

Report to: Governance Committee
Date: 14 July 2020
By: Assistant Chief Executive
Title of report: Partnership Working
Purpose of report: To update and seek the view of the Governance Committee on the partnership working arrangement with West Sussex County Council to work as their improvement partner including sharing the services of the Chief Executive of East Sussex County Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Governance Committee is recommended to note the report and endorse the continuation of the partnership arrangements

1. Background

- 1.1 In December 2019 the Cabinet approved the proposal to work with West Sussex County Council as an improvement partner including sharing the services of the Chief Executive of East Sussex County Council and other officers as required and the Leader of the Council working closely with the West Sussex Leader.
- 1.2 The agreement started on 6th January 2020 and the aim was for a first review after three months. There is also provision for both Councils to review the arrangement following the County Council elections in May 2021. Either Council will be able at any point to terminate the arrangement by providing notice of six months. The three month review has been delayed by the current coronavirus pandemic.
- 1.3 It was anticipated that following a due diligence period between January and March 2020, where a baseline for West Sussex improvement would be established, which would lead to the production of a detailed action plan for WSCC to enable both Councils to confirm plans, arrangements and commitment in April 2020. Recent events have delayed this, and it is now anticipated that the plan will now be considered by West Sussex County Council at its meeting on 17 July.
- 1.4 We have maintained the fundamental principle that East Sussex County Council will not suffer any financial detriment and the salary of the shared Chief Executive is split on a 50/50 basis between East and West Sussex County Council.

2. Benefits

- 2.1 Prior to the lockdown at the end of March and the prioritising of resources in consequence of that the two Council's corporate management teams held joint events with a view to sharing best practice, identifying areas of mutual support and exploring opportunities for where joint working will bring benefit.
- 2.2 During the pandemic we have worked together to share approach and practice in relation to our HR practices and responses, how we maintain the democratic process with virtual meetings. We have worked closely through the Sussex Resilience Forum on all aspects of the emergency response and continue to do so through the easing of lockdown and recovery structures and planning. We have shared information on the procurement of PPE and shared bulk order of face masks to secure improved

price. Work is ongoing regarding further joint procurements including accessing each other's Frameworks. There are ongoing discussions about waste and highways management and significant support has been provided by Children's Services to recruitment within WSCC. This closer working will reduce the risks to ESCC workforce development of a competitive rather than collaborative approach.

- 2.3 Close working between the Leaders, including through greater involvement with SE7 partners at Members and officer level, has strengthened our collective lobbying voice at local, regional and national level, including within CCN, LGA and with Government.
- 2.4 Partners across Sussex have welcomed the greater joint working and in particular the more joined up approach assists in exploring potential joint working in Adult Social Care and Health with a view to:
 - Developing a consistent approach to whole system working with the NHS to improve outcomes for our residents
 - Integrating working across East and West Sussex to address quality, capacity and sustainability for social care markets
 - Developing an integrated approach to commissioning support for people with complex needs, including those with autism, cognitive impairments and mental ill health
 - Putting in place a consistent framework for sharing best practice

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 The current emergency has provided a real test of the effectiveness and value of the joint arrangement. As we move into the recovery phase collaborative working will become all the more important in relation to working with partners, economic recovery/development and transport and infrastructure planning, Brexit preparations and work in response to Government initiatives. Members are therefore recommended to endorse the continuation of the arrangement.

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