

Report to: **Children's Services Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **10 March 2014**

By: **Chief Executive**

Title of report: **Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources 2013/14**

Purpose of report: **To review scrutiny's input into the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process during 2013/14.**

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee is recommended to a) review its input into the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources process and b) 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) has established an effective and transparent business planning process. A Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) has been produced. The 2013/14 RPPR round looks at the financial year 2014/15 which represents year two of the three year savings plan.

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 2013 each scrutiny committee considered extracts from the *State of the County* report and the departmental savings and Portfolio Plans. Requests for further information or reports were made to help the scrutiny committee evaluate proposals made in the respective Portfolio Plans.

2.4 The scrutiny committees established scrutiny boards to provide a more detailed input into the RPPR process. These met in December 2013 or January 2014 to consider the draft portfolio plans and the impact of proposed savings. The boards:

- considered any amendments to the Portfolio Plans and how they were being delivered against the proposed key areas of budget spend for the coming year;
- 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 Children's Services Scrutiny Committee RPPR Board to Cabinet.

3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

3.1 The committee is recommended to review its input into the 2013/14 RPPR process and in particular to establish whether there are lessons for improvement for the future.

BECKY SHAW
Chief Executive

Contact Officer: Paul Dean Tel No. 01273 481751

Local Members: All

Background Documents None

Overview and Scrutiny: Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) boards 2013/14

This is a summary of the outcomes, observations and findings of the scrutiny RPPR Boards held in December 2013 and January 2014.

All the scrutiny boards considered draft Portfolio Plans and savings plans and attempted to assess the impact of both any significant budget cuts facing the County Council over the coming years and those activities where savings are not necessarily being proposed but which account for significant use of resources.

Scrutiny boards commented on the plans being put in place and the means being proposed to protect front line services as far as practicable. As a consequence of this work, they have identified new priorities for scrutiny work programmes in the coming year.

Children's Services

RPPR Board on 7 January 2014

Board: Councillors Kathryn Field (Chair), Stephen Shing, Peter Charlton, Claire Dowling, Michael Ensor, Roy Galley, Alan Shuttleworth, Francis Whetstone and Councillor Mattock

Lead Members: Councillors Nick Bennett and Sylvia Tidy

Observers: Councillor Mike Blanch

Scrutiny Board Comments & Recommendations	Outcomes (where applicable)
Key messages to Cabinet:	
The Board supports the work the Department is doing to achieve its long term strategy and acknowledges the need for savings.	
1. The Board is concerned that the savings proposals for the Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service (SLES), Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and Targeted Youth Service (TYS) may undermine the Department's work to improve educational attainment and there may be knock on effects on other services leading to more referrals to children's social care and the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and consequent increased pressure on those budgets.	County Council agreed the savings on 11 February 2014.
Further detailed comments and observations made by the Review Board on the Portfolio Plan 2014/15 – 2016/17 and the Savings Plan are summarised below:	
<u>Special Education Needs (SEN) and Disability</u>	
2. The personalisation of budgets (e.g. for home school transport) will achieve savings based on the evidence from other local authorities. Where people hold their own budgets they tend to make different choices that lead to lower costs and can increase independence. However, the Board were concerned that the personalisation of budgets could affect the viability of directly provided services such as respite care thus reducing provision for those who choose not to have personal budgets.	Children's Services Department is using what used to be respite care, to avoid higher cost agency placements. The service will remain but will be used for a different purpose.

Scrutiny Board Comments & Recommendations	Outcomes (where applicable)
<u>Children's Social Care</u>	
THRIVE	
<p>3. Officers reported that the THRIVE programme is working and the department is arresting the increase in costs. The number of referrals is reducing and it is anticipated they will fall further by the end of the year. However, East Sussex still has more referrals than other authorities in the South East. The department is working with other local authorities to understand why referrals are higher. The Scrutiny Committee will continue to monitor this programme.</p>	<p>An update report on the progress of THRIVE is in the draft programme for the 16 June Children's Services Scrutiny Committee meeting.</p>
<u>Children's Centres</u>	
<p>4. The Board was concerned about the impact of the mergers and the reduction in services to those at risk of poor educational outcomes and the effect this could have on narrowing the gap at the early years foundations stage (EYFS). The savings proposals aim to maintain a fair distribution of early years practitioners across the County and outreach work will continue as far as possible.</p>	<p>Targeted support to vulnerable families through the Children's Centre Keywork Service will continue to include support for families to promote good child development and school readiness. The savings will reduce the volume of open access activity, all of which is designed to contribute towards the development of skills and understanding, and school readiness. The aim will be to deliver as much, well focussed, activity as possible within the reduced budget, for those who most need it. The contribution of Children's Centres to Foundation Stage attainment will be reviewed the Scrutiny Review of attainment at the Early Year Foundation Stage which is in the draft programme for the 16 June Children's Services Scrutiny Committee meeting.</p>
<u>Standards & Learning Effectiveness Service (SLES)</u>	
<p>5. The number of primary schools without a substantive head is an area of concern. There are a number of reasons why East Sussex has struggled to recruit. This has been raised both locally and nationally with Ofsted and the Association of Head Teachers. The Scrutiny Committee would like to look at this issue in further detail.</p>	<p>Recruitment and Retention of Head Teachers for Primary Schools has been identified as potential future scrutiny work on the forward plan</p>
<p>6. The levels of attainment reflected in the performance targets (pages 18 &19 of the portfolio plan) are disappointing and particularly at the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. A Scrutiny Review of attainment at the Early Years Foundation Stage has started and will look at this issue.</p>	
<p>7. The Board is concerned that reducing the SLES budget by £616K over 2 years will have an impact on the work to improve attainment.</p>	<p>County Council agreed the savings on 11 February 2014.</p>
<u>Targeted Youth Support (TYS) and Youth Offending Team (YOT)</u>	
<p>8. The savings in Targeted Youth Support (TYS) are linked across a number of proposals (savings plan refs CSD S12, S16 & S20). The Board had particular concerns about the impact of proposals for CAMHS (savings plan ref CSD S16), which the Board considered may lead to more referrals to social care and the YOT.</p>	<p>As far as possible the savings will be taken from the community activities provided by YYS rather than from one to one support or from CAMHS.</p>
<p>9. The Board generally had concerns about the impact of these savings proposals and requests that</p>	<p>Delay would mean finding savings proposals</p>

Scrutiny Board Comments & Recommendations	Outcomes (where applicable)
<p>consideration be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changing the phasing of the savings to allow more time to assess the impacts on the service (i.e. smaller savings in 2014/15 followed by the larger proposed savings in 2015/16). • changing the phasing of the savings to allow more time to assess the impacts on the service (i.e. smaller savings in 2014/15 followed by the larger proposed savings in 2015/16). 	<p>elsewhere in order to achieve overall savings targets for 2014-2015</p>

Recommendations for Improvement

- 1) The Board requests that additional background financial information is provided, specifically the addition to the savings plan of a column showing the current full year budget against each saving proposal, in order to make adequate judgements on the savings proposals.
- 2) Where there is still some element of choice, or where savings proposals are being revised, the Board would like to see a range of options presented with background information on the likely impacts of the savings proposals.

