

1. Scrutiny Committee Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) Boards December 2017

Adult Social Care and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee

1.1 Attendees: Councillors Angharad Davies (Chair), Martin Clarke, Nigel Enever, Jim Sheppard, John Ungar and Trevor Webb (Vice-Chair)

1.2 The Board received a number of clarifications and assurances in relation to the identified savings and agreed to highlight the following key points to Cabinet:

- The scale of the challenge for ESCC and Adult Social Care is very significant and is recognised by the Board, as is the requirement for the Council as a whole to live within its means.
- It is no longer possible to continue to protect preventative services which impact on demand. This means that savings are likely to have impacts elsewhere in the system and / or in future years.
- The impacts of proposed savings are significant and opportunities for mitigation are now limited.
- Officers should be encouraged to continue to mitigate the impact of savings as far as possible through reprioritising and recommissioning services, taking any available opportunities to modernise and improve the way services work through this process.
- The Board has been assured that specific service changes will be subject to consultation, Equality Impact Assessment and further executive decision as appropriate in accordance with legal requirements, and that opportunities for mitigation will be examined thoroughly through this process.
- It will be essential for the Council to engage positively with the anticipated Green Paper on social care during 2018/19 to influence the longer term settlement for Adult Social Care.

1.3 The Board's overall conclusions were as follows:

- Cllrs M Clarke, Davies, Enever and Sheppard regretted that the Council was in the position of having to make the proposed savings. In that context, they were assured that process for identifying savings had been rigorous and that every effort had been made to minimise the impact on service users. They welcomed the approach being taken in relation to reshaping and recommissioning services and were assured that back office savings were being achieved.
- Cllrs Ungar and Webb did not support the savings proposals as set out and expressed the view that savings should be examined more widely across the Council, including the proportion of savings allocated to Adult Social Care.
- Cllr Webb expressed particular concern in relation to savings in Supporting People services, carers' services and the Discretionary East Sussex Support Scheme.

Audit, Best Value and Community Services Scrutiny Committee

1.4 Attendees: Councillors Colin Swansborough (Chair), John Barnes (Vice Chair), Matthew Beaver, Philip Daniel and Francis Whetstone (substituting for Councillor Pragnell).

1.5 Comments to Cabinet:

Treasury Management Strategy

1.6 The Board recommended a re-assessment of the Treasury Management Strategy, putting more emphasis on medium term investment vehicles, such as Mixed Asset Bonds, as a way of providing a return without overly affecting liquidity. Such a re-assessment should also take into account a laddering of short term investments, to provide an even income stream. The Board also noted the funds available for investment would diminish over the next three years.

Property Asset and Investment Strategy

1.7 The Board welcomed the proposed prioritising of income generation from assets over capital receipts, and noted the current low volume of East Sussex assets.

1.8 The Board supported key principles 1, 2 and 4 of the Property Asset and Investment Strategy, but recommended a revision to principle 3: "Invest in income producing assets within County creating a diversified portfolio to manage risks and secure an annual return", to reflect the financing requirements and risks of such investment for the County Council better and the Board recommended a cautious approach to direct investment in commercial property.

Direct Property Investment

1.9 In respect of the Property Asset and Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy, the Board recommended a cautious approach to borrowing to invest directly in property with a view to income generation, as the two Strategies are linked, and a vigorous investment in property may require an equivalent cautious approach to other investments.

Libraries Review Board

1.10 Board Members: Councillors Colin Swansborough (Chair), John Barnes, Peter Pragnell and Richard Stogdon.

1.11 The libraries review board wished to comment on the final proposals being submitted to the Cabinet and will meet on 1 March. Any comments will then be circulated for consideration at the Cabinet meeting on 6 March

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

1.12 Attendees: Councillors Galley (Chairman), Field, Shing, Shuttleworth (Vice Chair), Pragnell (substituting for Councillor Chris Dowling) Whetstone and Dr Ann Holt (Church of England Representative).

The Children's Services Department's (CSD) role in an increasingly complex school system

1.13 The Board noted that the school system had evolved into a complex mix of different types of schools and academies, with different lines of accountability. At the same time schools had been granted increasing levels of autonomy. This greater level of autonomy had the potential to produce benefits for all schools.

1.14 The Board also welcomed the steps CSD was taking to support all schools and academies in the county to cope with the ongoing changes within the educational system and that, given its reduced resources, the Department needed to find new ways of working to achieve its proposed savings.

1.15 The Board remain concerned though, about how the educational system will work with more 'fragmentation of control' and therefore asked that its concerns on this point be taken into account by Cabinet.

Early Help and Savings Plan Details

1.16 With regard to 'Early Help', and as the figures set out in the Savings Plan did not appear to be 'firm' at the time of its meeting, the Board agreed it would like further information and reassurance regarding CSD's proposals for 2018/19 and 2019/20. It appeared to the Board that some savings built into the 2018/19 Plan will not be delivered until 2019/20. This caused some concern about the deliverability of the 2018/19 plan. The Board also felt it had not been presented with sufficient general background detail to be able to make informed comments regarding the potential impact of the proposed savings on this crucial service area. This could also apply to other savings areas within the Plan.

Economy, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee

1.17 Attendees: Councillors Richard Stogdon (Chair), Godfrey Daniel, Pat Rodohan, and Barry Taylor.

Comments to Cabinet

1.18 The RPPR Board of the ETE Scrutiny Committee had serious concerns about the savings proposals for waste and grass cutting, in particular, but recognised the corporate need to make the relevant savings against the background of the wider economic context for East Sussex County Council, in which such savings have to be made.

1.19 The ETE Scrutiny Committee would do its best to work constructively to mitigate the impact of the savings proposals on residents.

1.20 The work to examine the savings proposals by the Waste Review Board and Grass Cutting Review Board was still ongoing, and the Review Boards would provide further detailed comments.

Grass Cutting Review Board

1.21 Board Members: Councillors Claire Dowling (Chair), Godfrey Daniel and Barry Taylor

1.22 The Review Board examined the proposed savings options, their impact and any likely additional costs referred to in the options appraisal. The Board noted that only option 3 was predicted to achieve the full savings requirement of £400,000 per annum.

Comments to Cabinet:

1.23 Reducing the frequency of grass cutting would be very unpopular with residents and lead to significant additional costs or reductions in service levels. The Board considered that a move to one rural grass cut and one urban grass cut per year (option 3) was untenable due to the impacts this would have.

1.24 The Board considered there were risks to the Council if one rural cut and one urban cut were to be implemented in terms of:

- reputational damage to the Council;
- additional, reactive costs reducing the amount of savings that can be achieved; and
- impaired maintenance of drainage systems particularly in rural areas, potentially undermining existing investment in highway drainage.

1.25 The Board found that there were significant additional costs for reactive grass cutting maintenance of around £200,000 for two additional grass-cutting gangs; increased demand on the Contact Centre equating to approximately two full time equivalent posts; and potential

reductions in the level of service which could lead to reputational damage. This would significantly offset the initial savings and will have longer term impacts.

1.26 The Board identified potential alternative savings of £84,000 within the verge management budgets. It recommends that alternative options for providing the grass cutting service are investigated within the total verge management budget to mitigate the proposed reduction in the frequency of grass cutting in rural and urban areas.

1.27 The Board acknowledged the need to make savings, but recommends that the frequency of grass cutting in rural and urban areas is carefully considered, taking into account the potential impacts.

Waste Review Board

1.28 Board Members: Councillors Richard Stogdon (Chair), Godfrey Daniel, Darren Grover and Barry Taylor.

1.29 The waste board wished to comment on the final proposals being submitted to the Cabinet and will meet on 17 January. Any comments will then be circulated for consideration at the Cabinet meeting.

2. East Sussex Strategic Wider Partners

2.1 The Leader and Deputy Leader met with representatives of the public, voluntary and community sector and the Older People's Forums on 11 December 2017. The meeting provided an opportunity for the County Council to share with partners the 2018/19 spending and savings proposals and provide an update on the local and national financial and demographic picture influencing ESCC's decisions. Partners gave feedback on the proposals and made suggestions for how all sectors can work together to meet the challenges the county faces. 25 public and voluntary and community sector organisations were represented at the meeting and ESCC is grateful to all partners for the feedback and comments they provided.

2.2 The following issues were raised at the meeting:

- Partners asked if there was scope for local communities/parishes to take on services and physical assets which the Council could no longer afford to provide, for example running local library services. The Council would consider any proposals put forward. However, if others were to take over libraries, they would not receive funding from the Council. A number of community asset transfers had been made. The Council had a duty to get the best return on its assets, however, so robust business cases were needed to support any future transfers. With respect to libraries, the Council were in discussion with a number of local groups and councils about whether they could provide a local service in future. The County Council leased rather than owned many of the buildings currently housing libraries.
- Partners asked about the detail of the proposals in relation to placements for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. The Council would be carrying out a review with a view to moving towards a more rigorous commissioning approach and away from block transfers of funding to providers to provide assurance that the best use was being made of limited resources. A full impact assessment would be carried out as part of the review before any changes were made.
- In response to questions about why a move towards a fully integrated whole life disability service had been paused, partners were assured that Children's Services, Adult Social Care and health partners would continue to work together, but that complexity and capacity issues meant that a more incremental approach would be taken, with initial focus on improving the transition between child and adult services.

- Partners expressed concern that the move away from preventative services would increase pressures in the long run. The County Council recognised this issue but, in order to meet its statutory duties in the face of reduced funding, there would come a point where the Council had no other option. It would continue to work with the Voluntary and Community Sector to preserve services wherever possible and continue to protect those interventions which were most effective as long as possible.
- In response to questions about the possibility of filling the funding gap through business rate growth, the Council continued to do what it could to stimulate economic growth in the County. However, growth in business rates nationally was flat and small businesses of the kind that typified the economy in East Sussex had seen welcome reliefs introduced by Central Government. In order to generate sufficient growth the area would need a number of businesses with a large physical footprint to fill the gap and realistically this was unlikely to happen.
- The Government were unlikely to proceed with further devolution deals, however, the Council was working with other authorities across the South East on the formation of a Sub-National Transport Board, which would produce a transport strategy across the area in the hope of influencing the Government to invest in meeting the area's infrastructure needs.
- The Council was working to maximise income where possible.

3. Young people

3.1 In November 2017, the Youth Cabinet and the Children in Care Council (CiCC) were presented with key RPPR proposals for Children's Services. They discussed the proposals and produced comments and questions about the three key service areas where savings are to be identified: early help; social care; and Standards and Learning Effectiveness (SLES).

3.2 Key questions from young people:

Early help

- How will you provide vital services for mothers and babies?
- Where will people get support without Children's Centres?
- Shouldn't you be focusing on prevention rather than reaction?
- What about support for teen parents?
- Will there be strain on key workers working across 0 -19?
- How will management cuts affect proper supervision?
- Is there a cost of retraining staff to work across the whole 0 – 19 age range?

Social Care

- How will you evaluate the risks of some of the savings?
- How will you support all ages?
- Move children to less costly placements only if their placement has broken down
- How will you help Looked After Children with school?

SLES

- What are the incentives for school to school support?
- How will school to school support be organised?
- What is the impact of national cuts on school budgets?
- Would bigger schools be more cost effective?

Other questions

- How are savings being targeted in areas?
- What is the impact of Brexit?

- Young people asked that their future involvement should be earlier in the annual process

Next steps

Youth Cabinet

3.3 Children's Services have committed to responding to the comments and questions set out in the film, at the Youth Cabinet meeting in February or March. In addition, in response to one of their key points about being involved earlier in the process, Children's Services will involve the Youth Cabinet and other service users in the review of early help which will be undertaken during 2018.

CiCC (Children in Care Council)

3.4 Children's Services propose to discuss some of the non-statutory social care savings proposals with CiCC in January, so they are fully briefed on the proposals, and have the opportunity to give their comments.

3.5 In addition to the above specific consultation, a national survey is organised annually by the UK Youth Parliament to identify the top issues of concern to young people on which the Youth Parliament should campaign. Called "Make your Mark", the survey took place in November 2017. A total of 7,998 votes were cast by young people across East Sussex, with 13 schools in East Sussex taking part. The votes in preference were as below:

- Transport – 1,375 votes
- Votes at 16 – 1,103 votes
- Mental Health - 915 votes
- Curriculum for life - 901 votes
- Protect LGBT people - 876 votes

4. Libraries Strategy

4.1 As part of our library transformation programme, East Sussex Libraries – The Way Forward, a consultation on the proposed changes was held between September and December 2017. During the consultation 3,633 completed questionnaires (1,902 paper, 1,731 online) were received. All of the feedback received as part of the public consultation, will be analysed and considered prior to revising the Strategy for consideration by Cabinet in March 2018.

4.2 The Youth Cabinet has been engaged over the course of the Libraries Transformation Programme, to understand the needs of children and young people and how the library service can help to meet these. Their views have helped to shape proposals in the draft Strategy, particularly new offers for young people, including study and also the new schools offer. Most recently, as part of Takeover Day, the proposed changes to the service were explained. The group agreed, given the financial situation, the proposals are reasonable. They also felt that there was a lack of awareness about the range of library services that would still be available, particularly the eLibrary, and that our plans to promote the benefits of this and other offers according to their needs are right.

5. Other

5.1 The Chair of the East Sussex secondary Heads groups has written to Cllr Standley to ask that, in setting its budget for 2018-19, "decisions around education funding are seen in the context of cuts to our surrounding services and the role schools play in their communities."

5.2 SpeakUp have also raised a number of concerns about the proposed savings and their effects both on individuals and on VCS organisations ability to deliver services.

5.3 The full text of these representations are available in the Members' and Cabinet Rooms.