

Report to: **(All Scrutiny Committees)
Audit and Best Value Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **10 March 2008**

By: **Director of Law and Personnel**

Title of report: **Reconciling Policy and Resources – feedback to scrutiny**

Purpose of report: **To provide feedback on the outcomes of scrutiny input into the Reconciling Policy and Resources (RPR) process in 2007/08.**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Review its input into the 2007/08 Reconciling Policy and Resources process to establish whether there are lessons for improvement for the process next year.**
 - 2) Review the commentary on the specific input of this committee into the RPR process.**
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1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 There are no specific financial implications associated with this report.

2. Reconciling Policy and Resources (RPR) and scrutiny in East Sussex

2.1 Reconciling Policy and Resources (ie. aligning the Council's budget setting process with service delivery plans) is now firmly established as an effective and transparent business planning process in East Sussex. The 2007/08 round began with the *State of the County* report to Cabinet on 31 July 2007. Scrutiny committees actively engage in the process firstly to allow them to bring the experience they have gained through their work to bear, and secondly to help inform their future work programmes.

2.2 In September 2007 each scrutiny committee considered extracts from the *State of the County* report and made comments to Lead Members on the relevant policy steers and their contribution to the objectives of the whole Council (the County Council Promise) prior to consideration by County Council.

2.3 In November 2007 the scrutiny committees considered more detailed portfolio and budget plans and the emerging savings strategy. In particular the committees: considered whether the amended policy steers were reflected satisfactorily within the proposed key areas of budget spending for 2008/09; whether all possible efficiencies were identified; and assessed the potential impact of these savings on services provided to County Council customers. Most scrutiny committees established scrutiny boards to act on their behalf providing a more detailed input into the RPR process in December and January.

2.4 This report provides feedback on how scrutiny comments and recommendations have been dealt with by Cabinet and County Council. Its aims are to assist scrutiny to become more effective in future RPR rounds and to enable consideration of the specific commentary relating to each committee.

2.5 Appendix 1 to this report summarises the recommendations made by all the scrutiny committees and boards during the stages outlined above, and the responses to each by the Cabinet and Council. In addition to making specific recommendations, scrutiny sought or was

given assurances on a range of related matters. The appendix also provides a commentary on these items.

3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

3.1 The Committee is recommended to review its input into the 2007/08 Reconciling Policy and Resources process and in particular to establish whether there are lessons for improvement for the process next year.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Reconciling Policy and Resources – Guidance for 2007/08 round

Appendix1 : Overview and Scrutiny Reconciling Policy and Resources (RPR) boards 2007/08

Scrutiny Committee	Scrutiny comments and recommendations	Response to recommendations and requests for assurances
Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee		
Adult Social Care recommendations	Recommended that preventive services should be included within the policy steer to support more older people and vulnerable adults in their own homes and local community.	Separate policy steer not developed, although principle of preventative services included in other policy steers eg 'support more older people and vulnerable adults in their own homes and local community'
	Recommended that improvements be made to the reports for next year's RPR board to provide clearer information about the pressures and the impacts that any proposed savings will have on clients.	Recommendations noted and will be incorporated into RPR process for 2008/09
Adult Social Care request for assurances	Funding for maintaining the <u>preventative technology service</u> would continue beyond 2009/10 when it would be amalgamated into the base line funding.	The assurances provided at the meeting still stand
	Estimated savings on <u>directly provided services</u> (DPS) are as realistic as possible, having taken into account both increased needs and value for money. DPS efficiencies for disabilities do not impact on clients, but relate to certain staffing costs.	The assurances provided at the meeting still stand
	<u>Home Care</u> savings relate to a full year's impact of previously agreed changes to contracts and will not impact on the service provided to clients.	The assurances provided at the meeting still stand
	Savings on <u>Telecare</u> will result from reduced demand for other services with users switching to Telecare, and are not from a reduction in the Telecare service itself.	The assurances provided at the meeting still stand

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	<p><u>Eligibility criteria</u> would not be changing from the current level of <i>critical</i> and <i>substantial</i>. Savings in this area would be as a result of health services taking on the health care of clients currently funded by Adult Social Care following case reviews.</p>	<p>The assurances provided at the meeting still stand</p>
	<p><u>Transitions policy from Children's Services to Adult Social Care</u> – development of this policy would impact on future clients as residential placements would only be continued in extreme cases. Whilst this could be a contentious issue, the significant pressures felt by the department in maintaining current levels of residential placements were recognised.</p>	<p>The assurances provided at the meeting still stand</p>
	<p>Savings on <u>transport services for Adult Social Care clients</u> may be made as recommendations from the Best Value Review of Passenger Transport (2007) to introduce eligibility criteria for transport provision are introduced. This could be contentious, especially in relation to learning disability clients.</p>	<p>The assurances provided at the meeting still stand</p>
Audit and Best Value Scrutiny Committee		
<p>Audit & Best Value recommendations</p>	<p>*Increase efforts to persuade the waste collection authorities to agree a county-wide waste strategy. This strategy needs to ensure a coordinated approach that improves its currently low rate of recycling, maximises the re-use of materials, and minimises the transport and other costs of alternative methods of disposing of waste.</p>	<p>The Municipal Waste Management Strategy was sent to DEFRA on 12 October 2007. The Strategy included recommendations and caveats from each East Sussex district and borough council and was agreed by each authority's cabinet committee. We have not yet received a response from DEFRA.</p> <p>At the East Sussex Directors Waste meeting, held on 7 Feb 2008, directors agreed to give greater strategic direction and influence to both the Waste Forum Steering Group (a senior officer led group) and the East Sussex LGA group (a</p>

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	<p>*Give leadership to all stakeholders to embrace the wider environmental agendas, including sustainability.</p> <p>*Look again at delivering an improved transport infrastructure, including energising partners to look for innovative solutions to rural transport matters.</p>	<p>member led forum).</p> <p>A new strategic management policy steer has been added to the Council Plan this year: <i>To make positive progress towards tackling climate change in East Sussex, both in the County Council's own activities and through work with partners, to influence the behaviour of others.</i></p> <p>There is also a new policy steer within the Transport and Environment portfolio to <i>develop an environmental strategy to guide the work of the County Council with its partners in relation to environmental issues.</i> The target is to publish an environmental strategy following consultation with partners by 2009/10.</p> <p>This matter is being directly addressed following the Best Value Review of Passenger Transport (2007). Monitoring reports on the action plan for this review is being submitted to Transport and environment Scrutiny Committee in March 2008.</p>
<p>*These three recommendations appear in the Corporate Assessment report (2007) and were recommended by Audit and Best Value Scrutiny Committee for inclusion in the Reconciling Policy and Resources process.</p>		
<p>Audit and Best Value Scrutiny Committee assurances</p>	<p>Reassurances are sought on the effectiveness of remedial action being taken to address the deficits on the 2006/07 Council Tax Collection Fund accounts for Eastbourne and Hastings boroughs.</p> <p>Reassurance on the apparently worsening position of BVPI 197 (teenage pregnancies).</p> <p>Reassurance on the apparently worsening position of</p>	<p>This is not under any direct control or influence of the County Council. The respective Treasurers of both boroughs have advised that they have put in place actions to avoid any repeat.</p> <p>Children's Services Scrutiny Committee are considering how to review this matter in March 2008.</p> <p>The position on BVPI 53 for 2006./07 was a reduction of 0.3</p>

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	BVPI 53 – intensive home care support for people aged 65 and over.	However in the current year performance against this indicator has risen from 5.8 to 8.9. This performance improvement has given us a rise to the middle of our Comparator group given last year's outturns. However, many shire authorities, including those in our comparator group, consider this indicator to be contrary to the strategic direction of Adult Social Care nationally: we aim to rehabilitate service users and also consider a decrease in this indicator a success. This will increase further during the implementation of the "Putting People First" agenda with personalisation and other methods of support at the heart of service delivery.

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Children's Services recommendations	Recommended the list of <u>policy steers</u> should be reduced and policy steers: 1) should only be included if there was capacity to deliver, 2) should be clear of jargon and 3) should reflect the five outcomes for children as outlined in the Children Act.	The number of policy steers has been reduced by 1/3 rd and rewritten without jargon to make them clearer. They have been grouped under the five outcomes for children plus three overarching steers.
	Recommended that any <u>additional funding</u> received through the improved settlement be directed towards the duty and assessment teams working with the children on the <u>Child Protection Register</u> (social workers and administrative support) so that preventative work in this area could continue.	The County Council has agreed £660,000 new ongoing funding to meet the pressure of increased numbers on the Child Protection Register, which is reflected in the department's medium term financial plan and service planning.
	Recommended that the department effectively markets the non-statutory <u>Educational Psychologists</u> service to ensure that schools are fully aware of the benefits.	New income targets have been set for the Educational Psychological Service as part of the 2008/09 budget to reflect the sale of non-statutory services to schools. The service will be effectively marketed alongside all the other services the Department sells to schools.

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Community Services Scrutiny Committee		
Community Services recommendation	Recommended that the performance target in relation to <u>Gypsies and Travellers</u> should be made more relevant.	<p>A new target has been added to the Council Plan in relation to specific activity planned for 2008/09.</p> <p><i>b) Improve facilities for Travellers at Bridie's Tan, Southerham</i></p> <p><i>Deliver a purpose built 9 pitch transit site for Travellers.</i></p>
Community Services assurances	<u>Animal Welfare grant</u> is not likely to be included in revenue support grant (RSG) and we are currently expecting DEFRA to confirm that a specific grant will continue next year.	Animal Welfare Grant has not been included in RSG. The Head of Trading Standards has been asked to submit cost estimates to DEFRA for re-imburement in 2008/09, albeit on the basis that the in-year 10% cut in Grant imposed by DEFRA during 2007/08 will not be reinstated for 2008/09.
	More income can be raised through <u>libraries</u> by increasing the range of products sold; and also continue to raise income through <u>registration services</u> .	<p>The range of material available through Libraries has been extended e.g. Local Studies prints. Monitoring of income will be undertaken to establish whether the volumes are cost-effective. Liaison with other Local Authorities is ongoing to establish what successes others have had in the income generation field. There have been follow-up discussions through the Society of Chief Librarians and although the initial findings are that there appears to be no obvious untapped golden goose, the service is looking at appointing project officer for a fixed-term whose remit will include income generation.</p> <p>Our Registration staff continue to offer the widest possible range of services to the public. The current proposals to restructure the service should improve the availability to meet demand. At the same time, some external expertise is</p>

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		<p>being used to help identify any new potential sources of income. Nevertheless, our own staff do keep abreast of new developments, including for example current discussions at national level of the potential for Passport document checking to fall within their remit. Longer term proposals (provision within the Capital Programme) to improve access to; and quality of accommodation, should make our Register Offices more attractive and welcoming for users.</p>
	<p>Various measures will ensure that savings from not increasing the stock fund in the <u>libraries service</u> will not impact on the number of books purchased: replenishing with paperbacks instead of hardbacks except for longer shelf life reference books; increasing use of on-line subscriptions.</p>	<p>Focussing paperback purchases on the 'top 100' in popularity for which borrowing levels are highest, i.e. to meet user demand in the short-term but also making best use of resources for high volume items. Sufficient good quality copies are available across the library network for longer-term use once the initial rush of interest in a popular book has eased. Increased on-line subscription availability for reference material has encouraged greater user access. In such circumstances, the material obviously doesn't physically degrade and is always the most current version.</p>
	<p>The £20,000 saving in <u>Trading Standards</u> will be achieved through movement in the salaries budget without a detrimental impact on service to the public and businesses.</p>	<p>Normal good efficient practice in respect of Vacancy Control Procedures will continue to be adopted and the Head of Trading Standards will deploy the total available budget in a way that meets priorities across the service.</p>
Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee		
<p>Transport & Environment recommendations</p>	<p>Policy steer: <u>Provide less congested and safer roads and footways</u>;</p> <p>(1) Recommended removing the unintended implication that the council is trying to provide 'less congested footways';</p>	<p>The policy steer has been amended to address (1) as follows:</p> <p><i>Provide safer roads and footways and reduce traffic congestion with targeted maintenance and improvements, traffic management and parking controls.</i></p>

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	(2) clarify the term “targeted maintenance” to make it clear that it refers to work which has been prioritised and can realistically be carried out within the financial and other constraints.	(2) The term ‘targeted maintenance’ is used to imply prioritised actions. Each performance indicator that refers to maintenance issues relies on a method of ranking to ensure urgent/priority work is addressed as appropriate.
	Policy steer: <u>Reduce the number of casualties on our roads</u> : This steer appeared to be outside the County Council’s power to achieve; recommended rewording to reflect the need to work with partners and to specify the Council’s role in reducing traffic speeds on our roads.	The policy steer has been amended to include reference to the specific Council role in lowering traffic speeds as recommended: <i>Reduce the number of casualties on our roads and lower traffic speeds to improve the quality of life in our towns and villages.</i>
	Policy steer: <u>Assist in the preparation of a Master Plan for Eastbourne</u> : The lead role played by the County Council should be reflected in the steer.	The policy steer has been amended to state precisely the role played by the County Council as recommended: Prepare a Master Plan for the Eastbourne and Hailsham area.
	Policy steer: <u>Manage household waste through the Reduce, Re-use, Recycle</u> : Recommended making it clear that the strategy does not rely solely on incineration.	The policy steer has been re-drafted as follows to address this recommendation: <i>Plan for the sustainable management of all the County’s waste including provision of facilities to cater for household waste and continue to raise waste awareness through the Reduce, Re-use, Recycle campaign.</i>
	Recommended including an overarching steer to reflect the substantially increased emphasis on people-oriented <u>customer care</u> ethos.	The Council’s promise states a clear commitment to customer focus.
	Recommended including an overarching steer addressing <u>climate change</u> and environmental	A new strategic management policy steer has been added to the Council Plan this year:

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	sustainability.	<i>To make positive progress towards tackling climate change in East Sussex, both in the County Council's own activities and through work with partners, to influence the behaviour of others.</i>
	<p><u>Complaints monitoring</u>: Recommended that the new monitoring procedures for complaints should measure success based on the drop in <i>percentage</i> of complaints progressing beyond stage 1 rather than a reduction in the absolute <i>number</i> (on the basis that an increasing number of complaints is not necessarily a bad thing per se).</p>	The Transport and Environment service plan contains a performance indicator to monitor the <i>percentage</i> of complaints (which rarely exceeds six) progressing beyond stage 1, as a percentage of all complaints.
	<p><u>Reduction in preventative maintenance of pavements £16,000</u>: The Board recommended not taking this comparatively small saving because pavements are important to local people and because of the increased risk of injury claims a budget reduction may mean.</p>	The saving was made ultimately. However, a permanent allocation of £150,000 per annum was agreed by Cabinet to fund further maintenance of urban footways.
<p>Transport and Environment assurances</p>	<p>Both this and last year's Portfolio Plan refer to the difficulties of demonstrating the precise <u>impact of measures such as driver training, road safety education and cycle training</u> on levels of road safety. Requested further clarification of the evidence.</p>	<p>The Transport and Environment department has put in place actions that are believed to improve road safety, for example, lowering speed limits. This is in tandem with national initiatives, for example, the campaign against drink driving (where there has been a gradual but obvious change in attitude).</p> <p>The department has been unable to correlate directly the impact of specific actions, however, longer term trends do show a decline in the number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads.</p>

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	<p><u>Passenger transport reductions in service £150,000:</u></p> <p>1) Suggested viewing this saving in the context of the Best Value Review of Passenger Transport (recommendation for a zero based review of bus services).</p> <p>2) Queried why this saving was classed as <i>high impact</i> if the bus services that would be withdrawn were the least used.</p> <p>3) Requested greater clarity about how community transport solutions would be developed as alternatives to buses.</p>	<p>The savings were necessary to achieve the Transport and Environment Department's cash limit.</p> <p>At the time the Scrutiny Board met, it was not possible to identify exact routes. But the classification of impact relates to customer perception, and hence this was recorded as <i>high impact</i>.</p> <p>The Best Value Review of Passenger Transport did not make recommendations for savings but rather recommended actions which may in themselves result in efficiencies and perhaps different models of service delivery.</p>
	<p><u>Review of staffing structures saving £600,000:</u> 1) Request for clarification in due course on how this significant saving would align with the department's policy steers. 2) Concern at the timetable which could mean that the new structure would not be in place until some months into the 2008/09 financial year with consequential extra impacts on staffing. 3) Noted positive assurances that equal opportunities principles would be adhered to.</p>	<p>The restructure is progressing well but it is unlikely that the full anticipated savings will be achieved in 2008/09. This is recognised in the savings plans which show that the full estimated £1 million will be achieved over a two year period.</p> <p>The Council's promise and delivery of the policy steers is driving the whole change programme which is being managed in accordance with the Council Human Resources policies and procedures to ensure fairness and equity.</p>

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