

**Minutes of a meeting of the  
Joint Governance Committee  
Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils**

**Council Chamber, Worthing Town Hall**

**22 March 2022**

Councillor Steve Wills (Chairman)

**Adur District Council:**

Councillor Andy McGregor  
Councillor Rob Wilkinson  
Councillor Catherine Arnold  
Councillor Gabe Crisp  
Councillor Tania Edwards

**Worthing Borough Council:**

Councillor Mike Barrett  
Councillor Cathy Glynn-Davies  
Councillor Helen Silman  
Councillor Emma Taylor  
Councillor Steve Waight

**Absent**

Councillor Jim Funnell, Councillor Kevin Boram and Councillor Lee Cowen

Councillor Roy Barraclough and Councillor Louise Murphy

**JGC/44/21-22      Substitute Members**

Councillor Nicola Waight substituted for Councillor Roy Barraclough.

Councillor Debs Stainforth substituted for Councillor Lee Cowen.

**JGC/45/21-22      Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests.

**JGC/46/21-22      Minutes**

The minutes of the Joint Governance Committee meeting held on 25 January 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

**JGC/47/21-22      Public Question Time**

No questions from the public were received.

**JGC/48/21-22      Items Raised under Urgency Provisions**

There were no urgent items raised.

**JGC/49/21-22**

## **External Audit Verbal Update**

The Committee received a verbal update from the External Auditors on the progression with both Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils audit results reports.

The Committee was informed that to a large extent, the status of the audit had remained unchanged since the last report to Committee in January 2022.

The main obstacle preventing conclusion of the auditors work was the differences in property valuations that had been identified between the auditor's experts and the Councils external valuers. The auditors were in the process of moving that forward to reach a conclusion.

A Member sought assurance that this issue would be resolved before the deadline for the accounts being produced. Officers confirmed that the statutory deadline had already passed and advised that there was a national issue at present regarding the audit of Councils accounts. This was due to the audit of judgements and in particular, property judgements. It was noted that only 40% of all District Council accounts had been signed off. This was due to the agreement of valuations between Council experts and those employed by external auditors. Unfortunately this was a feature of the current audit regime which had caused a delay last year, and had been repeated again this year. Officers were hopeful that this issue would be resolved by the end of the month because otherwise it would slip into the preparation of the next set of accounts. It was noted that the Councils had completed their own preparation work on time and the bulk of the audit work had been concluded and that the opinion was unchanged from the previous report to the Committee. The Councils were now only waiting for the agreement of property valuations.

### **Resolved**

That the Joint Governance Committee noted the update.

**JGC/50/21-22**

## **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 provided the quarterly report on Internal Audit progress, key findings to the Committee and the updated Internal Audit Strategy.

It was noted that there had been good progress in catching up with the backlog in internal audit work from last year and the year prior. In addition, there had also been a significant improvement in the number of outstanding recommendations that had been implemented. This was largely attributable to the added scrutiny from the Councils Leadership Team with them pushing for outstanding recommendations to be implemented.

During debate of the item Members considered a number of issues including:-

- The audit of Theatres - it was noted that similar requests had been received by both the Joint Governance Committee (JGC) and the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee

(JOSC) to consider Theatres Procurement and Contract Management. It would take a significant amount of officer time to undertake both of these pieces of work and therefore it was recommended to defer the audit until the JOSC review was complete.

- Deadlines for the implementation of outstanding Priority 1 recommendations - Officers agreed to review the clarity of dates included in future reports. In addition, Officers from Housing updated the Committee in regards to the status of a number of policies, ongoing transformation work and gave an assurance that recommendations would be updated to reflect the ongoing work in this area.
- Asbestos Management - Officers advised that an asbestos survey had been completed but it didn't cover every aspect of the stock. Officers were well trained in regards to Asbestos and it was noted that disciplinary processes had resulted from situations where the procedures had not been followed.
- Communication with Adur Homes residents - Officers advised that work was ongoing in regards to how information was shared with residents and that it would be addressed as part of the transformation work.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Andy McGregor, seconded by Cllr Steve Wills and following a vote (For 12, Against 0, Abstentions 1) supported by the Committee.

## **Resolved**

### The Joint Governance Committee

- i. noted the progress against the 2021/22 Internal Audit Plan and implementation of Internal Audit recommendations;
- ii. noted the updated Internal Audit Strategy; and
- iii. approved that any further audit work on Theatres be deferred pending the outcome of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee review of Theatres procurement and contract management.

### **JGC/51/21-22            2022/23 Internal Audit Plan**

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 8.

The report asked Members to consider and approve the 2022/23 Internal Audit Plan.

The Committee considered the timing of audits throughout the year and which audits went into each quarter. Concerns were raised that complex audits being conducted in quarter 4 could slip into the following years audit days. Officers advised that the timing of audits were considered individually alongside the need to balance the audit resource throughout the year.

A Member raised concerns about the postponement of the Carbon Reduction Programme Audit from the 2021/22 plan to October 2022 as there was a risk that the Councils could miss out on grant funding during this period. Officers provided reassurance to Members that applications for government funding would not be disadvantaged by the timing of the audit. It was noted that internal governance and management was well covered and that the audit was not material to progress. When it came to auditing the Councils success in terms of carbon emissions reduction each year,

the Councils were undertaking a review extending the ambition of their targets to include Scope 3 emissions. As a result, one of the reasons for the timing of the audit was to allow the Councils the opportunity to undertake that work to develop a wider and deeper target.

Another Member raised questions in relation to the timing of the audit for a high risk area, the audit of Commercially Leased Buildings seeking clarification regarding the building safety measures that were going to be considered and the timing of the audit which was scheduled later in the year. In addition, clarification was also sought in relation to the rationale behind the timing of the audit of commercial waste which was scheduled in July 2022. Officers advised a significant amount of work had been undertaken in order to catch up with the backlog of audit work from the previous year and to get into a good position for finishing this year's audit plan. The auditors fully intended to complete all of the audits, well before year end. Although there were some audits scheduled for the fourth quarter, it was not with the intention of letting them slip. The issue in relation to lease buildings was compliance checking with health & safety. In regards to Commercial Waste, Officers advised that now wasn't the time to conduct this audit so as to provide time to resolve current issues. There was a need for additional time to assess pricing and see how the market responded to that and systems and processes were also relatively new. The team's capacity also needed directing to the completion of project work regarding the review of collection rounds to address imbalances in this area.

Consideration was also given to the Welfare Reform, Cost of Living and Covid Impact work as well as retrofitting for insulation and decarbonisation.

Following a vote (For 12, Against 0, Abstentions 1)

## **Resolved**

The Joint Governance Committee approved the 2022/23 Internal Audit Plan.

### **JGC/52/21-22          Anti-Money Laundering Policy**

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 9.

The report provided an Anti-Money Laundering Policy for approval.

A Member queried whether the policy related to fraudulent claims for Covid Grants. Officers advised that there was a rigorous assurance framework around the grants to businesses with significant assurance work required by Bayes which was referred to in the Audit Plan report. In addition, there was a Corporate Fraud Policy which could be viewed on the Councils website. In designing the grant award process, the Councils had fraud prevention in mind and used a number of tools to protect the Council against fraud and it was noted that a few fraudulent claims had been identified which the Councils were able to prevent.

Clarification was also sought in relation to whether it was reasonable to be suspicious of any cash payment. Officers advised that the Councils needed to know where cash payments came from and should be wary of payments from unexpected sources or things that looked a little unusual.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Rob Wilkinson, seconded by Cllr Catherine Arnold and supported unanimously.

### **Resolved**

The Joint Governance Committee

- i. noted the requirements of the various regulations on local authorities; and
- ii. approved the Anti-Money Laundering Policy.

### **JGC/53/21-22            The Councils' Surveillance Powers, Policy and Procedures**

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 provided an update on the usage and activity of RIPA requests during 2021/22; an update following on from an inspection by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office and a refreshed RIPA Policy for approval.

A Member queried whether the training referred to in the report would be mandatory. Officers advised that it would be for those with the powers to undertake this activity. It was noted that although the training was not intended to apply to Members, as they wouldn't be conducting surveillance, information would be shared through the annual report.

The recommendations were proposed by Cllr Cathy Glynn-Davies, seconded by Cllr Gabe Crisp and supported unanimously.

### **Resolved**

The Joint Governance Committee

- i. noted the statistical information relating to the use of RIPA for the period 2021/22;
- ii. noted the findings of the RIPA inspection; and
- iii. agreed the revised RIPA Policy.

### **JGC/54/21-22            Proposed revisions to Contract Standing Orders**

Before the Committee was a report from the Director for Digital, Sustainability & Resources, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and copies are attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 11.

The report proposed revisions to the Joint Contract Standing Orders to reflect the latest government procurement guidance and changes to legislation.

The Committee acknowledged the importance of taking account of social value in local government contracts, encouraging Officers to try and go above the minimum of 10% as

it could change a lot of local businesses. Consideration was also given to how the Councils could go further with local procurement with a suggestion that big contracts could be broken down into smaller ones to attract local provision of goods and services.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Councillor Helen Silman, seconded by Cllr Tania Edwards and unanimously supported.

## **Resolved**

The Joint Governance Committee

- i. recommended to Adur and Worthing Councils that the amendments to the Joint Contract Standing Orders be approved; and
- ii. delegated authority to the Chief Financial Officer in consultation with the Monitoring Officer to make minor and statutory revisions in future to the Joint Contract Standing Orders to ensure their continued alignment with legislative changes or changes to the Public Procurement Notices.

## **JGC/55/21-22                      Scheme of Allowances for Adur District Council in 2022/23**

Before the Committee was a report from the Interim Director for Communities, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and copies are attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 12.

The Joint Governance Committee was asked to consider the report of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel and make recommendations to Adur District Council on the level of Members' Allowances for the municipal year 2022/23.

Recommendations from the Joint Governance Committee on the level of allowances, would be considered at the Full Council meeting on 7th April 2022.

Mr Barry Hillman, Chairman of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel, attended the meeting to answer any questions in relation to the Panels proposals.

Members sought clarification regarding the consultation with group leaders in relation to the review of allowances. Officers agreed to provide details of the consultation with group leaders via a written response following the meeting.

The Committee debated the item, giving consideration to the important role allowances played in attracting demographic representation across the Council; difficulties arising from the way that allowances were treated as salaries by HM Revenues & Customs; the process for claiming back carers allowances rather than paying it in advance; and the disparity between the allowances paid to Councillors serving on Adur and Worthing Councils. Officers noted the points raised and agreed to feed them into the next review of allowances undertaken by the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel.

The recommendation in the report was proposed by Cllr Rob Wilkinson, seconded by Cllr Andy McGregor and following a vote (For 3, Against 0, Abstentions 3) supported by the Committee.

## **Resolved**

The Joint Governance Committee recommended to Adur District Council that Members Basic Allowance be linked to the outcome of the Officers' NJC Pay bargaining agreement for the year 2022/23.

### **JGC/56/21-22            Scheme of Allowances for Worthing Borough Council in 2022/23**

Before the Committee was a report from the Interim Director for Communities, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and copies are attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 13.

The Joint Governance Committee was asked to consider the report of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel and make recommendations to Worthing Borough Council on the level of Members' Allowances for the municipal year 2022/23.

Recommendations from the Joint Governance Committee on the level of allowances, would be considered at the Full Council meeting on 5th April 2022.

Mr Barry Hillman, Chairman of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel, attended the meeting to answer any questions in relation to the Panels proposals.

Members sought clarification regarding the consultation with group leaders in relation to the review of allowances. Officers agreed to provide details of the consultation with group leaders via a written response following the meeting.

The Committee debated the item giving consideration to the important role allowances played in attracting demographic representation across the Council; difficulties arising from the way that allowances were treated as salaries by HM Revenues & Customs; the process for claiming back carers allowances rather than paying it in advance; and the disparity between the allowances paid to Councillors serving on Adur and Worthing Councils. Officers noted the points raised and agreed to feed them into the next review of allowances undertaken by the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel.

The recommendation in the report was proposed by Cllr Helen Silman, seconded by Cllr Cathy Glynn-Davies and unanimously supported.

### **Resolved**

The Joint Governance Committee recommended to Worthing Borough Council that Members Basic Allowance be linked to the outcome of the Officers' NJC Pay bargaining agreement for the year 2022/23.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 8.45 pm, it having commenced at 6.30 pm

### **Chairman**