

Report to: Governance Committee
Date: 30 September 2021
By: Assistant Chief Executive
Title of report: Partnership Working: East and West Sussex County Councils
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:

Governance Committee is asked to note the report and endorse the continuation of the partnership arrangements on a permanent basis subject to the termination provisions in the arrangement.

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. The Improvement Partnership also included the Leader of the Council working closely with the West Sussex CC Leader. The arrangement allows the Councils to place officers at the disposal of each other. These arrangements have been used in a range of ways since the arrangements have been in place.
- 1.2 The agreement started on 6th January 2019 and was reviewed on 14th July 2020 when the Governance Committee endorsed its continuation. The final review point set out in the agreement was due to be in July 2021 following the elections. Bearing in mind the number of new members that have been elected to the Council it was decided to put the review back to September, to enable a more informed consideration of the arrangements. Either Council will be able at any point to terminate the arrangement by providing notice of six months.
- 1.3 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 During the pandemic we have worked together to share approach and practice in relation to our HR practices and responses. 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.
- 2.2 There has been constructive joint working between the ESCC and WSCC Policy Teams with monthly liaison meetings taking place which facilitate the sharing of insight and approaches on current issues, sharing of information and identifying areas for future co-ordination. Joint working has enabled attendance at a range of

MHCLG briefings/webinars and County Councils Network (CCN) meetings to be shared between the two teams, with notes shared across both Councils, helping to make best use of resources. Summary briefings produced in relation to current national issues have been shared between the two teams, creating efficiencies and maximising value.

- 2.3 Member Services has built on the existing relationship with WSCC Democratic Services to share approaches and materials in areas such as Member support and training, pre-election preparations and Member induction and supporting virtual meetings during the Covid pandemic. This has created efficiencies in some areas where existing materials could be adapted rather than created from scratch. In other areas the sharing of approaches has generated enhancements to existing processes or helped with responses to new challenges such as procedures and guidance for virtual meetings.
- 2.4 ESCC is working with WSCC on the Bus Back Better Strategy and specifically using the WSCC frameworks to procure external advice for the development of bus service improvement plans. There is also ongoing exploratory work in relation to highways and waste to understand where there might be opportunities to work collaboratively.
- 2.5 Significant support has been provided by both Children's Services to each other on senior recruitment and on many areas of policy and service development. This closer working reduces the risks to ESCC of workforce development being competitive rather than collaborative.
- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 A joint Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health has been appointed across East and West Sussex County Councils (with a separate additional DASS retained in East Sussex). Partners across Sussex have welcomed the greater joint working and in particular a more consistent approach to working with the NHS at both at a local authority "Place" and pan-Sussex level including:
 - The development of an Integrated Care System (ICS)
 - Defining the areas that planned, commissioned and delivered at Place.
 - Local authority representation of the ICS Body and Partnership Board.
 - Directors of Public Health working across Sussex to determine how they
 - support the ICS as part of their statutory role
 - including developing a joint approach to reducing health inequalities.
 - Input into the NHS review of the Better Care Fund
 - The application of the Hospital Discharge Scheme and Discharge to Assess to maintain acute hospital flow.
 - A common approach in respect of Mental Health Act Assessments and Places of Safety with Sussex Partnership Foundation NHS Trust.
- 2.8 Alongside this the partnership has enabled the sharing of best practice within Adult Social Care in relation to a range of areas including:
 - Financial Assessment
 - Brokerage and Market Management
 - Developing a Quality Assurance Framework for commissioned services
 - Mental Health Assessment and Care Management

- Community Safety
 - Domestic Abuse – Joint Commissioning and Partnership Board
 - Changing Futures Joint Project

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 The collaboration has benefited both Councils in a range of ways. The pandemic has provided a real test of the effectiveness and value of the joint arrangement. There has been valuable and continuing use of support and sharing of best practice in many areas of Council services. 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, and work in response to Government initiatives. Members are therefore recommended to endorse the continuation of the arrangement.

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Assistant Chief Executive