



**Getting Involved:
Making the most of Worthing
Borough Council Meetings**

A visitor's guide

Welcome to Worthing Borough Council

Meetings of the Council, Executive and its Committees are open to the public so that there is transparency in the decisions, taken by elected Councillors, which affect our everyday lives.

Members of the public are always welcome at our meetings. For those who have never been before, this brief guide is designed to explain exactly what is happening.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask any of the Councillors or Officers, either before or after the meeting. They can all be identified by name cards on the tables so you will know who you are talking to.

Whilst you are not permitted to take part in the discussions, time has been set aside during the meeting for the public to ask relevant questions and make statements.

You will be invited by the Mayor at the appropriate point to put your question or statement.

The Council meeting is more formal than Committee meetings. The meetings are governed by a set of procedure rules to be followed. Councillors must stand to speak. Officers of the Council do not usually join in any discussions.

Health and Safety

At the start of each meeting the arrangements for Health and Safety, including emergency evacuation, will be read out. Please ensure that you are able to identify the Emergency Exit nearest to you.

Who does what?

The Mayor

The Mayor sits at the centre of the dias in the Council Chamber facing the Councillors in the Council Chamber. The Mayor's role is to preside over Council meetings ensuring business is carried out efficiently and with equality for all participants. The Mayor also ensures that the Council meeting is a forum where issues of concern to the local community are considered.

Deputy Mayor of the Council

The Deputy Mayor takes charge in the Mayor's absence. In the Mayor's presence the Deputy Mayor sits to the right of the Mayor during Council meetings.

Senior Officers

The Chief Executive and Directors sit on the front bench directly below the Mayor's dais. To the left of the Mayor sits the Monitoring Officer and a Democratic Services Representative. Council Officers do not speak at Council Meetings except in special circumstances.

The Members

The Members of the Council (i.e. the elected councillors) are seated in the Chamber in their political groups. The Council has 37 councillors elected to represent you. They all meet together at full council during the year but much work is done by Executive Members or Committees, either those that decide on Policy or those scrutinising and advising the Council or those that make decisions on Planning or Licensing applications and issues.

The Press and Public

The public are able to sit in the public gallery and there is an area from which reporters can work. Councillors and officers are entitled to respect and, except during questions and statements of the public, comments from the public gallery are not permitted.

The Agenda

Available to you is a copy of the agenda. This is available on the website for downloading. This lists all the items that are going to be discussed. Most items have a written report including one or more recommendations.

An early item on the agenda is an opportunity for the public to ask questions.

A few matters are exempt from discussion in public. There will be a good reason for this, e.g. because the matter involves personal details of an individual or financial information about private sector firms which could benefit their competitors. You will be asked to leave the Chamber before such matters are discussed.

Exempt items are normally discussed at the end of the meeting to avoid causing you any inconvenience.

The agenda must be published and available to councillors and the public five clear working days before the meeting. This gives everyone time to read and understand the reports. You can find copies of agendas to view or download here <http://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/meetings-and-decisions/committees/worthing/council/>

Questions by the Public

On the agenda is an opportunity for the public to ask questions of a member of the Council's executive. The time for questions will not exceed 30 (thirty) minutes. During public question time any person, after giving his/her name and address, may ask any Executive Member of the Council not more than two questions. There is a 5 minute limit to your question.

To enable the relevant member to provide the fullest and most accurate answer notice of the question should be given no later than midday on the second working day prior to the day of a meeting, (so for a Council meeting on a Tuesday notice would need to be received by midday on the preceding Friday). You can send questions to democratic.services@adur-worthing.gov.uk or submit them in writing.

There is no requirement to give notice of your question and you can still ask your question at the meeting without having done so. However if notice is not given then the Member to whom the question was put can choose to either give a full response at the meeting or respond by undertaking to provide a written response within three working days.

There are rules about the type of questions you can ask and more information about this can be found in part for of the Council's Constitution <http://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/about-the-councils/constitutions/> or you can contact the Democratic Services Manager on the details listed at the end of this document.

Urgent Items

Occasionally urgent matters arise after the agenda has been produced and, if the Mayor agrees and the urgency is justified, these are also discussed at the meeting.

Making Decisions

Resolutions

The matters that come before the Council for decision are as follows:-

- (1) Executive recommendations (Joint Strategic Committee, Executive and Executive Members);
- (2) Recommendations from Joint Governance Committee
- (3) Scrutiny Reports and recommendations;
- (4) Approval of specific Plans and Strategies;
- (5) Items only the full council can approve, eg The Council tax base, ward boundary reviews

Executive Recommendations;

The agenda will contain the recommendations for the Council to consider.

Scrutiny Reports;

The Council may ask Overview and Scrutiny to carry out a piece of research, investigation or review Council services. These findings will be included on the Council agenda.

Approval of Specific Plans and Strategies

The Council, as sovereign body, must approve certain things like the rate of Council Tax and the Corporate Plan. The Executive will make recommendations to Council on these issues.

Special Council Meetings

The Council may hold a debate on a specific matter which affects the Borough of Worthing. There will be publicity of the date and subject. This can include meetings granting Aldermanship or granting of the Freedom of the Borough.

Voting

The Council will debate the items before it. Once a councillor moves a proposal it must be seconded before it can be put to the vote by way of a show of hands. Another councillor can propose an amendment to change the original proposal.

Voting may sometimes appear confusing because amendments to a recommendation have to be voted on first. Amendments are dealt with one at a time in the order proposed.

It all sounds a bit complex; however, the Mayor will explain what is happening so that both Councillors and the public know exactly what is being voted on.

Sometimes Councillors request a recorded vote. Each Councillor will be asked how they have voted - and this will then be recorded in the minutes. There is always a recorded vote when the Council approves the Council Tax each year.

The Minutes

The record of what went on at the meeting is called the 'Minutes'. The Democratic Services Officer writes these shortly after the meeting and copies from the Council's website approximately 2 weeks after the meeting.

At the beginning of the next meeting these Minutes have to be approved as correct, or have any factual inaccuracies corrected, before being signed by the Mayor. Thus, a permanent and accurate record is kept of all the business dealt with by the Council and its Committees. Minutes are available on the website under the date of the Council meeting.

Recording of the meeting

The open part of full meetings of Council are voice recorded; including public question time. The recording is made available on the Council's website <http://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/meetings-and-decisions/committees/worthing/council/>. Members of the public and press are permitted to make sound or visual recordings of the open part of the Full Council meeting. It is important to note that members of the public or press are not permitted to make a visual recording of any person under the age of 18 and are not permitted to make a visual recording of persons in the public gallery. No oral commentary or report is allowed to be made during the meeting. You may also tweet from the public gallery.

If you are going to film the meeting, please make Democratic Services aware 24 hours before the meeting so space can be made in the room for you.

The Constitution

A document known as the Constitution is available setting out the detail of how the Council makes decisions. Copies are available from Democratic Services or on the internet at <http://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/about-the-councils/constitutions/>

The Constitution was last updated in May 2016

Democratic Services Manager

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Where and when are meetings held?

The meetings are usually held at 6.30pm in the Town Hall on Chapel Road. You can find more details here:

<http://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/meetings-and-decisions/committees/worthing/council/>

Version October 2016 (May Constitution amendments)