

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

QEII Room, Shoreham Centre, Pond Road, Shoreham

6 July 2023

Chair: Councillor Joss Loader
Vice Chair: Councillor Mandy Buxton

Adur District Council:

Councillor Carol Albury
Councillor Tony Bellasis
Councillor Ann Bridges
Councillor Lee Cowen
Councillor Paul Mansfield
Councillor Sharon Sluman

Worthing Borough Council:

Councillor Heather Mercer (Chair)
Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes (Vice
Chair)
Councillor Dan Hermitage
Councillor Margaret Howard
Councillor Daniel Humphreys
Councillor Richard Mulholland
Councillor Hilary Schan

Absent

Councillor Cathy Glynn-Davies, Councillor Daniel Humphreys

JOSC/13/23-24 Declaration of Interests

Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes declared her interest as a West Sussex County Councillor.

JOSC/14/23-24 Substitute Members

Councillor Richard Nowak substituted for Councillor Daniel Humphreys.

JOSC/15/23-24 Confirmation of Minutes

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of the 8 June 2023 were approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman

JOSC/16/23-24 Public Question Time

There were no public questions

JOSC/17/23-24 Members Questions

There were no questions from Members

JOSC/18/23-24 Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items

JOSC/19/23-24 Consideration of any matter referred to the Committee in relation to a call-in of a decision

A Call-In had been received regarding decision JAW/002/23-24 Emergency accommodation Contract Award. An extra meeting of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been scheduled for 25 July to hear this matter.

JOSC/20/23-24 Interview with Adur Leader

The Committee had a report before it attached as item 8, which had been circulated to all Members and is attached to a signed copy of these minutes. This report set out background information on the Portfolio of the Adur Leader to enable the Committee to consider and question the Leader on issues within their portfolio and any high-level strategic issues which the Leader was involved in, connected with the work of the Council and the Adur communities.

A Member asked, “has the council considered any further joint working arrangements with neighboring councils where they can deliver services using economies of scale across a larger region as they've done for instance with the litter and dog fouling enforcement?”

Members were told the Council was in discussions with other local councils and groups such as the Greater Brighton Economic board about options and would bring those to committee should any of those discussions prove fruitful. The Levelling Up White Paper had some good ideas in it that they were keen to explore, but they would like to see a stronger role for districts and boroughs in the final bill.

JOSC/21/23-24 Interview with Worthing Leader

The Committee had a report before it attached as item 9, which had been circulated to all Members and is attached to a signed copy of these minutes. This report set out background information on the Portfolio of the Worthing Leader to enable the Committee to consider and question the Leader on issues within their portfolio and any high-level strategic issues which the Leader was involved in, connected with the work of the Council and the Worthing communities.

A Member asked “The update on our Strategic Priorities and the Cost of Living Emergency in JSC 13th June 4.6 refers to:

“Setting up a community pantry as part of a co-produced work with local food groups and sustainability groups and as a forerunner to developing a new sustainable food system for Worthing.” Finding the funds and community space will prove a challenge, yet I have been informed by a local resident that in January this year, he offered a building to the Council to use for a pantry and said he would renovate and kit it out at his expense. It is now July and the resident is so concerned that no progress seems to have been made that he has offered it to Broadwater Support Community Hub. Can we be assured that this property is being treated as a priority and have an update on the progress?

Members were told that 2 potential buildings had been identified to support the delivery of this ambition, due diligence processes were undertaken in both cases, and the conclusion was that these buildings were not viable, one was deemed unsuitable in terms of the building lay out and footprint and the other due to the costs associated with getting the building fit for use and the length of the lease term available for use.

The business owner approached the Council in January and an action plan was drawn up to support this activity, there had been two in person meetings at the site, and the following activity had taken place.

- Engaged Community Works to support the Council and business to facilitate activity
- Linked the business owner with food groups who might be interested in partnering the business
- Referred them to specialist advice to explore the potential of setting up a charitable arm
- Referred the business to legal advice via Community Works to explore with a solicitor the charitable arm options
- Pre planning advice gained, so they could support the taxi team to develop their plans

Officers continued to work with the business owner and Community Works and would prioritise accelerating this potential.

Chief Executive Catherine Howe, chaired a meeting with multiple partners to explore the next steps for a sustainable food system, this meeting had resulted in an action plan, which had recently been drawn up to support that vision.

A Member asked, "The same update says "the Council aims to support our food banks as the frontline of community action," however Government money released for food support has been delivered to West Sussex County Council (WSCC), and instead of forwarding it to local food banks as they did in earlier years, it has been kept at County level for delivery by their Community Hub who do not have the same local knowledge of residents.

This is a problem for Local food groups who have no direct access to the funds, and have no way of knowing which residents have been helped by the County Council. Are there any plans for this Council to negotiate with WSCC so that food banks receive the funds for food directly, rather than administer its distribution at County level meaning residents still contact food banks who are not supported with Government funds?"

Members were told WSCC remained the responsible body for administering the Household Support Fund (HSF), some funding was awarded to food groups from HSF2 (£44,297 in Worthing and £24, 632 in Adur) and with HSF3, food groups were able to access funds from WSCC to support fuel poverty as well as some direct funding to food groups (£20,000 in Worthing and £20,000 in Adur) WSCC had also passported significant funds to Citizens' Advice in relation to those facing significant hardship.

In the current year for HSF 4, AWCs used data from the LIFT platform as part of Proactive to develop a proposal to secure funding from WSCC for residents. WSCC had agreed to allocate £221,850 to distribute to 1,748 households who would miss out on the £900 Government cost of living support in 2023. This would additionally target 142 households who were entitled to Pension Credit but not claiming this. By offering HSF in this way, residents could also be assisted in completing a Pension Credit application form, if support was needed and access other forms of support.

In addition to the funding referenced here, funding under the Contain Outbreak Management Fund awarded during the pandemic saw significant funding to food groups, which amounted to over £300,000, with additional funds being awarded through a

crowdfunding initiative (£23,000). What they were seeing locally was reflective of the national picture, including the views of major grant givers and donors, which was the model of funding for food banks was not sustainable, hence the work on a sustainable food system and continued efforts to support the food groups through the food network.

A Member asked, “the council has recently published its strategic priorities paper. Given the challenging financial backdrop local government is currently operating against, how do you see that impacting on your ability to deliver these priorities?”

Members were told the Local Government Association (LGA) was saying that councils across the land were at risk of insolvency as they struggled to fill a £3 billion funding black hole caused by inflationary costs and soaring demand for services. The new Chair of the LGA, Councillor Shaun Davies, addressed the Annual Conference that week and called for a new local deal for councils to stabilise town hall services. He had said: “Simplify our funding, cut out wasteful and unnecessary bidding for resources, and give us long-term certainty and stability. With this we can get on with working to improve people’s lives in our villages, towns and cities.” The Leader had noted that the central Government had made an announcement promising a more transparent, simple, and accountable approach to funding and they looked forward to seeing more details.

Despite these challenges and whilst waiting for local government funding reform, Worthing was determined to deliver for its residents and they would do this by both prudently managing finances and seeking to change the way things were done. Clearly the pace and extent to which they were able to deliver their priorities would need to match the resources available. But having said that, they were a Council for the Community; listening to residents, changing and improving services based on this feedback didn’t always cost, and could in many cases reduce burdens. For example, reducing costs associated with temporary accommodation or by reducing demand on services, by getting upstream of problems. They could also simply use resources differently. The new economic model sought to keep money in Worthing, investing in communities, driving employment and protecting the environment.

Members also asked about the Trees for Streets project regarding involvement of WSCC and the progress on Teville Gate. Members were told that officers from WSCC were fully aware of the Trees for Streets project and very supportive; and that negotiations were progressing with the Teville Gate site but details could not be shared at this time.

JOSC/22/23-24 Update on the delivery of Our Plan and Interview with Chief Executive

The Committee had a report before it, attached as item 10, which had been circulated to all Members and is attached to a signed copy of these minutes. This report would assist JOSC in questioning the Chief Executive on the progress in delivering the objectives in ‘Our Plan’ which was agreed by the Councils as the new Corporate Plan in Autumn 2022. This report provided the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) with the details of the Corporate Plan, ‘Our Plan’, which was reported to the Joint Strategic Committee (JSC) on 11 October 2022. A copy of that report and the finalised Corporate Plan is attached as an Appendix to this report.

A Member asked, “given the paucity of detailed specific and measurable deliverables, how does the Chief Executive envisage that those who are responsible for holding her to

account for her performance and specifically for the delivery of “Our Plan”, and for the scrutiny of its execution, will be able to assess whether it is in fact being delivered, to what extent, at what speed, and with what degree of success?”

Members were told they were in the process of establishing their Mission Control team to oversee the delivery and performance management of the plan. Each of the missions in the plan had a road map setting out how each area would be delivered and what success would look like. The directors had already formed multi-disciplinary teams to deliver the road maps. Recruitment to the Mission Control team was about to start and the monitoring and reporting would be managed and reported through a project and information management tool called Asana. Service planning had also started and this would support the councils’ ability to report on service related outputs and outcomes.

A Member asked “ref paragraph 3.2 of the report to JSC on 11 October 2020 - What has the impact been of having shared services and staff across 2 councils, now with different political administrations and therefore differing strategic priorities?”

Members were told the shared service agreement between Adur and Worthing continued to work well, delivering services (many of which were shared) to a high standard, whilst realising considerable savings through scale and joint working. One staff team delivery for two councils with separate priorities and ambitions had been a defining feature of the agreement since its foundation.

Having said this there were of course challenges in meeting the needs of two different authorities which is why they had a shared corporate plan. Our Plan sought to set out how they would deliver for each authority and how they worked together on shared priorities, including services that were better delivered at scale and were complex and cross cutting. Key to working in this partnership agreement context for the staff was clarity on how they worked together, the principles that directed and informed the work and the required focus of the organisation on core and support services, plus cross cutting missions.

A Member asked “ref paragraph 3.9 of the JSC report - What work is being done to increase public engagement with the work of the council and in particular on methods of communication and content that engage all parts of our communities, especially young people?”

Members were told participation was one of the key principles and through this approach they aimed to improve engagement with residents and stakeholders in every aspect of the councils’ work. The new organisational design was seeking to embed participation capabilities throughout the organisation; they were transforming the Comms team, changing it from a broadcast function to communications and engagement function; they were investing in another participation lead (hub) for the organisation; and developing engagement ‘spokes’ in each of the directorates. Participation was forming part of the new and revised job descriptions through the organisation.

This work and approach had already started of course and they had been making good progress in developing and undertaking this approach in a number of settings, for example West Durrington, Lancing, Cissbury Fields, Adur River (Sussex Bay), Big Listen and Big Clean Up, the new tenant participation officer for Adur Homes and the revised CIL neighbourhood fund panel. They were also considering the expansion of participation in Adur through place based officers. With regard to young people they had just adopted strategies for Adur and Worthing and planned, as part of these commitments, to improve engagement with young people.

A Member asked, “When you came to JOSC in October you mentioned the newly appointed data lead would be using the community census data to better understand our communities and through collaboration with communities, they would seek to further improve and shape their services. There doesn't appear to be any specific mention about the 2021 census data in the 29 September 2022 report (Adur JSC Sub-Committee - New Priorities). We know this data can be of huge value for planning out policies and local services. Please could you inform the committee on the work being carried out by the data lead using this census data?”

Members were told following some good work, the Data Lead left for other employment. As part of the new organisational design process they had taken this opportunity to review the approach and would now drive the better use of data from Mission Control, located in the new People and Change Function. Supporting this work, in each of the directorates, there would be data leads, working in services to improve the collection and use of data to improve services. In addition they would work with mission control through matrix working, helping to inform and improve strategy and policy development for the organisation.

Whilst this work was ongoing, they were already using data from census 2021 to direct and inform the work. Using data for example to inform consultation work at Lancing and West Durrington, where it had been used to identify priorities, provide constructive challenge and inform decision making. Census data was also being used to guide and inform the CIL Neighbourhood Funding Panel, helping them to better understand the needs of places and communities. Using census data to make sure the staff team better reflected the communities served and that service delivery, for example the complaints and feedback service, the homelessness service and the wellbeing services (going local), were accessible and particular communities were not disproportionately represented.

A Member asked “from the JSC 29 September report 'on page 4 -Paragraph 4.3 "For Shoreham the priority is very much about making sure development of the Western Harbour Arm is able to both meet the housing needs of the area and deliver real benefits of the regeneration activity to local communities with the right infrastructure in place." From what I've learned from the community in and around Shoreham, they don't believe there are any real benefits, just detriments. The 'right' infrastructure isn't in place and there is no prospect of it being in place in the near future. The debacle around secondary school places for residents with the BN43 postcode is just one of many issues which is enraging the community. What message do you have for them?”

Members were told there were some real challenges and the council was committed to listening to residents and trying to resolve them. They were reviewing the Adur Local Plan to address these and other issues, making sure infrastructure such as schools, kept up with and matched changing needs. Solutions to all of these were in the hands of wide ranging partners and they were working through the Shoreham Joint Area Action Plan and other forums to try and resolve issues. Listening to the community of course needed to be central to all of that. There had been some recent good news for Shoreham with £750,000 of Government EcoTowns grant secured with Adur benefitting from £290,000 to primarily use to deliver the Shoreham Joint Area Action Plan. Brighton & Hove City Council received £460,000 for sustainability projects.

A Member asked “Our Plan: Agenda Page 43 - We are adaptable. “Create a culture that is brave and open to trying new things”. How would you determine the success of this culture?”

Members were told the new operating model of the council was about change and doing things differently - both of which required bravery. The combination of needs and reducing resources meant they had to change of course but the Chief Executive believed there was a more hopeful reason for change, one that could actually make things better and that took them closer to the main purpose as local councils - which was to provide good and lasting stewardship for Adur and Worthing.

In terms of measuring this they thought they would see changes for example through the outworking of the planned Workforce Strategy and associated staff survey. They would see it in the success of the community participation and engagement work and ability to share power and resources with communities and experiment with new ways of working where they both start and stop things; the delivery of complex cross cutting missions through successful multidisciplinary working; new ways of collaboration and partnership working for example with other anchor institutions and local authorities; and transition to digital services.

A Member asked "Our Plan: Agenda Page 44 - Our Principles - We are participative. "Provide inclusive services by listening to underrepresented voices, creating equal access and meeting our equality duties" and "Ensure everyone who works for us feels respected and that their views count" Last year when I asked about the immediate steps taken to provide truly inclusive services the response was that the Equality Impact Assessment had been revised for better planning, delivering and evaluating the council's services. Further to this, a Minoritised Ethnic Community Engagement project was underway and the new data lead would use the community census to better understand the communities and, through collaboration, would seek to further improve and shape services.

Can you explain the learning the council has taken from these actions and can you give an example of an outcome from these projects that has positively impacted our community?"

Members were told the Equality Impact Assessment process continued to support equality, diversity and inclusion work ensuring service changes and new policies did not disproportionately affect communities with protected characteristics. Training had been provided to managers and was supported through ongoing corporate coaching. Recent examples of this work included the Cost of Living Emergency Road maps for Adur and Worthing where the EIA process was used to identify groups at particular risk and then target actions and resources in those areas.

They continued to learn from participation and engagement work with diverse communities. With the Minoritised Ethnic Community Engagement project for example they commissioned this as a stand-alone piece of work and because they didn't directly partner with the delivery organisation they were hands off. They completed this work with some good outcomes and improved knowledge about the community but the councils didn't build new relationships, organisational capacity in undertaking this work wasn't improved and the overall benefits of the project could therefore have been stronger. They learnt from this that they needed to approach this kind of work with closer collaboration with community development agencies and had used this learning to improve engagement activities at Cissbury Fields and Lancing. In both of these examples they felt the engagement had been stronger, the councils had been able to engage and respond more effectively and more people had become involved in conversations. In Lancing for example they had successfully partnered with the Ideas Alliance and different groups were rallying around the place making agenda and social capital was being built. There was always room for improvement and learning of course, for example in West

Durrington they had identified the need to better engage some excluded groups (disability).

They were actively using data from census 2021 to direct and inform work. They were using data for example to inform consultation work at Lancing and West Durrington, where it had been used to identify priorities, provide constructive challenge and inform decision making. Census data was also being used to guide and inform the CIL Neighbourhood Funding Panel, helping them to better understand the needs of places and communities. They were also using census data to make sure the staff team better reflected the communities served and that service delivery, for example the complaints and feedback service, the homelessness service and the wellbeing services (going local), were accessible and particular communities were not disproportionately represented.

Members also asked about the resiliency of the council over efficiency, involvement with parish councils and a cancelled awards event. Members were told that a lack of resilience leaves you fragile and that the unexpected consistently happens, that the Chief Executive was always available to Parish Councils should they request them and that while unfortunate, the event was cancelled due to a lack of due diligence.

Resolved: The committee agreed to receive a further progress report on the delivery of the Corporate Plan at a meeting in 2024/25 (Date to be confirmed) as part of its Work Programme.

JOSC/23/23-24 UK Shared Prosperity Fund

The Committee had a report before it, attached as item 11, which had been circulated to all Members and is attached to a signed copy of these minutes. The purpose of the report was to provide Members with a detailed understanding of the approach being taken to deliver the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) in Adur District and Worthing Borough, and how this was responding to local resident and business needs, aligned to the fund criteria. It was also to update Members on procedures and regulations associated with the awarding of UKSPF, including the monitoring and evaluation of outcomes.

A Member asked if the Councils didn't deliver their investment plan within the timescale was there a penalty. Members were told that the government could be flexible with the revenue but the officers intention was to deliver the plan on time.

Resolved: The Committee agreed to

- I. Note the overall approach to UKSPF in Adur and Worthing to deliver place-based interventions and activities to support the most vulnerable residents, support businesses and to provide sustainable solutions.
- II. Receive an annual report that provided a high level view of progress of the interventions associated with UKSPF funding.

JOSC/24/23-24 Review of JOSC Work Programme

The Committee had a report before it, attached as item 12, which had been circulated to all Members and is attached to a signed copy of these minutes. This report outlined progress and plans for implementing the work contained in the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) Work Programme for 2023/24.

- Resolved:** The committee agreed to
- I. Invite the Chief Executive to attend a meeting of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee on November 30th, to provide an update on the implementation of Our Plan
 - II. Invite the Police and Crime Commissioner and Commander to a future meeting of JOSC
 - III. Invite the chief executive of Southern Water to a future meeting of JOSC.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 8.08 pm, it having commenced at 6.30 pm

Chairman