

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils**

QEII Room, Shoreham Centre

13 October 2022

Councillor Joss Loader (Chair)
Councillor Mandy Buxton (Vice-Chair)

Adur District Council:

Tony Bellasis
Ann Bridges
Sharon Sluman
Debs Stainforth

Worthing Borough Council:

Cathy Glynn-Davies
Ibsha Choudhury
Dan Hermitage
Margaret Howard
Daniel Humphreys
Heather Mercer
Jon Roser
Elizabeth Sparkes

Absent

Councillor Carol Albury and Councillor Paul Mansfield

JOSC/33/22-23 Declaration of Interests

Joss Loader declared an interest as a trustee of the Shoreham and Adur food bank.

JOSC/34/22-23 Substitute Members

Cllr. Andy McGregor substituted for Carol Albury

JOSC/35/22-23 Confirmation of Minutes

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of the 22 September 2022 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman

JOSC/36/22-23 Public Question Time

A member of the public asked: *"I would like to ask how many Adur Homes properties are currently in breach of the new tenancy act in respect of carbon monoxide detectors and when we can expect 100% compliance?"*

Response - The chairman read a response from the Head of Housing Officer, explaining they do not currently have data on the number of properties that are in breach of the new legislation which came into force on 1st of October 2022.

Due to previous issues with the delivery of a planned program of EICR/Smoke installation, the contract was terminated and they have been going through a process of re-tendering, and establishing what works were or were not carried out. However all void properties would have smoke detection done before they were re-let.

They said they are in the process of evaluating tenders for the new contract which would deliver the installation of smoke/heat and Carbon Monoxide through a hard wired installation. Majority of customers have battery installed smoke/heat, but no Carbon monoxide detection. These are tested annually through the Gas contract. The new contract would ensure that electric properties are also tested.

The program for delivery was estimated to take place between a 3-4 year period. As an interim solution those properties not listed on the 1st years program would be issued a battery operated Carbon monoxide detector during the gas safety inspection.

JOSC/37/22-23 Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items

JOSC/38/22-23 Consideration of any matter referred to the Committee in relation to a call-in of a decision

There were no call-ins

JOSC/39/22-23 Interview with Chief Executive - New Corporate Plan for Adur & Worthing Councils

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital, Sustainability and Resources which had been circulated to all members, a copy of which is attached to a signed copy of these minutes as item 7.

A Member asked: *What immediate steps will the Council take to listen to underrepresented voices when providing truly inclusive services to meet its equality duties?*

Response - Engagement and participation sit at the heart of Our Plan and as part of this the authority would work to meet their equality duties and listen to underrepresented voices. They had learnt a lot through the pandemic and they have been actively building on this over the past few years. They have revised their Equality Impact Assessment process to help them consider how changes to a policy, service or process might impact differently on different groups protected by the Equality Act 2010. This would enable them to develop an approach to planning, delivering and evaluating their services so they are both accessible and actively address inequality.

In addition, they had a number of work streams progressing that were seeking to listen to and engage particular communities, for example: 1) through their Cost of Living actions plans where they would seek to listen and target support at potentially vulnerable groups (older people, mental health, minoritised ethnic communities and communities experiencing multiple deprivation) 2) Proactive project where they were using benefits data and customer contact information to target support at those most in need, often those groups who experienced disadvantage 3) Minoritised ethnic community engagement

project where they had been engaging with their ethnic communities to help them to better understand need, barriers and identify areas where they could improve engagement going forward. 4) Through Fabric, Big Listen, Wellbeing work, Community safety and other projects and service areas they were actively working to ensure everyone was engaged, not just the usual voices but those often excluded or who faced additional barriers. 5) Through their newly appointed data lead they would be using the community census data (to be released in the next few months) to better understand their communities (then, and using projections, into the future) and through collaboration with communities who were often underrepresented, they would seek to further improve and shape their services.

A Member asked: *What will be your first priority to achieve a fair transition to Net Zero Carbon by 2045?*

Response - As part of the delivery of Our Plan they would develop a roadmap to set out their priorities for delivering Net Zero Carbon by 2045 (for the area). There was already extensive work being undertaken to decarbonise Council buildings and operations and significant progress had been made in this area. The roadmap would use baseline data from the Scatter report on area-wide carbon emissions to set out key areas for action by the Council working with the wider community, businesses and key partners.

The Cost of Living plans for Adur and for Worthing had been designed to deliver a balance of immediate and more sustainable supporters, for example, energy efficiency and retrofitting work would ensure long term savings on energy costs or householders.

A Member asked: *How will you be communicating updates on delivering Our Plan over the next 3 years?*

Response - Progress on the delivery of Our Plan would be provided annually through progress reporting to the Joint Strategic Partnership and JOSOC. In addition, updates on progress related to specific elements of the plan would be provided through risk and finance reporting cycles and service and project updates such as the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Sustainable Adur and Worthing Strategy reporting.

A Member asked: *With relation to Priorities for Adur Council - report by the CEO Under the participatory principles outlined by the Council, how much were non senior staff able to participate with the new corporate plan, given the need to work in these increasingly complex situations?*

Response - They have worked extremely hard to give as many people as possible, across the whole organisation, the opportunity to help shape and comment on the plan including:

All staff strategy workshops, hard copies placed at all sites, staff strategy drop in sessions, leadership college, all staff quarterly drop ins, Commerce way drop ins and emails.

A Member asked: *In the same document as Q1 it states 'as the focus of the Levelling Up bid for Adur, Lancing is a place where there is considerable opportunity to develop cultural and economic capital'. What provision is being made, under this Council's commitment to participatory principles within 'Our Plan', to consult with residents of Lancing with regards to the development of our cultural and economic capital?*

Response - For Levelling Up / place planning, they have designed a participation process that has planned for a number of data-informed facilitated conversations with a range of stakeholder groups including residents (young people, families, older residents), the business and trader community, voluntary sector leaders, and health and community professionals among others) to agree a set of community goals and priorities which would inform the development of a Lancing 'Place Plan' and capital investment bids including the anticipated Levelling Up Fund Round 3. This process, which would be organised in collaboration with Lancing Parish Council and other members of the Lancing community, would begin that month and continue through to the end of November. Adur Members for Lancing would be briefed that week regarding the finer details of the engagement approach.

A Member asked: *The same document states that the approach being taken to the use of this Levelling Up funding will seek to 'ensure everybody in Lancing sees the benefits of what more economic activity could mean in terms of a bustling high street, thriving village centre and market, improved public realm and increased connectivity with a growing Lancing Business Park'. What plans do the Council have in place for this money to secure these results?*

Response - The Council was committed to submitting a Levelling Up Fund bid next year, however the details of that bid, including where capital investment may be directed and the outcomes, will be drawn from the participation process that would take place over the next couple of months. The results of the community engagement exercise would be analysed and they were anticipating that projects would 'fall out' from the sessions - therefore, those projects would have been designed with the community. As part of the analysis they would then need to determine the deliverability and viability of each, to ensure they put a robust bid forward.

However, regardless of Levelling Up Fund opportunity the approach, and the delivery of a shared plan for Lancing, would stand the Council (and its' partners) in good stead for any other external funding that might be available in the next couple of years.

A Member asked: *Under the section "Our Missions a thriving environment" the plan aims for "A fair transition to net zero carbon by 2045" Just for clarification is that target for the Council or for the broader community?*

Response - This target relates to the Adur and Worthing areas as a whole, as signatories to the UK100 net zero pledge by leading local authorities. They recognised that this was an ambitious target, but demonstrated both council's intentions to lead and support the whole community to decarbonise. This would start with the Council tackling its own emissions in a concerted way. However the Worthing Heat Network went further to establish new low carbon heating infrastructure that would be used by Worthing Hospital and available to more organisations as it developed. As an example, they had offered their expertise to Worthing Hospital in developing decarbonisation funding applications.

They aimed to work with various networks and groups of organisations to encourage them to adopt net zero commitments and through Levelling Up funds work to more actively support their development of net zero plans.

The Councils' carbon reduction targets were as follows:

2030: Scope 1 and 2 emissions from the Councils' own operations - principally gas, fuel and electricity consumption from their buildings and fleet.

2045: The wider area, encompassing all activity with the district of Adur and borough of Worthing.

A Member asked: *What can be done, in your opinion, to make our Services more transparent and readily accessible to residents?*

Response - Improving service transparency and accessibility was a key priority for the councils. Over the past five years they had made significant improvements in this area. In addition to the participation work described earlier and their improvements to the equality Impact Assessment processes, they had made additional investments to improve their data and participation capabilities all of which should help them to further improve service transparency and accessibility. In summary these changes and investment helped them to better listen and engage residents, including those often excluded, in the process of improving and redesigning services.

In addition, the development of the CRM and further investments in digitisation (e.g Revs and Bens) helped to further improve services and monitor and respond to customer feedback and release staff from transactional bureaucracy. This in turn enabled them to invest further resources in better supporting vulnerable residents and engaging residents in the ongoing process of service review and improvement.

They also delivered regular staff training via communities of practice or similar on the importance of customer experience and skills that promote that (being honest, warm and approachable) and on how to design service processes to remove unnecessary steps for residents and think about what they deliver from a customer or resident perspective.

A Member asked: *I note there is a lot of chatter about cutting back to statutory services, slashing public spending.*

I see 'Our Plan' somewhat lays the 'foundations' for this by making a distinction between core universal services and other services and transecting missions.

A) To what degree are we anticipating that this government will make further cuts which will directly impact the council's ability to provide its current level of services?

B) How are we building in resilience to specifically cope with foreseen cuts and

C) What will be the direct impact on staff and on residents?

Response - The pressures faced by the council through increasing interest rates and inflation were significant and they were addressing these through budget planning work currently underway. There would be a further budget statement at the end of October by the Chancellor that might give them further information on funding arrangements for Local Authorities in 2023/24.

They thought it worth saying they had highlighted the work and role of core and universal services plus cross cutting missions for a number of reasons. It was important for example, that all services were seen, recognised and supported through their corporate planning process. The commitment for change set out on the plan of course was in part shaped by financial realities they faced, but believed staff, like the communities, were tired from simply reacting to each and every challenge that came along.....austerity, covid and then the cost of living.

There was a more hopeful reason for change. One that could actually make things better. That took them closer to the main purpose as local councils - which is to provide good and lasting stewardship for Adur and Worthing. The plan made the case that if they could evolve to meet the world as it was, rather than how it had been, they were more able to serve their communities. They could do better by their staff, creating an organisation that was resilient, adaptable and participative. These were the three principles written into Our Plan.

They were building resilience within their communities at a number of levels through the plan. The work around the Cost of Living Crisis in both Adur and Worthing (e.g. ethical debt policy) were examples of this, the investment in data and getting upstream of problems was another area (e.g. Proactive) and through stronger engagement and collaboration with communities they were helping to identify new ways of working and more sustainable solutions as seen for example through Fabric (levelling up), the Carbon reduction programme and Sussex Bay.

The fixed departmental structures and teams provided clear lines of responsibility and accountability. But they also separated them into different teams. A key outcome therefore from the development of Our Plan was a far reaching service planning and organisational redesign process that would enable them to deliver services and achieve outcomes more effectively. As part of this process, investing in new ways of working through the plan, recognising the way that they had come to work could slow them down at times. They weren't getting the most out of modern technology as a way to serve people and to connect the services together. Or to create a picture of what matters most to communities. Through new investments they would actively change this.

Ultimately, Our Plan was about their relevance and connection with those they serve. It was about the opportunity and not only the challenges faced.

In terms of direct impacts on services and staff because of the financial situation, they were in the process of undertaking the work, as described above, determining options. Areas of income generation and where savings could be made through service redesign. They were undertaking this work with the staff through the team planning process. More details on the options for consideration and their impacts would be provided through the budget setting process.

Further questions were posed which raised issues regarding how the council would reach out to unheard community voices, adhere to their cultural and leisure needs as well as tackling some aspects of the cost of living. The response highlighted participation work at data gathering events to hear and understand resident cultural, leisure and financial requirements. Other initiatives included encouraging active travel, home working and creation of 'warm hubs'.

JOSC/40/22-23 Interview with the Worthing Cabinet Member for Citizens Services

This report set out background information on the Portfolio of the Worthing Cabinet Member for Citizens Services to enable the Committee to consider and question the Cabinet Member on issues within their portfolio and any other issues which the Cabinet Member was involved in connected with the work of the Council and the Worthing communities.

That the Committee consider any representations from the Cabinet Member on the work within their Portfolio and other issues which the Cabinet Member was involved in and question the Cabinet Member on this and recommend any suggested action or make appropriate comments to the Cabinet Member for their consideration.

A Member asked: Given the ongoing Cost of Living Emergency and the likelihood that it will lead to an increase in people needing emergency housing, what steps are being taken to find appropriate accommodation?

Response - The Council was in discussion with a number of providers to secure both permanent and temporary accommodation locally.

The Council was working on increasing the number of temporary accommodation units it owned and also considering leased accommodation. The Council was also in discussions with proprietors to provide leased accommodation for use as temporary accommodation.

A landlord's roundtable with private and social landlords was scheduled for November to look at opportunities for settled and temporary accommodation.

The New Homes Team would work with the Housing Needs Team to establish a strategy for purchasing new or existing properties for use as EA/TA. This approach would require expertise in dealing with developers, agents, managing refurbishment and improvement projects (e.g. getting them to EPC C) and dealing with Homes England to secure a grant which the New Homes Team could offer.

They planned to hold a workshop with various providers of accommodation, including registered providers, to discuss and explore opportunities to increase the number of affordable accommodation across all tenures (i.e. both temporary and permanent accommodation).

With regards to permanent accommodation, they were exploring various models which could result in long leases and buying suitable units.

A Member asked: Can you give us a breakdown of currently available accommodation i.e one bed, two bed etc properties? What is being done to address any shortfall in any of these?

Response - As a result of significant demand all temporary and permanent accommodation were taken up immediately as they became available. Demand for affordable and suitable accommodation was more than what was available.

Current Worthing households in TA:

308

183 Singles

125 Families

A detailed breakdown was provided to members displaying demand for bedroom entitlement across different bands.

Actions being taken to increase supply of all types of affordable accommodation had been discussed above.

Further questions were raised regarding plans in place for emergency purchases, available grants and other available funding. The response conveyed that the council was looking at available venues and would provide written responses with regards to what funding was available for certain areas.

JOSC/41/22-23 Interview with Adur Cabinet Member for Communities and Wellbeing

This item will be discussed at a future meeting

JOSC/42/22-23 Crime and Disorder Scrutiny - Interview with the Chairman of the Adur and Worthing Safer Communities Partnership

This item will be discussed at a future meeting

JOSC/43/22-23 Annual Summary of Customer Feedback (Complaints and Compliments)

This item will be discussed at a future meeting

JOSC/44/22-23 Scrutiny review of the Adur & Worthing evening and night time economy

This report set out the revised discussions and recommendations from the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) Working Group which was created as part of the JOSC Work Programme to review the previous JOSC reports and recommendations on the Adur and Worthing evening and night time economy (ENTE) from 2020 and earlier in 2022

Members asked for clarity with regards to priority 6 and if strategies would be applied to businesses operating in the evenings. Members were told that this strategy was first contingent on legislation approving these new powers and then if Cabinet decided to use them. Should those things happen then it would be looking at underused or vacant shops.

Resolved: The committee reviewed and agreed to the recommendations of the report.

JOSC/45/22-23 JOSC Work Programme review

This item will be discussed at a future meeting

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 8.00 pm, it having commenced at 6.30 pm

Chairman