

Minutes of a meeting of the
Worthing Council
5 April 2022
at 6.30 pm

Councillor Lionel Harman (Chairman)
Councillor Richard Nowak (Vice-Chairman)

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| Councillor Noel Atkins | Councillor Dr Heather Mercer |
| Councillor Roy Barraclough | Councillor Richard Mulholland |
| Councillor Mike Barrett | Councillor Louise Murphy |
| Councillor Ferdousi Henna Chowdhury | Councillor Jon Roser |
| Councillor Russ Cochran | Councillor Helen Silman |
| Councillor Rebecca Cooper | Councillor Dawn Smith |
| Councillor Dan Coxhill | Councillor Sally Smith |
| Councillor Edward Crouch | Councillor Robert Smytherman |
| Councillor Jim Deen | Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes |
| Councillor Cathy Glynn-Davies | Councillor Emma Taylor |
| Councillor Karen Harman | Councillor Hazel Thorpe |
| Councillor Margaret Howard | Councillor John Turley |
| Councillor Daniel Humphreys | Councillor Nicola Waight |
| Councillor Charles James | Councillor Steve Waight |
| Councillor Kevin Jenkins | Councillor Carl Walker |
| Councillor Martin McCabe | Councillor Vicki Wells |
| Councillor Sean McDonald | Councillor Rosey Whorlow |
| | *Councillor Steve Wills |

***Absent**

C/78/21-22 Apologies for Absence

The Mayor announced that an apology for absence had been received from Councillor Steve Wills.

C/79/21-22 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Edward Crouch declared a pecuniary interest in item 7A(ii) as a Director of Worthing Homes.

C/80/21-22 Confirmation of Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2022 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Mayor.

The Mayor announced that there were 4 registered questions and 1 question from a member of the public in the gallery.

1) Submitted Question from Mr Phil Abbott, a Worthing Resident

*A blot on the Worthing landscape - Dumped, long term, short term parking of caravans, converted lorries, camper and commercial vehicles along West Parade is impacting on local residents, tourism and the wider Worthing economy.
What are you proposing to do about the situation?*

The Leader replied that West Sussex County Council, as the Highway Authority, was responsible for setting policies that govern on-street parking and enforcement. Worthing Borough Council carried out parking enforcement within that framework on behalf of the County Council.

Within that context, Worthing Borough Council can only take enforcement action by issuing penalty charge notices against vehicles that were parked in contravention to existing restrictions. Enforcement officers regularly patrolled West Parade and took appropriate action where necessary.

If any vehicle was not parked in contravention, whether commercial or otherwise, the council had no power or jurisdiction to have them removed from the highway.

Where vehicles appeared to be abandoned on the highway, a report would need to be made through <http://www.operationcrackdown.org/> which is a joint initiative between the police and local authorities.

The Leader advised Mr Abbott to raise the issue with his County Councillor, providing examples of similar issues that had been successfully resolved in this way.

2) Submitted Question from Mr Dan Hermitage, a Worthing Resident

Does the Leader think that Members' social media activity should be held to the same standards as other public communication methods, for example such as direct speech?

The Leader replied that social media could be a challenging area. It remained in many respects an unregulated (even lawless) arena, with an abundance of those who were all too 'trigger happy'. Content posted on social media had the potential to reach a wider audience than ever before, rather than being confined to the locality in which the content originated. This meant that content could have a much more significant impact, with a degree of permanence.

It was becoming increasingly common for standards complaints to be made on the basis of comments councillors had made on social media. Section 27(1) of the Localism Act 2011 placed a positive duty on councils to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of members and officers, and so this council sought to do so wherever its members used social media.

Mr Hermitage asked a supplementary question regarding Cllr Cochran's suspension from the Conservative Party in relation to his social media activity and whether the Leader thought it acceptable that internal Conservative enquiries into this activity were still outstanding, leaving the town with an independent councillor who had demonstrated prejudicial views on his social media channels.

The Leader replied that the question was factually inaccurate and the statements made were defamatory, therefore, he could not comment on them any further.

3) Submitted Question from Ms Pauline Fraser, a Worthing Resident

During the pandemic, Worthing Borough Council refuse and recycling workers kept the service going and were widely recognised and praised by the public as key workers for doing so. Is it not the case that the leadership of the Council failed to take this support into account when the strike started and anticipated that any sympathy from the public for their action would drain away as the bins overflowed, and that despite several statements and press releases from WBC on the strike that have sought to divide GMB and Unison members and to paint the refuse workers' strike action in a negative light, residents recognise that the strikers have a valid case for better pay and conditions?

The Leader replied that he recognised that refuse, recycling and cleansing staff had always provided a fantastic service in the Borough, and their efforts during the pandemic were particularly appreciated as demonstrated by the public support.

Many other council staff, who were also key workers, also rose to the challenge during the pandemic, supporting our communities and people in crisis, coordinating volunteers, helping the homeless community and those at risk of homelessness, establishing and supporting food banks, maintaining open spaces on which we were even more dependent, setting up systems to process and quickly pay covid grants to businesses and residents, and providing essential support through the Council's contact centre. The Council was grateful to each and everyone of them who went above and beyond during the pandemic.

The strike in the refuse and recycling service had caused significant disruption to residents and businesses just as we were starting to emerge from the pandemic. The Leader was very grateful to the cleansing crews who had worked throughout and had done a great job in keeping our environment as clean as possible in very difficult circumstances. All minds should now be focussed on bringing the strike to an end.

As a supplementary question, Ms Fraser asked whether the Chief Executive should have been on holiday during the dispute as it gave the impression that the GMB were not being taken seriously and that their demands were not being addressed properly.

The Leader replied that he would dearly love to hear the demands from the GMB, however, they had failed to represent workers in any of the talks held so far. It was also noted that the Chief Executive had delegated authority to a Director to undertake negotiations during her absence and any remarks in regards to competence were defamatory.

4) Submitted Question from Mr Samuel Baeza, a Worthing Resident

Does the Leader of the Council think that the current Code of Conduct for

Members is fit for purpose?

The code of conduct adopted by the council was based on the Model Councillor Code of Conduct, developed by the Local Government Association after extensive consultation last year, as part of its work on supporting all tiers of local government to continue to aspire to high standards of leadership and performance. It was a template for all councils to adopt in whole and/or with local amendments. The Council undertakes an annual review of this Code to ensure it continues to be fit-for-purpose, incorporating advances in technology, social media and changes in legislation. The sanctions available to enforce the Code were limited and were based on those permitted by legislation, which was outside the Council's control.

As a supplementary question, Mr Baeza asked the Leader whether Councillor Steve Wills was currently suspended from the Conservative Party and if so, when did the Leader know about that.

The Leader advised that he had not received any official notification of any matter involving Councillor Steve Wills and therefore could not answer the question.

5) Question asked by Mr Andy Whight, a Worthing Resident

Could the Executive Member for Digital & Environmental Services confirm when he last consulted with business owners on the Goring Road shopping parade, what problems were raised, what was done to address the issues raised and when.

The Executive Member replied that he was happy to have an email conversation with Mr Whight and provide a written response to any specifics, as it was unclear what the thrust of the question was.

The Leader advised that the question had been directed to the Executive Member for Digital & Environmental Services, but the question was not related to their portfolio.

C/82/21-22 Announcements by the Mayor, Leader of the Council, Executive Members or the Head of Paid Service

The Mayor made the following announcements.

Since the last meeting of Full Council, the Mayor had attended a number of Civic Events including:-

- A Worthing Rotary Dinner for their 100 year celebrations;
- The launch of the 2rd Goring Scouts new Squirrels group for youngsters aged 4 to 6;
- The Spiking awareness campaign;
- The National Tremor Foundation's Stall in town which was discussing and highlighting the effects of living with this condition; and
- The planting of two trees; 1 in Brooklands Park for the Covid Memorial and the second in Beach House Park as part of the Queens Green Canopy to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

The Mayor highlighted a number of upcoming charity events, including:-

- On Wednesday 13th, Thursday 14th and Tuesday 19th April from 2.00 to 3.30pm we are offering the opportunity to come and meet the Mayor for a cuppa at the Town Hall; this will also include a short tour of the Parlour and the Council Chamber.
- On Thursday 12th May the Worthing Society is giving a talk about Jane Austin at the Pizza Express in Warwick Street.
- There will also be a cheese and wine evening at TS Vanguard.

Finally, the Mayor congratulated Worthing Football Club on their success so far this season (they were 1 win away from winning promotion to the national league south). On behalf of the Council, the Mayor wished the team good luck in their remaining fixture.

The Leader made an announcement in regards to the lodging of an appeal in relation to Chatsmore Farm, Goring Gap, advising that the Council was on schedule to do that. The Leader paid tribute to all the people that came along to protest against the decision taken by the planning inspector and wished to place on record his thanks to two of the students from St Oscar Romero High School, Chloe and Elliott, for the contribution they had made to that campaign.

The Executive Member for Resources announced the opening of a new facility in Montague Street by 'AudioActive', a charity focusing on working with young people through the medium of music. The patron of the charity was Rory Graham, known as Rag and Bone Man, a hugely successful recording artist. Rory had been instrumental with the scheme in Worthing. The premises will feature a coffee shop, record store, music studios and performance areas. Free music sessions will be available for young people together with interventions to improve mental health.

C/83/21-22 Items raised under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items raised under the urgency provisions.

C/84/21-22 Recommendations from the Executive and Committees to Council

Council had, before it, recommendations from the Joint Strategic Committee, the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Joint Governance Committee.

Extracts of these minutes had been circulated as items 7A (i) and (ii), 7B and 7C (i) and (ii).

Item 7A(i) Joint Strategic Committee - 16 March 2022

Renewal of the Adur & Worthing Wellbeing Partnership

The Leader introduced the recommendation to the Council informing Members that the proposed new commissioning arrangements for Adur & Worthing Wellbeing, from April 2022, were for a period of five years. A funding allocation had been proposed for the 2022-2023 financial year which had been signed off at WSCC Full Council in February 2022. Indicative funding for each subsequent financial year would be agreed by December, annually.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Robert Smytherman, debated and unanimously supported.

Resolved,

That the Council agreed to amend the revenue budget accordingly. The indicative amount for 2022-2023 was £513,973.

** Councillor Crouch left the meeting during consideration of item 7A(ii).*

Item 7A(ii) Joint Strategic Committee - 16 March 2022

Pathways to Affordable Homes - Delivery Plans

The Leader introduced the recommendation advising that the report had followed the publication of the Adur and Worthing Housing Strategy for 2020-2023 and 'Delivering Pathways to Affordable Homes' documents. It outlined how Adur and Worthing intended to meet the commitments set out in Delivering Pathways to Affordable Homes.

The delivery plans provided details of how delivery programmes and teams could be structured as well as a detailed delivery structure providing an overview of work streams and timescales for completion.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Heather Mercer, debated and following a vote (For 18, Against 0, Abstentions 17) it was

Resolved,

That the Council agreed to adopt the Delivery Plans set out in Appendix A as part of the Housing Strategy for 2020-2023.

Item 7B Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 17 March 2022

JOSC Work Programme setting 2022/23

Prior to consideration of the item, the Council wished to place on record it's thanks to Cllr Smytherman, for all his work on the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman of the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Richard Nowak, debated and following a vote (For 18, Against 0, Abstentions 18) it was

Resolved,

That the Council approved the amended draft JOSC Work Programme for 2022/23.

Item 7C(i) Joint Governance Committee - 22 March 2022

Proposed revisions to Contract Standing Orders

The Chairman of the Joint Governance Committee proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Robert Smytherman, debated and unanimously supported.

Resolved,

That the Council approved the amendments to the Joint Contract Standing Orders.

Item 7C(ii) Joint Governance Committee - 22 March 2022

Scheme of Allowances for Worthing Borough Council in 2022/23

The Chairman of the Joint Governance Committee proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Robert Smytherman, debated and unanimously supported.

Resolved,

The Council approved that Members Basic Allowance be linked to the outcome of the Officers' NJC Pay bargaining agreement for the year 2022/23.

C/85/21-22 Report of the Leader on Decisions taken by the Executive

The Leader of the Council presented his report on the decisions taken by the Executive since the last Ordinary meeting of the Council, which were detailed in Item 8.

There were no questions raised in relation to the decisions reported.

C/86/21-22 Selecting the Mayor for 2023/24

Councillor Beccy Cooper proposed Councillor Martin McCabe as Deputy Mayor for 2022/23, to become Mayor in 2023/24.

Councillor Daniel Humphreys seconded the proposal.

There were no other nominations.

On a vote (For 36, Against 0, Abstentions 0)

Resolved,

That Councillor Martin McCabe be the nominated Deputy Mayor for 2022/23 to serve as Mayor from the Annual Meeting of the Council in 2023.

C/87/21-22 Members Questions under Council Procedure Rule 12

The Mayor announced that the Proper Officer had not received any questions from Members in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.

C/88/21-22 Motions on Notice

Before the Council was a motion proposed by Councillor Vicki Wells and seconded by Councillor Martin McCabe.

Resolved,

In accordance with the Constitution, the Motion was noted and immediately referred to the Joint Strategic Committee.

** Before closing the meeting, the Mayor wished to place on record his thanks to those Councillors who had chosen not to stand again at the upcoming elections in May for their service on the Council and wished them the best in their future endeavours.*

The Mayor closed the meeting at 8.02pm.

Mayor