

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

**Gordon Room, Town Hall, Chapel Road, Worthing**

**30 November 2023**

Councillor Dr Heather Mercer (Chair)  
Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes (Vice-Chair)

**Adur District Council:**

Councillor Joss Loader  
Councillor Mandy Buxton  
Councillor Lee Cowen  
Councillor Paul Mansfield

**Worthing Borough Council:**

Councillor Cathy Glynn-Davies  
Councillor Dan Hermitage  
Councillor Daniel Humphreys  
Councillor Richard Mulholland  
Councillor Hilary Schan

**Absent**

Councillors Ann Bridges, Carol Albury, Sharon Sluman and Margaret Howard

**JOSC/47/23-24 Declaration of Interests**

Councillor Humphreys declared an interest as his wife was an employee of Sussex Police.

Councillor Glynn-Davies declared an interest as a victim of damage at her property within the previous few weeks.

**JOSC/48/23-24 Substitute Members**

Councillor Debs Stainforth substituted for Councillor Sharon Sluman

**JOSC/49/23-24 Confirmation of Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the 7.09.2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**JOSC/50/23-24 Public Question Time**

A number of questions were submitted by members of the public who were not able to be present for the meeting. These questions focused on item 8, Interview with Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner; about visible police presence, the use of E Scooters and the treatment of young people. The Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Inspector undertook to respond with written answers to these questions.

**JOSC/51/23-24 Members Questions**

A number of questions were submitted by members that focused on item 8, Interview with Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner. These questions asked about police

recruitment figures, violence against women and girls (VAWG), crimes in Castle Ward, awareness of XL Bully dogs and use of E scooters on the promenade.

Members were informed that a total of 192 officers had been recruited in the 22/23 year, that they did not have specific data to hand on VAWG as those figures were bundled with other statistics but that Adur & Worthing had received some Safer Streets funding that was being put towards improving conviction rates. That all reported crimes were responded to and that the police chief could be emailed directly if this wasn't the case. New bespoke programmes were targeting those guilty of prolific shop lifting and anti-social behaviour. Members were also informed that the police were responding to the new legislation surrounding XL Bully dogs and work with dog liaison officers and units was ongoing; that those who use E scooters in public spaces risked having them seized.

#### **JOSC/52/23-24      Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions**

There were no urgent items

#### **JOSC/53/23-24      Consideration of any matter referred to the Committee in relation to a call-in of a decision**

There were no call-ins

#### **JOSC/54/23-24      Interview with Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner**

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 provided some background and guidance to assist the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) in interviewing the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the Chief Inspector, Sussex Police District Commander for Adur, Horsham and Worthing on local Police and crime issues covered within their remits.

A Member asked, "As a councillor, I frequently am told by residents:

- A. They have given up reporting because nothing gets done.
- B. They never see a police officer at identified trouble spots.
- C. Reporting online is difficult and laborious.
- D. There is an unacceptable delay in response times, even to 999 calls.

What measures are being taken to improve this situation?"

Members were informed that response times to 101 calls had been an issue but were now amongst the best in the country. There were many ways to report crimes including 999, 101 numbers and an online system designed to capture all necessary information required by the police to pursue enquiries. That the police receive over 2100 calls every day and it was impossible to contact everyone but every report was followed up on. Members were informed that the police were evidence driven and to encourage people to continue to report crimes where they see them.

A Member asked, "I use a bicycle to tour my ward. It allows me an opportunity to identify problems and to stop and speak to residents. Why do 'beat' officers not use bicycles?"

Members were informed that a number of officers do use electric bikes to go out and engage with communities. Not all officers were comfortable on bikes and that some preferred to walk or take public transport.

A Member asked “How does the Sussex Police & Crime Commission define ‘Anti-Social Behaviour’?”

Members were informed that while there was no official national definition, the police and crime commissioner defined it as ‘a member of the public who feels they have suffered harassment, alarm or distress’

A Member asked “In the Sussex Police Crime Plan, under Paragraph 3.1, the number one public priority is to ‘Strengthen local policing, tackle crime & prevent harm’. Amongst other elements, this focuses on ‘Local, visible and accessible policing’, ‘Business & retail crime’, ‘Call handling times and contact’, and ‘Public engagement’. The PCC is now a good amount of time into the 2021-24 plan. How do you assess progress on these desired outcomes?”

Members were provided with an annual report that reflected on the previous years statistics and were informed the Police and Crime Commissioner spoke with the chief constable on a daily basis and had a sit down once a week to go through any issues. On a monthly basis a performance check with the chief was publicly available and the police force had internal boards that monitored and measured the work carried out.

A Member asked, “In light of the recent and very public policing issues in Lancing and the many conflicting responses from our district representatives, how can we better support our officers and representatives to better manage the public’s expectations of officers and understanding of policy and to form a cohesive and supportive response afterward?”

Members were informed that community safety overall was a shared responsibility of different partners working together and that it would help if clearer signposting existed, to direct people for issues like noise, fly tipping and mental health.

A Member asked, “In the Sussex Police Crime Plan, under 3.1, the number one public priority is to ‘Strengthen local policing, tackle crime & prevent harm’. Amongst other elements, this focuses on ‘Local, visible and accessible policing’, ‘Business & retail crime’, ‘Call handling times and contact’, and ‘Public engagement’. How do you assess progress on these desired outcomes within and across specific localities and what do these outcomes look like in Lancing?”

Members were informed that while the remit of the police was across the county, performance was in the annual report. The situation in Lancing was challenging but they were working with local partners and a new dedicated sergeant for Adur was in place.

A Member asked, “The day-to-day effectiveness of a police service depends on the experience and expertise of its officers. Since the police workforce in Sussex has seen a high volume of officers leave the force to be replaced with a large number of new recruits, it is now a less experienced police force.

Whilst all will have been thoroughly trained, you can’t put a price on experience. Is the growing number of novice officers a concern for you? Is it affecting positive outcomes to emergency situations and is it hampering the force’s ability to carry out effective crime investigations?”

Members were informed that opportunities existed to rehire retiring officers and retain their knowledge and experience and that a new intake of officers brought a diversity of thought, with more coming from different careers, more women, more people from black and ethnic minorities and not all from 18 year old men.

A Member asked, "According to government statistics, the majority of hate crimes are racially motivated, accounting for 7 in 10 of all such offences. In addition, the ONS reported that hate crimes against trans people have increased by 11% in the year, hitting an all-time high.

In the Police and Crime Plan, you say you are working to provide support to victims of hate crime. What work has been done to train officers in the prejudice encountered by these groups in our community and what specific preventative action is being taken to tackle these forms of hate crime?"

Members were informed that funding was in place to offer bespoke training for officers with more money going into victim support. Members were also informed that information on numbers of LGBTQI+ in the force could be found in the brochure.

A Member asked, "One of your priorities has been to support and safeguard victims and tackle violence against women and girls, including encouraging victims of rape and serious sexual assault to report these crimes. Can you tell us more about the detail of this work and if there has been an increase in reporting as a result?"

Members were informed that a lot of these answers could be found in the annual report with an entire section devoted to VAWG. That reporting had increased which could be a result of people feeling more comfortable with reporting these crimes; that every victim/survivor had a different reason for reporting and not all of them wanted a criminal outcome.

A Member asked, "The youth of Lancing are, quite blatantly, saying that they believe they can get away with theft from the Coop, graffiti and other criminal damage. They are saying the police have no power because they are young and that the police leave them alone because they are under 18 - there seems to be no deterrent whatsoever! Furthermore, there have been a number of reports of criminal damage in Lancing by youths. The public and business owners tell me that the police do no more than supply a crime number. They are not reassured and have never been told of any successful action by the police with regard to youth crime in recent years. In one instance, with damage to the value of £3,000, the business owner provided clear CCTV evidence plus the names of those youths committing the offence. The police did no more than express surprise at the age of those committing the offence. What assurance can you give me that these crimes will be investigated? That the offenders will be processed in a way that deters them from future offences. Can you give any examples of this happening in Lancing?"

Members were informed that a lot was being done, an individual had been identified and processed. That a youth justice process existed that young people had to go through and where they were prolific offenders, police would work with criminal justice and childrens' social care. That where lines of enquiry could be followed, people were prosecuted.

A Member asked, "I have been told there is a mind-set that the police can only detain youth during business hours because that is when Social Services operate. Can you

reassure me that the police use the out of hours Social Services successfully and that all staff are aware of this service?"

Members were informed that the police didn't necessarily contact child care services unless there was a specific reason to do so, for example if a child had been taken into protective custody and they would use the out of hours service if required.

A Member asked "What is Sussex Police doing to address the threat to cyclists (and walkers) from drivers not driving safely and bike theft and what more can we do together?"

Members were informed that any cyclists who encounter dangerous driving should report registration numbers to the police. That a prolific offender who had been stealing bikes with an angle grinder had been prosecuted and was in prison and that the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership was doing work in the area.

A Member asked, "In the Police and Crime Plan it states the following: 'Much of that huge range of activity goes unseen and unappreciated by the public so we need to ensure communities feel that their local concerns are being addressed. For most people, anti-social behaviour and dangerous driving are the issues they face nearly every day and for our high street shops, shoplifting, abuse and assaults on staff are a daily occurrence.'

Given that I am regularly contacted about the daily issues that you've identified (anti-social behaviour and dangerous driving in particular) what demonstrable progress have you made in addressing the public's concerns.

If it's going unseen and unappreciated, as stated, what is the Force doing to raise Awareness?"

Members were informed that a police and crime plan was produced every four years for public viewing. That the police used a large number of tactics to tackle dangerous drivers and published their results on driver conviction. That pilot schemes were underway to tackle shoplifting and on a national level, to tackle organised crime behind it. Members were also informed that the police had an extensive suite of engagement, with focus groups across the county, personal public engagement, community safety partnership; that they engaged with councillors who were ambassadors for their local area and a comprehensive report to the crime panel was available online.

A Member also asked about a perceived time lag between the reporting of a crime and when it is responded to and could members of the public receive a copy of the transcript when reporting crimes.

Members were told the police crime and commissioner and police commander were not aware of this but would take it back to the contact center.

**JOSC/55/23-24      Crime and Disorder update - Interview with the Chairman of the Adur & Worthing Safer Communities Partnership (SCP)**

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 provided the

Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) with information on the work of the Adur & Worthing Safer Communities Partnership (AWSCP) in order for JOSC to scrutinise the work of the AWSCP and interview the Adur Co-Chair of the Partnership. The Worthing Co-Chair was unable to be present at the meeting but would provide written responses to questions directed to them.

A Member asked, "In light of the recent and very public policing issues in Lancing and the many conflicting responses from our district representatives, how can we better support our officers and representatives to better manage the public's expectations of officers and understanding of policy and to form a cohesive and supportive response afterward?"

Members were informed that the Partnership had recently developed and delivered training to members to increase understanding of reporting pathways, providing responses to public concerns following a high profile incident and managing expectations.

In addition, the partnership had hosted multi-agency events for Members and the community, to explain the breadth and complexity of joint working that took place to tackle crime and disorder, which had been helpful in providing Members' with balanced and informed responses to public concerns. The Safer Communities Team could provide further information on these approaches.

Members also asked about how housing issues contributed to problems like antisocial behaviour. Members were informed that it was difficult at times to pinpoint exact reasons for what caused antisocial behaviour, which the council was currently taking a holistic approach with multi agency responses, to understand the connection between poor housing and drivers of crime/antisocial behaviour.

#### **JOSC/56/23-24      Budget update and scrutiny - Joint Budget and Worthing only**

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

Due to exempt information contained within appendix 3 of this report, Members debated and then voted to go into a closed session, to hear the pre-submitted questions that related to the exempt appendix.

Outside of the closed session, Members asked about the sale of property assets and financial resilience. Members were informed that the Council had sold and was in the process of selling the EDF car park and caravan club site; that complications with residents rights of way at knightsbridge house were still being tackled and that the Council was working towards financial resilience.

#### **Resolved:**

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.

#### **JOSC/57/23-24      Interview with Worthing Cabinet Member for Resources**

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

A Member asked, "In your briefing note it highlights Community Wealth Building and an Economy Workgroup being set up to meet regularly. Can you tell the committee who is part of this workgroup, if there are any external organisations involved and how the members of the workgroup were decided?"

Members were informed the working group was made up of senior officers and cabinet members and was set up in response to a principals paper published the previous December. While no external organisations were a part of the group, it was an aspiration to involve them.

A Member asked, "The council has issued a press release assuring the public that no 'frontline' services will be cut when addressing next year's budget. Could the cabinet member provide members with a list of services which he classes as 'frontline' and a list of services that he believes are not 'frontline'?"

Members were informed that the term was often a political catchphrase and was difficult to define but there was a hierarchy between statutory and other services.

A Member asked "The budget savings paper proposes savings of £1.5m for Worthing and £2.52m for both councils through an organisational redesign. Can the cabinet member explain how he sees these huge savings being met without having to make members of staff redundant who deliver frontline services?"

Members were informed that it was difficult to second guess the savings proposals and the effect they would have on frontline services.

## **JOSC/58/23-24      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 the 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 and also included two scrutiny requests for consideration.

Members discussed the response from Southern Water that they would not attend a public meeting of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee and representations that could be made to the water regulator. They also discussed the two proposals that had been submitted for the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme. The first regarded the operation and role of PubWatch which could be found in Appendix B and the help Worthing council could provide to those with 'metallic implants' in their bodies in relation to ICNIRP Guidelines, which could be found in Appendix C.

### **Resolved:**

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to

- note the progress to deliver the JOSC Work Programme for 2023/24 as contained in the Appendix A;
- Make representations to OFWAT regarding the Southern Water decision not to attend JOSC;

- The joint Chairs writing a letter to the Chief Executive of Southern Water expressing concern that Southern Water would not attend the public JOSC meeting;
- Add the scrutiny request detailed in appendix B to the work programme
- Decline the scrutiny request detailed in appendix C because the issue related to matters that the Councils were not responsible for; and
- Recommend to the meetings of Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council in December 2023 that the changes made to the JOSC Work Programme since it was agreed by both Councils in April 2023 be noted.

### **JOSC/59/23-24      Worthing Theatres Working Group Review**

The Committee had a report before it attached as item 13, which had been circulated to all Members and is attached to the signed copy of these minutes. This report set out the recommendations from the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) Working Group which was created as part of the JOSC Work Programme to review the Worthing Cultural Services procurement process undertaken in 2019.

**Resolved:**

That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the Working Group report and the findings and refer the report to the Worthing Joint Strategic Sub Committee. That Officers be commended for their work when making the decision to externalise the culture service in Worthing via a new charitable Organisation and for bringing the issues to a conclusion.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 10.37 am, it having commenced at 6.30 pm

**Chairman**