

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

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Worthing

7 June 2022

Councillor Carl Walker (Chairman)

Adur District Council:

Councillor Neil Parkin
Councillor Angus Dunn
*Councillor Carson Albury
*Councillor Kevin Boram
Councillor Emma Evans
Councillor Steve Neocleous

Worthing Borough Council:

*Councillor Dr Beccy Cooper
Councillor Cathy Glynn-Davies
Councillor Martin McCabe
*Councillor Helen Silman
Councillor Emma Taylor
Councillor John Turley
Councillor Vicki Wells
Councillor Rosey Whorlow

** Member not present*

Other Members Present

Worthing Borough Council:- Councillor Kevin Jenkins

JSC/1/22-23 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

JSC/2/22-23 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes from the Joint Strategic Committee meeting held on 16 March 2022, were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

JSC/3/22-23 Public Question Time

Mr Sean McDonald, a Worthing Resident, asked when the Worthing Executive Member portfolios and responsibilities would be made public. The Worthing Deputy Leader replied that the administration was currently changing the portfolios and areas of responsibility to ensure that they responded to public need. This process took time as it was not straightforward, however, this work was nearly complete and the portfolios would be published shortly.

Mr Sean McDonald, a Worthing Resident, also asked a question seeking clarification regarding comments made by the Worthing Leader, which were quoted in the Herald on the 31st May, in relation to 'people having a fair and decent living wage'. What was the

likely financial impact and cost to local taxpayers? The Worthing Deputy Leader replied that the administration had given a commitment to doing everything they possibly could to pay the Council's workers as good and as decent a wage as possible so they could support and feed their families as well as meeting high energy costs.

Mr Sean McDonald, a Worthing Resident, also asked a question in relation to comments made by the Worthing Leader, reported in the Herald on the 27th May, in relation to the Chatsmore Farm appeal. Was the Labour administration prepared to follow its words with deeds and support the appeal all the way through to the High Court? The Worthing Deputy Leader replied yes, the Labour administration would be appealing the decision.

JSC/4/22-23 Items Raised under Urgency Provisions

There were no items raised under urgency provisions.

JSC/5/22-23 Chief Executive's use of urgency powers to settle the waste dispute

Before the Committee was a report by the Chief executive, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as Item 5.

The Committee was informed that a significant proportion of staff in the Waste and Cleansing team started industrial action on the 14th March 2022. Following negotiation with both the GMB and Unison, both sides reached agreement on the 8th April 2022 allowing the strike to come to an end.

The resulting settlement had significant unbudgeted cost implications for the Councils. Under the Council's financial regulations, officers were not allowed to enter into agreements with unbudgeted financial consequences, consequently the Chief Executive approved the use of the Council's reserves to fund the costs associated with the strike and associated new pay arrangements using urgency powers as set out in the constitution.

A Member asked a question regarding the financial risks posed to residents following the settlement. Officers advised that the risks were primarily related to inflation on the Council's budgets which was showing up in several different places. The Council was expecting pay awards of at least 4%, provision had been made in the budget for a 5% increase. Until the pay settlement was agreed, the Council wouldn't have certainty on this figure. In addition, inflation was also affecting energy costs. Since the budget was set, the war in Ukraine had had a significant impact on the energy markets. Diesel costs were expected to rise by 50%, electricity costs were expected to rise by 50% and the cost of gas was expected to rise by 300%. At this early stage in the financial year, officers were expecting cost pressures in Worthing of £750k excluding the cost of the strike action. As a result, a recommended programme of action would be proposed to the Council to help bring the budget back in line by the end of the financial year. This would form the basis of a report to the Committee in July 2022.

As a supplementary question, the Member asked how the withdrawal of the sum of £371k would affect the percentage of net revenue expenditure, which ideally should be held between 6 and 10%. Would the Council still achieve this? Officers advised that it would be recommended that the sum be taken from the capacity issues reserve, rather than the working balance, to preserve the working balance to manage the in year risks

that the Council was experiencing. Therefore, the working balance would be at the upper limit and was currently around 10%.

A Member highlighted that reserves could only be replaced from one source, the Council taxpayer. Therefore, he sought clarification as to how many Worthing Labour Councillors had been supported by the GMB? Councillor Walker agreed to provide a written response to the question following the meeting.

Members welcomed the report and thanked officers for their work to resolve this matter. The recommendation in the report was proposed by Councillor Vicki Wells, seconded by Councillor Angus Dunn and unanimously supported.

Decision

The Joint Strategic Committee noted the content of the report and endorsed the urgent decision made by the Chief Executive to settle the industrial action.

Call In:

The call-in deadline for the decision will be 5.00pm on the 17th June 2022.

JSC/6/22-23 Improving our Democracy and Governance Practices

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital, Sustainability and Resources, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as Item 6.

The Committee was informed that over the last two years, both Adur and Worthing Councils had developed plans and established new resources to enable the increased participation of residents and communities in policy development and decision making. New posts had been established including a Participation Lead and a Data Lead to improve our ability to understand and engage with our communities.

In support of the aim of continuing to improve participation and transparency in decision-making, an internal review by the councils' Monitoring Officer had identified opportunities for modernising both Council's constitutions, and this was about to enter the member consultation stage over summer 2022, via a Working Group, agreed to be set up by the Joint Governance Committee at its meeting on 31 May 2022. This work would be carried out independently but with parallel timetables where possible for each Council.

Further, the change of Administration at Worthing Borough Council created a need to consider how decisions were best made in both the joint and individual authority arenas.

The report proposed the creation of sub-committees of the Joint Strategic Committee - Worthing Executive and Adur Executive - to which would be delegated in full any decisions solely affecting the relevant Council. The intention was that it would improve the ability for our communities to understand how and where key "place based" decisions were taken, and how they were able to more fully participate.

The new arrangements would be piloted over a period of 6-12 months during which they will be reviewed to assess the impact on communities, decision-making and resources.

Options were also being developed for holding meetings away from the usual council buildings, enabling the Executives (subject to budget availability) to take decision-making even closer to the communities they serve, if they choose.

Both Councils continued to highly value the joint arrangements in place, and all decisions in the joint arena would continue to be made at the Joint Strategic Committee as part of these proposals.

Similar proposals were being developed for the greater utilisation of the separate Worthing and Adur Overview and Scrutiny Committees and/or the establishment of sub-committees of JOSC for individual-authority matters, whilst JOSC would remain the forum for all joint matters. This would be considered as part of the constitution Working Group, and may require amendments to be made to the Joint Committee Agreement, which will be brought to the Joint Strategic Committee as well as the Joint Governance Committee for consideration in due course, before being ratified by both Full Councils.

Subject to approval by the Joint Strategic Committee, the first sub-committee meetings would start in July and take place monthly, subject to requirements. To ensure efficient use of officer and member time and costs, meetings would only take place if there were sufficient agenda items, or subject to urgency.

It was anticipated that the Joint Strategic Committee may be able to meet less frequently under the new arrangements, although this was subject to trial and review during the pilot period.

Given the disparity in the sizes of each Council's Executives, agreement would need to be reached on the principle that the same number of Executive Members from each council would be present at each JSC meeting to ensure equality of voting.

For information, it was expected that the reviews to the constitutions would be presented to the Joint Governance Committee on 27 September 2022 for consideration and onward recommendation to Full Councils for approval in October 2022.

The Leader of Adur District Council clarified that the Adur Sub-Committee meetings would continue to have a full membership of 6 Executive Members and would continue to meet in the Shoreham Centre.

The Deputy Leader of Worthing Council welcomed the positive direction set out in the report, highlighting that there was a movement amongst progressive local authorities to do more place based work. For a lot of people, the nature of the town hall was quite intimidating and didn't necessarily feel open to the public. To be successful in the community, the Council would need to build successful engagement and communications strategies that let people in an area know that the Council was coming and wanted to listen and engage with residents. He believed that the proposed changes would lead to a much closer relationship between the Council and residents.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Councillor Emma Evans, seconded by Councillor Angus Dunn and unanimously supported.

Decision

The Joint Strategic Committee:-

- a. approved the establishment of a Worthing Executive Sub-Committee and an Adur Executive Sub-Committee, with the terms of reference as set out in paragraph 3.11 of the report; and
- b. noted the process for reviewing the constitutions and the proposed changes to scrutiny arrangements.

Call In:

The call-in deadline for the decision will be 5.00pm on the 17th June 2022.

JSC/7/22-23 Delivery of Housing for Emergency & Temporary Accommodation - South Street, Lancing

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for the Economy, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as Item 7.

The report followed the publication of the Adur and Worthing Housing Strategy for 2020-2023, 'Delivering Pathways to Affordable Homes' document and subsequent Delivery Plans, outlining the increasing demand for emergency and temporary accommodation (EA/TA) in Adur, the Council's commitment to owning its own stock of EA/TA and benefits to the Council of doing so, and the suitability of the South Street site to deliver this type of accommodation, owned and managed by the Council.

The report sought agreement to redevelop this site for the purpose of providing Council owned EA/TA and approval of a budget to progress both a planning application and development of the site.

Members thanked officers for the report and welcomed the proposals.

The recommendations, as set out in the report, were proposed by Councillor Steve Neocleous, seconded by Councillor Emma Evans and supported by the Committee.

Decision

The Joint Strategic Committee:-

- a. approved the approach to development of the South Street Car Park site to enable the council to fulfil its statutory housing duties under S188 and S193 of the Housing Act 1996;
- b. approved the release of £2.336m from the Temporary and Emergency Accommodation budget to enable the project to progress through planning to completion of the construction stage;
- c. delegated authority to the Head of Major Projects & Investment to invite tenders for the construction work, and to enter into all necessary contracts to enable the project to progress through the construction phase to completion, in consultation with Executive Members; and
- d. noted that a further report would be presented to the Executive Member post procurement, to confirm the final costs associated with the scheme and the viability of the proposal.

Call In:

The call-in deadline for the decision will be 5.00pm on the 17th June 2022.

*** Councillor Emma Evans left the meeting at 7.20pm in accordance with the Joint Committee Agreement.**

JSC/8/22-23 Delivery of Housing for Emergency & Temporary Accommodation - Victoria Rd, Worthing

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for the Economy, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as Item 8.

The report followed the publication of the Adur and Worthing Housing Strategy for 2020-2023, 'Delivering Pathways to Affordable Homes' document and subsequent Delivery Plans and outlined the increasing demand for emergency and temporary accommodation (EA/TA) in Worthing, the Council's commitment to owning its own stock of EA/TA, and reviewed the options available to the Council for the future of the Victoria Road site, with development of the site as EA/TA the preferred option both economically and in terms of meeting an established local need.

The report sought agreement of Councillors to redevelop this site for the purpose of providing Council owned EA/TA and approval of a budget to progress both a planning application and development on site.

A Member sought clarification in regards to the financial risks associated with the proposals, in particular, whether the financial figures took into account price inflation and whether the optimism bias would be sufficient. Officers advised that a stage approach had been adopted to mitigate these risks. An inflation figure had been applied to the anticipated cost plus an additional optimism bias at 25%. It was acknowledged that the construction industry was very volatile at the moment, but officers had confidence that the project could be delivered within budget.

It was noted that the Council was constantly balancing the cost of building against the rising costs of Emergency and Temporary Accommodation. It was also noted that the proposals were born from the previous administration's strategy and a paper would come back to the Worthing Sub-Committee in due course.

Consideration was also given to the sustainability measures included within the proposals.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Councillor Rosey Whorlow, seconded by Councillor Vicki Wells and supported by the Committee.

Decision

The Joint Strategic Committee

- a. approved the preferred option for the future of the Victoria Road site to enable the council to fulfil its statutory housing duties under S188 and S193 of the Housing Act 1996;

- b. approved a virement of £440,000 to the temporary and emergency accommodation budget funded by external funding from Homes England. This would increase the overall available budget to £3.541m;
- c. approved the release £3.403m from the Temporary and Emergency Accommodation budget to enable the project to progress through planning and to completion of the construction stage;
- d. delegated authority to the Head of Major Projects & Investment to invite tenders for the construction work, and to enter into all necessary contracts to enable the project to progress through the construction phase to completion, in consultation with Executive Members;
- e. noted that a further report will be presented to the Executive Member post procurement, to confirm the final costs associated with the scheme and the viability of the proposal.

Call In:

The call-in deadline for the decision will be 5.00pm on the 17th June 2022.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 7.34 pm, it having commenced at 6.30 pm

Chairman