

REPORT OF THE CABINET

The Cabinet met on 4 March 2014. Attendance:-

Councillor Glazier (Chair)

Councillors Bennett, Bentley, Chris Dowling, Elkin, Maynard, Simmons and Tidy

1. Council Monitoring – Quarter 3 2013/14

1.1 The Cabinet has considered a report on performance against the Council Plan, Revenue Budget, Capital Programme, Savings Plan and Risks for the third quarter of 2013/14. Broad progress against the Council's four strategic priorities is summarised below and headline data is provided in the Corporate Summary at Appendix 1 of the report to the Cabinet, previously circulated to all Members. Strategic risks were reported at Appendix 2 and a detailed report for each department was provided in Appendices 3 – 7 of the report to the Cabinet.

1.2 We continue to make progress across all our priority areas. For example this quarter we have seen: improvements across a range of initiatives in Adult Social Care that provide sustainable support to people with ongoing needs (see paragraph 1.14 below); good progress is being made with THRIVE, although work remains to be done (paragraph 1.12); and 27% of construction work for the Bexhill Hastings Link Road has been completed. More detail of progress against each of our priority areas is set out in paragraphs 1.9 to 1.19 below. Of the 70 Council Plan targets 50 (71%) are rated green, 13 (19%) are rated amber and 7 (10%) are rated red. The number of targets on track has fallen by 7, while those off track and rated red or amber has increased to 20 since quarter 2.

1.3 The Council is projected to underspend on its revenue budget by £10.4m (2.3% of the whole Council budget). The main variations include a projected underspend of £5.2m (18.2% of budget) in Treasury Management; a £6.4m projected underspend on central budgets (due to central contingencies that are now projected as not being required and additional grant income); and a projected overspend of £1.6m (0.9% of budget) in Adult Social Care. The Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) report to Cabinet of 28 January 2014 highlighted the overall good progress being made in delivering savings and managing revenue spending. The Council approved the Cabinet's recommendation to release the contingency funds together with the projected net underspend totalling £10m being directed to the following uses:

- £1.5m additional provisions to speed up repairs to potholes;
- £5.0m to address the maintenance of unclassified roads; and
- £3.5m to the capital reserve to replenish resource required for future investment.

Note: continuing bad weather throughout the winter has led to additional costs for highways, details were provided in Appendices 6 and 8 of the report to the Cabinet previously circulated to all Members.

1.4 There are specific reserves and contingency within the Public Health Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP): a Pandemic Reserve, £1.2m; contingencies to mitigate the risks

arising from the recommissioning of Tranche 1 services (includes smoking cessation, tackling obesity and alcohol and substance misuse), £1.2m; and the impact of new guidance on NHS Prescription Services, £1.0m (see paragraph 1.16). Projected underspend in other Public Health budgets totalling £1.4m will be allocated to reserves and contingency and there is scope within the Public Health MTFP for any remaining reserves and contingency to be carried forward into 2014/15.

1.5 Our 2013/14 savings plans are mainly on track. There is a projected shortfall of £2.0m, 8.7% of total, after mitigating savings of £577,000. The shortfall is largely within Adult Social Care Community Based Services. It is anticipated that the position will improve by the end of quarter 4, but this remains an area of risk, depending as it does on many individual decisions about care needs (also see paragraph 1.14).

1.6 The Council's debt has risen in the last quarter to £6.3m. Of this £2.22m (35%) is over five months old of which £1.5m (23%) is over one year old. This old debt is mainly in relation to Adult Social Care, further details were set out in Appendix 1 of the report to the Cabinet.

1.7 The Capital Programme runs to 2017/18. There is a projected variance of £6.8m. This is mainly composed of deferral of the £5m Local Authority Mortgage Scheme until an appropriate financing partner can be identified plus slippage consisting of £1.2m Children's Services Basic Need and £1.1m across a range of Communities, Economy and Transport (CET) projects. Major items of spend in advance are £680,000 on the Inward Investment Capital Grant Fund in CET and £600,000 on Building Maintenance Capitalisation in the Business Services Department.

1.8 There have been amendments to two of the risks in the strategic risk register: risk 2 health risk and control has been amended to include reference to the Better Care Fund and the risk score has decreased from red to amber; and risk 4 local economic growth control has been amended to reflect the March peer review with no change to the risk score.

Progress against Council Priorities

Driving economic growth

1.9 Significant progress continues to be made on construction of the Bexhill Hastings Link Road; 27% of construction work has been completed and opening of the road remains on track for May 2015. The Baldslow Link Road remains one of the priority schemes for South East Local Transport Board funding; preparatory design, ecological and environmental work is underway. There have been 809 new registrations for superfast broadband this quarter; the total number of new registrations this year is 5,617, exceeding the target of 2,000 (Appendix 6 of the report to the Cabinet).

1.10 Of the 32 Looked After Children (LAC) aged 16, 25 (78%) are currently in education, employment, or employment with training (EET), against a target of 84%. Of the 42 LAC aged 17, 28 (66%) are currently in EET, against a target of 70%. The Youth Employability Service is now in place and has already improved the referral process. We expect to see a reduction in the number of young people not in EET following the new re-engagement programmes in January/February 2014 (Appendix 5 of the report to the Cabinet).

1.11 Provisional attainment results for 2013 show that 52.7% of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) who are designated as school action achieved three levels of progress between key stages 2 and 4 in English; an increase of 7% on 2012 but below the target of 60%. 44% achieved three levels of progress in maths; an increase of 0.8% on 2012 but below the target of 48% (Appendix 5 of the report to the Cabinet).

Keeping vulnerable people safe from harm

1.12 Good progress has been made with THRIVE including: reduced duration of care proceedings; reduced timescales for matching prospective permanent carers with children; and fewer children being placed with agency foster carers. However, we are not meeting our targets for the rates of Child Protection Plans (52.3 against a target of 49.7) and LAC (55.0 against a target of 53) per 10,000 of the 0-17 population. We are undertaking a mid-term evaluation of THRIVE to check progress and capture lessons which will improve its implementation; findings will be reported in May 2014. A projected £4.1m will be drawn from the THRIVE budget to meet investments as intended (Appendix 5).

1.13 208 people were killed or seriously injured (KSI) on East Sussex roads between January and September 2013, and we do not expect to meet our target (less than 277) this year. This is 6.5% higher than the average for the same periods in 2010-12, and this trend is repeated across Sussex. We are working with partners to reduce the number of KSI (Appendix 6 of the report to the Cabinet).

Building resilience for individuals and families to live independently

1.14 The proportion of working age adults and older people receiving self directed support (74%) or direct payments (26%) continues to increase, both meeting the 2013/14 targets (Appendix 3 of the report to the Cabinet). We are projecting savings of £714,000 against a target of £2.7m in Community Based Services. We will continue our current activity to deliver these savings, as set out in our RPPR savings proposals. Equality Impact Assessments have been completed and mitigating actions put in place.

1.15 The Memory Assessment Service has received 1,216 referrals in the first nine months of 2013/14, exceeding the whole year target of 1,000. The Memory Support Service was not able to provide face to face client work until late November, due to staff training requirements and delays in establishing the service. Because of this, we project that 119 sessions will be delivered by 31 March 2014, missing our target of 200. The new service is operating well and we are confident that as the service becomes established delivery will increase (Appendix 3 of the report to the Cabinet).

1.16 New guidance has recently been issued stating that local authorities will need to cover the full costs relating to the prescribing of drugs for Public Health services. Nationally these costs were not included in the Primary Care Trust (PCT) transfer costs and so represent a risk to the Public Health Grant. Further retroactive guidance cannot be ruled out and could increase this risk. Work is being undertaken to estimate the prescribing costs (Appendix 3 of the report to the Cabinet). A risk relating to retroactive public health guidance being published putting unsustainable pressure on the public health grant is being considered by the Audit, Best Value and Community Services Scrutiny Committee and may be proposed as a strategic risk.

1.17 The number of completed Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) is 45, missing our target of 85. This is in line with numbers reported by other SE7 pathfinder

authorities. From April 2014, pathfinders will become early adopters and it is anticipated that the current target for completed EHCPs will be re-evaluated (Appendix 5 of the report to the Cabinet).

Making best use of our resources

1.18 The overall revenue savings target is rated amber with a predicted outturn of £20m, £2m below target (Appendix 4 of the report to the Cabinet). However, savings plans are generally on track and the shortfall is mainly within one area see paragraph 1.14 above.

1.19 The Agile programme is progressing well although there are delays in the roll out of the ICT Citrix programme – the technology that enables staff to access software programmes from any location at work or at home. We have employed external expertise to help us resolve some technical issues. Engagement workshops will inform the beginning of the rollout process in early 2014. We hope to pilot remote access technologies in early 2014 and, in parallel, pilot Agile change processes prior to a wider rollout of Agile in 2014 (Appendix 4 of the report to the Cabinet).

2. Notice of Motion: Closure of Mountfield and Whatlington Church of England Primary School

2.1 The Cabinet considered a report by the Interim Director of Children’s Services regarding the proposed closure of Mountfield and Whatlington Church of England Primary School. The report also addressed a Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Field. The Notice of Motion states:

“This Council will take the necessary steps in conjunction with all partners to mothball Mountfield & Whatlington school until such time as the true need for places is established after the proposed expansion of surrounding villages has taken place.”

2.2 The land and buildings were donated and are held in Trust by the Diocese of Chichester and the local church. Any capital liabilities incurred as a result of closure would fall to the Diocese and Trustees. It would be for the Diocese and Trustees to decide what should happen with the land and buildings.

2.3 The Cabinet approved the closure of Mountfield and Whatlington Church of England Primary School, given the concerns of the County Council and the Diocese of Chichester about the long term sustainability of the school in terms of improvements in standards and in the context of declining popularity and financial viability.

2.4 The Council's pupil forecasting model does not predict an increase in primary school places for the Mountfield and Whatlington area. Rother District Council's 2011 Submission Core Strategy and the 2013 Schedule of Main Modifications do not propose housing site allocations directly in the Mountfield and Whatlington area. In the surrounding parishes the Submission Core Strategy proposed circa 516 dwellings, which has since increased to circa 670 dwellings in the Main Modifications. There are four schools in the surrounding parishes, all of which are likely to be better placed than Mountfield and Whatlington Church of England Primary School to accommodate additional children from new housing in their area.

2.5 The Diocese of Chichester agrees with this view. In a communication to the Council on 24 January 2014 the Diocese stated that *'...new housing would need to be on a huge scale to make a case for reopening Mountfield and Whatlington School. The Diocese could not advise the Trustees that paying for mothballing would be a good use of their charitable funds'* and *'... can see nothing in the projections to suggest there are plans for the substantial housing developments that would be necessary to make a case to the Secretary of State to reopen the school. There is still spare capacity in several local schools and we expect many new parents will continue to choose existing popular and successful schools and favour their growth to a full one form entry, rather than choose a new small local school'*. In addition the Diocese stated that *'...Many parents say they would prefer a high performing rural primary school with seven classes – one for each age group with enough staff to offer a wider curriculum offer than small schools can provide alone...'* and *'If there were a moderate rise in pupil numbers locally the Diocese would first wish to explore expanding existing high performing schools to a full one form entry'*.

2.6 The Cabinet **recommends** the County Council:

- ☆ (1) not to support the Motion proposed by Councillor Field.

4 March 2014

KEITH GLAZIER
Chair

