



# Trial Joint Scrutiny Arrangements in West Sussex: Update

## April 2012

### Background

Arun, Chichester, Horsham and Mid Sussex District Councils, Crawley Borough Council and West Sussex County Council agreed in 2010/2011 to establish trial joint scrutiny arrangements, to enable them to work together on specific scrutiny projects. Worthing Borough and Adur District Councils decided not to take part at this stage. A Joint Scrutiny Steering Group oversees the joint scrutiny arrangements and is made up of the Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen of the participating councils. This Steering Group has now met twice (July 2011 and March 2012). This update focuses on the outcomes of the Steering Group's second meeting.

### Joint Scrutiny Steering Group Members

As at March 2012, the Joint Scrutiny Steering Group Members were:

- **Chairman** - Mrs Pat Arculus – West Sussex County Council (WSSC)
- **Vice Chairman** - Mrs Clare Apel – Chichester District Council
- **District and Borough Councils:** Mrs Jacqueline Maconachie – Arun District Council; Dr Howard Bloom – Crawley Borough Council; Mr David Sheldon – Horsham District Council; Mrs Sue Seward – Mid Sussex District Council
- **WSSC:** Mr David Britton, Mr Richard Burrett, Mr Duncan Crow, Mrs Christine Field and Mrs Irene Richards

However, a number of changes to membership will be made from 1 April 2012 as a result of a review of the scrutiny arrangements at WSSC. The current six select committees at WSSC are reducing to four, and Pat Arculus and Irene Richards will no longer be select committee chairmen. In addition, Christine Field has been appointed as WSSC Cabinet Member for Public Protection (from 22 March), so is standing down as a select committee chairman and will no longer be a member of the Joint Scrutiny Steering Group.

### Second meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Steering Group

The Joint Scrutiny Steering Group met in Horsham on 15 March 2012, attended by all members apart from Duncan Crow and David Britton, supported by scrutiny staff from WSSC (Helen Kenny), Chichester District Council (Bambi Benson) and Arun District Council (Paul Askew). The Scrutiny Committee Chairmen for Worthing and Adur were invited to attend as observers and Liza McKinney, Chairman of Adur District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, attended.

**Duncan Crow (WSSC) was appointed as Chairman of the Steering Group, to succeed Pat Arculus. Clare Apel (Chichester District Council) will continue as Vice Chairman.**

The Steering Group reviewed the issues that different councils have scrutinised during the past year, and particularly any areas of common interest, like crime and disorder and health matters. Members agreed that it was very useful to share such information, and that the Steering Group meetings were helpful in improving communications and dialogue between scrutiny committees.

A key issue for scrutiny is how to ensure it is outcomes focused and that recommendations can have influence. This is particularly important where scrutiny committees are reviewing services/issues where their council is not the direct provider. The Steering Group agreed that it was crucial that scrutiny committees across West Sussex share learning and information, and particularly any recommendations or scrutiny reviews relating to other councils' services.

As the Steering Group has become a useful forum for scrutiny across West Sussex, Members agreed that Worthing and Adur scrutiny committee chairmen should be invited to attend future meetings.

### **Joint scrutiny case study: Adur, Arun and Worthing Councils**

The Steering Group reviewed a joint scrutiny project carried out by Adur, Arun and Worthing Councils on health inequalities. The project focused on homelessness and was carried out by a joint working group of nine councillors (three from each council). An all-day stakeholder engagement meeting was held, receiving evidence from key organisations and individuals (including ex homeless people, homeless agencies, support workers and the Department of Health). Some of the key issues identified at this meeting are set out below:

- The difficulties homeless people have in accessing GP and dental services
- The problems homeless people can face in accessing support services without proof of identify
- The need for Homelessness Forums in each district
- The need for staff in agencies providing support for homeless people to have appropriate training
- Public awareness raising and education is needed on homelessness issues
- The needs of homeless people need to be included in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and key strategies such as the Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The working group drew up 17 recommendations, and the Councils are currently exploring the cost implications of these recommendations, and how best to take them forward. The Joint Scrutiny Steering Group felt that this was a good example of joint scrutiny in practice, and that it would be important for the recommendations to be shared as widely as possible, and particularly through the Steering Group. Members suggested that other bodies/organisations might be able to influence the outcomes of this project, for example the WSCC Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee and the shadow Health and Wellbeing Board.

### **Topics for joint scrutiny**

The Steering Group reviewed five topics that had been put forward for possible joint scrutiny, taking into account the previously agreed criteria for prioritising topics:

1. Better Together Programme
2. Localism/Big Society – with a focus on the provision of Community Legal Services across West Sussex.

3. Flooding
4. Health and Wellbeing Hubs
5. Highways

**The Steering Group agreed that there should be joint scrutiny of the Community Legal Advice Service provision across West Sussex: to review the impact and performance of this service and to input into the procurement of a new contract, due to be in place from April 2013**

The Steering Group agreed that a task group should be set up, with one member from each council (and that Worthing and Adur should be invited to take part in this, even though they aren't involved in the trial joint scrutiny arrangements). The Chairman of the task group will be agreed by the group at its first meeting. It is intended that this should be a time-limited, focused piece of work and (depending on decision-making timetable) that it is likely to carry out its work by August 2012. The focus will be on how the contract has performed, what value it has given to residents, and what the new arrangements will be after Legal Services Commission funding for this service is withdrawn.

The West Sussex Scrutiny Officer Network will produce draft Terms of Reference for this joint scrutiny project, to be agreed virtually by the Steering Group before any work commences. Resourcing arrangements will also be considered in terms of officer support for the task group.

#### **Future Joint Scrutiny Steering Group meetings**

The Steering Group is due to meet twice a year, and its next meeting will be in autumn 2012 (date to be confirmed, but likely to be September). This meeting will review progress with the joint scrutiny project, consider any new issues arising and provide an opportunity to share scrutiny work programmes. The meeting will be held at County Hall North in Horsham and will be held in private, but if any issue of public interest is on the work programme, a decision will be made at that time about whether or not to hold the meeting in public.

#### **West Sussex Scrutiny Officers Network (WSSON) and Contacts**

WSSON is made up of the scrutiny officers for all the County and district/borough councils (i.e. including Worthing and Adur). It supports and co-ordinates the joint scrutiny arrangements. It meets quarterly (with its next meeting on 30 May 2012) and the lead contacts for WSSON are:

- **Chichester District Council** – Bambi Benson, Corporate Policy Officer  
Tel: 01243- 01243 53 4685 / e-mail: [bbenson@chichester.gov.uk](mailto:bbenson@chichester.gov.uk)
- **West Sussex County Council** – Helen Kenny, Scrutiny Officer  
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