

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Joint Governance Committee
Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils
QEII Room, Shoreham-Centre, Shoreham-by-Sea
27 May 2021**

Cllr Andy McGregor (Chairman)

Adur District Council:

*Cllr Jim Funnell
Cllr Kevin Boram
Catherine Arnold
Lee Cowen
Gabe Crisp
Tania Edwards
Rob Wilkinson

Worthing Borough Council:

Cllr Roy Barraclough
Cllr Tim Wills
Cllr Mike Barrett
Steve Wills
Helen Silman
Emma Taylor
Cllr Steve Wills
*Cllr Steve Waight

***Absent**

JGC/1/21-22 Substitute Members

Councillor Daniel Humphreys declared his substitution for Councillor Louise Murphy.

Councillor Lionel Harman declared his substitution for Councillor Steve Waight.

Councillor Carol Albury declared her substitution for Councillor Jim Funnell.

JGC/2/21-22 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

JGC/3/21-22 Minutes

The minutes of the Joint Governance Committee meeting held on 27 March 2021 and the Joint Governance Sub-Committee meeting held on 31 March 2021, were agreed as correct records.

JGC/4/21-22 Public Question Time

No questions were received from the public.

JGC/5/21-22 Items Raised under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items raised.

JGC/6/21-22 Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council Audit

Planning Reports

Before the Committee was a report from the External Auditor, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and copies are attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 6.

The reports provided the Joint Governance Committee with a basis to review the proposed audit approach and scope for the 2020/21 audit in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the National Audit Office's 2020 Code of Audit Practice, the Statement of Responsibilities issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Ltd, auditing standards and other professional requirements. It was also to ensure that the audits were aligned with the Committee's service expectations.

The Provisional Audit Plans summarised the External Auditor's initial assessment of the key risks driving the development of effective audits for the Councils and outlined the planned audit strategy in response to those risks. The External Auditor's planning procedures remained ongoing, specifically in relation to the new requirements for the value for money conclusion. The External Auditor would report its value for money risk assessment and inform the Joint Governance Committee if there were any significant changes or revisions to its strategy for the financial statements audit upon completion of these procedures at the following meeting of the Committee.

The External Auditors welcomed the opportunity to discuss the reports with the Joint Governance Committee as well as understand whether there were other matters which the Committee considered may influence these audits.

During consideration of the reports, Members sought clarification on a number of points including the accounting for the Covid-19 grant income, the resources available to deliver the planned audit work outlined, valuation of Council properties and the mechanisms to consider all management overrides.

Resolved

That the Joint Governance Committee noted the contents of the report.

JGC/7/21-22 Internal Audit Progress Report

Before the Committee was a report from the Acting Head of Internal Audit, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and copies are attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 7.

The report sought to update the Joint Governance Committee members with the Head of Internal Audit's opinion reports on the systems of internal control at Adur District Council and at Worthing Borough Council during 2020/21.

A Member highlighted that a meeting with the Internal Auditor was outstanding in order to consider an additional item for the Audit Plan for 2021/22 regarding the 'allocation of costs and funding for town centre / public realm improvements'. Officers advised it was anticipated that resources would return to normal over the next few weeks and would enable a meeting to take place.

The Committee noted that a number of reports had not been completed for various reasons and sought clarification regarding which reports were still in progress and which had yet to commence. Members were advised that 3 audits had been deferred, they were Payroll, the Out of Hours Service and Cyber. The Theatres Audit had not yet started but the remaining audits were all in progress.

The Committee also raised queries in relation to the management of the Commercial Property Portfolio, Bluefrog Cleaning Services and Carbon Accounting. It was acknowledged that Adur District Council had committed to being carbon neutral in the delivery of its services by 2030.

It was suggested by the Committee that some Internal Audit days be allocated to look at the Council's Carbon Use.

The recommendations were proposed by Cllr Kevin Boram, seconded by Cllr Tania Edwards and unanimously supported by the Committee.

Resolved

That the Joint Governance Committee noted the contents of the report.

JGC/8/21-22 Annual Governance Statements 2020/21

Before the Committee was a report from the Director for Digital and Resources, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and copies are attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 8.

The Joint Governance Committee was asked to review and agree the Annual Governance Statements for 2020/21.

Members thanked Officers for maintaining control during the exceptional circumstances arising from the pandemic and for the swift role out of resources to the community.

The recommendations were proposed by Cllr Roy Barraclough, seconded by Tim Wills and unanimously supported by the Committee.

Resolved

The Joint Governance Committee

1. noted the evidence of compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance and the Progress Report produced to deal with any issues arising from these requirements as set out in Appendix A; and
2. approved the Annual Governance Statements for each Council, as set out in Appendix B to the report.

JGC/9/21-22 Risks & Opportunity Management Update

Before the Committee was a report from the Director for Digital and Resources, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and copies are attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 9.

The report provided updates on the management of the Councils' risks and Opportunities.

During consideration of the report, Members raised a number of queries including:-

- Welfare Reform in particular, the measures in place to alert residents to entitlement and how they could access - Officers advised that a number of initiatives were in place including Proactive Contacts by the Contact Centre which sought to provide advice in relation to financial inclusion, benefits, mental health support and digital inclusion. Members were informed that the resourcing of Council services providing support was under review to ensure that the correct level of resourcing was available including the use of redeployment where necessary;
- Business Rate Relief for Language Schools - Officers confirmed that the particular grant identified was for Leisure Services, however, a discretionary grant of £25k had been provided;
- Housing Supply (both social and emergency / temporary housing) and the inclusion of comments in relation to the Hidden Homes Project and properties sold through right to buy - Officers agreed to take the comments back to the author and advised that reports to the Joint Strategic Committee in relation to the Housing Strategy would seek to address the broader scope;
- The provision of 170 affordable homes on the site of the former Adur Civic Centre site - Officers advised that Adur District Council had contracted to sell the Civic Centre to a registered provider for the delivery of homes on the site due to the scale of development and the risks associated with development of this size. The general fund receipt would be used to support a number of projects moving forwards; and
- Affordability of rates (due to the LHA being frozen for many years - it was noted that LHA rates were different across geographic areas and that the Councils would write to the government on this issue.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Kevin Boram, seconded by Cllr Catherine Arnold and unanimously supported by the Committee.

Resolved

That the Joint Governance Committee

1. noted the progress in managing risks and opportunities;
2. agreed to receive a further progress report in September 2021.

JGC/10/21-22 Annual Review of Complaints about Member Conduct - 2020/21

Before the Committee was a report from the Monitoring Officer, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and copies are attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 10.

The report advised Members of the Joint Governance Committee of complaints received by the Monitoring Officer that Elected Members had breached the Code of Conduct. Complaints received related to Elected Members of Adur District Council, Worthing Borough Council, Sompting Parish Council and Lancing Parish Council.

The report advised of all complaints received during the municipal year 2020/21, action taken by the Monitoring Officer, and/or the Council, including any attempts at informal resolution and the outcome.

A Member of the Committee sought clarification in relation to how the number of complaints compared with the previous year. The Monitoring Officer agreed to review and feedback after the meeting.

One of the newly elected councillors asked how more detail could be found in relation to the Code of Conduct. Members were advised that training sessions would be provided by the Monitoring Officer and Independent Persons in July.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Lionel Harman, seconded by Roy Barraclough and supported by the Committee.

Resolved

The Joint Governance Committee noted the contents of this report and the actions taken by the Monitoring Officer and/or Council.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 8.12 pm, it having commenced at 6.30 pm

Chairman