

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

Gordon Room, Town Hall, Chapel Road, Worthing

30 January 2024

Councillor Dr Heather Mercer (Chairman)
Councillor Joss Loader (Vice Chairman)

Adur District Council:

Councillor Carol Albury
Councillor Ann Bridges
Councillor Lee Cowen
Councillor Andy McGregor

Worthing Borough Council:

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

Absent

Councillors Mandy Buxton, Elizabeth Sparkes, Paul Mansfield and Sharon Sluman

JOSC/60/23-24 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made

JOSC/61/23-24 Substitute Members

There were no substitutions

JOSC/62/23-24 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 30 November 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

JOSC/63/23-24 Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public

JOSC/64/23-24 Members' Questions

There were no questions from Members

JOSC/65/23-24 Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items

JOSC/66/23-24 Consideration of any matter referred to the Committee in

relation to a call-in of a decision

There were no call-ins

JOSC/67/23-24 Update on the Delivery of Our Plan and Interview with Chief Executive

The Committee had a report before it attached as item 8, which had been circulated to all Members, a copy of which is attached to a signed copy of these minutes.

In 2022 the Chief Executive, the Corporate Leadership Team and the wider staff leadership team, worked collaboratively to design a new corporate plan for the organisation. This plan, which came to be known as 'Our Plan', was agreed and adopted at the Joint Strategic Committee and both Councils in October 2022 and was launched to staff over the course of November 2022.

A Member asked, "How much progress has been made with The Growth Deal and is the project progressing, functioning and providing results in line with expectations?"

Members were informed the Growth Deal was a partnership with West Sussex County Council, therefore Adur District was dependent on decisions made by WSCC in terms of level of investment through the 'Deal'.

The Chief Executive was pleased to say that a number of projects had been delivered, under the Growth Deal banner, including flood defence as part of the Sussex Yacht Club works and also the delivery of Focus House. Most recently, they had worked in partnership with WSCC to deliver improvements at Southwick Square. This opened on time (in October) and on budget and was great to see the new space being enjoyed over the festive period.

The Council was in dialogue with WSCC regarding future projects across Adur, which followed the preceding 12 months where preparatory work had been undertaken on a number of projects, including as a result of the Lancing 'Now and into the Future' work."

A Member asked, "In Appendix 1 it informs that the section on Freedom of Information, Environmental Information Regulations and Data Subject Access Requests are not achieving targets. Has there been a particular rise in these requests and, if so, through greater transparency with our communities could that reduce the volume the council are receiving?"

Members were informed that there was a relative rise in requests and capacity to effectively deal with these represented a challenge. That digitising records should make data more transparent and make it easier to serve these requests.

A Member asked, "In June 2022 the council declared a Cost of Living Emergency. 18 months later and many of our residents are still experiencing these challenges. It could be argued that it's not so much an emergency situation any more, but has become a status quo for many. How do you prioritise the delivery times of Our Plan whilst a higher level of support is required to get some people through week to week living?"

Members were informed many of the residents continued to struggle as a result of the cost of living crisis. To help provide the support needed, much of the cost of living work had been mainstreamed into the core work. This meant front line services were better

able to give the right help at the right time to more residents. Through ongoing support of Citizens Advice and investments in online support tools such as Telljo, they had also been able to extend support and advice to those in need. In addition, they were continuing to deliver a proactive programme where data was used to reach out to people and help them to access help and support before they were in significant difficulties. This focus on prevention and early intervention ensured residents got the help they needed and furthermore costly assistance was less likely to be required later on from the councils. They continued to work with partners and communities to deliver other interventions (for example low cost loans from community banking) and provide support in places and the organisational design work sought to develop this further. In working closer to communities and neighbourhoods the intention was to increase the focus on prevention and further build the capacity and resilience of residents and communities.

Members also asked about the analysis of long term fluidity; equal pay data; interaction with unions and work of social prescribers; money advice services and employment advisers.

Members were informed that the focus was on building a resilient system with the ability to reprioritise; that they were still digging into data regarding fluctuations of equal pay and the leadership team was very conscious of the issue; that regular meetings were held with union representatives and that there were staffing challenges but design work was looking at a neighbourhood model that maintained consistency.

Resolved:

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- Noted the progress made by the Corporate Leadership Team in developing a new draft performance framework for Our Plan.
- Noted the measures outlined in Appendices 1 and 2 as the first iteration of measures for discussion with the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2024
- Reviewed and noted the progress made against performance measures where they were available
- Requested an annual performance reporting for Our Plan be brought to the committee to monitor progress and support performance improvement
- Agreed to refer these performance arrangements, including feedback from JOSC, onto the respective Joint Strategic Subcommittees for Adur and Worthing Councils.

JOSC/68/23-24 Review of the JOSC Work Programme

The Committee had a report before it attached as item 9, which had been circulated to all Members, a copy of which 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.

Members discussed the action taken by the Chairs to address Souther Water's decline of an invitation to attend a meeting of JOSC and asked when Pub Watch would be seen on the work programme. Members were informed that Pub Watch attendance had yet to be arranged but was being planned for a future meeting.

Resolved:

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Noted the progress to deliver the JOSC Work Programme for 2023/24 as contained in Appendix A.
- Agreed to postpone the Annual Review of the Worthing Bid & the Worthing Theatres Contract Monitoring reports until the 24/25 municipal year

JOSC/69/23-24 Interview with Adur Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources

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

This report set out background information on the Portfolio of the Adur Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources to enable the Committee to consider and question the Cabinet Member on issues within his portfolio and any other issues which the Cabinet Member was involved in or connected with the work of the Council and the Adur communities.

Unfortunately the Adur Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources was unable to attend the meeting but let the councillors know they would respond to their questions in writing.

JOSC/70/23-24 Interview with Adur Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure

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

This report set out background information on the Portfolio of the Adur Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure to enable the Committee to consider and question the Cabinet Member on issues within their portfolio and any other issues which the Cabinet Member was involved in or connected with the work of the Council and the Adur communities.

A Member asked, "Since the percentage of the population in Adur who are active has still not returned to pre covid levels and given the context of the complex relationship this council has with our public leisure centres and the provision of concessions, alongside the impending funding reductions from central govt, how will the cabinet member for leisure ensure that this figure of active people in Adur continues to rise and that our residents have continued opportunities for exercise and leisure?"

Members were informed that whilst the Council continued to work in partnership with South Downs Leisure Trust to provide sport experiences across Leisure Centres, the Council was also keen to improve 'every day activities' that would help with the defined activity levels.

For example, the Council was exploring ways of improving walking and cycling across the District, and the introduction of a bike hire scheme had contributed towards increasing activity levels. Other aspects included how to manage and work in partnership with communities to improve access to and from open spaces - with access to the sea

and the south downs. These, combined with open spaces, were seen as vitally important contributors towards a healthier lifestyle.

Adur was also blessed with a range and depth of activities led by community groups, whether traditional in the shape of sports clubs (e.g. football, basketball, tennis, fitness etc) or more 'informal' such as running clubs, open air swimming etc. The Council continued to provide other leisure assets to the community to support these, including tennis courts, sport pavilions, bowling greens and grassed pitches.

Finally, the Council continued to deliver Wellbeing Hubs in Adur; a face to face service as well as online and telephone one to ones to support people with: Smoking cessation, Alcohol reduction, Falls prevention activities, Physical activity options, Healthy weight tips and Cardiovascular and Pre-diabetes information.

All these elements showed the Council's commitment to improving the activity levels across the District, notwithstanding the motivation and dedication of individuals, groups, organisations, partners, businesses who are also helping to support this important topic.

A Member asked "Given that the Beach Green toilet block is still standing and that the consultation exercise planned for last year has yet to go ahead, what are the plans to ensure that the public loos are fit for purpose in 2024, pending any possible redevelopment, please?"

Members were informed the Council was still keen to explore the provision of new toilet facilities at Beach Green as part of any development at that site. In the meantime they would manage the existing facilities as best they could.

They were also working with officers on reviewing the provision of public toilets across the district which would enable them to prioritise sites for investment.

A Member asked "Are beach patrols planned for the 2024 summer season and, if so, what will the service look like, please?"

Members were informed the Council trialled the delivery of a coastal service in Adur over the summer holidays the previous year. They were currently assessing the outcomes and impacts from last season and had started assessing, with appropriate Officers - notably the Coastal Team, what a service could look like for 2024 and at what cost. At this stage nothing had been confirmed but they were certainly considering the options for 2024.

A Member asked, "Almost every year at this time Southern Water instals emergency over pumping equipment along the middle of Grinstead Lane. This year it was installed on November 3rd, much earlier than previous years. It's clear the problems are getting worse over time.

At Manor Close they have similar issues but rather than overpumping, lorries come back and forth taking away the wastewater to the treatment works.

The inline diesel pumps are loud and polluting and this is creating intolerable living conditions for residents living in the vicinity. On Grinstead Lane due to the blocked right turns, standing traffic is backing up. Residents on Mash Barn estate and the New Monks Farm estate are all forced to use Mash Barn Lane exit.

There doesn't appear to be any long term plan in place by either Southern Water or the County Council who are the lead flood authority. So my questions are:

Since the District Council is responsible for monitoring air pollution, is it doing any?

Could the District Council facilitate a stakeholder forum to discuss long term solutions?"

Members were informed there was already Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) monitoring in the vicinity of Grinstead Lane.

The raw data for 2023 showed levels remained similar to those in 2022, but were below the current national guideline values where they would be required to take action. The 2024 Annual Status Report would contain the final data which would have been bias adjusted as per national guidance. This report wouldn't be available until July.

The addition of a couple of generators was unlikely to have a widespread impact so adding NO₂ diffusion tube monitoring further south would not show levels significantly different to those already being collected at the existing locations. Regular meetings with Southern Water were held and would raise this issue with them at the next scheduled meeting to see what was happening, why and if a longer term, more sustainable solution was being sought.

JOSC/71/23-24 Interview with Worthing Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure

The Committee had a report before it, attached as item 12, which had been circulated to all Members, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes. This report set out background information on the Portfolio of the Worthing Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure to enable the Committee to consider and question the Cabinet Member on issues within her portfolio and any other issues which the Cabinet Member was involved in or connected with the work of the Council and the Worthing communities.

A Member asked, "With the council's long term ambitions to pass power and control over to what happens within communities, to communities: can you talk the committee through the process of how the Worthing Festival is organised and what control do members of the community, including those that volunteer their time to support engagement, have in decision making?"

Members were informed since the inception of the Worthing Festival in 2023, the Council had always indicated they would encourage community participation and control in how the Festival is delivered and shaped. An Arts Forum, made up of over 50 creative individuals and organisations, helped contribute to the inaugural Festival at a series of workshops through 2022/23, which led to the brilliant week the previous year.

However, a lot of learnings had been taken from the year following a comprehensive 'evaluation report'. Recommendations from this report would take a number of years to deliver, however for 2024 the focus was on how to establish a greater connection to young people (as participants and audience), business engagement and enabling 'the network' to support each other. The coming year, the Council had the support of a number of individuals from the community, aligned to the aforementioned, who were actively helping to deliver the 2024 Festival. Again, the Arts Forum had heavily influenced the direction for that year.

In the future, the hope was that the Council could become even more of an enabler around the Festival and the community take full ownership of how this was delivered, knowing the Council was supportive.

A Member asked, "In your briefing to the committee you talk of the fact that sports participation hasn't returned to its pre-covid levels. You also highlight the development of a stakeholder group across Sports & Leisure to develop a plan. How will members of this

group be identified and selected and what time frame is estimated for the establishment of it?”

Members were informed that over the previous 12 months, the Council had focused on the creation of an Arts Forum to ensure the Council was supporting the cultural sector in the best way possible. This was the focus and priority for 2023, however as that was now established, they would start looking at a similar forum around sport and leisure.

A good basis to work from was in place as Officers compiled a list in 2022/23 regarding the range of sport and leisure clubs available across Worthing. As with the Arts Forum, they would first be asking as many groups/clubs as possible whether they would like the Council to facilitate a ‘forum’ and, if yes, what would they like to see and get from it. This would be important to make sure the forum had integrity and value.

The Cabinet Member anticipated they would look to establish the group, if that’s what the community wanted, from April onwards as there was awareness there was a lot of work currently being prioritised in those teams that supported the sport and leisure sector. However, they would ensure they continued to identify as many sports clubs and groups as possible over the course of the next few months who may be interested in being part of this group and, equally, if fellow Members were aware of any organisations who may be interested, to get in contact.

A Member asked, “I’m aware there has been some work done with the LGBTQ+ community on ensuring Worthing Pride is an inclusive community event that encourages maximum participation. It was disappointing to see the hoardings erected around Pride this year, which many commented on social media were unattractive and gave the impression that if you couldn’t afford to pay for the event, you were not welcome. Could you give some more detail on what conversations are continuing to take place with our LGBTQ+ community about Worthing Pride and what improvements can be made for future events to provide more sense of inclusivity and openness?”

Members were informed the Council continued to work closely with the event organisers of Worthing Pride, including a thorough post event review. By working collaboratively with Worthing Pride the Council had ensured the popular Pride Procession continued to form an integral part of the wider Pride celebrations, at little or no cost to participants. Member engagement with the borough’s LGBTQ+ community informed the Council’s feedback to Worthing Pride ensuring the continual improvement of this pivotal event for Worthing. Through the council’s events application process and officer support, communities were encouraged to celebrate the annual Pride month and many town centre businesses had taken the opportunity to show their shared support through sponsorship of the Pride Procession, ‘after-parties’ and the flying of the freedom flag. With regard to the use of solid fencing at the previous year’s Worthing Pride event, the primary reason for the use of shielded fencing was a security measure. In addition to this solid fencing shielded the view of the portable toilets and helped to shield the surrounding buildings from the sound generated at the event by both people and amplified music. Thoughts on how Worthing Pride could be further improved were always welcome.

A Member asked, “It’s good to see Brooklands Cafe is finally set to open. Could you tell us what has led to the delay of that concession opening and the missed opportunity for people to use and enjoy the cafe over the Summer months?”

Members were informed the Council was delighted that the Brooklands Cafe was now open and the operator was seemingly very pleased and busy. But, as indicated, there was a delay in opening and this was fundamentally down to the Council not receiving assurances from the contractor regarding final works (including obtaining a new electrical supply and contractor issues with resources and supply chains) and a delay in the necessary warranties, for the work, being provided from the appointed contractor. The Council had already undertaken a 'lessons learnt' workshop, with appropriate Officers, to try and mitigate this happening in the future.

A Member asked how events across Worthing Pride might cater for those with special needs in the same way that Worthing theatres and museums had. Members were informed that while the focus had been on the Pride event itself, they were unsure what else was available and that if any information came through it would become available. Members were also advised that they would contact community groups that already exist to support those people and see what could be done.

JOSC/72/23-24 Interview with Worthing Deputy Leader

The Committee had a report before it, attached as item 13, which had been circulated to all Members, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes.

This report set out background information on the Portfolio of the Worthing Deputy Leader to enable the Committee to consider and question the Deputy Leader on issues within their portfolio and any other issues which the Deputy Leader was involved in or connected with the work of the Council and the Worthing communities.

A Member asked, "We're living within an unusually difficult current financial climate with a large lack of resources to local authorities and predictions of further struggles to come. Can you highlight any successes in the part of your portfolio for developing community participatory decision-making structures and what future work is required to utilise the abundance of skills in the community to support the council through its next challenges?"

Members were informed that as part of the application process for the Cil Neighbourhood Fund 2023, the council experimented with a new model of community assessment panels. Assessment panels for the Cil Neighbourhood Applications included ward councillors from across parties, community representatives and were chaired by the VCS infrastructure organisation Community Works. Assessment panels were held in community spaces in the neighbourhood and recommendations were then given to the deputy leader for final approval and sign off. This decision making structure enhanced the role of the ward councillor and of Community Works, and brought decision making processes into the neighbourhood, making good use of local knowledge.

In West Durrington, the council led a successful community participation process in collaboration with the consortium of three housebuilders to refine the design requirements of the long overdue West Durrington community park facilities.

During this process a number of engagements were held in West Durrington where residents, community groups and community interest groups were invited to contribute their local and specialist knowledge to inform decisions around the design of sports pitches, allotments and play park facilities. The refined park design included junior sports pitches (rather than adult), inclusive play park equipment catering across the age range

and for those with disabilities, and a coherent allotment and community garden design which was better integrated with the existing Humber Avenue Allotment community.

Under the banner of Council for Community they had been developing a visible offer to residents, members, staff and partners for how they can get involved in participative activity, including a calendar and/or map of activity; digital tools for people to have their say and match people up to increase social action; and an applied learning and development programme to enable residents, staff and partners to develop and share skills in place-based working and participation and apply them to practical challenges. This would improve the quality of how they did participation and community development – including through improved hosting and facilitation skills and make better use of partner/community skills.

Members also asked about raising awareness for Boom Community Bank; how the portfolio engaged with other portfolios in terms of children's' wellbeing; the young people's Cabinet and developing an apolitical strategy. Members were informed that Boom had not specifically requested help in terms of advertising but the Council was always happy to help where it could; that the Deputy Leader wanted to support young people in deciding what they wanted from the town, had recently worked with the head of Chesswood school and was in the early stages of getting others involved; that participation officers were putting together a long term plan to be co-produced with young people, a model of a young peoples' Cabinet and that officers were working with Members to develop an apolitical neighbourhood model and for it to be successful, it would need input from all Members.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 8.25 pm, it having commenced at 6.30 pm

Chairman