PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2022

1.30 pm COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, LEWES

MEMBERSHIP -   Councillor Johanna Howell (Chair)
Councillors Sam Adeniji, Charles Clark, Penny di Cara, Chris Dowling, Kathryn Field, Nuala Geary, Wendy Maples, Stephen Shing, John Ungar (Vice Chair), Trevor Webb

Miss Nicola Boulter, Parent Governor Representative
Trevor Cristin, Diocese of Chichester Representative
John Hayling, Parent Governor Representative
Maria Cowler, Roman Catholic Diocese representative

A G E N D A

1.   Minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 November 2022 *(Pages 3 - 14)*

2.   Apologies for absence

3.   Disclosures of interests

        Disclosures by all members present of personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the member regards the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.

4.   Urgent items

        Notification of items which the Chair considers to be urgent and proposes to take at the appropriate part of the agenda. Any members who wish to raise urgent items are asked, wherever possible, to notify the Chair before the start of the meeting. In so doing, they must state the special circumstances which they consider justify the matter being considered urgent.

5.   Scrutiny Review - Use of Digital and Technology in Adult Social Care and Health *(Pages 15 - 44)*

6.   Work programme *(Pages 45 - 66)*

7.   Any other items previously notified under agenda item 4

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PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the People Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes on 17 November 2022.

PRESENT:	Councillors Sam Adeniji, Penny di Cara, Chris Dowling, Kathryn Field, Nuala Geary, Johanna Howell (Chair), Wendy Maples, Stephen Shing, John Ungar (Vice Chair) and Trevor Webb and Ms Maria Cowler (Roman Catholic Diocese Representative) and Mr John Hayling (Parent Governor Representative)
LEAD MEMBERS:	Councillor Carl Maynard, Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health Councillor Bob Standley, Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability (EISEND)
ALSO PRESENT:	Mark Stainton, Director of Adult Social Care and Health Alison Jeffery, Director of Children's Services Ian Gutsell, Chief Finance Officer Leigh Prudente, Assistant Director, Operations (ASC) Elizabeth Funge, Assistant Director Education Sara Lewis, Head of Training, Workforce and Organisational Development in ASCH Nathan Caine, Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding Paul Bolton, ASC Service Development Manager Michael Courts, Project Manager (ASC) Beth McGhee, Senior Policy and Scrutiny Adviser

18. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 27TH SEPTEMBER 2022

18.1   The Committee RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2022 as a correct record and agree the recommendations made at the meeting.

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

19.1   Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Charles Clark, Mr Trevor Cristin (Diocese of Chichester Representative) and Miss Nicola Boulter (Parent Governor Representative).

20. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

20.1   None.

21. URGENT ITEMS

21.1   There were no urgent items.

22. ADULT SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE UPDATE

Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) Workforce Programme

22.1   The Assistant Director, Operations (ASC) and Head of Training, Workforce and Organisational Development in ASCH introduced a report and presentation updating the Committee on the ASCH Workforce Programme (2022-25). The update was provided in response to a request made by the People Scrutiny ASC Workforce Review Scoping Board, in March 2022, for the Committee to have an update on the Department's work to address recruitment and retention challenges later in the year. As part of the presentation, the Committee was updated on the latest Skills for Care data on the East Sussex care workforce (all sectors), which showed an increase in the turnover rate (from 27.8% in 2020/21 to 34% in 2021/22) and vacancy rate (from 4.6% in 2020/21 to 8.8% in 2021/22). The turnover rate was slightly higher than the regional (33.4%) and national (30%) average turnover rates. The average number of sick days in the local care workforce (7.2 days for 2021/22) was highlighted as below the national average (8.1 days).

22.2   The Assistant Director and Head of Training, Workforce and Organisational Development outlined a number of projects the Department was undertaking as part of the Programme, within its six workstreams (strategic workforce planning, leadership and management, recruitment, retention, building and enhancing social justice in the workforce, and enhancing the wellbeing of the workforce). The Department had established channels, including a dedicated email address, for all ASCH staff to make suggestions or comments on the Programme and since March 2022 over 700 staff had accessed these channels, demonstrating a good level of staff engagement. The presentation concluded with a look ahead at projects and work planned over the coming years of the Programme. The presentation slides delivered were appended to the report included in the Committee's agenda pack.

22.3   The Chair thanked the officers for the presentation. The Committee asked questions and made comments on the following areas:

•   **Local social care workforce size** – a question was asked on how many posts in total there were in the care sector locally. The Director of ASCH responded that the figure was around 18,500 posts in total but noted that the figure was challenging to calculate accurately as factors such as fluctuating levels of funding in the system impacted overall numbers of posts at any one time. The Director emphasised that regardless of the total number of people employed, both the vacancy and turnover rates were very challenging.

•   **Skills for care data** – officers were asked to comment on data covered in the presentation, including the increase in the vacancy and turnover rates. Both the Director and Head of Training, Workforce and Organisational Development responded that both rates were of huge concern. The Head of Training noted that the increase in the vacancy rate may have been impacted by a scheme to enable younger people to try roles before they applied, as a lot of those people had since left. In terms of other work to reduce vacancies, Skills for Care research had found that staff over 60 were more likely to leave their roles so the Department had a project to support staff over 55 to ensure they were able, and felt encouraged, to remain in the workforce, in their existing role or as coaches or mentors to younger staff. A Musculoskeletal (MSK) project was also underway to look at how to support staff with MSK issues to remain in their posts.

•   **Social Media and targeting younger people** – questions were asked on whether work was taking place to target recruitment of younger people to help address the vacancy rate, and whether a range of social media platforms were being used for this. The refresh of the Council's recruitment branding was also welcomed. It was confirmed a range of platforms were used and the Director confirmed that work to recruit younger people was underway (e.g. with the try before you apply scheme) but that this had to be balanced with efforts to retain older members of the workforce, given a third of the workforce were over 55.

- **Exit interviews** – in response to a question, it was confirmed that exit interviews were undertaken with outgoing staff and the Department was working to ensure all managers were aware of the need to conduct interviews and to collect feedback on how improvements could support retention and other areas of workforce development.

- **Leadership workstream** – further information on the Leadership workstream of the programme was requested, specifically what percentage of the workforce was likely to move into leadership roles, what opportunities there were for progression, and to what extent leadership skills, such as mentoring, would be included in this work. The Assistant Director responded that part of the leadership workstream involved reviewing and disseminating 'top tips for leaders' to ensure that knowledge and tips on leadership skills, such as mentoring and compassionate leadership, were collated and shared. In terms of Leadership opportunities, the Ladder to Leadership programme had offered opportunities for more junior managers to develop skills and cross-Council experience to assist with progression. It was also confirmed that the Department encouraged managers to explore mentoring and coaching opportunities. The Head of Training added that while it was not possible to give a specific percentage of the workforce likely to move into leadership roles, in house personal development opportunities, including management apprenticeships, were highly subscribed to demonstrating that there was a constant flow of staff accessing progression and leadership training opportunities.

- **Turnover rate for managers** – the turnover rate for managerial roles, compared to the rest of the workforce was requested. Officers committed to follow up with this information.

- **Support for the independent sector workforce** – a question was asked on what work was taking place to support recruitment, retention, training and progression in the independent sector workforce. The Head of Training responded that the Department offered the sector access to a wide range of free training courses on mandatory topics, through to more specialist training such as on dementia care. ASCH also offered a leadership programme for registered care managers, senior managers and senior officers in the independent sector, which was well attended and well received. The Department had also been working with Skills for Care and the Registered Care Association on a new project for retaining registered care managers, focussed in part on ways to support their wellbeing, and the next phase of this would be focussed on retaining deputy registered care managers. The Director added that in addition to the training offered, the Department worked to influence the terms and conditions of staff in the independent sector through its commissioning as much as possible, with one example being that new Home Care contract included a range of expectations around peer support, welfare support and supervision for staff. The Department also contributed to the cost of overseas recruitment (e.g. of visas) to support the sector.

- **Cost of training** – with regards to the provision of free training mentioned above, a question was asked on whether the Council recouped the costs of training from those who moved on to other roles and whether consideration had been given to charging for training. The Director responded that in terms of providing training to the independent sector, the Department had made an assessment that it was more effective and efficient to provide the training free of charge, and ensure it aligned with our standards, policies and procedures, than to pay providers to source the training elsewhere. The was no mechanism to recover the money from those who attended training and moved on to other roles and the logistics of tracking that would be challenging and not cost-effective to administer. There was a fee charged for non-attendance at training and within ESCC, if staff were recruited on a training contract and left before that ended there would be a cost to them.

- **Pay** – a question was asked on how wages of care workers in the local authority and the independent sector compared with national wages, and to what extent this could be contributing to challenges with recruitment and retention. The Head of Training responded that pay was a

challenge, as the sector was competing with higher pay in the private sector. The Department had been working with others in the sector locally to dispel myths around working in social care to support recruitment. The Director added that, without significant national investment, the Council had limited influence over wages in the sector. The Lead Member for ASCH and Director both noted that in recent years the Department had made above inflation increases in contract funding with the ambition of improving the pay of contracted staff.

- **Costs of overseas recruitment** – a question was asked on whether there had been an analysis of the cost of conducting overseas recruitment and how that compared with investment to support recruitment domestically. The Director responded that the Department did have a detailed breakdown of the costs and tended to make a fixed contribution to homecare providers to support the activity. Those providers had also made an assessment that it was cost effective. Fundamentally, the challenge facing providers was that not enough people in the workforce wanted to take up roles in care, despite long-term efforts to increase recruitment, so overseas recruitment was a necessity to fill posts.

- **Accommodation for care workers** – a question was asked on whether work takes place to support care workers to find accommodation close to the places they worked and to the people they cared for. The Director responded that access to affordable housing was a known challenge in East Sussex and the wider South East. Some providers, such as residential nursing home providers, would offer initial access to accommodation for new recruits but it was acknowledged that it could be more challenging for home care workers to find affordable accommodation close to those they cared for. The Chair of the Committee noted that the time pressures involved in providing care, in terms of travel time, was also significant and may influence people's willingness to join and remain in the profession.

Personal Assistants and Support with Confidence

22.4   The ASC Service Development Manager and Project Manager (ASC) then presented a briefing report and presentation on the role of Personal Assistants (PAs) and the Support with Confidence (SWC) scheme. The briefing and presentation was also provided in response to a request by the People Scrutiny ASC Workforce Review Scoping Board that the Department re-visit the recommendation of the previous People Scrutiny Review of the ASC Workforce: that the Department should support councillors to promote the role of PAs. The briefing and presentation covered the role of PAs, the support that the Council provided to PAs, figures on PAs in East Sussex, the aims and outputs of the SWC scheme, the role of the Direct Payment Support Service and plans to recommission the service.

22.5   The Chair thanked officers for the presentation. The Lead Member for ASCH commented on the success of the SWC scheme and its positive work. The Committee asked questions and made comments on the following areas:

- **Personal Assistant Role** – in response to a number of questions about the PA role, the Project Manager (ASC) confirmed that PAs are either self-employed or employed directly by the individual receiving care and the majority of PAs worked part-time so annual earnings would vary considerably. In East Sussex, PAs earned on average around £17 per hour but their annual salary would vary depending on how many hours they worked and how many clients they supported. In terms of the requirements to become a PA, the ASC Service Development Manager outlined that the requirements the SWC scheme looked for to accredit a PA were largely values based, with accreditation assessed on the basis of individuals being able to demonstrate qualities such as personalisation, respect and dignity. The broad range of activities PAs could be employed to undertake, from shopping, to administration, to personal care was noted.

- **Becoming a Personal Assistant** – a question was asked on who Councillors should refer residents to that may be interested in taking up a role as a PA. The ASC Service Development Manager responded that anyone interested in becoming a PA could contact the SWC scheme to find out more about what was involved in setting themselves up. Information about SWC was available on the ESCC website. The Project Manager added that ESCC commissioned two Direct Payment Support Service providers which played a role in matching vacancies to PAs, and assisting PAs with any additional training or support they required in taking up the role.

- **Turnover in SWC** – a question was asked on what contributed to the high turnover of people accredited by the SWC scheme. The ASC Service Development Manager responded that alongside ongoing high turnover, the SWC scheme had increased its capacity by 10% every year since 2016 demonstrating the increase in demand for the scheme. However, this was expected to be the first year the scheme would not increase its capacity a similar amount and was thought to be due to a people making changes in, and re-evaluating, their lifestyles post-pandemic and deciding to withdraw from the scheme as a result.

- **Resilience and continuity of PA care provision –** the Committee noted that while PA roles offered a number of benefits for the PAs and those employing PAs (in terms of flexibility and personalisation of care), there were risks in being able to guarantee continuity of care if a PA became sick or wanted to take leave, as they were a sole provider. The ASC Service Development Manager gave assurance that in order to mitigate this, the SWC scheme required accredited PAs to buddy up early in their employment journey with others to establish cover arrangements; and the scheme worked to ensure conversations between PAs and those receiving care happened at the outset of employing a PA to ensure contingency measures and a robust package of care was in place. The Project Manager (ASC) added that the need for contingency planning had been picked up in responses to a recent survey of Direct Payment Support Service users and work was taking place to ensure this was reflected in the offer from the Direct Payment Support Service providers.

- **County Council employment of PAs** - a question was asked on why the Council did not directly employ PAs. The Director responded that a mixed economy of care was required to meet people's needs. Around 30% of ASCH's clients were in receipt of direct payments and it had long been at around this level, reflecting that it was not appropriate, or necessarily desirable given the work involved, for all clients to receive payments and recruit PAs. The Director was therefore confident that the current approach of encouraging a healthy market of accredited PAs, alongside a range of other provision, was the best approach to most effectively, and most cost-effectively, meeting people's needs.

- **Challenges facing direct payment recipients –** in response to comments and questions from the Committee about the benefits, risks and practical challenges of direct payment recipients acting as employers of PAs, the Director outlined that the Department was committed to commissioning, and now recommissioning, a robust Direct Payment Support Service that supported people receiving direct payments with their responsibilities as an employer; in recruiting and retaining PAs; and dealing with any employment issues (although these were the expectation rather than the norm). The national Skills for Care website also provided assistance to those employing PAs. The Director confirmed that in terms of safeguards, people's direct payment accounts were monitored to ensure they were spending the money they received on their care and support needs and anyone in receipt of direct payments would receive a care review to ensure their needs were being met appropriately. The Director also confirmed that there were clear divisions of duty to ensure those in receipt of direct payments were paying PAs, and there was no conflict of interest in PAs paying themselves.

22.6   The Committee RESOLVED to note the presentations and updates.

23.   RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES (RPPR)

23.1   The Chief Finance Officer introduced the report which provided the Committee with an opportunity to consider the current position of the services within its remit and identify any information required ahead of the Committee's December RPPR Board. As the Autumn Statement was being announced on the day of the Committee's meeting, the Chief Finance Officer committed to circulate a briefing to all councillors on the implications of the Autumn Statement for ESCC.

23.2   The Committee asked questions on the following areas:

• **Use of County Hall** – a question was asked on whether financial analysis would be undertaken of the impact of alternative use of County Hall on future years of RPPR. The Chief Finance Officer responded that while the papers presented to the Committee provided an overview of the current position for service budgets and portfolio plans, to inform consideration of information the Committee required ahead of its RPPR Board, any ideas or options to mitigate future budget pressures would be considered through the RPPR process for 2023/24 onwards. The Chair of the Committee also advised that consideration of the Council's property strategy would be a matter for Place Scrutiny Committee. The Lead Member for EISEND confirmed that Cabinet had discussed with the Corporate Management Team how to make best use of the Council's office accommodation post-COVID, so the matter was under consideration.

• **Budget sustainability** – recent press coverage of the challenging financial position facing county councils in the South East was noted and assurance sought that ESCC was not facing similar challenges. The Chief Finance Officer responded that much like other local authorities, in the medium term, ESCC faced a significant deficit and would not be able to present a balanced Medium Term Finance Plan without additional sources of funding. The current position did not, however, generate the scale of concerns other councils had reflected publicly recently.

• **One Council working** – a question was asked on how well Directors felt they were able to achieve their services' priorities given, what could be seen as, conflicting priorities and demands in other areas of the Council. The Director of ASCH responded that they recognised and saw a One Council approach in the way services and priorities were planned and delivered at ESCC. First and foremost, the Council's priorities and the way Departments worked together was informed by the range of statutory responsibilities the directorates were responsible for delivering. Beyond that, where there were opportunities to work more flexibly on delivering broader priorities there was a corporate, One Council approach used, particularly through the RPPR process which provided a mechanism to ensure the Council effectively used its resources to deliver on a range of priorities and agendas. The Lead Member for EISEND added that the limitations on resources meant that there were often challenging decisions to be made around prioritisation of resources, and that the RPPR process enabled the Council to plan its budgets and priorities considering demands as a whole. The Director of Children's Services added that the RPPR process provided a fair opportunity to consider the priorities, and pressures, in Children's Services.

23.3   The Committee RESOLVED to note the report.

24.   WORK PROGRAMME

24.1   The Chair introduced the report which outlined the Committee's latest work programme. The Chair of the Scrutiny Review of Use of Digital and Technology in ASC reported that the

Review was concluding, having considered a range of evidence and would be reporting to the Committee's next meeting. The Chair of the Review Board added that they were supportive of the Committee's work programme, which was balanced, and that they welcomed the opportunity scrutiny reviews provided for the Committee to act a critical friend to work taking place and give a greater profile to that work.

School Attendance Data

24.2   Following a request of the People Scrutiny Board that scoped a potential review of School Attendance in March 2022, an update on school attendance data was considered to assist the Committee with work programming of this planned review. The Director of Children's Services introduced the latest data that was appended to the report, outlining that in line with a national trend post- coronavirus pandemic, the rate of school absences in East Sussex had not improved. The Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding added that the Department had recently received national comparator data for autumn/winter 2021/22 which showed that East Sussex had overall absence and persistent absence rates closer to the England average than its statistical neighbours. Despite this, improving school attendance was a very high priority for schools and the Department.

24.3   The Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding also outlined that new national guidance on attendance had been published and was due to come into force as statutory guidance in 2023. The Department was looking at how to organise its services to deliver on new expectations this created. The guidance created a new category of attendance; children with attendance at 50% or lower would be classed as having 'severe absence'. Early analysis indicated that there would be significant numbers of children in this category in East Sussex, who would need to be supported by the Council as a result of the new expectations.

24.4   The Committee asked questions on the following areas:

•   **Reasons for absences** – questions were asked on whether the Department looked into the reasons for absences from school and ensured the interventions taken in response addressed those reasons, noting that sometimes a family's lifestyle or situation could be a cause. The Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding responded that the reasons for school absence were varied, and layered, and it could be challenging to unpick the causes unless the Department was already working with families. When working with children or families, the Department would explore the reasons for school absences and make an intervention tailored to the cause. Causes of poor attendance could range from anxiety and mental health issues, including parental anxiety about school, to Emotionally Based School Avoidance, to a children's Special Education Needs or Disability (SEND) (for example instances of children with autism who struggled at school).

The Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding added that the Department was working to improve data gathering on school attendance, including automating gathering of data from all schools, to provide a better picture of reasons for absences. It was important to acknowledge that attendance in East Sussex had been below the national average for some time, and that responses to previous communications campaigns the Department had undertaken on this had shown different attitudes to school attendance in different parts of the county, so the response required a range of approaches and solutions. A member of the Committee commented on the important role parents and carers played in ensuring good school attendance of their children and the Director confirmed that this was absolutely recognised. The Assistant Director, Education added that the Department was also working hard to ensure school attendance was 'everyone's business'. This included working closely with Early Help and Social Care Teams to ensure that where those teams were working with families, school attendance was high on their agenda.

- **Mental Health Support in Schools** – in light of mental health and anxiety being highlighted as one of the causes of school absence, a question was asked about whether schools have staff in mental health first aider roles who could provide, and signpost to, support. The Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding responded that promoting good mental health and wellbeing was a priority of schools. A range of approaches to providing support were taken, and it was down to individual schools to decide the approach. Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) (a nationally funded scheme providing high-quality, professional mental health advice to children and young people) were embedded in around 50% of East Sussex schools. The Department also provided, jointly with health partners, a programme for all schools looking at whether schools could employ professionals to be mental health first aiders or design a whole school system that promoted good mental health and wellbeing.

A follow-up question was asked on whether there was quantifiable evidence of an improvement in the mental health of children in schools that had MHSTs. The Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding responded that although they did not have this data, because the teams worked with schools in more deprived areas, they would be addressing mental health challenges from a baseline of higher need. The Assistant Director added that MHSTs did good data analysis of issues arising for children they worked with to identify ways to get upstream of issues affecting children's mental health in all schools. The Director added that MHSTs disseminated learning to all schools, including through an annual conference.

- **Home working** – a question was asked on whether the Department had identified a connection between parents working from home and reduced school attendance. The Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding responded that they did not have any evidence to suggest that was a factor, but did know that attendance had dipped post-pandemic and attachment issues were a cause of non-attendance so this may have had an impact on some families.

Forward plan
24.4   The Committee considered the Council's Forward Plan of executive decisions and agreed there were no issues that required more detailed scrutiny.

24.5   The Committee RESOLVED to agree the work programme.

25.   ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION (EHE) IN EAST SUSSEX

25.1   The Assistant Director Education and the Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding introduced the report which updated the Committee on the work the Department undertook to meet the Council's statutory requirements relating to Electively Home Educated (EHE) Children. The growth in the number of children electively home educated between the 2017/18 and 2021/22 academic years was highlighted, and it was noted that the current number of children EHE in East Sussex was equivalent to around the size of a large secondary school. The introduction also covered:
- The limited statutory powers the Authority had to ensure EHE children received a good standard of education, and to safeguard children. The Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding noted that EHE had been a factor in a number of serious case reviews nationally.
- The changing national policy and legislative framework, including that the Schools Bill, which had been expected to legislate for new duties on local authorities – including to maintain a register of children not in school – appeared to have been removed from the Parliamentary timetable as a result of recent national political changes.
- The service had recently undergone an internal audit that had received an opinion of substantial assurance that the service was delivering its duties.
- Service improvements were being implemented and schools were supportive of work to reduce the number of children EHE and bring children EHE back into school wherever possible.

25.2   The Lead Member for EISEND commented that the reasons for families choosing to EHE were varied, and as a result the standard of education children received was very varied. The Authority had very limited powers, particularly around ensuring the safeguarding of EHE children and it was unfortunate that the future of the Schools Bill, which would have given greater powers in this area, had become uncertain.

25.3   The Committee asked questions and made comments on the following areas:

- **Areas with high EHE** – a question was asked on where the five schools with higher levels of EHE mentioned in the report were situated in the county. The Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding committed to follow-up with this information, as well as where the schools with lowest level of EHE were situated. The Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding noted that the schools with high or low levels were identified by schools recording requests to off-roll children. The Department knew that there were children in some parts of the county who had never been on-rolled; and there were parts of the county where certain philosophical beliefs around education were contributing to high levels of EHE but the position of children who had never been admitted to a school roll would not be reflected in the data.

- **Religious education** – a question was asked on whether there was any focus on ensuring EHE children received a religious education. The Director responded that parents that elected to home educate their children were not bound by the national curriculum or to deliver the curriculum agreed by the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. The Department asked for evidence of children receiving an appropriate education and if this indicated a child was receiving an education that could be deemed as extremist, the Department would respond.

- **School places** – a question was asked on whether any families were having to educate their children at home because they could not access a school place. The Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding responded that the report in front of the Committee was focussed on parents who had elected to home educate their children. There were instances where children may not be in school as they were waiting for a school place, for example children with SEND who were awaiting a special school place, but the arrangement for those children's education would be different, for example with access to tuition.

- **Educational performance –** a question was asked on whether the Council knew how the educational performance of EHE children compared with those in school. The Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding responded that this was not possible to compare because there was no requirement for EHE children's education to follow the national curriculum, for them to undertake exams or for parents to report the exam performance of their child if they did take exams. This contributed to the challenge of assessing whether EHE children were receiving an appropriate education as there was no requirement to demonstrate that the education being delivered would lead to a qualification.

- **Assessment of appropriateness of education** – a question was asked on how - given the limited powers local authorities had to investigate - an assessment of children receiving an appropriate education was undertaken. The Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding responded that the Department would visit families, ask for examples of work and try to make a professional judgment on whether it would meet the standards expected of a child at that age. Where it was challenging to make this assessment, the Department would arrange to revisit at a future point. Where there was no evidence, or little evidence of performance to a required standard, the Department could implement a school attendance order compelling a child to attend school. The Director added that it was important to understand that although the Department could request to visit EHE children, and the EHE Team were very good at engaging

parents, the Council had no right of entry unless there was evidence of a safeguarding risk, in which case, officers would attend with a police officer. The Director emphasised that this was a very contentious area and EHE lobby groups felt strongly that Councils should not have a right of entry.

• **Role of school in outcomes of children and young people** – the Committee commented on the role, and importance, of school for providing children with valuable life and developmental experiences. The Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding responded that while it should be recognised that some children thrived while being EHE, the Department shared similar concerns about EHE limiting a child's social interaction with peers and their access to a range of benefits that came from attending school, including access to other support services.

• **Budget pressures** – a question was asked on whether a link had been identified between schools' stretched budgets, as well as rising thresholds for accessing a range of support services (e.g. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and educational psychology services) and rising numbers of EHE. It was also asked, if there was a link, could those numbers be expected to rise. The Assistant Director responded that it would be difficult to demonstrate a direct link but that there were a number of reasons for families opting to EHE and some of those reasons may relate to issues, such as challenges around mental health, that may require needing to access stretched support services.

• **Legislative changes** – in light of the information presented on the limited powers the authority had to ensure safeguarding of EHE children, the Committee asked the Lead Member for EISEND to write to the Government to ask for clarity on the future and planned timetable of the Schools Bill. The Lead Member agreed to write to the Secretary of State for Education or Schools Minister, copied to East Sussex MPs, to ask for assurance the Bill would contain anticipated powers to create a register of children not in school and for an update on the timetable of the Bill.

• **Information and support for parents** – a question was asked on whether training or online support was made available for parents that outlined the range of benefits for children from being educated in school, to help them make an informed decision about EHE. A linked question was also asked on what proactive engagement, including virtual engagement, the Department was undertaking to support parents that had chosen to EHE. The Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding responded that the service provided drop in meetings to engage parents to ensure they were making informed decisions about EHE. The Department had worked with schools to ensure parents considering EHE understood that in choosing to EHE they were opting out of the education system and could not access resources for education or exams. There were also a wealth of other resources available for parents from EHE lobby groups. In terms of proactive support, a range of information, advice and guidance was provided on the ESCC website for parents, along with ways to contact the service. The service's resource was stretched, however, so had to primarily be focussed on delivering the Department's statutory responsibilities and could not necessarily proactively support, or address, coordinated online groups for EHE parents.

• **Home Educated Children with SEND** – in response to a comment about instances of parents opting to EHE because they felt their child was not receiving an appropriate education tailored to their SEND needs, the Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding outlined that the Department had seen an increase in the number of EHE with SEND and were keen to ensure parents were making informed decisions. The service targeted support to schools to ensure they had conversations with parents considering EHE in these circumstances, to discuss how their child's SEND needs would be met and to challenge their plans if the school felt they were inappropriate for the child. The Assistant Director added that this was linked to broader work to

ensure schools were having early conversations with families considering EHE to provide a wider perspective and challenge pre- or misconceptions about EHE. The Director added that the Department was undertaking a pilot in Eastbourne and Hailsham of council staff joining discussions between schools and families with children with identified SEND or attendance needs who were considering EHE.

25.4   The Chair thanked officers for the interesting and thorough report. The Committee RESOLVED to request officers provide the information on geographic spread of schools with high and low levels of EHE; and for the Lead Member to write to the Secretary of State for Education or Schools Minister as outlined in the legislative changes section above.

25.5   In response to the report recommendation that the Committee consider whether to progress to scoping a scrutiny review of EHE, the Committee considered work programming of the topic and agreed to request an update on the service's work in six months.

The meeting ended at 12.50 pm.

Councillor Johanna Howell (Chair)

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Report to:	**People Scrutiny Committee**
Date:	**16 December 2022**
By:	**Chair of the Review Board**
Title:	**Scrutiny Review – Use of Digital and Technology in Adult Social Care and Health**
Purpose:	**To present the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review and make recommendations**

RECOMMENDATION:

The Committee is recommended to consider and endorse the report of the Review Board, and make recommendations to Cabinet for comment and County Council for approval.

1. Background

1.1   In March 2022 the People Scrutiny Committee established a Scoping Board to look into the merit of conducting a scrutiny review of use of digital and technology in Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH).

1.2   The Scoping Board met on 5 July 2022 and considered opportunities presented by, as well as the drivers and risks of, greater use of technology and digitisation in ASCH. The Scoping Board heard that in line with the approach being taken by other councils, the Department was looking to encourage greater use of self-service options, such as online financial assessments and needs assessments; and linked to this, working towards implementing a 'digital by default' approach whereby digital and self-service means of contacting, accessing services from, and transacting with the Department are encouraged to be used as the primary route by those who are able to do so. 'Traditional' means of accessing services and contacting ASCH (in person or via telephone) will remain in place for those who require them. The Scoping Board also heard that significant cultural and behavioural changes are required to support this planned direction of travel.

1.3   The Scoping Board concluded that based on the discussion with officers about the strategic challenges being 'digital by default' would help with, including the Department having capacity to deliver the planned care charging reforms, the topic would benefit from closer examination by People Scrutiny. On the recommendation of the Scoping Board, the People Scrutiny Committee agreed at their July 2022 meeting that this review should explore what cultural and behavioural changes are needed to support greater use of online services, self-service options and adoption of a 'digital by default' approach by the Department, with a focus on the following service areas to avoid the Review being too broad:

- Financial assessments
- Reviews (especially carer reviews)
- Information, advice and signposting
- Carer assessments

2. Supporting information

2.1   The Scrutiny Review Board is comprised of Councillors Penny di Cara, Nuala Geary and Wendy Maples. Councillor di Cara was appointed as the Chair of the Review Board.

2.2   The attached report (Appendix 1) contains the findings and recommendations of the Review Board. Copies of evidence papers listed in the report and other support documentation are available on request from the contact officer.

## 3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1   The Committee is recommended to consider and endorse the Review Board's report for submission to Cabinet and County Council on 24 January 2023 and 7 February 2023 respectively.

Councillor Penny di Cara

Chair of the Review Board

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East Sussex
County Council
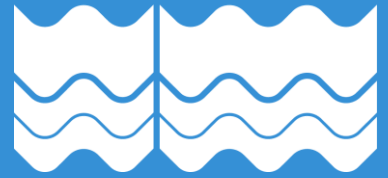
Scrutiny Review of Use of Digital and Technology in Adult Social Care and Health.

Report by the Review Board:

Councillor Penny di Cara (Chair)
Councillor Nuala Geary
Councillor Wendy Maples

People Scrutiny Committee – 16 December 2022
Cabinet – 24 January 2023
Full Council – 7 February 2023

The report of the Scrutiny Review of Use of Digital and Technology in Adult Social Care and Health

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Recommendations

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2	**The People Scrutiny Committee should be informed of the progress of take up of Online Financial Assessments, and feedback received, as part of the monitoring of this Scrutiny Review.**	11
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7	**The Department should reflect feedback from residents who have benefited from digital and self-service options in communications to staff.**	19
8	**Information on Being Digital and the digital and self-service platforms on offer in ASCH, should be included in all new ASCH staff inductions.**	19
9	**Digital transformation should be included as a discussion point in team and 1-2-1 (where appropriate) meetings within areas undergoing rollout of a new digital or self-service platform; and in ongoing departmental communications (such as Yammer, To The Point and Brief Encounter).**	19
10	**The Department should continue to work with colleagues through the One Council Digital Inclusion programme to map the digital inclusion offer in East Sussex, and, where appropriate, share this with adult social care and health staff and partners.**	21
11	**The Department should ensure it is promoting to staff, and utilising, the range of national and local digital inclusion resources and schemes available in moving to being digital by default.**	21
12	**The Department should explore opportunities for partners, including voluntary sector organisations, to support engagement with and signposting to ASCH's digital offer.**	23

3

13	**The Department should consider whether a Digital Ambassador Scheme could provide added value to Being Digital, informed by learning from the NHS Digital First Digital Ambassador pilot when it concludes, and consideration of other models.**	24

4

Introduction

1.   The Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) Department has an overarching medium term digital strategy, the Being Digital Strategy (2020-23). The Strategy was developed in autumn 2020 to provide the Department with a more structured oversight of the range of digital developments and innovations taking place; and to set a vision for the Department to have in place digital capabilities that meet the range of needs of the ASCH community and workforce, in order to support and enable effective service delivery.

2.   The People Scrutiny Committee was made aware at its March 2022 meeting that although the ASCH Department has an established digital strategy for the medium term, there is a need to look further ahead at how digital technology and other technological innovations can maintain provision of a high standard of care and support sustainability of ASCH services in the next five-to-ten years, and the Department welcomed the Committee's input on this.

3.   A Scoping Board met on 5 July 2022 to consider whether to proceed with a review of this topic. In addition to hearing about the range of work underway to deliver the Being Digital Strategy and discussing additional opportunities technology offered for meeting the needs of ASCH clients, the Board heard that the Department had recently agreed a future direction of travel for its digital work.

4.   In line with the approach being taken by other councils, the planned direction of travel includes encouraging greater use of self-service options, such as online financial assessments and needs assessments; and linked to this, working towards implementing a 'digital by default' approach whereby digital and self-service means of contacting, accessing services from, and transacting with the Department are encouraged to be used as the primary route by those who are able to do so. 'Traditional' means of accessing services and contacting ASCH (in person or via telephone) will remain in place for those who require them.

5.   The Scoping Board heard that introducing the digital capabilities to support this direction of travel is expected to result in better and simpler experiences for clients and carers in their interactions with the Department (particularly in being able to manage their care and access services at a time that works for them), as well as improvements in the efficiency and accuracy of work with partners and providers. The approach will also ensure ASCH resources are being used most effectively given ongoing demographic, resource and workforce pressures, and anticipated increased demand arising from the planned care charging reforms. However, the Department knows that significant cultural and behavioural changes are required to move to being 'digital by default'. These changes relate to both the way staff work and to clients', carers' and providers' behaviour and attitudes towards use of digital services and channels.

6.   The Scoping Board concluded that based on the discussion with officers about the strategic challenges being 'digital by default' would help with, including the Department having capacity to deliver the planned care charging reforms, the topic would benefit from closer examination by People Scrutiny.

Terms of Reference

7.   On the recommendation of the Scoping Board, the People Scrutiny Committee agreed at their July 2022 meeting that this review should explore what cultural and behavioural changes are needed to support greater use of online services, self-service options and adoption of a 'digital by default' approach by the Department, with a focus on the following service areas to avoid the Review being too broad:

- Financial assessments
- Reviews (especially carer reviews)
- Information, advice and signposting
- Carer assessments

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8.   Members agreed that this would be explored through the following key lines of enquiry:

1. Within the service areas outlined above:

    a) To what extent are residents, clients, carers and/or providers currently using online services, self-service options and/or digital communication channels?

    b) If there is high or low use, why is that?

    c) Why do people choose to use the channels they do to communicate with ASC in these areas?

    d) What cultural and behavioural changes are needed to support greater use of online services, self-service options and/or digital communication channels?

    e) How can that cultural and behavioural change be encouraged?

2. The review should also look more broadly at:

    a) What insights are there from other councils that have a high take-up of online services and have implemented a 'digital by default' approach on the cultural and behavioural changes needed?

    b) How have they encouraged those?

6

Background

<u>Being Digital Strategy and Programme 2020-23</u>

9.   The [Being Digital Strategy 2020-23](#) is published on the East Sussex County Council (ESCC) website. The Strategy is supported by an ambitious programme of work, spanning some 35 projects, focussed on deploying digital technology to improve the way clients and carers transact with ASCH, improve efficiency of business processes and support smoother and enhanced partnership working within the broader health and social care system. A Being Digital project team is leading delivery of the Strategy and Programme and this work is overseen by a Departmental Being Digital Steering Group.

10.   The Programme is underpinned by a detailed roadmap, setting out the projects underway to deliver the Strategy's ambitions. Some Being Digital projects that will deliver more self-service options within the services in the scope of this Review include:

- Online Financial Assessments – Most ASCH services are chargeable and most people will pay something towards, or for all, the costs of their care. Where a social care assessment determines that a person has eligible needs under the Care Act, a financial assessment is completed to determine the level of contribution the person will need to pay towards the cost of their care and support. The Department already has an online portal in place that enables people to complete financial self-assessments once they are assessed to have eligible needs.

- Client Finance Portal – This portal is being procured by the Department and will enable clients with eligible needs to track their client contributions relative to the planned care charging cap once introduced. This is a key tool for the Department implementing the processes to support the planned charging reforms.

- Client Account - Another tool that is planned to be provided to enable clients to see documents relating to their care, communicate with practitioners and sign documents electronically. This will give clients greater control of their care.

- Carer's Assessments - All unpaid carers have a right to a carer's assessment. The assessment looks at their needs and what support is available to help them to continue in their caring role. The Department already has an online self-assessment form that carers can complete in their own time and send to ESCC.

- [East Sussex 1Space](#) – This is an online directory of care and support services which has long been a pillar of ASCH's digital offer. The site has been online for almost ten years, but work is underway to ensure the site is more prominently displayed on ESCC's webpages.

- Artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots - a chatbot (called a Digital Assistant) is already in use on the ESCC website to answer questions about blue badge applications. Being Digital will explore other opportunities to employ this technology on the website.

11.   The Department's current public facing, self-service offer can be accessed through online forms available on the [Adult Social Care Portal](#) on the ESCC Website.
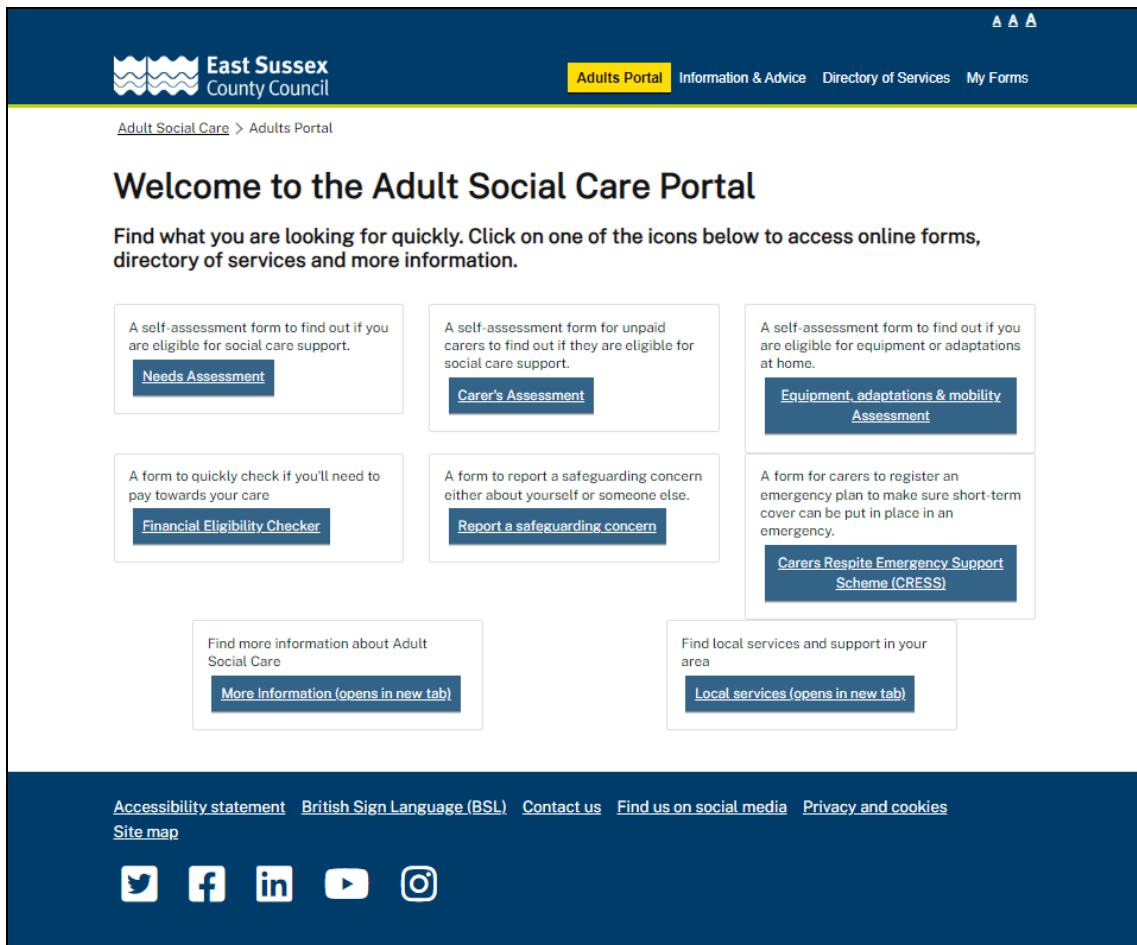
7

Figure 1. Adult Social Care Portal – Website Screenshot

<u>Local and National Context</u>

12.   The context to the ASCH Department introducing more self-service and digital options, and encouraging those to be the primary route into the Department for those able to use them, is:

•   **Changing expectations** – the Department is aware of the growing number of activities and services people are able to undertake and access online in managing their day-to-day lives, from applying for a passport to buying a house to having a doctor's appointment, and that this trend was rapidly accelerated during the coronavirus pandemic. The Department is seeking to anticipate growing expectations that residents will be able to access a similar digital offer from ASCH services, given the increased flexibility, accessibility and control such an offer can provide for residents trying to find information about our services and/or manage their care.

•   **Ongoing rising demand from demographic changes** – East Sussex has a growing elderly population, already at levels that will not be reached nationally for decades. While our local population is ageing, the needs of people requiring support are also increasing. This has increased demand for ASCH services which requires the Department to make best use of stretched resources.

•   **Workforce pressures** – the Department experiences a range of challenges in recruitment and retention of staff which stretches capacity. The Department must ensure staff time and resource is being used in the most effective way, with repetitive and process-based work limited wherever possible to free up staff time to focus on other work, including with clients.

8

- **Planned charging reforms** – the Government is planning to introduce reforms to the way people pay for social care, including introducing an £86,000 lifetime cap on the amount an individual has to pay for personal care, introducing a more generous means-test for local authority support and equalising the costs between people who fund their own care (self-funders) and local authority clients. At the time this review was conducted, the reforms were intended to be introduced from October 2023, although the Government has since announced that implementation will be delayed until October 2025. The Department has assessed that implementation of these reforms will result in an increase in the number of people approaching the authority for a Care Act assessment of their eligible needs and a financial assessment. This will further increase demand on ASCH services and greater use of digital and self-service options is expected to be a significant enabler of the Department meeting this demand within restricted resources.

13. Nationally, the Government has made a commitment to ensuring that the opportunities presented by use of digital technology, for improving independence, quality and sustainability of social care are fully realised. The Department of Health and Social Care has published a Plan for Digital Health and Social Care (June 2022) which outlines the recognised benefits from digital transformation of health and social care and a national vision for embedding digital technology and achieving a digitally transformed health and social care system by 2028. The People at the Heart of Care White Paper (December 2021) also made a commitment to invest to drive greater adoption of technology and to achieve widespread digitisation across social care, building on the way digital technologies transformed delivery of care achieved during the coronavirus pandemic.

9

Review Board Findings

Part 1: Understanding the current offer and uptake

14.   In addressing the Review's first three lines of enquiry, the Review Board sought to understand the current position in provision of digital and self-service options by ASCH within the service areas covered by the review; take-up of those options; and any barriers to their greater use.

Online Financial Assessments

15.   One of the areas in which the Department has made notable progress in implementing a self-service approach is the provision of online financial self-assessments (OFAs). The Review Board heard that the delivery model of the financial assessment service has undergone quite significant change in recent years, moving from a service that was mostly delivered face-to-face including in people's homes, to being offered via remote assessment, to now encouraging those who can to complete self-assessments using a digital form.

16.   While all residents can complete a financial eligibility checker on the ASC portal to determine if they are likely to pay the full cost of - or make a contribution to - their care, residents need to have been assessed as having eligible needs under the Care Act to be sent a link to the full OFA. This requirement has been introduced within the last year and has improved the acceptance rate of self-assessments, but is reliant on practitioners sharing the link to the form. The Review Board heard that while consistency in practitioners sending the forms has improved, and the number of forms completed has increased over time, sending the link is perhaps not yet fully integrated into practitioners' standard approach. The Department has a programme of behavioural change work underway to encourage more active sharing of the link which is covered in section two of this report.

17.   The Review Board heard from the Head of Service for Hospitals, Finance and Continuing Healthcare that a new Financial Services offer is currently being designed in which the digital offer is seen as core to delivery in future, and it is planned for a team within ASCH to pilot making OFAs the default route for individuals requiring a financial assessment in winter 2022/23. The service is also looking to streamline the process for financial assessments to reduce the amount of information required to undertake an assessment.

18.   The Review Board heard that in the Head of Service's experience, ESCC is advanced in its digital offer, as some councils are not yet able to offer an online assessment. In terms of take-up, between January and August 2022, 330 links to the OFA form were sent and 68 forms returned; a return rate of 21%.

19.   The Review Board asked whether the Department knew whether people not completing a form were choosing not to complete an assessment outright or defaulting to the non-self-assessment route. The Head of Service responded that while staff will follow up with anyone who does not use the link sent to ensure they have access to a financial assessment if they require one, the service does not currently collect feedback on whether individuals are choosing not to complete an online self-assessment or are not completing an assessment at all. Feedback is also not currently collected by the service on what might be preventing people completing a self-assessment or, more broadly, on the online form. The Head of Service thought that this could be addressed in the planned pilot to make OFAs the default route for financial assessments. The Review Board agreed this would be beneficial and asked that the Department ensure that any insights from feedback that could support and encourage take-up of online financial, and other, self-assessments were captured and responded to.

> **Recommendation 1**
>
> **The Department should ensure the planned implementation of Online Financial Assessments being the default route for financial assessments collects feedback from users on the form, including on any barriers to completing it, and why those who were asked to complete an online assessment and did not, chose not to.**
>
> **Recommendation 2**
>
> **The People Scrutiny Committee should be informed of the progress of take up of Online Financial Assessments, and feedback received, as part of the monitoring of this Scrutiny Review.**

20.　　The Review Board noted that, in terms of delivery of these recommendations, the move to OFAs being the default route of assessment was part of a wider programme of changes to the financial assessment service, and timescales for implementation of this whole programme of work may fall beyond the People Scrutiny Committee's period of monitoring of this Review.

21.　　While the Review Board heard that ESCC is relatively advanced in its digital financial assessment offer, the return rate of 21% cited above and other evidence considered showed there are opportunities to improve take-up of OFAs. The Review Board asked what proportion of all financial assessments are currently completed online and heard that as of October 2022, just under 1% of all ESCC's financial assessments are currently conducted online. Comparatively, other local authorities have reported to ESCC a much higher rate of financial assessments being completed online, up to 60% in some areas.

22.　　Other local authorities have been successful in encouraging people to use OFAs as the primary route of assessment and both ESCC and a large number of other local authorities have sought to learn from their approach as a result. Learning is of particular interest where the same IT systems and providers as ESCC are in use, as replicability should be simplified. The Review Board considered detailed learning from the approach taken by others and were updated on how this is being applied in ESCC. This included that:

- **Considered thought has been given to messaging** – website content sets expectations of clients undertaking assessments online where possible and senior managers have signed up to a 'Digital First' approach and actively promote it with staff. The language used to describe the increased use of self-assessments has also been carefully considered to ensure the change is described positively and to reduce anxiety about the change. The Review Board heard that in ESCC, the ASCH Department Management Team has also agreed to and supports a 'Digital First' approach and message.

- **Staff are equipped with scripts or calling cards** – this supports them to encourage clients to complete the online assessments and to determine who can complete assessments online and who may need support or lack capacity to complete them. These people may be offered traditional pathways (a phone call or visit). As mentioned above, in ESCC the approach to equipping staff to encourage take-up of OFAs has been considered through a behaviour change programme covered in section two of this report.

- **'Live Agents' are available during standard office hours** - to respond to queries which reduces emails and phone calls regarding the forms and increases timeliness in responses. At the time the Review Board considered their evidence, another local authority was also looking to introduce a **chatbot to answer frequently asked questions about OFAs**. The Review Board heard that ASCH is also considering how use of chatbots in ESCC could support people with the process of completing OFAs.

23.   As part of this evidence, the Review Board heard that another local authority had achieved a much shorter average turnaround time for financial assessments than is currently being achieved in ESCC. The Board heard that application of Robotic Process Automation (RPA) to the back-office finance system helped speed up the processing of financial assessments. The Scoping and Review Board heard that ASCH is exploring implementation of RPA at ESCC, including in support of processing financial assessments, as it has the potential to free up hundreds of working hours spent on repetitive, administrative tasks every year. ESCC is also implementing a change management project to improve turnaround time for financial assessments as part of the broader programme of work referenced above. The Review Board was supportive of and reassured by the range of actions the Department is seeking to take to improve take-up of OFAs and turnaround time of financial assessments.

Recommendation 3

The Department should continue implementation of learning from other local authority Adult Social Care departments to improve take-up of Online Financial Assessments and turnaround time of financial assessments, particularly considering introducing Robotic Process Automation.

Chatbots

24.   As outlined in the background to this report, a chatbot (known as a Digital Assistant) is already in place on the ESCC website to answer questions about blue badge applications. The Review Board heard that the chatbot is thought to work well in the blue badge service because there are a relatively limited set of questions that can be asked. The Being Digital Team have experienced some scepticism and challenge around whether chatbots can be used more widely to respond to more complicated queries in other service areas. The Department is looking to other local authorities that are using chatbots more broadly in order to learn from the effectiveness of this and opportunities it presents for ESCC. The Review Board supported the opportunity to learn from this.

25.   In light of the potential for chatbots to be utilised more by ASCH in future, the Review Board explored both the reliability and limitations of chatbots. The Review Board asked officers about accuracy and usability of the blue badge Digital Assistant and heard that the service did a lot of work when implementing the chatbot to ensure the information on the website is clear and easy to follow; audits of chat logs are undertaken for accuracy; and the chat bot will check whether the information provided is useful and provide 'hand-offs' to a member of the team or signpost to other sources of information if needed. Between October 2021 and late September 2022, 3342 questions were asked of the chatbot, with a 93% success rate on it providing the information users required.

26.   The Review Board heard that there is a current limitation on use of the chatbot in that cookies (small blocks of data created by a web server while a user is browsing a website) have to be enabled for it to be visible on the webpage. The Review Board also heard evidence from an East Sussex resident and Lay Member of the Being Digital Inclusion Group (see paragraph 66 below for more information about the Group) that in their experience providing support to older people and people with learning difficulties to use digital tools and services, chatbots can be challenging for some people to use. The Lay Member said that the challenges can arise as older people and people with lower levels of literacy sometimes do not know that keywords or phrases can be required to trigger the responses needed for the chatbot to work. This correlated to evidence the Review Board received that the accuracy of the blue badge chatbot results will vary depending on the way the question is phrased and that work is underway to improve this. It was also noted that the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the existing blue badge digital assistant does enable the chatbot to 'learn' from the information it receives (such as colloquial phrases). The Review Board sought assurance that chatbots, and broader ASCH website content, were accessible for those with English as an additional language and had confirmation from officers that language used on the website, and by the blue badge digital assistant, was intentionally simple and accessible so that it could be easily translated by online translation tools.

27.   The Review Board concluded that on the basis of evidence they have considered, particularly the 93% success rate of the digital assistant on the blue badge webpages, they are supportive of the Department exploring greater use of chatbots on the website; and recognise the role chatbots could play in supporting people to access the Department's future digital offer. The Review Board acknowledge that there are some limitations to their use and initially had some reservations about their effectiveness and accessibility, but were reassured by officers' responses to questions asked throughout the Review, particularly recognition that chatbots had to be designed so that they used the most simplified, accessible language possible.

Carer's Assessments and Reviews

28.   Another area in which the Department has put in place the technological capabilities for people to self-serve is carer's assessments. As outlined above, these can be completed completely independently online. Those who require assistance with completing the form can ask for help from Care for the Carers (CFTC), a charity commissioned by ESCC and the NHS to be the Carers Centre in East Sussex and provide support for anyone who cares for someone who would not be able to manage without them. ESCC monitoring shows that use of carer's self-assessment forms on the ASC Portal is high but this is influenced by a project involving use of the forms by CFTC (see paragraph 31 below).

29.   The Review Board heard evidence from the Chief Executive of CFTC which covered that CFTC is seeing an increase in demand for support for carers, and that the charity is therefore supportive of the opportunities digital provides to work differently with partners to meet this demand and to provide options to help carers help themselves, where it works for them.

30.   The Review Board asked about feedback CFTC has received about the digital Carer's Assessments offer from ESCC and the Chief Executive outlined that there is a mixed picture among carers with how much they want to engage with a digital offer. CFTC has heard clearly from some carers that they do not want to use support via digital means whereas others are supportive. The Board did hear from both the Chief Executive of CFTC and the ESCC Strategic Commissioning Manager for Carers that carers are often busy, managing lots of different demands and can be reaching out for support in a time of crisis. In these circumstances, being asked to complete an online form to assess their needs may not always be appropriate or welcomed. The Review Board heard it is therefore important to maintain an alternative option for accessing support and the Chief Executive of CFTC did not feel that encouraging greater use of the online self-assessments was the greatest opportunity digital presented for carers.

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31.   Instead, the Review Board heard from the Chief Executive of CFTC that digital presented an opportunity for enabling the system that interacts with - and provides support to - carers to work more effectively together, in a joined up way. CFTC has seen the potential for this in being commissioned by ESCC to undertake Reviews of Carer's Assessments; whereby CFCT are commissioned for two members of staff to conduct reviews over the phone, input information directly into the Carer's Assessment form on the ASC Portal and then submit that to ESCC. The Chief Executive of CFTC expected planned further developments to this approach to reduce administration time and duplication of work for both CFTC and ESCC. It was also noted that the particular commissioning arrangement CFTC has with ESCC has enabled smooth information sharing, as well as a range of other benefits in how support for carers is provided in East Sussex.

32.   Being Digital knows that digital presents a significant opportunity to better join up services and, while not considered in detail as part of this Review, the Programme has a strand of work focussed on delivering projects that will put in place the digital platforms and enablers to support the health and social care system to work better together. These include:

- **Delegation Portal** - this system allows ASCH practitioners to delegate parts of forms to other practitioners and professionals to complete (e.g. part of a form to be completed as part of a safeguarding investigation), and is intended to be the default route for seeking some information from third parties in future. There are a number of benefits to the portal including reducing the need for transcription from current media, such as email, as information will be entered straight into ESCC's ASC case management system; it is secure; there is less risk of incomplete information being provided; and it creates a digital audit trail.

- **GP to Local Authority referrals** – Health and Social Care Connect (HSCC), the telephone contact centre for ASC services in East Sussex, receives thousands of referrals from GPs per month which are currently manually inputted into ASC's case management system. This project is looking at how these referrals can flow from primary care (using their patient record service) directly into ESCC's case management system.

- **Plexus** – this is a project to connect health and care records for practitioners across Sussex.

The current position elsewhere

33.   The Review Board also considered take-up of self-service and digital options in other areas. The Review Board heard that account registrations on the ASC Portal have increased year-on-year but are perhaps not yet at a level that could reduce demand from queries to the HSCC team. Form submissions on the ASC Portal have also increased in the last year but there is not a uniform rise across all form types because not all business processes align with the forms on offer, which the Department is seeking to address in the broader move to being 'digital by default'.

34.   In terms of HSCC, the service has seen a natural shift towards people using digital means to contact them. When HSCC was established in 2016, the access point saw about 4,000 contacts a month. Around 20% were by email, 70% by phone and another 10% were by various other methods including fax. Now HSCC see around 7,000 contacts a month, 7% of those are from the ASC portal, 49% by phone and 44% by email. The Review Board queried whether the reduction in use of phone is due to callers not being able to get through, and the service manager explained that while the rate of 'dropped calls' was higher than the Department would want it to be, they were not being flagged as a reason for a high number of complaints to the Department at the time of the Review. The service also has an arrangement where if there are long wait times for calls, there is an option for the caller to leave a voicemail and a member of the Team will follow up.

35.   Applications for a blue badge can also be completed online (using a GOV.UK form that is processed by ESCC) via ESCC's webpages and 70% of Blue Badge applications are now conducted online (of approximately 550 applications per month). Blue badge reviews can also be completed online and there is an upward trend in the number of people completing reviews that way. The Review Board heard from the service manager that the pandemic encouraged this shift to a certain extent.

Rationale for moving to 'digital by default'

36.   In reviewing the current position, the Board received a range of evidence on the Department's rationale, and considerations it had made, in deciding to encourage greater use of digital and self-service options.

Benefits

37.   As covered in the introduction, the Scoping and Review Board heard that ASCH anticipate there to be real benefits of the approach for residents, clients and carers in being able to access information and apply for and assess their eligibility for services at a time that suits them and that matches broader expectations of how residents should be able to manage their lives online. During their evidence session, the Lay Member of the Being Digital Inclusion Group confirmed they would expect to be able to undertake more administrative and process-based tasks, such as financial assessments and applications for documents such as blue badges, online. Implementation of further technology to support faster processing of applications and assessments submitted is expected to also improve the experience of clients and carers.

Digital and Internet Usage

38.   The Review Board heard at its Scoping Board meeting that in considering setting its direction of travel to encourage greater use of digital and self-service options, the Department has considered whether it is reasonable to expect the ASCH community to be able to self-serve.

39.   Figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on internet usage suggest that to a certain extent this is a reasonable expectation, as internet usage has grown, including in age groups that make up a larger proportion of the ASCH client base and may typically be perceived as less likely to use the internet:

•   From January to February 2020, 96% of households in Great Britain had internet access, up from 93% in 2019 and just 57% in 2006.

•   Internet connections in households with one adult aged 65 years and over had increased by 7 percentage points since 2019 to 80%.

•   Internet usage is almost universal in adults up to 64 years. Perhaps expectedly, adults aged 75 and over was the lowest group of internet users in the UK. However, this group has shown the highest increase of internet use, over and above any other age group, at an increase of +13 percentage points between 2018 and 2020.

40.   It should be noted that these figures are also pre- the coronavirus pandemic which widely drove increased use of digital and the internet to undertake communication and day-to-day activities such as shopping and accessing GP appointments.

Limitations

41.   The Department recognises that there are limitations to use of self-service and digital options in providing services. The Being Digital Strategy highlights national data suggesting that people aged 75 and older and disabled adults are more likely to be non-internet users and, given that these demographic groups form a large proportion of the ASCH client base, digital inclusion is a core consideration in delivery of the Being Digital Strategy and Programme. This is covered in more detail in the second section of this report.

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42.   There was also recognition in the evidence heard of the distinction between digitisation of process-based transactions, such as completing a blue badge application, and digitisation of the processes people use to contact ASCH services to reach out for support at a time of unexpected change, or of potential crisis, when they may be really concerned for the welfare of their loved ones. The Department is clear about the importance of maintaining an option for residents who need it to be able to access services via a 'human' conversation, whether that be over the phone or face-to-face, while also recognising that increasing the digital and self-service offer has considerable potential to free up staff time and resource to focus on providing that human support for those most in need.

Conclusions and support for the planned direction of travel

43.   Informed by all the evidence considered above, the Review Board has concluded that it is supportive of the work the Department is undertaking to deliver more self-service options and the planned direction of travel to move towards being 'digital by default'. The planned direction of travel builds on a natural trend in people choosing digital means to contact and transact with the Department, demonstrated by the shift in methods of contact to HSCC, in growing registrations to the ASC Portal and use of blue badge forms, and the Board also recognises that general expectations of what people should be able to be do online have shifted in recent years, particularly following the coronavirus pandemic.

44.   There are opportunities to increase use of OFAs and opportunities to grow use of other self-service forms on the ASC portal and there are expected to be benefits of the approach in making best-use of ASCH resources. While not a core motivation of the Department's work, the Review Board noted in considering learning from approaches taken by other local authorities that shifting people's method of engaging with services online has the potential to deliver financial savings.

45.   The Review Board particularly welcomes the balanced approach the Department is taking to this planned direction of travel, and the recognition of limitations in the approach. The Review Board were reassured by the recognition throughout the review that 'human options' for interactions with ASCH services must not be lost and that digital inclusion is a core consideration of the Department's work.

46.   More broadly, there are clear benefits to use of digital for joining up service delivery and the Board are very supportive of ambitions Being Digital has to deliver this. The Review Board also concluded that it is supportive of any future efforts to streamline processes, such as that planned for financial assessments, particularly in light of evidence that time may be a limitation to carers, in particular, completing self-assessments and assessments on behalf of others.

Recommendation 4

The Department should continue to explore opportunities to simplify operational processes alongside implementing the Being Digital programme.

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47.   Finally, as part of its evidence gathering, the Review Board asked if the Being Digital Programme has metrics or targets to measure success. It was confirmed that at the time of the Review, the Programme was working to put in place a range of measures to track success of its projects with clear, ambitious, but realistic, targets wherever possible. The Review Board asked for the People Scrutiny Committee to be kept up to date on progress against those targets.

Recommendation 5

The People Scrutiny Committee should be informed of progress against Being Digital programme targets as part of the monitoring of this Scrutiny Review.

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Part 2: Ways to support behavioural and cultural change

48.   To address the remaining key lines of enquiry for the Review, the Review Board considered evidence on the behavioural and cultural changes required to support greater take-up of online and self-service options and how that change could be supported.

Behavioural change programme

49.   The ASCH Department has a programme of work underway with the University College London (UCL) Centre for Behaviour Change to look at behavioural changes required to support delivery of the Being Digital Programme and the move to becoming 'digital by default'. The work is applying behavioural science to better understand the factors that influence people to act and, with that understanding, to identify what interventions could support the shift to people using new digital channels. A particular benefit of the programme is that it is upskilling staff to apply behaviour change approaches to support other future transformation work.

50.   The Review Board held an evidence session on the Department's work with UCL, and heard that the work is taking place in three phases, with phases one and two complete at the time of the Review. The first phase involved initial capacity building sessions with attendees from ASCH learning how to use the behaviour change wheel.
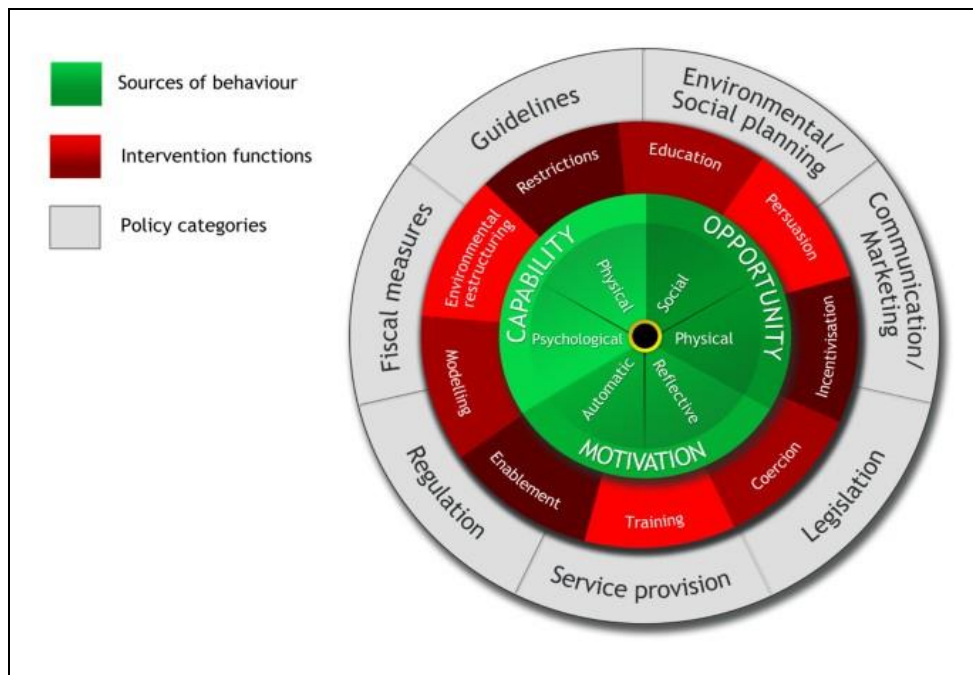
Figure 2. Behaviour Change Wheel

51.   Phase two focussed on applying UCL's approach to the topic of maximising completion of OFAs, identifying key actors (including staff in HSCC, ASC practitioners and clients) and target behaviours required to support this ambition (including HSCC always asking for and recording email addresses of clients and carers, ASC practitioners promoting and always sending the link to the OFA, and clients using the link to complete and submit the OFA). Influences on these behaviours were then considered, such as - in the case of staff - emotions and habits they may have formed based on perceptions of clients. A range of interventions were then identified to support behaviour change of ASCH staff as an initial outcome of the work, including producing guidance on OFAs for staff, which the Department is taking forward. The third phase will involve UCL providing in-depth consultancy support for the application of the behaviour change wheel to a broader, more complex area that supports the Department's move to being 'digital by default.'

52.   The Review Board asked clarifying questions on the work with UCL as part of the evidence session and concluded they were supportive of the work underway. The Review Board were encouraged to hear in evidence received that work with the UCL's Centre for Behaviour Change is considered best practice. The Review Board also noted that this work will enable the Department to consider many different aspects of encouraging behaviour change, such as considering the role of language and ways to talk to people's aspirations, rather than their deficits, in encouraging use of digital services.

53.   The Review Board asked about the focus and timeline for the third phase of work with UCL and heard that the focus was being agreed and that the phase was due to be delivered in the next six to nine months (by the end of summer 2023). The Review Board asked for the People Scrutiny Committee to be updated on the outcome of this final phase of work.

Recommendation 6

The People Scrutiny Committee should be informed of the outcome of the third phase of the Department's Behavioural Change work with the UCL as part of the monitoring of this Scrutiny Review.

Staff engagement and communications

54.   The Review Board considered a range of evidence that suggested well thought-out communication and engagement with ASCH staff is required to support behaviour change by ensuring staff understand, are convinced of, and are able to promote the benefits of digital and self-service options.

55.   As outlined in part one of this report, another local authority shared learning with ASCH that giving careful consideration to the way increased use of OFAs was described to staff reduced anxiety about the transformation. Similarly, the ESCC Head of Service for Hospitals, Finance and Continuing Healthcare gave evidence that staff in their service have mixed views about the move to increased use of OFAs, with some very keen to move to self-assessments and others more sceptical. They therefore suggested it is important that the benefits of a digital approach are understood and shared among staff. They suggested the Department needs to have a clear understanding of what the benefits of online and self-service processes are for residents, clients and carers, with the ability to share case studies and place personal voices centrally as much as possible in communications about the change. They felt this would help reduce scepticism and support a shift in staff mindset and culture to recognise that many people are able to carry out self-assessments online.

56.   The Review Board also heard evidence from the Programme Manager for the NHS Digital First Programme in Sussex, a four-year NHS England programme working to increase the availability and use of digital options in primary care services. In their evidence session, the Programme Manager explained that early and good staff engagement that highlighted the benefits and ensured staff had the skills and knowledge to support the changes underway had been key to implementing the transformation Digital First has undertaken. Finally, learning from a range of national research and case studies on the approach taken by other local authorities to encourage behaviour change to deliver 'channel shift' (where service users access or interact with services via channels other than those to which they normally choose) emphasised the importance of considered, proactive staff engagement that demonstrates the benefit of the change.

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57.   Having considered this evidence, the Review Board identified that, beyond being able to promote the benefits, staff will also play an important role in identifying the digital capabilities of the clients, carers and/or residents they interact with to determine which channel they should use and ensuring they get additional support with using technology if needed (see digital inclusion section below). They may also play a role in helping people to build their digital skills by talking them through ASCH's digital processes so that they are able to undertake such processes themselves in future. The Review Board also noted from the evidence considered that some preconceptions about people's, particularly older people's, digital abilities may need to be challenged. The suggestion of producing case studies and centring personal voices in communications may assist with this.

Recommendation 7

The Department should reflect feedback from residents who have benefited from digital and self-service options in communications to staff.

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58.   The Review Board asked how ASCH officers plan to communicate the move to being 'digital by default' to staff and the Being Digital Delivery Manager explained that the Department is in the process of developing the approach. There will not be one single communication exercise and instead Being Digital will be working over the next year or so to bring staff, particularly in teams that are rolling out new digital platforms and self-service options, on a journey where the intention behind, and benefits of, the platforms being put in place are better understood. This would build on the learning about engaging with and supporting staff to increase take-up of OFAs that had been identified by the work with UCL outlined above. The Review Board noted that staff in services rolling out new platforms may themselves require new training and development to be able to support clients, and heard from officers that work is taking place to ensure staff are trained on the digital tools and platforms being introduced. This includes incorporating training on digital options as part of the mandatory training of all new ASCH staff.

59.   The Review Board heard as part of the Review that new HSCC staff already receive 'digital inductions' on East Sussex 1Space and the digital offer of other services and partner organisations to ensure they are able to promote and signpost to these. The Review Board suggested that, building on this approach, information on Being Digital and the Department's planned direction of travel to being 'digital by default', as well as the digital and self-service platforms on offer, should be included in all new staff inductions. The Review Board also supported a suggestion that for those staff who are in an area undergoing transformation in rollout of a new platform, the topic should be included in team meetings, and individual supervision meetings where appropriate, as an opportunity to identify any training or support needs and as a mechanism for staff to raise any concerns about implementation. The Review Board also agreed the topic should also be included in regular departmental communications.

Recommendation 8

Information on Being Digital and the digital and self-service platforms on offer in ASCH, should be included in all new ASCH staff inductions.

Recommendation 9

Digital transformation should be included as a discussion point in team and 1-2-1 (where appropriate) meetings within areas undergoing rollout of a new digital or self-service platform; and in ongoing departmental communications (such as Yammer, To The Point and Brief Encounter).

Design and testing

60.   The Review Board also considered a range of evidence that suggested design and testing of digital platforms is key to ensuring their take-up and to building people's confidence in using them.

61.   Key learning from case studies from other local authorities that have encouraged behaviour change to drive channel shift showed that considerable focus on good design of webpages and online services is a fundamental first step to encourage take-up of the services put in place. The Review Board also heard in evidence from ASCH service managers that they know the Department's online offer needs to be stable, reliable and as easy to use as established channels (e.g. picking up the phone) to encourage people to use it and have confidence in it.

62.   In light of this evidence, the Review Board sought assurance that ASCH's digital offer is simple, accessible and well-designed. The Review Board heard that ASCH works closely with services to design self-service forms and that they are designed to emulate best practice, such as GOV.UK forms; ensuring they are easy to fill out with lots of blank space and use simplified language. An officer in the ASCH Information, Guidance and Insight Team ensures ASCH's online offer is accessible and the ASCH webpages have passed an assessment of digital accessibility against Government standards, including website usability. In terms of testing, a user testing system is used to test the navigability and user-experience of online forms before they are made live. It was also confirmed that ASCH do use tester groups to test new forms or platforms being developed by the Department, although this may not be conducted in person.

63.   Snapshots of the Online Financial Assessment process were circulated to the Review Board the Board confirmed that it looked to be a reasonably designed process. The Review Board also discussed with officers ways that learning from the behavioural change work with UCL could be incorporated in designing future forms, to ensure they are Easy, Attractive, Social and Timely (EAST) (e.g. including checklists and checkboxes at stages throughout the form to provide a sense of accomplishment and progress while completing forms).

Digital inclusion

64.   Digital inclusion involves ensuring that the benefits of the internet and digital technology are available to everyone. Enabling digital inclusion is a county-wide ambition that a number of organisations in the public, voluntary and private sector – including ESCC – play a role in delivering. This is achieved through a range of strategies, schemes and projects that work to increase access to digital devices, the internet, and digital skills and literacy training opportunities. It is a complex issue to address, with a multitude of factors - ranging from deprivation to skills gaps to internet connectivity – all impacting on risk of digital exclusion.

65.   Digital inclusion is one of three main principles of the ASCH Being Digital Strategy and the Review Board heard from officers throughout the Review that they understood the importance of digital inclusion for enabling residents to take advantage of online and self-service options. This is particularly the case because, as covered in part one of this report, national research shows that the demographic groups that form a large proportion of the ASCH client group (older people and adults with disabilities) are less likely to use the internet.

66.   Being Digital has in place two key strands of work to enable digital inclusion. Governance of the Being Digital Programme includes a Being Digital Inclusion Group which has been established to consider inclusion and accessibility of Being Digital projects, particularly for clients with disabilities. Officers confirmed for the Review Board that the group will consider the inclusion implications of the Department moving to being 'digital by default' in detail at an upcoming meeting. The Review Board considered the Terms of Reference and work of this Group and concluded they were very supportive of it and its work to ensure no group is disadvantaged by Being Digital developments.

67.   The Department is also involved in a One Council Digital Inclusion Programme. This programme is working to join up and scale up the digital inclusion offer in different areas of the Council. Through this, Being Digital are establishing a formal referral route from ASCH to a pilot, targeted scheme being run out of the Library Service that can loan devices/ allocate data or offer skills training to those with an identified digital inclusion need. Other work that the programme is undertaking includes gathering a list of all providers offering digital inclusion interventions to East Sussex residents in 2021 and 2022 to produce a Partner Management Database. This database is helping to build relationships and collaborative delivery of digital inclusion, with a longer-term ambition to identify gaps in provision to be addressed through either restructuring existing offers or considering the case for new provision. The programme is also working to show places to get online on a map on East Sussex Community Information Services.

68.   The Review Board heard from witnesses about a wide range of other national and local work taking place to increase digital inclusion. This includes:

•   Locally - county-wide IT for You computer skills sessions run out of East Sussex libraries and a scheme local to Hastings run by the Education Training Consortium proving IT support sessions.

•   National organisations - the Good Things Foundation works across the country to address the 'digital divide' through a national community network, databank and device bank for people in need; and AbilityNet provides free online resources and a network of over 300 community-based volunteers to help individuals with any disability, of any age, to use all kinds of digital technology.

•   Targeted resources – including Digital Inclusion programmes funded through NHS Sussex to support digitally excluded people to access healthcare using digital tools; and specific resources for carers, such as Computer Help at Home, an ESCC commissioned service from the Association of Carers where volunteers provide one-to-one support to carers in their own home to help them learn how to use technology.

•   Private sector – the Review Board heard that as many banks and utility companies have moved their interactions and access to their services entirely online, they can play an important role in upskilling people. The closure of some high-street banks was noted as potentially limiting this as an option for some people to access.

69.   In considering this, the Review Board identified that while there are clearly a range of resources and support available, there is potentially a need to ensure there is good awareness of the support available among residents. This was supported by evidence given by the Lay Member of the Being Digital Inclusion Group who suggested that people who are reluctant to use, or may struggle with, digital technologies may not know about the range of support that is available to them. The Lay Member suggested that this support could be promoted to younger people who can update older relatives on the support available. The Review Board also felt there is a need to ensure the those working with people who may be digitally excluded are aware of support on offer and able to sign-post to it. The Review Board encouraged the Department to ensure it was promoting and taking advantage of the range of digital inclusion resources that were highlighted by witnesses in implementing the move to being 'digital by default'.

Recommendation 10

The Department should continue to work with colleagues through the One Council Digital Inclusion programme to map the digital inclusion offer in East Sussex, and, where appropriate, share this with adult social care and health staff and partners.

Recommendation 11

The Department should ensure it is promoting to staff, and utilising, the range of national

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and local digital inclusion resources and schemes available in moving to being digital by default.

Trust

70.   The Review Board considered evidence that suggested lack of trust is also a barrier to using online and digital services, and to digital inclusion more generally. The Programme Manager of the NHS Digital First Programme shared engagement that the programme had undertaken with the patient population in East Sussex which found that while people may be willing to use digital technology for activities such as online shopping, emails, online banking and booking holidays, they were generally more concerned with it being used for healthcare. Reasons people gave included a lack of trust in the reliability of technology and not knowing what the 'official' app to use was, alongside issues with internet access and uncertainty about whether they had the digital skills necessary. These reservations about using digital technology for healthcare may translate into lack of trust in the reliability of technology for accessing digital ASCH services.

71.   Being Digital is aware that trust may be a potential barrier to take-up of digital options and the Being Digital Inclusion Group has initiated a project looking at how to improve trust in digital applications, including considering safeguards that could be put in place to ensure vulnerable people interacting with the Department's digital applications and platforms know that they are legitimate and can be trusted (similar to the way banks provide advice on how customers can know they can trust digital communications or an online banking app). There may also be opportunities to explore ways to improve trust through the ongoing behavioural change work with UCL.

72.   The Review Board took the opportunity to discuss ways to build trust in ESCC's digital services with two witnesses who gave evidence to the Review. The Board asked the Lay Member of the Being Digital Inclusion Group - who also undertakes work to support older people and people with learning difficulties to use digital tools and access digital services - how they build trust with the people they undertake support sessions with and they explained they ensure the details of the registered charity they work for is displayed on promotional material they use. The Review Board and Lay Member recognised that ESCC as a large organisation can face distinct challenges in building trust with residents that smaller charities and community organisations can overcome. The Lay Member suggested that learning could be taken from a past digital inclusion scheme they knew of where a service provider (a housing association) had partnered with a recognised charity to deliver the scheme. The involvement of the recognised charity had acted as a bridge between the community and those working for the service provider, to achieve the aim of increasing digital inclusion.

73.   This suggestion was supported by evidence the Review Board heard from Eric Kihlstrom (Chair of the London-based charity OpenAge, UK Ambassador to Aging 2.0 - a global network focussed on improving the quality of life for older people, and former Interim Director of the UK Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund on Healthy Ageing). OpenAge is a London-based charity working to provide physical activity and learning, arts, culture and social opportunities for anyone aged over 50. The charity moved its programme of activities online in the pandemic and had success in encouraging just under 40% of its 4000 active members to take this up. The digital offer has been so popular that post-pandemic, OpenAge has a hybrid model of delivery and many of its online sessions are oversubscribed. OpenAge found that key to enabling this transition was that their members trusted the charity, which also provided support with 'How to use Zoom' sessions via phone to help members access its digital offer. Eric Kihlstrom recommended that leveraging existing, local 'trusted networks' could be key to increasing digital inclusion and, thereby use of digital platforms and take-up of online services. Such 'trusted networks' could be the NHS; large national charities present in East Sussex, such as AgeUK and the Citizen's Advice Bureau; smaller decentralised charities such as the Good Neighbours Scheme; and the digital inclusion charities outlined above which often have networks of volunteers that could bolster existing digital inclusion schemes.

74.   The Review Board recognise that there could be a number of benefits to using partnerships to support and enable the increased take-up of digital services. This includes potential opportunities to promote and signpost to ASCH's digital platforms; and to signpost into organisations that could improve the digital skills and inclusion of those that come into contact with partner organisations. The opportunity for better signposting to ASCH's digital offer is supported by evidence the Review Board heard from the NHS Digital First Programme Manager that there may opportunities for ASCH to better signpost to the digital offer in primary care and vice versa.

Recommendation 12

The Department should explore opportunities for partners, including voluntary sector organisations, to support engagement with and signposting to ASCH's digital offer.

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75.   Eric Kihlstrom shared other resources with the Review Board that he suggested may support ASCH in addressing the challenge of encouraging greater take-up of digital ASCH services, including joining the Healthy Ageing Challenge Community of Practice, which shares knowledge and innovations across sectors to support healthy ageing in the UK; and considering opportunities to work with the University of Sussex Innovation Centre. The Review Board encouraged officers to take advantage of these suggested resources and officers committed to do so.

Digital ambassadors

76.   As part of this Review, the Review Board has considered the role that a digital ambassador scheme might play in supporting take-up of the digital and self-service offer from ASCH. The Review Board acknowledge that there are a number of different models that could be considered. Case studies of other authorities that have delivered channel shift through behavioural change that the Review Board considered showed that some councils have asked members of their workforce to act as 'digital champions' for channel shift, who can be powerful advocates for digital channels amongst their staff peers, clients and other residents, as they are often residents in the council area themselves.

77.   Rather than a champion scheme, the model of digital ambassador mostly discussed by the Review Board involves employed staff or volunteers (either specifically recruited, or part of an existing voluntary organisation) supporting residents, clients and/or carers to use digital platforms. The Review Board considered there to be a number of benefits to such a scheme, including identifying digital exclusion and referring people to support available; and providing peer-to-peer, in person opportunities to learn how to use digital technology and services.

78.   One local example of such a scheme is the Digital Ambassador project implemented by the NHS Digital First Programme. The Review Board received a detailed presentation on this project from the Project Manager which covered that the project is a Sussex-wide pilot to evaluate the impact of having a funded staff member in Primary Care Networks that meets with patients to demonstrate the benefits of, and how to use digital healthcare tools. Ambassadors are currently employed in nine PCNs and are employed directly by GP practices, typically one day a week, to demonstrate the benefits of and provide information and training on digital healthcare tools such as the NHS app, online consultations, NHS111, GP practice websites and the Patient Access System. In addition to supporting patients and practices, ambassadors have a network to share ideas, best practice and learning. Different delivery models have been used by the various digital ambassadors, with one ambassador partnering with a local community group and another working closely with a digital inclusion partnership in Brighton & Hove.

79.   The project has had positive feedback from patients who have said they are grateful to have a person to sit with them face to face to show them how to download, register and understand the scope and benefits of digital healthcare tools. GP practices have said the demand for the scheme is evident and the scheme has helped address a need that reception staff do not have time to assist with. The pilot will be evaluated this winter and the outcome of that evaluation is expected in Spring 2023.

80.   The Review Board concluded that there were clear benefits to a digital ambassador scheme and to the approach taken through the NHS Digital First Programme. The Review Board asked that officers evaluate the benefits and costs of establishing a digital ambassador scheme in ESCC. This should be informed by learning from evaluation of the NHS pilot Digital Ambassador project, including the benefits and achievements of the different delivery models used. The Review Board also asked that the Department consider other models used elsewhere to identify what could work best for ESCC.

Recommendation 13

The Department should consider whether a Digital Ambassador Scheme could provide added value to Being Digital, informed by learning from the NHS Digital First Digital Ambassador pilot when it concludes, and consideration of other models.

Conclusions

81.   The Review has considered a broad range of evidence and concluded it is supportive of the Department's ambitions to be 'digital by default' and the balanced approach the Department is taking to this planned direction of travel. The Review Board has identified that there are opportunities to capture learning from other local authorities and from ongoing rollout of digital services to ensure the offer being put in place is taken advantage of by residents, clients and carers.

82.   There are a number of positive projects and programmes already underway - including one on behavioural change this is specifically working to address the lines of enquiry for this Review - and the Board asks that the People Scrutiny Committee is kept up to date on progress and outcomes of those.

83.   The Review Board has identified areas where activity, both internally in ASCH and with partners, could support greater use of the platforms and innovations being put in place that it is recommended that the Department now explore in greater detail.

84.   Overall, throughout the Review the Board has found the Department to be very open to questioning, challenge and consideration of alternatives. The Board has been encouraged to find that the Department is taking an iterative approach to this area of work and constantly developing, adapting and improving its approach in response to feedback and consideration of learning and best practice.

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Appendix

Scope and terms of reference of the review

The Review was established to consider and make recommendations on the following:

What cultural and behavioural changes are needed to support greater use of online services, 'self-service' options and adoption of a 'digital by default' approach by the Department.

The Scoping Board agreed that considering the above in all service areas within the ASC Department would be too broad. Instead it was expected that the review would particularly focus on the following service areas:

- Financial assessments
- Reviews (especially carer reviews)
- Information, advice and signposting
- Carer assessments

1. Within the service areas outlined above:

   a) To what extent are residents, clients, carers and/or providers currently using online services, self-service options and/or digital communication channels?

   b) If there is high or low use, why is that?

   c) Why do people choose to use the channels they do to communicate with ASC in these areas?

   d) What cultural and behavioural changes are needed to support greater use of online services, self-service options and/or digital communication channels?

   e) How can that cultural and behavioural change be encouraged?

2. The review should also look more broadly at:

   a) What insights are there from other councils that have a high take-up of online services and have implemented a 'digital by default' approach on the cultural and behavioural changes needed?

   b) How have they encouraged those?

Board Membership and project support

Review Board Members: Councillors Penny di Cara (Chair), Nuala Geary and Wendy Maples.

The Project Manager was Beth McGhee, Senior Policy and Scrutiny Adviser with additional support provided by Melanie Funnel, Business Partner HR&OD and Patrick Major, Scrutiny and Policy Support Officer.

Paul Hussey, Interim Assistant Director, Planning, Performance and Engagement; Jacqueline London-Willis, Head of Business Development and Insight; and Alex Callaghan, Being Digital Delivery Manager provided ongoing support to the Board throughout the review.

Review Board meeting dates

Scoping Board meeting – 5 July 2022

First Review Board meeting – 21 September 2022

Second Review Board meeting – 7 October 2022

Third Review Board meeting – 2 November 2022

Fourth Review Board meeting – 14 November 2022

Final Review Board meeting – 2 December 2022

Witnesses providing evidence

The Board would like to thank all the witnesses who provided evidence:

ESCC officers

Sonny Butler, Head of Service – Hospitals, Finance and Continuing Healthcare

Alex Callaghan, Being Digital Delivery Manager

William Harvey, Performance and Planning Officer

Jaqueline London-Willis, Head of Business Development and Insight

Alison O'Shea, Operations Manager, Health and Social Care Connect

Tamsin Peart, Strategic Commissioning Manager

External Witnesses

Calvin Humphries, Lay Member of Being Digital Inclusion Group

Jessica Kaye, Head of Programme Sussex, Digital First – NHS England and Improvement

Eric Kihlstrom, Chair of OpenAge and UK Ambassador to Aging 2.0

Jennifer Twist, Chief Executive, Care for the Carers

Amanda Waller, NHS Sussex Digital First Project Manager

Evidence papers

Item	Date considered
Adult Social Care & Health digital strategy 2020-2023	July and September 2022
Being Digital Roadmap	September 2022
Being Digital Projects overview for scrutiny	September 2022
Adult Social Care Portal Dashboard – August 2022 Key Data	September 2022
NHS Digital First Primary Care – Overview	October 2022
Summary of national research and case studies: • Rochdale Borough Council: A behavioural approach to digital channel shift (2019) • Engaging Citizens Online Briefing – Promotion of online services (2016) • LGA Digital Experts Programme channel shift case study: Dacorum Borough Council (2017) • Suffolk County Council: LGA Design in Social Care Programme (2019) • Lincolnshire County Council: Social Care Digital Innovation Programme (2021)	October 2022
Behavioural Insights activity in ASCH	October 2022
Online Financial Assessments – learning summary	October 2022
Being Digital Inclusion Group Terms of Reference	November 2022

Role description – Being Digital Inclusion Group Lay Member	November 2022
ASC Portal registrations by job title and organisation	November 2022
Online Analytics in Adult Social Care and Health – a summary for scrutiny	November 2022
An introduction to A Categorisation Of Residential Neighbourhoods (ACORN)	November 2022

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Report to:	**People Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting:	**16 December 2022**
By:	**Assistant Chief Executive**
Title:	**People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme**
Purpose:	**To review and discuss the People Scrutiny Committee's future work programme**

RECOMMENDATIONS: **The Committee is recommended to:**

1) review and agree the latest work programme set out at Appendix 1;

2) consider the summary of work and comments of the Loneliness and Resilience Reference Group at Appendix 2 – to follow; and

3) review upcoming items on East Sussex County Council's Forward Plan as set out at Appendix 3 to identify any issues that may require more detailed scrutiny.

1 Background

1.1 The work programme is an important tool in ensuring the correct focus and best use of the Committee's time in scrutinising topics that are of importance to the residents of East Sussex, and the efficient and effective working of the Council. It also provides clarity for those who may be requested to give evidence to the Committee on the issues under review, and the questions the Committee requires answers to.

1.2 Discussion of the work programme provides the Committee with the opportunity to consider topics that it may be of value to scrutinise, and to decide whether further scoping work is required. This provides a basis for deciding the best way of scrutinising a topic, the timescale, and who from the Committee will be involved in carrying out the review work. If there are a number of potential topics for review, Members can determine the priority of the work within the resources available to the Committee.

2 Supporting information

Work programme

2.1 The Committee's latest work programme is attached at Appendix 1. The Committee is asked to consider, discuss and agree any changes required.

Loneliness and Resilience Reference Group
2.2 The Loneliness and Resilience Reference Group was established by the previous People Scrutiny Committee in March 2021 to input into a loneliness project being undertaken by the Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) department. The Reference Group has met four times since and agreed at its last meeting on 29 November 2022 to conclude its work, and report back to the Committee a summary of the work the Group has undertaken and summary comments on the areas it has considered. This is included as Appendix 2 (**to follow**).

2.3 When considering potential topics for inclusion in the work programme, the Committee is asked to consider a range of questions. These include:

- Is the topic relevant to the Council's Corporate Priorities?

- Is the issue of concern or of relevance to East Sussex residents?
- Can Scrutiny have an impact and add value by scrutinising this issue, service or policy?
- Is the issue one that the Committee can realistically influence?
- Are the resources needed to undertake the review available?

Scrutiny Reviews

2.4   The Review of Use of Digital and Technology in ASCH has concluded and the final report is included on this meeting agenda.

2.5   The first Review Board meeting of the Review of the Use of Prevention in Children's Services will take place on 5 January 2023 and will consider initial evidence and an updated timeline for the Review. The Review of Adult Social Care Equality and Inclusion will also commence in the New Year.

2.6   A re-Scoping Board of a Scrutiny Review of School Exclusions will take place on 12 January 2023 to consider work on inclusion undertaken by the Department since the Review was agreed prior to the COVID-pandemic; whether it remains appropriate to undertake a review of this area; and, if so, whether any changes are required to the previously agreed Terms of Reference.

2.7   Any suggestions for potential Scrutiny Review topics should be discussed with the Chair, or the Senior Policy and Scrutiny Adviser, in advance of the Committee meetings.

Forward Plan

2.7   A copy of the Council's Forward Plan of executive decisions for the period 1 December 2022 to 31 March 2023 is included at Appendix 3. The Committee is requested to review the forthcoming items on the Forward Plan to identify any issues within the remit of this Committee that may require more detailed scrutiny. The Forward Plan is revised and published on a monthly basis and Committee members should regularly review the Forward Plan.

3.   Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1   An important part of managing the work of the People Scrutiny Committee is regularly reviewing its future work programme. This involves the Committee assessing its priorities, ensuring its ongoing reviews are completed in a timely fashion and identifying new areas for scrutiny.

PHILIP BAKER
Assistant Chief Executive

Contact Officer: Beth McGhee, Senior Policy and Scrutiny Adviser

Tel. No. 01273 335828

Email: beth.mcghee@eastsussex.gov.uk

People Scrutiny Committee - Work Programme

Current Scrutiny Reviews		
Title of Review	**Detail**	**Proposed Completion Date**
Use of digital and technology in Adult Social Care	The Committee has accepted the recommendation of the Initial Scoping Board that the Committee proceed with a review of this area, focussed on exploring the cultural and behavioural changes needed to support greater use of online services, 'self-service' options and adoption of a 'digital by default' approach in ASC. Membership of the Review Board: Councillors di Cara (Chair), Geary and Maples.	December 2022
ASC Equality and Inclusion	The Committee has accepted the recommendation of the Initial Scoping Board that the Committee proceed with a review of this area, looking at how the Department engages with 'seldom heard' groups and whether residents of all backgrounds know how to access ASC services. Membership of the Review Board: Councillors Geary, Ungar (Chair) and Webb.	March 2023
Use of Prevention in Children's Services	The Committee has accepted the recommendation of the Initial Scoping Board that the Committee proceed with a review of this area, focussed on examining work planned and underway to strengthen use of prevention in Children's Services. Membership of the Review Board: Councillors Adeniji, Field, Howell (Chair) and John Hayling, Parent Governor Representative.	March 2023
School Exclusions	The previous Committee agreed in March 2020 to undertake a Scrutiny Review of issues relating to school exclusions. The Committee also agreed the Terms of Reference proposed by the Scoping Board. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on the availability of schools to contribute to further work on this review, it was subsequently paused with the intention to recommence it at a suitable future date. Since the original review was scoped, the Department has commenced a project with ISOS consultancy to draw together aspects of good and emerging practice into a clear, whole-system, strategic approach to inclusion and the use of Alternative Provision for secondary-age pupils in East Sussex. The Committee wishes to recommence this review and will hold a further short scoping meeting to consider the outcomes of the ISOS project and any adjustments required to the existing Terms of Reference before commencing the review.	To be confirmed when second scoping board undertaken on 12 January 2023.

	Membership of the Review Board: Councillors Adeniji, Field, Maples and Nicola Boulter, Parent Governor Representative.	

Initial Scoping Reviews

Subject area for initial scoping	Detail	Proposed Dates
School Attendance	The Committee heard at their 2021 work planning awayday that overall school absence and persistent absence rates across East Sussex are high, when compared to national and statistical neighbours; and that East Sussex has a significant number of children and young people deemed too ill to attend school due to anxiety and poor mental health, and increasing levels of Emotionally-Based School Avoidance. A scoping board meeting was held on 10 March 2022 and the Board agreed that although the subject was appropriate for a Scrutiny Review, as so much of the current situation regarding school absence rates in East Sussex was related to the ongoing impact of, and disruption from, the coronavirus pandemic, it was too early for the Committee to undertake a scrutiny review of school attendance. The Board therefore agreed that the review should commence in Spring 2023 when we expect to have a clearer sense of the long-term impact of COVID on school absences. A further short scoping board meeting will be held in early 2023 to build on issues discussed at the 2022 scoping board and draft Terms of Reference for this review. Membership of the Scoping Board: Cllrs Adeniji, di Cara, Field and Howell (Chair) and Nicola Boulter, Parent Governor Representative.	To be confirmed following a further short scoping board in early 2023.

Suggested Potential Future Scrutiny Review Topics

Suggested Topic	Detail

Scrutiny Reference Groups

Reference Group Title	Subject area	Meeting Dates
Health and Social Care Integration Programme (HASCIP) Reference Group	The Committee agreed to establish a Reference Group to monitor progress of the East Sussex Health and Social Care Integration Programme and identify areas for future scrutiny. It will review HASCI progress reports provided to the Health and Wellbeing Board and meet on an ad hoc basis as required to consider issues arising in more detail.	Next meeting: Expected Spring 2023

	The group last met on 22 November 2022 to consider and comment on key elements of the draft Sussex Integrated Care Strategy ahead of it being considered by the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development. It was agreed at this meeting that the Strategy's action plan would be presented to a future HASCIP Reference Group meeting, expected to be in Spring 2023. The group has also requested to consider progress with work at the locality level in East Sussex and a meeting to consider this is expected to take place in 2023 when this work is further progressed. Membership of the group: Councillors Clark, di Cara, Geary (Chair), Ungar and Webb.	
Loneliness and Resilience Scrutiny Reference Group	The Committee agreed to establish a Loneliness and Resilience Scrutiny Reference Group at its meeting in March 2021. The purpose of the group is to provide scrutiny input into a loneliness project being undertaken by the Adult Social Care and Health Department. The Group had presentations on progress with the project in August and December 2021 and March 2022. A final meeting of the Reference Group took place on 29 November to consider the final project recommendations and next steps, as well as what and how the Group wish to report back to the Committee on this project. Membership of the group: Councillors Clark, Geary, Maples, Howell, Ungar and Webb.	
Educational Attainment and Performance Scrutiny Reference Group	The Committee agreed in June 2018 to establish a Reference Group to focus on reviewing data on educational attainment in East Sussex and related issues. The group meets on an annual basis. The next meeting of the Group is anticipated to take place in late January/ early February 2023 when Department for Education ratified attainment data for the 2021/22 academic year is expected to be available. Membership of the group: Councillors Adeniji, Field and Howell and Nicola Boulter, Parent Governor Representative.	Next meeting: Late January/ Early February 2023
Adult Social Care reforms Reference Group	The Committee agreed at its 2022 work planning awayday to establish a reference group to consider the impact and implementation of the Adult Social Care reforms. It has been agreed that the first meeting of the Group will take place after October, when the Fair Cost of Care exercise is complete, and will receive a report on the anticipated impact of the reforms on the Council's finances, Care Act assessment volumes, staffing, other operational issues, and the local care market. Membership of the group: Councillors di Cara, Geary and Ungar.	First meeting: Post-October 2022

Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) Board	RPPR Board meet annually to agree detailed comments and any recommendations on the emerging portfolio plans and spending and savings proposals to be put to Cabinet on behalf of the scrutiny committee.	Next meeting: 16 December 2022

Reports for Information

Subject Area	Detail	Proposed Date
Market Sustainability Plan	At its September 2022 meeting the Committee asked to receive a copy of the Market Sustainability Plan once it was finalised.	When finalised – expected to be February 2023

Training and Development

Title of Training/Briefing	Detail	Proposed Date

Future Committee Agenda Items		Author
16 March 2023		
Armed Forces Covenant	At their September meeting the Committee asked for an update on ESCC's work to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant, particularly on work required to achieve gold accreditation.	Director of Children's Services
Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) Annual Report	To update the Committee on the work of SACRE.	Roy Galley, Chairman of SACRE / Director of Children's Services
Committee Work Programme	To manage the Committee's programme of work including matters relating to ongoing reviews, initial scoping boards, future scrutiny topics, reference groups, training and development matters and reports for information.	Beth McGhee, Senior Policy and Scrutiny Adviser
Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)	To provide the Committee with an opportunity to review its input into the RPPR process for 2023/24 financial year.	Becky Shaw, Chief Executive
17 July 2023		

Implementation of Schools White Paper Reforms	The Committee requested at its July 2022 meeting an update in 12 months on progress with implementing reforms set out in the Schools White Paper.	Assistant Director, Education
Elective Home Education	The Committee requested at its November 2022 meeting an update in 6 months on the work of the Elective Home Education service.	Assistant Director, Education
Committee Work Programme	To manage the Committee's programme of work including matters relating to ongoing reviews, initial scoping boards, future scrutiny topics, reference groups, training and development matters and reports for information.	Beth McGhee, Senior Policy and Scrutiny Adviser
Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)	To commence the Committee's involvement with the RPPR process for 2024/25 financial year by reviewing the information in the Quarter 4 (end of year) (2022/23) Council Monitoring report and the State of the County report.	Becky Shaw, Chief Executive
25 September 2023		
Committee Work Programme	To manage the Committee's programme of work including matters relating to ongoing reviews, initial scoping boards, future scrutiny topics, reference groups, training and development matters and reports for information.	Beth McGhee, Senior Policy and Scrutiny Adviser
Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)	To continue the Committee's work on the RPPR process for 2024/25 financial year.	Becky Shaw, Chief Executive
Safeguarding Adults Board - Annual Report	The Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) Annual Report outlines the safeguarding activity and performance in East Sussex during the previous financial year, as well as some of the main developments in place to prevent abuse from occurring.	Chair, Safeguarding Adults Board
Annual Review of Safer Communities	To update the Committee on performance in relation to Safer Communities in 2022/23 and the priorities and issues for 2023/24 that will be highlighted in the Partnership Business Plan.	Assistant Director - Planning, Performance and Engagement
East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (ESSCP) Annual Report	Presentation of the annual report of the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership. This report will include a progress update on the work of multi-agency exploitation coordinators as requested at the March 2022 Committee.	Independent Chair, East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership
29 November 2023		

Committee Work Programme	To manage the Committee's programme of work including matters relating to ongoing reviews, initial scoping boards, future scrutiny topics, reference groups, training and development matters and reports for information.	Beth McGhee, Senior Policy and Scrutiny Adviser
Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)	To continue the Committee's work on the RPPR process for 2024/25 financial year.	Becky Shaw, Chief Executive

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN

The Leader of the County Council is required to publish a forward plan setting out matters which the Leader believes will be the subject of a key decision by the Cabinet, individual Cabinet member or officer in the period covered by the Plan (the subsequent four months). The Council's Constitution states that a key decision is one that involves

(a) expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the expenditure of the County Council's budget, namely above £500,000 per annum; or

(b) is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions.

As a matter of good practice, the Council's Forward Plan includes other items in addition to key decisions that are to be considered by the Cabinet/individual members. This additional information is provided to inform local residents of all matters to be considered, with the exception of issues which are dealt with under the urgency provisions. Only key decisions to be taken by officers are included.

For each decision included on the Plan the following information is provided:

-    the name of the individual or body that is to make the decision and the date of the meeting or relevant time period for an officer decision
-    the title of the report and decision to be considered
-    groups that will be consulted prior to the decision being taken
-    a list of documents that will be considered when making the decision
-    the name and telephone number of the contact officer for each item.

The Plan is updated and published every month on the Council's website two weeks before the start of the period to be covered.

Meetings of the Cabinet/individual members are open to the public (with the exception of discussion regarding reports which contain exempt/confidential information). Copies of agenda and reports for meetings are available on the website in advance of meetings. Key decisions taken by officers will not be taken at a meeting – documents listed can be made available on request to the contact officer, with the exception of those which contain exempt/confidential information.

For further details on the time of meetings and general information about the Plan please contact Andy Cottell at County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, BN7 1UE, or telephone 01273 481583 or send an e-mail to stuart.mckeown@eastsussex.gov.uk. For further detailed information regarding specific issues to be considered by the Cabinet, individual Member or officer please contact the named contact officer for the item concerned.

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL
County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, BN7 1UE

For copies of reports or other documents please contact the officer listed on the Plan or phone 01273 335274.

FORWARD PLAN – EXECUTIVE DECISIONS (including Key Decisions) –1 December 2022 TO 31 March 2023
Additional notices in relation to Key Decisions and/or private decisions are available on the Council's website.

Cabinet membership:

Councillor Keith Glazier - Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development
Councillor Nick Bennett – Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change
Councillor Rupert Simmons – Lead Member for Economy
Councillor Claire Dowling – Lead Member for Transport and Environment
Councillor Carl Maynard – Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health
Councillor Bob Bowdler – Lead Member for Children and Families
Councillor Bob Standley – Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability

Date for Decision	Decision Taker	Decision/Key Issue	Decision to be taken wholly or partly in private (P) or Key Decision (KD)	Consultation	List of Documents to be submitted to decision maker	Contact Officer
12 Dec 2022	Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability	Proposal to lower school age range at Wivelsfield Community Primary School To consider whether to lower the age range at Wivelsfield Community Primary School to enable the governing body to provide early years provision on the school site.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Jane Spice *01323 747425*
13 Dec 2022	Cabinet	Council Monitoring: Quarter 2 2022/23 To consider the Council Monitoring report for the second quarter of the financial year 2022/23 as part of the Council's Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) budget monitoring process.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Victoria Beard *07894 708914*

13 Dec 2022	Cabinet	Treasury Management Annual Report 2021/22 and mid-year report 2022/23 To consider a report on the review of Treasury Management performance for 2021/22 and the outturn for the first six months of 2022/23, including the economic factors affecting performance, the Prudential Indicators and compliance with the limits set within the Treasury Management Strategy.	**KD**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Ian Gutsell *01273 481399*
13 Dec 2022	Cabinet	Treasury Management Stewardship 2021/22 To consider a review of the Council's performance on treasury management for the year 2021/22 and the mid year review for 2022/23			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Ian Gutsell *01273 481399*
13 Dec 2022	Cabinet	Conservators of Ashdown Forest - Development Strategy and MTFP, 2022/23 budget and Q2 report To consider the Conservators of Ashdown Forest Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan	**KD**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Ian Gutsell *01273 481399*
13 Dec 2022	Cabinet	Annual Report of Looked After Children's Services To consider the annual report of the Looked After Children's Service			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Sally Carnie *01323 747194*
13 Dec 2022	Lead Member for Resources and	Declare surplus and dispose of freehold land and buildings at former Etchingham	**P**		Report, other documents may	Nigel Brown *07394 410630*

Date		Description			Report	Contact
	Climate Change	Primary School, Etchingham The Council hold the freehold of land and buildings at the former Etchingham Primary School. The Council seeks to declare the property surplus to Council requirements and dispose for a capital receipt by public auction with a reserve price to be set before the auction date.			also be submitted	
13 Dec 2022	Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme: Consultation Response Wealden District Council are consulting on changes to their Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) for 2023/24. As Precepting Authority we are able to provide a response to the consultation. The proposed changes will see the extension to the 100% LCTRS discounts available, thereby potentially reducing the amount of Council Tax income the County Council will receive.	**P** **KD**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Ian Gutsell *01273 481399*
13 Dec 2022	Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	Agree the delivery plan for Partnerships for People and Place pilot intervention A decision is being made on the delivery of the Partnerships for People and Place pilot intervention, including what elements will be taken forward and how. There are several potential strands of the delivery including: • an engagement exercise • energy efficiency home assessments • post-assessment support and signposting			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Phie Bannister *07701 394919*

	Date						
			• installation of small measures • top up funding for the Household Support Grant				
	19 Dec 2022	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	East Sussex County Council's Alternative Weed Maintenance Techniques Trials 2022 Information presented on the outcome of the alternative techniques to using Glyphosate weed killer for weed control on the highway including opt-out volunteer service, reactive service and Foam spray. Decision to be taken on future weed maintenance techniques and whether the trials should be rolled on for 2023.	**KD**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Dale Poore *01273 335506*
	19 Dec 2022	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	Rural Verges as Wildlife Corridors - Trial of Early Season Reduction in Rural Grass Cutting Decision to be taken on any permanent amendments to the rural grass cutting policy, following this year's trial. The trial reduced the grass cutting service of rural verges in 12 areas to only one full cut in the Autumn. This change meant that Highways would not cut rural verges (except for visibility) at a time when flowering is often at its peak and it is the most beneficial time for pollinators.	**KD**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Dale Poore *01273 335506*
	19 Dec 2022	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	Highway Network Resilience Plan The report seeks approval for a new Highway Network Resilience Plan. The Plan supports our asset management approach and the management of highway assets		The Plan applies to all wards. **Internal**	Report, other documents may also be submitted	Rosslyn Mills *01273 336337*

		and will help us to prioritise maintenance services during situations such as extreme weather so that we can minimise disruption on the most important routes around the county.		**Stakeholders** Highway Maintenance Contractor, Public Transport Team, Flood Risk Management Team, Traffic and Safety Team, Emergency Planning Team, Infrastructure, Planning and Place Team, Major Projects and Growth Team **External Stakeholders** Neighbouring highway authorities that share a border (Emergency Planning Officers and Highway Service), Sussex Resilience Forum members: Police, Fire, Ambulance, NHS, Coastguards, Transport for the South East, Network rail, Bus		

					operators, National Highways, Logistics UK, District and Borough Councils Emergency Planning Officers		
19 Dec 2022	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	Highway Policies Review To seek agreement for amendments to the following Highways Policies. • Highway Asset Management Strategy, including Network Hierarchy Review • Highway Asset Management Policy The Highway Asset Management Strategy and the Highway Asset Management Policy set out the council's long-term strategic approach from which we develop our Asset Management Plans for each highway asset group (structures, drainage, lighting etc.) Amendments reflect current best practice guidance, including a review of the Network Hierarchy, which details the process used to define each road, ranging from Strategic Route down to Minor Road.				Report, other documents may also be submitted	Rosslyn Mills *01273 336337*
December 2022	Chief Operating Officer	Award of Contract for internal refurbishment of office accommodation at Muriel Matters House and Cavendish House, Hastings ESCC need to vacate Ocean House, Hastings. An office search was concluded and at a meeting for Lead Member for	**KD**		The local Member was advised of the proposed lettings and received the	Report, other documents may also be submitted	Nigel Brown *07394 410630*

			Resources and Climate Change it was agreed in July 2022 to taking leases at Cavendish House and Muriel Matters House, Hastings. The leases are about to be completed but refurbished works will be needed. As the contract for the building refurbishment is over £500,000 a key decision is required. The capital investment will be paid for from the non-schools planned maintenance programme and there is the budget to pay for this.		report that advised the Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change meeting in July 2022. A programme of staff consultation to those involved in the move will commence in mid October 2022.		
In the month of December Not before 5th Dec 2022	Director of Adult Social Care and Health		Extension of School Health Service Contract The School Health Service is commissioned from Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust; it provides the 5-19 Healthy Child Programme which provides universal and targeted support for children and young people of school age. The current contract value is £2M and is funded from the ring-fenced Public Health Grant, the service was procured in 2019 and was commissioned to start from Jan 1st, 2020, on a three year contract with an option to extend for a further two years. The first three years of the contract end on 31 December 2022 and, after review, it is proposed that the current contract is extended for a further two years until 31 December 2024 as further time is required to re-evaluate the specification to fully	**KD**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Simone Lane *01273 335216*

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		reflect the changing nature of the service as a result of COVID, etc.				
Between 9 Dec 2022 and 31 Dec 2022	Director of Adult Social Care and Health	Generic Infrastructure Service (GIS) Contract Extension The initial contract period (01/10/19 – 31/03/23) for the Generic Infrastructure Service (GIS) contracts expires on the 31st March 2023. The terms of the GIS contracts allows for East Sussex County Council and NHS Sussex no later than three (3) months before the end of the initial period or before the end of any previous Extension(s) of the Contract Period (as the case may be) to extend the Contract Period by a further period or periods of up to 2 years in total by giving written notice to the Service Provider of its wish to extend this Contract and the required length of such extension (an "Extension") provided that the total number of years does not exceed 5 years and 6 months. This decision is to extend the GIS Contract Period by a further period of 2 years (1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024 and 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025).	**KD**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Paul Rideout *01273 482911*
16 Jan 2023	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	London Road, Bexhill - Town Hall Square Public Realm Proposals To consider responses to the stakeholder and public consultations on the proposed Town Hall Square Public Realm Improvements as part of the wider London Road pedestrian improvement scheme and seek approval to progress the scheme to detailed design and construction.	**KD**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Andrew Keer *01273 336682*

16 Jan 2023	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	Petition: Traffic calming in the Northampton Way/Norfolk Drive/Kent Road and Lincoln Close area of St Leonards on Sea Petition for traffic calming in the Northampton Way/Norfolk Drive/Kent Road and Lincoln Close area of St Leonards on Sea. A petition was submitted to the County Council on 11 October 2022 and needs to be considered by Lead Member for Transport & Environment.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Victoria Bartholomew *01424 724284*
16 Jan 2023	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	Petition: Piltdown Village Speed Limits To decide on the response to the petition to create a 30mph zone on the roads between the village gateways at Piltdown.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Michael Higgs *01273 482106*
24 Jan 2023	Cabinet	People Scrutiny Review: Use of Digital and Technology in Adult Social Care and Health To consider the final report of the People Scrutiny Committee review of the use of digital and technology in ASCH.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Beth McGhee *01273 335828*
24 Jan 2023	Cabinet	Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) 2023/24 Draft Council Plan To ask Cabinet to approve the draft Council Plan, Council Tax levels, Revenue Budget, and Capital Programme for 2023/24 for recommendation to the County Council (including Savings Proposals, Equality Impact Assessment, Engagement and Scrutiny feedback).	**KD**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Claire Lee *07523 930526*

Date	Decision Maker	Subject			Documents	Contact
24 Jan 2023	Cabinet	Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24 To consider the Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24. This includes setting the Prudential Indicators as set out in the Prudential Code and approving the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2022/23	**KD**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Ian Gutsell *01273 481399*
24 Jan 2023	Cabinet	Corporate Climate Emergency Plan To consider an updated Corporate Emergency Plan	**KD**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Andy Arnold *01273 481606*
24 Jan 2023	Cabinet	Annual Accounts for Lewes Charitable Trust Requirement to report annually to Cabinet in line with the current practice where the County Council is a Corporate Trustee.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Samantha McManus *01273 482080*
24 Jan 2023	Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	Corporate Office Estate New lease New Lease for St Marks House, Eastbourne	**P**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Zoe Tweed *07701 021868*
January 2023	Director of Communities, Economy and Transport	Procurement of Bus Service 254,304,305 - Hastings-Hawkhurst-Wadhurst-Tunbridge Wells Procurement of Bus service 254,304,305 - Hastings-Hawkhurst-Wadhurst-Tunbridge Wells. Contracted (subsidised) bus service – socially necessary bus service providing access to employment, health and education.	**KD**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Craig Lamberton *01273 337525*

January 2023	Chief Operating Officer	Acquisition of property - Exceat Bridge Improvement Scheme Acquisition of freehold land in connection with the Exceat Bridge Improvement Scheme as set out at LMRCC meeting 8 November 2022.	**P** **KD**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Zoe Tweed *07701 021868*
January 2023	Chief Operating Officer	Approval of the preferred purchaser and sale terms for 1 Southview Close and Access Road The Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change declared the property (1 Southview Close) surplus on 11 October 2022 and delegated the approval of the preferred purchaser and sale terms following the marketing of 1 Southview Close and the access road which is due to close on 6 December 2022 to the Chief Operating Officer.	**KD**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Zoe Tweed *07701 021868*
January 2023	Chief Operating Officer	Freehold Disposal of the former Firstfield Resource Centre, 42 London Road Hailsham The Council own the freehold of the former Firstfields Resource Centre and it is adjacent to an operational asset owned by SEACamb. Both public sector landowners agreed to a joint disposal to maximise the capital receipt. The joint disposal will occur once SEACamb move to their new accommodation which is being procured. Both organisations have jointly marketed for disposal via a property agent and offers have been received and evaluated. The officer decision report will be finalised,	**KD**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Nigel Brown *07394 410630*

			recommending a joint disposal to a purchaser on a conditional basis, subject to planning permission. This is subject to SEACamb finalising their vacation of their current operational asset. The Council will secure 70% of the capital receipts on completion.				
27 Feb 2023		Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability	East Sussex Childcare Sufficiency Duty 2023 - 2024 To approve the publication of the East Sussex Childcare Sufficiency Duty for 2023 to 2024			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Jane Spice *01323 747425*
28 Feb 2023		Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	Exceat Bridge Improvement Scheme land acquisition and compensation Various parcels of land subject to acquisition and/or compensation in connection with the Exceat Bridge Improvement scheme.	**P** **KD**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Zoe Tweed *07701 021868*
28 Feb 2023		Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	To approve the granting of a new Lease to the Trustees of the West Hills & District Community Centre The current Lease dated 12 March 2008 expires 11 March 2023 and it is proposed that ESCC grant the Trustees a new Lease for a period of 25 years which will allow the Trustees to be able to seek grant funding.	**P** **KD**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Joanne Johnston, Zoe Tweed *01273 336621, 07701 021868*
7 Mar 2023		Cabinet	Gatwick Airport Development Consent Order for the Northern Runway Proposal To consider the County Council's approach for responding to Gatwick Airport Limited's	**KD**		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Jon Wheeler *01273 482212*

		Development Consent Order for their Northern Runway Project'				