

Joint Scrutiny Arrangements in West Sussex: Update

November 2018

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 but joined the group in November 2014. A Joint Scrutiny Steering Group oversees the arrangements and is made up of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen of the participating councils. This Steering Group has met six times. The Group has also shared information and sought comments via virtual means. This update focuses on the outcomes of the Steering Group's sixth meeting.

Joint Scrutiny Steering Group Members

As at November 2018, the Joint Scrutiny Steering Group Members were:

- **District and Borough Councils:** Councillor Stephen Chipp, Adur District Council; Councillor Norman Dingemans, Arun District Council; Councillor Mrs Clare Apel – Chichester District Council, Councillor Chris Cheshire, Crawley Borough Council; Councillor Leonard Crosbie, Horsham District Council; Councillor Linda Stockwell, Mid Sussex District Council; Councillor Roy Barraclough, Worthing Borough Council
- **WSCC:** Mr Pieter Montyn, Mr Bryan Turner, Mr Michael Cloake and Mr Andrew Barrett-Miles

Sixth meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Steering Group

The Joint Scrutiny Steering Group met in Horsham on 26th November 2018, attended by members and supported by scrutiny staff from West Sussex County Council (Susanne Sanger), and Arun District Council (Jackie Follis).

Joint scrutiny protocol/working arrangements

The Steering Group reviewed the proposed up-dates to the joint scrutiny terms of reference, protocol and working arrangements which were last reviewed in 2016. The arrangements have been streamlined to combine all the information and procedures into one document which more accurately reflects the current joint scrutiny arrangements. The new document does not change the principles of joint scrutiny.

Members of the Group agreed the changes which include:-

- to only hold Steering Group meetings when the need arises, rather than having a set timing for these to take place. This will make better use of resources as information will be shared virtually where appropriate.

- Scrutiny officers will meet on a regular basis to discuss work programmes and share best practice and up-coming issues.
- If a relevant project is identified for joint scrutiny, by either officers or Members, the steering group will be consulted for agreement. At this point the Group will decide whether to meet in person to discuss the project proposal and terms of reference or views will be sought and taken forwards virtually.
- That there will be no standing Chairman for the Group but that a Chairman is appointed at each meeting.

Joint scrutiny projects: Housing for Care Leavers

The Steering Group reviewed the joint scrutiny project on Housing for Care Leavers, carried out through a task and finish group (TFG), which was set up to:

- **Review the housing provision for young people leaving local authority care to ensure the accommodation needs and associated support in the community for young people leaving care were identified and procedures put in place to ensure that agencies work in partnership to achieve it.**
- **Review the Joint Working Protocol which has recently been created.**
- **Review the proposed changes to the allocation of Housing Benefit/Universal Credit to assess any potential impact on young people under the age of 21 years who are leaving the care of the Local Authority.**

The TFG comprised member representatives from the Authorities signed up to the joint scrutiny process. The TFG met three times during March and April 2016 to review evidence and finalise recommendations. Discussions were also held with the West Sussex Strategic Housing Group in May 2016.

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. The final report was issued in October 2016.

The JSSG role is not to agree the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group (TFG) but to evaluate the process and if necessary identify any changes to working arrangements. The evaluation of how the TFG worked identified a number of issues. These included: -

- That in future TFGs are not held in the period April/May to avoid election periods.
- That a Vice-Chairman be appointed for all TFGs.
- That consideration be given to retaining the TFG to meet and review the housing provision for care leavers.

Members of JSSG agreed that the first two points should be considered when establishing a TFG in future. The Group also discussed whether the TFG should be reconvened to further review the provision of housing for care leavers. The Group agreed that an up-date report should be produced for presentation to JSSG to outline what action has been taken since the review was completed. The Group would then decide whether further work was required.

Topics for future joint scrutiny

Members of the Group discussed suggestions for future joint scrutiny projects. These included:-

- **Supported Housing** – after a discussion it was determined that as this was already being scrutinised by the WSCC Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee in December 2018 it was therefore not an appropriate area for a joint scrutiny project at the moment.
- **Homelessness Reduction Act** – Members decided that this was a suitable topic for a future scrutiny review as it is relevant to all Authorities across the county. Members therefore requested that officers meet to consider the terms of reference for a review into this area and the best timing for a review to take place. The project should include a review of strategies being developed across the county to address the requirements of the Act.

The future of joint scrutiny arrangements

The Steering Group agreed that the joint scrutiny arrangements provide a useful mechanism for carrying out joint work that should continue. They decided that the Steering Group 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 when the need arose.

West Sussex Scrutiny Officers Network (WSSON) and Contacts

WSSON is made up of the scrutiny officers for all the County and district/borough councils. It supports and co-ordinates the joint scrutiny arrangements. It meets twice a year and the lead contacts for WSSON are:

- **Arun District Council** – Jackie Follis, Policy Group Head
Tel: 01903 737580 / e-mail: jackie.follis@arun.gov.uk
- **West Sussex County Council** – Susanne Sanger, Senior Advisor
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Click [here](#) for further information on joint scrutiny arrangements in West Sussex.