

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Joint Strategic Committee
Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils**

The Shoreham Centre, QEII Room

7 December 2023

Councillor Neil Parkin (Chair)

Adur District Council:

Kevin Boram
Emma Evans
Steve Neocleous

Worthing Borough Council:

Dr Beccy Cooper
Carl Walker
Caroline Baxter
Sophie Cox
Emma Taylor-Beal
John Turley

[As agreed by the Joint Strategic Committee (JSC) in June 2022, the same number of Cabinet Members from each council would be present at each JSC meeting to ensure equality of voting]

Absent

Councillor Carson Albury

Councillor Rita Garner, Councillor Vicki Wells and Councillor Rosey Whorlow

JSC/22/23-24 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations on interest

JSC/23/23-24 Minutes

Resolved: that the minutes from the Joint Strategic Committee meeting held on 3 October 2023, were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

JSC/24/23-24 Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public.

JSC/25/23-24 Members Question Time

There were no pre-submitted questions from Members

JSC/26/23-24 Items Raised under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items

JSC/27/23-24 2nd Quarter Revenue Monitoring Report 2023/24

Before the Committee was a report by 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 6.

This report updated the Joint Strategic Committees with the expenditure and income projections for both Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council for the financial year 2023/24, compared to the Revenue Budget approved by both Councils in February. Whilst the 'spend to date' would be the position as at 30 June 2023, the forecast outturn position would reflect the latest information available to ensure an up-to-date forecast is presented.

The outturn projection for the 2023/24 financial year for the Worthing Borough Council General Fund was a net overspend after reserve transfers of £1.541m and for Adur District Council General Fund was a net underspend after reserve transfers of £33k. A breakdown was set out in section 4.4 of the report.

The position had been achieved as a result of very significant in-year spend controls and savings process delivering £1.1m in forecast savings, largely counteracted by significant emerging new pressures.

Decision

- 1) That the report and projected outturn position for Worthing Borough Council against the approved revenue budgets and proposed use of reserves (Appendix 2b) be noted.
- 2) That the report and projected outturn position for Adur District Council against the approved revenue budgets and proposed use of reserves (Appendix 3b) be noted.

Call In

The call-in deadline for the decision will be 5.00pm on 19 December 2023

JSC/28/23-24 2024/25 Budget Engagement Insights

Before the Committee was a report by the Assistant Director for People and Change, 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

The report summarised the findings from the budget engagement for Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council.

A Member asked a question about the way in which figures in the report were presented. Members were given further information on what the figures represented, it was agreed that language used to present findings would be noted for future insight reports.

Members welcomed the introduction of young people into the survey and explored ways in which engagement could be improved in the future.

Decision

That the findings be noted, as part of the finalisation of the Budget 2024/25 in advance of the Joint Strategic Committee in February 2024 and Full Council meetings later that month.

Call In:

The call-in deadline for the decision will be 5.00pm on 19 December 2023.

JSC/29/23-24 Update to budget forecast 24/25 and approval of savings proposals

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 8

The report provided members with a progress report on the delivery of the financial strategy for 2024/25, along with details of the proposals that would help deliver a balanced budget for the next financial year and beyond.

Members were asked to note that the proposals at Appendix 3 have been considered in advance of the Chancellor's Autumn statement and the provisional settlement, expected on or just before 20 December. As such they were proposed for approval but it was anticipated a further review following these key announcements. Whilst the proposals remained undetermined and open to review and because the Appendix contains commercially sensitive information relating to the financial and business affairs of the Council, the information at Appendix 3 was exempt pursuant to Schedule 12A Paragraph 3 of the Local Government Act 1972

In line with the decision to bring all financial reports as joint reports to JSC (with the exception of the capital programmes); the report included items for consideration by each individual authority as well as specific budget proposals to increase income, to deliver efficiency, and other savings initiatives for 2024/25 which impact on the Joint Strategic Committee.

A question was raised about the nature of service contracts and whether discussion with partners concerning proposed reductions in service contracts.

Decision

- 1) That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the report and make comment on the savings proposals to the Joint Strategic Committee.

- 2) That the current 5 year forecasts at Appendix 1 be noted;
- 3) That the committed growth items as set out in Appendix 2 be noted;
- 4) To note the current budget update and progress towards developing the 24/25 budget and approve the approach taken by officers and areas of focus for savings proposals. Fully costed proposals to go to the Adur and Worthing Cabinet meetings.

Call In

The call-in deadline for the decision will be 5.00pm on 19 December 2023.

JSC/30/23-24 Adur and Worthing strategic acquisition approach for Temporary Accommodation

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 updated Members on the strategic acquisition programme to acquire more affordable temporary accommodation (TA). The purpose was to reduce the extraordinary cost pressures of meeting housing duties to place homeless households in more affordable accommodation, compared to using more expensive nightly-booked accommodation (which is subject to fluctuating and expensive rates that change during peak periods), and to secure better quality accommodation, enabling more people to remain closer to their local families and social networks.

Decision

- 1) That the progress made to date by using long-term leases and service level agreements to reduce budget pressures and improve our provision of temporary accommodation having regard to the financial implications in this report be acknowledged.
- 2) That Subject to the information contained in this report and the exempt appendix, to authorise the Director for Housing and Communities to enter into two separate new 5-year service level agreements (containing a 3-year break clause) with Revival Investments Limited for the acquisition of nomination rights to 37 units of managed temporary accommodation, with one service being located at High Street, Littlehampton, and another combined service at Goring Road and George V Avenue, Worthing, to enable the councils to discharge the housing duties owed to homeless households under S188 and S193 of the Housing Act 1996.
- 3) that authorisation to enter into contracts for acquisition of temporary accommodation by way of long-term leases and service level agreements will continue to be obtained using the existing delegated authorities and governance arrangements set out at paragraph 4.3 below be noted and approved.

Call In

The call-in deadline for the decision will be 5.00pm on 19 December 2023.

JSC/31/23-24 Digital Rapid Improvement Programme - Impact Report

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 9

This report before members aimed to offer members a thorough summary of the Digital Rapid Improvement Programme's progress from April 2023 onwards. It sought to provide an update on the savings achieved thus far and a cumulative projection for future years.

The report demonstrated the programme's value and its critical importance going forward as the Councils continued to undertake significant organisational redesign with the need to create simplified and digitised processes and systems that reduce costs and improve resident experience.

The report explored the testing of the introduction of artificial intelligence as a digital capability that could generate significant improvements, efficiencies and improved resident experience.

Decision

- 1) That the current 5-year forecasts be acknowledged;
- 2) That the proposed savings be acknowledged;
- 3) That the allocation of an additional £250k to fund the resources required to support the Rapid Improvement Programme for the fiscal year 2024/25, with an estimated payback period of 3 years be supported.

Call In

The call-in deadline for the decision will be 5.00pm on 19 December 2023.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 8.40 pm, it having commenced at 7.10 pm

Chairman