

REPORT OF THE CABINET

The Cabinet met on 13 November 2018. Attendance:-

Councillor Glazier (Chair)

Councillors Bennett, Bentley, Elkin, Maynard, Simmons, Standley and Tidy

1. Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources

1.1 The Cabinet agreed in July that the next steps of the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process was to ground our planning in a “Core Offer”. The Core Offer is an articulation of what officers consider the minimum outcomes a competent and efficient Council could expect to be able to provide by 2020/21 having regard to East Sussex County Council’s agreed priorities with the resources it anticipates having available to it over the next three years. The backdrop is the saving of £129m made over the last eight years, and the work we have done to ensure we are efficient and maximise the availability of resources to front line services. The Core Offer is ambitious but realistic: seeking to maintain our track record of delivering excellent services, innovation and providing good value for money. The Core Offer is an articulation of what we believe local people most need from the Council. This is based on the Council’s agreed priorities, local knowledge, evidence of need and demand and Members’ ambitions for East Sussex. It will act as a focus for our planning on how best to deploy the £390m/pa funding we will have by 2021/22. Agreement is not being sought now to reduce services to the Core Offer. Decisions relating to changes in policy, service delivery and reductions in services leading to only the Core Offer being provided, will be taken in the usual way through the RPPR process and in accordance with the Council’s constitution.

1.2 The Core Offer considered by the Cabinet is set out in Appendix 1 and is based on the four priority outcomes that Members have agreed: driving sustainable economic growth; keeping vulnerable people safe; helping people to help themselves; and making best use of resources. This means that we will continue to support economic development because the County’s economy lags behind the rest of the South East and providing access to high quality employment is the single most important thing that can be done to reduce avoidable reliance on public services. It also means that some element of preventative services are included in the Core Offer where they prevent immediate need for more costly interventions. Enabling people to help themselves to live independently gives better health, wellbeing and quality of life for individuals and families and reduces the need for more costly intervention in the very short term.

1.3 The Core Offer will need to evolve over time as the needs of local people change and new ways of meeting needs become available.

1.4 The Core Offer is not the ideal that we would wish to be able to provide but seeks to capture what is most appropriate and possible in a time of austerity. We have already removed a number of early intervention and preventative services, which we know help to maintain the resilience of communities and individuals and whose removal may lead to increased costs in the long term. The proposals which form the Core Offer make further reductions in these services. However, building local people’s long-term health and wellbeing is better than stepping in when families and individuals are in crisis so the Council would want to reinvest in these areas if our financial situation were to improve.

1.5 We will also continue to innovate and be creative about how we work to make the best use of the available resources. Extensive work and change will be required by the County Council and with partners to deliver the Core Offer as effectively as possible. We will work across the Council to make sure that we are maximising the use of all funding and resources to achieve the best outcomes we can for local people, including the best use of public health resources. We will also

CABINET

continue to compare our costs and practices with others to make sure we are making the best of every penny we spend.

1.6 The partnership work we undertake with all or local partners, particularly with health and the voluntary and community sector, will continue to be vital and also evolving in nature.

1.7 Getting the Core Offer right and clear, so that we can use it in discussion with residents, businesses, the Government, our partners and stakeholders is crucial. This means being clear about what is most needed from the Council for children and young people in the county, for adults with disabilities or who are vulnerable, for older people and what our universal offer is to all residents. This will ensure that we are looking across the Council at our offer to residents and businesses rather than through any departmental silos.

1.8 The Core Offer will help us in our lobbying with Government to set out the realistic level of funding we need to continue to serve local people adequately. We have listed both the areas that we consider should be included in the current Core Offer and the proposed current areas that would be excluded. The Core Offer proposed by Chief Officers and considered by the Cabinet is set out in Appendix 1. In drawing it up and considering the resources required to deliver it, Chief Officers have aimed to be realistic but ambitious about the level of service that can be maintained with minimum resources. It will however rely on a huge effort by our already reduced workforce, continued creativity and innovation working with our partners and may risk our ability to meet statutory guidance and deadlines.

Medium Term Financial Plan

1.9 The latest update of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is set out in Appendix 2. Whilst we have had the Chancellor of the Exchequer's budget announcements which have implications for local government, the direct effect on our position will not be certain until we receive the provisional local government settlement which is expected on 6 December. The Budget included welcome announcements of some additional funding for Children's and Adults' Social Care of £410m nationally in 2019/20. In addition £240m has been announced to help relieve winter pressures on the health system, continuing the winter pressures allocation of £240m already announced for 2018/19. We do not know, however, what the County Council's share of the £410m will be; whether the Government will split the funding between Children's and Adults or whether it will be for Councils to decide how to spend their shares and what, if any, conditions will be placed on the funding. £420m was also announced to fix potholes and carry out other highways repairs in 2018/19. Again we do not know how much of this East Sussex will receive or what restrictions will be placed on the use of funding. The additional funding, whilst helpful, is one off. It will not, therefore, change our savings requirement, unless the Government gives a commitment to replicate the funding for remainder of the MTFP period. Neither is it sufficient to close the budget gap. The Chancellor, although saying austerity is coming to an end, also said that plans may need to be reviewed if there were to be a no-deal Brexit and that the next period would be one of "continued financial discipline". Funding for local government is therefore unlikely to improve and may get worse. Further savings are therefore inevitable unless new Government funding becomes available.

1.10 There are a number of other areas of uncertainty. For example we still await the outcome of the bid by East Sussex Councils to be a business rate retention pilot. In the longer term the Government is still working through proposals for future funding of local government once it has removed all Revenue Support Grant. All these factors will have an effect on our MTFP. In addition, work continues on a number of proposals that finance and support the changing costs of service delivery. The paragraphs below set out how these scenarios may affect the current MTFP.

1.11 The projection of Government funding is based on what has been confirmed in the latest Local Government Financial Settlement. The Council's funding will reduce by a further net £15.1m

CABINET

over 2019/20 - 2021/22. In the same period there are unavoidable costs to cover projected inflation, demographic and service pressures of £64.8m. This equates to a real term loss of purchasing power over this three year period of £79.9m. Forecast increases in Council Tax receipts brings £34.2m additional funding but this still leaves a shortfall in spending power of £45.7m, which represents the current forecast savings requirements.

1.12 The updated MTFP sets out a worst case scenario deficit budget position by 2021/22 of £45.7m.

MTFP (cumulative)	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Total Resources	(374,254)	(381,027)	(390,411)
Total Expenditure	390,979	417,362	436,112
Total Budget Deficit	16,725	36,335	45,701

1.13 The annual budget deficits are set out in the table below:

MTFP (annual)	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Annual Budget Deficit	16,725	19,610	9,366
Savings from move to Core Offer	(5,844)	(4,495)	(1,972)
Remaining Annual Budget Deficit - subject to further areas of search	10,881	15,115	7,394
Cumulative Budget Deficit	10,881	25,996	33,390

1.14 The development of the Core Offer has identified savings of £12.3m (Appendix 3), leaving a total deficit of £33.4m to be identified. The work continues on the following areas of search, with the “indicative range” showing the potential opportunities to contribute towards the total deficit:

1.15 *National funding (indicative range: £0-6m for permanent relief; £5-7m for one-off funding)*
There are potential positive impacts of a number of national funding streams:

- recent Budget announcements (see para 1.9 above);
- further announcements from the provisional and final Local Government Settlement;
- the Fair Funding Review: a revised formula for Local Government funding allocation is awaited. The timeline for implementation is 2020/21;
- Business Rates Retention 75% Pilot 2019/20 (one year only): ESCC together with Eastbourne BC, Hastings BC, Lewes DC, Rother DC and Wealden DC, have submitted a bid to be a pilot area for 2019/20. The potential gain for the authority has been estimated at £1.6m. The successful bids will be announced as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement;
- Business Rates Retention (BRR): the longer term model for BRR has yet to be announced and will be informed by the learning from the 75% BRR Pilot for 2019/20;
- Comprehensive Spending Review 2019: Central Government is set to review funding allocations to all departments, which will impact from 2020/21 but no information is available at this stage; and
- Older People Social Care Green Paper: now delayed until the autumn but unlikely to provide additional funding until after the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and General Election.

1.16 *Cost of Operations (indicative range: £2m-4m):* including:

- the assessment of inflation, using Office of Budget Responsibility and CPI indices;

CABINET

- the review of current fees and charges, assessing levels of collection, comparing with benchmarking data and assessing the opportunities to raise existing, and set new, fees and charges; and
- through established protocols, assess the level of pressures and appropriateness of funding through the MTFP; and
- improving the way we work across the council through: technology, digital and Artificial Intelligence; removing duplication and improving efficiency and commercialisation.

1.17 *Financing (indicative range: £3m-8m):* including:

- updating the Treasury Management Strategy, with consideration of the basis for the calculation of the Minimum Revenue Provision, opportunities to reduce the cost of debt and increase the level of investment income;
- updating the Capital Strategy, with consideration of the impact of current capital programme slippage, reassessment of service needs and opportunities for refinancing the programme, including reduction in the revenue contribution to capital; and
- reviewing the overall use of Working Capital to support the MTFP.

1.18 The areas of search and possible impact of national funding announcements, add a significant level of complexity in setting a balanced budget for 2019/20 and a deliverable MTFP to 2021/22. Options will be developed in the intervening period to Cabinet in January 2019 and Full Council in February 2019.

1.19 In addition to all these areas of uncertainty, the effects of Brexit on the economy of the country, the duties the Government expects us to carry out and the workforce available to both the Council and the service providers on whom we rely, particularly in the Care Sector, remain unclear. It will be an additional factor that we need to take into account as the details of any deal and the practical realities begin to emerge.

Savings proposals

1.20 The initial savings proposals attached at Appendix 3 would take the Council to its Core Offer and would reduce the budget by £12.3m over the next three years. They will be subject to consultation and impact assessment before any final decisions are made. The Cabinet has agreed to these areas of search for savings ahead of further work and scrutiny.

Communication, Consultation and Lobbying

1.21 The Council is using its best endeavours to live within its means and is continuing to work to make sure it is making the best use of resources. It remains unlikely, however, that even the Core Offer will be sustainable by the end of the next three year planning period. Lobbying will continue, therefore, to try to achieve a realistic settlement from Government in the short term leading up to the Comprehensive Spending Review. We will also make the case that in the long term, a truly “fair funding review” needs to recognise that the resources needed to meet local need cannot be raised from East Sussex residents and businesses. The economy and demography of the County mean that it is imperative that national funding solutions are found to fund the growth in demand for social care for older people.

1.22 In addition, the Council is asking for more local discretion about what services it provides and the choice to charge for some services. If funding is all to be obtained locally, local people should have a greater say in what is provided with that funding.

1.23 A programme of communications and engagement is being launched with residents, staff, stakeholders and partners about our Core Offer. We will also be carrying out statutory consultation and impact assessment on the overall budget proposals. More detailed impact

CABINET

assessments and consultations with those likely to be affected will be carried out in advance of any specific saving proposal being considered.

Staffing Impacts and Implications

1.24 Moving to a Core Offer and the need to make savings may lead to a reduction in staffing. These are yet to be identified and quantified. The County Council has established robust employment protection policies and will continue to try and avoid making compulsory redundancies, wherever possible.

13 November 2018

KEITH GLAZIER
(Chair)