

# Executive Scrutiny Committee

<b>10:00</b>	<b>Tuesday, 23 April 2013</b>	<b>Committee Room 2, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex</b>
--------------	-----------------------------------	---

## Quorum: 4

### Membership

Councillor M Mackrory  
Councillor G Butland  
Councillor S Candy  
Councillor W Dick  
Councillor N Edey  
Councillor A Hedley  
Councillor S Mayzes  
Councillor V Metcalfe  
Councillor G Mitchinson  
Councillor M Page  
Councillor J Pike  
Councillor I Pummell  
Councillor J Roberts  
Councillor A Turrell  
Councillor B Wood  
Councillor J Young

Chairman  
Vice-Chairman

Vice-Chairman

### For information about the meeting please ask for:

Robert Fox, Governance Officer  
Graham Hughes, Committee Officer  
**Telephone:** 01245 430935  
**Email:** [graham.hughes@essex.gov.uk](mailto:graham.hughes@essex.gov.uk)



Essex County Council

## **Essex County Council and Committees Information**

All Council and Committee Meetings are held in public unless the business is exempt in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972.

Most meetings are held at County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1LX. A map and directions to County Hall can be found at the following address on the Council's website:  
<http://www.essex.gov.uk/Your-Council/Local-Government-Essex/Pages/Visit-County-Hall.aspx>

There is ramped access to the building for wheelchair users and people with mobility disabilities.

The Council Chamber and Committee Rooms are accessible by lift and are located on the first and second floors of County Hall.

If you have a need for documents in the following formats, large print, Braille, on disk or in alternative languages and easy read please contact the Committee Officer before the meeting takes place. If you have specific access requirements such as access to induction loops, a signer, level access or information in Braille please inform the Committee Officer before the meeting takes place. For any further information contact the Committee Officer.

Induction loop facilities are available in most Meeting Rooms. Specialist head sets are available from Duke Street and E Block Receptions.

The agenda is also available on the Essex County Council website, [www.essex.gov.uk](http://www.essex.gov.uk) From the Home Page, click on 'Your Council', then on 'Meetings and Agendas'. Finally, select the relevant committee from the calendar of meetings.

Please note that an audio recording may be made of the meeting – at the start of the meeting the Chairman will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being recorded.

## Part 1

(During consideration of these items the meeting is likely to be open to the press and public)

		Pages
1	<b>Apologies and Substitution Notices</b> The Committee Officer to report receipt (if any)	
2	<b>Declarations of Interest</b> To note any declarations of interest to be made by Members	
3(a)	<b>Minutes</b> To approve as a true record the minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 26 March 2013 (attached).	5 - 10
3(b)	<b>Matter Arising - Localism</b> To consider a further report (ES/13/13) from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Planning.	11 - 16
3(c)	<b>Matter Arising - Coroner's Service</b> To consider a further report (ES/14/13) on the Coroner's Service.	17 - 26
4	<b>Transformation II</b> To receive a report (ES/15/13) on Transformation II from Councillor David Finch, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation Programme. <b>(Report to follow).</b>	
5	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b> A schedule of meeting dates for the 2013/14 municipal year will be agreed with the Committee Chairman after the County Council elections in May 2013.	
6	<b>Urgent Business</b> To consider any matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.	
7	<b>Chairman's Concluding Remarks</b>	

## Exempt Items

(During consideration of these items the meeting is not likely to be open to the press and public)

To consider whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of an agenda item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 or it being confidential for the purposes of Section 100A(2) of that Act.

In each case, Members are asked to decide whether, in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption (and discussing the matter in private) outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

**8 Urgent Exempt Business**

To consider in private any other matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD ON 26 MARCH 2013**

**Present**

G Butland (Vice-Chairman)	M Page
W J C Dick	J Pike
A Hedley	J Roberts
M Mackrory (Chairman)	Mrs A Turrell
Mrs V Metcalfe	R Walters (substitute)
G Mitchinson	B Wood
	J A Young (Vice-Chairman)

The following officers were present in support of the meeting:

Robert Fox	Governance Officer
Graham Hughes	Committee Officer

**1. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

The Committee Officer reported apologies for absence from Councillors N Edey (for whom Councillor R Walters substituted) and S Mayzes.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

No other declarations of interest were made.

**3. Minutes and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**4. (a) Localism**

Councillor John Jowers, Cabinet Member for Communities and Planning, and Jane Gardner, Senior Policy and Strategy Manager, were present to introduce a report (ES/10/13) on Localism.

The report responded in turn to questions previously set by the Committee on the impact of the Localism Act 2011 in Essex. In his introductory comments the Cabinet Member stressed that, in addition to its statutory duties, the County Council also had an important role as a community enabler. More generally the context for future partnership working was changing with individuals and communities being more empowered, taking more responsibility and becoming more self-sufficient in a less political setting. Thereafter, the Committee considered the response provided to each question in turn and during discussion the following issues were highlighted and/or discussed:

- (i) Community Asset Transfers

It was highlighted that ECC had a policy and protocol in place and a process by which communities could engage in dialogue and submit expressions of interest for Community Asset Transfers. In the current financial year to date there had been twelve active processes across the county at varying points of progress. The recent transfer of Stock Library to the Stock and Buttsbury Heritage Society was highlighted.

Members stressed that Localism in its broader sense meant devolving decision-making to the community and that communities would also need to include succession planning in their strategic and long term thinking. The Cabinet Member advised that the County Council needed to be risk aware but not risk adverse, as the latter could stifle innovation, and that evidence to date on applications for Community Asset Transfers, for example, indicated well thought-out businesses cases put together by local communities. It was confirmed that the maximum discount available to community groups for Community Asset Transfers was 25% or £80,000 whichever was the smaller.

In determining the strength of an application for a Community Asset Transfer, particularly when it might also be in a poor state of repair, the County Council would look to ascertain the community value of the building and not just an actuarial valuation. Members gave some anecdotal evidence on the experience of some applications made some of which highlighted the importance of submitting early applications.

(ii) The Big Society Fund

The Big Society Fund provided funding to local communities to provide better local facilities, increasing public participation and citizenship and improving public services. The fund was available to receive applications from community groups, town and parish councils and voluntary organisations who wished to provide a local community asset. Very few applications for the Big Society Fund were rejected although any rejections were usually communicated in person. Instead, officers worked with applicants before formal submission to help them strengthen their business case where possible. In some cases County Council officers were able to advise applicants of other supplementary funding sources that were available from third party organisations.

(iii) Community engagement

The County Council intended to build upon existing contacts with a substantial number of community and voluntary groups. However, local members were encouraged to make any suggestions and nominations as to suitable local key and trusted contacts in their own area. It was acknowledged that community engagement varied between areas. Harlow was cited as an example which, although having been the first area to participate in the Community Initiatives Fund, seemed to have low community engagement at present. It was acknowledged that the County Council may need to seek community engagement from different sources than in the past and think more broadly about the publicity mechanisms it used.

(iv) Member communication

At present local Members were not informed of Big Society Fund applications, although the local borough or district council were advised at an early stage in case it contravened any of their local policies in that area. Local Members were advised at a later stage of those applications which had been successful and usually attended subsequent grant awards ceremonies. The Cabinet Member was keen to preserve the depoliticised nature of the applications but, as members stressed the importance of them being kept up to date and well informed on local matters, agreed to review whether local Members could also be advised at the time of applications being received.

(v) Voluntary sector

The voluntary sector was adapting so that it could respond and meet the contractual services required by the County Council as a commissioner of services. However, it was acknowledged that the voluntary sector had lost some of its other funding sources and it was not possible for the County Council to 'step-in' and replace that funding although it was moving towards placing longer-term contracts for the services it was commissioning from that sector.

(vi) Engagement with other local councils

In partnership with Cambridge Open Systems the County Council provided free website hosting, training and technical support for town and parish councils (including voluntary groups and other organisations) which would be developed further in the coming year to include small businesses. Some Members expressed concern that the provision of these services could be in direct competition with private sector suppliers of similar services and the Cabinet Member agreed to review the current arrangements for any such conflict.

(vii) Locality Boards

Locality Boards had been established to get consensus on key issues of local concern, generating debate and suggesting solutions. It was noted that in some areas Locality Boards had yet to be established. Some Members highlighted that they were unaware of the issues currently being considered by their particular local Board and had little or no involvement with it. The Locality Boards varied in their terms of reference and what they sought to achieve. However, the Cabinet Member was keen to emphasise that the Boards offered significant opportunities over time particularly through the gradual development and extension of their remits.

(viii) Conclusion

Members requested a further update on the further development of Localism in due course. The witnesses were then thanked for their attendance and then they left the meeting.

**4(b) Petitions**

The Committee received and noted a report (ES/11/13) from the Governance Officer providing background information on petitions. This issue would be further considered at a future meeting.

## 5. Coroner's Service

The Committee considered a report (ES/11/13) on the Coroner's Service. Councillor David Finch, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Coroner's Service, Alex Hallam, Assistant County Solicitor – People, and Amy Donovan, Coroners Service Manager, joined the meeting to introduce the report.

### (i) Background

The Coroner's Service supported two jurisdictions – the first in Essex and Thurrock and the second in Southend and South East Essex (which included the Castle Point and Rochford District Council areas). A Coroner was an independent judicial officer, and not a local government officer, although the relevant council would appoint them, pay them and be responsible for providing them with suitable premises and resources for them to be able to conduct their duties. Whilst the County Council could not dismiss the Coroner it could, if it was necessary, make representations to the Ministry of Justice although it would always seek to resolve any disputes directly with the Coroner if at all possible.

The report outlined operational changes made to the service during 2012. In addition, the service would move to County Hall after suitable refurbishment and some of the accommodation currently occupied by the service would be refurbished and remodelled to provide a permanent Coroner's Court. Most significantly the new accommodation arrangements would provide a discrete home for the Coroner's Court and private meeting rooms for bereaved families which was seen as a significant improvement and was welcomed by Members.

### (ii) Annual Report and Statistics

The Annual Report for the Coroner's Service had been submitted to the Ministry of Justice at the end of February 2013. This would be published in the summer once all figures had been checked and collated. The following unconfirmed figures were highlighted and/or discussed:

- (i) Timescale for bringing cases to inquest: this had reduced to 36 weeks for 2011 in Essex and Thurrock (from 40 weeks in 2010) and had increased to 36 weeks for 2011 in Southend and South East Essex (from 33 weeks in 2010);
- (ii) Inquests still open or in progress: the number of inquests still open for more than two years in 2012 had decreased in Essex and Thurrock but had increased in Southend and South East Essex (compared to 2011). It was acknowledged that there could be a different and more complex mix of cases in the latter area and it was **agreed** that further information would



be circulated to Members to try and explain the difference between the two administrative areas.

(iii) Budget

The 2013/14 budget for the Coroner's Service predicted a £3.18 million cost offset by a £1.13 million anticipated income, leaving a net cost of £2.05 million for approximately 6,500 cases per year. In addition, there were contributions received from Southend and Thurrock unitaries (representing approximately 19.2% of the total cost) and Essex Police. It was **agreed** that further information would be distributed to Members to provide a per case cost and to offer a perspective on the level of current costs via some benchmarking data.

(iv) Transformation

Councillor Finch confirmed that, whilst the Coroner's Service was an essential service, it was relatively small in scale by comparison to other County Council services and it was not a key area of focus under the Transformation II programme.

(v) Government consultation

There was a current Ministry of Justice consultation exercise inviting comments on developing larger administrative areas for Coroners. It was thought that the intention was not to make any such new jurisdictions any bigger than an existing geographical county. It was agreed that a copy of the County Council response to the consultation would be circulated to Members before submission.

(vi) Conclusion

It was **agreed** that a further update be provided to the Committee in due course. The witnesses were thanked for their attendance and then left the meeting.

## 6. **Forward Look**

The Committee considered and **Agreed** the Forward Look (ES/12/13).

## 7. **Dates of Future Meetings 2013**

The next meeting of the Committee would be at 10am on Tuesday 23 April 2013 in Committee Room 2.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 11.33 am.

Chairman  
23 April 2013



		<b>AGENDA ITEM 3 (b)</b>
		<b>ES/13/13</b>
<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Executive Scrutiny Committee</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	<b>23 April 2013</b>	
<b><u>MATTER ARISING: LOCALISM</u></b>		

The attached response to issues discussed on Localism at the last meeting has been received from Councillor Jowers.



Councillor John Jowers  
Cabinet Member for Communities & Planning  
Essex County Council  
Cabinet Office  
PO Box 11  
County Hall  
Chelmsford  
Essex CM1 1HQ



**Councillor M Mackrory**  
Chairman  
Executive Scrutiny Committee

Our Ref JJ/jg  
Your Ref  
Date 27/03/2013

Dear Michael,

**Executive Scrutiny Committee: 26<sup>th</sup> March 2013 - Localism**

Further to my attendance at the Executive Scrutiny meeting yesterday to present on localism, I wanted to take the opportunity, through you, to thank members for the helpful contributions made and to advise them of the actions that I have or intend to take in relation to the key concerns raised. For ease of reference, I have categorised the issues raised under key themes as follows.

**Devolution**

- ***Explore the devolution agenda further to consider engagement and influence of local communities in the decision making process.***

I have noted the comments made and will be exploring this issue further.

**Community Asset Transfer**

- ***Reflect on timescales for declaring assets surplus to requirements as it may not offer communities enough opportunity to explore funding streams to sustain the operations within the community facility for future use***

Whilst the concern raised was well made, as the committee was advised, the authority would rightly need to continue to explore VFM considerations in declaring assets surplus to requirements.

/continued.....

**Big Society Fund (Community Initiatives Fund)**

- ***Need for more targeted promotion of the fund in 2013/2014 in district areas with lower take-up.***

The BSF Team will undertake work with colleagues from and communications teams and with partners in identified areas where take-up of this fund is lower to put in place a series of targeted promotions.

In addition to this, all elected Members will receive a briefing pack that details the application process and encloses the Guidance Notes and Expression of interest Form. I would kindly request that Members of the Executive Scrutiny Committee to use this briefing material within their respective Divisions not only to promote the availability of the fund, but to also actively encourage applications to be submitted.

- ***Request to share applications submitted with the Divisional Member for their information only prior to them going to the Judging Panels for consideration.***

This request will be actioned as part of the 2013/2014 CIF process.

Members will receive a summary sheet detailing applications that have been made in their Division and a contact number will be provided should they wish to discuss any of the applications made further with one of the CIF Team.

In addition to this, the application form has also been amended and the applicant is now required to seek support for their application from their local Essex County Council Member.

- ***Ensure Divisional Members are invited to launch of schemes within their areas.***

The process for this will be strengthened as part of the process for 2013/2014.

On the submission of the last invoice for payment, the recipient will be contacted personally to discuss planned press coverage and launch events. Based on discussion the Chairman and Cabinet Member will be invited to attend planned events and a personal call will be made by a member of the CIF Team to respective Divisional Members to invite them also.

### Making the Links

- **Concern was expressed about the development of any proposed extension to small businesses of the partnership with Cambridge Open Systems (essexinfo.net) to provide free website hosting, training and technical support as it might but the authority in direct in competition with small businesses already providing this service.**

In the light of the comments made, I will be reviewing this position.

### Voluntary Sector

- **Concern was raised about the capacity of the voluntary sector to offer more within a climate of reducing funding.**

I do acknowledge that in a climate of reduced available funding, not just within ECC but also within other public sector organisations, it is a difficult time for the sector.

To reassert the response I provided at the meeting, the funding provided by ECC to support the sector has remained relatively consistent, with the intention to further invest in the sector going forward; the community resilience fund is an example of this.

### Locality Boards

- **There was disappointment expressed by some Members in areas that did not have a Locality Board, with a plea for consistent application within the new structure.**

As I explained Locality Boards continue to be a 'work-in-progress' and we cannot impose these on district areas. I do, however, acknowledge that further consideration does need to be given to keeping Divisional Members informed about what is happening in their respective areas; I will take this forward for further consideration.

I hope you find this update helpful and again, I would like to thank you and Members of the Committee for their helpful contributions.

Yours sincerely,



**Councillor John Jowers  
Cabinet Member for Communities & Planning  
Essex County Council**





<b>AGENDA ITEM 3 (c)</b>	
<b>ES/14/13</b>	
<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Executive Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>23 April 2013</b>
<b><u>MATTER ARISING: CORONER'S SERVICE</u></b>	

Reproduced below is the text of an email (together with Appendix) sent to Members of the Committee on Friday 12 April 2013:

At the end of the discussion on the Coroner's Service at the last Executive Scrutiny Committee it was agreed that a copy of the County Council's response to the current Government consultation on amalgamating some jurisdictions would be circulated to the Members of the Committee ahead of submission.

A copy of the County Council's response is attached to this email and an accompanying note with further information on the consultation from Alex Hallam in Legal Services is reproduced below. This information and attachment will also be included in a Matters Arising item for the next meeting of the Executive Scrutiny Committee on 23 April.

"Following on from the meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> March I am attaching the consultation response on behalf of the authority for your information. The Ministry of Justice had requested local authorities to express an interest in amalgamating jurisdictions in their area and a Cabinet Member Action was taken by Councillor Finch in December that this would be an appropriate step to take. The decision was published on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2012. Southend Borough Council were approached in relation to the decision and were aware of the interest expressed by the Authority. The consultation therefore includes the proposed amalgamation of the Essex and Thurrock and Southend and South East Essex jurisdictions. This is a wide ranging consultation on a variety of matters connected with the implementation of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and there are a number of technical aspects to the consultation that do not require a response on behalf of the local authority.

The consultation was to close on 12<sup>th</sup> April but responses are being accepted until 19<sup>th</sup> April. The response will be returned early next week to ensure that it is considered."





Please complete this section to tell us more about you.

**About you**

Full name

Job title or capacity in which you are responding (e.g. member of the public etc.)

If 'Other', please specify

Date

Company name/organisation (if applicable)

Address

Postcode

If you would like us to acknowledge receipt of your response please tick this box.

Address to which this acknowledgement should be sent, if different from above

**If you are a representative of a group,** please tell us the name of the group and give a summary of the people or organisations that you represent

## List of questions for response

We would welcome responses to the following questions set out in this consultation paper. Please email your completed form to coroners@justice.gsi.gov.uk or it fax to 020 3334 2233.

**Question 1:** do you agree that the proposals set out in this consultation paper will impose no significant new burdens on local coroner's services or others?

Yes     No

If you disagree, what new costs would arise? And how could these be mitigated?

New costs will arise if there is an obligation to process significant amounts of inquest work within three months.

**Question 2:** do you have any views on the proposed changes to coroner areas under the 2009 Act, as set out in the table at Annex E? If so, please give details.

Essex County Council welcomes the proposal to create a single jurisdiction from the former Essex and Thurrock and Southend and South East Essex jurisdictions.

In recognition of the Access to Local Services issue referred to in paragraph 19 of the Consultation it is proposed to continue to hold inquests in some cases in the Southend Area.

**Question 3:** do you support the proposal to amend the Judicial Appointments Order 2008 so that Fellows of CILEX are eligible for coronial appointments?

Yes     No

Please give reasons for your response.

**Question 4:** in your experience what difference has the current Guide to coroners and inquests and Charter for coroner services made since it was published?

The current Guide has been an extremely useful aid, an authoritative Guide to distribute to the bereaved. The inclusion of guidelines has assisted the Service in planning and goal setting and given a wider perspective of their work to the staff of the Service.

**Question 5:** the new Guide to coroner services (at Annex D) revises the Guide to coroners and inquests and Charter for coroner services, so that it is consistent with the 2009 Act. Do you think the new document is a helpful summary of what to expect during a coroner investigation?

Yes     No

If not, please explain your answer.

The new document is welcomed. It is clear and sensitive and improved by the amalgamation of the two sections contained in the previous guidance.

**Question 6:** is there anything else we should cover in the Guide to coroner services, or cover differently?

Yes     No

If so, please explain your answer.

There may be some benefit in including reference to faith groups and also a target for the day to day work as well as the inquest work.

**Question 7:** should the new coroners rules include a target date for completing inquests?

Yes     No

If so, what should this target be? Would three months be appropriate?

Yes     No

Please give your reasons.

A three months target for the completion of inquests would be difficult to achieve for all the reasons set out in the text of the Consultation. It might be achievable for very routine cases but in any event could result in raising the expectations of the bereaved in all cases. It may impinge unfavourably on the quality of inquests if a time target is substituted or imposed. There are instances where it is better for the bereaved for an inquest to take longer because it gives them more time to adjust to their loss and make a constructive contribution to the inquest process. The imposition of a three month target would not be cost neutral and may result in a target focussed approach to inquests rather than quality focussed approach.

**Question 8:** are you aware of a time when a coroner has in practice needed to be available out of hours for duties not relating to a post-mortem examination or organ donation?

Yes     No

If so, please give details.

The only instance where it may be necessary for a Coroner to be available other than in the circumstances mentioned is in the case of a mass fatality incident either within the area or concerning a point of entry or departure.

**Question 9:** are you content with this approach to the drafting of the regulations on post-mortem examinations?

Yes     No

If you are not, please give your reasons.

**Question 10:** are you content with the draft regulation which says that a body should normally be released within 30 days, and that if this is not possible, the coroner must explain why?

Yes     No

If not, please explain your answer.

The practice in Essex is already in line with the Home Office circular.

**Question 11:** do you agree that one month (with the possibility of seeking a one month extension) should be sufficient for a person to respond to a coroner's reports of actions to prevent other deaths?

Yes     No

If you do not, please explain your reasons.

The one month plus a one month extension proposal ought to be sufficient. It is suggested that if further time is allowed then there should be provision for a monitoring timetable to be imposed.

**Question 12:** do you agree that the draft regulations to be made under section 43 (Annex A) will ensure more consistent standards in the coroner investigation process?

Yes     No

If not, please give details.

**Question 13:** do you agree with the time limit for notifying interested persons of the arrangements for the inquest hearing?

Yes     No

Do you agree with the requirement on coroners to publish the arrangements for an inquest hearing?

Yes     No

If you do not, please explain your reasons.

The time limit for notifying interested persons of the arrangements for an inquest hearing may conflict with the three month time limit target suggested for the holding of an inquest. It is agreed that the Coroner should publish the arrangements for an inquest hearing.

**Question 14:** are you content that our proposed rules on disclosure will help bereaved people and other interested persons play a more active part in the investigation process (where they choose to do so)?

Yes     No

Please explain your reasons.

**Question 15:** do you have any suggestions as to how the rules on disclosure could be improved?

Yes     No

If so, please explain your answer.

**Question 16:** are you content with the proposed rules on evidence: a) written evidence; b) video link; c) screened evidence?

Yes     No

If not, please explain your answer.



**Question 17:** do you agree with new rule 25 and the requirement for a coroner to record inquest proceedings?

Yes     No

Should the rules contain sanctions for misuse of recordings?

Yes     No

Please give your reasons.

It is agreed with both suggestions contained in Section 17. The need for protection of the identity of a child on a serious case review is particularly endorsed.

**Question 18:** are you content with the draft rule and form on conclusions, determinations and findings?

Yes     No

If not, how could they be improved?

Do you agree with the addition of the new short-form conclusions 'drink/drug related' and 'road traffic collision'?

Yes     No

Please give your reasons.

**Question 19:** do you agree that the draft rules on inquests to be made under section 45 (Annex B) will help make inquests more consistent?

Yes     No

If not, please give details.

**Question 20:** would any of the proposed regulations for juror and witnesses allowances lead to increased costs for local authorities?

Yes     No

If you think so, please give details.

The limit on expert costs is particularly to be welcomed. These are a significant financial burden for local authorities.

**Question 21:** do you have any comments on the draft regulations to be made under Schedule 7 (Annex C) in addition to your answer to question 20 above? If so, please give details.

The proposals in relation to the transfer of investigations are likely to result in more refusals because this will unlock the ability to enable the costs to be discharged by the transferring coroner.