



Report of the Leader on Decisions taken by Cabinet Members and the Joint Strategic Committee since the last meeting of Council

A Decisions Taken by Individual Cabinet Members

Listed below is a summary of decisions taken by the individual Cabinet Members since the dispatch of the agenda for the last Ordinary Council Meeting. Full details can be found on the Cabinet Members Decisions webpage

Leader

None

Executive Member for Regeneration

None

Executive Member for Resources

JAW/001/22-23 Delivery of Condition Surveys: Technical Services and Estates

JAW/002/22/23 Business Rates: COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (local discretionary relief)

Executive Member for Customer Services

None

Executive Member for the Environment

None

Executive Member for Wellbeing

None

B. Decisions taken by the Joint Strategic Committee on 7 June 2022

Items related to Worthing Borough Council are not reproduced on this agenda.

Full details can be found by clicking on this [link](#).

The matters not appearing elsewhere on the agenda:-

The Committee was informed that a significant proportion of staff in the Waste and Cleansing team started industrial action on the 14th March 2022. Following negotiation with both the GMB and Unison, both sides reached agreement on the 8th April 2022 allowing the strike to come to an end.

The resulting settlement had significant unbudgeted cost implications for the Councils. Under the Council's financial regulations, officers were not allowed to enter into agreements with unbudgeted financial consequences, consequently the Chief Executive approved the use of the Council's reserves to fund the costs associated with the strike and associated new pay arrangements using urgency powers as set out in the constitution.

A Member asked a question regarding the financial risks posed to residents following the settlement. Officers advised that the risks were primarily related to inflation on the Council's budgets which was showing up in several different places. The Council was expecting pay awards of at least 4%, provision had been made in the budget for a 5% increase. Until the pay settlement was agreed, the Council wouldn't have certainty on this figure. In addition, inflation was also affecting energy costs. Since the budget was set, the war in Ukraine had had a significant impact on the energy markets. Diesel costs were expected to rise by 50%, electricity costs were expected to rise by 50% and the cost of gas was expected to rise by 300%. At this early stage in the financial year, officers were expecting cost pressures in Worthing of £750k excluding the cost of the strike action. As a result, a recommended programme of action would be proposed to the Council to help bring the budget back in line by the end of the financial year. This would form the basis of a report to the Committee in July 2022.

As a supplementary question, the Member asked how the withdrawal of the sum of £371k would affect the percentage of net revenue expenditure, which ideally should be held between 6 and 10%. Would the Council still achieve this? Officers advised that it would be recommended that the sum be taken from the capacity issues reserve, rather than the working balance, to preserve the working balance to manage the in year risks that the Council was experiencing. Therefore, the working balance would be at the upper limit and was currently around 10%.

A Member highlighted that reserves could only be replaced from one source, the Council taxpayer. Therefore, he sought clarification as to how many Worthing Labour Councillors had been supported by the GMB? Councillor Walker agreed to provide a written response to the question following the meeting.

Members welcomed the report and thanked officers for their work to resolve this matter. The recommendation in the report was proposed by Councillor Vicki Wells, seconded by Councillor Angus Dunn and unanimously supported.

Decision

The Joint Strategic Committee noted the content of the report and endorsed the urgent decision made by the Chief Executive to settle the industrial action.

JSC/006/22-23 Improving our Democracy and Governance Practices

The Committee was informed that over the last two years, both Adur and Worthing Councils had developed plans and established new resources to enable the increased participation of residents and communities in policy development and decision making. New posts had been established including a Participation Lead and a Data Lead to improve our ability to understand and engage with our communities.

In support of the aim of continuing to improve participation and transparency in decision-making, an internal review by the councils' Monitoring Officer had identified opportunities for modernising both Council's constitutions, and this was about to enter the member consultation stage over summer 2022, via a Working Group, agreed to be set up by the Joint Governance Committee at its meeting on 31 May 2022. This work would be carried out independently but with parallel timetables where possible for each Council.

Further, the change of Administration at Worthing Borough Council created a need to consider how decisions were best made in both the joint and individual authority arenas.

The report proposed the creation of sub-committees of the Joint Strategic Committee - Worthing Executive and Adur Executive - to which would be delegated in full any decisions solely affecting the relevant Council. The intention was that it would improve the ability for our communities to understand how and where key "place based" decisions were taken, and how they were able to more fully participate.

The new arrangements would be piloted over a period of 6-12 months during which they will be reviewed to assess the impact on communities, decision-making and resources.

Options were also being developed for holding meetings away from the usual council buildings, enabling the Executives (subject to budget availability) to take decision-making even closer to the communities they serve, if they choose.

Both Councils continued to highly value the joint arrangements in place, and all decisions in the joint arena would continue to be made at the Joint Strategic Committee as part of these proposals.

Similar proposals were being developed for the greater utilisation of the separate Worthing and Adur Overview and Scrutiny Committees and/or the establishment of sub-committees of JOSC for individual-authority matters, whilst JOSC would remain the forum for all joint matters. This would be considered as part of the constitution Working Group, and may require amendments to be made to the Joint Committee Agreement, which will be brought to the Joint Strategic Committee as well as the

Joint Governance Committee for consideration in due course, before being ratified by both Full Councils.

Subject to approval by the Joint Strategic Committee, the first sub-committee meetings would start in July and take place monthly, subject to requirements. To ensure efficient use of officer and member time and costs, meetings would only take place if there were sufficient agenda items, or subject to urgency.

It was anticipated that the Joint Strategic Committee may be able to meet less frequently under the new arrangements, although this was subject to trial and review during the pilot period.

Given the disparity in the sizes of each Council's Executives, agreement would need to be reached on the principle that the same number of Executive Members from each council would be present at each JSC meeting to ensure equality of voting.

For information, it was expected that the reviews to the constitutions would be presented to the Joint Governance Committee on 27 September 2022 for consideration and onward recommendation to Full Councils for approval in October 2022.

The Leader of Adur District Council clarified that the Adur Sub-Committee meetings would continue to have a full membership of 6 Executive Members and would continue to meet in the Shoreham Centre.

The Deputy Leader of Worthing Council welcomed the positive direction set out in the report, highlighting that there was a movement amongst progressive local authorities to do more place based work. For a lot of people, the nature of the town hall was quite intimidating and didn't necessarily feel open to the public. To be successful in the community, the Council would need to build successful engagement and communications strategies that let people in an area know that the Council was coming and wanted to listen and engage with residents. He believed that the proposed changes would lead to a much closer relationship between the Council and residents.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Councillor Emma Evans, seconded by Councillor Angus Dunn and unanimously supported.

Decision

The Joint Strategic Committee:-

- a. approved the establishment of a Worthing Executive Sub-Committee and an Adur Executive Sub-Committee, with the terms of reference as set out in paragraph 3.11 of the report; and
- b. noted the process for reviewing the constitutions and the proposed changes to scrutiny arrangements.

JSC/007/22-23 Delivery of housing for Emergency & Temporary Accommodation - South Street, Lancing

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for the Economy, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as Item 7.

The report followed the publication of the Adur and Worthing Housing Strategy for 2020-2023, 'Delivering Pathways to Affordable Homes' document and subsequent Delivery Plans, outlining the increasing demand for emergency and temporary accommodation (EA/TA) in Adur, the Council's commitment to owning its own stock of EA/TA and benefits to the Council of doing so, and the suitability of the South Street site to deliver this type of accommodation, owned and managed by the Council.

The report sought agreement to redevelop this site for the purpose of providing Council owned EA/TA and approval of a budget to progress both a planning application and development of the site.

Members thanked officers for the report and welcomed the proposals.

The recommendations, as set out in the report, were proposed by Councillor Steve Neocleous, seconded by Councillor Emma Evans and supported by the Committee.

Decision

The Joint Strategic Committee:-

- a. approved the approach to development of the South Street Car Park site to enable the council to fulfil its statutory housing duties under S188 and S193 of the Housing Act 1996;
- b. approved the release of £2.336m from the Temporary and Emergency Accommodation budget to enable the project to progress through planning to completion of the construction stage;
- c. delegated authority to the Head of Major Projects & Investment to invite tenders for the construction work, and to enter into all necessary contracts to enable the project to progress through the construction phase to completion, in consultation with Executive Members; and
- d. noted that a further report would be presented to the Executive Member post procurement, to confirm the final costs associated with the scheme and the viability of the proposal.

C. Decisions taken by the Joint Strategic Committee on 5 July 2022

Items related to Adur District Council are not reproduced on this agenda.

Full details can be found by clicking on this [link](#).

The matters not appearing elsewhere on the agenda:-

JSC/016/21-22 Phase 1: Organisational design and capability building

Since the appointment of Dr Catherine Howe as Chief Executive (CEX), the organisational leadership team, made up of senior officers within Adur and Worthing Councils, had been meeting to develop a new Corporate Plan to replace 'Platforms for our Places' as well as looking at what organisational changes were needed. The next phase of this work was for staff, member and community engagement to allow a wider group of people to contribute to this work over the course of the summer in order to inform budget conversations into the Autumn.

The report outlined the first phase of organisational changes, which were targeted at creating the capability and capacity needed to deliver wide ranging changes. It was built around the principles of participation, resilience and adaptability, which would be needed in order to deliver the Corporate Plan once it was agreed.

Also included were changes needed to reflect a renewed emphasis from both Councils on communication and engagement (both internally and externally), and the additional capacity needed to support democracy and participation.

A Member asked questions about the timing of the two phases of work and the increased focus on democracy and participation. Clarification was provided in regards to the timetable for the two phases of work and officers advised that in regards to participation, the report was about building capacity to do some of these things better. Conversations will be required with both Councils as to what they want to do with that capacity around communications, engagement and participation.

Another Member asked what was the priority, meeting the budget or maintaining front line services. Officers advised that the National Pay Award was outside of the Councils control and the Chief Finance Officer was having to make assumptions about what the likely outcomes of those negotiations would be. This process would require the working up of a set of agreed priorities across both Councils finding a balance between what the Councils invest in and what they don't. The report signalled the start of that process and set out the parameters of how the Councils wanted to do this work.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Councillor Carl Walker, seconded by Councillor Steve Neocleous and unanimously supported by the Committee.

Decision

The Joint Strategic Committee

- a. noted that the Chief Executive would be proceeding with the phased organisational design changes outlined in the report;
- b. requested that the Chief Executive bring back the developed three year programme for implementing the new Corporate Plan to this committee for consideration in advance of the budget setting process and prior to its consideration by both Councils;
- c. agreed that the Corporate Plan be the basis of the next phases of organisational change.

JSC/017/21-22 Proactive interventions to support low income residents

The report described changes in the national and local context since the start of the year and included information about a further 66 residents that the Proactive team had been able to engage by mid May 2022 (out of a total of a further 294 that were contacted via phone since our last report).

The report detailed progress in moving from an experimental approach to a more embedded programme within the Councils, using the learning from the case review approach detailed at section 5.6, additional digital tools to enable residents to self help, and improved insight into residents contact with other council teams. The report also set out how the Councils partnership working on the cost of living was progressing and outlined plans for joint working between the Councils and relevant partners.

A Member asked questions about the inclusion of Universal Credit data, whether the work to call residents on the housing application waiting list had started and when the dashboard would be ready. Officers advised that work was already underway with the DWP in regards to the inclusion of universal credit and data sharing. Responses to the questions regarding calls to residents on the housing application waiting list and the dashboard would be provided following the meeting.

An amendment requesting a progress report in 6 months, was proposed by Councillor Emma Taylor, seconded by Councillor Kevin Boram and supported unanimously.

The recommendations in the report, as amended, were proposed by Councillor Kevin Boram, seconded by Councillor Carson Albury and supported unanimously by the Committee.

Decision

The Joint Strategic Committee

1. noted the contents of the report; and
2. requested that the Interim Director for Communities reports back in 6 months on progress against the next steps outlined in the report.

JSC/018/21-22 JOSC report on the review of Adur and Worthing Evening and Night time economy

The Joint Strategic Committee (JSC) was asked to receive and note the findings and recommendations of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) review on the Adur and Worthing evening and night time economy (ENTE). Those recommendations followed on from the discussions of a Working Group set up by JOSC. A copy of the report from the Working Group to JOSC was attached as Appendix 1 to the report. The JSC was also asked to consider the findings and recommendations from a previous report which was tabled at the cancelled JOSC meeting on 19 March 2020.

The JOSC Working Group recognised that the challenges faced by the ENTE had not gone away and it found, from speaking with some business owners, relevant stakeholders and receiving comments from members of the Adur and Worthing communities, that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was still being felt and the future remains uncertain.

The Working Group had identified a number of findings and the Working Group considered that its report and findings/research could help the Councils and other agencies in developing the ENTE for the benefit of local communities, businesses and visitors to the areas.

Members queried whether this work had been focused on the post covid position or was an amalgamation of the work carried out both pre and post covid. It was noted that other covid recovery work could incorporate some of the recommendations outlined in the report and one of the difficulties experienced in opening up the night time economy post covid, was the lack of people wanting to work in the sector. Therefore there was an employment issue as well as a recovery issue going on which was not covered in the working group's findings.

It was proposed that the report be referred back to JOSC and brought back to this Committee at a later date. In the meantime, the comments from the Joint Strategic Committee would be relayed back to JOSC, via the JOSC Chairs.

Decision

The Joint Strategic Committee requested that the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee take another look at the report in light of the comments made with a view to the report being brought back to a future meeting.

D. Urgent Decisions taken by the Executive

Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended).

None.

Local Government Act 1972

Background papers

(Reports and decisions are available on the Council's website or as indicated in each of the paragraphs above)

**Councillor Neil Parkin
Leader of the Council**