

REPORT OF THE CABINET

The Cabinet met on 27 June 2022. Attendances:-

Councillor Glazier (Chair)
Councillors Bennett, Bowdler, Maynard, Simmons and Standley

1. Council Monitoring - Quarter 4 2020/21 – Year End

1.1 The Cabinet has considered a report on performance against the Council Plan, Revenue Budget, Capital Programme, Savings Plan and risks for 2021/22. Broad progress against the Council's four strategic priority outcomes is summarised below and an overview of finance and performance data is provided in the Corporate Summary at Appendix 1. Strategic risks are reported at Appendix 7.

1.2 Despite difficult circumstances through 2021/22 we have continued to deliver key services and have met the majority of the challenging targets that we set for the year. Alongside the continuing challenges of the pandemic we have had to respond to new issues linked to the increasing cost of goods and utilities and the outbreak of war in Ukraine. We have also experienced increasing demand for core services at a time of continued future financial uncertainty. Despite this we are forecasting a small net underspend as a result of our careful budget management.

1.3 36 (67%) of the 54 Council Plan targets were achieved and 11 (20%) were not achieved. Seven (13%) are carried over for reporting in quarter 1 of 2022/23. The carry overs are measures, where action has been completed, but the year-end outturn data is not yet available to report against the target.

1.4 Of the 54 targets, the outturns for 10 (19%) are not comparable with the outturns from 2020/21. Of the remaining 44 measures which can be compared, 19 (35%) improved or were at the maximum (i.e., the most that can be achieved); one (2%) remained the same; 17 (31%) had a lower outturn; and seven (13%) are carried over for reporting at quarter 1 2022/23. Although 17 measures are showing a lower outturn compared to 2020/21, nine of these met their target for 2021/22.

1.5 The Strategic Risk Register, Appendix 7, was reviewed and updated to reflect the Council's risk profile. Risk 1 (Roads), Risk 4 (Health), Risk 6 (Local Economic Growth), Risk 7 (Schools), Risk 14 (Post European Union (EU) Transition), and Risk 15 (Climate) have updated risk controls. Risk 5 (Reconciling Policy, Performance & Resources), Risk 8 (Capital Programme), Risk 9 (Workforce) and Risk 12 (Cyber Attack) have updated risk definitions and risk controls. The risk RAG rating was amended from Amber to Red for Risk 9 (Workforce) and Risk 17 (Safeguarding). Risk 16 (Covid-19) was removed from the Strategic Risk Register.

Budget Outturn

1.6 The details of revenue over and underspends in each department are set out in the relevant appendices, and show a total outturn overspend of £2.0m (£2.9m at quarter 3). The main headlines are:

- Pressures for Children's Services (CSD) have reduced slightly to £2.812m since quarter 3 (£3.052m). While this is a small improvement, many of the pressures remain, across Early Help and Social Care, in particular where LAC budgets continue to be under pressure from expensive residential agency placements, and the ongoing need to find countywide placements for families deemed intentionally homeless by the district and borough councils, as well as from pressures in the Family and Friends allowances.

CABINET

Pressure on Home to School Transport budgets remains, with work continuing to identify operational solutions, including a case by case review of solo routes.

- The year-end outturn for Business Services (BSD) is a net underspend of £0.870m (£0.258m at quarter 3) arising primarily from staff vacancies, reduced costs of printers and consumables and additional rental income.
- The overspend for Adult Social Care (ASC) is £0.209m (£0.244m at quarter 3). This comprises an overspend of £0.977m in the Independent Sector offset by an underspend of £0.768m in Directly Provided Services, the latter mainly due to staff vacancies and a reduction in services resulting from COVID-19.
- Communities Economy and Transport and Governance Services are showing minor underspends of £0.072m and £0.036m respectively.

1.7 Within Treasury Management (TM) and other centrally held budgets there is an underspend of £6.3m, a small increase from quarter 3 (£6.2m):

- There is no change from the estimated £2.1m underspend on TM at quarter 3; this is based on the capital programme position removing the need to borrow externally in 2021/22. In line with normal practice this underspend has been transferred to reserves to offset capital borrowing.
- The General Contingency of £4.0m has, in the first instance, been used to offset service overspends. The remaining £2.2m has been transferred to the Financial Management reserves in line with the Council's Reserves Policy, to facilitate the management of financial risk in future years.

1.8 The total revenue budget underspend for 2021/22 is £4.3m. As stated above and in line with the Reserves Policy this underspend will be taken to reserves – Capital Programme reserve (£2.1m) and Financial Management reserve (£2.2m).

1.9 COVID-19 related costs and income losses have been fully mitigated from general and specific funding. The table below shows the current forecast for use of this funding:

COVID-19 Grants 2021/22 (£m)	Carried forward	Expected in-year	Forecast usage in-year	Specific set-aside for LAC & Parking in future yrs	Forecast balance remaining
COVID-19 General Funding	15.138	11.979	(13.042)	(5.205)	8.870
COVID-19 Specific Funding	15.032	31.050	(37.092)	0	8.990
Total funding	30.170	43.029	(50.134)	(5.205)	17.860

1.10 Capital Programme expenditure for the year totalled £75.6m against a budget of £85.6m, a net variation of £10.0m. Of the net variation position, £4.4m relates to Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) funded projects being delivered by, or in partnership with others, where the timing of expenditure and delivery is largely outside of the Councils' control. Of the remaining £5.6m variation, main variations include:

- Schools Basic Need Programme – slippage of £0.8m mainly due to retention being held on projects nearing completion.

CABINET

- Capital Building Improvements (Schools) – slippage of £0.6m due to the continued supply chain issues impacting the construction industry and the delivery of many projects. Manufacturing has yet to achieve the stability of the pre-pandemic period, with a backlog on orders evident by lead-in times. Issues around delivery of materials continues to be a global issue and cost increases for basic materials persist, continuing into quarter 4 following the invasion of Ukraine and global sanctions particularly impacting the supply of steel.
- IT & Digital Strategy Implementation – slippage of £1.2m largely relates to the Managing Back Office Systems (MBOS) programme where establishing the full resource complement for the programme has been challenging in the latter half of 2021/22. This has led to changes in the planned spend profile where spend has been lower or lagged from the anticipated rates when the programme was initially set up. Most roles are now filled, and whilst some resourcing variation is expected in 2022/23, this is not expected to have an impact on the overall MBOS budget. In addition, implementation costs to external partners are based on specific deliverables and are therefore subject to timing variations.
- Climate Emergency Works – slippage of £0.7m where the initial feasibility studies report arrived later than anticipated, impacting the timetable for delivery. Also, decarbonisation works at Ninfield School have been given priority to allow the expenditure of external grants to meet deadlines before progressing on to the next phase of works.
- Integrated Transport Schemes – slippage of £0.8m over a number of individual schemes for reasons including requirements for additional investigatory works, lack of contractor availability and land ownership issues.
- Street Lighting and Traffic Signals SALIX scheme – slippage of £0.7m due to the requirement for extended consultations on heritage style units and where additional time has been given to ensure that all options have been explored with stakeholders in sensitive areas.
- Broadband – spend in advance of £1.1m where additional premises have been brought into the contract (increased coverage); and secondly, an increase in costs as a result of Ofcom’s review of Openreach’s wholesale prices (the review was not finalised when the parties entered into the contract). There was also a small underestimation of the value of the work that Openreach would complete which is reflected in the year end position.

1.11 In addition, there is £0.4m of COVID-19 related costs that are funded from COVID-19 specific or tranche funding, thereby having a net nil impact on the Council’s capital programme.

Progress against Council Priorities

Driving sustainable economic growth

1.12 The Council has spent over £283m with 958 local suppliers over the last 12 months, which equates to 67.9% of total spend. The Procurement team continues to promote our contract opportunities to local suppliers, as well as building local supply chain opportunities into our tenders where possible. This focus on spending Council money within our local economy supports the East Sussex Economy Recovery Plan (Appendix 3).

1.13 Around £171m is being invested into the county because of the East Sussex Economy Recovery Plan to support the survival, reset, recovery and growth of the economy in the county. Over the last year business support programmes have assisted businesses to create or safeguard 194 jobs and Locate East Sussex have supported 29 businesses to remain within, or

relocate into, the county. 1,100 students, parents and teachers from across Sussex attended the live virtual careers event 'What's Next Sussex, in quarter 3 (Appendix 5).

1.14 76 carriageway improvement schemes have been completed in 2021/22 to maintain and improve the condition of the county's roads. Over 24,000 potholes have been repaired during 2021/22, of which almost 18,000 were carriageway potholes. The final road condition figures for 2021/22 will be reported in quarter 1 2022/23 (Appendix 5).

1.15 The Transport Hub organised the school transport of 4,500 children for the return to school in September 2021. This year was more challenging than usual, with a large scale retender project for the transport of 20% of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND); the removal of COVID-19 funding for additional transport capacity across the network and a larger than normal intake of new SEND children (Appendix 5).

1.16 93% of young people at academic age 16 (year 12) were participating in education, training or employment with training at the end of 2021/22, against a target of 93%. 85% of young people of academic age 17 (year 13) were participating, against a target of 86%. There has been a significant increase in the number of young people opting to enter employment without training and in other situations that do not meet the Department for Education's criteria for participation, such as opting into part time education and temporary employment. Increases in the cost of living are thought to be influencing young people's decisions. Participation of looked after children in Year 12 was also slightly below target at 78%; this is partly due to an increase in the number of children in this cohort, however this cohort has also been most affected by the impact of COVID-19 on their routines. The Virtual School and Through Care Team continue to work together to support these young people into education, employment and training (Appendix 4).

1.17 The Government's apprentice incentive payments and the Kickstart scheme finished at the end of 2021/22. At the end of the schemes the Council had drawn down over £150,000 in incentive payments, and 18 young people had been employed as 'Kickstarters'. At the end of 2021/22 265 Council members of staff were undertaking an apprenticeship, with 130 enrolling on a new apprenticeship during the year. Staff have enrolled on 33 different types of apprenticeships ranging from entry level to masters degree (Appendix 3).

1.18 215 premises were connected to improved broadband speeds in quarter 3 (reported a quarter in arrears), and the project is forecast to be complete in line with its revised deadline. A contract dispute during quarter 3 required a renegotiation, and the contract change, which included replacement premises, had to be formally approved by the Council and the Department of Digital Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). This meant that the build was put on hold for a period which will result in us missing our target for the number of premises connected during 2021/22. However we are progressing well following the change and recommencement of work. The final total of premises connected for 2021/22 will be available as part of the quarter 1 monitoring 2022/23 (Appendix 5).

Keeping vulnerable people safe

1.19 During 2021 the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme provided for more than 5,000 eligible young people in the county. In total across the Easter, summer, and winter holidays, more than 35,000 sessions were delivered across 150 sites. The programme supported 97 separate local providers and external partners, many of whom have gone on to apply for additional funding and deliver outside of these HAF-funded holiday periods. Although initially only funded for one year, it has now been confirmed that the programme will continue for the next three years (Appendix 4).

1.20 A report by The Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers showed that the Council's Trading Standards team helped to prevent residents of East Sussex from losing an estimated £400,000 in 2020/21. It also highlighted 303 scams victims where intervention by Trading Standards saved the victims a combined £24,600, that 98,000 illegal cigarettes were seized, and that fraudulent traders were ordered to pay back £41,300 through the Proceeds of

Crime Act. Trading Standards made 227 positive interventions to protect vulnerable people during 2021/22; including visiting vulnerable people, installing call blockers, and rapid responses to people at risk of being defrauded (Appendix 5).

1.21 At the end of 2021/22 the rate of children on a child protection plan fell slightly to 50.3 per 10,000 children aged 0-17, however this is above the target rate of 49.4. This is part of an overall increase in demand for support from children's social care. The rate of looked after children also remained above target at 58.9 per 10,000 children, this is due in part to the ongoing significant delays in the court system (Appendix 4).

1.22 The role of the Exclusions Prevention Coordinator was expanded in 2021/22 to cover all secondary schools across the county. The coordinator supports schools to look for alternatives to permanent exclusion and schools can now apply directly to the coordinator for a child to move schools if they have done something that would mean returning to their current school may lead to a permanent exclusion. 91% of these placements have been successful and, over the course of the year, the rate of permanent exclusions across the county has dropped by 74% (Appendix 4).

1.23 During quarter 4 the Prevent Project officer delivered 78 Prevent themed workshops across East Sussex, to try and prevent violent extremism, reaching approximately 2,900 students and staff. The workshops included 42 Relation-SHOPS delivered to year 6 students; 34 workshops to raise awareness of Prevent to year 7 – 12 pupils; and two staff training workshops around the Prevent duty (Appendix 2).

Helping people help themselves

1.24 New online resources were created following the invasion of Ukraine to help local residents and arriving refugees find information and support. These have included welcome guides for hosts and their guests in the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Web pages are being translated into Ukrainian and Russian and an online translation tool has been applied to our website to help people find information in the best language for them (Appendix 6).

1.25 24 schemes to improve the road safety infrastructure in the county were completed in 2021/22. As part of the national Bikeability scheme, which helps to prepare people for cycling safely on the road, we delivered 445 Bikeability courses to 4,010 individuals during 2021/22 at participating schools and the Cycle Centre at Eastbourne Sports Park. We also delivered 160 Wheels for All sessions, which are aimed at adults and children with disabilities and differing needs and helps them to cycle in a safe and structured environment, to 3,166 attendees at the Sports Park (Appendix 5).

1.26 The number of people receiving Technology Enabled Care Services was below target at the end of year at 8,150 people. This is due to a fall in the number of people eligible for the service, rather than a decrease in take-up, with some clients moving out of the area or into residential homes for example. The percentage of referrals triaged and progressed to required services by Health and Social Care Connect within required timescales remains off target due to staffing issues. As reported previously performance was higher for those referrals where a service was needed, as opposed to information and advice (Appendix 2).

1.27 The number of eligible households receiving a family support intervention under the government's Supporting Families programme in 2021/22 was 856, below the target of 900. This was due to staff vacancies within the early help service; however, a recruitment strategy is in place to address this. Despite lower than expected levels of engagement we had a high number of successful payment by results claims (Appendix 4).

1.28 We provided support to GPs to help them recommence NHS Health Checks during 2021/22. The latest available figures show that due to staffing pressures and care backlogs only 70% of GP practices had resumed their usual NHS Health Checks service. However, we have had success with our other Public Health work, with our East Sussex Smoking Cessation service (part of One You East Sussex) being ranked as the top performing smoking cessation service in the South East, and the 14th highest performing service in England for 2020/21, in a

report from NHS Digital. The service has continued to improve performance despite having to shift from face to face to remote provision during the pandemic. (Appendix 2).

1.29 Health and social care integration has continued in 2021/22. Although the start date for the introduction of statutory Integrated Care Systems (ICS) under the Health and Care Bill was delayed nationally to 1 July, discussions have progressed on the governance arrangements between local NHS organisations, Local Authorities and wider partners in our Sussex ICS, so that the new NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board and Sussex Health and Care Assembly can start to operate in shadow form ahead of 1 July. Adult Social Care and Health have continued to take a lead role in supporting people in East Sussex to access appropriate health and care, as well as mobilising the vaccination booster rollout as part of the response to the Omicron variant of COVID-19. Although these urgent priorities have led to some delays to our strategic integration plans, we have also continued our focus on joint work to transform care models and pathways to help us build on the developments that have been accelerated by the pandemic and support the continued restoration and recovery of our health and care system, in a sustainable way (Appendix 2).

Making best use of resources in the short and long term

1.30 The Council has continued to lobby the Government during 2021/22 to influence policy development in a range of areas, including levelling up, the future of children's social care and local authority funding. The Leader and the Chief Executive have continued to raise issues and priorities for the county with our local MPs and Government ministers during 2021/22, including during a visit from the Minister for Children and Families to summer holiday activities in the county in summer 2021; and during a visit from the Chancellor of the Exchequer to Newhaven in January 2022 (Appendix 6).

1.31 Additional funding announced by the Government, together with our prudent planning, means that, for now, our financial position remains secure. However, the updated financial outlook shows that we are likely to face a much more challenging position from 2023/24 onwards, so we will need to continue to work with our local, regional and national partners to highlight the specific needs of East Sussex, and to press for fair and sustainable allocation of funding that enables us to continue to meet the needs of our residents. An £8.9m reserve was created in October 2021, made up of money made available due to the impact of COVID-19 and additional funding from Government. Cabinet agreed, in November 2021, to use the reserve for one-off investments in highways and to tackle climate change (Appendix 6).

1.32 There has been an overall increase in carbon emissions of 1.4% at the end of quarter 3 (reported a quarter in arrears) against emissions for the same period in 2020/21. This is a significant improvement compared to quarter 2, which saw an increase of 18.5% compared to the same period in 2020/21. The smaller increase is largely due to warmer temperatures experienced when compared to the same period last year. Compared to the pre-pandemic year of 2019/20 overall emissions are down 17.8%. A number of projects to reduce the Council's carbon footprint have been completed in 2021/22, including over 525 solar panels being fitted to Council buildings, and nine buildings having LED lighting schemes fitted. Additionally, feasibility studies on heat plans for 20 buildings were completed to help inform 2022/23 investment plans (Appendix 3).

1.33 Team East Sussex endorsed the Climate Emergency Road Map for East Sussex, Environment Strategy 2020 | East Sussex County Council, in January 2022 (Appendix 5).

1.34 Thousands of young people from 26 secondary schools, colleges and youth voice groups across the county voted in the new Youth Cabinet in December 2021. The 22 newly elected members will serve a two-year term representing the views of all young people across East Sussex. The Youth Cabinet works on local and national campaigns, informing and lobbying decision makers, advocating for the power of youth voice and participating in special events and projects. The Youth Cabinet's campaign themes; jobs, homes, money and opportunities, and the environment; were determined by the Make Your Mark ballot in which over 10,000 young people voted (Appendix 4).

1.35 At the Local Authority Pension Fund (LAPF) Investment Awards 2021 (which were delayed due to COVID-19), the East Sussex Pension Fund was named 'Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Fund of the Year for assets over £2.5 billion' and was highly commended in the 'Best Climate Change Strategy Award' (Appendix 3).

2. Reconciling Policy Performance and Resources – State of the County

2.1 The Cabinet considered a report on the State of the County which is a key part of the Council's Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process, its integrated business and financial planning cycle. The report set out an overview of the current context in preparation for more detailed planning for 2023/24 and beyond. In conjunction with our 2021/22 year-end monitoring report, it reflects on the achievements over the last year, the challenges in the year ahead arising from both local and national factors and, in light of this, begins to refine plans to guide business planning and budget setting processes. This report contains the normal elements included in the State of the County report: the demographic evidence base; the national and local policy outlook; and updates on the Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme. It gives our up to date understanding of how we will need to continue to respond to the wide range of policy, demographic and financial drivers which influence the outlook for the Council in the short and longer term.

2.2 Significant uncertainty continues to dominate the context within which we are working. The challenging national economic environment and recent increases in the cost of living directly affect us locally, both in terms of the impact on our residents, particularly the most vulnerable, and in terms of cost and resource pressures on the Council itself. These new economic challenges come as local businesses and households recover from Covid impacts, creating new risks alongside the new opportunities we have sought to maximise in the county. The financial outlook for the Council remains unclear with a further one year financial settlement anticipated for 2023/24 and key national reforms to local government funding likely to be delayed. Many of our major, demand-led, services are, or are likely to be, subject to significant national reforms, with accompanying service and financial risks to manage, and there is a continuing pressing need to work towards addressing the impacts of climate change. Although we have now moved to a position of living with Covid, the impact of the pandemic is ongoing and will continue to have consequences for people, businesses and services in the short and longer term. We are also playing an increased role in supporting people displaced by global conflicts and seeking refuge in East Sussex. All these factors combine to create the volatile and highly challenging backdrop against which we must plan for the future.

2.3 In light of the multi-faceted pressures we face, it is essential that we continue to direct our resources, in partnership with others, in the most effective way to support our priorities and core service provision. The Council spends over £900m gross each year (in the region of £450m net) on services for the county. RPPR provides the vehicle by which we ensure our financial and other resources are aligned to delivery of our priority outcomes and that we are informed by a clear understanding of our effectiveness. This approach, additional short-term Government support, and many years of careful financial management enabled us to maintain a secure financial position during the past two years defined by the Covid pandemic, providing stability during this difficult time. However, the financial outlook in the medium term remains very challenging and uncertain with a number of key risks which cannot yet be fully defined.

2.4 In this context the report sets out our proposed lobbying and communications focus to help us ensure that the Government is aware of the needs of our county and the ongoing and urgent need for a sustainable multi-year funding settlement. In particular we will highlight the need for full funding of the major reforms to social care provision for adults and children and to support for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), if we are to maintain core services in the future in light of growing demand and stretched resources.

Current position

2.5 The past year continued to illustrate the key role the County Council plays for the residents, communities and businesses of East Sussex as the county emerged from the peak of the Covid pandemic and attention turned to recovery. Through our services, employment, purchasing and how we work in partnership with others the Council makes a significant contribution to quality of life for people across our county. The need for our support is heightened by the enduring impacts of the pandemic and the current pressures on cost of living, both of which disproportionately impact on the most vulnerable. More recently, we have worked with partners and communities across the county to mobilise a local response to the situation in Ukraine and the arrival of hundreds of refugees. Our assessments of the ongoing levels of need arising from recent developments continue to be refined and will influence our plans as we better understand the longer-term implications.

2.6 In developing our medium and longer term plans we will need to have regard to the broader context in which we will be working. The national policy environment is rapidly developing, with significant reforms brought forward by Government across a wide range of services, requiring a significant and often rapid response across all departments. The national and local context includes:

- The challenging and uncertain national economic situation, current high levels of inflation and the increased cost of living, particularly rising energy, fuel and food prices. This environment is likely to impact on the demand for our services as well as directly on the costs of providing services.
- The Government's economic and policy agenda, as set out in the recent Queen's Speech, in particular the programme outlined in the Levelling Up White Paper and Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, the impact of new post-EU funding regimes and changes to arrangements for driving economic growth locally.
- Specific uncertainty over the future of local government funding. A planned funding review, covering the formula on which funding allocations to individual local authorities are based, now appears likely to be deferred, increasing the likelihood of a further one year financial settlement for 2023/24. In addition, major national reforms to Adult Social Care and Children's Services (see below) carry considerable financial risks for local authorities. These are significant areas of change that currently are not fully understood and cannot be fully quantified but will have potentially significant financial impact.
- The impact of Government reviews and reforms of public services – In September 2021, the Government announced plans to increase funding for health and social care over the next three years and to reform the way that Adult Social Care is funded, with significant changes to the way individuals' financial contribution to their care is managed, as well as the fees paid for care. Further reforms were set out in the subsequent People at the Heart of Care and Integration White Papers. Taken together, these amount to a major system change with significant impact on our services.
- In addition to the reforms to Adult Social Care there are significant changes to our responsibilities arising from the Education White Paper and Schools Bill and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Green Paper, and further impacts arising from the recommendations of the national review of children's social care, the Government response to which is currently in development.
- The growing impact of climate change, the national and local commitments to achieve carbon neutrality, the need to adapt to the impacts of climate change, and the introduction of a range of new measures through the Environment Act.

CABINET

- Significant national policy developments related to planning, infrastructure, and transport and, locally, the re-procurement of our highways contract, and taking forward our Bus Services Improvement Plan and refresh of our Local Transport Plan.
- The increasing need to support refugee resettlement in light of global conflicts and increased numbers of people seeking asylum, including unaccompanied children.
- The impact of current low rates of unemployment and significant workforce shortages in key sectors on our ability to recruit and retain staff, coupled with the need for our workforce to adapt to service reforms and post-pandemic changes to working patterns.
- Opportunities to continue to build on positive work with our public, Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE) and private sector partners during the Covid pandemic, and more recently to deliver the Homes for Ukraine scheme in East Sussex. We will look to further develop our ability to tackle issues in partnership in the future, including building community wellbeing and responding to the increased need in our communities.
- The ongoing need to support post-Covid recovery and adjustment, both in our services and for society and the local economy.

2.7 The local and national policy outlook at Appendix 9, sets out the latest thinking on these and other current issues, although plans will continue to develop over the summer as more information emerges.

2.8 Faced with diminishing resources and increasing demand, especially in social care, the Council has made significant savings over the past decade to live within our means. These difficult decisions, together with short-term additional support from Government and sound financial management has placed the Council in a relatively stable position for 2022/23 and enabled us to avoid the need for further savings. However, cost pressures have already increased in the current year and the outlook in the medium term is far more challenging. There remains a significant gap between the income we currently expect to receive and the costs of providing core services, with significant additional risk arising from Adult Social Care and other reforms. Fundamentally, without further Government support or sustainable reform of local government finances we will not have the funding we need for the future. Further detail on the financial outlook is provided at paragraphs 2.16 to 2.24.

2.9 In all our activities, and in planning for the future, the County Council continues to work to our guiding principles that:

- What we do represents good value for money;
- Our activities are transparent and we can be held to account;
- We operate as One Council and focus on key areas for County Council action;
- We prioritise the investment available for front line service delivery by maximising the resources available to us through treasury management, working to secure sustainable national funding and working in partnership with other organisations;
- We work towards achieving carbon neutrality in our activities as soon as possible and take account of the climate impact of what we do;
- We remain focused on delivering our priority outcomes;
- We carry out all we do professionally and competently; and

- We remain ambitious, optimistic and realistic about what can be achieved.

Demographic and Demand Changes and Financial Background

2.10 Appendix 8 sets out the key factors affecting the County in relation to demography, housing, deprivation, health, the environment and economy, and the impact these are having on demand for our services. The main issues driving demand are:

- Older People - form a high proportion of the population of the County which has an impact on the demand for services and the Council's finances.
- Children and Young People – we have seen an increasing demand for support for Children's Social Care which has resulted in a higher number of child protection cases. The number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) continues to increase.
- Economy- there are signs that our local economy is recovering from the effects of the pandemic, with a decrease in unemployment. However, recent increases in utilities costs and the cost of living may affect growth in the short-term.
- Climate change – CO2 emissions were falling in all sectors in East Sussex except transport before the pandemic. Although we had the lowest emissions of carbon dioxide per person of all the County Council areas in England, further reductions will be needed.

Council Priority Outcomes

2.11 The Council's business and financial planning is underpinned by its four priority outcomes, which provide a clear focus for decisions about spending and savings and direct activity across the Council.

- 2.12 The current four priority outcomes are:
- Driving sustainable economic growth;
 - Keeping vulnerable people safe;
 - Helping people help themselves; and
 - Making best use of resources now and for the future.

The priority outcome that the Council makes the "best use of resources now and for the future" is a test that is applied to all activities to ensure sustainability of our resources, both in terms of money and environmental assets. It ensures that the future impact of the choices we make about using resources is actively considered across all that we do, as well as the here and now.

2.13 The priority outcomes, and their subsidiary delivery outcomes, were reviewed and updated during 2020/21 with some amendments made to delivery outcomes to ensure that they appropriately reflected the operating context as it had been impacted by Covid. Although the impact of Covid persists, we have now moved to a position of living with the virus longer term and it is considered timely to review priority and delivery outcomes once again to ensure the priorities we are working to deliver, and the way we measure the performance of our activities and services, remain appropriate.

2.14 The current priority and delivery outcomes are attached at Appendix 10 (section a) and the following changes have been agreed to delivery outcomes:

Driving sustainable economic growth

In light of the changed context, and the intention to move forward, during 2023/24, from the Economy Recovery Plan developed to support the immediate recovery of the

CABINET

county's economy from Covid, it is proposed to amend the below delivery outcome as shown below:

- East Sussex businesses are supported to ~~recover~~ **succeed** and grow **sustainably** ~~through the delivery of the Economy Recovery Plan~~

Reflecting both current and future workforce challenges and the opportunity to capitalise on changes in working patterns following Covid, the following amendments are proposed:

Delete:

- The county's employment and productivity rates are maximised

To be replaced with:

- **The county is an attractive place to live, work and do business**
- The workforce has and maintains the skills needed for good quality employment to meet the needs of the **current and** future East Sussex economy

To reflect up to date terminology and pathways the following wording amendments are proposed:

- All children progress well from early years ~~to~~ **through** school ~~leave~~ and into **post-16** education, training and employment

Keeping vulnerable people safe

To reflect the importance of family, friend and community support networks to vulnerable adults and children, which was highlighted during Covid-19, it is proposed make an amendment and addition as below:

- People feel safe at home **and well supported by their networks**
- **Children grow up supported by enduring, loving relationships**

To reflect the evolution of the Covid response and the ongoing focus on health and social care integration, it is proposed to broaden the following delivery outcome beyond Covid-19 by making amendments as follows:

- We work with the wider health and care system to support people ~~affected by Covid-19~~ to achieve the best ~~health~~ outcomes possible

Helping people help themselves

In light of the strengthening of mutual support systems during Covid and the Ukraine crisis and the continuing role of these in responding to ongoing levels of need in communities, it is proposed to change the below delivery outcome to better reflect our partnership with the VCSE sector and the role community-based support is playing:

Delete:

- Through our work with others, individuals and communities are encouraged to maintain and develop local mutual support systems

To be replaced with:

- **Through working well with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, individuals, families and communities are supported to be independent and to thrive**

Making best use of resources now and for the future

To simplify and make clearer our focus on working as a single organisation across our activities it is proposed to shorten the following delivery outcome:

- ~~Working~~ **We work** as One Council ~~both through the processes we use and how we work across services~~

CABINET

To fully reflect our effective and valued partnerships, including with the VCSE sector, which have been further strengthened through joint work in relation to challenges such as Covid and support for Homes for Ukraine, it is proposed to amend the following delivery outcome as shown:

- ~~Delivery through~~ **We work in** strong and sustained partnership **with** ~~working~~ across the public, voluntary, community, **social enterprise** and private sectors to ensure that ~~all available~~ **our collective** resources **and influence** are used to deliver maximum benefits ~~to local people~~

To address current and future workforce challenges and the need to focus on effective recruitment and retention of staff to support service delivery it is proposed to add the following delivery outcome:

- **We are an employer of choice and support our staff to achieve and develop**

The proposed updated delivery outcomes, including all the above amendments and additions, are also shown at Appendix 10 (section b).

2.15 Cabinet reviewed the current priority and delivery outcomes and agreed them as the basis for future business and financial planning, subject to the amendments outlined in paragraph 2.14 above.

Medium Term Financial Plan

2.16 When the 2022/23 balanced budget was approved by Full Council on 8 February 2022, the deficit on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to 2024/25 was £9.608m. Updating the MTFP for normal factors (such as the latest inflation rates and an additional year), the position would have been a deficit budget position by 2025/26 of £14.999m:

Medium Term Financial Plan	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	£m	£m	£m
Total Budget Deficit / (Surplus)	6.480	5.056	3.463
Annual Budget Deficit / (Surplus)	6.480	11.536	14.999

2.17 The impact of the pandemic, global supply chain issues and levels of inflation not seen for decades, combined with the Ukraine situation, has led to an unprecedented level of financial uncertainty. At a national level, the Government funding that ESCC will receive between 2023/24 – 2025/26 is yet to be confirmed. Although the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented a three-year financial plan in his budget in 2021, the Local Government Financial Settlement was only a one year settlement for 2022/23. We therefore await the provisional settlement for 2023/24, which will be in the late autumn of 2022.

2.18 Although Government has given a strong commitment to update the current local government funding regime, it is considered increasingly likely that funding reforms will be delayed until after 2023/24, due to lack of time available to undertake a full consultation and implement major funding changes. The Queen's Speech did however list a Non-Domestic Rating Bill, which includes reducing the rates revaluation cycle from five years to three years from 2023, which has been the subject of previous consultations. On 30 May the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities also issued a [consultation](#) seeking views on the transitional arrangements to be adopted at the 2023 Business Rates Revaluation. The nature of any further reform and how this will impact the continuation of existing Business Rates pooling arrangements for 2023/24 and onward, is not clear.

2.19 As a result of the major national Adult Social Care reforms (outlined at paragraph 2.6 above and in more detail at Appendix 9), local authorities will become responsible for funding care for a larger number of people as more residents become eligible for local authority funded care and support. The rate local authorities will need to pay providers for individual placements will increase. There will also be a significant increase in demand for both Care Act and financial assessments which will increase operational costs. Modelling work is underway to inform the MTFP in the autumn; the current assumption is that, as the costs of reform are new burdens, they will be fully funded; the reality may well be different. A report by the County Councils Network (CCN) and Newton, released on 25 May, provides the first independent analysis of these reforms. It estimates that the cost of reforms in the nine years from when they are introduced to 2032 could be a minimum of £10bn higher than currently estimated and could create a further workforce crisis in social care, with over 5,000 extra staff projected to be required to carry out extra care and financial assessments for those seeking to benefit from the reforms. The analysis also indicates a significant regional variation in the costs of implementing the reforms, with councils in county and rural areas disproportionately impacted. Councils in England's counties account for 57% (£14.3bn) of the total estimated minimum costs of the reforms over the next decade. There is also very significant regional variation, primarily driven by the variation in population wealth and house values; this looks to be of particular impact in the South East. Counties in the South East, such as East Sussex, are expected to be most significantly affected given the current high levels of people paying for their own care (self-funders) and relatively high fee rates compared to other parts of the country (meaning the care cap would be reached more quickly).

2.20 In addition to Adult Social Care reforms, there are a range of other significant policy and legislative changes across services, particularly within Children's Services and Communities, Economy and Transport as outlined in paragraph 2.6 of Appendix 9. The impacts of these changes are still being explored and, at this point, the MTFP assumes that, as new burdens, the pressures will be fully funded by government, therefore net nil.

2.21 At a local level, the impact the economic downturn and cost of living crisis has had, and will have, on collection rates and base growth for Council Tax and the levels of Business Rates remain unclear, and local Council Tax Reduction Schemes will see a further reduction in the collection of Council Tax.

2.22 With all this uncertainty, it is not possible to present a draft MTFP to 2025/26. It is planned to work through the details required over the summer as more information becomes available and also factor in the budget requirements for services. After this work, modelling will provide a set of balanced budget scenarios considering the local and national position that presents itself.

2.23 As reported at Full Council in February 2022, the Local Government Settlement provided the Council with a Services Grant of £5.175m. The government statement supporting this funding highlights that this is a one-off grant and will not be taken into consideration for transitional protection when future system changes are made (but will be used for transitional support). As such, in future years the distribution formula may change with regard to transitional support provided. It was agreed therefore that this grant will be held in reserves for one-off investment opportunities.

2.24 Ideas and opportunities are now being considered for use of this one-off resource, which can be revenue and/or capital in nature and can be spread across multiple years. It is proposed that any investment ideas should focus on, and be assessed against, the following principles:

- enabling a significant improvement in delivering to the Council's priorities and/or performance targets
- managing service demands
- avoiding future costs

CABINET

- proactively addressing known future issues; or
- having a positive impact on the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Cabinet moved to recommend the draft criteria and will seek views from scrutiny on them through discussion at the July meetings of People and Place Scrutiny Committees. A final set of criteria and investment proposals for consideration will be reported as part of the RPPR process through the autumn.

Capital Programme

2.25 The approved programme has now been updated to reflect the 2021/22 outturn and other approved variations, revising the gross programme down to £676.0m to 2031/32. The details are set out in Appendix 11, together with the revised programme.

2.26 As part of the Queen's Speech in May, the government announced new measures to address excessive risk arising from borrowing and investment practices. The measures, to be taken forward through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, will put in place statutory powers allowing the government to investigate local practices and, where necessary, require remedial action by an authority where there is excessive risk to financial stability from capital practices. The intent of the powers is to provide the government with the ability to take targeted and precise action where it has concerns, without the need for further reform to the Prudential Framework as a whole. This is in response to long-running concerns that a small number of authorities are taking on very high, disproportionate levels of debt or become excessively exposed to risk from commercial investment strategies.

2.27 The risk metrics to be used will be put in place through regulations being developed and any impact or considerations will be reported in the normal way through the RPPR process.

2.28 The 10 year capital programme to 2031/32 and 20 year Capital Strategy 2022/23 to 2042/43 will be updated as part of the RPPR process over the autumn to add a year and to include consideration of the impact and management of inflation and supply chain issues, alongside any updates relating to Government funding and the risk metrics being developed as well as the procurement of the highways contract and other investment basic need.

Lobbying and Communications

2.29 Our strong local foundation of efficient and effective service delivery, coupled with additional Government funding received during the pandemic and in the finance settlement, has enabled us to provide another year of relative stability and a further window of opportunity to prepare for the uncertain future. Opportunities for one-off investments to support delivery of the Council's priorities, particularly where this can help manage future pressures, are being identified.

2.30 However, the medium term outlook remains highly challenging. We face a significant financial gap, the undefined impact of national reforms in major service areas and a lack of clarity on long-term funding arrangements. There are significant risks and uncertainties arising particularly from social care and SEND reforms, which makes planning for the future difficult. In the context of this ongoing uncertainty in our position, coupled with wider volatility in the economy and its impacts on our residents, our lobbying will continue to call for certainty of future funding for local government, and funding that is appropriately reflective of local need and that fully reflects the impact of reforms. This will be paramount to ensuring we secure adequate resource to deliver what will be required to support East Sussex residents, communities and businesses with the core services they need, including opportunities to continue positive preventative work that could most effectively manage future demand for services.

2.31 We will continue to work with local MPs and local, regional and national partners to make this case. Through work with South East 7 partners we will highlight the particular strengths and needs of the South East 7 area and the benefits of investment in the region through a joint approach to lobbying.

Next Steps

2.32 Work will continue over the summer to further refine our understanding of the medium term impacts on our services of national reforms, economic volatility, changing demand for services and the financial resources that will be available to us in the coming years. We will continue to press the case for a multi-year financial settlement which enables us to plan ahead with more certainty but if there is a further one year settlement we will use our RPPR process to plan accordingly.

2.33 There will be a report back to Members in the autumn with an updated assessment of our service demand and funding expectations to inform more detailed business and budget planning for 2023/24 and beyond.

2.34 Members will continue to be consulted on plans as they are developed through Cabinet, County Council, Scrutiny Committees, Whole Council Forums and specific engagement sessions throughout the 2022/23 Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources process.

3. Ashdown Forest Trust Fund 2021/22

3.1 The Cabinet considered a report on the Ashdown Forest Trust's Income and Expenditure Account for 2021/22 and Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2022.

3.2 The Ashdown Forest Trust, a registered charity, was set out by declaration of Trust in 1988. East Sussex County Council is the trustee and agrees grants made to the Ashdown Forest Conservators, from the Ashdown Forest Trust Fund.

2020/21 Accounts

3.3 Subsequent to the 2020/21 accounts being approved, the independent Examination process has now been completed in accordance with Section 145 of the Charities Act 2011.

3.4 The Examiner's report is attached as Appendix 12. It does not identify any issues that require any further action by the Council as the trustees.

2021/22 Accounts

3.5 The Trust's Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet are set out in the attached Appendix 13. The Income and Expenditure Account shows a surplus in 2021/22 of £4,376.

3.6 The main source of income to the Trust relates to the rent from the Royal Ashdown Golf Club at £70,000 per annum. The only other income this year was from bank interest.

3.7 The expenditure mostly relates to the £65,100 grant paid to the Ashdown Forest Conservators. The remaining expenditure was for audit fees.

3.8 The accumulative General Reserve totalled £167,069 at 31 March 2022.

CABINET

3.9 A formal annual report and statement of accounts will be compiled in accordance with the Charity Commission's Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) by the end of January 2023, once the Independent Examiner report has been received.

3.10 The Trust made an operating surplus of £4,376 during 2021/22. The General Reserve as at 31 March 2022 amounts to £167,069. This fund is available to finance expenditure which meets the Trust's objectives.

3.11 The Cabinet noted the final accounts for the Ashdown Forest Trust.

27 June 2022

KEITH GLAZIER
(Chair)