

Report to: **Audit, Best Value and Community Services Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **15 March 2013**

By: **Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Community Services**

Title of report: **Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources 2012/13**

Purpose of report: **To review scrutiny's input into the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process during 2012/13.**

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee is recommended to (1) review its input into the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources process; and (2) identify any lessons for improvement for the process in future.

1. Financial Appraisal

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

2. Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) and scrutiny in East Sussex

2.1 Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (i.e. aligning the Council's budget setting process with service delivery plans) is now established as an effective and transparent business planning process in East Sussex. The 2012/13 round began with the *State of the County 2012* report, considered by Cabinet on the 24 July 2012.

2.2 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.

2.3 In September 2012 each scrutiny committee considered extracts from the *State of the County* report and made comments to the Cabinet on the policy steers and their contribution to the objectives of the Council (the County Council 'Promise') prior to consideration by the full County Council.

2.4 The scrutiny committees established scrutiny boards to provide a more detailed input into the RPPR process. These met in December 2012 or January 2013 to consider the draft portfolio plans and the impact of proposed savings. The boards:

- considered whether the amended policy steers were reflected satisfactorily within the proposed key areas of budget spend for the coming year;
- considered whether all possible efficiencies were identified; and
- assessed the potential impact of these savings on services provided to East Sussex County Council customers.

2.5 Appendix 1 summarises the comments and recommendations made by the Audit, Best Value and Community Services RPPR board.

3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

3.1 The Committee is recommended to review its input into the 2012/13 RPPR process and in particular to establish whether there are lessons for improvement for the future.

SIMON HUGHES

Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Community Services

Contact Officer: Paul Dean Tel No. 01273 481751

Local Members: All

Background Documents

None

Overview and Scrutiny: Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) boards 2012/13

This table is a summary of the outcomes, observations and findings of the **Audit, Best Value and Community Services RPPR Board** held in January 2013.

The Board considered the draft Portfolio Plans. It attempted to assess the impact of the significant budget cuts facing the County Council over the coming years, and reviewed activities where savings were not being proposed but which accounted for significant use of resources.

The Scrutiny board is supportive of the plans being put in place, and the means being proposed, to protect front line services as far as practicable. In general, the Board endorsed the decisions of the Cabinet to protect a number of key activities.

All the RPPR boards emphasised the continuing importance of presenting RPPR information in an open, clear and understandable way.

<p><u>Board members:</u> Councillors: Sparks (Chairman), Barnes (Vice Chairman), Ensor, B Tidy and Whetstone.</p> <p><u>Lead Member:</u> Councillor Freebody</p> <p><u>Officers:</u> Simon Hughes, Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Community Services Dr Diana Grice, Director of Public Health Phil Packham, Assistant Director, Resources Irene Campbell, Assistant Director, Community Services Rita Greenwood, Assistant Director, Corporate Resources Melanie Griffin, Assistant Director Property and Capital Investment Tony Summers, Interim Chief Information Officer Harvey Winder, Scrutiny Support Officer</p>
--

Scrutiny board observations and recommendations	Outcomes (where applicable)
<p>1) Consider agreeing the plan to deliver joint back office services and SAP with Surrey County Council sooner than the proposed target of 2014/15 (Community and Resources Portfolio Plan, p.6).</p>	<p>We will commence the planning work on the next stage of the partnership work with Surrey County Council shortly and once the transfer of services from Serco has been completed. This will include options for creating centres of excellence around the provision of the transactional services, to drive further efficiencies and savings, and the potential convergence of the SAP</p>

Scrutiny board observations and recommendations	Outcomes (where applicable)
	system for the two authorities. The 2014/15 date in the Portfolio Plan is for an agreed plan on the way forward and the commencement of the service improvement work.
2) Consider including as a performance measure for Public Health the performance of health visitors in contacting the families of children at 24 months old, once that duty comes to the Council after 2015 (Public Health Portfolio Plan, p.4).	Not applicable in 2013.
3) The mobile office is approaching the end of its working life and does not need to be replaced, so a saving can be made on running costs. Due to advances in technology, the services that it provides can now be delivered as effectively in other locations, for example, in static libraries or community halls.	The recommendations are being considered within reviews of mobiles, rural services and the Eastbourne area. This is due to report in June following consultation.
4) Increase the shelf life of books to mitigate the proposed savings but take care when reducing book stock so as not to reduce the popularity of the service.	We continue to review the shelf life of books and will increase where possible.
5) Scrutiny reviews are an extremely valuable and effective tool. To avoid the impact of savings, reviews should be conducted in the most cost effective manner. This could include ensuring that the project initiation document and scrutiny recommendations are as focussed as possible. Members might also consider taking on some additional activities when carrying out scrutiny reviews to maximise the effectiveness of officer time.	These ideas will be pursued by the Scrutiny team.
6) Whilst supporting the proposal to cease having a car for the Chairman, the Board wished to see options explored for retaining a driver for circumstances when the Chairman might need it.	A range of options will be explored, including those recommendations made by the RPPR Board.
7) The Agile working scheme and the move towards paperless working will require greater ICT support than the current working practices. The proposed savings need to reflect the likely need for more ICT support.	The detailed business case and implementation plan for the Agile Working Programme is being developed. This will include a thorough evaluation of the ICT support required for implementation and on-going support of systems and technology. Proposed savings for both Agile and within ICT will reflect these requirements, and if necessary be adjusted.