

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 ETE Scrutiny Committee meeting on 14 June 2017 established a Scrutiny Review Board to examine in detail the opportunities for savings and efficiencies in the Waste Contract as part of the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process. The Waste contract net budget is currently £25.927 million per annum, with an original savings target of £800,000 in 2018/19 for the Waste Disposal Service in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

1.30 The Review Board has considered evidence on the work that is underway to review the current Waste contract, and the opportunities for savings that this may produce. The Board supports the approach that has been adopted, and understands the need to examine other aspects of the Waste Disposal Service in order to achieve savings in the shorter term.

Summary Findings and Recommendations

Household Waste Recycling Site (HWRS) Service – Proposed introduction of charging for non-domestic waste

1.31 A third of local authorities currently charge for non-domestic waste. The Review Board found from the experience of other local authorities that the introduction of charging:

- a) Has not led to an overall increase in fly-tipping compared with national trends.
- b) Will lead to a drop in the volume of non-domestic waste delivered to the HWRS sites, which could be up to 75% depending on the level of charging. This will produce savings in the form of avoided costs for disposing of waste, in addition to an income from charges.

1.32 The Review Board examined the possible impact of a number of different levels of charge on waste volumes and levels of savings.

1.33 The Board recommends that:

- Based on the evidence, the charging level which is likely to achieve the savings target is considered for inclusion in the savings proposals, which it understands is likely to be in the region of £4.00 per bag of waste.
- If charging is introduced for non-domestic waste, the waste contractor should be approached to explore whether it would be feasible to introduce a chargeable service for commercial waste at HWRS sites for small to medium sized businesses.

1.34 The Review Board found that there was some uncertainty around the level of savings it will be possible to achieve from charging. Consequently, it may be necessary to consult on other changes to the Waste Disposal Service in order to deliver the savings required by the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

HWRS Opening Hours

- The evidence suggests that further reductions in HWRS site opening hours would not achieve the level of savings necessary, and that limited HWRS site closures may need to be considered.

HWRS Site Closures

1.35 The Review Board examined evidence on the impact of limited site closures on the accessibility of the HWRS Service for residents.

- The Review Board has some concerns about the proposals for limited HWRS site closures but understands that, in the context of the need to make savings, they may be necessary.

Public Consultation

1.36 The Reviewed Board examined the options for public consultation on the potential changes to the Waste Disposal Service.

1.37 The Board recommends that:

- Both charging and limited site closure measures are included in the forthcoming consultation, rather than having to consult again separately on site closures should they be necessary.
- The Council consults on detailed proposals regarding charge levels and specific sites, if closures together with charging, are the only way to achieve the necessary levels of savings.

Conclusion

1.38 The Review Board has undertaken a considerable amount of work, which underpins the summary findings and recommendations. The Board will examine the proposals for the Waste Disposal Service in more detail once the public consultation has been completed, and will submit further comments to Cabinet in due course

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. Trade Union representatives

5.1 A meeting was held with trade union (TU) representatives on 17 January 2018 to consult on the Council's 2018/19 spending and savings proposals outlined in the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) Cabinet papers.

5.2 The Leader of the Council opened the meeting by thanking the TU representatives for attending; and through them thanked staff for their continued support and hard work over the last few years.

5.3 The Leader reminded attendees that the Council and wider public sector still faced a range of significant challenges and opportunities. He reiterated that the Cabinet would continue to work to protect services for the county's most vulnerable people in line with the Council's four priority outcomes. However, the scale of the financial challenge the Council faced remained stark and the savings planned for 2018/19, on top of those already made, would have an unavoidable impact on the Council's services and staff.

5.4 The Leader informed the meeting that he had written to East Sussex MPs about the proposed savings. The Council was lobbying Government through the Local Government Association, County Councils Network and South East 7 partnership to express its concerns about the impact of sustained savings, and to lobby for further transitional grants to be made available between now and the introduction of the Business Rate Retention and the Fair Funding Formula in 2020/21. The Council would respond to the Fair Funding Review consultation to set out the requirements for a fair funding deal for East Sussex.

5.5 The Chief Executive provided an overview of the current financial position. Since October, there had been some changes to the financial position, including the announcement in the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement allowing local authorities to increase Council Tax by an additional 1%. The savings target had reduced to £17m from £22m, but savings would still have a significant impact on Council services and

staff. The Chief Executive also acknowledged that recommending an increase of Council Tax by 5.99% would place a significant burden on residents, including many staff, but, on balance was recommending to Members that it was the appropriate decision to protect services for vulnerable people.

5.6 An assessment of the impact of the savings was set out in Appendix 4 of the RPPR Report. The assessments recognised that some of the proposals do not make good 'business sense' in the medium term, e.g. reductions in preventative services; however, the savings were being proposed in light of the need to make the best use of remaining resources in line with the Council's four priority outcomes. Where necessary, the savings would be subject to consultation and further Equality Impact Assessments.

5.7 In light of the significant savings, a reduction of approximately 200 staff posts was anticipated during 2018/19. The Council would continue to operate its agreed employment stability policies and procedures in consultation with TUs and staff and remained committed to avoiding compulsory redundancies – offering redeployment opportunities where possible, recognising opportunities for redeployment would decrease as services reduce. The Chief Executive reminded the meeting that although the planned savings understandably dominated discussions, the Council planned to spend £371m in the county in the coming year and would continue to make a difference to the lives of the people of East Sussex. Plans for spending the budget were set out in the Council Plan.

5.8 The TU representatives raised a number of questions and issues which were addressed as set out below.

Corporate Health Indicators

5.9 TU representatives asked for details of current arrangements for monitoring Corporate Health Indicators and whether the Cabinet should receive regular updates on indicators such as the number of staff at risk of redundancy, stress and sickness.

5.10 The Chief Executive said that Cabinet look at Corporate Health Indicators, including staff sickness, in the Council Plan quarterly monitoring reports; the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and individual Departmental Management Teams look at these indicators in more detail; and the Audit, Best Value & Community Services (ABVCS) Scrutiny Committee consistently scrutinise the figures.

Team restructures

5.11 TU representatives asked the Cabinet to take a more coordinated approach to service restructures, that would reduce certain teams' exposure and make better use of managers' and TU representatives' time.

The Leader clarified that it was the role of Cabinet to agree policy and take decisions, and that officers would implement the decisions, including carrying out any necessary restructures of teams.

5.12 The Chief Executive explained that the Council's approach to restructures was to carry them out in the way, and at the level most appropriate, to allow the restructure objectives to be met, whilst minimising disruption to directorates. This may mean that restructures were carried out at individual team level rather than across a whole service area at once.

5.13 The Chief Executive acknowledged that in the Children's Services Department some staff had been subject to a number of restructures. The Head of Human Resources explained that there were a number of factors to consider in determining the most appropriate approach for a restructure, but confirmed that a central consideration was the need to make the best use of managers', trade union representatives', HR staff, and other

stakeholders' time. The Human Resources Service would be working with departments to consider this further in terms of restructures during 2018 and would take TUs' feedback into account.

Future planning and the Medium Term Financial Plan

5.14 TU representatives asked that the Cabinet continue to be open about savings plans and their impact on staff and services. It was beneficial for staff to have early notice and full understanding of any proposed changes that would impact their work. TU representatives asked when details of savings for the following two financial years would be available to provide clarity for staff.

5.15 The Chief Executive explained that due to the level of uncertainty around future resources, this was the first time in recent years that the Council did not have a three year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The budget report included some estimates about 2019/20 and 2020/21, however, Cabinet agreed to defer producing a detailed MTFP until certain Government policies and funding agreements became clear, such as the Green Paper on Adult Social Care expected later in 2018. The reason for this was to avoid causing unnecessary concern and disruption amongst staff and residents by producing a MTFP before the level of resources available to the Council was more certain. Once the Government's policies became clearer, a MTFP would be developed as soon as possible using the standard budget planning procedures.

Impact of savings proposals

5.16 TU representatives were very concerned about the impact of the 2018/19 budget proposals on staff, both in their working capacity and as residents of East Sussex. Particularly there were concerns that the proposed Council Tax increase risked increasing the number of staff in in-work poverty and that reduced services would put pressure on staff that were also service users. It was noted that staff were experiencing increasing work demands, in part due to higher expectations from the public.

5.17 The Leader recognised that the Council's staff had gone above and beyond to continue to deliver high class services in particularly challenging times. The Chief Executive acknowledged the challenges staff faced and explained that the Council had recently published a revised Customer Promise to clarify ESCC customer service expectations, for both staff and the public. The Promise had been developed in consultation with staff to ensure that the requirements included were practicable.

Stroke Association

5.18 TU representatives had concerns regarding the impact of proposed ASC savings on the service offer of the Stroke Association.

5.19 The Director of Adult Social Care and Health explained that the Stroke Association funding formed part of a wider prevention and support service for elderly and vulnerable people that was co-funded by the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). The proposed reduction in the funding package of care provided by the Stroke Association was in keeping with a wider savings plan that involved reducing investment in preventative work across social care.

Children's Services Department

5.20 TU representatives had concerns that the savings proposals in Children's Services would have knock-on effects for schools. Further details on Children's Service's proposals were requested, particularly on proposed savings in the Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service (SLES) and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability (ISEND) services.

5.21 The Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability said that the impact assessments described in the Cabinet report demonstrated a commitment to openness and honesty about the impact of the proposed savings, including acknowledging that the savings could create difficulties either in the future, or in other organisations, such as schools, that were required to carry a greater financial burden.

5.22 The Director of Children's Services confirmed that the Council had recently agreed with schools how the Dedicated Schools Grant funding would be spent next year, including the extent to which the Council and individual schools would contribute towards Standards and Learning Effectiveness.

Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service

5.23 The Director of Children's Services explained that the direction of travel was towards schools becoming more self-sufficient, requiring schools to improve their own standards. SLES had become a slimmer service and offered a limited traded offer of support for schools, requiring schools to pay for further services.

5.24 The SLES offer was expected to continue to reduce under the budget proposals and the Council was in discussions with school head teachers to encourage them to take internal actions to improve standards, such as through federating into Education Improvement Partnerships that have the capacity to provide support to each other. Schools were also considering becoming academies so that they could receive support through Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs).

ISEND and Education Support Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS)

5.25 The Director of Children's Services explained that the Council still spent £50m annually on ISEND and ESBAS. The Council was undertaking a lot of work to offset reducing the ISEND support it provided to children by equalising the costs paid to different institutions for the same level of support. This should ensure the same quality of care was provided but at a lower cost.

5.26 The Council was also negotiating with special schools about the role they played in sustaining and maintaining after-school provision currently paid for by the Council.

Integrating health and social care

5.27 TU representatives had concerns that integrating the Council's budget with health partners, as part of plans for health and social care integration, would result in reduced control and oversight of the social care budget.

5.28 The Leader said that the East Sussex Better Together (ESBT) and Connecting 4 You (C4Y) integration programmes were the best way to ensure that health and social care worked together in East Sussex for the benefit of residents.

5.29 The Director of Adult Social Care and Health explained that the C4Y Programme Board was in the process of aligning budgets and agreeing priority developments between the Council and High Weald Lewes Havens Clinical Commissioning Group (HWLH CCG). In the ESBT area, work was underway to integrate provider and commissioner budgets. The Council was aware of the financial challenges in the local health economy. All partners remained committed to delivering the Strategic Investment Plan agreed last year. The progress of both integration programmes was closely monitored by the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board and East Sussex Better Together Strategic Commissioning Board.

Agency staff and consultants

5.30 TU representatives remained concerned about whether the Council's use of consultants and agency staff made the best use of staff skills and resources.

5.31 The Chief Executive assured the meeting that the Council appointed staff on permanent contracts wherever possible, but at times staff sickness and other capacity issues, as well as the requirement for special skills, necessitated the recruitment of consultants or agency staff. The Chief Operating Officer explained that there had been a 30% reduction in the use of agency staff over the past 3 years. The ABVCS Scrutiny Committee regularly scrutinised the number of agency staff and consultants in the Council and the reports were publically available. Use of agency staff and consultants was also closely monitored in order to comply with IR35 regulations.

ESCC Staff Structure

5.32 TU representatives asked for further detail on what consideration is given to the Council's staff structure, particularly the ratio of management to staff posts and the ratio of back-office to front-office staff.

5.33 The Chief Executive and the Head of HR kept staff structures and the split of staff across pay grades under review. It was also noted that the Council had fewer layers of senior management compared to other local authorities.

5.34 The Chief Executive explained that the traditional distinction between back and front-office staff, and the need to monitor an appropriate ratio, was less pertinent, because back-office staff provided important services to customers and were vital to the ability of traditionally front-office staff to function properly.

Voluntary redundancy scheme

5.35 The Head of HR confirmed that there was an open scheme of voluntary severance available to staff at all times, subject to a viable business case. As part of the restructure process, staff were reminded about the scheme and a number of staff took voluntary redundancy last year ahead of restructures.

6. Other

6.1 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."

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

6.3 Sussex Police have commented on the savings proposals. Whilst they fully appreciate the requirement to make savings and support ESCC's position, they expressed concerns about the effect of service reductions on vulnerable people and the potential this has to lead to an increase in crime.

6.4 The police raised specific concerns about the effect any withdrawal of drug and alcohol services could have, potentially leading to an increased presence of organised crime in the county as a result of an expanding market. Effective services, particularly for vulnerable young people, are seen as a helpful protection against this threat. They also expressed concern that the closure of waste facilities may lead to an increase in fly tipping, increasing police and other agencies' costs.

6.5 Care for the Carers have expressed concern about proposals to cut the carers' budget, considering it a false economy leading to increased costs for the Council.

6.6 The Stroke Association has also written to the Council setting out its view that removing the services they provide would lead to a gap in provision and that their services are integral to helping stroke survivors to live independently.

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