

Minutes of a meeting of the
Worthing Council
18 April 2023
at 6.30 pm

Councillor Ferdousi Henna Chowdhury (Chair)

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 Rita Garner	Councillor Richard Mulholland
Councillor Nigel Morgan	Councillor Richard Nowak
Councillor Lionel Harman	Councillor Jon Roser
Councillor Noel Atkins	Councillor Helen Silman
Councillor Roy Barraclough	Councillor Dawn 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 Cathy Glynn-Davies	Councillor Steve Waight
Councillor Margaret Howard	Councillor Carl Walker
Councillor Daniel Humphreys	Councillor Rosey Whorlow

*Absent

C/65/22-23 Apologies for Absence

The Mayor received apologies for absence from Councillors Dan Hermitage, Sally Smith and Vicki Wells.

C/66/22-23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

C/67/22-23 Confirmation of Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 21st February 2023 and the Extraordinary Council meeting held on the 28th March 2023, be approved as correct records and signed by the Mayor.

C/68/22-23 Questions from the Public

The Mayor advised that 1 question had been received in advance of the meeting. Unfortunately, Claire Hunt was unable to attend the meeting so the Mayor agreed to read the question in her absence and arrange for a written response to be provided.

1. Question submitted by Claire Hunt, a Worthing Resident

Are there policies and procedures in place that govern how the Council invites Expressions of Interest for opportunities to supply funded services or projects in Worthing? For example, is the council required to have more than one bid for any project to ensure transparency, inclusion, value-for-money and comparison of different approaches? What requirement is there to consider local groups, businesses and non-profits as potential suppliers of a service, to build their capacity, sustainability and keep the funding in the local economy? If these policies and procedures exist, which groups or businesses, other than Trees for Streets, submitted EOIs before the Council decided to allocate £24k to the London-based company? Were any of the others local? If no other bids were encouraged, how is that 'Fair, Green and Local'?

The following written response was provided by the Cabinet Member for the Environment:-

The Council's standing orders provide guidance to ensure that all procurements are compliant with UK procurement law. The Council has flexibility in smaller value procurements to restrict these to local or regional providers and actively encourages local procurement where appropriate.

In this particular case Trees for Streets were considered the stand-out provider of a bespoke local authority crowdfunding platform, specialising and proven in community resourced urban trees. Trees for Streets has a growing client base of 16 local authorities and has facilitated the funding/planting over 2,750 trees since its inception two years ago.

Trees for Streets presented their bespoke approach to crowdfunding at the second of two meetings of local 'Tree Champions', answering questions on their suitability and fit for the council's and community aspirations. The arrangement with Trees for Streets will be closely monitored and reviewed, to ensure the relationship is providing the desired local impact and continued value for money.

Worthing Borough Council actively welcomes local, volunteer support with any of our tree planting programs. The council continues to work closely with local environmental groups who share the council's priorities in addressing the climate emergency. Community groups who facilitate local, grassroot initiatives and support the council in achieving its multiple, environmental aims remain very highly valued.

C/69/22-23

Announcements by the Mayor, Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members or the Head of Paid Service

The Mayor provided a summary of the events that she had attended and supported since the last Full Council meeting and details of the upcoming Mayor's charity events.

The Leader acknowledged that this was the last meeting of the Council prior to the elections taking place in May and therefore wished to place on record the Council's thanks to Councillors Jim Deen, Lionel Harman, Martin McCabe, Helen Siman and Sally Smith who were standing down (Councillor Deen had recently resigned), for their hard work on behalf of their residents and for the Council.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency notified the Council that the scope of the Climate Emergency portfolio had been expanded to include the Ecological E-mergency.

There were no announcements by the Chief Executive.

C/70/22-23 Items raised under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items raised under the urgency provisions.

C/71/22-23 Recommendations from the Cabinet and Committees to Council

Council had, before it, recommendations from the Worthing Joint Strategic Sub-Committee and the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Extracts of these minutes had been circulated as items 7A and 7B.

Item 7A Worthing Joint Strategic Sub-Committee - 6 March 2023

Worthing Heat Network: Letting of contract to design, build, fund, operate, and maintain a low carbon heat network for Worthing Town Centre and agreement to enter into heat supply and connection agreements for WBC estate

The Leader proposed the recommendations from the Worthing JSC Sub-Committee which were seconded by Councillor Helen Silman.

Members were pleased to see the network progressing and wished to place on record the Council's thanks to all the officers involved in progressing the scheme which was acknowledged as ground breaking work.

Following a vote, the recommendation was unanimously supported.

Resolved,

That Worthing Borough Council approved an amendment to the General Fund capital programme budget of £7,454,490 funded as follows:

£2,449,200 from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme;

£5,005,230 from additional prudential borrowing.

Item 7B Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 16 March 2023

JOSC Work Programme Setting 2023/24

The Chair of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Roser, proposed the recommendation from the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 16 March 2023.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Daniel Humphreys and unanimously supported.

Resolved,

That Worthing Borough Council approved an amendment to the JOSOC Work Programme for 2023/24 to bring Our Plan forward to the July meeting.

C/72/22-23 Report of the Leader on Decisions taken by the Executive

The Leader of the Council presented their report on decisions taken by the Cabinet since the last meeting of the Council, which were detailed in Item 8.

During consideration of the item, questions were raised in relation to the number of Individual / Joint Executive Members Decisions taken since December 2022, Trees for Streets, Redundancy Costs and Somerset Lake.

C/73/22-23 Decision making following a resignation

Before the Council was a report by the Director for Communities, a copy of which was circulated to all members, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 9.

The report outlined decisions required by Council to ensure that committee appointments were determined according to the relevant legislation.

The following nominations were proposed by the Leader:-

1. Cllr Rosey Whorlow be appointed to fill the Labour vacancy on the Planning Committee;
2. Cllr Helen Silman be appointed as Chairman of the Planning Committee until the Annual Council meeting in May 2023; and
3. Cllr Jon Roser be appointed as Deputy Mayor until the Annual Council meeting in May 2023.

Members debated whether the Mayoral role could be cross party in the future and group leaders gave an undertaking to hold constructive conversations moving forwards in this regard.

The nominations proposed were seconded by Councillor Carl Walker and supported following a vote.

Resolved,

That Worthing Borough Council

- I. Noted the revised political balance of the Council as set out in paragraph 3.3;
- II. Noted that there were no changes to seat allocations on Committees;
- III. Noted the appointment of Cllr Rosey Whorlow to the Planning Committee;
- IV. Approved the appointment of Cllr Helen Silman as the Chairman of the Planning Committee until the meeting of the Annual Council in May 2023.
- V. Approved the appointment of Cllr Jon Roser as Deputy Mayor until the meeting of the Annual Council in May 2023.

C/74/22-23

Selecting the Mayor for 2023/24

Councillor Beccy Cooper proposed Councillor Ibsha Choudhury as Deputy Mayor for 2023/24, to become Mayor in 2024/25.

Councillor Dawn Smith seconded the proposal.

There were no other nominations and following a vote, the nomination was supported.

Resolved

That Councillor Ibsha Choudhury will be the nominated Deputy Mayor for 2023/24 to serve as Mayor from the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2024.

C/75/22-23

Schedule of Meetings 2023/24

The Council received the schedule of meetings for the Council and other meetings from the Proper Officer, the Director for Communities, a copy of which was circulated to all members, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 11.

Council was invited to formally approve the dates for its meetings during this period whilst noting the proposed dates for other committees.

*** The meeting was adjourned at 8.05pm in order for advice to be sought regarding an amendment to the schedule of meetings concerning the annual meeting in May 2023. The meeting was reconvened at 8.28pm.*

The Leader proposed the Schedule of Meetings for 2023/24 incorporating the following amendment; that the Annual Council meeting in 2023 be held at 6.30pm on Tuesday 23rd May 2023 instead of 12 noon on Friday 19th May 2023. The proposed schedule of meetings as amended was seconded by Cllr Samuel Theodoridi.

Members debated the pros and cons of holding the annual meeting on 23rd May 2023 in the evening and the Council Tax Setting meeting on the 20th February 2024 during the daytime.

The motion was supported following a vote.

Resolved

The Council approved the amended Schedule of Meetings for 2023/24.

C/76/22-23

Members Questions under Council Procedure Rule 12

The Mayor announced that the Proper Officer had received 1 question from Members in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12. She advised that one supplementary question could be asked which must arise out of the original question, or, the reply.

Questions would be asked in rotation of the Groups represented in the Chamber and there were 30 minutes allowed for questions with 1 rotation of speakers possible.

The Mayor announced that Councillor Thorpe had submitted a question.

First rotation

Question 1 from Councillor Hazel Thorpe to the Cabinet Member for Citizen Services

I congratulate the New Interim Head of Housing on her appointment.

I believe, as elected councillors, we have the right to scrutinise and represent our residents on issues such as our housing, mould, repairs and inefficient energy devices, without having to resort to complaints and the ombudsman.

Question

Whilst they are independent organisations, we surely have a service level agreement with them? Therefore, when and how often is the Council going to meet and discuss these matters with the Council's preferred RSL partners to scrutinise and improve the level of duty of care to our residents?

The Cabinet Member replied that the Council did not have Service Level Agreements with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) as they were independent organisations rather than preferred partners each providing a service to the other.

The Council attended an RSL forum quarterly where issues could be raised / questions could be asked. In addition, senior officers attended regular meetings with key local partners where the Council was also able to raise issues.

Adur and Worthing Councils were establishing a new Adur and Worthing Homelessness Prevention Partnership, which would bring together key partners to develop more data informed approaches to prevention. This would help to collectively identify work that the Councils could do with its partners including the RSLs in their respective areas.

Councillors should make Heads of Service and Directors aware of concerns with organisations so that they could be raised at the forum. This was a route for general issues and not individual cases where a direct approach to the organisation was required as the Council had no authority over them. Tenants were able to approach independent organisations for advice too e.g. CitA.

Escalation for issues for RSL tenants was the same as for the council:

- Make an enquiry
- Escalate as complaint if the tenant remained unsatisfied
- Once the process had been exhausted, issues could be referred to the ombudsman for investigation.

This was the best route to ensure issues were captured in a process and unresolved issues could then be dealt with by the ombudsman enabling a consistent process and publication of findings if there was fault.

Issues relating to housing conditions and / or disrepair could be referred to Private Sector Housing if they remained unresolved after reporting. This way the Council could intervene and / or serve notice where required, if reasonable steps were not being taken.

The Mayor declared the meeting closed at 8.58pm

Mayor