



ADUR & WORTHING
COUNCILS

Adur and Worthing Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2021/22



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 2021/22. This report sets out the JOSC's purpose and function in Adur and Worthing in 2021/22 and some details of the Committee's key work.

This year has again been a challenging year for everyone. The Covid-19 pandemic has continued to have an enormous impact on everyone's lives. The Committee has, however, continued to meet virtually and held one in person meeting 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 as well as scrutinising the Council's finances, savings proposals and the provision of housing services but this year has also focused on scrutinising issues/services that have been impacted by the pandemic and the recovery processes which have been put in place to help local businesses and the communities recover during and after the pandemic. The challenges facing the Councils require joined up thinking and effective partnership working. The Joint Overview and Scrutiny function can help support this as a key part of the democratic-decision making process and can help shape the Councils policies, improve community wellbeing and accountability for the benefit of Adur and Worthing residents.

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

In 2021/22 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 2021 to ensure that the Councils' priorities are being delivered.

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 2021/22 the Committee undertook a review of the Revenue Outturn for 2020/21 and savings proposals for 2022/23.

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 and cost of living and other inflationary pressures on the Council finances.

- The Committee also interviewed the Adur and Worthing Councils' Chief Executive in October 2021 and March 2022 to assess progress made in delivering the commitments in the 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 her 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 2022/23 to check on progress with delivering the strategic vision and new Strategy when that is in place.

- The Committee received a report from one of its Working Groups that has undertaken a review of the Adur and Worthing Evening and Night Time economy (ENTE).

Outcomes - The outcomes from the review revealed that although there was a lot of excellent work ongoing to improve the vibrancy of the ENTE and help it recover from the pandemic, the ENTE had been hit hard by the pandemic and a lot more work still was needed to continue to help businesses and the communities recover. The Working Group offered a series of recommendations for how the Councils and other stakeholders could support

the ENTE to rebuild in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic which are relevant at this time. These recommendations centred on keeping Adur and Worthing safe and light in the evening and at night, ensuring that the Councils do more to promote the ENTE and include a commitment in the Corporate Strategy to recognise the importance of the ENTE. The Working Group also considered that there was a need for more events in Adur and Worthing and that a Hospitality Scheme was required for Adur (Pub Watch) to help address crime and anti social behaviour issues in the hospitality sector. The findings from the review will be reported to the Joint Strategic Committee (JSC) and the JOSC will review the responses when they are received during 2022/23.

- Interviewing and ‘holding to account’ the Adur and Worthing Council Executive Members during 2021/22 to ensure that the Executive Members are delivering their priorities.

Outcomes - The Members of JOSC have been able to question and hold to account the Executive Members (with the exception of the Executive Members for Regeneration who were unable to attend the final meeting of the year) on issues within their remits and to find out what they and the Councils were doing to address these key issues for the benefit of the Adur and Worthing communities.

- The JOSC 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 JOSC to monitor the work the Councils are doing in this area to ensure that

it is being targeted in the correct way. Further scrutiny work will continue on this in 2022/23.

- JOSC 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 JOSC to review the performance of the Trust since the transfer which has coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic that affected the service.

- JOSC also wanted to keep a careful watch on economic recovery in general across Adur and Worthing during the pandemic and as part of this, JOSC received a report which provided extensive detail on the work which had been undertaken by the Councils to provide support for businesses and the communities during the pandemic. The report also provided an overview of how the local economy in Adur and Worthing was 'bouncing back' from the pandemic, and highlighted the ongoing areas of work which were supporting the area's most vulnerable residents and businesses.

Outcomes - This scrutiny has enabled JOSC to monitor the support being provided to ensure it was being directed appropriately to support the communities.

- 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 Adur & Worthing Executive Members for Health and Wellbeing

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 2022/23.

- 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 Executive Members for Customer Services to ensure that resources are being directed accordingly to control these key issues.

- This year JOSC also held an in depth question and answer session with Southern Water to discuss bathing water quality in Adur and Worthing and also other matters that Southern Water are responsible for such as drainage and connection of the Houseboats in Shoreham to the sewerage system and also flooding issues in Lancing. There was some good engagement with the communities on this item and the communities were allowed to put questions to Southern Water.

Outcomes - JOSC have asked Adur District Council to investigate options to apply to have part of the River Adur that stretches through Shoreham designated as bathing water. Southern Water have also been asked to work with the Councils to have the houseboats connected to the

main sewage system. Southern Water were also asked to look at bathing water testing sites. JOSC will review the progress with these issues to ensure that action is taken.

- JOSC has also reviewed the delivery Plan that has been agreed by the Councils for the Adur and Worthing Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021 - 2024.

Outcomes - Scrutinising this delivery Plan has enabled JOSC to keep up to date with the issues and review what progress is being made to help improve the health and wellbeing of the communities.

- In March 2022 JOSC reviewed the Councils approach to providing seasonal concessions in Adur and Worthing. This followed receipt of a public scrutiny request which had asked for the matter to be reviewed because of concern about noise from some of the concessions and the impact on the environment.

Outcomes - This scrutiny has enabled JOSC to review the approach to concessions and JOSC has also requested that formal consultation with existing businesses should be undertaken in future as part of the concessions approval process.

- JOSC has also continued to review the Adur Homes Repairs and Maintenance service via a Working Group.

Outcomes - The Working Group has been able to review the transformation process being put in place for the service which was agreed as part of the original Scrutiny review and the Working Group will continue to meet again in 2022/23 to review these issues.

- JOSC has also instructed a Worthing only Working Group to review the Worthing Business Improvement District (BID) process which is due for a further ballot later in 2022.

Outcomes - The Working Group has finalised its report and is due to report to JOSC in Summer 2022.

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.



Councillors Joss Loader (Adur) and Charles James (Worthing) Joint Chairmen of the Adur and Worthing Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2021/22

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 2021/22:

Adur District Council – Councillors Joss Loader (Co-Chairman), Carol Albury, Vee Barton, Ann Bridges, Mandy Buxton, Joe Pannell, Sharon Sluman and Deborah Stainforth

Worthing Borough Council - Councillors Charles James (Co-Chairman), Daniel Humphreys, Louise Murphy, Richard Nowak, Jon Roser, Sally Smith, Vicki Wells and Rosey Whorlow

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 strategic vision 'Platforms for our Places: Going Further' and the future Corporate Strategy. 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.

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