

Report to: **Children's Services Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **21 March 2016**

By: **Chief Executive**

Title: **Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources for 2016/17 and beyond**

Purpose: **To review scrutiny's input into the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process during 2015/16.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Review its input into the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources process and;**
 - 2) Identify any lessons for improvement for the process in future.**
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1 Background

1.1 Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (i.e. aligning the Council's budget setting process with service delivery plans) has established an effective and transparent business planning process.

1.2 Scrutiny committees actively engage in the process, firstly to allow them to bring the experience they have gained through their work to bear and, secondly, to help inform their future work programmes.

2 Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) and scrutiny in East Sussex

2.1 In September 2015 each scrutiny committee considered extracts from the *State of the County* report and the departmental savings and Portfolio Plans. Requests for further information or reports were made to help the scrutiny committee evaluate proposals made in the respective Portfolio Plans.

2.2 The scrutiny committees established scrutiny boards to provide a more detailed input into the RPPR process. These met in December 2015 to consider the draft portfolio plans and the impact of proposed savings. The boards:

- considered any amendments to the Portfolio Plans and how they were being delivered against the proposed key areas of budget spend for the coming year;
- assessed the potential impact of these savings on services provided to East Sussex County Council customers.

2.3 Appendix 1 summarises the comments and recommendations made by the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee RPPR board to Cabinet.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The committee is recommended to review its input into the RPPR process and in particular to establish whether there are lessons for improvement for the future.

BECKY SHAW
Chief Executive

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Comments and recommendations made by the Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee RPPR board.

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee RPPR Board

Overview and Scrutiny: Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) Boards – 2015/16

This is a summary of the outcomes, observations and findings of the scrutiny RPPR Board held in December 2015.

All the scrutiny boards considered draft Portfolio Plans and savings plans and attempted to assess 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.

Scrutiny boards commented on the plans being put in place and the means being proposed to protect front line services as far as practicable.

Children's Services

RPPR Board on 14 December 2015

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

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

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

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

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

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)

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.

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.