

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

QEII Room, Shoreham Centre, Shoreham-by-Sea

25 July 2019

Councillor Joss Loader (Vice-Chairman)

Adur District Council:

Catherine Arnold
Kevin Boram
Paul Mansfield
Andy McGregor
Lavinia O'Connor

Worthing Borough Council:

Paul Baker
Margaret Howard
Charles James
Jane Sim
Carl Walker

Absent

Councillor Robert Smytherman, Councillor Stephen Chipp and Councillor Carol Albury

Officers:

1 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor Ann Bridges declared her substitution for Councillor Carol Albury

3 Confirmation of Minutes

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of the 20 June 2019 be signed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman

4 Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public

5 Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items

6 Consideration of any matter referred to the Committee in relation to a call-in of a decision

There had been no call-ins received at the time of the publication of the agenda

7 Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2019-20

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Communities, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 6. This report outlined progress with the work contained in the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) Work Programme for 2019/20 and detailed of four public Scrutiny requests.

Members discussed two requests in relation to fortnightly bin collections and recycling and agreed to refer the requests to the Working Group reviewing recycling to take into consideration as part of its work.

Members discussed a request to review parking on pavements and it was agreed that the matter be referred to West Sussex County Council as the responsible authority.

Members discussed a request in relation to the Council's Cultural Services and a recent Executive decision in that regard. Members agreed to set up a working group consisting of Councillors Margaret Howard, Carl Walker, Paul Mansfield and Jane Sim

Members discussed the recent declaration of climate change emergency and were informed of motions being referred to the Committee at its next meeting.

Resolved: that the progress of the work programme be noted with the amendments made at the meeting. .

8 Financial Performance 2018/19 - Revenue Outturn

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital and Resources, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 7. The report outlined the revenue financial monitoring position for the end of the 2018/19 financial year for Joint Strategic Committee, Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils.

The Head of Financial Services introduced the report to the Committee.

A Member asked the following question *' It is encouraging to see that parking income has increased across Adur. Is it possible to have a further break down - ie which car parks are performing well and which, if any, are under-used? What is being done to encourage use of car parks generally, to ease pressure on congested areas such as beach-front roads on Shoreham Beach and in our town/village centres where on-road parking is prevalent and inconveniences residents? The tariff for Beach car parks is £4 per day on Sundays - significantly more than the £1 charged on Sundays in the town. Are Beach car parks well used at weekends? Why is the tariff so substantially different? The Adur Executive Member for Resources told the Committee that more detailed figures on usage could be sent on after the meeting. However the car parks were well used, some had been closed for a period of time. Work had been undertaken with West sussex County Council about extending TRO's.*

A Member asked the following question: *Is it possible to know why Adur cemeteries are under achieving against their income? Is this due to a drop in burials or other factors? If the latter, what are they please?* The Executive Member told the Committee that there had been a downturn in death rate

A Member asked the following question: *Again it is encouraging to see that markets and bus shelter advertising income in Adur exceeded the budget. Congratulations to John Kerr and the team. With relation to the bus shelter advertising, there has been criticism that prominent High Street slots are often given over to Worthing Theatres' and general Worthing events. Is it possible to know the percentage of Worthing adverts compared with Adur events in the past 12 months? Is priority given to Adur advertisers in the event of competition for key spots? If not, why not?* The Exec Member told the Committee that there was 25 percent reserved for Adur community, business or social enterprises group and Adur District Council activities. Worthing Theatres had paid for 25% of the advertising upfront. Income from bus shelters was needed to pay the rates that the bus shelters incurred.

A Member asked the following question: *As 72% of the income received by WBC already comes from Council Tax, are there plans to protect those on lower incomes as we move from central government funding to Council Tax, business rates and commercial activity?* The Head of Financial Services told the Committee that the Councils were in an extended period of falling Government grant. The 72% proportion of income received by the Council reflects the fact that government funding has been withdrawn, so Council Tax has risen as a percentage of the Council's overall funding from taxation. Council Tax levied by the Borough Council generally only increased by inflation and is limited by the referendum principles to around a 2%-3% maximum increase. The final decision on the setting of Council Tax will be for the Worthing Council as part of the annual budget process. Worthing Borough Council has a Council Tax Support Scheme in place, although every resident is expected to pay some Council Tax (£5.00 per week or approximately £260 per annum). This is further supplemented by a Hardship Fund (£80,000) for those in most financial difficulty. In addition to the Council Tax Support Scheme, the Council has a number of other initiatives in place to support those on low incomes including work that is commissioned to the Citizens Advice Bureau to support people with a wide range of issues including finance and debt. We also have programmes in place to support people back into work and other projects commissioned around cooking on a budget.

A Member asked the following question: *Our parking income is £2,861,000 but with a climate emergency now declared by WBC, how have we factored in a potential reduction over time in this significant income?* The Head of Financial Services told members that whilst the gross income was substantial, the net income in 2018/19 from car parking was £1.1m, when costs are factored in the loss of car parking income is not the issue it might first appear. Within the Medium Term Financial Plan elsewhere on this agenda, the council is already factoring in the eventual loss of income from the redevelopment of the Grafton site (£0.5m) by 2022/23. The Council continuously monitored and projected parking income. Following the declaration of the Climate Emergency officers would be working on the potential impact on parking, and associated income, as well as the opportunities it presented for more sustainable transport solutions. This work would be done through a joined up approach with officers from Sustainability, Economy, Finance and Parking.

A Member asked the following question: *Housing Needs re: temp accommodation - I see that Worthing covered overspends by a flex homeless support grant, Adur's overspend at £143,000 was not, can you explain why please, was a proportion of this grant not applied to Adur?* The Head of Financial Services told the Committee that Both Councils receive flexible housing support grant. The Councils had the following initial allocations - Adur £206,019 , Worthing £137,743. These allocations had originally been based on information from 2015/16 returns,

however the caseloads have changed substantially in the intervening time and as a result, Worthing was awarded an additional £69,000 grant at the year end. As the grant was awarded to Worthing Borough Council by the Government, it cannot be used to support Adur District Council expenditure.

A Member asked the following question: *Commercial waste increased tonnage (was the increase not foreseen, did the company raise fees within our financial year with no notice?)* Members were told that this had occurred as a result of an underestimation of the budget required to cover the tonnage of waste generated by our commercial activities. This had been resolved in the 2019/20 financial year budget and a set gate disposal fee per tonne has been negotiated with the disposal company for a 2 year period.

A Member asked the following question: *Parking Services – officers previously explained that income from parking can be used to subsidise sustainable transport, given Adur & W has called a climate emergency – can we look at subsidising children willing to take the train or dedicated bus service to Sir Robert Woodard from Shoreham and from Worthing in for the Sept 2019 start. Many children are being placed in secondary schools at greater distance from home and we need to cut pollution along these problematic routes. Or subsidise train or bus travel for the disabled?* Members were told that sustainable transport priorities would be identified through the development of the LCWIP (local cycling and walking infrastructure plan) and the identification of supporting infrastructure needs, such as storage and EV charging points. School Transport was the responsibility of the County Council as the Education Authority, and there were subsidies in place through discounted travel options for young people. This included free transport for those who live more than 3 miles away from school (2 miles if under 8), children with special educational needs, or those from low income families. Discounted travel options existed for young people including low cost bus passes and rail passes. Free bus passes are also available for older people and those with disabilities. There was also a disabled person's railcard which offers a third off rail travel, which could be sought instead of a bus pass. Adur and Worthing Councils also supported Community Transport, which enabled more vulnerable residents to get out and about.

A Member asked the following question: *Facilities management – how often are energy recharges audit done and how can we be sure its accurate re-charging (hourly meter reads etc) .* Members were told that an energy management audit was carried out recently and had received a Satisfactory assurance. Recharging was carried out on a quarterly basis.

A Member asked the following question: *Can you confirm within the £1.4mn is the figure spent what was spent on the marketing of High Street and ex Civic Centre and if so what was the original budget and what is this made up of please?* Members were told that the £1.4m was the opening balance on the Worthing Borough Council Capacity Issues Fund which was used to fund one-off initiatives. The Joint Strategic Committee approved the release of up to £100,000 from Worthing Borough Councils' reserves for marketing and legal costs for the disposal of Colonnade House (High Street, Worthing) and the western part of the Worthing Civic Car Park.

A Member asked the following question: *Please can you let me know why the decision for £19k in trees is for Lancing only, where will these be earmarked – along the air pollution hotspots? Why not Shoreham please? Also on another page it says £12k.* Members were told that the correct figure was £12,000 and relates to supporting street scene planting and maintenance for 2019/20 of the 14 Lancing and 12 Shoreham planters. The costs were allocated according to need and number of planters in each location.

A Member asked about a specific carry forward set out in the report and was told that the figure related to commitments regarding the upkeep of South Downs Leisure property. The Head of Financial Services also set out issues relating to replacement of smashed glass at Splash Point.

A Member asked a question about a line in the accounts relating to Colonnade House and was told that funding had been set aside to negotiate a purchase to increase its size.

Resolved: that the report be noted

9 Becoming Financially Sustainable - Revenue Budget Strategy for 2020/21

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital and Resources, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 8. The report before members set out the Councils' budget strategy for 2020/21

A Member asked the following question: *Is it anticipated that the business rate income from forthcoming developments will be impacted by our declaration of a climate emergency (for instance, the climate emergency may have potentially reduced business rate income if it impacted the likelihood of a high-traffic project like New Monks Farm.* Members were told that speculative increases were not built into the budget. The Councils had committed to work towards becoming carbon neutral by 2030, the commitment involved the shift away from fossil fuels and virtually eliminating carbon emissions.

A Member asked the following question: *As the Council will need to meet the 50% recycling target by 2020, and the alternate weekly collection will only manage a rate of over 40% (paragraph below), are there cost implications of meeting this 2020 target (beyond the saving of £400k) since it is noted that there is provision of £200k per year from 2021/22 onward?* Members were told that The 50% target relates to the County as a whole and the recycling rate for West Sussex is already presently in excess of this at 51.3% (2018). The Councils would continue exploring other potential waste minimisation and recycling initiatives as part of the West Sussex Waste Partnership.

Resolved: that the report be noted

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 8.05 pm, it having commenced at 6.30 pm

Chairman