

## **Appendix 1 – Comments to Cabinet by the Place Scrutiny Committee RPPR Board.**

### **1. Place Scrutiny Committee**

1.1. The Place Scrutiny RPPR Board met on the 22 December 2022 and agreed comments to be put to Cabinet, on behalf of the parent Committee, for its consideration in January 2023. The information supplied to the Board to support its discussions comprised of:

- a Local Government Association (LGA) briefing on the Autumn Statement 2022;
- a summary of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Local Government Finance Policy Statement 2023/24 – 2024/25; and
- the draft portfolio plans for the Communities, Economy and Transport, Business Services and Governance Services Departments.

1.2. The Board met after the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2023 to 2024 was published on 19 December 2022. The Board received an update from the Chief Finance Officer at their meeting on the implications of the provisional Settlement for the Council's financial position and the specific grant allocations, where these were known. The Board were also able to ask clarifying questions on the financial briefings and any implications for the Council.

1.3. The Board reviewed the draft portfolio plans for the three departments within its remit and asked a number of questions about the services and future plans for each department. The Board did not recommend any changes to the draft portfolio plans and considered them within the context of the emerging financial outlook for the Council.

1.4. The comments of the Place Scrutiny RPPR Board are set out below.

### **Comments to Cabinet**

#### **Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement**

1.5. The Chief Finance Officer provided the Board with further detailed information on the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. Overall, this will mean an estimated increase in the Core Spending Power of the Council of 9.8% (assuming that the Council exercises the option for the maximum increase in Council Tax). This includes an increase of almost £14 million in the Social Care Grant which will go some way to meeting cost pressures the Council is facing in these areas.

1.6. Although the Fair Funding Review has been delayed until after the current Parliament ends in 2025, there is a greater degree of financial certainty regarding the funding position for the Council over next two financial years than had been anticipated.

1.7. The RPPR Board welcomed the relatively positive provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, and that additional grant funding had been provided in a number of areas.

### Savings

1.8. No new savings have been planned for 2023/24 whilst awaiting more detail on the Council's future funding position. The Board heard that the information contained in the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement confirms that there will not be a requirement to identify new areas for savings in the next financial year.

1.9. The Board welcomed that there will be no requirement for new savings in 2023/24.

### Income Generation

1.10. The RPPR Board notes that income generation as well as savings can help with meeting the budget pressures the Council faces. The Board heard that all Council departments regularly review the opportunities for income generation both through new initiatives and increasing existing fees and charges.

1.11. The Board considers that the Communities Economy and Transport department should continue to consider the opportunities for income generation, such as the equalisation of some on street parking charges across different Civil Parking Enforcement schemes and use the income to invest in areas such as transport improvement schemes and highways maintenance.

### Reserves and one-off investment of Services Grant

1.12. The Board noted that the Government is looking at the level of reserves held by councils. As part of the Council's financial planning Cabinet had previously agreed to hold the majority of the £5.175 million Services Grant in reserves, rather than committing it to one-off investment projects, until there was more certainty about the Council's financial position.

1.13. The Board asks that Cabinet, through the RPPR process, considers re-instating some of the one-off investment proposals such as the speed limit survey and measures to improve road safety to reduce the number of Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) incidents in the County.

### Communities, Economy and Transport (CET) Portfolio Plan - Community Match Fund

1.14. The RPPR Board notes that the Community Match capital fund has been undersubscribed with a lower number of bids submitted by community groups. This is in part due to the cost of some schemes requiring a large amount of match funding to meet the 50% match funding requirement, which can be beyond the capacity of some community groups and smaller Parish Councils. The Board recommends that if the Community Match Fund continues to be underspent, consideration is given to reviewing the contribution level required by community groups and raising the amount the Council contributes (e.g. 50% - 70% funding provided by the Council for larger schemes).