

Minutes of a meeting of the
Worthing Council
26 May 2020
at 6.30 pm

Councillor Hazel Thorpe (Chair)
Councillor Lionel Harman (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Noel Atkins	Councillor Richard Mulholland
Councillor Paul Baker	Councillor Louise Murphy
Councillor Roy Barraclough	Councillor Richard Nowak
Councillor Mike Barrett	Councillor Helen Silman
Councillor Keith Bickers	Councillor Jane Sim
Councillor Ferdousi Henna Chowdhury	Councillor Dawn Smith
Councillor Rebecca Cooper	Councillor Sally Smith
Councillor Edward Crouch	Councillor Robert Smytherman
Councillor Jim Deen	Councillor Elizabeth Sparkes
Councillor Karen Harman	Councillor Val Turner
Councillor Paul High	Councillor Nicola Waight
Councillor Margaret Howard	Councillor Steve Waight
Councillor Daniel Humphreys	Councillor Carl Walker
Councillor Charles James	Councillor Paul Westover
Councillor Kevin Jenkins	Councillor Steve Wills
Councillor Martin McCabe	Councillor Tim Wills
Councillor Sean McDonald	Councillor Mark Withers
Councillor Dr Heather Mercer	

(The Mayor, Councillor Hazel Thorpe, opened the meeting as Chairman)

The Mayor addressed the Council.

C/1/20-21 Election of the Mayor

It was proposed by Councillor Steve Wills and seconded by Councillor Daniel Humphreys that Councillor Lionel Harman be elected to serve as Mayor for the coming year.

Resolved that Councillor Lionel Harman be elected Mayor of the Borough of Worthing for the 2020-21 Municipal Year.

There was a short pause in proceedings whilst the newly elected Mayor put on the Insignia before making his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

(The Mayor, Councillor Lionel Harman, in the Chair)

The Mayor addressed the Council.

C/2/20-21

Appointment of the Deputy Mayor

The Mayor proposed that Councillor Sean McDonald be appointed to serve as Deputy Mayor in 2020/21, this was seconded by Councillor Steve Wills.

Councillor Beccy Cooper put forward a second nomination, that Councillor Jim Deen be appointed to serve as Deputy Mayor in 2020/21. This was seconded by Councillor Carl Walker.

Following a vote, the Council

Resolved that Councillor Sean McDonald be appointed Deputy Mayor for the 2020-21 Municipal Year.

Councillor Sean McDonald made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

C/3/20-21

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence received.

C/4/20-21

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Louise Murphy declared a personal interest in Item 14A(i) as a non-Executive Director of Worthing Homes.

C/5/20-21

Questions from the Public

No questions from the public had been received in advance of the meeting.

C/6/20-21

Confirmation of Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2020 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Mayor.

C/7/20-21

Vote of thanks to the outgoing Mayor

Proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Bob Smytherman and

Resolved that the Council placed on record its sincere thanks to Councillor Hazel Thorpe for the fine manner in which she upheld the tradition of the Office of Mayor of the Borough, for her service to the community of Worthing during the year, and for the fair business like way in which she presided over the meetings of the Council during the year; and that the Council also expressed its sincere thanks to Robin Rogers for the dedicated and friendly manner in which he carried out the duties of Mayor's Consort.

The Mayor advised that he was unable to present the outgoing Mayor with her Past Mayor insignia and Mr Robin Rogers with the past Mayor's Consort insignia as this was a remote meeting. He advised that this would be presented as soon as it was possible to do so.

C/8/20-21

Youth Mayor

Council noted the appointment of Will Nyss as the Youth Mayor and Henny Sonneman-Petty as the Deputy Youth Mayor for 20-21.

The Mayor announced that he was looking forward to presenting them both with their insignia at a later date.

C/9/20-21

Announcements by the Mayor, Leader of the Council, Executive Members or the Head of Paid Service

The Mayor informed the Council of his charities for the forthcoming year.

The Chief Executive advised the Council of the work that had been undertaken during the Covid-19 lockdown.

C/10/20-21

Items raised under Urgency Provisions

There were no urgent items.

C/11/20-21

Worthing Borough Council Constitution

Before the Council was a report by the Monitoring Officer, copies of which had been distributed to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 11.

The Council's Monitoring Officer had recently made some changes to various documents within the Council's Constitution under her delegated authority. The report sought the endorsement of the Council to the changes that had been made to the Worthing Borough Council Constitution.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Helen Silman, seconded by Councillor Jim Deen, and supported following a vote;

For 30, Against 0, Abstentions 7

Council approved the recommendations in the report, as amended, following a vote;

For 36, Against 0, Abstention 1

Resolved

1. That the Council noted and endorsed the changes made by the Monitoring Officer and agreed to formally adopt the following documents into the Worthing Borough Council Constitution:-
 - i. the Council Procedure Rules on the 22nd April 2020;
 - ii. the Protocol for Remote Council and Committee Meetings on the 22nd April 2020;
 - iii. the Protocol on Public Speaking at Remote Council Planning Committee Meetings on the 6th May 2020;
 - iv. The Council's Petition Scheme on the 12th May 2020;

- v. the Joint Committee Agreement with Adur District Council on the 12th May 2020.

2. That the Council agreed to refer the following proposed amendment to the Borough Council of Worthing Petition Scheme, clause 6(2), to the Joint Governance Committee for consideration:-

Lines 9 to 12 of the Petition Scheme, clause 6(2), be amended to read as follows:

The Petition Organiser will be given five minutes to read the petition at the meeting and make any representations, 'before Members discuss the petition', in accordance with Council's Standing Orders as contained in Part 4 of the Constitution.

At the end of the discussion and before any proposition is voted on, the Petition Organiser will be given 3 minutes (maximum) to make a closing statement.

C/12/20-21 Schedule of Council Meetings and Attendance by Councillors

Before the Council was a report by the Monitoring Officer, copies of which had been distributed to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 12.

Council was informed that Local Government legislation provided that a Councillor would cease to be a Member of a Local Authority, if they failed to attend a meeting of the Council for a period of 6 months, without approval for their absence.

The report had sought the Council's approval for the absence of a Councillor from meetings. However, it was noted that as Councillor Louise Murphy was present at the meeting, it was not necessary for Council to approve her absence.

The report also sought the Council's endorsement to the cancellation of the Worthing Borough Council meeting scheduled to take place on 21st April 2020 which had been cancelled due to the global pandemic.

The recommendation in the report was proposed by Councillor Louise Murphy, seconded by Councillor Kevin Jenkins and supported following a vote;

For 36, Against 0, Abstentions 1

Resolved

The Council noted the cancellation of the Worthing Borough Council meeting scheduled to take place on 21st April 2020 and the Chief Executive's use of delegated powers in this regard.

C/13/20-21 Decision making by Worthing Borough Council in 2020/21

Before the Council was a report by the Acting Director for Housing & Wellbeing and the Solicitor to the Council, copies of which had been distributed to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as item 13.

The report outlined a number of decisions required by Council to ensure that the decision making structure for 2020/21 was determined according to the Council's Constitution, this included:

- noting the Political Balance of the Council;
- in accordance with Political Group nominations, to appoint Members to seats on Committees for 2020/21;
- to appoint the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to each Committee for 2020/21;
- noting the Leader of the Main Opposition for 2020/21.

It was noted that an updated Appendix B had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

The recommendations outlined in the report, were proposed by Councillor Daniel Humphreys and seconded by Councillor Ed Crouch.

An amendment proposed by Councillor Beccy Cooper, that Councillor Carl Walker be appointed as the JOSC Chairman, was seconded by Councillor Jim Deen but not supported.

Council approved the recommendations following a vote;

For 22, Against 0, Abstentions 14

Resolved

That the Council

- i. noted the decision making structure of the Council and the political balance of the Council as referenced in paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2;
- ii. confirmed the Terms of Reference of the Council, Executive, Committees and Sub-Committees as outlined in Part 3 of the Constitution including those relating to Joint Committee Agreements;
- iii. appointed to the Committees in accordance with the wishes of the Political Groups on the Council, as detailed in Appendix B;
- iv. agreed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Committees, as detailed in Appendix B, be appointed until the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2021;
- v. noted the Group Leaders and Deputy Leaders as confirmed to the Proper Officer as outlined in Appendix B; and
- vi. in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 39, the Council noted the appointment of the Leader of the Labour Group on the Council, as the Leader of the Main Opposition.

**The meeting was adjourned at 20.14 and reconvened at 20.24.*

C/14/20-21

Recommendations from the Executive and Committees to Council

Council had, before it, recommendations from the Joint Strategic Committee.

Extracts of these minutes had been circulated as items 14A(i), 14A(ii) & 14A(iii).

Item 14A(i) Joint Strategic Committee - 10 March 2020

Adur and Worthing Councils Housing Strategy 2020-2023: 'Enabling communities to thrive in their own home'

The Leader of the Council presented the recommendation from the Joint Strategic Committee meeting held on 10 March 2020.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Heather Mercer.

Members generally expressed support for the Strategy and acknowledged that Covid 19 was likely to have a negative impact on housing in the future.

The substantive motion was supported on a vote:

For 35, Against 0, Abstentions 1

Resolved

That the Council approved the adoption of the new Adur and Worthing Housing Strategy for 2020-2023.

Item 14A(ii) Joint Strategic Committee - 10 March 2020

Strategic Property Investment Fund 2020 and the Annual Commercial Property Investment Strategy 2020/21

The Leader presented a recommendation from the Joint Strategic Committee meeting held on 10 March 2020.

The proposal was seconded by Cllr Elizabeth Sparkes.

During discussion of the item, the Leader of the Opposition raised concerns regarding the strategy and the associated risks.

The Leader of the Council reiterated the importance of the approach, stating that there were no obvious alternatives for delivering revenue. Risks were being mitigated where possible, for example, aiming to have a maximum of 30% of the portfolio in any one area.

On a vote: For 24, Against 10, Abstentions 3

Resolved

That the Council approved the adoption of the Commercial Property Investment Strategy for 2020-2021.

Item 14A(iii) Joint Strategic Committee - 10 March 2020

Brooklands Park - Masterplan Development

The Leader presented a recommendation from the Joint Strategic Committee meeting held on 10 March 2020.

The proposal was seconded by Cllr Keith Bickers.

During discussion of the item, Members generally expressed support for the proposals, noting the net increase in provision of play equipment at the park.

A Member expressed concerns regarding the level of borrowing required for the project and questioned the viability of increasing prudential limits at this time.

On a vote: For 25, Against 10, Abstentions 2

Resolved

That Worthing Borough Council

1) approved an additional budget of £2.35m funded by

- External and S106 funding of £250,000;
- Virement from the public convenience budget of £83,000;
- Prudential borrowing of £2.012m;

the revenue implications of which were to be funded from the Major Projects budget set aside to fund projects arising from 'Platforms'; and

2) approved increasing the prudential limits to allow for the increased capital spend and borrowing requirements.

C/15/20-21 Report of the Leader on Decisions taken by the Executive

The Leader of the Council presented his report on decisions taken by the Executive since the last Ordinary meeting of the Council, which were detailed in Item 15.

Questions were asked regarding Southdown Leisure's Five Year Strategy in relation to Childhood Obesity, Capital Investment and development of the Worthing Integrated Care Centre.

C/16/20-21 Members Questions under Council Procedure Rule 12

The Mayor announced that the Proper Officer had received 6 questions from Members in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12. He advised that one supplementary question could be asked which must arise out of the original question, or, the reply.

Questions would be asked in rotation of the Groups represented in the Chamber and there was 30 minutes allowed for questions with 4 rotations of speakers possible. At the end of 30 minutes the Mayor explained that he would extend the time to conclude the current rotation of questions.

The Mayor announced that the following Councillors had submitted questions:

Councillors Jim Deen, Henna Chowdhury, Martin McCabe, Helen Silman, Bob Smytherman and Sally Smith

The order would be

First rotation: Councillors Sally Smith and Martin McCabe

Second rotation: Councillors Henna Chowdhury and Bob Smytherman

Third rotation: Councillor Helen Silman

Fourth rotation: Councillor Jim Deen

First rotation:

Question from Councillor Sally Smith to the Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing

What assessment will there be of the impact of the coronavirus on the well being of the community, given the well documented rise in issues such as domestic violence and mental health difficulties?

The Executive Member replied that throughout the Covid crisis the Council had continued to develop the community response and as part of that, had been dynamically assessing a range of issues facing our community including domestic abuse, mental health, food poverty, digital exclusion and debt. The Council had also been working with partners such as Safe in Sussex, West Sussex County Council, Sussex Police, Mind and Citizens Advice to understand levels of reporting, emerging issues and identify opportunities to co-ordinate support and resources. The Council had been facilitating and participating in a range of multi agency meetings to understand the level of current and emerging needs in our communities.

The assessment process was ongoing and would allow the Council to reorient services and resources moving forward. It was anticipated - in line with other areas - that there would be a peak in demand for domestic abuse and mental health support as lockdown restrictions were eased. Whilst West Sussex had the responsibility for domestic abuse services, the Council was in the process of ensuring that our Housing and Wellbeing team were equipped to respond to this demand.

The Council had a great deal of expertise in the Communities and Wellbeing Team to support our residents, including One Junction, Wellbeing Advisors and Social Prescribers. The Council would also continue working alongside GPs, Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust, Mind and other services to understand how Adur and Worthing Councils could best support residents to access the appropriate services. The Council would be reviewing its community response work and the impact on those that had been supported.

Councillor Sally Smith asked a supplementary question regarding how such services would be funded in the long term.

The Executive Member replied that these were considerations for West Sussex County Council and other partner agencies.

Question from Councillor Martin McCabe to the Leader

Can the Leader tell us what proposals the Councils have to take advantage of the reduced traffic on our roads to provide a long term, sustainable solution to tackling the climate emergency?

The Leader replied that Worthing Borough Council was in a strong position to work on introducing lasting changes to support the greater use of active travel because of the work it had been doing on the Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan. This Plan would be brought to the Joint Strategic Committee for final approval on the 9th June.

Transport emissions contributed to 27% of carbon emissions in Worthing, so reducing this was crucial in the effort to become carbon neutral.

Data from West Sussex County Council during the first weeks of lockdown identified significantly reduced traffic flows. West Sussex count sites showed reductions of up to 59% for 7-day traffic during this period.

The Covid19 crisis had seen reduced levels of NOx air pollution and carbon emissions relating to transport. It would take a while to get data on exactly how much carbon emissions from transport had reduced, but estimates indicated a reduction in daily global carbon emissions of as much as 17%.

In some places across the UK, there'd been a 70% rise in the number of people on bikes - for exercise, or for safe, socially distanced travel.

This had resulted in major improvements in air quality particularly in relation to Nitrogen Oxide (NOx) emissions. National analysis during the lockdown found NOx emissions had been cut by over 50%. These were levels last seen in the early 1900's in terms of air quality.

Car use was starting to creep up now that lockdown was easing, so it was crucial that the Council take advantage of recent government incentives to install, at speed, changes to support the increased use of cycling and walking, combined with safe distancing. In early May the Government announced £250 million would be distributed to Local Authorities for pop up cycle routes and similar interventions. Government also announced new guidance on Traffic Regulation Orders.

The government expected local authorities to make significant changes to their road layouts to give more space to cyclists and pedestrians. West Sussex County Council, as the Highways Authority, had the powers to make these changes, so Worthing Borough Council had been lobbying West Sussex County Council hard to access this support and deliver changes.

Last week the County advised officers that they would make resources available and would begin work with Districts and Boroughs to follow the government guidance. They

had begun with immediately exploring a small number of schemes - 3 or 4 - to initiate this work. The week starting 25th May, the county were exploring two major interventions in Worthing developing traffic management plans in advance of defining what types of TROs were needed and they would work with the Borough on the fast implementation of those.

It's worth noting that the only other areas being explored in detail in this first tranche of interventions, were in Chichester and Adur, and this prioritised position was due to the political pressure that had been applied, coupled with the advanced stage of the Worthing LCWIP. More news on this would be made public as soon as plans were advanced to a stage when the interventions had been found to be practically, legally and safely deliverable.

The council was also drawing up a longer list of interventions, evidenced by the LCWIP data gathering and public consultation processes, and pressure would be maintained to pursue further options in Worthing.

Meanwhile, the council had acted extremely fast to facilitate home working using online platforms, communications and meetings. For the council's own practice, these positive changes were likely to be promoted and maintained where possible. Emissions from council offices had reduced significantly during the last months, and this would contribute to the achievement of the Carbon Neutral Plan and the commitment to becoming a carbon neutral council by 2030.

Councillor McCabe asked the following supplementary question; 'had the Council already missed the boat in regards to sustainable transport'?

The Leader replied that these were longer term considerations and that the boat had not been missed.

Second rotation:

Councillor Henna Chowdhury had already asked her submitted question during consideration of the Leaders report. She asked a supplementary question which sought clarification regarding the amount of money that had been invested in the Worthing Integrated Care Centre project by the Council and the associated risks.

The Executive Member for Regeneration replied that he would provide the details following the meeting.

Councillor Bob Smytherman to the Executive Member for Digital & Environmental Services

Can I ask the Executive Member what financial support has been put in place for those businesses & Charities with commercial waste accounts who were forced to close during the Coronavirus pandemic and what additional measures are planned to support them during the remainder of the time they are unable to trade?

The Executive Member for Digital & Environmental Services replied that Adur & Worthing Council's Commercial Waste Team had been supporting local businesses and charities during the Coronavirus pandemic, in a number of several ways, including:

- no additional charge - local business and charity accounts had been suspended, allowing for a penalty-free service and payment holiday;
- the service and fees had been 'flexed' to suit changing needs, during the crisis, as businesses adapted to the circumstances (e.g. restaurants changing to takeaways);
- businesses and charities had been signposted to local business grant/ support application assistance;
- businesses and charities that had suspended, several weeks after the start of lockdown, had their payment holiday backdated to the 1st April (all accounts had therefore been treated fairly);
- the Council had maintained regular communications with all customers proactively about the status of the service via the website and email; and
- the Council planned to proactively engage with affected customers post lockdown, to retain their business.

Third rotation:

Question from Councillor Helen Silman to the Executive Member for Customer Services

How much has the Council spent to date on the provision of accommodation and services to Rough Sleepers and to those at risk of Rough Sleeping since March 17th 2020 when the Ministry of Communities, Housing and Local Government set up the 3.2 million pound Covid 19 emergency fund scheme to reimburse Local Authorities for the cost of such provision?

The scheme states that the Local Authority will be notified as to the provisional maximum amount it would be entitled to claim back calculated on the number of rough sleepers reported in the Autumn 2019 snapshot.

How much has the Council claimed to reimburse it for the cost of providing accommodation and services to Rough Sleepers and to those at risk of Rough Sleeping and how much has the Council received?

The Executive Member replied that £3.2m of funding had been made available nationally for homelessness. Local authorities would claim costs incurred from the government. Each local authority would be notified as to the provisional maximum amount it was entitled to claim back, which was calculated based on the number of rough sleepers reported in the Autumn 2019 snapshot. On this basis, the maximum grant available for Adur was £1,500 and for Worthing was £9,750 which would be insufficient to cover the cost of the Emergency Accommodation provided.

The claim for this fund had a deadline of 1 June 2020 and no award had yet been made.

Worthing Borough Councils had spent on average £13,000 per week net on provision for those who were rough sleeping at the time Covid19 guidance to isolate was issued and on provision for those who were at risk of rough sleeping and became homeless during the Covid19 isolation period.

In addition to the specific funding for homelessness, the Council had received further funding towards all costs and loss of income due to the Covid 19 emergency. This was part of a £1.6bn national fund from which Worthing Borough Council received £1.1m.

Councillor Silman asked whether the Council had drawn up an outbreak plan in case of a second spike of cases as her supplementary question.

The Executive Member for Customer Services replied that a plan had been prepared in conjunction with the Council's partners.

Fourth rotation:

Question from Councillor Jim Deen to the Leader

I am assuming that a recovery plan is in preparation, to deal with the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on Worthing and its residents and that we will have heard details about this earlier in this meeting.

In view of the wide-ranging and all-embracing impact of the virus pandemic on individuals, communities, businesses and organisations in the town, does the leader agree with me that it would be desirable for the executive to work closely with all members of the Council, across all parties, in the development and execution of such a plan.

Would he further agree that formal arrangements should be made with the opposition parties to ensure that the objectives of such cross-party working are met in full.

The Leader replied that the Council was working closely with its partners in the Borough and that there were good arrangements in place.

C/17/20-21 Motion on Notice

Before the Committee was a report by the Acting Director for Housing and Wellbeing, which had been circulated to all members and a copy of which is attached to the signed version of these minutes.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Sally Smith and seconded by Councillor Carl Walker.

During consideration of the motion, an amendment was proposed by Councillor Kevin Jenkins and seconded by Councillor Heather Mercer.

The motion, as amended, was approved unanimously.

Resolved,

That Worthing Borough Council wished to formally recognise and thank key workers and volunteers from across all sectors in our community who have worked tirelessly to keep our town and country running and to help keep us all safe in these unprecedented times.

Amongst those we thank the staff of Adur and Worthing Councils who have demonstrated an excellence and dedication to their work, supporting our communities; especially those who are vulnerable and in need of help.

Not least we recognise the doctors, nurses, healthcare workers and other responders who have worked so hard fighting the effects of Covid19.

Amongst those, some have sadly lost their lives to this virus and we offer our condolences to their friends and families.

The meeting ended at 10.20 pm