

7. Trade Union representatives

7.1 A meeting was held with Trade Union representatives on 18 January 2017 to consult on the Council's 2017/18 spending and savings proposals outlined in the RPPR Cabinet papers. The Leader of the Council opened the meeting and thanked the representatives for attending; thanked the Trade Unions, and ESCC staff, for their support and hard work; and reiterated that the Cabinet would continue to protect services for the county's most vulnerable people in line with the Council's four key priority outcomes.

7.2 The Chief Executive provided an overview of the current financial position, and explained that ESCC remains a large employer with a significant net revenue budget of £365m for 2017/18. Since October, there have been a number of changes, some announced in the Local Government finance settlement, which have improved the Council's financial position this year. However, the required savings for 2017/18 are still approximately £17m.

7.3 In light of the significant savings required, further reductions in staff posts are anticipated in 2017/18, and the Council will continue to apply its agreed employment policies to mitigate the impact of job losses, including avoiding compulsory redundancies wherever possible.

7.4 Apologies from Trade Union representatives were noted.

7.5 The Trade Union representatives raised a number of questions and issues which were addressed as set out below.

East Sussex Better Together

7.6 The Director of Adult Social Care (ASC) and Health explained that the East Sussex Better Together (ESBT) programme involved ASC, Children's Services and Public Health working with Hastings and Rother Clinical Commissioning Group and Eastbourne, Hailsham and Seaford Clinical Commissioning Group to develop an integrated Strategic Investment Plan (SIP), which will align £864m of commissioning budgets for 2017/18. Detailed work on the SIP has included engagement with Trade Unions, and the full proposals are being considered as part of the Council's Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process.

7.7 Cabinet will consider a report in July 2017, setting out the future organisational arrangements of an Accountable Care Model, which will be shaped by local engagement. The impact of this on the employment terms of ESCC staff is subject to ongoing staff and stakeholder engagement, and more detailed proposals will be included in the July report.

7.8 The Director of ASC and Health confirmed that Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust is a member of the ESBT partnership. Therefore, the work to deliver fully integrated health and social care services, by reducing demand for acute care and investing in localised, population focused healthcare, will apply to mental health services as well as physical health services. It was noted that the task may prove more complex for mental health services as some acute services are provided over a wider footprint than the ESBT geography, but delivery plans recognise this and are ongoing.

Maintaining local decision making

7.9 The Leader confirmed that while ESCC is involved in a number of important and positive partnerships, such as ESBT and Orbis, that have enabled the Council to plan and deliver services differently to reduce the level of savings required, responsibility for making decisions that impact East Sussex residents and ESCC employees would continue to remain with the Council and be made through the democratic decision making process. The Chief Executive emphasised that a cornerstone of agreeing to enter these joint partnerships was ensuring that they benefited the residents of East Sussex. The Director of Adult Social Care and Health explained that after an Accountable Care Model has been established through ESBT, the Council would retain its statutory duties around social care and public health, and remain a strategic commissioning body, continuing to set local priorities and make decisions about the investment of resources.

Bullying

7.10 The Leader set out that the Council has a zero tolerance policy to bullying and there are very effective processes in place to deal with it. The Chief Executive said it was important that any instances of bullying were reported through the appropriate channels so that they could be acted upon.

Transparency

7.11 There was agreement from Trade Union representatives that ESCC is a transparent organisation that has a good relationship with the Trade Unions, but emphasised that relationships would need to be maintained as ESCC increasingly works in partnership with external organisations. The Chief Operating Officer set out that Orbis also has an ethos of transparency between management, staff and Trade Unions but recognised that there are challenges in ensuring the same degree of transparency across three organisations. In recognition of this, and in response to concerns raised by staff, improvements to transparency have been made, including increasing the frequency of meetings between Trade Unions and the Orbis management team.

Lobbying

7.12 The Leader explained that working with local and regional partners is the most effective way to improve the historically poor infrastructure of East Sussex. For example, the Council is working with Local Authorities and other partners across the South East to develop a Sub-National Transport Body to exert more influence over infrastructure decisions made by Government and statutory bodies such as Highways England and Network Rail.

7.13 It was noted that work to develop a devolution deal for the Three Southern Counties have been paused until after May, as County Council elections are a priority for Local Authorities and developing plans for Britain to leave the European Union is a priority for Central Government.

7.14 In response to a query about the extent of the Council's lobbying efforts, the Leader said that lobbying of the Government continues through local and regional partnerships, meetings and briefings with MPs, and the Local Government Association. Some examples of issues the Council have lobbied on were given, including lobbying for Central Government to increase ASC funding for Local Authorities and support the integration of health and social

care; and lobbying for the redistribution funding formula under 100% Business Rates Retention to take account of local need.

7.15 The Deputy Leader said that the increased media awareness of the issues facing ASC in the last couple of years demonstrated the success of lobbying efforts.

Economic growth

7.16 The Lead Member for Economy set out evidence that the Council has driven economic growth in East Sussex over the past four years, including that: there has been a 58% reduction in unemployment; average household income is increasing at 10 times the national rate; and East Sussex is the 10th fastest growing county in the country. East Sussex has made important investment into economic development including: building the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road, which is expected to create 3,000 new jobs; the Queensway Gateway Road which is under construction and is expected to deliver 800 jobs; and the Newhaven Port Access Road will begin construction this year, creating a further 1,000 jobs. There are also future ambitions to develop a rail line from Ashford to Hastings to reduce journey times to London.

ISEND

7.17 The Director of Children's Services said that the Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability (ISEND) services are experiencing increased costs and higher demand, and the cost of placements in special schools is high. The Children's Services Department is exploring a wide range of ways to manage this demand, including working with schools to enable them to maintain SEND pupils more effectively in a mainstream setting. To mitigate the impact of the increased costs, it is proposed in the Cabinet papers that an additional £200,000 be invested in Home to School transport, and £300,000 of ISEND savings be deferred to 2018/19.

7.18 The Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability explained that he had not witnessed any instances of lack of support for SEND pupils in the schools that he has visited in East Sussex, although Children's Services do recognise improvements could be made around referrals practice and that the exclusion rate is high. If Trade Unions are aware of specific instances where support for SEND pupils is lacking, he would want to be informed.

Looked After Children (LAC)

7.19 The Director of Children's Services set out the roles and responsibilities academies have in relation to Looked After Children (LAC) and that they are accountable to the Regional School Commissioner (RCS). The Director of Children's Services said that the Virtual School (VS) was closely monitoring LAC and he was not aware of any evidence of academies cutting LAC provision. He explained that when the Council receives letters of complaint about an academy in relation to LAC it refers them to the academy's governing body. The Director of Children's Services may also write to the head of the academy chain or to the RSC if there are concerns about LAC provision in an academy. The Children's Services Department also works with academies through Education Improvement Partnerships to tackle any local problems, such as reducing school exclusion numbers.

Virtual Schools

7.20 The Director of Children's Services said that the VS works closely with schools and academies to achieve the best outcomes for LAC. The Lead Member for Children and Families sits on the governing body of the VS and attested to the hard work that the VS tutors and headteachers put in to raise the educational standards of LAC in East Sussex.

8. Adult Social Care and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee Additional RPPR Board 20 January 2017

Attendees: Councillors Davies (Chair), Belsey, Carstairs, Clark, Ungar and Webb

8.1 The Board reviewed the revised savings proposals and the following clarifications were made in response to questions:

East Sussex Better Together (ESBT)

- There had been no changes to the overarching proposals but the county council contribution to the pooled budget had increased which reduces the support needed from the NHS to the council (from c£11m to c£7m) to continue the jointly agreed service redesign programme.
- There remains a significant savings requirement across health and social care which is being delivered through service redesign to manage demand differently.
- Key changes to the system and model of care (and associated risks) are planned for 2017/18 and 18/19 which the proposed front loading of funding through the additional ASC levy will support. There has also been a national government commitment to try to resolve longer term issues with ASC funding.

8.2 In relation to the ESBT savings proposals the Board welcomed the additional funding which would be made available as this would help support the delivery of service transformation which the Board recognised remains challenging.

Outside ESBT

- Key adjustments to the savings proposals are the removal of savings on assessment and care management staff and the proportionate allocation of remaining additional funding to the community care budgets for older people and working age adults. The basis of this allocation is to prioritise meeting eligible need and supporting care plans, reflecting statutory duties.
- Following agreement of overall budget headings by Council, savings proposals would be subject to further review, consultation and equality impact assessment (EIA) as required before final Cabinet decision.
- The impact assessment against savings in community care budgets remains the same as the nature of risks from reduced budgets are unchanged. However, the scale of risk would reduce significantly in line with the reduction in savings.
- Reductions in the community care budget would be achieved through changing the types of support plan put together for new clients and through ongoing reviews of existing care plans.
- The impact assessment against the review of day centre services has been broadened to show that it will cover the whole range of services. This includes, but is not limited to, the Phoenix Centre.
- Any further mitigations will be identified through the EIA process and reported through the Cabinet process but mitigation has become more difficult year on year. In addition,

public health funded work on building community resilience continues across the county which is also part of the approach to mitigation.

8.3 In relation to the savings proposals outside of ESBT, the Board welcomed the additional funding which had enabled the savings proposals to be reduced. There was also a general understanding of the rationale for where the additional funding had been directed.

8.4 However, Cllrs Carstairs, Ungar and Webb indicated they do not agree with these cuts as set out in the report.