

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

Gordon Room, Worthing Town Hall

10 September 2019

Councillor Daniel Humphreys (Chairman)

Adur District Council:

Angus Dunn
Carson Albury
Brian Boggis
David Simmons

Worthing Borough Council:

Kevin Jenkins
Edward Crouch
Elizabeth Sparkes
Val Turner

Absent:

Councillors Neil Parkin, Emma Evans and Heather Mercer

JSC2419-20 Declarations of Interests

Councillor Edward Crouch declared an interest in item 7 as a landlord.

JSC2519-20 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes from the Joint Strategic Committee meeting held on 9 July 2019, be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

JSC2619-20 Public Question Time

The following question was received from a member of the public:-

Question 1 from a Worthing resident:-

According to the Worthing Homes Ltd Financial Statement 2000, £35.7m was used to buy housing stock from Worthing Borough Council. I would be very interested to know what the money was used for and where it went.

The Leader of Worthing Borough Council agreed to provide a written response.

JSC2719-20 Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions

There were no items raised under urgency provisions.

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital & 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 5.

The report updated the Joint Strategic Committee with the latest expenditure and income projections for each Council in the financial year 2019/20, compared to the Revenue Budget approved by both Councils in February. Whilst the 'spend to date' would be the position as at the 30 June 2019, the forecast position would reflect the latest information available to ensure an up-to-date forecast was presented.

A Member raised questions regarding the 'higher than expected repair costs on the new fleet' highlighted in paragraph 4.10.3, the 'additional net income anticipated in relation to Business Rates S31 grants by Worthing of £160k' highlighted in paragraph 4.10.11 and the overspend on water across all sites of £50k highlighted in paragraph 4.12. Officers confirmed that most of the vehicle fleet had been replaced 2 to 3 years ago but they would investigate why repair costs were higher than expected and report back after the meeting. Officers also advised that Business Rates went through the collection fund and there had been a loss of income arising from the conversion of office blocks (as a result of reduced business rates). The question regarding an overspend on water across all sites would be shared with the Head of Technical Services for a response.

The Committee commended the Major Projects Team for their work in relation to the Strategic Property Investment Fund.

Decision:

The Joint Strategic Committee noted the report and projected outturn position for the Joint Committee, Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council against the approved revenue budgets and proposed use of reserves (Appendix 1b and 2b).

Call In:

The call-in deadline for this decision will be 5.00pm on 20 September 2019.

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital & 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 6.

The report updated the Joint Strategic Committee with the progress made on the 2019/20 Capital Investment Programmes for Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council. The programmes included schemes which supported the delivery of services by the Joint Services Committee.

Clarification was sought regarding the cost of a replacement digital camera for the Connaught Studio (£65k). Officers advised that the equipment was a digital camera / projector which was used to livestream events and that the cost would be repaid by the

Trust over the next three years by reducing down the annual contract payment by £15k per year.

A Member queried whether the virement of £50k from the DDA coastal footpath, to the Southwick Leisure Centre, was premature. Officers advised that colleagues in Technical Services were confident that the tender would come in under budget but agreed to provide additional information following the meeting.

Another Member sought an assurance that the timeline for delivery in relation to the Decoy Farm site was realistic and questioned the £42k provision for replacement Boundary Signs. Officers advised that timescales for delivery of the Decoy Farm site were anticipated in 2020/21. The Leader of Worthing Council agreed to investigate the provision for Boundary Signage.

Decision:

The Joint Strategic Committee:-

a. with respect to the Capital Investment Programme of Adur District Council

- i. noted the reprofiling of the Adur District Council capital schemes as advised in paragraphs 8.2.1 and Appendix 3;
- ii. noted that a virement of £50,000 from the DDA coastal footpath to the Southwick Leisure Centre outdoor all weather pitch, as detailed in paragraph 8.2.3, was approved by the Director of Communities to resolve a potential overspend against this budget;
- iii. noted the confirmation of £590,000 external funding from the Environment Agency towards the Coast Protection Works at Shoreham Western Harbour Arm as detailed in paragraph 8.2.5;
- iv. approved the addition of the purchase of Trade Refuse Bins to the 2019/20 and 2020/21 Capital Investment Programme funded from revenue contributions of £7,500 p.a.as detailed in paragraph 8.1.2;
- v. approved the inclusion of Play Area Improvements at Sompting Recreation Ground funded from a virement of £100,800 from the Middle Road Play Area Improvements as detailed in paragraph 8.2.4.

b. with respect to the Capital Investment Programme of Worthing Borough Council

- i. noted the reprofiling of the Worthing Borough Council capital schemes as advised in paragraphs 8.3.1 and Appendix 4;
- ii. approved the virements from the budget provision for the Town Hall Asbestos Removal to support a re-prioritised scheme of asbestos management surveying and works, Seafront Fire Safety Works Budget and the Durrington Cemetery Extension for Additional Burial Spaces Budget as detailed in paragraph as detailed in paragraph 8.3.3 and 8.3.6;

- iii. approved the virements to amalgamate all the budgets in the Capital Investment Programme for the Brooklands Park Development into one programme of works totalling £502,610 as detailed in paragraph 8.3.7;
- iv. approved the virement of £150,000 from the unallocated public convenience budget to the Highdown Gardens Infrastructure Scheme for the improvement to the Highdown Gardens public convenience detailed in paragraph 8.3.8;
- v. approved the ring-fencing of 2019/20 Capital Investment Programme Contingency as a provision for the internal works to the new Durrington Community Centre to ensure the building is ready for use by a new tenant detailed in paragraph 8.3.9;
- vi. approved the procurement of a cremulator and transfer table for the Crematorium be included in the 2019/20 Capital Investment Programme funded from the 2019/20 Capital Investment Programme General Contingency Budget as detailed in paragraph 8.3.4;
- vii. approved the inclusion of the development of the Crematorium Children's Garden in the 2019/20 Capital Investment Programme funded from the unallocated Crematorium Improvements Budget in 2020/21 as detailed in paragraph 8.3.5;
- viii. agreed to the addition of the purchase of Trade Refuse Bins to the 2019/20 and 2020/21 Capital Investment Programme funded from revenue contributions of £17,500 p.a.as detailed in paragraph 8.1.2;
- ix. approved the inclusion within the capital programme of a new digital camera for the Connaught Theatre funded by £20,000 from the levy budget and £45,000 from the Treasury Management budget as detailed in paragraph 8.3.10.

Call In:

The call-in deadline for this decision will be 5.00pm on 20 September 2019.

JSC3019-20 Reconsideration of the locally-determined Council Tax “long-term empty” premium and discounts

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital & 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.

The Committee were informed that since 1 April 2013, local authorities had been able to charge an additional fifty percent Council Tax in respect of properties that had been unfurnished and unoccupied for more than two years. This was known as the “long-term empty premium”.

Legislation had now been introduced allowing local authorities the ability to increase the premium to one hundred percent from 1 April 2019, thereby charging two-hundred percent of the Council Tax that would otherwise be due.

The report invited Members to consider whether they wished to increase the long-term empty premium and also to amend the periods when no Council Tax was payable in respect of properties that were:-

- Unoccupied and unfurnished
- Undergoing or requiring structural alteration or major repair

A Member sought clarification regarding the rules following bereavements. Officers advised that there were a number of statutory exemptions (class F) for properties that become empty following a bereavement which covers the period up to the point of probate being granted and then 6 months thereafter.

Another Member sought clarification regarding the terminology of unoccupied and unfurnished. Officers informed the Committee that Council Tax liability was based on what legislation referred to as sole or main residence. These were residents homes which were their sole or main residence. Properties referred to as 'second homes' were generally used as holiday homes or were infrequently occupied and would be subject to the normal 100% Council Tax charge. The proposals were specifically in relation to properties that were unoccupied and unfurnished.

The Committee discussed the proposals relating to properties that were unoccupied and unfurnished for a period of up to 1 month. They requested further information in regards to the administrative costs associated with such situations be provided in a future report.

Decision:

The Joint Strategic Committee

- i. noted the content of the report;
- ii. agreed that public consultations should be conducted for both Adur and Worthing Councils in respect of the "long-term empty premium", the local discount in respect of properties undergoing structural alterations or major repairs and the local discount in respect of unoccupied & unfurnished properties;
- iii. delegated authority to the Head of Revenues & Benefits, in consultation with the respective Executive Members for Customer Services, to conduct a public consultation, with the results and any recommendations to be reported back to a future meeting of the Joint Strategic Committee.

Call In:

The call-in deadline for this decision will be 5.00pm on 20 September 2019.

JSC3119-20 Annual Treasury Management Report 2018-19 Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council and Revised Treasury Management Policy and Practices

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital & 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 asked Members to note the Treasury Management performance for Adur and Worthing Councils for 2018/19 as required by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003.

Members were recommended to approve the revised Treasury Management Policy and Practices, which had been updated to incorporate new CIPFA and MHCLG guidance and were attached as appendices 1 and 2.

Decision:

The Joint Strategic Committee noted the annual report and approved the revised Treasury Management Policy and Practices.

Call In:

The call-in deadline for this decision will be 5.00pm on 20 September 2019.

JSC3219-20 Our Growing Regional Economy - An Update on the Greater Brighton Economic Board

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for the Economy, 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 provided the Joint Strategic Committee with an update on the benefits Adur and Worthing had gained from the Councils' membership of the Greater Brighton Economic Board (GBEB), which included:

- securing funding through the Local Growth Fund;
- advocating for local infrastructure issues at regional and national level;
- promoting economic development as part of the Greater Brighton region.

The report also sought approval from the Joint Strategic Committee to recommend to meetings of the full councils that Arun District Council be confirmed as a member of the GBEB. This additional capacity would further strengthen the Board's position as a voice for economic development, across the Greater Brighton region, advocating at local, regional, national and international level.

Members welcomed the proposals whilst acknowledging the importance of Arun's inclusion on the Board as they were part of the same economic area.

Decision:

The Joint Strategic Committee:-

- 1) noted the contents of the report and the ongoing benefits gained from Adur and Worthing Councils membership of the Greater Brighton Economic Board;
- 2) recommended to Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils respectively, to ratify the proposed amendment to the Greater Brighton Economic Board's Head of Terms (Attachment A) relating to Arun District Council's membership of the Greater Brighton Economic Joint Committee (which meets with the Greater

Brighton Business Partnership as the Greater Brighton Economic Board), subject to the decision of other constituents authorities, and to delegate authority to the Solicitor to the Council to make consequential changes to the Joint Committee Agreement and the Councils' Constitutions;

- 3) noted the Greater Brighton Economic Board's 5 Year Strategic Priorities (Attachment B) and Annual Report 2018 (Attachment C).

Call In:

The call-in deadline for decisions (1) and (3) will be 5.00pm on 20 September 2019.

There is no call-in for recommendations to Council, decision (2).

JSC3319-20 Wadurs - Changing Room extension and M&E Works

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for 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 10.

The purpose of the report was to seek approval to move funding from other approved Adur Community Leisure (ACL - known as Impulse Leisure) capital projects to fund the new changing room and M&E works at Wadurs Swimming Pool. This was due to an identified budget shortfall following a recent tender process for the project.

Members welcomed the proposals, acknowledging that they would provide the very well used Wadurs Swimming Pool, with a new lease of life.

Decision:

The Joint Strategic Committee

1. noted the increased cost of the extension to WADURS swimming pool and replacement boilers;
2. approved the use of the following budgets allocated for 2 projects; roofing and glazing (£84,750.00) and electrical rewiring (£34,000.00) for Lancing Leisure Centre to be re-allocated in order to fund the changing room and M&E works project at WADURS;
3. as a result of the failed bid to Veolia, approved the use of £40k of the current revenue budget underspend to ensure that the project progressed in the current financial year;
4. noted that planning approval had been granted for the project at the September 2019 Adur Planning Committee.

Call In:

The call-in deadline for this decision will be 5.00pm on 20 September 2019.

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for 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 11.

The report set out a motion referred to the Joint Strategic Committee, from the meeting of Adur District Council on the 18 July 2019, for consideration and determination.

The motion was attached to the report as Appendix 1 and asked Members to consider declaring a 'Climate Emergency', to sign up to the pledges proposed and request a report to Full Council within six months of the date of the motion, setting out the relevant actions.

It was noted that Members could accept the motion, requesting that further work be carried out in this regard, or, Members could reject the motion.

As the proposer of the motion, Councillor Catherine Arnold attended the meeting and presented it to the Committee.

During consideration of the motion, the Committee stated that it had already declared a Climate emergency at its July meeting and requested the production of an outline strategy on how the Councils would work towards the carbon neutral target, which was to be produced by January 2020 at the latest. This strategy document would cover the type of detail set out in the motion before the committee.

It was also stated that the Council had no powers to deliver change in areas outside of its control but would seek to use its influence to effect change in these areas. Adur and Worthing Councils were already leading on Sussex Air, a wider partnership looking at a number of these issues and both Councils were also involved with the West Sussex County Council review of Sustainable Transport that was currently underway.

Members highlighted that the motion did not provide any specification regarding BREEAM standards neither was there any mention of costs to deliver the proposed outcomes.

It was proposed and seconded that the motion be refused as the Committee had already commissioned the production of a strategy to address these issues and therefore could not agree something, which had already been agreed.

Decision:

That the Joint Strategic Committee rejected the motion.

Call In:

The call-in deadline for this decision will be 5.00pm on 20 September 2019.

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital & 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 12.

The report set out a motion referred to the Joint Strategic Committee, from the meeting of Adur District Council on the 18 July 2019, for consideration and determination.

The motion was attached to the report as Appendix 1 and asked Members to consider the adoption of a number of policies, additional to those adopted by the Joint Strategic Committee at its meeting in July.

It was noted that Members could accept the motion, requesting that further work be carried out in this regard, or, Members could reject the motion.

As the proposer of the motion, Councillor Richard Mulholland attended the meeting and presented it to the Committee.

During consideration of the motion, the Committee stated that a sizeable amount of the work proposed was already being undertaken. Currently, Worthing was producing a new Local Plan which would consider a number of the points raised and Officers would be reporting on progress in the near future.

The Leader of Worthing Borough Council gave an assurance that reports would be provided in due course to provide updates as the work progressed.

It was proposed and seconded that the motion be rejected.

Decision:

That the Joint Strategic Committee rejected the motion.

Call In:

The call-in deadline for this decision will be 5.00pm on 20 September 2019.

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital & 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 13.

The report informed the Committee that Worthing Homes Ltd was a local not-for-profit registered provider of social housing. It had been reviewing its corporate structure and governance arrangements and proposed converting from a company limited by shares and registered charity, to a community benefit society with charitable objectives, with commercial and charitable subsidiary arms.

Worthing Homes required the consent of Worthing Borough Council to implement these proposals due to obligations contained within the original Stock Transfer Agreement and the more recent Loan Agreement between Worthing Borough Council and Worthing Homes Ltd.

A Member asked how the proposed change would benefit existing and future tenants and questioned the use of the word intention in paragraph 4.2.1. Officers advised that the change to a community benefit society with charitable objectives would support the long term sustainability of the business and Worthing Homes had consulted with all of their tenants (more than 4,000 residents) in regards to the proposals and tenants were satisfied that the service provided by Worthing Homes would not be undermined.

Decision:

The Joint Strategic Committee agreed to provide the Council's consent to Worthing Homes Ltd to:

1. convert from a registered charitable company to a community benefit society with charitable objectives;
2. create a commercial subsidiary company, limited by shares, for the primary purpose of property sales;
3. create a charitable subsidiary company, limited by guarantee, for the primary purpose of community development activity;
4. using overall borrowing for on-lending to their subsidiary.

Call In:

The call-in deadline for this decision will be 5.00pm on 20 September 2019.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 8.10 pm, it having commenced at 6.30 pm

Chairman