executive Member for Customer Services replied that the budget for culture included both the contract payment to the Trust and the Council's costs associated with cultural services. The Council's budgets included the cost of maintaining the buildings (£163,000), depreciation (£336,000) and the cost of officer time spent on cultural related activities including managing the facilities, contract management costs, insurances and support to general cultural activities.

The contract payment budget itself had increased by a small margin for inflation from £1,460,010 to £1,477,900. This contract sum was included in the agreed contract between the Council and WTM.

Under the terms of the contract, the Council was liable for the costs associated with any increases to the pension contribution rate requested by the Pension Fund actuary over the rate specified within the contract. This had been included in the budget for 2021/22 at a cost of £37,460.

As part of the 2021/22 budget there had been a fundamental review of the allocation of costs. Whilst the overall cost of the services to be allocated had not significantly changed beyond inflationary pressures, it had resulted in swings in the allocations throughout the Councils accounts.

Question from Councillor Tim Wills to the Executive Member for Regeneration

"In recent years the Worthing Observation Wheel has been a welcome sight on our seafront. Can the executive member confirm that the wheel will be returning this year and if so when please?"

Supplementary: Are there plans for any other Covid compliant attractions or events to support our town centre?"

The Executive Member for Regeneration replied that officers were currently in dialogue with De Koning Leisure, the owner and operator of the Worthing Observation Wheel, to confirm attendance for the 2021 season. Whilst the pandemic had had a significant impact the Council was confident the Wheel would return to Worthing seafront for the summer.

Councillor Tim Wills asked a supplementary question regarding plans for other Covid compliant attractions / events.

The Executive Member for Regeneration replied that with regard to events in 2021, the Council was in communication with a number of event organisers, including those events that had been regular fixtures for Worthing. Officers were actively engaging with organisers and adding events to the diary in the anticipation that these covid compliant

attractions would go ahead. Any events would need to align with the new national Covid-19 guidance associated with managing outdoor events.

Fourth rotation:

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

In October 2019, this Council pledged support for the campaign group WASPI in calling for fair transitional state pension arrangements for women born in the 1950s, which recognised financial hardship among this group. There has been recent shocking confirmation by the Office of National Statistics that the pandemic has caused an 11 per cent rise in unemployment in older women, many of whom are dependent on the gig economy, temporary and zero hours contracts.

What measures are being taken to alleviate hardship and poverty in this group?

The Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing replied that the Council recognised that many local communities would need support with work and finance. The Council knew from the data that there were some local communities that had been hit hardest, which also included young people, and women and ethnic minority communities of working age.

The Council had established employment support information and a platform for communities to access for help and support.

The Council was also undertaking work to alleviate financial hardship for local communities, recently reported to the Joint Strategic Committee. The Council continued to have in place information and advice and access to services for support.

Councillor Smith asked a supplementary question regarding the steps to alleviate poverty in this group.

The Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing replied they would be considered alongside all age groups as lots of people had been severely affected and that residents could also self refer to the Going Local service.

Question from Councillor Keith Bickers to the Executive Member for Digital & Environmental Services

“The pandemic has demonstrated how important it is for residents, businesses and public services to have the best, fastest and most reliable internet services. The action taken by this council to work with CityFibre to provide ultrafast broadband now looks inspired.

Can the Executive Member please give the council an update on how the scheme is progressing and what benefits it is bringing to the town?”

The Executive Member for Digital & Environmental Services replied that by the end of January 2021, CityFibre had laid 146Km of fibre, passing more than 20,000 properties, at which point CityFibre announced the first two Internet Service Providers (ISP); ZEN Internet and No One, who were now actively selling, delivering, and supporting full fibre services for residents in areas that had received the new CityFibre infrastructure.

CityFibre had indicated several more ISPs were expected to mobilise during 2021, and the Council expected business broadband deals would launch early summer at the latest.

In parallel with the commercial rollout of full fibre, CityFibre were actively delivering fibre to 83 Council-owned sites, which would be used as the underpinning infrastructure for public services such as Citizen Wi-Fi; free-to-use public Wi-Fi services in key open spaces with interfaces that promoted activities, services, and public information.

The Councils' fibre sites would also be used as the future underlying infrastructure for Sussex Police Community Safety Cameras in Worthing, Lancing, Southwick, and Shoreham, and as the foundation for an Internet of Things (IoT) network that presented significant potential to support public service delivery, community initiatives, and potentially commercially-led innovation.

At the end of January 2021, the scheme had also created 66 full-time employment jobs.

Budget Speech 2021

“This evening we will be discussing our annual budget in circumstances we have never experienced before, following a year like none we have never experienced before but we will, I hope, come together to offer our community a sense of certainty in a very uncertain world.

It scarcely seems possible that it was just one year ago that we met to debate our council’s budget for 2020. At that time the UK had just left the European Union, a new government had been elected two months earlier and all the political chatter revolved around the laudable ‘levelling-up’ agenda and infrastructure spending.

At our budget setting meeting in February 2020 we debated and voted on a budget that looked to 2020 and the 2020s as a time in which Worthing was set to roar into a new phase of development. We had recently approved the latest iteration of our Platforms for Places strategy and that budget served to ensure that we would deliver a range of ambitions to make Worthing an even better place to live, work and enjoy.

Following a great deal of progress in delivering regeneration to neglected areas, purchasing the former police station site at Union Place, enabling new development at the former Aquarena, demolishing dilapidated buildings and a multi-storey car park at Teville Gate and beginning the process of laying mile upon mile of dark fibre we committed to go further and faster. Securing a planning permission for Union Place, decontaminating Decoy Farm, pressing forward with public realm regeneration and hooking up homes, businesses and public services across Worthing to ultrafast broadband.

Over the previous years we had driven forward a number of projects to support the health and wellbeing of our communities. Our social prescribing programme ‘Going Local’ had helped over 2000 people across Worthing and Adur; we had prevented 717 households from becoming homeless since 2017 and in 2019 our ‘One Stop Junction’ had supported over 200 local residents into employment.

Last year we committed to going even further by working with local health partners on the delivery of a new town centre health hub; to bring on new council owned housing options for those at risk of homelessness and to improve the way we harnessed and used available data to make more timely preventative interventions to support those in our community who needed our help the most.

Our environmental credentials had been well burnished in the years leading up to 2020 as we improved our recycling rates, worked to eliminate plastics, let the wild flowers bloom across Worthing, reduced our carbon emissions and delivered a renaissance at Brooklands Lake. Taking up the challenge from our community and the government to go further we pledged to go net-zero by 2030, trial a new commercial food waste collection service, hold a climate assembly and investigate opportunities for tree planting and rewilding.

By digitising services, improving our technological capabilities and moving to the cloud among many other initiatives we had already improved the way we maintained and delivered services to the extent that residents were able to book services online and be seen to within

hours, if not minutes in some cases. Last year we undertook to move further and faster in improving the way we work with and serve our local residents, businesses and customers.

And we reflected on our success in previous years in securing government funding, over £10m to assist with schemes in Worthing and pledged to lead the way in fighting, not just for Worthing, but the wider area too, for more recognition in the levelling up agenda.

But then, just a few weeks later the coronavirus pandemic that had struck other parts of the world had its deadly impact on our country and we were thrust into lockdown. Our communities needed support from our council like never before and we had to face a new challenge that none of us had foreseen.

The impacts of the virus and the effects of lockdown are well known. People's lives and livelihoods have been affected or lost in far too many instances. I know that all councillors would wish once again to place on record our sympathy with those who have been affected in such ways.

Over the past year the people of Worthing rose to the Covid challenge amazingly. More than one observer described it as 'Worthing's finest hour'. Community support groups sprung up. Every street had a WhatsApp group and neighbours looked out for each other like never before. Whether it was by volunteering for the community effort, by working as a key worker or by limiting contact with loved ones every person was playing a role in the fight against the pandemic. Every one helped to save lives and every one helped to protect our NHS. For that we are all very grateful.

Special recognition must go to the officers and employees of Worthing Borough Council who were tested like never before and passed with flying colours. The transition to home working for staff was seamless and people needing to contact the council were able to do so with the same level of ease as when customer contact staff were office based. Our refuse collectors didn't miss a round. The cleansing teams kept up their great work keeping Worthing spik and span. Our Environmental Health officers worked with the providers of the burgeoning hot takeaway sector to ensure that all food reaching residents, key workers, volunteers and people in need was safe to eat.

And our staff went above and beyond the call of duty in providing extra levels of support to the community. The food distribution centre in the Assembly Hall meant that no one in Worthing facing hardship needed to worry about not having food. Our homelessness team ensured that no one had to sleep on the streets by arranging an offer of a bed for all our known rough sleepers. Businesses that would have had to close were provided with grants, disbursed by our team as quickly as possible. We should all be proud of the efforts our staff put in over the past year.

And while none of this could have been achieved without their dedication it is also true that a great deal of this could not have been accomplished without the decisions taken by councillors on this council in recent years. The move to the cloud and the digital programme that I've already mentioned were crucial components in enabling our officers to deliver these remarkable achievements. It is relevant and appropriate to reflect briefly on the fact that

other councils nearby that had not taken such decisions in recent years were not able to deliver the uninterrupted programme that our team did.

The subsequent financial challenge to this council was daunting and we wouldn't have been able to continue with our work for the community without the prudent decisions we had previously made - not least in regard to our strategic investment programme, the digital programme and the commercialisation work that has been pursued. And nor would it have been possible without the government support that was sent our way from the Chancellor of the Exchequer. With car parking and commercial income drying up overnight, our leisure centres needing support and extra burdens falling on the council's finances it was critical that more funding was provided and over a million pound was quickly awarded to us. The subsequent pledge to fund 75% of lost income will be critical to Worthing's ability to build back in the coming months.

So through this, what of the ambitions that we had set ourselves twelve months ago? With the distraction of Covid many would forgive a council for reducing the activities it was working on. This council though took no such course. In fact the six and twelve month reviews of Platforms for our Places showed that, remarkably, we are well on track to meet the ambitious targets that we set ourselves.

Planning permissions were granted for the Health Hub, the Boklok scheme at Fulbeck Avenue and the Union Place development. Remediation works, funded by the Coast to Capital LEP, have been completed at Decoy Farm readying that site for long term employment use. Similarly the council purchased land with planning permission on Southdownview Road to safeguard critical employment space. Contracts have been awarded for regeneration projects in the town centre which this council is project managing and the installation of ultrafast fibre has actually been accelerated meaning that Citizen Wifi should reach the town centre even sooner than planned.

The renovation of the former Downview Pub has been completed and people formerly at risk of homelessness now have the security of a place to live. A similar scheme on Rowlands Road is due to be complete soon.

On our environmental initiatives the achievements of this council have been similarly commendable. We recently reported a 13% reduction in carbon emissions for 2019/20. The planned Climate Assembly did go ahead on Zoom with 45 local residents engaged throughout and resulted in 18 well thought through recommendations. The council's recycling rates continue to go up and we have adopted a new sustainable procurement strategy. In an attempt to improve our enforcement work on litter and dog fouling we have adopted a scheme to be run by colleagues at East Hampshire District Council.

I could go on and on but I suspect we will be here for quite some time this evening so I'll leave the list of achievements there and conclude by reflecting on the national recognition that Worthing Borough Council received in being shortlisted for not one but both of the national Council of the Year awards. While we were shortlisted for both, no other district or borough council in the country made the shortlist for either award. A high commendation for our council that I'm sure all colleagues will agree demonstrates that we've set very high standards over recent years.

So this year's budget brings us back to our ambitions and how we continue to achieve our successes against the financial challenges that we still face. My colleague the Executive Member for Resources and the finance team at Worthing Borough Council have excelled themselves once more in delivering a balanced budget that provides us with the means to serve our communities and drive Worthing forward with exciting plans for regeneration and improvement.

The savings identified in these papers amount to nearly £1.3m and are a significant proportion of our revenue budget. It is no mean feat to once again drive these improvements in our financial performance without having to reduce our services, ambitions or plan for draw downs from reserves.

This budget enables us to go further on our work to deliver regeneration projects in and around the town centre. It means we can deliver more apprenticeships through the kickstart scheme. It offers support to the local NHS and those in our community in greatest need. It funds the delivery of more and more of our environmental initiatives for which we have received over a million pound of grant funding. It means prudent planning for the next twelve months through the creation of a contingency fund and of new posts to accelerate the delivery of our digital services and use of data that have been so important to this council's ability to serve the community through the pandemic.

Colleagues, we have much to plan for and a great deal to be proud of. I commend this budget to the virtual chamber as a means to build the platforms that our residents, employers and public servants will need to thrive in the post pandemic world.

Worthing Borough Council Labour Group

Proposed Budget Amendments 21/22

1. Key Staffing Requirements - Creation of two new Officer Posts

- i) Community Engagement Officer (to include specific asset mapping skills) (cost per annum: £45k)
- ii) Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer (cost per annum: £45K)

Budget to be re-allocated from Service Reinvestment Proposals:

- i) Digital Apprentices
- ii) Data Lead (TBC – acknowledge that some aspects of this post very useful. Explore incorporating into Community Engagement and Asset Mapping Portfolio, or getting part time position for 21/22)

Rationale: As a Borough, we need to take stock of where we will be post-COVID-19 and to re-evaluate the priorities and needs of the Community. The Labour Group have raised the issue of a lack of effective consultation (and analysis of consultation) with our Communities in major project developments such as Brooklands Park, Teville Gate, and investment in the Town Centre. Community engagement, alongside community asset mapping, is an opportunity for the Council to engage with our communities in a way that results in effective partnership working and a renewed social contract.

Ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion is an essential part of how we want to interact with our communities. This is also true of our internal Council culture, and the proposal is that this post will consider both internal and external facing Council approaches to the work that we undertake.

2. Housing – Begin process of establishing Council as an RSL (Registered Social Landlord)

Cost/benefit and feasibility assessment (21/22 cost: £20K)

Budget to be reallocated from Major Projects Team

Rationale: The relationship with Worthing Homes has not yielded the fruitful partnership that the Borough needs to address the chronic shortage of social and truly affordable housing. We propose a thorough review of this partnership, alongside a feasibility assessment in 21/22 of establishing the Council as an RSL

3. Environment - Retrofitting Homes Grant Fund

To compliment the Green Homes National Government Fund

Budget to be re-allocated from proposed Car Park cladding costs (£700K)

Rationale: The Council's Carbon Neutral target is laudable, but there are serious equality gaps in people's ability to afford retrofitting for their homes to reduce their carbon footprint. This budget reallocation signals our commitment to prioritise the climate emergency above other issues that are of lesser importance (we have left the requisite amount in budget to ensure that car parks are safe and usable).

As part of this budget amendment, we also propose a full review of our Borough's ability to access the Green Homes National Government Fund, to ensure that we are enabling residents to make best use of this fund and that we are maximizing our contribution to addressing the climate emergency in this area.

4. Environment – Sharing investment equitably across Parks and Green Spaces in the Borough

Budget to be reviewed and reallocated from Brooklands Park (21/22 £2 million allocated)

Rationale: This budget amendment has been identified as a result of the public consultation for Brooklands, identifying improvements that do not now reflect the development plan for this site. We therefore propose revisiting this public consultation, reviewing and revising the plans and the budget, and using the expected underspend from the 21/22 £2 million allocation to invest more equitably across the numerous green spaces in Worthing (particularly those green spaces that have not been identified as "jewels in Worthing's crown" but are nevertheless essential to community health and wellbeing)

5. Environment – Food Waste

Investment for feasibility study as per Adur's budget amendment below (£12K from capacity issues reserve)

Budget for a spend of £20k (£8k for Adur, Worthing £12k) to commission a feasibility study into a residential food waste collection.

The study should be based on a scheme initially using the currently available infrastructure that would provide for the transfer of our food waste to one of the existing companies for digestion and energy generation out of our area. The study should include an outline assessment of the longer-term feasibility of a local digestion and electricity generation facility that might have the potential to produce a revenue stream for the council.

Whilst, at present, this council has no statutory duty to provide a food waste collection, the benefits of such a scheme in reducing the contamination of recyclable waste, reducing landfill, and contributing to generating electricity will make a substantial contribution towards meeting the council's target of carbon neutrality by 2030.

6. Environment – HMO Refuse Collection Consultation

Consultation costs as per Adur's budget amendment below (£12k from Capacity Issues Reserve)

There is substantial evidence that the move to fortnightly refuse collections for homes of multiple occupancy (HMO) isn't working and has since become a public health issue with overflowing bins, strewn rubbish and stench.

The survey which received over 1800 responses revealed general dissatisfaction with the new arrangements. In addition, many residents have made direct contact with councillors and on social media channels to indicate their concerns.

We wish to use £20k (£8k for Adur, £12k for Worthing) for an audit of the general refuse arrangements for the HMOs. We would also wish to see an equality impact assessment carried out.

Once this has been carried out, we wish to see an action plan to identify the HMOs with continuing problems and to deliver more capacity either through;

- 1) the provision of larger bins,
- 2) increased bin storage areas,
- 3) or a return to weekly collections.

7. Public Realm - Increase Local High Street Development Fund (currently £50k 21/22)

Budget increase to be re-allocated from proposed Car Park cladding costs (£100K)

Rationale: Local high streets have proven to be invaluable during the Pandemic and can continue to be a source of a thriving local economy and a community hub moving forwards. We propose that the Council should show its support for these essential areas across the Borough by increasing the £50K fund for 21/22 to £150K

8. Public Realm – Regeneration of the Lido

Feasibility work to bring the Lido back to a swimming pool and create outstanding seafront attraction (£20K)

Budget to be re-allocated from Major Projects Team

Rationale: In 2019, the local Labour Party ran a petition asking the Community to back a proposal to regenerate the Lido, returning it to a swimming facility and refurbished surrounding buildings. The petition got over 2000 signatures and generated a great deal of positive interest in the possibility of bringing this amazing building back to a swimming facility for the Community and a beautiful seafront attraction.

There is work currently ongoing to scope what is needed to secure the underpinnings of the Lido, which will need to be addressed in 21/22. In order to find the money for the proposed regeneration, it is anticipated that the Council will need to consider applying to the National Heritage Lottery Fund. 21/22 will therefore be a scoping exercise to ascertain what exactly we are able to do with this outstanding seafront building, how much funding will be required and where we will get the funding from.

9. Public Realm – Upgrading toilet facilities on seafront (including one changing place and gender neutral facilities)

Allocate public conveniences improvement budget for this specific use in 21/22 (£300K)

Rationale: Toilet facilities on the seafront are well used by both local community members and tourists. They are in need of an upgrade, with a particular need for the inclusion of a changing place and gender neutral facilities. This proposal is to earmark the public conveniences improvement budget for these upgrades

10. Remove £5 Council Tax Minimum cap

To go out for consultation in 21/22 with the intention of scoping options for offsetting the cost and amending for 22/23

Rationale: As per Cllr Howard's amendment in December 2020 Full Council:

This restriction is effectively an additional charge as it reduces the amount of Council Tax Support that would have been allowed if we kept to the National scheme. This restriction has the greatest impact on the poorest members of the Borough who cannot afford an extra £261 per annum.

11. Review: WSCC/WBC Public Realm Town Centre Funding

To review allocation of WSCC Public Realm Town Centre funding (including allocation to Portland Road and plans for remaining funds)

Rationale: It has been difficult to ascertain exact costs for Portland Road, and at time of writing it is still unclear what the final sum will be. To this end, the proposal is for a thorough and transparent review of the planning around investment of this public realm funding. We understand that decision rights have been delegated from WSCC to WBC (but again, need to revisit this MoU) and if this is the case, will ask the Council to undertake a thorough analysis of town centre public realm requirements in the wake of the Pandemic, on top of the issues that the high street was already facing. In previous work, we have highlighted the glaring omission of seating and greenery in many parts of the town centre, leaving them to run the risk of becoming grey, concrete wastelands which will attract no footfall. We have concerns that the current Portland Road plans show a similar lack of imagination, and whilst we have no objection to pedestrianizing the road, we would query granite benches as a choice of street furniture and the lack of ambition in design.