

**Minutes of a Meeting of the  
Adur District Council**

**7 April 2022**

**QE2 Room, Shoreham Centre, Shoreham-by-Sea**

Councillor Stephen Chipp, Chairman  
Councillor Ann Bridges, Vice-Chairman

Councillor Carson Albury	Councillor Jim Funnell
Councillor Catherine Arnold	Councillor Jeremy Gardner
Councillor Robina Baine	Councillor Joss Loader
Councillor Vee Barton	Councillor Paul Mansfield
Councillor Brian Boggis	Councillor Andy McGregor
Councillor Kevin Boram	Councillor Steve Neocleous
Councillor Mandy Buxton	Councillor Carol O'Neal
Councillor Dave Collins	Councillor Joe Pannell
Councillor Lee Cowen	Councillor Neil Parkin
Councillor Gabe Crisp	Councillor Sharon Sluman
Councillor Angus Dunn	Councillor Debs Stainforth
Councillor Emma Evans	Councillor Leila Williams

**Absent**

Councillor Carol Albury, Councillor Tania Edwards and Councillor Rob Wilkinson

**c/64/21-22                    Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Carol Albury, Wilkinson and Edwards

**c/65/21-22                    Declarations of interest**

There were no declaration of interests

**c/66/21-22                    Questions from the public**

The Chairman announced that there had been a number of questions received on the same subject, questioners were asked you to read questions and then the Executive Member for Resources would to reply to all of them.

The following questions were asked:

*1. Dear Sirs/Madams, I am on the Swiss Gardens PTA and so am rather passionate about improving the experience of our children at Swiss Gardens Primary. I just wanted to send a brief email ahead of the meeting on 7th April, which either myself or my husband will be attending. This to say that we (and an overwhelming majority of parents at the school) very much support the all weather pitch that has also been deemed by the head of Adur Council Parks 'the best option for the school and the community'.*

*The recent pandemic has caused a lot of anxiety in children and as we all know, outdoor activity can hugely improve this. This is especially important during the darker winter months when children can really only get outdoor time in daylight inside school hours. This is also precisely the time of year that regular grass becomes waterlogged. We know from previous consultations with the council that an all weather pitch would be the only option that would provide long lasting, year round access to a usable playing field.*

*Furthermore, we have a fantastic head who has been campaigning tirelessly for this for many years. Mr Caughlin is much respected and trusted in our school and the mere fact that he has spent so much time and energy on this, during what has been a very difficult few years for schools, says enough to us parents as to how important this all weather solution must be for our children.*

*I think everyone agrees that our children, who spend most of their time at school, deserve to grow up as healthy, happy adults. So I and many parents, carers and grandparents at the school very much hope we finally get approval for the all weather pitch that has been just out of reach for the past 5 years. This solution is highly overdue and now needed, more than ever. Please let me know if there is anything that we can do to make this happen?*

*2Swiss Gardens has to use the Meads as an outside area for sports and play as they don't have enough space. But The Meads is unusable for one third of the time due to the condition of the surface.*

*That's the equivalent of one whole term where the children have no access to a safe place to run around.*

*1,650 hours of missed PE and play opportunities have already passed since the funds were actually allocated to Swiss Gardens.*

*That translates to 300 hours of actual child play for every week that Adur council doesn't move this project on.*

*300 hours on enclosed concrete when they could be in the Meads with a play-friendly surface surrounded by the trees and grass of the rest of the park.*

*This is not just a nice thought. Playing on concrete has real consequences. Twice my own child has been knocked over on the over-crowded concrete and been hurt badly enough I've had to come and collect him. These are not just grazed knees, these are face and head injuries. The second of which bled so much I had to replace his coat.*

*Playing in an area that is only 'half' committed to the children also has consequences. The children have to wait while their teacher checks the grass for broken glass and dog poo before they start. There was one time my son missed his PE lesson after he sat down in the beginning and put his hand in dog poop and had to go in and clean up. He missed his lunch too that day because he just couldn't get his hand to feel 'clean' enough to eat.*

*This is why we are asking the council why there has been no forward movement on this, why have they stopped before a solution was found, and what they are going to do to move this on and get our children a safe place to play?*

*3Adur Council leases the enclosed area of the Meads to West Sussex county council for the use of Swiss Gardens Primary to use for 35 hours a week.*

*Sport England states that, at most, natural turf pitches have a weekly coping capacity of 3-6 hours for adults, rising to 4-9 hours for children.*

*Given the HUGH discrepancy between the hours of use needed and the hours of use actually viable with grass, why is this option being considered by the council?*

*4. Firstly, to give context to my question I would like to briefly summarise some observations. A genuine comment from my two children, on separate occasions a few weeks ago when there was a dry spell 'Mummy, we are using the Meads now' and 'I had a good play time, we are on the Meads.....' It was if it were a treat to have been given this opportunity. I saw how much lighter and positive they seemed having had a good playtime during their day. It has been widely noted that the play space at Swiss Gardens Primary school is inadequate and does not meet the required standards of play space per child or space needed to make sure that the PE curriculum is resourced efficiently. For most of the year the children are required to play in the small, concrete areas that surround the school where there is also constant school pedestrian traffic - those getting from one area to another. The ground is harsh and accidents happen regularly. If you take the opportunity to see the children at playtimes you will notice that there is not enough space to run or move and children are constantly having to navigate other children and staff.*

*As a professional in the field of mental health and wellbeing within schools, I cannot stress highly enough, the importance of having sufficient and usable outdoor play space is for primary school children. With higher expectations academically, children need the opportunity to be able to have a space to be physical during playtimes and PE. Moreover, post pandemic, there is even more of a requirement for children to have outdoor space. There has been an increase in cases of children requiring mental health and emotional support. When a child is feeling anxious or frustrated they need to be able to match that energy by doing something physical that can change the energy into something positive such as running or playing ball games. Sitting in a calm room will not always support that child. The DfE state that enabling a child to be physical when in a heightened state of emotion, allows them to regulate their feelings more effectively. This is particularly true for primary age children as emotional maturity is not as developed as secondary age children and therefore are less likely to be able to self-regulate. Without expelling the energy, they have caused by increased adrenaline in the body, children become frustrated and angry which can lead to negative behaviour or internal and / or external self-harm. Currently there is no sufficient space for children to run, play and conduct ball games on the current site safely. The government guidelines stipulate that the MINIMUM amount of outdoor play space recommended per child is 20m<sup>2</sup>, Swiss Gardens children have 2m<sup>2</sup> – Please take a moment to note that this is ten times less than the recommended amount.*

*The NHS indicates that 1 of the 5 areas to focus on to support wellbeing is physical activity, children spend 195 days at school per year, over half of those days are during the winter months, when it is dark from 4pm. Therefore, an opportunity for children to get the most physical exercise to support their wellbeing is during the school day. I appreciate the concerns of the surrounding residents; in an ideal world the Meads would be able to facilitate children's playtime throughout the year on grass. The feasibility study indicates that 20% of the year this would still not be possible – most likely during the winter when the children need it most. It also indicates that grass as an option would not last.*

*Please note that 460 children who attend the school are also neighbours to the Meads. Their voices need to be heard too.*

*Considering the above my question is: Were all 570 parental responses on behalf of the children who attend the school that were in favour of having an all-weather pitch to support the mental health and wellbeing of the children, taken into consideration? And what is proposed to rectify the woeful inadequacies of current play space for the children given that the grass option is most likely to be out of use during the winter months when children have less opportunity to play outside after school and need the provision in school?*

*5. I have a question for the council regarding the development of The Meads play area in Shoreham-By-Sea.*

*The Meads has two sets of users who unfortunately have opposing sets of needs*

*Firstly - Children who use the enclosed area for physical education and play.*

*Secondly - Local people who use the park, next to the enclosed area, for recreation.*

*Given that Adur council are required to serve both sets, it was concerning to see that the consultation was managed by a company whose mission statement supports the needs of the second set of people and opposes the first. We have concerns as to why an independent company wasn't used.*

*Even more concerning is that we don't see where in the consultation the needs of our children were EVER actually investigated or explored.*

*Despite the fact that the 450 children of Swiss Garden are the main users of the enclosed area and in pure numbers the main daily users of the Meads, the consultation demographics record only 1% of the reporting included people under the age of 16!*

*In effect, nobody talked to them at all!*

*When our school community started to understand that the process was missing out the needs of our children, over 500 parents sent in messages of why this is so important, but we don't see any evidence that Council has acknowledged this intense local support or the content of those concerns.*

*Can the council therefore tell us how they are going to address this imbalance going forward and give a more suitable weight to the needs of our children as the main users of the enclosed area?*

*6. We have been pursuing for 6 years + potential projects which would enhance the outside sporting and play experience for children at Swiss Gardens. We have been given many assurances that improvements will be made. The school's clear preference has apparently been rejected by the council. During this 6 years around 400 children have moved on from Swiss Gardens. We currently have 430 children at the school. How does the council's future planning ensure we meet the social, emotional and health needs of children currently at, and not yet at, the school ?*

7. In Dec 2016, this council helped us secure funding to improve our outside space on the Meads to make it more useable all year round especially in light of increased numbers. Adur DC announced the news to great fanfare to the local press.

- Over the next few years we had many meetings with Emma Evans, and officers, during which time everyone broadly said they were supportive of the scheme.
  - WSCC offered to project manage the scheme. Adur DC insisted as it was their land and they should project manage it for the benefit of the school and the community.
  - After some local opposition started the school had a meeting on Jan 10th 2020 with - officers, Emma Evans and Kevin Boram who were all asked in the face of local opposition, 'there is no point in the school carrying on with the scheme unless we have your support'. Every person in that room said they supported us. This was the last meeting the councillors agreed to attend despite several requests.
  - In Jan 2021 an officer from parks met the school and told us the consultation had gone well, the independent consultant had described to him that the scheme was a 'no brainer', that there was no significant environmental impact, that there was a clear need for an all weather space, that new grass and drainage wouldn't last, still wouldn't be useable and that he would be recommending an all weather solution to the JSC.
  - As effectively the budget holders we were promised that we would have a chance to make sure voice was heard in that forum. This never happened.
  - We were promised the consultation would be released in Feb 2021. It was delayed till after the local elections, itself a breach of government consultation guidelines.
  - Pre election 2021 I begged the Green Party candidate not to use the Meads as political football whilst we were trying to keep our teachers alive and kids educated in a pandemic. She told me in writing : 'there's nothing for you to worry about as Chair of Governors' and effectively that she wouldn't take sides. A short while after she announced in her election material that she was opposing the schools wishes with telling the school first,
  - In July last year the council announced it had a preference for grass, in direct contradiction of the advice of their own senior officer, and promises they personally had made
  - In subsequent meetings with Officers a number of promises were made, minuted and agreed to. These include (amongst others) :
    - A commitment to provide an 'exemplary well drained sports and play space'
    - That he would organise ground / usage surveys done over the winter, get data on the different surfaces and bring plans to start the shared fundamentals of project
    - He would facilitate meetings with local councillors
    - That he would 'to present evidence that a grass solution is sustainable and durable all year round for the level of use we anticipate for the space'
    - That he would find a previous officers recommendation that he told us he would make to Exec councillors recommending Artificial Grass Pitch for the JSC report we were promised.
    - That Adur DC would reevaluate all options for enclosed Meads space including
      - Assessing educational need - clearly no work has been done on this - not a single conversation has been had with any teacher about educational need.
      - Reassessing costs / durability / all year round use / value for money (particularly in light of new info that a new grass pitch without a very high maintenance regime is likely to be unsustainable)
      - Demonstrate Adur recommended solution is compliant with statutory obligations / regulatory guidance for Health & Safety, Employment Law and School Playspace.
- As far as we're aware none of these promises have been fulfilled. Does this council have a problem keeping promises to primary schools and more importantly taking the steps necessary to keep our kids safe?

The Executive Member for Resources stated that there had been a misunderstanding about the role of Adur District Council in relation to the meads. The Exec member noted the

importance of sport and recreation for the children at Swiss Gardens and explained that he knew first hand the benefits of the sport to the mental and physical development and active lifestyle brought. The Council was not here to stifle that opportunity. It was important to understand that whilst Adur District Council owned the Meads, the fenced area was leased in its entirety to West Sussex County Council for use by the school during set times. This arrangement came about following a request from West Sussex during changes to the age of transfer process moving the school from a first school to a primary. The expanded school no longer had sufficient outdoor space and the District Council were asked to allow shared use of the Meads through a lease arrangement which Adur District Council agreed to.

As the Planning Authority the Council had secured section 106 monies from developers primarily on behalf of other parties such the Ropetackle north development section 106 monies were secured on behalf of West Sussex County Council. An amendment was made that funding be ring fenced for Swiss Gardens Primary School. How the money was spent was for the County Council to determine, it was expected that this be done in consultation with the school. Adur District Council had no say on how the School and West Sussex decided to spend that money.

The mental and physical benefits of an outdoor space were not limited to children. The District Council has overall responsibility to look after our parks and open spaces in Adur for the benefit of the whole community. The Council was committed to curating our parks and open spaces and to promote environmental best practice in a manner that is consistent with our Climate Change strategy. The Meads was one of the smaller open spaces. It served a variety of uses and was enjoyed by a wide cross section of people from the local community, many of whom had also made their views known. It was clear from the consultation exercise that took place last year, that a majority favoured an improved grass solution for the leased area.

The Councils conclusion as landowner, was that it was believed that the impact on the Park of the leased land becoming 3G would be on balance detrimental and take away too much of the grassed area that is enjoyed by the wider community outside of school hours. It was important to note that the Council had not been asked by the leaseholder to consider a variation to the lease to permit installation of an artificial surface or to do anything to that piece of ground. The fact was that a considerable sum remained available to be spent by the County Council in conjunction with the school– in the region of £280,000. This money could be used to upgrade the leased area and the District Council would be likely to support an improved grass solution with much better drainage that would maximise its availability during the year. The Council would commit technical and project support along with ongoing maintenance. The decision on how to spend the money lay with the County Council to determine in consultation with the school.

It was reiterated that the money was not the District Councils to spend. It was for West Sussex County Council in consultation with the school. It was money that was earmarked for school improvements. It was not ringfenced for the Meads and could be spent on other areas of the school. The Councils had not had any updates on progress and would continue to push for these. It felt that some of the questions put through misunderstanding were put through false premise that the District Council were somehow holding things up, didn't care about the pupils of the school and didn't want to make a decision. The school was urged to take up dialogue with the county council and agree how the money should be spent.

The Executive Member for Environment explained that a friend of the Meads group had been formed and had cross party support and it was urged that people get involved with that

group. It was believed that the group involved parents from the school as well as residents and that working together was a way forward.

It was asked how the work of friends addressed the drainage of the site. The Executive Member told the meeting that the area outside of the fence was being dealt with by the 'friends of' group. With regards to the area leased, the council was waiting for West Sussex to put forward a proposal. A request to improve drainage would be considered as landowner in that instance. The leaseholder would need to request something in the first instance.

Members were told that the school was in continual consultation with the County Council about the use of the money. It was asked why during the process the school had been misled by officials and councillors as to how the process played out, who carried key responsibilities and who were the decision makers. The Executive Member told the meeting that the Council was not the Education Authority and that West Sussex County Council were the education authority, they were the ones who would need to make proposals about the use of the land of which the District Council would make a decision.

It was asked how the Council could help provide a resolution to a 'council vacuum' (referring to decisions not being made by either West Sussex or Adur District). The Executive Member told the meeting that The Council had offered project and technical support to West Sussex County Council should they want to go ahead with the enhanced grass and drainage solution. There had been no decision because there had been no question from West Sussex concerning use of the land. The Executive Member committed to getting in touch with West Sussex County Council responsible officers and members to get an update on where the Councils were.

It was asked if democratically the Council had carried out a democratic consultation. It was purported that the Council had not addressed the whole neighbourhood including children and parents of the school. The Executive Member told the meeting that there had been a session with allotment holders, two school sessions had been carried out, there were two public drop-ins, there had been a public survey. There were a number of opportunities for people to engage with the process.

It was asked how concerns about the process of consultation were being addressed and how would the school be heard. The Executive Member told the meeting that there had been a variety of opportunities for people to take part in the consultation which had been carried out by an independent company. The Executive Member told the meeting that people could write to their County Councillor, the responsible County Council Cabinet Member and the responsible officers at West Sussex.

Reference was made to a petition supporting the installation of a 3G pitch and it was asked why that was not considered public support for the project. The Executive Member told the meeting that a range of responses had been considered when a preference had been reached as a result of the consultation.

**c/67/21-22                      Confirmation of Minutes**

**Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting of the 7 April 2022 be approved as the correct record

**c/68/21-22                      Announcements by the Chairman, Leader of the Council,  
Executive Members and / or Head of Paid Service**

## **The Chairman made the following announcements**

March/April 2022

3rd March – Planted a silver birch tree in Brooklands park in commemoration of those that have lost their lives during the pandemic and to be used as a place of quiet contemplation.

11th March – Planted and Oak Tree in Buckingham Park to commemorate the Queens platinum Jubilee for the Green Canopy initiative. I was joined by several councillors and was really happy that my children's school allowed my children to join me and help.

1st April was my charity golf day for Esteem at West Hove golf club. Great day had by all and we raised over £3000 for charity. To say conditions were challenging is a bit of an understatement with strong winds, snow, sleet and hail and blazing sunshine all in one 4 hour game – unless you were Angus Dunns team who really got their moneys worth and had about a 17 hour round!

Finally I am able to advise, if not already known, that I will be stepping down from role as a Cllr after 7 years. I have fought 3 elections and enjoyed immensely my time as a Cllr. I made my intentions clear to the Leader before Christmas and only reference this as a recent planning committee audience members may feel they have somehow helped in that decision – they did not. I have no long and rousing speech except to say I hope that Cllrs on all sides of the chamber treat each other with respect and choose their words publicly carefully – having had to call the Police due to recent communications sent to me on line I know all too well the consequences of enflaming the work we do here – which after all is only for the benefit of the area we live.

Some highlights for myself have been the hundreds of constituents I have been able to meet and help over the years, the deterrents on Southwick Green that have ensured we had at least one period in my time as Southwick Green Cllr without incident and also some of the buildings that are now developed in our community that will house new families and help bolster our local economy.

I want to thank all of the officers that have helped me a long the way and you, my fellow councillors for all tirelessly doing work to aid our Adur District. Best of luck to all those standing in the upcoming May election.

The Leader of the Council wished all Members well in the upcoming election and all retiring members well. The Leader told members that he had taken on board comments at a recent governance meeting concerning allowances and benefits. It was a national issue and he had asked some members to look into the issue and report to the MP for support.

### **c/69/21-22                    Items raised under urgency provisions**

There were no urgent items

### **c/70/21-22                    Recommendations from the Executive and Committees to Council**

### **7(a) Joint Strategic Committee 16 March 2022**

## **Renewal of the Adur and Worthing Wellbeing Partnership**

The Leader introduced the recommendation to the Council which was seconded and on a vote unanimously approved.

**Resolved:** that in relation to the annual funding allocation from West Sussex County Council for the next five years of the partnership the Councils amend the revenue budget accordingly. The indicative amount for 2022-2023 was £513,973

## **7(b) Joint Strategic Committee 16 March 2022**

### **Pathways to Affordable Homes - Delivery Plans**

The Leader of the Council introduced the recommendation to the Council which was seconded and debated

Members discussed waiting lists, housing currently available and housing being developed with the seconder of the recommendation commenting that housing was needed across all sectors of the market. On a vote the recommendation was unanimously approved.

**Resolved:** that Adur and Worthing Councils adopt the Delivery Plans set out in Appendix A as part of the Housing Strategy for 2020-2023.

## **7(c) Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee 17 March 2022**

### **JOSC Work Programme Setting 2022/23**

The Chairman of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee introduced the recommendation to the Committee which was seconded.

Members debated the recommendation and comments were made about member participation in Scrutiny meetings and independent of Chairing. On a vote the recommendation was passed unanimously

**Resolved:** That the amended draft JOSC Work Programme for 2022/23 be approved.

## **7(d) Joint Governance Committee – 22 March 2022**

### **Proposed revisions to Contract Standing Orders**

The Vice Chair of the Joint Governance Committee introduced the recommendation to the Committee.

Members debated the recommendation and discussed issues of social value and local procurement. On a vote the recommendations were approved unanimously

**Resolved:** that the amendments to the Joint Contract Standing Orders be approved;

## **7 (e) Joint Governance Committee 22 March 2022**

## **Scheme of Allowances for Council in 2022/23**

The Vice Chair of Joint Governance introduced the recommendation to the Committee.

Members debated the recommendation and there was consideration that the recommendation be deferred to the next municipal year although this amendment was withdrawn. On a vote the recommendation was unanimously approved

**Resolved:** that Members Basic Allowance be linked to the outcome of the Officers' NJC Pay bargaining agreement for the year 2022/23.

### **c/71/21-22 Report of the Leader on decisions taken by the Executive**

There were no announcements by the Executive and no questions put under this item

### **c/72/21-22 Members question time under Council Procedure Rule 12**

There were no questions under this item

### **c/73/21-22 Motion on Notice**

Before the council was a motion proposed by Cllr Neil Parkin and seconded by Councillor Dunn. The Motion concerned aggression in Ukraine.

Members debated the motion and discussed on the implementation and wording of the motion. It was agreed that the word 'Russian' be removed as there were people in Russia who were being persecuted for opposing the actions of the Russian Government.

#### **Resolved;**

"Adur Council is saddened and disturbed by the unprovoked aggression against Ukraine, which has caused horrific devastation, and created an escalating humanitarian crisis with millions displaced or affected. In light of this, and as a way of expressing support for the people of Ukraine and members of our communities who are from or who have ties with Ukraine this Council;

- a. Condemns the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine and stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and their families and friends, including those local to Adur
- b. Stands ready to provide support and open our arms to innocent people displaced and affected by this unprovoked aggression.
- c. Will work with and support the efforts of our local communities to provide help, support and comfort to those in need."

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.07 pm, having commenced at 7.00 pm

