



ADUR & WORTHING
COUNCILS

Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee
10 June 2021
Agenda Item 7

Key Decision [No]

Ward(s) Affected:N/A

Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2020/21

Report by the Director for Digital, Sustainability and Resources

Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets out the draft Annual report for the Committee covering the 2020/21 Municipal year in accordance with the terms of the Councils' constitutions.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee approves the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual report for 2020/21; and**
- 2.2 That the Annual report be submitted to the Adur and Worthing Council meetings in July 2021 for approval.**

3. Context

- 3.1 As part of good practice and a requirement in the Councils' constitutions, the Councils are required to produce a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual report for 2020/21 for approval by the Committee and thereafter by the Full Councils. The final Annual report will be available from the Councils' website.

4. Issues for consideration

- 4.1 The 2020/21 Municipal Year has been an unusual year due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and has proved challenging for the Councils on a number of levels. Despite these challenges, the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee has continued to meet regularly, holding virtual meetings and has directed its resources to scrutinise issues where it could make the most impact. The Committee has continued to ensure that there has been a 'Holding to Account/Challenge' role applied. A summary of the work is contained in the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual report for 2020/21 which is attached as an appendix to this report. As well as being a requirement of the Constitutions, it is good practice to produce an Annual report on the work of Overview and Scrutiny which can help publicise and promote the work undertaken amongst the local community and local partners.
- 4.2 Members of the public and/or local partners are able to make a scrutiny request using an online scrutiny form and this helps encourage people to take part in the scrutiny process and the democratic process as well as helping the public to influence decision making. During 2020/21 the Committee considered 16 public scrutiny requests.

5. Engagement and Communication

- 5.1 The Joint Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been consulted on this report. The previous Chairmen of the Committee have also been consulted.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Councils have the powers to do anything to facilitate or which is conducive or incidental to the discharge of any of their functions.
- 7.2 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a Local Authority to do anything that individuals generally may do (subject to any current restrictions or limitations prescribed in existing legislation).
- 7.3 Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 1999 (LGA 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.
- 7.4 The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to produce an Annual report for approval by the Councils in accordance with the Councils' constitutions and good practice. The Council meetings in July will be required to receive the Annual report.

Background Papers

Agendas, reports and minutes from Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings during 2020/21.

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Sustainability & Risk Assessment

1. Economic

Matter considered. No direct issues identified but some issues discussed by the Committee may have an economic impact.

2. Social

2.1 Social Value

Matter considered. It is good practice for the Councils to produce an Annual report which can help publicise and promote the work of the Committee amongst the local community and local partners. The work of the Committee may lead to improvements in communities and help promote social value.

2.2 Equality Issues

Matter considered. Copies of the Annual report will be available on the Council website and can be made available to people on request if they do not have access to a computer or are blind or partially sighted.

2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

Matter considered and no direct issues identified but the Committee has discussed community safety issues during 2020/21.

2.4 Human Rights Issues

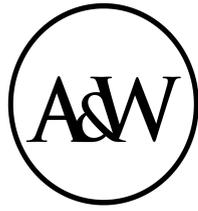
Matter considered and no issues identified.

3. Environmental

Matter considered and no issues identified.

4. Governance

Matter considered. It is good practice for the Councils to produce an Annual Report on Overview and Scrutiny and is a requirement of the Constitution and the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules. It is also part of good Governance practice for the Councils to have an effective oversight and scrutiny function in place to encourage constructive challenge and debate on Council policies and practices.



ADUR & WORTHING
COUNCILS

Adur and Worthing Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2020/21



Message from the Chairmen

On behalf of the Adur & Worthing Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) we are pleased to present the Annual report for 2020/21. This report sets out the JOSC's purpose and function in Adur and Worthing in 2020/21 and some details of the Committee's key work.

This year has been a difficult year for everyone. The Covid-19 Pandemic has had an enormous impact on everyone's lives. The Committee has, however, continued to meet virtually to ensure that proper scrutiny of Council services continues to be undertaken and that the Council Executive Members and Senior Officers are 'held to account'. The Committee's work has again been driven by the Councils' wider strategic objectives and priorities set out in 'Platforms for our Places' strategic vision but this year has also focused in more detail on the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances and the savings proposals and other challenges for the Councils at this time such as the provision of housing services and help to lead economic recovery. The challenges facing the Councils require joined up thinking and effective partnership working. The Joint Overview and Scrutiny function can help support this by ensuring that activities and opportunities are maximised for the benefit of Adur and Worthing residents.

At the time of writing this Annual report and reflecting on the year behind us, the United Kingdom is still suffering the devastating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and these will continue to have an extreme impact on the health and wellbeing of residents and long term will have an impact on local and national economies. It may take a long time for the economy to 'bounce back' but the Councils will be continually working with our local communities to help with the recovery

process. The JOSC will also be able to help in this process by providing oversight and scrutiny of the recovery work taking place and the delivery of the Council services for the benefit of local residents and communities during this difficult time.

The Committee's work will help ensure that the Council Executives (Joint Strategic Committee) and other partners are scrutinised for the actions taken.

In 2020/21 JOSC has played its part in scrutinising a number of important issues and the Leaders of the Councils, relevant Executive Members, the Chief Executive and local stakeholders have all attended meetings to answer questions on relevant issues within their areas of responsibility including:-

- Interviewing and 'holding to account' the Adur and Worthing Council Leaders in July 2020 to ensure that the Councils' priorities are being delivered and to assess the Councils responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Outcomes - The Members of the Committee were able to question the Leaders on issues within their remits and to find out what they and the Councils were doing to address key policy issues for the benefit of the Adur and Worthing communities and to ensure that the Councils responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic have been effective. This has helped ensure that their decision making on service and policy provision has been transparent and provides value for money for Adur and Worthing residents' benefit.

- There have also been regular reviews of financial information by the Committee this year. Financial Scrutiny takes place year round and in 2020/21 the Committee undertook a review of the Revenue Outturn for 2019/20 and savings proposals for 2021/22.

Outcomes - Financial Scrutiny is vital to provide a check on the finances and ensure that the Council Executives 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 Executive Members on the status of the current financial position and for an explanation on current and future expenditure including the impact of Covid-19 on the Council finances. Members have also looked at risk management.

- The Committee also interviewed the Adur and Worthing Councils' Chief Executive in September 2020 and March 2021 to assess progress made in delivering the commitments in the strategic vision 'Platforms for our Places' and the proposals contained in the new Strategic vision 'Platforms for our Places: Going further 2020/22'.

Outcomes - This in-depth Scrutiny has enabled the Committee to investigate the status and delivery of the activities and commitments for the three year Strategic vision to check that this is progressing in a timely manner. Speaking with the Chief Executive gave the Committee the opportunity to question him regarding the make up of the aims and commitments in the strategic vision. The Chief Executive was also questioned on those projects which were at risk, what the Councils were doing to address the risks and also the delivery of Council services during the Covid-19 Pandemic. This scrutiny will continue during 2021/22 to check on progress with delivering the strategic vision.

- At the request of some members of the public, the Committee has reviewed the consultation process

undertaken by the Councils when disposing of Council land and assets.

Outcomes - This provided the Committee with appropriate information in order to assess whether or not the consultation processes were robust and fit for purpose and the Committee was satisfied with these processes.

- The Committee received a report from one of its Working Groups that has undertaken a review of the introduction of the fortnightly refuse and recycling collection service introduced in September 2019.

Outcomes - The outcomes from the review have been referred to the Joint Strategic Committee (JSC) and the JOSOC will review the responses when they are received during 2021/22. The findings from the review included recommendations that the Councils should undertake some form of consultation with local residents, when the time is right, to establish their views on the introduction of the new service and to help further service design work. The review also recommended that the Councils should consider undertaking food waste recycling if the evidence from trials elsewhere in West Sussex suggested that food waste recycling was a valuable way to increase recycling and reduce waste.

- JOSOC has also received reports from a Working Group which reviewed climate change issues and made recommendations. This Working Group looked in detail at climate change and made some strong recommendations which it considered could help the Councils and other partners tackle climate change. This report and recommendations were referred to the JSC for consideration.

Outcomes - A number of the recommendations had already been implemented by the Councils due to the very fast moving nature of work on climate change through the Platforms for our Places and Sustainable AW but the JSC did agree to add the Fairtrade Directory to the Councils website and also to consider decarbonisation and energy efficiency opportunities in future Adur Homes capital investment plans. Other recommendations were for West Sussex County Council to consider.

- The JOSOC has also undertaken a detailed review of the Adur Homes Repairs and Maintenance service via a Working Group. The review was undertaken to help in the Adur Homes transformation review and to take a detailed look at the Repairs and Maintenance service to help inform the transformation.

Outcomes - The review identified a number of recommendations which it was considered could help with the overall improvement of Adur Homes. The report called on the Adur Executive and Executive Member for Customer Services to put in place a transformation programme to implement a number of improvements set out in the report, to improve the Adur Homes core business for the provision of social housing and also recommended that an appropriate progress reporting mechanism be put in place to ensure that the decisions are made to support the transformation programme on a timely basis. The JSC supported the recommendations and the JOSOC has agreed to continue to closely monitor the performance of Adur Homes and will keep the Working Group constituted for this purpose, undertaking further work in 2021/22.

- JOSC has also reviewed the work being undertaken by the Councils relating to food poverty and looking at support being provided for the vulnerable who are experiencing food insecurity.

Outcomes - This information has provided the members of the Committee with more detailed information on the issues relating to food poverty and work being undertaken by the Councils and Community Works (who were also interviewed by the Committee) to tackle this important issue and help the communities at this time during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

- Following the receipt of two public scrutiny requests relating to particular anti social behaviour issues, JOSC has also reviewed the work of the Councils working with the communities and partners to prevent and reduce the harms caused by anti social behaviour. JOSC Members were informed of specific areas of concern relating to the two matters subject to the scrutiny requests and the multi-agency work being undertaken to tackle those challenges including targeted youth outreach and tackling issues around rough sleeping. JOSC was also advised on the more general work and processes involved in controlling anti-social behaviour matters.

Outcomes - JOSC Members are now better informed on this work and action that has been taken to improve the matters which were the subject of the scrutiny reviews.

- The Committee has also kept up to date with the progress on housing issues and scrutinised the delivery of the Council's Housing Strategy covering the period 2020-2023.

Outcomes - This has given the Committee the opportunity to ensure the Councils are making progress in delivering the important Housing commitments and question the Director for Communities and Head of Housing on this progress. The Committee has requested that further scrutiny will be maintained during 2021/22.

- The Committee has also scrutinised the work being undertaken by the Environment Agency to improve flood defences at Shoreham Harbour. This followed on from a public scrutiny request and concerns which asked the Committee to investigate the issues and find out why there appeared to be a gap in the flood defences which was causing flooding and what action the Environment Agency was taking to find a solution.

Outcomes - The Committee was able to establish that the Environment Agency was working to find a permanent solution to improve the flood defences and would ensure that it investigated all concerns of the local residents and kept local residents informed. This is a great example of effective scrutiny, where the Committee was able to use its position as Councillors to work constructively with partners to review a major scheme which impacts on thousands of residents.

- The Committee has also reviewed how the Councils manage and maintain its corporate property assets using the 'Corporate landlord' approach which centralised all property functions under relevant technical departments. This was more efficient.

Outcomes - This scrutiny provided JOSC with detailed information to demonstrate that the Councils are now

using an effective approach to managing its corporate property assets.

- The Committee has also undertaken its crime and disorder scrutiny role by reviewing the work of the Adur and Worthing Safer Communities Partnership and discussing the work with the Council Executive Members who represent the Councils on the Partnership - The Adur and Worthing Executive Members for Health and Wellbeing.

Outcomes - This scrutiny has enabled the Committee to be kept aware of the work of the Safer Communities Partnership to ensure that it is working effectively to help reduce crime and disorder through effective multi-agency working to make Adur and Worthing a safer place to live, work and visit. Further scrutiny will be undertaken in 2021/22

- The Committee has also received updates on the work of the West Sussex Health and Adult Social Care Committee (HASC) relating to Adur and Worthing from its members who represent Adur and Worthing on the HASC. Information was provided on the outcome of public consultation on proposals to improve mental health services for adults and older people across West Sussex. HASC had considered the public consultation on proposals by the West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group and Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. This included a look at changes made to the original preferred option, which was presented to the HASC at its formal meeting on 12 June 2019, a discussion on the activity undertaken during the public consultation, the issues raised and how they were addressed in the final revised proposals.

Outcomes - This scrutiny will continue during 2021/22 and ensures that the Committee is kept informed about the valuable work of the HASC and how this work impacts on Adur and Worthing residents.

- The Committee was also requested to consider the benefits of introducing toilet and litter bin provision at or near to Kingston Beach in Southwick. This followed on from a public scrutiny request in which the member of the public asked that the Councils consider if there was a need for additional facilities for those using the beach, especially during the Summer period.

Outcomes - The Committee discussed the report and noted the difficulties with providing a solution in the area given financial constraints and the village green status of Kingston Beach. It was agreed to keep the item under review and this is another example illustrating the potential of the Committee to be able to take up local concerns of the public with a view to influencing the Councils to make changes for the benefit of local residents and visitors to the areas where change is considered appropriate.

- During 2021/22 separate Member Task and Finish Working Groups of the Committee will review the Adur and Worthing evening and night time economy, particularly reviewing how the evening and night time economies are working to 'bounce back' after the end of the 'lockdowns' introduced because of the Covid-19 pandemic. An Adur only Working Group will also continue to monitor progress with improvements to the Adur Homes repairs and maintenance service.

Outcomes - The findings from the Working Groups will be reported to the Committee during 2021/22 and any

relevant recommendations for change will be made to the Councils' Executives and other outside stakeholders as considered appropriate. This highlights the ongoing work of the Committee to help develop and influence service improvements and policy changes.

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.



Councillor Stephen Chipp and former Councillor Keith Bickers Joint Chairmen of the Adur and Worthing Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2020/21

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) 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 Constitution at [Procedure Rules](#)

Membership of the Committee in 2020/21:

Adur District Council – Councillors Stephen Chipp (Co-Chairman), Carol Albury, Catherine Arnold, Ann Bridges, Brian Coomber (Part Year), Joss Loader (Co-Vice-Chairman) Paul Mansfield and Deborah Stainforth

Note - Councillor Kevin Boram was also a member of the Committee for Part Year only.

Worthing Borough Council Councillors Keith Bickers (Co-Chairman), Karen Harman (Co-Vice-Chairman), Margaret Howard, Charles James, Richard Nowak, Jane Sim, Bob Smytherman and Carl Walker

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 and the minutes of our meetings.

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. A copy of the Work Programme for 2021/22 is attached to this Annual report. 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 strategic vision 'Platforms for our Places', the ability of the Committee 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 when this is possible and safe to do so but in the meantime the public can access meetings remotely via the remote link on the Councils' website. Meetings are held at least seven times a year. Public questions relating to Council meetings can be put to the remote meetings if submitted in advance.

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