



ADUR & WORTHING
COUNCILS

Joint Strategic Committee
17 July 2024

Key Decision [Yes/No]

Ward(s) Affected: All

Joint Priorities for Adur & Worthing Councils

Report by the Assistant Director of People and Change

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1. Purpose

The aim of this report is to:

- 1.1. Set out the joint priorities for Adur & Worthing Councils.

2. Recommendations

The Joint Strategic Committee is asked to

- 2.1. Agree the joint priorities for Adur & Worthing Councils.
- 2.2. Note the work programme as outlined in the [JSC July 2024 Annual Performance Update](#).

3. In context

Increasing demand for services in Adur and Worthing, years of inadequate central government funding and the urgent need for action to mitigate climate change means the way the councils have worked until now is unaffordable and unsustainable.

Businesses and community organisations face similar challenges. But if the councils work with them in partnership, the needs of Adur and Worthing citizens can be met.

At the local elections of May 2024, citizens in Adur and Worthing voted for administrations that have pledged their commitment to a fair, green and local future for their towns and villages.

Worthing Borough Council began this work after the local elections of May 2022. In May this year, a new administration was elected in Adur District Council. There is now an opportunity for greater joint-working between the two authorities.

The election of two administrations with the same mindset this year is an opportunity to strengthen the partnership between the two councils for the benefit of their communities.

As councils for the community, they will listen to their citizens to ensure their focus is on the issues that matter most to those who live, work, study and visit the area.

This paper outlines the approach and strategic priorities, more detailed delivery plans are outlined in the Annual Performance report which is also on the agenda for this meeting.

3.1. Councils for the Community

By working closely with communities across Adur and Worthing and with partners, the councils will reshape their services to make them more sustainable and accessible for those who need them, to ensure they can meet the needs of citizens of today and tomorrow.

The organisational redesign work which is underway is designed to create teams which are able to work more closely and more effectively with communities, helping to achieve their ambitions and supporting changes they want to see.

To create the capacity to do this the councils are changing how they work. This includes:

- Simplification of online processes, making it quicker and easier for residents to get in touch with teams and to access the services they need, while also allowing the councils to focus resources where they are needed most
- Designing of services in a way that balances the need to deliver savings with a focus on quality and future proofing delivery

- Improving how programmes and performance are managed, and developing the capabilities of staff so they can be more adaptive, participative and resilient
- Developing a financial strategy that helps the organisations to be financially resilient

A [programme has begun to redesign the councils' services to improve how they are run and make them more cost-efficient, where possible, for citizens](#). The councils are [using technology to make it easier for residents to report issues](#) and to [pay online](#). A review is also underway of the councils' strategic portfolio assets to ensure they provide the best value for money to support communities.

The councils are seeking to harness the power of community groups and networks to help Adur and Worthing citizens, businesses and the local environment to thrive. That includes greater partnership working on the projects that matter most to communities and improving neighbourhoods for everyone, to make Adur and Worthing cleaner, greener and fairer.

Across both Adur and Worthing, officers have sought to encourage citizens to have their say on the issues that affect them, including on the councils' [budgets](#), [community safety](#), [active travel](#), [shopping and retail](#) and the [future of the local economy](#)

Building on this work, the councils will work to engage more with those whose voices are not always heard, including younger and older people, to ensure that the lived experiences of all sections of the community are taken into account in decision making. Creative ways of funding community organisations and partners will also be explored and pursued.

As noted earlier, Worthing Borough Council adopted this approach in 2022 so can already point to demonstrable achievements in this work. This includes [the redesigning of the Community Infrastructure Levy \(CIL\) grant funding process in 2023 by officers working with councillors and the community to make it easier for local groups to apply for funding for projects](#). As a result, [£575,000 of developer contributions was distributed to 45 community groups across the borough](#), allowing for the growth of innovative projects to improve people's [wellbeing](#), [cost of living](#), [heritage](#), [culture](#) and [accessibility](#).

Both councils will therefore demonstrate a more community-led approach in the coming months through the development of new initiatives to increase engagement with citizens.

3.2. Fair, green and local

The councils will develop blueprints for the future of Adur and Worthing town and village centres to make them more environmentally friendly and more inviting for shoppers, visitors and workers. They will help citizens to travel in healthier and more environmentally-friendly ways, working with West Sussex County Council and community organisations to explore cycling infrastructure. Work has already begun on this:

- [In the last year both councils have installed new bike repair stations and hundreds of bike racks across Adur and Worthing to provide residents and visitors with better opportunities to travel actively and sustainably.](#)
- New, accessible public toilet facilities have been delivered at High Street multi-storey car park in Worthing and at the Shoreham Centre, and free litter-pick lockers have been introduced in parks and near the shore in Southwick, Lancing and Worthing.
- A partnership between Adur District Council and West Sussex County Council has led to the transformation of Southwick Square into a more welcoming, accessible and sustainable space for citizens and visitors. Adur District Council will be encouraging community use of the square.
- In June 2024 [Worthing Borough Council hosted the second Worthing Festival, with over 150 live music, arts and heritage events celebrating the wealth of local creative talent.](#)
- Separately, the new administration at Adur District Council has signalled its intention to work with cultural groups, businesses and traders to develop its own ideas to harness the creativity of citizens and promote the area for visitors and citizens.

The councils will work with partners to improve the environment to try to make Adur and Worthing the fairest and greenest coastal areas in the country. They will continue working to reduce the environmental impact by developing a strategy to replace their vehicles, tackle waste more efficiently and develop a circular economy. Increasing the use of solar technology and more environmentally-friendly methods of heating properties will also be explored. The potential for the introduction of 20mph zones in parts of Worthing to reduce air pollution will also be considered in consultation with residents and local communities.

It will also protect and restore local natural environments through initiatives like its Nature Strategy, and will continue to pursue pioneering environmental projects. Current examples include:

- [Kick-starting the launch of Sussex Bay, a movement powered by civic organisations, businesses and communities to generate £50m to speed up the recovery of Sussex's coast.](#)
- [Worthing Borough Council successfully applied for two new designated bathing waters](#) to add to those already in place in the town, as well as in Lancing, Shoreham Beach and Southwick. The council hopes the subsequent increase in testing by the Environment Agency will make it easier to identify and target polluters, to drive an improvement in water quality in Adur and Worthing.
- [Worthing Crematorium becoming the first in the world to trial a switch to cleaner, greener hydrogen energy.](#)
- Work beginning on [a district heat network for Worthing that will provide cleaner, greener energy to town centre buildings.](#)
- Adur District Council progressing plans with partners on the Adur River Recovery project to transform the estuary, create new habitats and increase biodiversity.

The councils will improve the parks and green spaces of Adur and Worthing to make them more welcoming and more accessible for everyone to use while also encouraging biodiversity through rewilding and the planting of more trees.

- Worthing Borough Council [launched the community tree scheme 'Trees for Streets', with 87 trees sponsored and planting underway](#), as well as the [planting of a community orchard](#) in Findon Valley.
- [National Green Flag awards have again been achieved by many of Adur and Worthing's beautiful and much loved green spaces](#).
- [Plans have also been finalised by Worthing Borough Council for Montague Place to be transformed into a vibrant green space that links the town to the sea](#).

3.3. Regenerating our streets and spaces

Adur & Worthing Councils are working with partners to develop an inclusive economy that works for everyone, through community wealth-building principles. This includes active support for local businesses, attracting external investment into high street and regeneration projects and working with partners to help the Sussex economy to grow for Adur and Worthing's citizens.

They will work to make the best use of every pound they have to spend into the local economy, developing procurement and commissioning strategies that build community wealth and a circular economy with anchor institutions.

The councils have [supported businesses to work in more inclusive and sustainable ways](#). Worthing Borough Council has had a focus since 2022 of improving Worthing town centre and the new Adur administration has committed to helping its high streets and businesses to thrive through investment in better signage, better promotion and enhanced greening of its public spaces.

Adur & Worthing Councils will continue to demand a fairer deal for their communities from central government and other agencies, to improve roads, health services and schools.

They will also fight to stop pollution being pumped into the sea, rivers and streams, working with the community and [other agencies](#) to push for the better water quality that citizens deserve.

3.4. A home you can call your own

Across Adur and Worthing there is a significant shortage of housing. There are 1,900 local households on the councils' housing waiting lists but there is nowhere near enough of the affordable accommodation the communities need. The councils are having to house hundreds of families outside the area, away from their friends, relatives, jobs and schools, which damages their quality of life and is very expensive.

- In recent months the councils have secured more than a dozen new units of temporary accommodation in [Worthing](#) for citizens who would otherwise be homeless to use as a first step back into having a permanent home. This accommodation is also far less costly to the councils than the use of hotels and B&Bs, particularly with last-minute bookings.
- The councils are also creating more of this first step accommodation themselves by converting office space they own, building new homes on their under-utilised land and looking for other sites that could be redeveloped for this purpose.
- Worthing Borough Council has [formed a partnership to provide new supported accommodation to tackle homelessness in partnership with housing providers and charities](#).

The councils are to work with partners to develop a housing strategy for the area, building on the launch of their new housing board. They will conduct an expanded housing needs assessment to support local planning and are also developing proactive homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainment programmes.

Working with housebuilders, the councils will find creative ways to build more good-quality, sustainable homes here for rent and first step accommodation for those at risk of becoming homeless.

Adur District Council is maintaining its focus on its under-utilised land to build new council homes for Adur citizens in need of somewhere to live. At the same time, the council will continue to progress with its improvement plan to make sure all of its existing Adur Homes properties are safe, secure and of a good standard.

- So far this year Adur District Council has built 14 new sustainable council homes in Sompting, Lancing, Shoreham and Fishersgate. Work is also underway on a further 65 new council properties in the district.
- This year, Worthing Borough Council agreed a [joint venture for a new development at Union Place](#) and sold [Teville Gate to Homes England to deliver sustainable homes and green space on that key location](#).
- In Shoreham, work to develop the former civic centre site to create homes for social rent and shared ownership is ongoing while hundreds of new properties are being built at Western Harbour Arm. While Adur District Council agrees that more homes are needed, it is determined to ensure that this is not at the expense of existing communities and that genuinely affordable homes are provided. The council will continue to work with developers to demand that projects cause the minimum impact on local residents and that the infrastructure needed to support these new homes is also supplied.

It's vital that homes are built that local citizens can afford, but the councils agree with the community that designated green spaces are not the right place for developments. Instead the councils are committed to prioritising house-building on derelict or under-used brownfield land and will take steps to protect Adur and Worthing's beautiful countryside.

Worthing Borough Council is continuing its fight to prevent the development of Chatsmore Farm and will robustly defend the site against housebuilder Persimmon Homes at a planning inquiry later this year.

These aren't Adur issues or Worthing issues, but issues that affect each and every citizen across the area in some way or other. Working together with their communities, the councils can better respond to the challenges they face, to make Adur and Worthing better for everyone who lives, works and visits here.

3.5 Continuing to respond to the cost of living crisis

Both councils are continuing to focus on the cost of living. The aftermath of Covid, inflationary costs, wider economic challenges and the enduring impacts of coastal inequalities, continue to impact many of our communities. This disproportionately impacts lower income families, single households, lone parents, people with disabilities and those in insecure work. It means that some of our communities cannot access or retain decent homes, buy enough quality and healthy food, afford to heat their homes and generally afford to live. There are communities living side by side, with different levels of life expectancy and quality of lives and many children are growing up in unacceptable levels of poverty.

In Worthing a cost of living emergency was declared in 2022 and both councils developed a cost of living roadmap setting out how officers, working with partners and communities, would undertake work to support the most vulnerable people in Adur and Worthing. This focused on energy and utility costs, housing costs, financial exclusion and food poverty.

Within these programmes, we have continued to work with food partners who have provided a lifeline to many communities in food need, during and after Covid, providing resources where we have been able to and continuing to work in partnership to support the development of more sustainable approaches to alleviating food poverty.

Officers have continued to develop and invest external funding into our proactive programme. Using data from our Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT), teams have been prioritising those at risk of homelessness to provide early help and maximise income levels where possible. Whilst this will be reported more widely in the autumn, some headlines for this work include the use of the partnership project TellJo to target those on the housing register. During May, TellJo was used to assess 122 households, generate £12,333 income and support an average of 1.7 referrals to support agencies per household. Officers have also been targeting the Household Support Fund to help prevent homelessness and enable people to move out of temporary accommodation. Our Proactive team which focuses on helping people who are most in need is now being designed into our teams as business as usual and there is a focus on using and sourcing external resources to support this work.

4. Our Plan: Delivering a programme to support the joint priorities



The councils have developed a work programme that will:

- Provide staff with a sustainable and manageable programme of work
- Prioritise the projects they deliver to support the joint priorities and manage their resources effectively
- Strengthen governance in how they track the delivery of their projects through JSC and member-officer working groups
- Support wider work in how they communicate with and involve local communities, civil society organisations, businesses and other partners on the priorities.

Further detail is outlined in the [JSC July 2024 Annual Performance Update report](#).

5. Engagement and Communication

- The joint priorities are based on the manifestos of the Adur administration and the Worthing administration.

- This document has engaged the Corporate Leadership Team and Informal Cabinets.
- Communications have taken place extensively on the different projects highlighted above and these are hyperlinked accordingly.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 Future financial planning will be aligned to the joint priorities of Adur and Worthing Council both in the medium term financial plan and the capital programme. In year, priorities will need to be delivered against the approved revenue and capital budgets unless additional external funding is achieved that would enable further delivery beyond.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 empowers the Council to do anything an individual can do apart from that which is specifically prohibited by pre-existing legislation.
- 7.2 Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 1999 contains a general duty on a best value authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Background Papers

- [New Priorities for Worthing Borough Council - 5 July 2022](#)
- [Strategic Priorities for Worthing Borough Council: 2022/3 Progress Update Report and New Priorities for 2023/24 - 13 June 2023](#)
- [JSC July 2024 Annual Performance Update report - 19 July 2024](#)

Sustainability & Risk Assessment

- A Sustainability and Risk Assessment must be completed for all reports.
- Identify Positive or negative implications, and how we may address to leverage these implications.
- If no issues are identified under a heading then it should read "Matter considered and no issues identified."

1. Economic

- How does this proposal/issue impact on the economic development of our places or the economic participation of our communities?

The report outlines key economic priorities such as regenerating high streets and spaces and support a thriving economy.

2. Social

2.1 Social Value

- What impact does the proposal/issues raised have on our communities or specific groups within our communities?

The report outlines key social priorities including being fair, green and local, acting as councils for the community and enabling people to have a home they can call their own.

2.2 Equality Issues

- Details of any equality issues, any equality impact assessment undertaken, or how the proposal impacts on access or participation.

The report has a particular focus on tackling the cost of living crisis and its disproportionate impacts.

2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

- Details of how the proposal helps to reduce crime and disorder and meet the Council's duties regarding crime and disorder reduction targets.

The report outlines the objective of having safer streets and homes that are more secure.

2.4 Human Rights Issues

- Does the proposal impinge on anyone's human rights and if so how is it justified under the Human Rights Act? Human rights include:
Right to a fair trial, respect for family life, private life, home and correspondence, freedom of thought, expression, assembly and association and protection and

quiet enjoyment of property and possessions. Also ask, is the action proportionate to the anticipated response or outcome?

The content of the report does not impinge on human rights and are proportionate to the anticipated outcomes of improving community engagement and quality of life.

3. Environmental

- Are there any implications for the management, custodianship and protection of our natural resources?

The report outlines objectives to be more environmentally friendly, building on existing successes in this area.

4. Governance

- Are there any implications for or alignment with the Councils' priorities, specific action plans, strategies or policies?
- Are there any implications to the Councils' reputation or relationship with our partners or community?
- Any implications for resourcing, risk management (including health and safety), the governance of the either Council?

The report outlines the councils priorities and also refers to the Annual Performance Report which outlines the delivery plans for the priorities and Financial Strategy to help the organisation be more financially resilient. These are also coming to the Joint Strategic Committee in July 2024.