

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

Gordon Room, Stoke Abbott Road, Worthing Town Hall

21 November 2019

Councillor Keith Bickers (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)

Adur District Council:

Stephen Chipp
Joss Loader
Carol Albury
Catherine Arnold
Kevin Boram
Paul Mansfield
Andy McGregor

Worthing Borough Council:

Margaret Howard
Charles James
Jane Sim
Bob Smytherman
Carl Walker

Absent

Councillor Roy Barraclough, Councillor Paul Baker and Councillor Lavinia O'Connor

JOSC/46/19-20 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made

JOSC/47/19-20 Substitute Members

Councillor Debs Stainforth declared a substitution for Councillor Lavinia O'Connor.

JOSC/48/19-20 Confirmation of Minutes

Resolved: that the minutes of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of the 17 October 2019 be approved as the correct record.

JOSC/49/19-20 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

JOSC/50/19-20 Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items

JOSC/51/19-20 Consideration of any matter referred to the Committee in relation to a call-in of a decision

Before the Committee was a report by the Monitoring Officer, a copy of which was sent to all members, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes.

Resolved: That the report of the monitoring officer be noted

JOSC/52/19-20 Engaging Adur and Worthing - how we engage with our Communities

The Committee had a report before it attached as item 7, a copy of which had been circulated to all members, a copy of which is attached to a signed copy of these minutes. Attached to a covering report was a copy of a paper presented to the Joint Strategic Committee (JSC) on 7 November 2019 which proposed an updated approach to the way that the Councils engage with communities, partners and elected Members. Annexes to the report detailed a draft guide and engagement toolkit for Members to consider.

A Member asked the following question: *On the same paragraph it states 'No type of engagement is better than another'. The point about needing to be flexible in consultations is clear but the five models of engagement are quite distinct. It is clear what they are but less clear is the circumstances that each one should be chosen. How do we ensure consultations don't default to the 'Organisation implementation' when a more complex and empowering mode of consultation is more appropriate?* Members were told that the document had been designed to be flexible and that issues would be assessed on a case by case basis.

A Member asked if the document would offer more detail on the difference between consultation and engagement. The Committee was given an explanation about how the document set out different types of engagement and that the overarching document sat next to legal obligations around consultation. It was reported that the document could make the difference between engagement and consultation clearer.

A Member asked the following question: *Regarding the 'Engaging Adur and Worthing' document, the 'You said, we did' mechanism ensures feedback to the public but doesn't not in and of itself guarantee meaningful incorporation of consultation responses into decision making. Does the process have any mechanism to ensure that consultation feedback has been fully incorporated into decision making on an issue?* The Committee was told that ultimately all engagement processes will be considered alongside a range of other information and data, with options and issues presented for members to consider as part of their decision making processes. Members attention was drawn to the analysis section of the guide and the role of elected members section in the same guide. The Committee was told that Intelligence gathered from an engagement process needed to be considered in the context of a range of other pieces of information. It was an officer's responsibility to present that information and make a series of recommendations based on analysis of that information. Sometimes feedback from an engagement process could be out of scope, could not be achieved due to other considerations or could be contradictory. It was ultimately the responsibility of elected members how they want to use this information as part of their decision-making. A Member commented that it would be worth finding a way to explain engagement in order to manage the expectations of the public and it was agreed that a section in the document could be expanded to help people understand

Resolved: that the comments of the Committee be noted and submitted to the Director for Customer Services for consideration

**JOSC/53/19-20 Financially Sustainable Councils: Budget update 20/21 - 2024/25
and savings proposals**

The Committee had a report before it attached as item 6, a copy of which had been circulated to all Members, a copy of which is attached to a signed copy of these minutes. The report before members provided an overview of the delivery of the sustainable councils financial strategy for 2020/21, along with details of the proposals that would help deliver a balanced budget for the next financial year and beyond.

The Head of Financial Services introduced the report to the Committee and set the main financial challenges facing the Council.

A Member asked the following question: *Under 'Increase in the costs associated with temporary and emergency accommodation' it states that there has been a further increase in the caseload associated with homelessness and should this caseload continues to rise the Council will need to address the cost issues. Is this increased caseload due to the extra preventative work being carried out? What does 'address the cost issues' mean in this context?* The Committee was told that the caseload referred to is the number of households accommodated in temporary accommodation in Worthing. The number of households presenting as homeless each month meant that Worthing was experiencing a net increase in the number of households that require emergency accommodation. The cost pressures referred to the net cost of placing families and individuals into temporary and emergency accommodation. The creation of temporary accommodation at developments such as Rowlands Road.

A Member asked the following question: *The commercial programme states a drop in income between 18/19 and 19/20 of approx 190k, are all the reasons as stated on agenda page 19 (g) and h) please and if so what is the breakdown across those factors please?* Members were told that this referred to the Grafton Site in Worthing which was a complicated site that included some associated properties.

A Member asked the following question: *It is noted that the current budget strategy was subject to consultation in 2016/17 and that 'individual savings proposals are subject to consultation with officers of the council, executive members and members of JOSC'. As there is no detailed public budget consultation exercise this year, at what point, if any, are individual savings proposals considered sufficient to be put to public consultation?* The Committee was told that it was important that when the Councils consulted with communities an unrealistic expectation was not created of how they may effect change or have influence over a final decision. The Councils had limited financial flexibility, however endeavour was made to engage with our community where there was likely to be significant service change or the change is of wide public interest, and there are viable alternatives in which consult with residents on. For example the Councils were consulting on changes to Council Tax discounts and premiums relating to vacant and long-term empty residences. There would also be specific engagement activities which may be a result of or aim to influence a specific budget initiative - for example the Brookland Masterplan.

A Member asked the following question: *Business rates deficits - please can you provide an update on whether the out of action turbines is a long-running issue and whether contingency has been made to cover this.* Members were told that the turbines had become faulty earlier in the year. It was expected that they would remain out of action for about 6 months during which time no business rates would be payable. Since the 6 month exemption had expired, business rates have been paid. There was no need to provide a contingency as this was a one-off and exceptional event.

A Member asked the following question: *Financial pressure in 21/22 re: potential cost of investing in food waste (what does this mean and how much are we talking here please?)* Members were told that the budget was based on initial forecasts and was a contingency budget. There were some unknown factors that had been taken into account such as the possibility of some government funding, the extent at which the County would share savings generated by diverting waste from landfill and different ways to configure a service to accommodate weekly food waste collections, all of which will need to be considered.

Resolved: that the report be noted

JOSC/54/19-20 Review of the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The Committee had a report before it attached as item 8, a copy of which had been circulated to all members, a copy of which is attached to a signed copy of these minutes. The report before members set out the findings from the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) Working Group which was created as part of the JOSC Work Programme to review the effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The Chairman of the Working group set out the report and findings of the group.

Members discussed a recommendation that the Councils should amend the Constitutions to allow for a secret ballot for the appointment of the Chairmen of the Scrutiny Committees to help to de-politicise the process and that JOSC should also be given authority to appoint its Chairmen at the first JOSC meeting of the Municipal Year. It was proposed that the recommendation be removed as a similar recommendation had been rejected at Council meetings in October. On a vote it was agreed that the recommendation be removed from the Working Group and not be recommended to the Joint Governance Committee.

The Working Group report as amended was agreed unanimously and the matter was referred to the Joint Governance Committee for consideration.

Resolved: the report and recommendations from the Effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny Committees Working Group be referred to the Adur and Worthing Joint Governance Committee and Councils for consideration in due course as appropriate.

JOSC/55/19-20 Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2019/20 - Update

The Committee had a report before it, attached as item 9, a copy of which had been circulated to all members, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these

minutes. The report before the Committee outlined the progress with the work programme to date and asked the Committee to recommend to Councils to note the changes to the Work Programme.

The Committee discussed the plan and resolved that it be noted and referred to Council.

Resolved:

- i) That the work programme be noted
- ii) That it be recommended that the meetings of Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council in December 2019 note the changes made to the Work Programme since it was agreed by both Councils in April 2019.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 7.30 pm, it having commenced at 6.30 pm

Chairman