



ADUR & WORTHING
COUNCILS

Adur and Worthing Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2022/23



Message from the Chairpersons

On behalf of the Adur & Worthing Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) we are pleased to present the Annual report for 2022/23. This report presents an overview of the work undertaken by the Members during the course of the Year including the work of the Committee and Working Groups that have reviewed services which are vital to the residents of Adur and Worthing.

Overview and Scrutiny plays an important role in our Democratic system and, therefore, it is important for effective scrutiny to be robust, thoughtful and effective to help deliver real challenge, change and improvement to those issues which are scrutinised. The impact of scrutiny can be seen in four main areas:-

(a) The 'critical friend' challenge

Scrutiny must be forensic and challenging – but it must also seek to support decision-makers to do their work better. Our Councils have a collective responsibility to support high quality decision-making, and scrutiny is an integral part of the governance framework that works to make that happen. Being a 'critical friend' involves understanding what decision-makers are trying to achieve and using evidence both to critique and refine these priorities and the methods proposed to achieve them. Decision-makers also have to be open to scrutiny and create a culture which enables effective scrutiny to happen.

(b) Holding decision makers to account

Part of the role of scrutiny is to hold decision makers to account. This means looking at the way in which decisions are made, the evidence they are based on and whether a thorough consideration of the risks and impacts of decisions have been looked at.

(c) Amplifying the voice and concerns of the public

The scrutiny role should ensure that the public's voice is heard generally in the way that decision-makers design and deliver services and policy development, improve the way the JOSC should listen and work alongside local residents, using the issues that are important to residents to improve profile and inform work programmes.

(d) To be led by independent people and drive improvements in public service

The Committee should be independent-minded and the Members also bring their unique perspective to the scrutiny process and a different point of view which brings something distinct to both policy development and post-decision scrutiny. By setting our own work programmes and asserting independence, Members of the JOSC can look at things from angles that might not be apparent to Cabinet Members, or Senior Officers.

During the last 12 months the JOSC has undertaken 8 meetings, held question and answer sessions with 14 Cabinet Members and considered a vast number of topic areas, a summary of which is set out below and the work of the

Committee has been driven by the Councils' strategic vision.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Committee Members as well as those who provided information, attended the Committee meetings and assisted with the Overview and Scrutiny functions work during the last 12 months, it is much appreciated. We look forward to the next 12 months and contributing positively to both the Councils and partners work.



Councillors Joss Loader (Adur) and Jon Roser (Worthing) Joint Chairpersons of the Adur and Worthing Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2022/23

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

The Local Government Act 2000 first introduced the requirement for every local authority to include provision for at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Subsequent amendments to the Act have further developed the role of Overview and Scrutiny within local authorities.

Although not a decision making body, effective Overview and Scrutiny has enormous potential to influence and inform decisions made by both the Councils and partner bodies connected with the areas.

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee can review and scrutinise any matters which affect the Councils, the areas or residents from those areas, in order to provide greater transparency and accountability in the delivery of local services.

The following key roles have been identified as areas which Overview and Scrutiny should be concerned with in Adur and Worthing:-

- **Representing the views and wishes of Adur and Worthing residents about the services which they receive;**
- **Holding the Joint Executives (Joint Strategic Committee) and Adur and Worthing Joint Strategic Sub-Committees to account and reviewing the decisions made;**
- **Monitoring Council performance;**
- **Reviewing Policy;**
- **Developing Policy; and**
- **Scrutinising external issues of public concern beyond the remit of the Councils.**

There is one Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee made up of sixteen Councillors (eight Adur and eight Worthing) representing wards across the areas. The Committee as a whole meets usually at least seven times a year and the meetings are open to the public.

Detailed procedure rules regarding the operation of overview and scrutiny can be found in the Council's Constitutions at [Procedure Rules](#)

Membership of the Committee in 2022/23:

Adur District Council – Councillors Joss Loader (Co-Chairman), Carol Albury, Tony Bellasis, Ann Bridges, Mandy Buxton, Paul Mansfield, Sharon Sluman and Debs Stainforth

Worthing Borough Council - Councillors Jon Roser (Co-Chairman), Ibsha Choudhury, Cathy Glynn-Davies, Dan Hermitage, Margaret Howard, Daniel Humphreys, Heather Mercer and Elizabeth Sparkes

Work carried out in 2022/23

1. ‘Holding the Cabinets to account’ - In 2022/23 JOSOC has played an important role in scrutinising the work of the Adur and Worthing Leaders and Cabinet Members. Both Leaders and all Cabinet Members (with the exception of the Adur Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources who was unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances), have attended JOSOC and been interviewed by Members on the work which they have been undertaking as part of their Cabinet Member Portfolios.

Outcomes - JOSOC has been able to question the Cabinet Members to find out what they and the Councils were doing to address and deliver the key issues within their remits for the benefit of the Adur and Worthing communities.

2. Scrutiny reviews -

(a) The Worthing Business Improvement District (BID) -

A JOSOC Working Group reviewed the performance of the Worthing BID and its proposals for the renewal of the BID covering 2023-2028 which were being put to a vote of the businesses later in 2022.

JOSOC supported the recommendations of the Working Group which proposed that the Councils should support the BID and

vote 'Yes' in the ballot. The recommendations from the review also proposed ways that the Councils could work in a better way with the BID and regularly review the BID performance in order to ensure that it was meeting its objectives for the benefit of local businesses.

Outcomes - (i) The recommendations from the review were submitted to the Worthing Joint Strategic Sub-Committee in July 2022 to assist it as part of its consideration of supporting the renewal of the BID for a fourth term; and
(ii) As part of the drive for the Council to closely monitor the the performance of the BID, JOSC also received a report from the Worthing Town Centre Manager to its meeting in March 2023 which reported on progress in delivering the objectives of the BID for the fourth term and how the Council was working with the BID to help achieve this. JOSC was able to question the Town Centre Manager on this work.

(b) The Adur & Worthing evening and night time economy (ENTE) -

At the request of the Joint Strategic Committee (JSC), a JOSC Working Group reviewed the ENTE again in light of issues raised by JSC relating to the emerging cost of living crisis and the impact on the ENTE and wider economic planning. JSC asked JOSC to review the recommendations and identify if they were post-pandemic or general economy recommendations.

Outcomes - Findings from this review were reported to the JSC which is currently reviewing a detailed response from the relevant Cabinet Members which will look at the impact and resource implications of implementing the recommendations.

3.The Councils responses to the cost of living crisis -

JOSC has reviewed the actions which the Councils have taken to respond to the cost of living crisis.

Outcomes - This scrutiny has enabled JOSC to question

relevant Officers and Cabinet Members on the Councils responses to ensure that the Councils are taking a helpful and realistic approach to supporting the most vulnerable in the communities.

4. Financial scrutiny including scrutiny of the 2023/24 Budget -

There have also been regular reviews of financial information by the Committee this year. Financial Scrutiny takes place year round and in 2022/23 the Committee undertook a review of the Revenue Outturn for 2021/22 and savings proposals for 2023/24.

Outcomes - Financial Scrutiny is vital to provide a check on the finances and ensure that the Council Cabinets are held to account and making decisions in the best interests of the communities. This regular check on the Councils' financial position has enabled the Committee to question Council Officers and the Cabinet Members on the status of the current financial position and for an explanation on current and future expenditure including the cost of living and other inflationary pressures on the Council finances.

5. Review of the Councils Constitutions -

The Committee has been involved in the recent overall review and update of the Councils Constitutions.

Outcomes - The Committee has provided helpful comments to assist in review of the Overview and Scrutiny and Joint Overview and Scrutiny content in the Constitutions which will make the Constitutions more robust and sustainable for the future.

6. Interview with the Chief Executive and review of the new Corporate Plan -

In Autumn 2022, the Councils launched a new Corporate Plan

‘Our Plan’. Prior to the launch of the Plan, the Committee was able to question the Chief Executive on the detail in the plan and the proposals for delivering on the objectives and commitments contained in the Plan.

Outcomes - This in-depth Scrutiny has enabled the Committee to investigate the content of the Plan and speaking with the Chief Executive gave the Committee the opportunity to question her regarding the make up of the aims and commitments in the Corporate Plan. This scrutiny will continue during 2023/24 to check on progress with delivering the Corporate Plan.

7. Crime and Disorder scrutiny - Scrutiny of the Adur and Worthing Safer Communities Partnership -

As part of its crime and disorder scrutiny role, JOSC has also interviewed the Chairman of the Adur and Worthing Safer Communities Partnership and the relevant Adur & Worthing Cabinet Members.

Outcomes - This has enabled JOSC to find out more about the priorities for safer communities and what is being done to deliver these and make Adur and Worthing safer places. Further scrutiny of these key issues will be undertaken again in 2023/24.

8. Review of the Housing Strategy -

JOSC has also been able to scrutinise the progress in delivering the commitments set out in the Housing Strategy for the Councils 2020-2023 - ‘Enabling communities to thrive in their own home’.

Outcomes - This scrutiny has enabled JOSC to review the progress in delivering the Housing Strategy, the overall provision of housing related wellbeing and support, the provision of better homes and stronger communities and affordable housing. JOSC has also been able to question

Officers and the Cabinet Members for Citizens Services and Adur Homes and Customer Services to ensure that resources are being directed accordingly to control these key issues.

9. Southern Water consultation and River Adur bathing river designation

JOSC can also review partner issues and this piece of Scrutiny provided JOSC with the opportunity to review the Southern Water consultation on its draft Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan and JOSC was also able to review the views of Officers and Adur Cabinet Members on the request from JOSC for the Councils to seek to have the part of the River Adur, travelling through Shoreham-by-Sea, designated as bathing water.

Outcomes - JOSC was able to note the proposed Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan and the impact on Adur and Worthing and also note the reasons why it was considered that an application for bathing water status would not achieve improvements to bathing water quality and could create operational and reputational issues for the Councils.

10. Complaints and compliments -

This year JOSC has scrutinised the complaints and compliments which the Councils have received in 2021/22 and also scrutinised the summary of those received during the six month period 2022-2023.

Outcomes - This scrutiny has enabled JOSC to review the compliments and complaints received by the councils and to assess trends covering the previous two financial years. Information was also reported on improvements to the Councils feedback process and policy and the steps that are planned for the next financial year to embed a feedback driven Culture.

11. Review of the delivery of the climate change agenda

The JOSOC has also scrutinised the progress in delivering Sustainable AW in order to tackle the climate emergency and the new targets for the Councils and the community.

Outcomes - This scrutiny has enabled JOSOC to monitor the work the Councils are undertaking in this area to ensure that it is being targeted in the correct way. Further scrutiny work will continue on this in 2023/24.

12. Worthing Theatres contract monitoring

JOSOC has also reviewed the performance of Worthing Theatres and Museum Trust. The Trust was set up following the transfer of the service away from the Councils.

Outcomes - This scrutiny has enabled JOSOC to review the recent performance of the Trust and issues affecting the service.

13. Review of the work of the West Sussex Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC) -

The two JOSOC Members who represent the Councils on the West Sussex Health and Adult Social Care Committee (HASC) provided the Committee with a summary report on the recent work undertaken by HASC.

Outcomes - JOSOC was able to question the Members on the work of HASC which provides a very important role in the scrutiny of health services in Adur and Worthing and this included updates on proposals for the provision of hospital based stroke services in West Sussex affecting Adur and Worthing residents, general primary care services and dentistry services.

14. Worthing Cabinet Member for Resources - Follow up questions on car parking charges -

As part of its 'holding to account' role and ability to question Cabinet Members on their work, JOSC was able to request the Worthing Cabinet Member for Resources to attend a meeting to question him on matters relating to car parking charges in Worthing and to clarify some points relating to information released about the parking charges.

Outcomes - From the answers provided to the Committee by the Cabinet Member, JOSC was able to establish that the Cabinet Member had not intentionally misled the Committee or withheld the information.

The Committee has Procedure Rules which assist members in providing strong scrutiny, transparency and also to ensure that all local decision makers are held to account for their decisions.

Have your say...

You can find out more about our work on the internet at [Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) where you can look at the reports we have received, our recommendations, the minutes of our meetings and view the Work Programme.

Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council are committed to being more responsive to the way in which they provide services. They want more people to feel that they have the opportunity to influence matters that affect them. The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee can look at these issues and the Committee would like to give more people the chance to contribute to its work.

Suggest a topic for scrutiny

Each year the Joint Committee sets a Work Programme of issues that it would like to review. The Joint Committee reviews its Work Programme regularly throughout the year to make sure that it is working on topics that it can make a major impact on. The Work Programme is, therefore, subject to change in agreement with the Committee. The Committee would like local residents and stakeholders to get more involved in the scrutiny process so if there is an issue or service which you think that Councillors should review, please make a 'scrutiny request' using the online Scrutiny request form which is accessible at <http://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/scrutiny>

The Committee will consider your request and when considering items for the Work Programme will be guided by the Council's Strategic Objectives set out in the Corporate Plan 'Our Plan'. The Committee will also be guided by the ability to have influence and/or add value on the subject and the PAPER criteria (Public Interest (P), Ability to change (A), Performance (P), Extent (E) and Replication (R)). Requests are then considered initially by the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen and reported to the next available meeting of the Committee.

Come along to a meeting

The Committee would also like more public engagement in its meetings and would encourage you to attend the public meetings which are held at the Shoreham Centre and Worthing Town Hall. Meetings are currently held at least seven times a year. Public questions relating to Council issues can be put to the meetings if submitted in advance or asked at the meeting.

To find out more you can contact Mark Lowe, Scrutiny and Risk Officer at Town Hall, Chapel Road, Worthing on 01903 221009 or on mark.lowe@adur-worthing.gov.uk