

Minutes of a meeting of the  
Worthing Council  
21 February 2023  
6.30pm

The Mayor, Councillor Henna Chowdhury  
The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Jim Deen

Councillor Ibsha Choudhury	Councillor Charles James
Councillor Samuel Theodoridi	Councillor Kevin Jenkins
Councillor Dale Overton	Councillor Martin McCabe
Councillor Andy Whight	Councillor Dr Heather Mercer
Councillor Dan Hermitage	Councillor Richard Nowak
Councillor Rita Garner	Councillor Jon Roser
Councillor Nigel Morgan	Councillor Helen Silman
Councillor Lionel Harman	Councillor Dawn Smith
Councillor Noel Atkins	Councillor Sally Smith
Councillor Mike Barrett	Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes
Councillor Russ Cochran	Councillor Emma Taylor
Councillor Dr Beccy Cooper	Councillor Hazel Thorpe
Councillor Dan Coxhill	Councillor John Turley
Councillor Jim Deen	Councillor Steve Waight
Councillor Cathy Glynn-Davies	Councillor Carl Walker
Councillor Margaret Howard	Councillor Vicki Wells
Councillor Daniel Humphreys	Councillor Rosey Whorlow
*Councillor Roy Barraclough	*Councillor Richard Mulholland

\*Absent

**C/51/22-23                      Leader's Announcement**

The Mayor used her discretion to enable the Leader to announce a change to the membership of the Planning Committee.

The Leader advised Council that Councillor Emma Taylor would be replaced by Councillor Samuel Theodoridi on the Planning Committee with immediate effect.

**C/52/22-23                      Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Roy Barraclough and Richard Mulholland.

**C/53/22-23                      Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Richard Nowak declared an interest in item 6a as a private landlord.

Councillor Kevin Jenkins declared an interest in item 6a as a private landlord.

Councillor Nigel Morgan declared an interest in item 6a as a private landlord.

Councillor Hazel Thorpe declared an interest in item 6a as a private landlord.

Councillor Steve Waight declared a personal interest as a Member of West Sussex County Council.

Councillor Noel Atkins declared a personal interest as a Member of West Sussex County Council.

### **C/54/22-23 Confirmation of Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of both the Ordinary and Special meetings of Full Council held on 13 December 2022 be approved as correct records and that they be signed by the Mayor.

### **C/55/22-23 Questions from the Public**

#### **1. Submitted Question from Claire Hunt, a Worthing Resident**

*I'm in complete support of your plans to seek bathing water designation for the section of sea next to Beach House Park. Is there any progress or outcome on the application for designation (which was to be made in October 2022), and is there any reason why a similar application could not be made for a section of sea in Goring-by-Sea - which is ranked 5th in the top 10 beaches in West Sussex in the UK Beach Guide 2023.*

The Cabinet Member for the Environment replied that the Council had yet to receive feedback from Defra on its Beach House Bathing Water application. It was anticipated that a response would be received before Easter.

The Council proposed to submit an application for a bathing water designation at Goring later in the year. Both the Environment Agency and Southern Water were in support of the proposal. The Council would begin collecting the data needed to support an application at the start of the forthcoming bathing season (which runs from May to September).

#### **2. Submitted Question from Claire Hunt, a Worthing Resident**

*I am pleased to see that concern for the Climate and Ecological Emergency are being considered in the plans for extending the Memorial Garden at Worthing Crematorium. I would like to ask if there could be any future provision of a natural burial site in or close to Worthing, or to allocate part of existing sites for natural burials? Interest in natural burial is increasing but there is currently only one in West Sussex, at Clayton Wood, near Hassocks, 15 miles away. They are clearly a much more environmentally-friendly option than cremation or traditional burial, and can be easily combined with woodland or meadow creation and management, so could this be built into future plans, reducing fossil fuel use, carbon emissions, and toxic emissions of things like mercury.*

The Cabinet Member for the Environment replied that the Council was currently actively appraising the most viable and cost effective options for a natural burial

site within its own asset portfolio. This was a high priority for the service and would be subject to technical reports and financial forecasting and service modelling.

### **3. Submitted Question from Mr Ian Davey, a Worthing Resident**

*The A27 presents a significant physical barrier that severs most of the people of Worthing from the South Downs National Park. It also restricts access to amenities such as Worthing College and sports pitches.*

*In their proposals that are currently open to consultation, National Highways predict, and aim to provide for, a 25% increase in traffic by 2041. Government plans for a new Arundel bypass will help make this a self fulfilling prophecy. Despite this, National Highways admit that their proposed solutions in Worthing will all "under deliver".*

*What impact does the Leader of the council think that the implementation of any of the current National Highway proposals will have on congestion, pollution and severance in Worthing.*

The Leader replied that the Council was giving full consideration to the proposals contained within the consultation. It had yet to formulate a response covering those areas to which you refer, however the Council would submit comments through the consultation portal before the deadline of 19 March 2023.

The Leader was not sure that the proposals went anything beyond tinkering at the edges of the highway network; and frankly, some minor junction improvements to help with traffic flow was probably all that could be expected for £20m. This represented a reduction of £149m on the earlier scheme and that was rejected by local communities for its lack of ambition. Perhaps the only real positive here is that by spending this money National Highways fulfils a commitment under the Regional investment Strategy to make some improvements and this would help with future bids for funding.

We need a much more integrated approach which links highway improvements with our Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan (LCWIP) and improvements to the public transport network. You will recall that the Borough Council expressed its firm support for the approach set out in Transport for the South East's Strategic Investment Plan which looked at transport solutions holistically and from the perspective of our carbon reduction targets.

### **4. Submitted Question from Margaret Higgins, a Worthing Resident**

A question had been pre-submitted by Margaret Higgins and was read out by the Mayor as Ms Higgins was not present at the meeting.

*On the 5th December 2022 at your Joint Strategic sub committee for Worthing, you and your cabinet colleagues all voted and agreed to a new commercial income programme introducing charges to previously free-to-use car parks. Those papers suggested that your intent was to raise £42,000 in additional income.*

*Subsequently it was learnt that you planned to introduce those charges at the Marine Crescent car park on the seafront, at the Sea Lane cafe car park and at the Goring Road car park near to the Mulberry, all in Goring amongst others in the town.*

*You have said you will consult, you haven't; yet you have published these proposals in budget papers without first listening to us the residents, to most people this seems like a done deal, unless you are now going to do a U-turn and back track on your decision.*

*As a resident of Goring, can you tell me why these car parks have been targeted, many residents have written in objecting to these charges as we all fear that car drivers will now not use these car parks because of the charges being imposed and will instead park out in the residential roads, adding to the congestion and misery that residents already experience during the busy periods.*

The Cabinet Member agreed to provide written response to the question which was as follows:-

Thank you for your question regarding car parks.

In response to the poor financial position that was inherited from the previous Council administration, all options were on the table to balance the books.

Subsequently, the budget passed allowed the Council to consult on whether or not to bring in charges for a handful of car parks that were currently subsidised by the taxpayer. That consultation had already begun, with a number of one-to-one discussions and a public online meeting held so far. The Cabinet Member was accelerating that consultation process over the coming weeks and would then make a decision based on the feedback from that consultation.

The Cabinet Member believed this was the right approach to take and that it's always good to have a straight conversation with residents on issues such as this.

If you'd like to discuss this further or send me your views on this topic, please do so and I'll gladly include these in my review. I will also gladly let you know of further public meetings that I hold on this issue.

## **5. Question from Mary Day, a Worthing Resident**

A question was received at the meeting from Mary Day, a Worthing resident, regarding facilities for the disabled and carers in the town.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged that being a carer could be really isolating, especially when caring for a relative. The Cabinet Member conveyed that she had

personally received a lot of support from GuildCare who ran a lot of social events and held meetings for carers.

However, the ideas proposed by the questioner were welcomed and would be considered further by the Council.

### **C/56/22-23                    Items raised under Urgency Provisions**

There were no urgent items raised under the urgency provisions.

### **C/57/22-23                    Recommendations from the Cabinet and Committees to Council**

Council had, before it, recommendations from the Worthing JSC Sub-Committee, Joint Audit & Governance Committee, the Worthing Cabinet and the Joint Strategic Committee.

Extracts of these minutes had been circulated as items 6A, 6B, 6C, 6D, 6E, 6F and 6G.

#### **Item 6A                    Worthing Joint Strategic Sub-Committee - 12 January 2023**

##### **Outcome of the public consultation in respect of the locally-determined 100% one-month Council Tax discount in respect of unoccupied & substantially unfurnished properties**

The Leader introduced the recommendation to the Council which was seconded by Councillor Emma Taylor and supported following a vote (In Favour 23, Against 0, Abstentions 12).

##### **Resolved,**

The Council approved that, with effect from 1 April 2023, the one-month 100% discount should be discontinued.

#### **Item 6B                    Worthing Joint Strategic Sub-Committee - 12 January 2023**

##### **Memorial Gardens**

The Leader introduced the recommendation to the Council which was seconded by Councillor Vicki Wells and supported unanimously following a vote (In Favour 35, Against 0, Abstentions 0).

##### **Resolved,**

That the Council approved the creation of a new capital budget of £315,000 funded through prudential borrowing with total repayment costs of £407,940 over the lifetime of the project which will be funded from the income generated by the sales of the memorials and to delegate to the Director for Communities authority to procure and enter into all necessary contracts (in consultation with the Cabinet Member) for the delivery of the memorial garden and repairs to the Munthan Estate Walls as incorporated in the design providing always the spend is within the approved budget.

## **Item 6C          Joint Audit & Governance Committee - 24 January 2023**

### **Scheme of Allowances for Worthing Borough Council**

The Chairman of the Joint Audit & Governance Committee introduced the recommendation to the Council which was seconded by Councillor Samuel Theodoridi and supported following a vote (In Favour 22, Against 1, Abstentions 12).

During debate of the item, Members considered the proposals from the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel, the affordability of an increase in allowances and the number of Members sitting on the Cabinet.

An amendment to the recommendations was proposed and seconded but not supported following a vote.

#### **Resolved,**

That the Council accepted the report and recommendations of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel, including an amendment proposed by the Joint Audit & Governance Committee to remove paragraph 4.2.6 from the Independent Panels recommendations.

## **Item 6D          Cabinet - 1 February 2023**

### **Investing in our Places - Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2025/26**

The Mayor advised that the recommendations from Worthing Cabinet would be considered under Item 8 on the agenda.

## **Item 6E          Cabinet - 1 February 2023**

### **Budget Estimates 2023/24 and setting of the 2023/24 Council Tax**

The Mayor advised that the recommendations from Worthing Cabinet would be considered under Item 8 on the agenda.

## **Item 6F          Joint Strategic Committee - 7 February 2023**

### **Council Tax Support Fund in respect of 2023/24**

The Leader introduced the recommendation to the Council which was seconded by Councillor Emma Taylor and supported following a vote (In Favour 23, Against 0, Abstentions 12).

#### **Resolved,**

The Council approved that the criteria to be adopted in respect of Council Tax Support Fund for 2023/24 should be those detailed in paragraph 4.8 and in accordance with the government guidelines.

## **Item 6G            Joint Strategic Committee - 7 February 2023**

### **Joint Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy 2023/24 to 2025/26, Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council**

The Leader introduced the recommendation to the Council which was seconded by Councillor John Turley and supported following a vote (In Favour 22, Against 0, Abstentions 13).

#### **Resolved,**

The Council approved the Prudential Indicators and Limits, and MRP Statements.

#### **\* The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7.35pm and reconvened at 7.49pm C/58/22-23                    Suspension of Council Procedure Rules**

The Council was asked to suspend Council Procedure rules where they conflicted with the budget procedure rules in accordance with paragraph 7.2 of the budget procedure rules.

Having been proposed by the Leader, seconded by Councillor Andy Whight the Council unanimously agreed to suspend Council Procedure Rules for the consideration of Item 8 on the agenda.

#### **C/59/22-23                    Council Tax 2023/24**

The Mayor introduced the item explaining that items 6D and 6E, recommendations from the Cabinet, would be considered as part of this discussion with the full proposed recommendation being contained in the papers circulated with the agenda.

As required by the Regulations there would be a recorded vote on any amendments to the proposed budget together with a final vote on the substantive motion.

The Mayor clarified that the item would be dealt with under the budget procedure rules and therefore, ordinary rules of debate did not apply.

The Mayor invited the Leader of the Council to address the Chamber.

The Leader of the Council introduced the budget and setting of the council tax to members and a copy of the Leaders budget speech is appended to these minutes as Appendix A.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor John Turley.

The Leader of the Conservative Group on the Council, Councillor Kevin Jenkins, addressed the Council and proposed an amendment to the budget, appended to these minutes as Appendix B.

The proposed amendment was seconded by Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes.

Liberal Democrats Councillor Hazel Thorpe addressed the Council.

Members in the Chamber debated the proposed budget and budget amendment.

In accordance with Budget Procedure Rules, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader were given rights of reply.

The Mayor put the amendment to the Council for a vote. A recorded vote was taken, the results of which, are set out below:-

Vote 1 - Amendment

**For (13):** Councillors Atkins, Cochran, Coxhill, Harman, Humphreys, James, Jenkins, Mercer, Morgan, Nowak, Sparkes, Thorpe, & Waight

**Against (22):** Councillors Barrett, Choudhury, Chowdhury, Cooper, Deen, Garner, Glynn-Davies, Hermitage, Howard, McCabe, Overton, Roser, Silman, D Smith, S Smith, Taylor, Theodoridi, Turley, Walker, Wells, Whight & Whorlow

**Resolved** that the amendment was not supported.

As the amendment was not supported, the Mayor put Appendices A & B (the substantive motion) to the Council for a vote. A recorded vote was taken, the results of which, are set out below:-

**For (22):** Councillors Barrett, Choudhury, Chowdhury, Cooper, Deen, Garner, Glynn-Davies, Hermitage, Howard, McCabe, Overton, Roser, Silman, D Smith, S Smith, Taylor, Theodoridi, Turley, Walker, Wells, Whight & Whorlow

**Against (6):** Councillors Coxhill, Humphreys, James, Mercer, Morgan & Waight

**Abstentions (7):** Councillors Atkins, Cochran, Harman, Jenkins, Nowak, Sparkes and Thorpe

**Resolved**

- 1 1. That it be noted that on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2023, the Cabinet calculated the Council Tax Base 2023/24 as **39,364.60** [Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")];
- 2 2. That the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2023/24 was **£10,231,650**.
- 3 3. That the following amounts be calculated by the Council for the year 2023/24 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
  - (a) **£79,141,696** being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.



- (b) **£68,910,046** being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
- (c) **£10,231,650** being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R), in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).
- (d) **£259.92** being the amount at 3(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.
- (e) **£0.00** being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
- (f) **£259.92** being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.

4. That it be noted that for the year 2023/24 the West Sussex County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in the table below:-

All of the Council's Area 2023/24	Band A £	Band B £	Band C £	Band D £	Band E £	Band F £	Band G £	Band H £
Worthing Borough Council	173.28	202.16	231.04	259.92	317.68	375.44	433.20	519.84
West Sussex County Council Total as split below:	1088.94	1270.43	1451.92	1633.41	1996.39	2359.37	2722.35	3266.82
West Sussex Council – Core	945.00	1102.50	1260.00	1417.50	1732.50	2047.50	2362.50	2835.00
West Sussex County Council – Adults Social Care Element	143.94	167.93	191.92	215.91	263.89	311.87	359.85	431.82
The Police & Crime Commissioner for Sussex	159.94	186.60	213.25	239.91	293.22	346.54	399.85	479.82

5. That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the amounts shown in the table shown above, as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2023/24 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

	<b>Band A</b> £	<b>Band B</b> £	<b>Band C</b> £	<b>Band D</b> £	<b>Band E</b> £	<b>Band F</b> £	<b>Band G</b> £	<b>Band H</b> £
All of the Council's Area	1422.16	1659.19	1896.21	2133.24	2607.29	3081.35	3555.40	4266.48

**C/60/22-23**

**Members Questions under Council Procedure Rule 12**

As the meeting had been running for nearly 3.5 hours, the Mayor proposed that written responses be provided to the 8 Member Questions which had been received in advance of the meeting and that the responses be included in the minutes of the meeting.

**First rotation:**

**Question 1 from Cllr Russ Cochran to the Cabinet Member for the Environment - Cllr Vicki Wells**

*As both a councillor for the ward and a football coach I truly welcome the investment made in longcroft parks' new Football Goals as several training sessions for various teams and clubs occur regularly there for teams and mini soccer as well as casual use.*

*Together with our highly regarded park rangers team I had previously tried in vain, since 2021, to save the council some money sourcing some Square post replacements to the matching footings bedded in the ground, yet after 34 years sadly the manufacturer had switched to round posts, it was a literal; Round hole - square peg situation!*

*I am sure we can all agree that with sustainability constantly at the forefront of our intentions, Local residents have had a quite astounding amount of use from this heavy duty product, which was put in by the developer many years ago.*

*May I ask if we are going to see other investments in similar facilities for sport in our green spaces in future across the borough and if so would these planned improvements be achieved to the same standard as demonstrated in the recent investment in Longcroft Park? Also if so how much will be invested over the coming financial year?*

The Cabinet Member replied that 'as a new administration and also as residents of Worthing, we understand well the managed decline that we have inherited as a Council. This is particularly evident in the condition of some of the parks across Worthing. None more so than at Longcroft Park.

The heavy gauge, square steel goal posts at Longcroft - which were 35 years old - had totally rotted away at the base were unsafe and unstable.

Residents - and evidently yourself - have been frustrated for a number of years at their poor and frankly dangerous state. It's alarming that this issue wasn't resolved years earlier by the previous administration.

The good news is that in the short time we have been in administration, we have worked with rangers and the sports team to provide FA approved size goals made from Heavy Duty (76mm) Steel. These are the strongest which were available and have finally replaced their decrepit predecessors.

In addition an extra pair of junior posts were provided adjacent to the children's playground. The playground itself was also in a state of poor repair, so while addressing the goal posts - the burnt out and vandalised roundabout was replaced with a disabled and buggy accessible model. While we were at it we removed the old concrete fencing posts that were cracked and broken with rusted reinforcing rods dangerously exposed.

Given the funds we have, we are breathing new life into our valued green spaces and certainly Longcroft Park now has a much cleaner, safer and open aspect.

Dialogue is about to commence with the stakeholders and developers in Durrington with regard identifying what facilities the community would like to see in the new development which may include similar football pitches as well as play equipment, allotments and parkland.

In the wider the replacement of these kinds of facilities are managed over a variety of timescales with appropriate funding bids placed to coincide with expected end of life. Funding is achieved through the capital programme and a variety of other funding streams such as S106 and CIL.

There are identified and approved replacement schemes currently in progress at Homefield Park, Northbrook Recreation Ground, and Palatine Park and £80K has been allocated to upkeep of playground facilities in the coming year'.

## **Question 2 from Cllr Hazel Thorpe to the Cabinet Member for Resources - Cllr John Turley**

*I trust that you would agree with me that applying rules from 1996 without regard for current hard times is a bit Dickensian and an insult, and we should have respect for families that live with disabilities, as they have a higher cost of living than the average family requiring them to have financial support.*

*In 1996 the Mandatory maximum grant allowed per family for Disabled Facilities was £30,000 and the maximum Discretionary grant award was £30,000. This is equivalent in today's terms to £78,000. The value of this grant has not changed but has been devalued by 38.46%*

*Q1) Since we are aware that there is a need for this support, why was the Disabled facilities Grants budget underspent by £701,810 and why do you think the Home Repair Assistance budget was also underspent by £37,695?*

The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 sets out the main provisions for the Disabled Facilities Grant. Alongside the Act a number of orders, directions and consents were published that detail how many of the provisions work in practice – including the means test and the upper limit.

Although we have been expecting central government announcements on key policy issues, such as increasing the maximum mandatory grant payment, modifying the means test and reviewing the allocation of funds, the maximum grant payment for mandatory disabled facility grants remains at £30,000 per relevant person

Worthing Borough Council has a legal duty to set a budget that will meet the likely number of applicants for DFGs. This is currently £750,000 per annum.

The budget is fully met by central government funding of £1.36M for DFGs channelled through the WSCC Better Care Fund (BCF). This allocation allowed the implementation of a county-wide Discretionary DFG (DisDFG) policy which includes a discretionary top-up grant of £30,000 per property amongst other tools.

The countywide policy is designed to ensure that all lower-tier authorities provide consistent services to their residents, but this does limit the level of assistance that those Councils, such as Worthing, who have more generous BCF allocations can provide.

The officers are very aware that inflation and the cost of living crisis has resulted in some adaptations becoming unaffordable. Worthing has partially addressed this through measures such as the permitted use of Head of Service discretion to increase the funding of some adaptations as necessary, but this will not result in all schemes becoming viable.

The number of adaptations and level of spend is, of course, demand-led and dependent on the number of referrals received from WSCC Independent Living Service.

With these factors in mind, the DFG budget for Worthing is not underspent by £700,000. The actual spend on adaptations in Worthing at the end of January 2023 is in the region of £1,065,634, which is about £315,000 over the allocated DFG budget. The Council currently expects to spend £1,451,810 on Disabled Facilities grants in 2022/23 with a further £800,000 expected in 2023/24.

It has been agreed that any spend below the allocated £1.36M can be retained by Worthing Borough Council and this ensures that the Council can fund overspends (which have occurred in previous years) and provides a buffer against any potential reductions in allocations.

The combination of these retained funds, actual spend (which includes grants approved in the previous financial year) and committed spend (approved grants to be paid this or next financial year) could give the appearance of an underspend but the DFG and DisDFG schemes are important and not under-utilised.

In respect of the Home Repair Assistance budget, one of the DisDFG tools is the Safe, Suitable and Warm grant (SSW) which overlaps the cover provided by the HRA. This has freed our budget to fund schemes, such as the Landlords Repair Grant Assistance to make additional housing available to the Council, but does not represent a reduction in the support given to residents.

## 2nd Rotation

### Question 3 from Councillor Kevin Jenkins to the Leader

*Can the Leader please tell us how many posts the Council have held vacant since May 2022?*

The Leader replied that vacancy numbers were dynamic as you might expect from an organisation of our size. If I assume you are asking how many posts had been deliberately held vacant since May 22 - and if we exclude posts that are proving hard to recruit or where we have a high turnover of staff and as a result have interim staff in place - then the number of held vacancies is 15 at present but subject to change.

## Third Rotation

### Question 4 from Councillor Nowak to the Cabinet Member for the Environment - Councillor Vicki Wells

*Recycling data supplied to me by officers for the period April – December 2022 and comparative data for the same period in 2021 reveal that the tonnage of kerbside recycling has declined by 781 tonnes and garden waste has declined by 875 tonnes with the result that our overall recycling rate has decreased from 45.85% to 44.77%. These figures cannot be fully explained away by citing issues such as the pandemic or the hot summer in 2022. The administration's policy initiatives are simply not cutting through in terms of lifting the recycling rate.*

*In order for the administration to hit the national target of 50% pledged by the Labour group as part of its manifesto promises it is clear that drastic measures would be required but we are half way through the final quarter and I am not aware of any initiatives that will make a significant difference.*

*Is it time for the cabinet member to admit she has failed to honour her group's manifesto promise for 2022-23, or was it an unrealistic promise to the residents of Worthing? What remedial action does she now propose, and with what degree of urgency?*

Thanks for your question Cllr Nowak - I love your passion for recycling. You asked a similar question last year.

If you recall, I explained that recycling rates vary throughout the year, this can include seasonal variations - so looking at data over such a short time-scale - in this case over 8 months from April to Dec is of limited use as there are different factors that influence waste stats. Longer term, overall trends are more informative.

The picture painted isn't as bleak as you have presented and we remain, as stated in our 2022 Manifesto, committed to "work to exceed national recycling targets".

The data shows that between April and Dec 2022, overall kerbside recycling increased by 0.82% from 26.32% in the previous year to 27.14%. You will join me in celebrating the important increase.

The individual tonnage figures in your question includes green waste, which was significantly impacted by the industrial dispute during April and then by the extreme weather experienced in June, July and August.

As you know, Summer 2022 entered the climate record books as the first time that the UK hit an air temperature above 40°C, it is without question amongst the UK's hottest and driest summers overall. The weather was so extreme that I know of at least one council suspended its garden waste collections completely in August (Waltham Forest).

The data also shows the relatively large reduction of tonnage in residual waste and recycling - which is a trend seen in other councils and the officer's view is that this is down to lockdown easing. This is backed up by national and international research. During lockdown, people were stuck at home and therefore created more waste to be collected by our crews. There is an interesting report by Everyday Plastic which suggests plastic disposal increased by 29% during lockdown, and increases will also have applied to other packaging materials. This view is also corroborated by international research (eg National Library of Medicine and national research by the Royal Society of Chemistry regarding e-waste). DEFRA also acknowledges that the pandemic increased total household waste arisings.

I have looked at the commercial recycling data for this period for comparison.

You will be delighted to learn that dry mixed recycling increased from 1.69 tonnes in April 2020 - March 2021 - to 536.59 tonnes between April 2021 to March 2022.

Not only does this data reflect the return of residents to local businesses post pandemic - and as a consequence an increase in commercial recycling, it helps contextualise the reduction in tonnage of domestic refuse and overall kerbside recycling including green waste during the periods April- Dec 2021 to April-Dec 2022.

So yes, the data absolutely can be explained within the context of consumer patterns normalising post pandemic, the extreme summer and notably the industrial dispute - a legacy of the last administration.

While the impact on recycling of the industrial dispute and heatwave were completely out of our control, we pledged to introduce electrical collections. Given the short time we have been in administration we have delivered this pledge and launched the new collection service in October 2022.

To date we have collected a staggering 7.9 tonnes and based on current figures, we expect to collect approximately 1 tonne of small WEEE per week - which is a significant amount given the value of the materials and their potential environmental impact if not recovered and processed properly.

We do have high aspirations to increase recycling rates to 50% and beyond. As you will be aware, food waste collections are key to meeting that target. Unfortunately DEFRA has repeatedly delayed announcements on the details around food and changes to recycling collection. Crucially we are still awaiting details of new burdens and capital funding to support the roll out of these new services without which they are unaffordable.

In addition to the feasibility study on food waste collections, officers are working up a scope for a trial of food waste collections, the roll out of which will be dependent on funding.

<b>Recycling Rates (April – Dec)</b>	<b>April 2021 – Dec 2021</b>	<b>April 2022 – Dec 2022</b>	<b>Increase / Decrease</b>
Overall Recycling Rate	45.85%	44.77%	-1.08%
Kerbside Recycling	26.32%	27.14%	0.82%
Green Waste	19.53%	17.63%	-1.90%
<b>Tonnages</b>	<b>April 2021 – Dec 2021</b>	<b>April 2022 – Dec 2022</b>	<b>Increase / Decrease</b>
Refuse	15378.41	14171.24	-1207.17
Kerbside Recycling	8158.08	7376.29	-781.79
Garden Waste	6123.40	5248.26	-875.14

**Question 5 from Cllr Kevin Jenkins to the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing - Cllr Rosey Whorlow**

*Feeling safe in Worthing is important to all of us, a number of crime related events either in our high street shops or the recent event in Worthing in Liverpool Gardens area, involving a section 18 wounding, has brought home to many how vulnerable they can feel when venturing into our town.*

*After this violent event in Liverpool Gardens on the 13th February a multi agency briefing (including WBC as a statutory partner to the Safer communities Partnership) was held for the public in Montague Street. In your role can you please update us as to your participation in that meeting and its outcome, and what message you would have for residents, especially families with young children; in our town who are now fearful of venturing into Worthing?*

The Cabinet Member replied that this was a tragic incident, and thankfully such occurrences were rare. There was a live and ongoing investigation and those alleged to have been involved would be subject to specific measures, whilst the investigation takes place.

When there were serious incidents such as the one referred to in the question, these were subject to a Gold Command structure overseen by Police Colleagues and involved all key partners. Where information could be shared on such incidents, members were briefed directly. Street briefings that take place either in direct response to an incident or where these are routine in nature, were public meetings, and as such any interested party could engage with Police, Community Safety officers and where appropriate partners from the voluntary and community sector. In addition the Police had specific powers when such incidents occurred, which included Section 34 dispersals and Section 60, Stop and Search. These powers were time limited and needed to demonstrate proportionate action as a response to any such incidents. Reassurance work would be ongoing, such as utilising appropriate powers as was deemed necessary, directly commissioning additional outreach in the impacted area and work with schools.

The Cabinet Member had been briefed on this incident and what was being done by the Police in terms of any investigation. They had reassured the Cabinet Member that this was an isolated incident and that the town centre remained a relatively safe place for our young people, families and communities. The Cabinet Member appreciated that this had had an understandable ricochet in the community. Anyone impacted was encouraged to seek support and if people were struggling to access support, they could email the Communities and Wellbeing team, who would signpost them to support, [candwteam@adur-worthing.gov.uk](mailto:candwteam@adur-worthing.gov.uk).

### **Question 6 from Councillor Thorpe to the Cabinet Member for the Environment - Councillor Vicki Wells**

*As a consequence of the impact of Covid on mental health and the realisation of the wealth of opportunity provided by our open spaces it was decided to create Park Management plans with the backing of local people under the "Friends Of" banner.*

*These Management plans created by local residents supported by local organisations have been sorely let down by the lack of funding Tarring Park, for one, has not even been allocated £5,000 for a Park Run circuit, signage which apparently requires to be vandal proof even though Tarring has a low crime rate.*

*Q1). Given the Community First approach, "Create community groups with the power to change things in their area". Why have individual parks budgets been raided without any discussion with local people or councillors and when will they be reinstated?*

The Cabinet Member replied that the Council currently had 14 thriving Friends Groups which were well supported by the parks team which had benefited from resources within the parks team and the associated budgets.

There were numerous projects which had been funded through the capital programme and parks operational budgets and other available funding such as S106 and CIL to fund park improvement projects which had been developed through ideas and ambitions brought forward by Friends Groups.

These included the construction of a new pergola constructed at Denton Gardens, installation of dog agility equipment at West Park and the construction of raised beds at Lyons Farm Open Space.

In addition, parks budgets were delivering the replacement of playground, sports and gym equipment across numerous parks. There had also been a variety of new planting schemes which had included planting 100,000 naturalising bulbs, sustainable planting at Montague Place and hedge and tree planting schemes across a number of Parks.

### **Question 7 from Cllr Jenkins to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration - Cllr McCabe**

On the 5th December 2022 at your Joint Strategic sub committee for Worthing, you and your cabinet colleagues all voted and agreed to a new commercial income programme introducing increased charges to beach huts rental fees. Those papers suggested that your intent was to raise £58,000 in additional income from the beach hut users. In the report this amounts to a 20% increase in fees.



As the previous administration, we know how this council works, that this rise would not have been tabled by officers without at least first consulting with the cabinet members and especially those who are responsible for beach huts under their portfolio, namely you. Even if you weren't you did not ask any questions on the 5th December to query why such a large increase was being applied.

We have done our research, but for openness and transparency, can you publicly explain to the residents of Worthing and the current beach hut users, by what process this 20% figure was arrived at for such a large increase in fees?

The Cabinet Member replied that currently inflationary pressures on the Council were in excess of 10%, and the fees were set in the light of these pressures.

However, inflation was not the only factor that was taken into consideration. The Council also looked at demand for the service within the area and given that the waiting list for beach huts was currently 6 years, the Council took the view that for this particular service a higher increase was appropriate.

### **Question from Cllr Jenkins to the Cabinet Member for the Environment - Cllr Vicki Wells**

On the 5th December 2022 at your Joint Strategic sub committee for Worthing, you and your cabinet colleagues all voted and agreed to a commercial income programme introducing increased charges to the green garden waste bins from £85.00 to £89.00 per annum and an unspecified increase in the price per sack of the garden waste sacks. In all producing an additional income totalling £22,400.

As the previous administration, we know how this council works, that this rise would not have been tabled by officers without at least first consulting with the cabinet members and especially those who are responsible for these services under their portfolio, namely you. Even if you weren't, you did not ask any questions on the 5th December to query why such increases were being applied at a time when residents are facing day to day pressures on their household bills.

For openness and transparency, can you publicly explain to the residents of Worthing and the users of these services, by what process this figure was arrived at, and what the proposed new price for a garden sack will be?

The Cabinet Member thanked Councillor Jenkins for his question about the small price increase of weekly green waste collections.

As part of the budget challenge, and closing the financial gap for 2023/24, it was right to consider all commercial / income generating activity to support the Councils' financial position. You may think this bunkham, but incredibly this fee has remained static since 2018, so this year we are applying a modest increase of £4 per year which is significantly less than the rate of inflation.

To put it into context it is an increase of 8p per week from £1.70 to £1.78.

As you are fully aware, Cabinet members in both Adur and Worthing were consulted and agreed on these small increases. Price increases are never favourable however, I was personally delighted that this £4 per year rise is well under the rate of inflation.

The cost of providing frontline services is going up, with increasing fuel, staff and material costs, including the cost of sacks and bins.

To remind you that this service provides an excellent, opt in, weekly garden waste collection for customers. The service is very popular with approximately 18,500 subscribers across Adur and Worthing.

We also offer the option for people to buy sacks to use and when they need them for those who do not need a weekly collection.

The price of sacks has also been static for a number of years, and for the same reasons we are increasing the cost from £1.25 per bag to £1.50. This price covers the cost of the sacks, delivery by us to the retailer, commission for the retailer and collection costs.