

Minutes of a meeting of the
Joint Strategic Sub-Committee (Worthing)
5 December 2023
at 6.30 pm

Councillor Dr Beccy Cooper (Chair)

Councillor Caroline Baxter
Councillor Sophie Cox
Councillor Rita Garner
Councillor Emma Taylor-Beal

Councillor John Turley
Councillor Vicki Wells
Councillor Rosey Whorlow

Absent

Councillor Carl Walker

JSS-C(W)/34/23-24 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

JSS-C(W)/35/23-24 Minutes

Resolved: that the minutes from the Worthing Joint Strategic Sub-Committee meeting held on 9 November 2023, be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

JSS-C(W)/36/23-24 Public Question Time

There were no public questions

JSS-C(W)/37/23-24 Members Questions

There were no Members questions

JSS-C(W)/38/23-24 Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items

JSS-C(W)/39/23-24 Council Tax Support Scheme

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Housing and Communities, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as Item 6.

The report before members explained Council Tax Support was a scheme to help some people pay their Council Tax. This depended on their income and personal circumstances and was only available to some people in the UK who were living on a low income. The Council Tax Support scheme must be considered each year as part of the

Local Government Finance Act 2012 (which introduced the framework for localism of Council Tax Support), with Members confirming revisions, continuing the scheme as is or replacing this it another scheme.

The Scheme formed an important part of the Council's ambition to become the fairest coastal town by supporting people who were living on the lowest incomes. It should be noted that whilst the Council was experiencing extreme budgetary pressures, this scheme was one way in which the Council was responding to the enduring impacts of the cost of living to help lift people out of poverty. Given the importance of the scheme, the report asked Members to continue the scheme with no changes and to recommend the scheme to the Full Council in respect of 2024/25.

Questions were asked about consultation and the structure of the Council Tax. Members were told that the scheme was important to the Administration to relieve the burden on those hard pressed by the cost of living crisis. Members were told that the current system of council tax was out of date and needed revision.

Members supported the report, it was noted that results from the recent budget consultation supported investment in Cost of Living Support.

Decision

- 1) That the content of the Report be noted
- 2) that the Council Tax Support scheme for Worthing Borough Council in respect of working age customers for 2024/25 be recommended to council and should
 - a) Be based upon the current Council Tax Support scheme for 2023/24 with no restrictions; and
 - b) Not be further altered with any other changes beyond necessary technical amendments required to keep the scheme consistent with the national rules in respect of Housing Benefit

Call-in

There are no call-ins for recommendations to Council

JSS-C(W)/40/23-24 2nd Quarter Capital Investment Programme & Projects Monitoring 2023/24

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Sustainability and Resources, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as Item 7.

This report updated the Sub-Committee on the progress made on the delivery of the 2023/24 Capital Investment Programme for Worthing Borough Council. The programme included schemes which supported the delivery of services by the Joint Services Committee.

A Member questions about required savings for 2024/25 and staff shortages in the Technical Services area. Members were given the background to the proposed savings

which would be discussed at the JSC meeting on 7 December. The Committee was told that shortages in technical services were acknowledged and that there was an upcoming organisational restructure.

Members supported the proposals within the report and progress and completion of other schemes was lauded.

Decision

- 1) That the reprofiling of the Worthing Borough Council capital schemes as advised in paragraph 6.1 and appendix 2 be noted
- 2) That the changes to the current schemes as set out in section 6.2 report be noted.

Call-in

The call-in deadline for the decisions will be 5.00pm on 15 December 2023.

JSS-C(W)/41/23-24 Redevelopment of 5&7 High Street to provide Emergency and Temporary Accommodation (EA/TA)

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Housing and Communities and the Director for Place, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as Item 8.

The report before members sought approval for the refurbishment and extension of the Council owned property at 5-7 High Street and 52 Ann Street, Worthing to provide emergency and temporary accommodation (EA/TA) and requested a budget to complete the redevelopment of the site.

The recommendations supported the Council's ambition to directly deliver homes for EA/TA and, if approved, would make a contribution towards the achievement of the targets set out in the Adur and Worthing Housing Strategy for 2020-2023, 'Delivering Pathways to Affordable Homes' document and subsequent Delivery Plans.

This report examined the increasing demand for EA/TA in Worthing, the Council's commitment to owning its own stock of EA/TA, and reviewed the options available to the Council for the future of the buildings. It identified a Preferred Option (2) which entailed the retention of the facade of both buildings, demolition of the rear extensions and reconfiguration of the building into EA/TA flats. This option was the most economically viable and would help meet local housing needs.

The report also noted the continuation of Colonnade House as an economic contributor as well as the adjoining commercial / retail units. The introduction of temporary accommodation at 5-7 High Street would ensure all buildings had an 'active use' in this part of the town centre.

The legal position concerning the Overage to be applied to No. 5 High Street was being explored with West Sussex County Council to ensure that the Council's Legal Team's interpretation of the Overage clause within the Deed of Transfer is the same as that of West Sussex County Council's legal team i.e. overage did not apply to the Preferred

Option. Once this was determined, officers will be able to proceed at pace to appoint consultants to undertake the surveys and more detailed design work required to deliver this option.

A Member asked a question about the commercial and residential split between the proposed housing and the use of Colonnade House and if consultation had taken place with Colonnade House on the decision. Members were told that Colonnade House were content with the new scheme and were glad that there would be no interruption to commercial activity on the site.

Decision

- 1) Subject to the Director for Place being satisfied (in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources) that the overage provisions referred to in this report do not apply to the proposed preferred option and receipt of Homes England Funding referred to at paragraph 2.2 below, to approve the Preferred Option (2) to convert the buildings at 5 and 7 High Street and 52 Ann Street into EA/TA for the reasons outlined within this paper and to enable the council to fulfil its statutory housing duties under S188 and S193 of the Housing Act 1996.
- 2) That a budget of £1,745,300 from the unallocated temporary and emergency accommodation budget to deliver the project, alongside anticipated funding of c.£600,000 from Homes England be approved
- 3) That authority be delegated to the Director for Housing and Communities to invite tenders for the construction work, and to enter into all necessary contracts to enable the project to progress through the construction phase right through to completion.
- 4) That the continuation of the commercial / retail uses to the south, including Colonnade House, as the adjoining buildings be noted.

Call-in

The call-in deadline for the decisions will be 5.00pm on 14 December 2023.

JSS-C(W)/42/23-24 Local Authority Housing Fund grant funding allocation for Worthing Borough Council

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Housing and Communities, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as Item 9.

The report sought approval of the use of grant funding provided to Worthing Borough Council for the acquisition of homes for refugees under the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) programme, administered by DLUHC. Approval was needed to allow the councils to deliver this programme.

This report set out the need for these homes, the funding which the council could benefit from to deliver the homes, the borrowing necessary and viability of the programme and the options considered to deliver it.

Decision

- 1) that the Local Authority Housing Fund grant of £809,083 from the government and to commit to delivering the accommodation required under the fund be accepted.
- 2) That a budget of £914,213 be approved by way of a loan to enable the purchase of properties in Worthing. The loan accounts for 53% of the project budget, with the grant covering the remaining costs and the cost of borrowing to be covered from rental income in the first year of occupation.
- 3) That a total budget of £1,723,296 be approved, comprising £809,083 of grant funding, and £914,213 by way of a loan.
- 4) That it be noted that when the homes are no longer needed by refugees they will be used to provide Emergency and Temporary Accommodation (EATA) for eligible local households in need.
- 5) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director for Housing and Homelessness Prevention to approve the selection of properties which we will acquire through the fund.

Call-in

The call-in deadline for the decisions will be 5.00pm on 15 December 2023.

The meeting ended at 7.36 pm