

**ADUR**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL



# **Ensuring greater transparency and better value for money services for Adur residents**

## **Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2009/10**



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## **Message from the Chairman**

Through Adur District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillors make sure that the services provided for residents are continually improving and provide good value for money. It can be said that under the Council's Cabinet system we are the eyes and ears of the residents.

Members of the Committee use their local knowledge to represent residents on issues that are important to our diverse communities. This can be your concerns on the economic climate, local services, parking issues and leisure and recreation facilities. Of great importance is scrutinising Adur District Council's budget strategy to ensure sound financial planning and value for money.

This year we have been undertaking a great deal of work as the Council's watchdog, ensuring that the Council's Cabinet is held to account for the decisions it has to make and ensuring that there is greater transparency of the process.

The Annual Report is a summary of what we have done this year and how we have made a difference.

Councillor Liza McKinney  
Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee



## **What is Overview and Scrutiny?**

Overview and Scrutiny is a process by which decision-makers are accountable to local people, via their elected representatives, for improving outcomes for the District and its residents. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee does not make decisions but seeks to influence those who do by considering the major issues affecting the District and making recommendations about how services can be improved.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees play an important role in making the District Council more responsive in the way we provide services. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is also playing an increasingly important role in scrutinising the local Partnerships in the Borough, in particular the Adur Local Strategic Partnership and the progress with the actions contained in the West Sussex Local Area Agreement. By undertaking this detailed scrutiny role, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is doing its bit to help improve the quality of life for the people who live in, work in and visit the Adur District.

### **The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a number of different roles including:**

- Representing the views and wishes of Adur residents about the services which they receive;
- Holding the Council's Cabinet to account and reviewing the Cabinet's decisions;
- Scrutinising the work of the Partnerships in Adur including the Adur Local Strategic Partnership to deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy;
- Helping to develop new policies and developing existing ones; and
- Monitoring performance.

There is one Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Adur made up of eight Councillors representing wards across the District. The Committee as a whole meets at least six times every year and the meetings are open to the public.

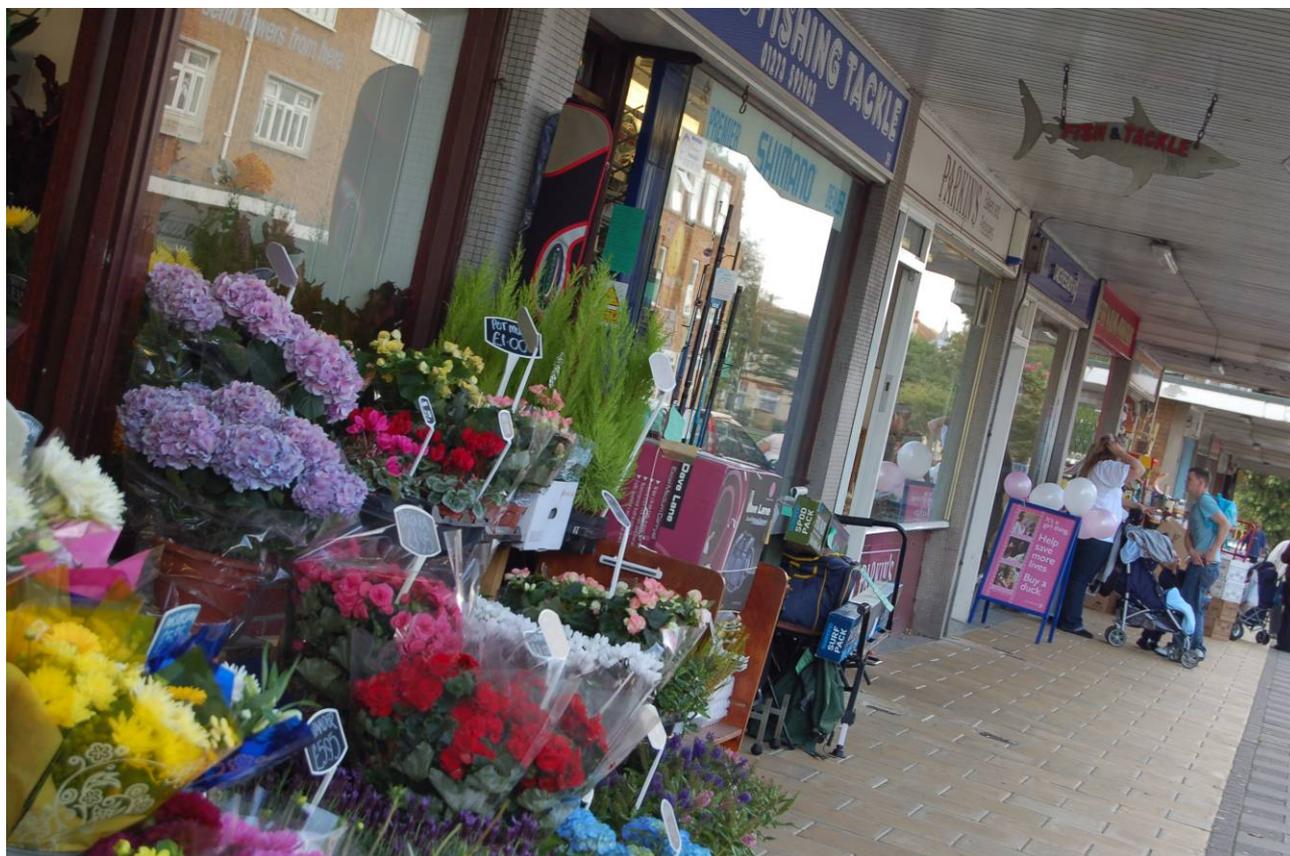
## **Adur District Council** **Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2009/10**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has played its part in striving to create a District where all young people are happy, healthy and safe and have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. When looking at issues relating to young people the Committee investigates and tests how the Council and its partners are carrying out this work.

It also considers matters relating to crime and disorder and how the Council's services meet the needs of the Adur community. The Committee's Partnership Scrutiny Working Group is responsible for undertaking the additional responsibility to scrutinise the work of the Adur and Worthing Safer Communities Partnership.

The Committee has a responsibility to scrutinise a wide range of issues which relate to housing and the environment. The Committee plays an important role in looking at how the Council achieves value for money and how decisions are taken.

The Committee scrutinises decisions being made on the key issues which aim to improve the quality of life for people who live and work in Adur as well as those who visit the Adur District.



We believe that some of our major successes this year have been:-

- Undertaking detailed scrutiny of the Council's budgets and Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2010/11 and forwarding views to the Council's Cabinet to ensure that the budgets are fit for purpose, robust and provide an adequate level of service provision for Adur residents. This has included a robust scrutiny of the Council's budget strategy, three year forecast and final accounts.
- Interviewing and 'holding to account' all six Cabinet Members to ensure that they are delivering on the priorities contained in their portfolios, their decision-making on service provision is transparent and providing value for money for the benefit of Adur residents. This also included a report from the Leader and debate on the State of the Area.
- Scrutinising the progress with the implementation of the targets set out in the West Sussex Local Area Agreement (LAA) which is a very important three year partnership agreement aimed at tackling the area's most important problems and goals for the future. The Committee has worked on this initiative with Worthing Borough Council via the Partnership Scrutiny Working Group.
- Scrutinising the Adur District to establish if it is a 'Disability Friendly Place'.
- Providing robust and detailed in-depth scrutiny of the Council's performance and corporate priority information on a quarterly basis to ensure that the Council is delivering on those key priority issues and to ensure that those priority services continue to improve and provide value for money for Adur residents.



For 2010/11 the Council has a budget of nearly £11 million. Every year the Committee scrutinises the budget and holds to account the Cabinet in approving the budget to ensure that decision making is efficient, transparent and accountable. This ensures that before the Cabinet formally approves the Budget to go to Council, it is fit for purpose. This year has been no exception and has included scrutinising the Council's final accounts, the budget strategy, the Capital Investment Strategy and very importantly the level of Council Tax which the Council should set. The Committee also scrutinised the outline three year forecast and savings proposals and noted that there would be approximately £437,000 in savings as well as £1.6 million in efficiency savings arising from Partnership working with Worthing. The Committee expressed the view to the Cabinet that the savings should be placed into the reserves to prepare for the financial difficulties ahead with the likelihood of reduced Government funding.

The Committee recommended that the Cabinet set a Council Tax of 2.8% and taking into account the views of the Committee, the Cabinet recommended Council agree to set a Council Tax increase of 2.5%. The Committee has an important role in scrutinising the budget and the Council's spending of public money. This duty to local Council taxpayers is at the heart of the Committee's role and mandate as locally elected representatives. The Local Government funding landscape is complex and the Committee has been able to draw out the challenges facing the Council of having to balance local priorities with government expectations and prescription.

The Committee has given particular consideration to the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2010/11 and the level of rents for Adur Homes properties in 2010/11 and proposed to the Cabinet that there should be a 3% increase in rent levels. Although the

Cabinet noted the comments of the Committee it felt it had to approve an average increase of 3.1%.

Over the past year the Committee has been busy scrutinising the following issues:-

- The development principals for the Pond Road development in Shoreham. When the Committee scrutinised this brief it expressed concern regarding the economic viability issues and reductions in residual land values. The Committee had very serious concerns with regard to the road layout set out, particularly increased pressure on Western Road and an already busy Brunswick Road. The Committee was very concerned about the pedestrianisation creating cul de sacs of Church Street and Middle Road as well as St Mary's Road. The Committee was also concerned about the lack of an integrated transport system. The Committee's comments were forwarded to the Cabinet and have been seriously considered ;
- The use of Council owned garages. The Committee's scrutiny established if the garages could be used for other things as well as storing vehicles to maintain rent income;
- The procedures for the operation of the Council's Participatory Budgeting system. The Council undertook a participatory budget scheme, the 'Pot of Gold', in January 2010 to increase public involvement in Local Government. Capital bids. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members were involved in identifying a shortlist of the bids, identifying those bids which were set to enhance the fabric of the District or improve community facilities;
- The Council's property assets and the Council's Asset Management Plan. The Committee was very pleased with the management of the assets and the plan which it considered was informative and valuable. The Committee also received information on properties which had been sold during the financial year 2009 to 2010 and assessed why the properties were allocated for disposal and what value such sales had been for the community.
- Interviewing and holding to account all six Cabinet Members. The Committee was able to ensure that progress was being maintained with their key priorities. There has never been more of an important time for services to be transparent and good value for residents. The Committee was able to ensure value for money, raise any matters of concern and satisfy themselves that Cabinet Members are delivering the quality of decision making and value that Adur residents expect.
- Good practice Guidance setting out internal space standards for new homes in the Adur District. The Guidance had been produced following concerns from Council Members over the increasingly small internal space of dwellings being built within the District, particularly flats and their ability to provide satisfactory living conditions and be sustainable in the longer term. The Committee considered the Guidance had been produced at the right time and recommended the Cabinet accept and make it a major part of the District's planning guidance.



- Examining the Council's quarterly Performance Monitoring Information the Committee highlighted two particular issues :-
  - Dog control orders and the control of dogs in Adur and the need for a system for enforcement. Following comments made to the Cabinet, the Committee will be receiving a report at a future meeting to ensure that the Council can improve enforcement of the Council's dog control orders..
  - Foreshore management and resources to ensure public safety on Adur's beaches. The Cabinet and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Safety has agreed to investigate this issue and review foreshore management.



### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee Working Groups**

In 2009/10 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee created Working Groups to assist in the work of taking an overview and scrutiny of important issues. These were:

**Disability Review Working Group** – this Working Group, comprising three Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, is reviewing whether the District is a user friendly place for people with disabilities, including blind and partially sighted residents and those with learning difficulties. The Committee has received evidence that there are places in the area that are not user friendly to people who are disabled and prevent them from enjoying life to the full. The review is examining if residents in the District have been prevented from doing certain things because of their disabilities or have had problems gaining access to buildings and the review will highlight the worse case issues. This Working Group has been consulting with local residents and interested people and organisations via the Council's magazine Adur Outlook and the Citizens Panel, Viewpoint. A great deal of fact finding has been undertaken including an access audit of shops in the shopping areas in the District.

The Working Group plans to announce its findings in September and will share those findings with residents and other organisations who have contributed to the review. It is anticipated that the findings from the review will be reported back to the Committee in the autumn 2010.

**Partnership Scrutiny Working Group** – this Working Group comprising three Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook scrutiny of the Local Area Agreement, the Adur and Worthing Local Strategic Partnerships and the Adur and Worthing Safer Communities Partnership. This Working Group met simultaneously with the Worthing Borough Council Partnership Scrutiny Working Group.

Following the signing of the Local Area Agreement 2 in May 2008, the Committee has been closely involved in scrutinising the progress on the delivery of the targets contained in this Agreement. The Local Area Agreement is a vitally important agreement which contains a number of targets which seek to tackle the most important issues within a local authority area e.g. anti social behaviour, deprivation, homelessness, children who have experienced bullying and the economy. The Agreement is a partnership agreement

between all Councils in the County and the Committee keeps a regular check on the progress in achieving the targets. The Partnership Scrutiny Working Group of members, working with Worthing Borough Council has been undertaking an even more rigorous scrutiny of the Local Area Agreement progress to ensure that these targets are being met for the benefit of Adur and Worthing residents.

Altogether Adur's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has had a very busy year and its Chairman does attend Cabinet meetings when its members can further question the Committee on its recommendations or comments.

**Membership of the Committee 2009/10:**

Councillors Liza McKinney (Chairman)- Carson Albury - Pat Beresford - Emma Evans - Laura Graysmark - Debbie Kennard - Rod Hotton – Peter Metcalfe



### **Have your say...**

You can find out more about our work on the internet at [www.adur.gov.uk](http://www.adur.gov.uk) where you can look at the reports we have received, our recommendations and the minutes of our meetings.

Adur District Council is committed to being more responsive in the way it provides services and wants more people to feel they have the opportunity to influence matters that affect them.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee can look at all these issues and the Committee would like to give more people the chance to contribute to its work.

### **Suggest a topic for scrutiny**

The Committee reviews its Work Programme throughout the year to make sure that it is working on topics that it can influence. If there is an issue or service which you think Councillors should consider, please return the tear out form on Page 10 of this report to tell us about it.

### **Come along to a meeting**

The Committee meets at least eight times a year at the Adur Civic Centre. Except in exceptional circumstances, the meetings are open to the public. Details of the meetings can be found on the Council's website at [www.adur.gov.uk](http://www.adur.gov.uk)

### **Tell us what you think**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a Work Programme that lists the topics and issues which the Committee is going to look at in the near future. If you have a particular interest in a topic which the Committee is looking at, the Committee would like to hear from you. If you would like a copy of the Work Programme, please contact the Corporate Policy Officer (Scrutiny) using the details below.

**You can find out more about Overview and Scrutiny by visiting the Council's website: [www.adur.gov.uk](http://www.adur.gov.uk)**

**Alternatively, you can contact Mark Lowe, Corporate Policy Officer (Scrutiny):**

Corporate Policy Officer (Scrutiny)  
Town Hall,  
Worthing,  
West Sussex,  
BN11 1HA  
Telephone: 01903 221009



**Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme**

**TOPIC SUGGESTION FORM**

Name .....

Organisation or member of the Public? .....

Tel: ..... Email: .....

1. What is the heading for your topic?

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2. What is the background to the issue? What is the current situation/problem?

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3. How do you think that Overview and Scrutiny can make a difference and add value to this issue?

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*Thank you for your suggestion*

We will make every effort to cover as many topics as possible as thoroughly as possible. We will, however, prioritise those topics we feel can contribute to and benefit Adur residents.

**Please return this form to Mark Lowe, Corporate Policy Officer (Scrutiny) at Adur District Council, Town Hall, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 1HA**

