

1. Engagement on RPPR

1.1 Each year the Council engages with all Members and a range of stakeholders, including the Trade Unions and young people on its proposals for actions, spending and savings for the following financial year. The engagement is carried out within the context of the prospects for local government for the next four years.

2. Scrutiny Boards

2.1 All Scrutiny Committees held Boards and considered the draft Portfolio Plans and savings plans in December 2014. The Boards assessed the impact of both any significant budget cuts facing the County Council over the coming years and activities where savings were not necessarily being proposed, but which accounted for significant use of resources. The Boards commented on the plans being put in place and the means being proposed to protect frontline services as far as practicable. As a consequence of this work, new priorities for scrutiny work programmes have been identified for the coming year.

Adult Social Care & Community Safety

2.2 The Board discussed and made the following observations to highlight to Cabinet:

- a) The scale of savings to date (£27.8m over three years) inevitably changes the risk levels in the whole system.
- b) The potential future savings required from 2016/17, whilst uncertain, are likely to have further significant impacts.
- c) There are a number of potential risks and pressures associated with implementing the Care Act provisions.
- d) There is a need to pursue partnership working with the NHS, and the East Sussex Better Together programme is of high importance in terms of working towards a sustainable health and social care system in East Sussex and a rebalancing towards community based care.
- e) There is uncertainty regarding future commissioning arrangements for health and social care, given the forthcoming general election and differing policies amongst the national political parties.
- f) The impact of reductions in personal budgets as a result of required savings continues to be assessed and the Scrutiny Committee will receive a further report in March 2015.

2.3 The Board agreed the following specific recommendation:

Adult Social Care, working with health partners, should create a stable delivery vehicle for community services which can offer stability through any structural changes, with strong local accountability.

Audit, Best Value & Community Services

Public Health

2.4 The Board noted that Public Health proposed to continue the use of underspends on one-off projects to improve community resilience. The Board was not apprised of detail. It was requested that such expenditure requires a prior scrutiny by Members, and the Board asked for the opportunity to return to this before any firm decisions are made.

Capital Programme

2.5 The Board recommended that Cabinet:

- a) Examines whether additional borrowing should fund what are currently revenue contributions to the Capital Programme given pressures on the revenue budget.
- b) Reviews currently contractually uncommitted elements of the Capital Programme (£105m) in order to seek ways to reduce revenue servicing costs.

Feasibility of installing photovoltaic canopies over Council car parks

2.6 The Board supports the Council's investigation of the possibility of installing photovoltaic panels on its buildings and canopies on top of car parks. It recommended that any energy generated by the photovoltaic panels is assessed in the first instance for its ability to reduce the running costs of the buildings themselves, irrespective of whether access to the grid can be obtained and further revenue generated.

Libraries

2.7 The Board supported an investigation into installing self-service facilities in the remaining libraries that do not yet have them and welcomed the continued conversion of libraries into 'community hubs' that provide a range of front-end Council services, such as providing residents with Blue Badges.

2.8 The Board recommended that:

- a) The self-service installation project investigation is undertaken as soon as reasonably practicable and is given clear timescales for completion.
- b) The Libraries and Information Service should continue to research alternative ways of running libraries, for example, lending books through local booksellers in villages.
- c) The Libraries and Information Service should consider whether it is cost effective to continue to run more than one library in larger towns.
- d) If the use of the Mobile Library Service continues to decline, the Council should consider replacing it with alternative ways of lending books.

Communications

2.9 The Board recommended that the "Your County" magazine should aim to become, at a minimum, self-funding and noted the reputational damage arising from a lack of understanding of its cost-effectiveness. The policy on advertising should be reviewed and other means also be investigated to achieve this goal.

Procurement

2.10 The Board welcomed the forecast savings for 2015/16 of £3.4m revenue and £4.4m capital that are to be delivered through procurement, contract and supplier management activities.

Registration Service

2.11 The Board noted that the surplus for 2014/15 is projected to be £101,000 against a target of £50,000. It therefore recommended that the annual savings target be increased from the current level by £50,000 (each year for the next three years).

Agile Programme

2.12 The Board learned that it would be a difficult and potentially inefficient process to try to extract Agile savings from a department's wider savings targets. All the projected Agile savings would not be realised during 2014/15 and the Board was told that reserve funds would cover the shortfall; this would need to be factored into the 2015/16 budget. The Board recommended that the Agile programme be pursued as expeditiously as possible.

Personnel

2.13 The Board wished to draw Cabinet's attention to the potential need to focus additional HR resources on reducing short-term sickness (and the associated reliance on agency staff) especially within Adult Social Care. This activity might require additional, short-term cost.

Further Audit, Best Value & Community Services Scrutiny Work

2.14 The Board highlighted its intention to undertake further detailed scrutiny work in the following areas:

- Exploring alternative models for running libraries, including the provision of mobile libraries.
- Reviewing the provision of the Policy and Performance functions within the Council with prioritised options for levels of service.
- Reviewing the provision for internal and external Communications within the Council with prioritised options for levels of service (to establish what savings could be achieved).
- Draft proposals for 2015/16 for one-off Public Health projects.
- Reviewing the running costs of Council buildings and planned improvements, such as photovoltaic panels.
- The level of motor mileage and car leasing costs for staff and Members (report to the Committee).

Children's Services

2.15 The Board wished to highlight to Cabinet:

- a) The cumulative impact of the savings proposals for Children's Centres has the potential to undermine the support for some of the most vulnerable children and families and adversely impact services targeted at early years.
- b) The proposals for savings to the Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service have the potential to undermine the progress towards implementing the Excellence for All Strategy and obtaining the best educational outcomes for children and young people in East Sussex.

(However, it was noted that the savings and impact did not reflect an additional £870,000 that has been identified for 2014/15 and 2015/16 from available Dedicated Schools Grant and the Corporate Transformation Fund to fund the improvements identified in the Ofsted action plan.)

Economy, Transport & Environment

2.16 The department will achieve the savings required for 2014/15 and is largely on target to achieve the savings for 2015/16.

2.17 Some Highways savings, which are linked to the re-procurement of the Highways contract, may be delayed (previously reported to Cabinet) and those savings dependent on a decision on the Reformulated Supported Bus Network may also be subject to change.

3. Partners

3.1 The Leader and Deputy Leader met with representatives of businesses, public, voluntary and community sector, UNISON and the Older People's Forums on 27 November 2014. The meeting provided an opportunity to share proposals for the 2015/16 Council Plan and budget and to explain the challenges the Council was likely to face in future years.

3.2 The discussion in the meeting focused on the sustained, national economic situation and the challenge this presents for the county, with a specific focus on:

- a) The consensus and shared understanding that exists across partners of the scale of the financial challenge facing all sectors and the fact that no easy or quick solution exists.
- b) The suggestion that an overall picture of the scale of savings required across all public services in East Sussex could help partners and stakeholders to put the changes needed into context.
- c) The uncertainty represented by the General Election in May 2015. Irrespective of the political make-up of the next Government, there will be no additional money available and this is likely to continue for some time.
- d) The scale of the transformation of public services required as a result of the unprecedented economic challenges which will continue for the foreseeable future. The need for increased engagement and a focus on outcomes was also discussed.
- e) The partnership arrangements which have strengthened over recent years will need to continue to support how all partners/stakeholders work with communities, using a strategic

commissioning approach and evidence of what works. Supporting communities to help themselves will be essential as the funding cuts impact on the frontline.

- f) The need for continued work to ensure that all assets were being used as efficiently and effectively as possible to support frontline services delivery, but an acknowledgement that savings of the scale needed could not be achieved by efficiency alone.

3.3 The role of ESCC as a large employer and spending organisation (in spite of the funding difficulties, ESCC will be spending £325m in 2015/16) within the county was acknowledged for the best practice that can be shared and for the positive impact it can have on other organisations.

3.4 The ESCC focus on economic growth was recognised for the impact the numerous activities can have in supporting the local economy and in making the infrastructure across the county as robust and effective as possible.

4. Business Representatives

4.1 A meeting was held with Business representatives on 15 January 2015.

4.2 In response to questions about impact of the savings in relation to social care, it was explained that joint working with Clinical Commissioning Groups would be a key area and with a focus on re-shaping the health and social care economy. Work would continue to identify the services required in local areas in order to invest in community services. The Better Together Programme would result in better integration of Health and Social Care Services, with a continued focus on the frail and elderly. The Thrive programme would continue to provide early intervention in relation to Children's Social Care and other initiatives, such as the Troubled Families Programme and ongoing work in Children's Centres, should result in a reduction in the number of Looked After Children. Work in relation to the 'Helping People Help Themselves' priority outcome would be key in relation to social care delivery in the future.

4.3 In response to questions about the challenges for educational attainment and opportunities for career development at school/college, officers explained that good progress had been made in relation to attainment in the early years and work was in progress to raise attainment at other stages of education. It was suggested that there could be a role for businesses to interact with schools by, for example, liaison with Governing Bodies. The possibility of developing a model to increase business community engagement in schools to increase collaboration on training and work experience opportunities was discussed.

4.4 Representatives asked about the support given to the voluntary sector and whether assistance could be given to local people to establish groups. For example, templates as to how to set-up groups, key roles and responsibilities for those involved, draft structures, recruitment of volunteers etc. The County Council's role in supporting these activities was explained. Further consideration would be given to initiatives to support the development of the voluntary sector.

4.5 Representatives were supportive of the Council's proposals for promoting economic development in East Sussex. They highlighted the need to generate markets both within the county and beyond. Communication with the business community about the work of the Council and its various initiatives/investment opportunities was important.

4.6 In response to the suggestion that ultra-fast broadband in urban areas and business parks should be promoted as a trigger for economic development, it was reported that developers had the opportunity to have broadband installed at zero cost to the developer on any new business development.

4.7 Representatives referred to the 'pinch points' in the county's transport infrastructure, such as level crossings, and the potential benefit of yellow lines to deter parking in some areas. It was agreed that the time level crossing gates were closed would be raised with Network Rail. It was reported that a series of parking reviews were to be carried out and route studies undertaken to try to improve traffic flows. Transport improvements were considered as part of the planning for new developments.

4.8 Representatives asked about the Council's proposals in relation to making best use of assets and were assured that work was being undertaken with partners to ensure best use was being made of assets and that co-location formed part of the consideration.

Engagement on RPPR Addendum

Trade Unions

1.1 A meeting was held between Cabinet and the Trade Union representatives on 22 January 2015.

1.2 In response to questions about Community Based Services and re-ablement, it was explained that the purpose of re-ablement is to maximise people's independence through a range of time limited, outcome focused interventions. Following a successful period of either bed and/or community based re-ablement, individuals are able to remain living in their own homes as well as delaying, removing or reducing the need for community support (homecare, community meals, etc) funded from the local authority's community care budget. The £2m in 2014/15 and £3m in 2015/16 represents the estimated net saving of providing re-ablement to East Sussex residents prior to considering the need for long term support. Re-ablement is delivered by the Joint Community Rehabilitation Service, independent sector homecare providers and Occupational Therapists.

1.3 Questions were raised about Supporting People, in particular with regard to: Young People at risk; Offenders and complex homeless; and Mental health and Homeless Services. It was explained that the Young People at Risk was a service in Rye, which consists of six units of accommodation, and was proposed for closure. It has a long history of underutilisation. This is primarily due to the service location in an area where there are issues with transport links and little opportunity for young people to access employment or education opportunities. Closure of this one service achieved a saving which also enabled us to reduce the impact on other accommodation based services for young people. Most referrals for this service come from Bexhill and we are maintaining a service provision in that area. All current tenants of this scheme are being supported into appropriate alternative accommodation. In relation to Offenders and complex homeless, this is a service which has been de-commissioned in a planned way in conjunction with partners in Housing and Probation. The existing service proved unable to meet the requirements of clients and efforts were made to commission a new service. The tender opportunity did not attract sufficient interest and the existing provider declined the opportunity to deliver against the required service specification. We have worked with senior colleagues in Housing and Probation to establish an alternative means of delivering the service to offenders and homeless people with complex needs and this service is operational. In relation to the Mental Health and Homeless Service, it was explained that we have worked with providers and colleagues in housing to: maximise revenue opportunities through alternative sources e.g. housing management; and manage savings requirements with minimal reductions to services, maintaining maximum staffing at the front line with most reductions being achieved through changes to central management costs. All our accommodation based providers have been able to deliver the savings required which means there have been no scheme closures and have confirmed their commitment to deliver the agreed service specifications.

1.4 In response to an observation that Adult Social Care seemed to bear the heaviest reductions, it was explained that Adult Social Care accounts for around 50% of the Council's current spending. When the Medium Term Financial Plan to deliver £60m savings was developed two years ago, officers had been charged with identifying savings of £70m, with a view to allowing Members some flexibility to identify services

they felt should be protected. Adult Social Care has benefitted from some of that mitigation.

1.5 In response to questions about the reduction in SEN flexibility and disability agency placements, it was explained that the Local Authority has invested resource in the creation of permanent alternative provision available locally and managed by East Sussex. This provision is more cost effective and has the benefit of being provided in the child's local community. Nonetheless, the Local Authority will still be seeking to reduce placements with a wide range of agency providers.

1.6 In response to a query about Children's Centres it was explained that as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan the budget for the delivery of Children's Centres was reduced for 2015/16 by a total of £1,076,000. £160,000 was initially expected to be achieved through the de-designation of initially seven, but ultimately five, Children's Centres. These Centres were in locations where there was a deficit in the number of childcare places available for 2 year olds and have therefore been made available for the development of additional nursery places.

1.7 In response to questions about Secondary Behaviour Support it was explained Targeted Youth Support (TYS) delivers two strands of work: One to one Casework support; and Community based youth work working with groups of young people in community based settings. The most recent managing change process has been in relation to Community based work. The question refers to reduction of provision taking on step down from social care which is being undertaken by YYS casework provision. There has been no reduction relating to this area of service. Four management posts have been deleted in a recent managing change exercise. No reduction in face to face delivery has been made as part of this exercise to the community offer. Two FTE (2 staff) who had a joint community based co-ordination and a casework role have been deployed solely into casework roles and have hence increase capacity in the casework area of the service. There are no plans to make further redundancies in YYS.

1.8 Questions were raised regarding the School Learning and Effectiveness Service and Early Years Foundation Stage. It was explained that plans are in place to realise the savings set out and actions have been taken to mitigate impact of £800,000 that would be detrimental to the performance of the service and schools. Additional one-off resources have been identified by the Council and Schools Forum to support specific activities from 2014 to 2016 that will help to secure swift and sustainable improvement in the effectiveness of school improvement services, and to build resilience in school to school support. It was set out that the Service conducts at least termly visits to all schools, and visits those schools in an Ofsted category more regularly. The Service also brokers additional services from other local authorities, Academies and other providers which are available for schools to purchase.

1.9 In response to a query regarding Targeted Youth Support, it was explained that the way that the Youth Offending Team works is subject to external inspection by the Youth Justice Board and so any model has to meet that strict test. Last year the team was reorganised into a model that operates along functional lines e.g. there is a Court team and a community team. This is working well and there are no plans to reorganise again at the present time.

1.10 In response to a question about reserves, it was explained that the reserves item related to mitigation of the savings required in the first year of the current savings plan

(13/14). The decision was made that by using previous years underspend to mitigate part of the year 1 savings target it would provide time to allow the development of an appropriate savings strategy.

1.11 In relation to a question about the Highway Contract Re-procurement project, it was explained that the Cabinet had agreed the Detailed Business Case, and that the project had moved into the procurement phase. Following discussions with neighbouring local authorities, the notice in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) was drafted in a way to allow partner authorities the option to become part of the project in due course.

1.12 Representatives asked questions about the Agile Working Programme and the basis of projected savings. The original business case was based on 10% efficiencies on staffing for those services operating from corporate office accommodation and would receive modern and agile technology and office accommodation environment. These agile developments would enable and support the development of new working practices. The efficiency targets were aligned to Departments on a per capita basis calculated on the services in scope of the Agile Programme. There is confidence that delivery and adoption of the Agile Working Programme will enable efficiencies of operation in line with the business case, based on evidence that has been developed in ESCC and with reference to experience from elsewhere in the public and private sector. In ESCC, Agile is being delivered alongside and in support of significant business change and challenges and therefore needs to be delivered in support of these wider complex changes which will be the drivers for how savings are delivered and pressures are managed and mitigated. This approach is being taken in order that benefits are recognised, delivered and managed in an integrated and sustainable way. The Agile programme is being delivered in conjunction with the Asset Management Strategy.

1.13 It was confirmed that ESCC was aware of the impact of savings on staff and remained committed to minimising compulsory redundancies and would continue to apply the full range of agreed employment policies including seeking redeployment opportunities wherever possible, which had proved successful last year. Although difficult to confirm until implementation was undertaken, the likely order of job losses was expected to be 100, a similar figure to last year.

2. Young People

2.1 On 22 January 2015, members of Cabinet and CMT met with representatives of young people in the county including the Youth Cabinet and Children in Care Council to discuss a range of issues including the final RPPR proposals.

2.2 The area raised and discussed included:

- Buses and the recent changes to the supported network, especially the impact on fares for young people;
- Thrive and Looked after Children including changes for children in foster care, the number of agency placements and respite care;
- Disabilities and how they are defined and responded to by services;
- Current teaching about PHSE, life skills (especially financial literacy) relationships and avoiding child exploitation. The young people expressed great interest in the Curriculum for Life approach; and
- Quality and availability of Careers advice especially for young people not wanting to go to further and higher education.