

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

**The Gordon Room, Worthing Town Hall**

**16 March 2023**

Chairman: Councillor Jon Roser  
Vice Chairman: Councillor Dan Hermitage

**Adur District Council:**

Councillor Joss Loader  
Councillor Mandy Buxton  
Councillor Carol Albury  
Councillor Tony Bellasis  
Councillor Ann Bridges  
Councillor Sharon Sluman  
Councillor Debs Stainforth

**Worthing Borough Council:**

Councillor Cathy Glynn-Davies  
Councillor Margaret Howard  
Councillor Ibsha Choudhury  
Councillor Daniel Humphreys  
Councillor Heather Mercer

**Absent**

Councillor Paul Mansfield ,Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes

**JOSC/90/22/23 Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest

**JOSC/91/22/23 Substitute Members**

There were no substitutions

**JOSC/92/22/23 Confirmation of Minutes**

**Resolved:** the minutes of the meeting of the 16 February 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

**JOSC/93/22/23 Public Question Time**

Members were asked, "By what process did the Council decide that Trees for Streets, a national company based in London, offered the best model to engage the public and achieve the goal of having more street trees? Were other organisations asked to bid? In particular, why weren't local green groups with considerable numbers of volunteers and expertise in engagement invited to submit proposals that could have offered alternative ways to deliver these aims? £24k of funding over a period of 3 years for engagement and sourcing trees from local projects could have made a huge difference to the sustainability of local environmental non-profits, contributing to a stronger local economy and providing better value for money and equitability. In any case, why will the cost of sponsorship be £395 per tree when Trees for Streets own website recommends a charge of £100-200

and WSCC Donate a Tree scheme charges £200? What provision is being made to ensure that neighbourhoods that can't afford to sponsor are not excluded?

This council has the ambition to be fair, green and local in both policy and action. Given this committee's role in holding the Executive to account, is the committee satisfied that the process by which this decision was made has delivered the best outcome possible? If not, will you hold the executive to account and ask that they reconsider?

**Response:**

The Trees for Streets approach and platform had been reviewed by Officers who were confident this provided value for money as this provided a full package of support and an easy step through experience to engage all residents across the Borough. The Council reviewed internal and external factors when seeking a platform that integrated nicely to the Council's needs whilst, more importantly, creating a very easy to navigate customer facing experience to ensure all residents and all communities had the opportunity to engage with the programme, whether on an individual basis, street basis or as part of a group. The Council also took soundings from three existing authorities utilising the platform.

The Council didn't have the resources and expertise to create a crowdfunding platform of the nature offered by the Trees for Streets organisation. Trees for Streets bespoke software supported the coordinated marketing of the scheme enabling a steady stream of applications. Whilst £24k (over 3 years) could be utilised for green projects, the Council needed to invest in the capability and functionality to increase the reach, and generate the interest, in caring for and planting more trees in the Borough.

The pricing structure per tree was yet to be formally agreed however the report noted that no tree would cost in excess of £395 and not necessarily £395 per tree. The Worthing Borough scheme had proposed additional social value as it included equipment for use by communities which would help in neighbourhood watering and make use of rainwater harvesting. Aligned to the community funded trees were those sponsored by businesses and the Council was hopeful that businesses, who expressed an interest, would look to locations where a community may have the desire but not the means to sponsor their own or to expand on their neighbourhood crowdfunding to date. As specialists in this field Trees for Streets facilitated a joined up approach in a way that WSCC Donate a Tree scheme, for example, currently didn't.

Given the substantial breadth of the proposed Trees for Streets scheme the council welcomed volunteer help in the delivery of the project and welcomed thoughts on how they might work together to give the scheme every chance of success.

**JOSC/94/22/23      Members Questions**

No member questions were received.

**JOSC/95/22/23      Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions**

There were no urgent items

**JOSC/96/22/23      Consideration of any matter referred to the Committee in**

## **relation to a call-in of a decision**

There were no call-ins

### **JOSC/97/22/23      Annual Feedback report from meetings of West Sussex Health & Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC)**

The Committee had a report before it attached as item 8, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members and is attached to the signed copy of these minutes

Members asked about the level of medical expertise on the panel, the decision to open a new acute stroke unit in Chichester, the viability of Worthing patients and their relatives getting to Chichester, and how data is gathered on dentistry care.

Members were told that experts were presenting evidence to the committee, that the new acute unit would be a much better option for those recovering from stroke and that data on dentistry was gathered from health watch, community organisations, doctors and the voluntary sector.

### **JOSC/98/22/23      Interview with Adur Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Strategic Planning**

The Committee had a report before it attached as item 9, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members and is attached to the signed copy of these minutes.

A Member asked, "Can you explain how you think Lancings' needs can be met by, and meet the criteria for, securing this levelling up bid?"

#### **Response:**

Members were told that the council had undertaken a very in depth process to establish the challenges and opportunities that existed in Lancing and, maybe for the first time, explored people's 'lived experiences'. They were really confident that they had a good sense of what the Lancing 'community' needed, which was backed up by solid data and evidence, both of which aligned really well with the Levelling Up agenda.

In terms of the Levelling Up bid, it was important to reaffirm that this was a competitive process and whilst this was an immediate opportunity to secure investment into Lancing, this wouldn't be the only opportunity. However, for the bid itself, the community voted on the top items that the Adur District, Lancing Parish and WSCC should focus on, one of which was improving the village centre in terms of visual appeal. This aligned extremely well with the criteria of the bid as 'town centre regeneration' was a key theme and with Adur (Lancing) being a priority 2 area they were confident they would not only submit a robust bid but it was built from solid community foundations.

A Member asked, "There is consensus that we need more affordable housing, so why did you support a housing development on the Howard Kent site for just 5 shared ownership homes, how are we ever going to reduce housing need if the few remaining brownfield land sites are not being used for affordable housing?"

#### **Response:**

Members were told Government guidance and the adopted Adur Local Plan stressed that the viability of a development is a material consideration in the planning process. The developer of the Howard Kent site submitted a viability assessment that was robustly assessed by an Independent Viability Consultant (appointed by the Council). This assessment recognised that the scheme could not deliver 30% affordable housing and the offer of 5 on site shared ownership units or £427k towards off site rented accommodation was considered reasonable in all circumstances by Planning Officers. The viability issues facing developments along the Western Harbour Arm had been known for some time and were due to the extremely high costs of providing a new flood defence and new cycle path along the river frontage and along the A259.

It should be noted that whilst some sites had not been able to provide affordable housing, other sites along the Western Harbour Arm were providing 100% affordable housing such as Kingston Wharf adjacent to Howard Kent. As a result the overall level of affordable housing being provided was actually significantly in excess of the Local Plan requirement of 30%.

The Local Plan and subsequent Joint Area Action Plan (JAAP) set a minimum housing requirement for the Western Harbour Arm of 1,100 dwellings and of these 30% (330) would have been expected to be affordable homes with the majority (247) being for affordable rent.

Since the adoption of the JAAP however, planning permission had been granted for 856 dwellings and of these 445 would be affordable housing. This represented 52% of all housing currently approved at the Western Harbour. The reason for this is that a number of the developers were Registered Providers (Housing Associations) and were able to utilise funding from Homes England to deliver much higher levels of affordable housing. This taken together with the affordable housing being delivered on Adur Homes land (e.g. at Albion Street) meant that the Council working together with key development partners would be delivering significantly higher levels of affordable housing than originally envisaged in the Adur Local Plan.

A Member asked “Do you think that with pressing WSCC, we are actually making headway with them, in relation to the sustainable travel plans, cycle routes , traffic mitigation...?”

Never has this been more important than now, with more large building developments, children needing to cycle in a safe way and a properly managed route to school and looking to the future of the way that our travel will have to change. We urgently need this addressing. Do you see this actually happening?”

**Response:**

Members were told that a consistent message was going to WSCC and some progress was starting to be felt. That a constant dialogue was open and they would go into greater detail on this when answering a later question.

A Member asked, “On the site of New Monks Farm Development, a site is set aside for a new primary school. Do you still foresee that this will still go ahead as the national trend in primary school numbers are down and our primary schools in Lancing are increasingly

undersubscribed, going down to a two year class intake instead of three, would this area not be better utilised for a large state of the art Health Clinic?"

**Response:**

Members were told the planning permission and the accompanying legal agreement reserved the site for a primary school and ultimately it would be up to West Sussex County Council as the relevant education authority working with the the Department of Education and Education partners (Trusts and Academies) to decide on the need for a school on this site. Whilst there had been a drop in birth rates and corresponding demand for primary school places this was often cyclical and planning for school provision had to take a longer term view. The Council was at the time reviewing infrastructure needs as part of the Review of the Adur Local Plan and this would identify future demand for additional school places.

A Member asked, "We are seeing new homes being built in Adur but not the infrastructure to complement them. As Cabinet Member whose portfolio includes the Local Plan do you foresee plans being made for a new school and a doctors' surgery? For example there are a considerable number of new homes being built on New Monks Park but there is no provision there for either."

**Response:**

Members were told there was a provision for a new primary school in New Monks Farm and were aware of the need for health care facilities however these decisions lay outside the remit of Adur District Council but representations were being made.

A Member asked, "Part of your portfolio is Transport. There is a bus service Compass Bus no.16 which was formerly subsidised by West Sussex County Council, who decided to stop doing so in 2019. The service is important to Lancing and Sompting residents who are elderly and have mobility problems as it goes into Lancing village to access doctors, shops, library and dentists. It also goes to Worthing Hospital and Town Centre. As a County Councillor at that time I organised a petition of more than 1,500 signatures which West Sussex Council still refused. As a Lancing Parish Councillor I took the request there under the Localism Act and fortunately got funding for a slightly reduced service for the bus. The service is still being run in this way and will do so this financial year.

Do you perceive that as public transport is now so important as part of our Green agenda that Adur Council might help with funding for this service in the near future?"

**Response:**

Members were told it was extremely important that bus provision existed for all of the residents to access local amenities, and the Adur Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Strategic Planning completely endorsed the approach of looking to retain this community service in one way or another.

Unfortunately the District Council wasn't responsible for bus infrastructure and whilst the District might be able to look at funding feasibility work around routes, they didn't have the mandate (both financially and in officer time) to resource this. However, they were extremely happy to take this up with County Councillors and the Cabinet Member for

Highways and Transport, Cllr Joy Dennis, to highlight this concern and see if there is anything that could be delivered, whether directly from WSCC or in partnership.

A Member asked, "On the basis that the Government has agreed to water down mandatory housing targets for local councils, please explain what powers ADC has under the Local Plan review to address residents' very real concerns about infrastructure provision to meet our growing population?"

A good example of this would be secondary school provision, which has already reached crisis levels in Adur, even though many homes have yet to be built. Although education provision is clearly a WSCC issue, it does have a major impact on Adur's home building programme.

**Response:**

Members were told that whilst the Government was consulting on changes to the National Planning Policy (NPPF) and these may dilute to some extent the requirement to deliver objective assessed housing needs, it was not clear whether the proposed changes would be implemented. Furthermore it was not clear what criteria would be used to assess which authorities may have some flexibility to not meet future housing needs.

Nevertheless, the District had been able to demonstrate to previous Government appointed inspectors that the lack of land within the District meant that it was unable to meet future housing needs and the adopted Local Plan was approved with a 3,107 shortfall. The Local Plan Review would assess future infrastructure needs for the District and they would work closely with WSCC to assess the need for a new or extended secondary provision to meet current and future demand. Predicting future education requirements had never been easy and the current drop in primary school numbers would be felt in secondary schools in due course.

A Member asked, "Can you explain the mechanisms through which ADC will work with WSCC to ensure that good quality cycling and walking infrastructure can be put in place, how optimistic are you that there's a realistic prospect of this being achieved in the next couple of years, and what will you be doing to help prevent any further delays?"

**Response:**

Members were told the Council were already actively working with WSCC to provide comment on existing cycling and walking schemes which, at the time, included the current consultation regarding new cycling infrastructure on two north-south routes and also two core east-west routes, the latter being the planned designs for Upper Shoreham Road and also improvements to the A259.

The Adur Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Strategic Planning was aware that Officers from both the District and WSCC met every other month to ensure there was a close working relationship around sustainable / active travel, which was fed into Members. Equally, Member conversations were picked up at places like the Shoreham Harbour Leaders Board whilst it was planned that this agenda would also be picked up under the new Growth Deal with WSCC which was planned to be agreed with the County that Summer.

The Council was fully committed to good quality cycling infrastructure, as this was vital infrastructure for the future, and The Adur Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Strategic Planning was pleased that as a District, had worked with WSCC to get these schemes out for consultation. They would continue to work with WSCC to focus efforts onto the next stages.

A Member asked, “More than 1000 flats have been approved or applied for along the Western Harbour Arm with more in other parts of Adur. Are you confident that Section 106 money from developers going to West Sussex County Council will be used effectively within Adur? Adur council’s annual report on its share of s106 money was extremely clear. WSCC’s report was without information on how much money comes from Adur developments and how much will be spent on Adur infrastructure. Could you influence WSCC to be clearer on this?”

**Response:**

Members were told that information had been received earlier that afternoon and would be shared in due course.

Members were also informed that both Adur and Worthing Planning Committees, in agreeing the annual Infrastructure Funding Statements (IFS) were keen to ensure that in future years the IFS included a summary of the s106 funding held by WSCC for each authority to improve transparency. WSCC prepared its own IFS but it was a large document covering the whole County and therefore lacked detail on the funding held for each authority.

As part of the Adur Local Plan Review and work on reviewing the Western Harbour Arm WSCC had been requested to provide a detailed breakdown of contributions held for each transport scheme identified in the Adur Transport Study. This information was contained within the individual s106 agreements for each development but a composite list and allocation for each improvement scheme was being prepared and would be shared with Members in due course.

**JOSC/99/22/23      JOSC Work Programme setting 2023/24**

The Committee had a report before it attached as item 10, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members and is attached to the signed copy of these minutes

Members discussed the process for reviewing scrutiny through a workshop group before putting together a working group. It was clarified that no decisions were to be made at this meeting as to the future of JOSC and that Members were currently being presented with a possible roadmap for improving how Scrutiny was conducted. Members discussed the 23/24 schedule and voted unanimously to bring the Our Plan item forward to the July meeting.

As part of the discussion on the Work Programme it was accepted that the work of the JOSC Working Group (Adur Homes Repairs and Maintenance) would need to be paused pending the outcomes of the Adur Homes referral to the Housing Regulator. It was also accepted that the JOSC Working Group (review of policy for housing vulnerable people in accommodation outside of Council areas) could continue its work as it was not an area of

focus for the Housing Regulator but that some adjustments and input could be required by the Regulator in the coming months which might impact on the work of that review.

**Resolved:**

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

(1) Noted the progress in delivering the JOSC Work Programme for 2022/23

(2) Amended the draft JOSC Work Programme for 2023/24 to bring Our Plan forward to the July meeting and agreed that the amended Work Programme be submitted to the Adur and Worthing Full Council meetings in April 2023 for approval.

**JOSC/100/22/23      Annual review report on the work of the Worthing BID**

The Committee had a report before it attached as item 11, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members and is attached to the signed copy of these minutes. The report was presented by the CEO of the Worthing Bid.

A Member asked, "In the Review that this committee carried out last year one of the issues raised was the relationship between the BID and the Council. On pg 50 of this report you outline how this important relationship has improved. Are there any ways or actions that could improve the relationship further?"

**Response:**

Members were told that as an organisation that works with many aspects of the council, the Worthing Bid found the work programme in the Platforms for our Places document very helpful, as that allowed them to see where they can link in within the larger council and see other activities that they can again link in with.

A Member asked, "How successful do you feel the Worthing Gift Card has been since its launch at Christmas 2021 and what feedback have you received from the 115 businesses signed up for it? Can you give further details on the ongoing programme to keep spending inside Worthing?"

**Response:**

Members were told that the Gift Card scheme had been successful, especially for companies and organisations that really promote it and last year generated £15k. They found that people had been using it increasingly for theatre and cinema and treats.

Members also asked about extending the Business Improvement District to including other areas, which businesses could participate in the scheme, what engagement with the wider business community existed and what responses to the festival stage at the upcoming Worthing Festival they had received. Members were informed that satellite areas were a possibility but that those areas were currently unlikely to generate the necessary money to make it worthwhile but this could always be reviewed. Members were also told that any business within the Business Improvement District could participate, a monthly newsletter along with rangers out talking to businesses were

important factors in their engagement and there had been 7 responses to the stage so far, which would be placed at south st square.

**Resolved:**

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the progress and performance of the Worthing BID and a unanimous vote of appreciation be accorded to Sharon Clarke for her work in supporting the BID and the Town Centre Initiative over the previous 20 years.

**JOSC/101/22/23      Worthing Cabinet Member for Resources**

The Committee had a report before it attached as item 12, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members and is attached to the signed copy of these minutes

The Worthing Cabinet Member for Resources read a prepared statement outlining a timeline of events, regarding information released about car parking charges. They advised that they had not intentionally misled the Committee or withheld information.

Members asked about whether the cabinet had reviewed the details behind money raised by an increase in car park charges and what information is to be made public and available to scrutiny. Members were told that the proposed car park charges had been put together as a number of possible options by officers, but hadn't been agreed at the time and that while scrutiny has greater access to information, exempt information needs to be shared with scrutiny under exempt conditions.

**JOSC/102/22/23      Interview with Worthing Cabinet Member for Regeneration**

The Committee had a report before it, attached as item 13, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members and is attached to the signed copy of these minutes.

A Member asked, "I like to ask this question of all the Cabinet Members. What are the main challenges or obstacles facing the work of Regeneration?"

**Response:**

Members were told that the legislative framework and permitted development was at odds with the ambitions of local authorities. Housing targets, the levelling up bill, ensuring the productivity of assets, recruiting talent and retaining great staff were all big challenges faced.

A Member asked, "Like a lot of the portfolios, Regeneration seems to cover a broad range of responsibilities. Are there any areas that are in danger of slipping through the cracks, so to speak?"

**Response:**

Members were told that it was difficult to drive campaigns and garner public interest on maintenance of assets projects putting them at risk but Members were assured these were not 'slipping through the cracks'. Members were also told it was essential for the

Local Plan to be adopted swiftly so a working group could be established to start looking at the design code of the national planning policy framework.

A Member asked, "The missions of 'Our Plan' include thriving places and that by their nature, these missions are bigger than the individual services provided, needing creative solutions including working with residents, businesses, visitors, communities and partners.

How well do you think your portfolio has developed in the first year of administration, to work with businesses, partners and communities, towards making our places thrive?

**Response:**

Members were told of involvement in recent school competitions, the Big Clean campaign continued to gather momentum with a number of town centre, seafront and neighbourhood cleans in 2022, showed the appetite from residents to care with them for their places and they hoped to see many more people at events. Public consultation on the Lido whereby they received over 4,000 responses and whilst this did provide them with a challenge to review, this was a nice challenge to have as this demonstrated commitment to involving communities in the development of projects, and decision making. They had continued to meet with business owners, members of TCI and looked forward to more.

A Member asked, "Sea level rises are a very immediate concern. If you were to look at the prediction maps for this rise matched with the additional threat of annual floods then the image isn't nice viewing for Worthing and the surrounding areas by 2030 and into the next century.

Can you give the committee any updates on work that is taking place to keep Coastal Protection developing in line with the data shown on sea rises?"

**Response:**

Members were told that Worthing Borough Council undertook annual maintenance works to the coastal defence structures along the entire borough frontage. Works included but were not limited to, re-bolting loose timbers, replacing worn or missing timber planks, wailings and land ties and pile extensions.

Officers from the Council were working with the Environment Agency (EA) and had been working in partnership to secure government grant funding via Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) for a short term and more immediate scheme to undertake the necessary repairs to the timber groynes and maintain shingle levels. The estimated cost of the scheme was approximately £2m, which included a £200,000 contribution from Worthing Borough Council.

As part of this more immediate project, a condition review of all the timber groynes along the Worthing frontage had been carried out by Officers from the Engineering Team. The timber groynes were made of either soft or hard wood depending on their age. Timber groynes in the last 25/30 years had been replaced with soft wood, mainly due to costs. As such, the timber groyne field was all substantially at "end of life", which was more apparent in areas where shingle volume was lowest.

These larger repair works had become unsustainable from existing maintenance budgets and external Government funding was being sought from Defra via the Environment Agency to fund these works using their Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Appraisal.

The longer term future solution (10 years +) to Worthing's coastal erosion and flood protection would be considered by the partnership and again look to secure government grant funding via Defra. The future solution might consist of replacement coastal defence structures in either timber, rock or both, following consultation and environmental and economic appraisal, but the extent of the works was unclear at this time, including cost. A previous consideration to replace the entire groyne field in Worthing estimated costs of up to £55m, although this was likely to have increased due to the higher costs of materials.

A Member asked, "In your speech at full council on 21st February you highlighted the structural engineering and survey appraisal works that are about to begin on our Lido. Many residents are excited about this part of the town's history being reinvigorated. Can you update the committee on the timeline for these appraisals and what the next steps for the Regeneration portfolio will be once these have been concluded?"

**Response:**

Members were told that understanding the structure was the first step. The Council were currently preparing specifications to undertake Ground Condition and physical structural inspections on the Lido. These specialist work requirements would then be procured through a competitive tendering process. On conclusion of the outcome of these investigations, officers of the council would review the findings and would be in a stronger position to propose the next key steps moving forward. At the time it was estimated that this particular work stream would be completed by Autumn 2023.

Members also asked about the future of Southern House as a site for employment and were told that long term aspirations for the sight were still in their infancy.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 9.27pm, it having commenced at 6.30pm.

**Chairman**