



# Joint Scrutiny Arrangements in West Sussex: Update

## April 2014

### Background

Arun, Chichester, Horsham and Mid Sussex District Councils, Crawley Borough Council and West Sussex County Council (WSCC) agreed in 2010/2011 to establish trial joint scrutiny arrangements, to enable them to work together on specific scrutiny projects. After a review in late 2012 it was agreed to make Joint Scrutiny a permanent arrangement. Worthing Borough and Adur District Councils decided not to take part in the formal arrangements at that stage. A Joint Scrutiny Steering Group oversees the arrangements and is made up of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen of the participating councils. Worthing and Adur are invited to attend meetings as observers. This Steering Group has now met four times (July 2011, March 2012, December 2012 and March 2014). This update focuses on the outcomes of the Steering Group's fourth meeting.

### Joint Scrutiny Steering Group Members

As at March 2014, the Joint Scrutiny Steering Group Members were:

- **Chairman** – Mrs Deborah Urquhart – West Sussex County Council (WSCC)
- **Vice Chairman** – Councillor Mrs Clare Apel – Chichester District Council
- **District and Borough Councils:** Councillor Paul English, Arun District Council; Councillor Sally Blake, Crawley Borough Council; Councillor George Cockman, Horsham District Council; Councillor Jack Callaghan, Mid Sussex District Council
- **WSCC:** Mr Graham Tyler, Mr Richard Burrett and Mrs Margaret Evans

Whilst Worthing Borough and Adur District Councils decided not to take part in the joint scrutiny arrangements, the Steering Group has agreed to invite its Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen (Councillor Liza McKinney, Adur District Council and Councillor Roy Barraclough, Worthing Borough Council) to attend its meetings as observers.

### Fourth meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Steering Group

The Joint Scrutiny Steering Group met in Horsham on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, attended by all members apart from George Cockman and Roy Barraclough, and supported by scrutiny staff from West Sussex County Council (Susanne Sanger), Chichester District Council (Bambi Jones) and Mid Sussex District Council (Jo Harper).

## Joint scrutiny projects: Flooding

The Steering Group reviewed the joint scrutiny project into flooding, carried out through a task and finish group (TFG), which was set up to:

### **Review the multi-agency responsibilities, roles, involvement in, and management of, major flooding incidents across West Sussex**

The TFG comprised eight elected members – one from each district and borough council within West Sussex, and one from the County Council. The TFG met twice – in October and November 2013 - to consider evidence and develop recommendations.

Evidence included: -

- Input from officers of West Sussex County Council (including the Fire and Rescue Service) and Worthing Borough Council, and from representatives of the Environment Agency and Southern Water. A member of the public also addressed the Group on the subject of partnership funding.
- reports on the June 2012 flooding event in West Sussex, including the causes and details surrounding the event, the response by the various partners, and what lessons had been learned for future resilience, response and recovery
- the changes in roles and responsibilities under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (the Act), of the importance of partnership working between agencies and authorities to the effective delivery of flood risk management actions, and of the improvement in inter-agency working arrangements and relationships since the June 2012 floods
- the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) which the County Council, as Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA) is required to develop under the Act. One outcome arising from this is the work programme, which identifies all county-wide flood risk-reduction projects not considered to be routine maintenance, but must be prioritised to ensure that any investment delivers the maximum benefit for taxpayers.

The TFG identified that the political will to unlock resources and work together was strong and recommendations reflected this. The JSSG recognised West Sussex County Council as the Lead Authority and would support any lobby made to government for extra resources to address flooding issues.

It was proposed to review the recommendations made in early 2015 to see how effective the joint scrutiny work had been. Some Members were not satisfied with this approach and wanted the TFG to continue and extend its remit to review flooding experienced in the district in the early part of 2014. The Chairman of the TFG agreed to take forward the issues raised at a meeting to be held with the Leader of West Sussex County Council.

Click [here](#) to see the TFG report.

In accordance with the agreed protocol on Joint Scrutiny in West Sussex, the TFG recommendations were presented to the relevant executive decision makers within each partner local authority via the relevant overview and scrutiny committees in those authorities. A number of the Members of the JSSG raised limitations in this approach as changes to recommendations could not be made. The protocol in relation to feedback on recommendations of TFGs was debated. It was considered opportune for the system to be reviewed and this would be included on the agenda for the next WSSON meeting to be held in June 2014.

## **Joint scrutiny projects: Community Advice Service**

The second phase of the Community Advice Service TFG is due to reconvene shortly to agree the procurement of the generalist advice services across the County. The Terms of Reference for the group were agreed by JSSG.

Click [here](#) for the Terms of Reference.

Membership of the Group was agreed and subsequent to the meeting Mr Liam Marshall-Ascough, Crawley Borough Council, was appointed as Chairman for the Group. Officer support for this review was also confirmed. The Service Lead Officers are Denise North, West Sussex County Council and Craig Downs, Crawley Borough Council.

## **Topics for joint scrutiny**

The Steering Group discussed whether there were any suitable topics for joint scrutiny and considered a proposal put forward by West Sussex County Council to:

**Review the capacity of community facilities eg schools, medical facilities, roads and the impact of housebuilding on capacity.**

The objective of this TFG would be to consider how liaison between District/Borough planners, the County Council and service providers can be improved to ensure appropriate planning for, and delivery of, sufficient community facilities to meet future demand.

The project would be an opportunity to review the roles and responsibilities, communications, procedures and allocation of resources across Councils in West Sussex to ensure developers provide what is needed in a community.

The Steering Group agreed that this was an issue that affected all areas in one way or another and agreed that it was a suitable project for joint scrutiny. The Group agreed to take this forward as the next project with a likely start date of December 2014.

## **The future of joint scrutiny arrangements**

The Steering Group agreed that the joint scrutiny arrangements provide a useful, flexible mechanism for carrying out joint work that should continue. There was agreement that the Steering Group provided a useful forum for sharing information and best practice, and that it doesn't need to have physical meetings to carry out its work (e.g. information can be shared via e-mail). They decided that meetings would be scheduled but if no business was necessary that the meetings could be cancelled.

They also agreed that the Steering Group Chairman should write to Worthing Borough and Adur District Councils asking them to review their decision to take part in the formal arrangements.

The review of TFG procedures detailed earlier in this briefing was supported by the Members present, although they did not want to make the system overly bureaucratic.

## Future Joint Scrutiny Steering Group meetings

The Steering Group is due to meet twice a year and it is planned that the next meeting will be scheduled for September 2014. This meeting will review progress on any joint scrutiny projects underway, consider any new issues arising and provide an opportunity to share scrutiny work programmes.

## 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 and the lead contacts for WSSON are:

- **Chichester District Council** – Bambi Jones, Principal Scrutiny Officer  
Tel: 01243- 01243 53 4685 / e-mail: [bjones@chichester.gov.uk](mailto:bjones@chichester.gov.uk)
- **West Sussex County Council** – Susanne Sanger, Senior Advisor  
Tel: 033022-22550 / e-mail: [susanne.sanger@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:susanne.sanger@westsussex.gov.uk)

Click [here](#) for further information on joint scrutiny arrangements in West Sussex.