

1. Engagement on RPPR

1.1 Each year the Council engages with all Members and a wide range of stakeholders, including the Trade Unions and young people on its proposals for actions, spending and savings for the following spending cycle. This appendix sets out a summary of the feedback received.

1.2 As the meetings with Trade Unions and Business representatives is scheduled to take place after the dispatch date for Cabinet papers. A summary of the discussion will be tabled at the Cabinet meeting.

2. Engagement with residents on the overall position

2.1 Between 23 September and 25 November 2015 an engagement exercise was carried out with East Sussex residents to explore concerns about the future budget cuts. The results of this exercise are appended

2.2 Details of the feedback received from East Sussex residents will also be available in the Members' and Cabinet rooms.

3. Scrutiny Boards

3.1 All Scrutiny Committees held Boards and considered the draft Portfolio Plans and savings plans towards the end of 2015. The Boards assessed the impact of both any significant budget cuts facing the County Council over the coming years and activities where savings were not necessarily being proposed, but which accounted for significant use of resources.

Adult Social Care and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee RPPR Board

3.2 Present: Councillors Peter Pragnell (Chair), Peter Charlton, Angharad Davies, Jim Sheppard, John Ungar and Trevor Webb.

Lead Members: Councillors Bill Bentley and David Elkin

3.3 The Board were informed that, in response to the consultation being undertaken, by the time the Board met:

- there had been 791 on-line responses, 70+ letters, 70+ comment slips, and 20+ phone calls.
- In addition the consultation had engendered active on-line debate, notably via twitter. Independent sector care providers were specifically encouraged to inform their clients about the consultation via social media (i.e. clients who may not meet ASC eligibility criteria and may therefore be unknown to ASC), and this had been especially successful.
- There had been 9 public drop-in sessions across the county, as well as more than 20 meetings with specific client or stakeholder groups.
- The development of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) had been run concurrently with the consultation, with consultation responses informing the EqIAs.
- Elected Members who had received correspondence from residents about budget plans are encouraged to pass communications on to ASC officers where appropriate so that these responses can be included in the evaluation of the consultation.

- This had been an unprecedented consultation in terms of publicity and in terms of reach – engaging with service users as well as the general public.

3.4 Some Members commented that it would have been helpful to have been informed about the detailed savings plans (i.e. to the level of the impact on individual schemes) as Councillors for the divisions impacted, rather than just the high-level plans presented at October 2015 Cabinet. Some Members expressed concerns that, if detailed savings plans were currently being shared only with service users, this potentially impacted on the ability of concerned members of the public who are not themselves users of specific services to understand and comment on savings plans.

- The Director of Adult Social Care and Health responded that the agreed process for the development of budget plans was to have high-level plans reported to Cabinet as a basis for consultation and then more detailed planning shared via consultation.
- The Director responded that all members of the public have been welcome to engage with the consultation, which has not been confined to service users. The council has proactively explained this in the local media and through its website.
- Responses to the consultation process will inform the development of EqIAs. Themes from the consultation will be included in the Cabinet papers and copies of the full consultation responses will be available to Members.
- Cllr Bentley undertook to circulate a response that he had provided to Councillor Ungar (dated 10 November 2015) with additional information on a number of issues.
- In response to questions on how budget consultation comments could impact on the ASC spending plans, the Director told Members that the funding available to ESCC will be fixed and the Council will consequently have to make all the savings required. However, consultation responses will feed into the EqIA process, and inform how those savings are best delivered and how best mitigate the impact of those savings and to manage risk.

3.5 Members asked questions on a number of issues:

Council Tax precept

This could amount to around £15 million over the next three years for East Sussex. It seems likely that councils will be allowed to increase Council Tax by an additional 2% each year to support adult social care.

Identifying Need

The Director explained that the Care Act includes a statutory definition of need in terms of eligibility for services, but there is also a requirement for a broader role for ASC which encompasses the principle of prevention. However, the level of savings required was such that it would not be possible to maintain all preventative services and the Council has had to identify the savings that will have the least impact in terms of individuals and in terms of the potential increase in service demand for the County Council.

The consultation process has a key role to play in refining understanding of these impacts. In the previous round of savings, the council had protected preventative services, instead cutting community care allocations. It was not possible to make further savings from the Community Care budget which was under pressure, increasing demand from residents eligible for social care.

Prevention

Some Members expressed concern about proposed savings to preventative budgets, including Supporting People, Learning Disability employability services and support for people with mental health problems, and supported accommodation. Some Members were concerned about the long term impact on individuals, and potentially also on council finances, of less effective preventative services.

Dialogue with Borough and District Councils

Members asked about the level of dialogue with Borough and District (B&Ds) Councils over plans to reduce preventative spend, particularly in areas such as homelessness prevention where the principle housing duties rest with the B&Ds. The Director explained that the Strategic Forum (including District and Borough Councils) has considered all proposals. An officer Housing groups sits under the forum and this group has discussed plans in detail. Housing has also been added as an East Sussex Better Together work-stream. However, it is important to bear in mind that the context is one of diminishing resources across the public sector.

Concluding comments

3.6 The Chair emphasised that, when discussing the ASC plans, it was important that Members proposing to reduce the amount being saved had given thought to alternative ways to make the savings required. However, alternative savings did not necessarily have to be identified from within the ASC budget. Cllr Elkin added that any alternative savings had to be recurrent rather than one-off opportunities, if a sustainable budget were to be agreed.

3.7 Cllr Webb stated that he was unable to support the planned reductions to Supporting People services [points 6-19 in the savings spreadsheet]; community grants prospectus [18]; or to services providing mental health support [31]; supported accommodation and independent living solutions [32]; or Learning Disability community support [30]. He therefore proposed that the Board agree to recommend to Cabinet that these savings be abandoned. The Board voted on this proposition, which was not carried.

3.8 Cllr Ungar sought to table his own proposition: that the Board should state to Cabinet that it was not currently in favour of the entirety of the adult social care savings plans. However, no vote was taken.

Audit, Best Value and Community Services Scrutiny Committee RPPR Board

3.9 Present: Councillors Mike Blanch, John Barnes, Philp Howson (substituting for Councillor Laurence Keeley), Bob Standley, Trevor Webb and Francis Whetstone.
Lead Member: Councillor David Elkin.

Consultation update

3.10 The Board did not consider that any clear themes or new ideas emerged from the responses and recommended that future consultations would benefit from having greater clarity around:

- The difference between revenue and capital expenditure, as it was apparent that this was not very well understood by respondents.
- The background to the budget setting process and in particular that the Council was having to make savings as a result of cuts to local government funding by Central Government, and this was something that the County Council had no control over.

- The responsibility for services provided by the County Council, and those that are the responsibility of the District and Borough Councils. Often respondents refer to “the Council” and are not clear on which services County Council is responsible for.

Additional Work carried out by the RPPR Board

3.11 The Board noted that it had previously commented on, or carried out separate pieces of work on:

- The Orbis Business Plan and the proposed savings of around 12% over the next 3 financial years.
- Communications, which examined several options for the future delivery of this service.
- The Libraries’ Transformation Programme.

Corporate Governance and support

3.12 The Board commented that the wording in paragraph 2.3 (page 5 of the Portfolio Plan) “We must prepare.....” gives the impression that ESCC is going to change in the future. The Board recommended that the wording is amended to reflect that ESCC is in the process of transformation to meet the challenges it faces, and is prepared for change which is permanent in nature. The Chief Executive responded that the aim was to convey that there had been a fundamental shift in local government services and this was a permanent change. ESCC has changed since 2010 and is now having to change again.

One Council

3.13 The Board asked for further clarification of the concept of a ‘One Council’ approach to services, as it felt this was not clearly understood, and questioned how well this was being delivered in practice. The Chief Executive explained that the ‘One Council’ approach was about ESCC behaving as a single organisation and working closely with partners (e.g. health providers and other councils) to provide services; for example the East Sussex Better Together (ESBT) programme. The Chief Executive added that actions were being taken to embed the ‘One Council’ approach. A set of behaviours and values have been developed which feed directly into staff recruitment, induction and appraisal.

Senior Management Structure

3.14 The Board asked how the senior management structure might change in response to the need to act as one organisation, ESBT, the loss of schools and the development of traded services (e.g. for school improvement, children’s services). The Chief Executive stated that the number of senior managers was about right for the challenges that ESCC currently faces. That structure is informed by the drive to behave as one organisation, the need for capacity to manage change, and to have accountability. This may need to be reviewed in the light of changes that may take place over the next two years. The Deputy Leader commented that he considered that the current scrutiny arrangements may act to magnify a ‘silo’ approach and this may need to be reviewed.

Members’ ICT Strategy

3.15 The Board wished to see greater progress with the development of the strategy and asked whether hardware changes would be introduced before the next ESCC elections in 2017. The Assistant Chief Executive responded that officers have been meeting with Councillors to resolve individual ICT related problems and small group training is planned next year on the topics identified by the Members’ ICT survey. There

is a renewed focus on making sure the current equipment works (both mobile phones and computers etc.), with plans to provide new hardware after the next elections (e.g. options will include new hybrid tablets with a detachable keyboard).

Policy and Performance Management

3.16 The Board received a paper last year on this area of activity and asked for further information on the staffing and costs for this function.

- The Chief Executive is supported by 3 FTE (full-time equivalent) policy officers and 1 intern. The performance management function covers all departments except Adult Social Care (ASC) and Children's Services (CS). The performance team has 4 FTE staff and one intern. The total annual revenue budget for both functions is £444k (7 FTE staff and 2 interns). The combined team covers all policy and performance work including support for devolution, SE7, the RPPR process and portfolio plans (except ASC and CS). The team has experienced a 20% reduction over the last three years.
- For ASC and CS it is more difficult to separate out costs for policy and performance work as it tends to be just one part of officers' roles who carry out a mix of operational and policy work. As part of the savings plans it is proposed to reduce the CS Communication, Planning and Performance function by £260k and the ASC Planning, Performance and Engagement function by £500k.
- The Director for Adult Social Care and Health added that the policy function within ASC is contained within the commissioning manager's role, which includes responsibility for policy development and advice. The performance function has 3 FTE posts and almost 1 FTE administration post. The number of performance posts was reduced two years ago and the policy function has been reduced via savings in commissioning.

Public Health

Budget Reductions

3.17 The 20% RPPR savings shown in the report are based on the assumption that the ring-fencing of the Public Health budget would cease at the end of April 2016. It has been announced the ring-fence arrangements will be retained until the end of 2017/18 but the 20% savings plans would remain in place due to the uncertainty about future funding levels.

3.18 The Board noted the 6.2% reduction in Public Health funding in 2015/16 and the further reductions of 2.2% in 2016/17 rising to 2.6% in 2018/19 and 2019/20. The extension of the ring fencing arrangements for the Public Health budget, and uncertainty about future funding allocations, means there is a risk that it may be difficult to achieve the predicted £4.8m savings in 2016/17. The Director for Adult Social Care confirmed that the change to the ring fence does potentially change the situation, depending on the allocation formula and phasing of budget reductions. It is unlikely that ESCC will get this information until the New Year. Up until now, the Public Health reserve has been used to offset in-year budget reductions. The way the Public Health grant is received does allow for some cushioning and the setting aside of money in a reserve.

Smoking Cessation

3.19 The Board noted that the savings plan contained two entries for smoking cessation, as well as one for tobacco control, and sought clarification on the impacts of these services. The Board expressed an interest in monitoring the impact of these interventions as part of the work of the ABVCS Scrutiny Committee.

- The Director informed the Board that there was good evidence for the efficacy of these interventions, which lead to reduced demand for health services.
- The Acting Director for Public Health confirmed that smoking cessation is not a mandatory service. The proposed savings for smoking cessation prescribing activity would not have an impact on the service, but modelling has shown that further reductions would have an impact on the efficacy of the interventions.

Life Expectancy Indicator

3.20 The Board questioned the measurement of success through the morbidity measure when ESCC cannot directly assess the impact of the programmes it has put in place (due to the contribution made by other organisations). The Board also commented that it was hard to see how the life expectancy indicator relates to the rest of the work in the Portfolio Plan. The Board noted that more direct measures of the impact of ESCC's work are being developed through the ESBT programme. ESCC is required to report against this measure as it is one of the overarching performance indicators contained within the national Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF), which has 200 other indicators below it.

Community Resilience Steering Group

3.21 The Board requested that there be greater consultation with parish and town councils on the development and delivery of this work which aims to improve social capital as well as to achieve a number of other objectives. The Acting Director for Public Health responded that parish councils were being engaged through the ESSP and the Community Resilience work stream will be reported via the ESBT Scrutiny Board.

Resources (Business Services/Orbis)

Agile Programme

3.22 The Board questioned why the implementation of the Agile ICT was taking so long and noted that, with the exception of Children's Services, savings made as a result of the Agile Programme were not reported in departmental savings plans. The Board recommended that a commentary is included in departmental Portfolio Plans that refers to the savings made as a result of the Agile Programme, as Children's Services has done, to enable the impact of the programme to be evaluated. The Chief Operating Officer clarified that there were no delays with the technology programme; this will be completed at the end of March 2016 with the implementation of SharePoint during 2017. The Chief Operating Officer clarified that the BSD's Agile savings were incorporated within the development of Orbis.

Capital Programme

3.23 The Board requested a further explanation of the shift from 'monitoring' to 'management' of the capital programme. The Chief Operating Officer explained that a stronger approach was needed to the way in which the programme is managed through, for example, the scheduling of budgets and the costing of schemes; this would reduce slippage for example. Currently the programme is only monitored through the reporting of progress to date.

Income and Income Generation

3.24 The Board commented that in addition to the work to generate income, the public is very interested in the cost reduction programmes ESCC has in place (e.g. energy reduction, bill validation etc.) and this should be given greater prominence. The Board recommended that a breakdown of income (and a reference/link to the Council's budget book) is included in the Resources Portfolio Plan and greater emphasis

is given to cost reduction measures to reassure the public that the Council is taking action to reduce costs. The Board would also like the outcome of the Income Generation Programme work to be shared with them at the earliest opportunity, in order to aid the budget setting process.

- The Chief Finance Officer undertook to forward a breakdown of income which is broadly divided into four categories: business rates; Direct Schools Grant (DSG); other grants (capital) and; income from fees, charges etc.
- The Income Generation Programme, which is led by the Chief Executive and supported by the Chief Finance Officer, comprises fifteen officers. It has generated £1.3m in additional income. The major pieces of work include:
 - The Property Strategy;
 - Fees and charges review; and
 - Orbis work to increase commercial activity.

Financial System (SAP/ERP)

3.25 The Board asked if it was possible to make a saving if the implementation of a new or enhanced financial system was delayed. The Board requested the opportunity to see the business case for the replacement/enhanced system before a final decision is made. The Chief Operating Officer said he would come back to the Board with some costs, but the department had set aside around £1m for development or replacement of the SAP/ERM financial system.

Property

3.26 The Board welcomed the implementation of PAMS and requested further information on the costs/benefits of the new system and whether the outcomes of the business case had been achieved. The Acting Chief Property Officer said it was difficult to predict the level of savings as some savings were achieved as benefits to customers and others relied on an analysis of data from the system (which leads to increased efficiencies and enhanced customer satisfaction).

Future Communications Service Delivery Models – RPPR Board 13 November 2015

3.27 Scrutiny Committee Members: Councillors Mike Blanch (Chair), John Barnes, Bob Standley, Trevor Webb and Francis Whetstone.

3.28 Three scenarios were considered:

- Scenario A: Core service only. Under this model the Communications Team would only work on corporate issues and there would be no support for departmental work which would have to be commissioned externally. The Communications Team would be smaller, with a more general focus and with fewer specialisms. This model focusses on corporate needs, but does not allow for any departmental work, beyond giving general advice.
- Scenario B: Digital only or digital first. This is an inevitable direction of change where increasing amounts of communications activity are undertaken using digital media. Scenario B outlines an accelerated process of moving towards this model of service delivery. The unanswered questions under this model are about the pace of change to digital only media, the impact in terms of equalities and access for residents and the continuing level of demand from departments for non-digital communication. The skills of the Communications Team would also need to be enhanced under this model.
- Scenario C: This is a service model based on recharging with initially unchanged resource levels within the central Communications Team. The recharging model

sets out the areas of work that central Communications would recharge for. Officers are not aware of any other councils where communications services are recharged to internal departments. The service models that are in use are where departments spend additional funds for projects/additional needs via a framework agreement either with the internal team or with a number of external companies. The current service model of provision means ESCC departments effectively get communication services at a discount, as they are not paying full market rates for them and hence saving money.

Departmental budgets

3.29 The Board requested a breakdown of the statutory expenditure and for consideration as to how it might be possible to more precisely measure how much is spent by departments on communications. Officers explained that the limitations of SAP meant it was not possible to be precise about the level departmental expenditure on communications. Some expenditure was project based, some was being coded to budget codes other than SAP cost codes for Advertising & Publicity, and some was for statutory advertising (e.g. planning, highways and parking notices). It is estimated that departments will spend around £800k, based on existing hours used. There is a range of costs shown in the report as costings have been made using both annual salary and hourly rates that respectively exclude and include profit margins. All the scenarios rely on having effective demand management measures in place, and deciding where communications work is adding value and where it is not.

3.30 The Board considered that less departmental expenditure on communications might be desirable, as not all communications activity may be essential. It might be possible to find a different way of disseminating information for those people who are not able to access the internet. Officers responded that the issue centres on deciding what ESCC can do without in terms of departmental expenditure on communications.

3.31 The Board questioned whether the current system of required (statutory) advertising was effective because people, in general, no longer read local newspapers. The Government is consulting on this issue and the Board considered that the LGA should be requested to look at this.

Core Service

3.32 The Board highlighted the approach taken by the London Borough of Bromley which has adopted a lean service delivery model with 3 people doing media enquiries (press office function), internal communications and advice on major campaigns. However, their web site function (maintenance and development) is contracted out. Internal departments have their own communications staff: 2 in Adult Social Care; 1.5 in Environment, and 2 undertaking web site work. Bromley's central team do very little in terms of public campaigns and they do not undertake evaluation of the impact of their communications work. Bromley have taken the decision to ration communications work tightly and bear the consequences of that decision.

3.33 Officers responded:

- the core model in scenario A has a different staff profile to the Bromley example, which would be appropriate for ESCC's size and nature.

3.34 The Board asked if a decline in the need for traditional press releases, as electronic media becomes more prominent, will lead to less need for press officers. Press officers spend time on reactive and proactive activities promoting work that ESCC is

doing and dealing with all types of media enquiries. Their work is fundamental to the proper functioning of the Council. ESCC needs 2 press officers.

A Digital First Service

3.35 Scenario B moves the service towards more digital media. This requires more 'content officers' compared to individual specialists, and more web development which is why the scenario has more web developer posts than currently. The number of staff under this scenario is less than the current establishment, but there is a question about the pace of change to digital only media. Under this scenario there is no support for departments' non-digital communications activity. There will still be some reduced departmental support for media campaigns, but not using non-digital media.

3.36 The Board considered that there would always be some individuals for whom digital media would not work for some people from lower social economic groups do not have digital access. Officers responded that on current trends, 90-95% of households will have digital access. It was difficult to estimate how much will be saved as non-digital demand ceases.

3.37 The Board commented that ESCC needs to accelerate digitalisation, as non-digital media is not really working effectively. The Board recommended that the Communications Service take steps to make 'Your County' self-financing (including the cost of producing content, editorial and securing advertisers). Officers respond that 'Your County' reaches those who do not have digital access and is more effective than leaflets that people often disregard. 'Your County' also saves the Council money by effectively promoting services such as fostering.

Recharging and Options for Demand Management

3.38 Scenario C service delivery model is based on the retention of a communications team with a configuration similar to the current model, but one that charges internal departments for the work it does on their behalf. The Board considered the advantages and disadvantages of re-charging, and suggested a number of alternative ways that demand from departments could be managed without the overhead of recharging. These include a system for prioritisation or communications work, a 'gatekeeping system' and an annual resources budget.

3.39 The Board considered that a mechanism for managing demand would be needed alongside scenarios A and B, as well as providing an alternative to recharging.

Gatekeepers

3.40 Under this scenario, each department would have 1 or 2 people (gatekeepers) authorised to commission communications work through the central department. This would provide greater control over expenditure and hence costs are more likely to be evaluated. (This would not apply to the minimum core model, but would apply to digital and other models.) The Board supported this approach as it provides departments with a better means of controlling communications expenditure.

- Officers highlighted the existence of an oversight board, the Communications Management Board (CMB), which is attended at Assistant Director level to manage communications demand. The role of the CMB could be extended to include consideration of what work should be prioritised if demand exceeds the resources of the central Communications Team.
- The Gatekeeper role could work for a number of models where departments are spending externally or commissioning internally.

- There is also need to evaluate the effectiveness of communications work as well as controlling cost/demand.
- If ESCC takes forward the minimum core corporate service scenario, more administration resources will be needed for departments to buy in communications (whether from an in-house team or from external suppliers). Under this scenario what will be important is how the demand for communications is estimated.

Framework Agreement

3.41 The Board considered that a framework agreement should be developed for departments to use to commission communication services from external suppliers. Some Members suggested using a framework agreement to commission (internal) communication services, but did not support the bureaucracy re-charging would entail.

3.42 *Conclusions and recommendations*

- The Board wishes to keep the service under review and re-visit it again in the future. In particular it wishes to gauge more accurately the level of departmental expenditure on communications activity, and especially to gain a better understanding of what constitutes 'statutory' and 'non-statutory' expenditure.
- The Bromley model is 'leaner' than the minimum core model, but still ensures that essential media work is covered. If this model were adopted then departments would then have to carefully evaluate and justify expenditure on any other communications work.
- A significantly more digital orientated service is radical and attractive as it caters better for future need. However, it does not save as much as scenario A. Such a model would still need a framework agreement and/or gatekeeper arrangement to manage departmental expenditure. If scenario A was adopted, there would inevitably be a move towards digital service delivery (scenario B) over time.
- Retaining the press officers is very important and removing them would present significant risk to ESCC.
- ESCC should explore opportunities for incorporating communications within the Surrey County Council/Orbis partnership. There are also devolution proposals that may affect future service provision.
- Evidence suggests that 'Your County' is widely read and therefore merits retaining not least because it reaches those who do not have internet access. It should be entirely self-funding and the possibility of outsourcing production and advertising evaluated.
- Whichever model is chosen there would be a need for a framework agreement and/or gatekeeper arrangement to manage departmental expenditure. External departmental communications expenditure will need to be tracked (using gatekeeping arrangements and the use of framework agreements).
- Both scenario A (Minimum Core Service) and scenario B (Digital First Service) provide viable future service models and there are pros and cons for each. The Board expressed a preference for scenario A. Once adopted, either scenario will need to be reviewed by the Board after 18 months.

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee RPPR Board

3.43 Present: Councillors: Kathryn Field (Chair), Mike Blanch (as Chair of Audit, Best Value and Community Services Scrutiny Committee), Stephen Shing, Charlton, Angharad Davies, Claire Dowling, Michael Ensor, Alan Shuttleworth, Trevor Webb (acting as substitute for Kim Forward) and Ms Ann Holt (Diocesan Representative).

Lead Members: Councillor Nick Bennett, Lead Cabinet Member for Learning and School Effectiveness, Councillor Tidy, Lead Cabinet Member for Children and Families and Councillor David Elkin, Deputy Leader of the Council and Vice Chair of the Cabinet.

Draft Portfolio Plan 2016/17

3.44 Whilst the Children's Services Department await further government policy and budget announcements, the current Draft Portfolio Plan necessarily contains a number of incomplete sections. The Board asked to be kept informed of the 'direction of travel' that the Children's Services Department is taking as new government announcements are made. The Director of Children's informed the Board that there are some parts of the Plan which were necessarily left blank whilst the Department waits for further policy and budget announcements from the Government or from confirmation from Ofsted of the outcome of most recent inspection in East Sussex.

Impact of proposed Adult Social Care Department savings on services which are the responsibility of the Children's Services Department

3.45 The Board is concerned about the impact of savings proposed by the Adult Social Care Department (regarding savings relating to the supporting people programme) on services effecting 16 and 17 year olds who are the responsibility of the Children's Services Department. The Board is especially concerned about young mothers, Care Leavers and Young People at risk of child sexual exploitation. The Board asked that their concerns about the impact of one department's savings on another department are considered by Cabinet.

Longer term impact of savings

3.46 The Board expressed the view that whilst many of the proposed savings might produce short term savings, there was a general concern that in the longer term, such savings would potentially produce not only poorer outcomes for our young people, but also increased costs for East Sussex County Council. For example, the Board specifically asked that their concerns regarding proposed savings to the Short Term Agency Budget within the ISEND service and the additional pressure this will put on families is highlighted to Cabinet.

Health and Children Centres – Reliance on volunteers

3.47 The Review Board welcomed the idea of encouraging volunteers to come forward to help provide services to the local community. However, it was concerned about the resilience of the service if it became overly reliant on volunteers to support it. The Board questioned therefore how the Department would ensure effective services are maintained given the challenges that working with volunteers can present.

Youth Offending Team

3.48 Some members of the Board asked that their concerns about the impact of savings on this service are highlighted to Cabinet. A request was also made for the Department to consider whether it would be beneficial to 're-profile' the saving plan so that the majority of the cuts do not take place in the first year (2016/17) of the three year savings plan.

Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service (SLES)

3.49 Whilst acknowledging the Department's achievements on school performance and pupil outcomes, and the work the Department have undertaken to build school's resilience, the Board expressed concerns about the impact of the proposed savings on children and whether more work could be done to mitigate them. The Board therefore

asked that this concern be put to Cabinet. The Board also requested that the importance of rural schools to their local communities is highlighted to the Cabinet.

Home to School Transport – Review of Unsafe Routes.

3.50 The Department is investigating whether expenditure on providing financial assistance relating to unsafe home to school routes could be reduced. The Department undertook to investigate whether it would be possible to access funding from a one-off Public Health fund relating to road safety.

Economy, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee RPPR Board – 21 December 2015

3.51 Present: Councillors Richard Stogdon, Mike Pursglove, Pat Rodohan, Rosalyn St. Pierre, Barry Taylor and Trevor Webb (substituting for Councillor John Hodges).

Lead Members: Councillors Carl Maynard, Rupert Simmons and Chris Dowling

Consultation results

Pothole Repairs

3.52 The Board raised the issue of poor quality patching repairs and asked if this is something that will improve under the new contract. The Board questioned whether the current policy (intervention when potholes reach 40mm or over in depth) achieves best value in the long term, or whether it is better to intervene earlier. Earlier intervention may also reduce the number of successful insurance claims made against ESCC for pothole related damage.

3.53 While officers maintained that the Department's performance on pothole repairs is good with 95% of potholes (meeting the current intervention criteria) being repaired within 28 days and those on main roads being repaired within 5 days, this perception does not appear to be shared by Members and residents, bringing into question the validity of the current intervention criteria. The same applies in regard to the suggestion that the number of complaints received by the contact centre has reduced and the backlog of repairs is small.

3.54 The Board recommended that the value for money impact of the current pothole repair policy is evaluated in conjunction with the enhanced provisions of the new highways contract. The Board considered that account should be taken of the long term engineering implications of not properly curing damaged road (and pavement) surfaces at an earlier stage, and the cost implications of the current policy arising from successful claims on the County Council. The Board specifically requested costing information relevant to a change of the current policy, and will examine this issue through the future work of the Scrutiny Committee.

3.55 The Director and Assistant Director of Communities, Economy and Transport responded:

- It is important to bear in mind the scale of the problem and the number of complaints ESCC receives compared with the size of the asset ESCC maintains. If the intervention policy is changed, then more resources will be required in the revenue budget to carry out the work. The change in emphasis to planned maintenance via capital investment in the road network, has improved road condition, and has started to address legacy issues from previous under-investment. The department does

make temporary repairs where roads are in a dangerous condition, until permanent repairs can be made.

- The Assistant Director, Operations added that the policies are linked to resources and are financially sustainable. It is possible for the Lead Member to agree a change in the policy, but this will have resource implications. The current revenue budget provision for repairing potholes is approximately £2m a year. The capital budget for patching repairs is between £1.5m to £2m per year, and £15m for resurfacing. Both budgets are used in a prioritised approach to get the best results from pothole repairs, patching, and resurfacing.
- Highway Stewards do have the discretion to order repairs for potholes that are not quite at the intervention level where it makes sense to do so.
- Utility companies can legally make temporary reinstatement of the highway and have up to six months to carry out a permanent reinstatement. The permanent repair is guaranteed for one year and the department closely monitors all repairs through the permit scheme.
- While it was reported that the department's performance on pothole repairs is good with approximately 95% of potholes (that meet the intervention criteria) are repaired within 28 days and those on main roads are repaired within 5 days and the number of complaints received by the contact centre is not high and the backlog of repairs is low, please see also the Board's comments above.
- The quality of repairs is carefully monitored. Each repair is photographed and supervisors inspect a sample of repairs. The new Client Team will also check the quality of repairs. The Assistant Director, Operations agreed to examine examples provided by Cllr Stogdon, where resurfacing work has failed.
- There is evidence that resurfacing roads as part of the planned maintenance programme does reduce the need for pothole repairs. The asset management approach ensures that resurfacing investment is targeted at roads where it will provide the best value for money and minimum whole life cost.
- Lowering the intervention standard would lead to disproportionate increase in costs. The department could try and estimate what the increase might be, but it does not retain records of potholes that do not meet the current intervention standard.
- Since 2010 the Highways revenue budget has been reduced by £5.5m. Consequently there are some legacy issues that have affected road condition. Road condition is now improving through the asset management approach and planned capital investment.
- The new Highways Contract has the provision to repair 30,000 potholes annually with a lump sum payment of £1.5m. This is judged to be sufficient to meet current policy standards. The new contractor will also be incentivised to ensure timely and good quality repairs as it will be liable for claims management. The intent of the new contract is to get the best condition of the road network for the investment available.

Insurance Claims

3.56 The Board highlighted that the cost of successful claims also needs to be taken into account when evaluating the long term implications of pothole repair policy. The County Council repudiates approximately 70%-80% of insurance claims where ESCC can demonstrate that inspections and repairs have been carried out within the timescales in ESCC's highways maintenance policy (statutory defence under section 58 of the Highways Act). The two main reasons for the 20% of claims that are successful are where ESCC cannot provide evidence that repairs have been carried out within the timescales and where data has not been kept to record when repairs have been carried

out (this will be addressed in the new contract through the use of hand held devices to record repairs in the field).

Volunteers

3.57 The Board asked if there were more opportunities to use volunteers to undertake highway maintenance work and whether making owners' responsibilities clearer would help increase self-help and volunteering. The Director of CET outlined the current use of volunteers and the community match schemes that are in operation. Some Parish Councils are very proactive and the 'Social Value' element of the new contract may provide further opportunities for community involvement. Both the Director of CET and the Assistant Director, Operations highlighted the need to comply with health and safety requirements when volunteers work on or next to the highway as there are very clear legal responsibilities associated with working in the public highway. There are further possibilities, but it is important to select appropriate tasks for volunteers bearing in mind the health and safety issues.

Land Disposal

3.58 The Board asked if there were any opportunities to generate income or capital receipts from land disposal. The Director of CET replied that the department does not own much land, (which tends to be small 'slithers' acquired for road improvement schemes) so there is not much opportunity for further income generation. The Rights of Way and Countryside Sites Commissioning Strategy may offer some opportunities for different types of land management, or disposal to other organisations which may be better placed to manage countryside sites. The Lead Member for Resources commented that the CET property portfolio was small and most land has been disposed of previously when it was declared surplus. Work under the SPACES Programme and Property Strategy will seek to maximise the income from ESCC land and property

Bexhill - Hastings Link Road (BHLR) and Infrastructure Improvements

3.59 The Board referred to the comment that ESCC should avoid 'vanity projects' like the BHLR. The Lead Member for Economy commented that the Link Road (Combe Valley Way) was now open and will lead to £1billion in value added benefits to the local economy. For example Glovers House has been built which has provided much needed expansion space for an East Sussex business which might otherwise have moved out of the county. The Queensway Gateway Road and the North Bexhill Access Road will unlock land for housing and employment. The Lead Member for Transport and Environment added that some of the environmental benefits, such as the greenways, will be delivered next year and reminded the Board of the development of the Combe Valley Countryside Park.

Council Tax Increase

3.60 The Board observed that there were comments throughout the public consultation in support of an increase in Council Tax. The Director of CET informed the Board that the impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review announcement was still being assessed and the cap on Council Tax increase was still in place. A 2% increase in Council Tax would produce approximately £4.5m in additional income.

Draft Portfolio Plans

Supported Bus Network

3.61 The Board asked if the reformulated supported bus network took into account the work to increase tourism and the new housing schemes. The Director confirmed that the

commissioning priorities took these issues into account when the network was reformulated, and housing developers are required to take into account the need for bus access. The Libraries' Strategy will also take into account bus transport access issues for libraries.

Newhaven Port Access Road

3.62 The Director of CET explained the details of the scheme and the additional Department for Transport funding that has been secured to deliver the road to unlock land for business development. The Lead Member for Economy added that Newhaven had been granted Enterprise Zone status and that £10m had been secured from the Local Economic Partnership and the Department of Environment for the harbour flood defence scheme.

Cultural Tourism

3.63 This work is in the Economic Development portfolio which aims to broaden and increase the impact of visitor expenditure in the local economy.

Broadband Project

3.64 The Board asked if the £15m investment by ESCC in the Broadband project had delivered the benefits ESCC had hoped for, as it seems that broadband speeds in urban areas are good, but in rural areas this is not the case.

3.65 A report will be brought to the ETE Scrutiny Committee in March 2016 where there will be an opportunity to discuss this in more detail and consider broadband uptake data.

- The Director of CET disagreed that this was the case as there are examples of rural areas where broadband speeds have been greatly improved. To date 630km of fibre optic cable has been provided and 60,000 premises have fibre enablement. However, there are some areas where it is not viable to provide fibre access on value for money grounds, but these are not exclusively rural areas. The Government is now offering a satellite voucher scheme, which is a subsidy of around £300 against the cost of installation, to guarantee minimum broadband access speeds of 2 mbps. This has some latency issues for 'streaming' applications.
- The Government's national targets for this scheme are to give 90% of the population access to 24mbps broadband, and the remaining 10% 2mbps broadband access. In East Sussex 96% of the population have access to 24mbps broadband speeds which will increase to 98% by the end of the second contract, leaving 2% who will have 2mbps access via the satellite scheme.
- It should also be borne in mind that:
 - Users can pay for superfast broadband services themselves.
 - BDUK have imposed a cap on the public subsidy per dwelling for fast/superfast broadband access.
 - The first contract will be completed in March 2016 and £6m has been secured for the second contract to in-fill provision in hard to reach areas (subject to value for money criteria).
 - Users can use the "Go East Sussex" web site to investigate broadband speeds and provision.
 - Users can specify the Internet Service Provider (ISP) and speed they require once fibre enabled.

Increasing Inward Investment

3.66 The Board asked why the target specified only ten businesses.

- The Assistant Director, Economy explained that there was a time lag between creating new employment space and uptake by new businesses. It was hoped to increase this target through the work of Locate East Sussex and the possibility of doubling the investment available through a bid to the European Regional Development Fund in conjunction with the District and Borough Councils.

Employability and Skills Strategy

3.67 The Lead Member for Economy highlighted the major investment in employability and skills that is taking place. Some businesses struggle to recruit the right staff locally and a Skills and Employability Board has been established to work with local colleges and universities to address this need, raise aspirations and influence the curriculum on offer.

Road Safety

3.68 Public Health have made £1m available for a project to look at how ESCC and its partners can reduce KSI's. The joint ETE/ABVCS Scrutiny Board is due to meet early next year to examine the proposals for this project.

Libraries' Transformation Programme

3.69 The Lead Member for Community Services outlined the proposal for the Libraries' Transformation Programme. This is a significant piece of work that aims not only to make a saving of £2m from a £6m budget, but also to create a sustainable, modern Library Service for the future. This is a good opportunity to make positive changes to future library provision.

Registration Service

3.70 The Board questioned whether there were increased opportunities in north Wealden for income generation as a result of Kent County Council's plans to reduce the number of registration offices. The Director of CET and the Lead Member for Community Services said they were aware of the situation, but constraints on how the income from Registration Services can be used, may make the business case for expanding ESCC services difficult to justify.

Proposed Savings Plans for 2016/17 – 2018/19

3.71 The main factors contributing to the department's savings plan total are Parking, the Waste Reserve, and Libraries which total around £4.3m. Other smaller contributions come from Waste Operations, the Transport Hub, and the Rights of Way and Countryside Site Commissioning Strategy.

3.72 In response to the Board's request for further information, the following responses were provided:

- Trading Standards – The Board asked if service levels could be maintained with the proposed level of savings. The Director confirmed that service levels can be maintained with the savings coming from increased income generation and small changes to staffing.
- Planning and Development Control - The Director of CET explained that this section currently recovers 95% of its costs through fees and charges. The savings proposal is to increase income so that 100% of costs are recovered. Some additional income will be generated by providing specialist advice to District and Borough Councils in areas such as ecology, archaeology, landscape etc.

- Waste Reserve - The Board asked if the saving proposal represented the maximum amount that the waste reserve could be reduced by. The Director of CET confirmed that the department had reviewed the reserve provision very carefully, and what is proposed is the right amount for the risks that remain.

Conclusion

3.73 The majority of the Board endorsed the Communities, Environment and Transport (CET) Savings Plan for 2016/17 to 2018/19. Cllr Webb stated that the Labour Group were happy with the savings proposals in the Savings Plan as they stand, but could not support additional expenditure on highways pothole repairs in 2016/17 should there be a change in the intervention policy.

4. Partners

4.1 The Leader and Deputy Leader met with representatives of the public, voluntary and community sector, UNISON and the Older People's Forums on 19 November 2015. The meeting provided an opportunity for the County Council to share the agreed proposals and for partners to share their views on the ESCC budget and service provision for the next three years (2016/17 to 2018/19).

4.2 The discussion in the meeting focused on the following points:

- The distribution of savings across services was discussed and the scale of the savings required from Adult Social Care was questioned. Over the last five years, the Council had made differential savings across service areas, providing relative protection to Adult Social Care and Children's Services. The scale of savings likely to be needed over the next five years and the savings already made in smaller service areas, meant that savings in all services needed to be considered. The bulk of the Council's budget was spent on Adult Social Care and Children's Services, so savings in these areas are unavoidable.
- It was explained that the profile of savings for Adult Social Care over the next three years (of £10m, £10m and £20m respectively) is designed to allow East Sussex Better Together (the programme to deliver a sustainable health and social care system through integration) to begin delivering results before the largest savings are required.
- The issue of eligibility criteria for Adult Social Care and support services was discussed, specifically, whether the savings would require a change in criteria. The Government has set out in legislation "national eligibility" criteria to ensure that care and support services are consistent across the country. Most of the budget for Adult Social Care was spent on meeting the needs of those who met the eligibility criteria. The number of people needing help was likely to increase significantly over the next five years, and the needs of those helped were becoming more complex. For this reason, savings were not being proposed in the Community Care budget. It was acknowledged that early intervention and prevention were important and could lead to reductions in the need for more expensive care later. The approach which had been taken to the savings proposals was to sustain investment in activity that will most help manage demand in the short term.
- The challenges of consulting a wide range of service users on a set of complex proposals within the necessary timescales were acknowledged and confirmation was provided of the many and varied ways being used to engage individuals and groups that would be potentially affected by the proposals. The difficulty of providing partners with information about specific impacts in advance of the completion of the

consultation was discussed. Impact assessments will however be made available to Members so these can be taken into account before final decisions are made on the budget in February 2016.

- Delegates discussed the need for strong partnership working to continue over the next five years and for partners to be aware of the cumulative impact of savings on services and communities across the county.
- The issue of senior ESCC staff salaries was raised by a Trade Union representative as was the dangers of losing unique expertise which existed in the authority as part of any reductions in staff numbers. The discussion included the need for strong and stable leadership to help the authority make the difficult changes which would be needed over the next five years, for which competitive salaries would need to be paid.

5. Young People

5.1 Engagement with young people took place as part of the Children's Takeover Day on 20 November 2015. A summary of the young people's comments on savings proposals is set out below.

Adult Social Care

5.2 Proposals: Reduction in Supporting People and Drug and Alcohol Prevention Services

Cuts to supported housing will mean:

- increases in young homeless people;
- increasing drug and alcohol use on streets and increased demand on drug and alcohol services;
- increased crime;
- increase in suicide rates;
- increased risk of death for young people; and
- increased risk of child sexual exploitation and organised prostitution.

Cuts to young mothers services will mean:

- young mothers unable to cope;
- increase in postnatal depression; and
- increase in children in care.

Cuts to refuge services will mean:

- more people are hurt.

Cuts to drug and alcohol prevention services will mean:

- increase in young people using drugs and alcohol.

5.3 Proposal: Reduction in Commissioning Grants Prospectus

Impact:

- more strain on NHS and emergency services;
- increased pressure on charities; and
- people will end up in crisis sooner.

Mitigations:

- raise Council Tax; and

- cut less urgent services, transfer money to help vulnerable people.

Communities Economy and Transport

5.4 Proposal: Reduction in library services

Impact:

- revising libraries' opening hours to 10am – 4pm would mean young people are not able to access during the week;
- for young people who don't have access to quiet study space at home this will affect academic success;
- not all school libraries are able to open after hours; and
- transport is an issue for young people in rural areas.

Mitigations:

- revised opening hours should be 11.30am - 5.30pm with some late openings;
- less books more computers;
- quiet space for young people to study with access to computers; and
- focus on central libraries and close smaller libraries in towns where there are multiple libraries.

Children's Services

5.5 Proposal: Reduction in universal early help services and Inclusion, Special Educations Needs and Disability (short breaks budget)

Impact:

- young people without a strong family network will be left hanging around on streets and be unsafe; and
- disabled young people's wellbeing will be affected by reduction to short breaks budget.

Mitigations:

- encourage volunteering; and
- small pots of funding to support local people to set up groups to plug gaps.

5.6 Proposal: Looked After Children (LAC) - reduction in support for families and focus on use of in house placements

Impact:

- LAC happy won't take children out of settled agency placements;
- reduction in Placement Support Service will mean Foster carers have less of a break, and individual needs aren't met;
- this will result in more placement breakdowns;
- cuts to Children in Care Council will negatively affect all LAC; and
- worried that cuts to services for care leavers will mean they can't develop skills for independence and will end up in difficult situations.

Recommendation:

- Retain funding for LAC support services.

Additional feedback regarding Young Carers Groups

5.7 Young Carers' groups provide valued support for young carers to socialise with others in a similar situation.

Impact:

- reduction in young carers groups will affect emotional wellbeing.

Recommendation:

- young people need to be given explanations when services end.

6. Adult Social Care

6.1 Wide ranging consultation has been carried out on the Adult Social Care savings proposals. People could take part by: completing the online survey; printing and posting a survey back to us; coming to one of the consultation drop-in events and completing a survey or comment form; attending another event or group session where the consultation was discussed (these might have been arranged by the Council, a provider or a voluntary organisation); emailing or writing us with their comments and speaking to us at the events or over the phone.

6.2 The consultation was promoted widely to our stakeholders, including statutory partners, providers, voluntary organisations and clients and carers. Most of the services covered by the three main areas where savings were proposed are ones that we fund other organisations to provide. We have worked with the providers of services to ensure that clients were informed about the consultation. The consultation was also covered by the local press and television news. It was also discussed and shared on social media. About a thousand responses were received and over 400 people attended one of the drop-in events. 365 individual also commented on the proposals. A report on the outcomes of the consultation exercises is available on-line, in the members' room and for inspection by the public on request at County Hall reception.

7. Business Representatives

7.1 The engagement meeting with business representatives took place on 13 January 2016.

7.2 Detail of the discussion is as follows:

- In response to questions regarding the funding of future capital projects, it was explained that as the ESCC resource reduces, there would be a continuing need to work with partners in order to bid for funding from LEPs etc and lever in additional private funding.
- In relation to the Three Southern Counties devolution bid, it was explained that Leader representatives were meeting the Minister on 14 January 2016. If the bid was successful, there would be a greater opportunity for Local Government in the area to take a holistic approach to key projects, such as infrastructure. Increased certainty over funding in the medium/long-term and the better co-ordination of projects over a larger geographical area would provide greater opportunities to draw in other funding for projects. It was noted that businesses are important to the devolution process and consultation would start once a positive commitment had been received from Government.
- Following questions regarding the impact of the proposed savings, it was explained that they would result in service reductions that would affect local service users. Other

organisations could be affected where reductions in preventative services are implemented. Officers stated that modelling of the impact of the savings proposals had been undertaken and would be available to Councillors when considering budget proposals.

- In response to questions regarding the Government announcement that Councils could raise an additional 2% Council Tax for Adult Social Care, officers commented that this was a switch of funding from the Government to local taxpayers and the Revenue Support Grant had been reduced to reflect the option available to raise additional income via Council Tax.
- Representatives asked about the staffing structure and pay awards for ESCC staff. In response, officers explained that there had been a 27% reduction in senior officer posts over the last five years following the consolidation of a number of services into corporate rather than departmental teams. It was noted that there had been a pay freeze in Local Government for a three year period but salaries had not been reduced. East Sussex was one of a few counties that would be impacted by the National Living Wage and any reduction in salaries could create risks in relation to equal pay. Further efficiencies were being sought through increased shared service provision with other councils. It was difficult to track headcounts in the organisation on a like for like basis due to a number of factors such as outsourcing of services, the transfer of Public Health to the Council etc. Headcounts in each department are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis and chief officers, individually and collectively, regularly consider and review structures. The Council Plan and Portfolio Plans would provide further detail on how and where resource was to be used.
- Following questions in relation to the importance of rural transport infrastructure, it was explained that there had been a review of subsidised bus routes that had been implemented in 2015. As a result of the review, a number of routes had become commercial routes and the revised service provided peak time access to education and employment; 91% of users were unaffected by the changes and 95% of users continue to have access to a 6 day a week service. Devolution would provide an opportunity to plan with commercial bus operators on a greater scale and consider expansion of the commercial network. It was noted that initiatives such as the Wheels to Work project and rural broadband project were having a positive impact.
- In relation to the proposals regarding the future allocation of business rates, it was noted that approximately 30% of business rates collected nationally were from London. The ability to keep a greater proportion of rates locally would potentially create inequalities and some redistribution was likely to be required. Local Government would continue to lobby and work with Government in relation to the proposal. It was noted that East Sussex currently imports approximately £53m of business rates and any reduction would create a further financial pressure.
- Following comments regarding proposed reductions in funding in relation to school improvement, it was noted that there was a national debate regarding the role of local councils in relation to school improvement. In East Sussex, school improvement remains an important issue but alternative ways of delivering this, such as peer to peer support were being introduced. It was noted that through Skills East Sussex, local businesses now had a role in shaping the curriculum offer at FE colleges and universities in the county in order to address any skill gaps at apprenticeship/degree level to increase the employability of young people.
- In response to questions regarding the Council seeking income generation opportunities, officers explained that, in reviewing proposals, full consideration was given to the impact on the local economy, including local businesses.

- In relation to procurement, it was noted that the Council has targets for local spend on contracts and had introduced a number of measures to encourage local businesses to engage in council procurement opportunities.
- In response to questions, it was explained that consideration had been given to increasing Council Tax by more than 1.99% but the cost of a referendum was significant and it was unlikely that such an increase would be supported.

8. Trade Unions

8.1 A meeting was held with Trade Union representatives on 21 January 2016. The Leader thanked the representatives for attending, and through them the County Council's staff.

8.2 The Chief Executive set out that the County Council remained a large employer, with an estimated annual spend of £350m. Since the original budget proposals were announced in October there has been extensive work in response to the provisional budget settlement from central Government, leading to proposals mitigating the savings required in Adult Social Care by £1.9m.

8.3 The Trade Union representatives raised a number of issues which were addressed as set out below.

Income generation

8.4 The Lead Member for Resources set out that the County Council was committed to exploring ideas for generating income with a cross-party Income Generation Board. Some proposals have developed from staff suggestions, but each proposal has to be supported by a sound business case for viability and payback period. There is a proposal coming forward for some County Council buildings to have solar panels, which has been developed from the proposal that closed landfill sites be used for energy generation, which proved unviable.

Pothole repairs

8.5 The Lead Member for Transport and Environment set out that potholes repairs had been funded from a variety of sources, including central Government grants, in response to four consecutive wet winters, and long-term investment through the capital programme, as an invest to save measure. There were tangible benefits to the programme of repairs in line with the current intervention criteria, as reported to the Economy, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

Bexhill Hastings Link Road

8.6 The Director of Communities, Economy and Transport set out that the overspend on Coombe Valley Way has been attributable in part to adverse weather conditions during the construction period (including the wettest winter recorded since 1776), and the extensive archaeology uncovered which is of international importance. The Way should be seen as a path to prosperity in its effects in job creation and unlocking land to meet housing need, and in generating £1bn in gross value added of benefits in a deprived area of the county.

Consultants

8.7 The Chief Operating Officer set out that there was a council-wide methodology for the management, monitoring and delivery of programmes and projects. The Council has a new supplier for interim and agency staff and activity is reported annually to Scrutiny Committee in order to give transparency to activity and reasons for using interim or agency staff. Procurement Standing Orders are in place that set the procurement requirements and standards that have to be applied. It is important to recognise that some use of specialist external staff, particularly during large-scale change programmes, is unavoidable, but the Council is committed to the development and training of staff to enable them to achieve their full potential. The Lead Member for Resources highlighted the Ingenium initiative which show cased up and coming talent in the workforce. Out of this a number of ideas from staff are being developed and as an example a project developed by staff to create CVs to inform managers of the skills available within their teams.

Music Service

8.8 The Director of Children's Services, in response to a query regarding the financing of the Music Service, set out that County Council was not in a position to direct how schools use their pupil premium, but was in a position to advise them of the Music Service's offer and that the premium could be used to purchase those services. The direction of travel for the Music Service is for it to be self-funding from government grants and fee income.

Support for young people and home to school transport

8.9 The Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness set out the background to the decision taken in November to review the Council's discretionary spending on home to school transport. The importance of access to the Further Education offers at the County's providers, and the risk of young people becoming NEET, was acknowledged. A wide-scale review of Further Education provision (including West Sussex and Brighton & Hove) was highlighted.

8.10 The Director for Children's Services explained that 25% of the savings achieved in the course of the review of discretionary spend had been recycled into bursaries available to those colleges with the highest proportion of low income families. In respect of the support for young people, the Director set out that by reducing the universal offer provisions the Department was able to restrict reductions in some services targeted at the most vulnerable to below 15%.

ISEND

8.11 The Director of Children's Services set out that the Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability service had been the subject of great changes. He stressed that the service was always looking for ways to improve, and that if staff had concerns regarding any administrative burden incurred through the traded services system it would be explored. He further set out that the conversion rate of Statements of SEN to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHP) would be increased, and that the greater savings were scheduled for later years in the MTFP.

8.12 In response to a query about traded services, the Director of Children's Services set out that schools had access to a core offer and a number of supplementary services which they could purchase, aimed at reducing the risk of children being placed outside local authority provision. With regard to ECHPs the expectation is for more children to be accommodated within local schools which will result in less money being spent on independent special schools.

IT Provision

8.13 The Chief Operating Officer, in response to a query regarding the state of the Council's IT infrastructure, set out that the key consideration was the return on the Council's investment. The performance of the Helpdesk Team, access to which was highlighted as a particular concern, is monitored. In response to a common Helpdesk request, investment in an automatic password resetting programme was being evaluated. The Leader and Deputy Leader both highlighted that they had been operating paperlessly for two years.

Supply teachers

8.14 The Director of Children's Services explained that the County Council was not in a position to maintain a bank of supply teachers, and that how schools spent their budgets, whether they chose to engage agencies to provide supply staff or make their own arrangements, was up to them. Schools were encouraged by the Council to make full use of the established Education Improvement Partnerships.

National Living Wage

8.15 The Interim Assistant Director – Personnel and Training set out that a benchmarking exercise had been undertaken with regard to implementation of the NLW and our neighbours, which had revealed that East Sussex was broadly comparable. It was confirmed that there was no intention to implement the Foundation Living Wage.

Lobbying

8.16 The Leader highlighted the work he and the other Members of the Council did in lobbying, both directly in the form of his letter to the Prime Minister and meetings with Government representatives, and indirectly through the LGA and CCN. It was recognised that these efforts may not necessarily bear immediate fruit, but it was hoped that there might be an impact in future settlements.

Job loses

8.17 It was confirmed that the County Council was aware of the impact of savings on staff and remained committed to minimising compulsory redundancies and would continue to apply the full range of agreed employment policies including seeking redeployment opportunities wherever possible, which had proved successful last year. Although difficult to confirm until implementation was undertaken, the likely order of reduction in FTE staff was expected to be 100-150.

The future budget of East Sussex County Council

Residents of East Sussex were asked about their level of concern over the funding cuts faced by East Sussex County Council (ESCC) and about their ideas and comments on how these cuts could be handled.

The consultation ran from 23/09/2015 to 24/11/2015 and received 215 responses from residents.

Objectives

Our objectives for this activity were to:

- Promote understanding of the financial pressures ESCC faces in the future
- Understand the concerns of residents over future savings proposals
- Generate ideas and suggestions on how ESCC could handle future savings.
- Open up dialogue with residents that can be continued throughout any future savings proposals

Promotion of the budget consultation

The consultation was promoted to the residents of East Sussex through:

- The survey was featured repeatedly throughout the ESCC website, with its own webpage, link from the homepage and on the have your say hub.
- Through the corporate social media channels (repeated posts on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn)
- A YouTube video was created outlining the budget savings that need to be made by ESCC
- A press release was issued receiving coverage in:
 - Local newspapers*
 - Sussex Express
 - Eastbourne Herald
 - Hastings Observer
 - Eastbourne Gazette
 - Argus
 - Radio*
 - BBC Sussex
 - Television*
 - BBC South East Today

Document summary

Between 23/09/2015 and 25/11/2015 the Communications Team at East Sussex County Council (ESCC) carried out an engagement exercise with East Sussex residents to

explore whether residents were concerned about the future budget cuts. The majority of respondents were concerned about how the cuts could affect them (87%).

Suggestions on how ESCC should handle the cuts included focusing on key services such as protecting the vulnerable, maintaining roads, and promoting business in the area.

Suggestions on how savings could be made included cutting in-house expenses and/or becoming more efficient and challenging the Government over the cuts to funding. There were also calls for greater cooperation with other councils and to encourage volunteering in the community. Increasing council tax was also a suggestion repeatedly raised. The importance of involving residents in any decisions was also highlighted

Consultation responses

Concerns over the cuts:

The majority of the residents who responded to the consultation (87%) stated that they were concerned about how reduced spending could affect them (Figure 1; Table 1). A number of people also expressed their concerns in the comments question about how any changes could affect others in their community (Appendix 1).

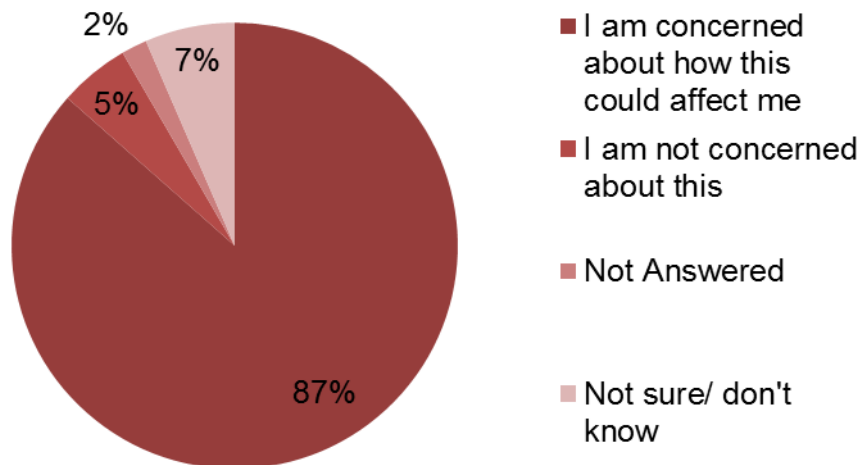


Figure 1 – Residents reaction to the question “We expect that there'll be £70 million less to spend each year on services in East Sussex in future. What's your reaction?”

Table 1 - Consultation responses on residents' concerns over the funding cuts

We expect that there'll be £70 million less to spend each year on services in East Sussex in future. What's your reaction?		
	Count	%
I am concerned about how this could affect me	186	87%
I am not concerned about this	11	5%
Not answered	4	2%
Not sure/ don't know	14	7%
Total	215	100%

Suggestions and ideas on how to handle the funding cuts faced:

Of the 215 responses received, 146 answered the question “Do you have ideas or comments now about how this pressure on services in East Sussex should be handled?” Each response was read and coded by the themes that were raised.

Common concerns were over protecting key services, including services for vulnerable people, road maintenance and support for businesses in the area (See Table 2).

Suggestions on how savings could be made included cutting in-house expenses and/or becoming more efficient and challenging the Government over the cuts to funding (Table 2).

Suggestions for savings also included working more closely with other councils and encouraging volunteering to ensure that services can continue (Table 2).

Increasing council tax was also a suggestion repeatedly raised (21 times; Table 2). The importance of involving residents in any decisions was also highlighted (Table 2).

Table 2 – Themes raised in response to the question “Do you have ideas or comments now about how this pressure on services in East Sussex should be handled?” Responses are available in the members room.

Do you have ideas or comments now about how this pressure on services in East Sussex should be handled?		
Code no	Code name	No
1	Protect key services	62
2	Cut in-house expenses/ promote efficiencies	37
3	Challenge Government over cuts	21
4	Increase council tax	19
5	Work with other councils	19
6	Involve residents in the decisions	18
7	Encourage volunteering	17
8	Reduce management	13
9	Charge for some services	12
10	Sell assets	9