

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

QEII Room, Shoreham-Centre, Shoreham-by-Sea

11 July 2024

Councillor Debs Stainforth (Chair)
Councillor Nigel Corston (Vice-Chair)

Adur District Council:

Councillor Tony Bellasis
Councillor Caroline Fuhrmann
Councillor Adrienne Lowe
Councillor Andy McGregor
Councillor Carol O'Neal
Councillor Julian Shinn

Worthing Borough Council:

Councillor Dan Hermitage
Councillor Dom Ford
Councillor Mike Barrett
Councillor Margaret Howard
Councillor Daniel Humphreys
Councillor Richard Mulholland

Absent

Councillor Nigel Morgan and Councillor Rosey Whorlow

JAGC/13/24-25 Substitute Members

Councillor Cathy Glynn Davies substituted for Councillor Rosey Whorlow

JAGC/14/24-25 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made

JAGC/15/24-25 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 28 May 2024 were approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chair

JAGC/16/24-25 Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public

JAGC/17/24-25 Members Questions

There were no questions from Members

JAGC/18/24-25 Items Raised under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items

JAGC/19/24-25 Housing Complaints and Feedback Policy and Procedures

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. This report provided an overview of the proposed feedback and complaints policy and procedure in respect of Adur and Worthing Council housing services, including Adur Homes.

Members asked about how complaints would be categorised, satisfaction with current complaint communication, financial implications and the split between complaints regarding Adur homes and the rest of the housing service.

Members were informed that as data was collected it would be categorised into themes, which would allow for better and more targeted responses; that the officer was not satisfied with the current communication of complaints and that while things had improved, they recognised more work was to be done; that the aspiration was for more complaints to be lodged and recorded digitally, freeing up officer time and resources for prevention work and that work was being done to make it easier to pull out data like the split of complaints between services.

The Joint Audit and Governance Committee approved the proposed Housing Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure for the Housing Service, to include Adur Homes.

JAGC/20/24-25 Enquiries to those Charged with Governance

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. The external auditors, Ernst and Young, had asked that the Joint Audit & Governance Committee consider a letter about how the Committee gained assurance from management regarding the financial governance arrangements of the Councils. The Chairs of the Committee had received two letters, one for Adur District Council, and one for Worthing Borough Council.

Members asked about the dates in the letter in relation to the timing of the meeting, the last time a fraud investigation took place, which budgets were being referred to as balanced, what was considered a reasonable amount of reserves and when to specify internal and external audit.

Members were informed that this was the normal time for the letter to come to the committee and that officers continued to work closely with the auditors; that the last fraud investigation report was given to the Joint Audit and Governance Committee in May, that the budgets referred to were the ones reported in February; that reasonable reserves were considered to be from 6-10% of revenue expenditure and that legal issues were considered each time an internal or external report came to the committee.

Members went on to discuss the councils' status as a growing concern, current levels of reserves, future budgets and council record of spending.

The Joint Audit and Governance Committee is asked to considered and agreed to the proposed responses to the external auditor's letter.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 7.19 pm, it having commenced at 6.30 pm

Chairman