

## 1. **Place Scrutiny Committee's Comments on savings and use of additional funding**

1.1 The Place Scrutiny Committee RPPR Board discussed the comments it wished to make to Cabinet on the Portfolio Plans, MTFP Savings Plan and the priorities for the use of the one-off funding at its meeting on 17 December 2019.

1.2 The Board has some concerns about the impact of the savings planned for Trading Standards and the Library Service. For Trading Standards, the planned savings could reduce the capacity to work on Scams and to protect vulnerable people. If possible, this work should be protected as it contributes to keeping vulnerable people safe, particularly the elderly. For Libraries, the Board considered that it would be difficult to achieve the future savings of £0.528 million without having an impact on the provision of library services across the County.

### Priorities for the Use of One-off funding

1.3 The Place RPPR Board acknowledges the pressures faced by Children's and Adult's social care services. However, in the light of the additional funding being made available by central Government for social care, the Board considers that it is important for some of the one-off funding to be spent on visible, universal services that are important to the wider community and meet the Council's objectives. The Board considered that some priority should be given to one-off investments that council tax payers will see as improving council services for them.

1.3 With the above factors in mind, the Place RPPR Board agreed to recommend to Cabinet the following one-off options as priorities:

1. Highways Works Programme Management (£2.000million in 2020/21) - The Place RPPR Board's first priority for the use of one-off funding is to spend £2 million on the Highways Works Programme Management. The Board recommends that the £2 million is spent on Highways infrastructure in the following areas:
  - Dropped Kerbs - £75,000 is spent on installing dropped kerbs to promote access for the whole community, particularly those with disabilities. The additional funding will enable the backlog of requests to be dealt with and has a wide social benefit.
  - Road markings – Additional funding for road markings (lining and signing) based on the initial findings of the Scrutiny Review, which will help promote road safety and road capacity across the County.
  - Maintenance of Pavements – Additional funding to repair pavements to reduce falls and promote walking as a sustainable way of getting around.
  - Potholes – Additional expenditure to enhance the existing work to repair potholes which has a wide community benefit for road transport across the County.
2. Economic Development (£1.000 million in 2020/21) - The Board's second priority is the £1million expenditure on Economic Development. Additional investment in this area would have benefits for the wider community by increasing employment opportunities for residents and promoting sustainable economic growth in East Sussex.

1.4 In addition to the above, the Board asks Cabinet to consider the impact of the future savings in Trading Standards and Library Service budgets, as the Board has concerns about

size of the savings where it affects the capacity of Trading Standards to undertake work on scams to protect vulnerable people and the provision of the County's Library Service.

## **2. People Scrutiny Committee's Comments on use of additional funding**

2.1 The People RPPR Board met on 16 December 2019 and discussed in detail the draft portfolio plans, budget proposals and the nine one-off funding options which the People Scrutiny Committee had identified as potential priorities at its meeting in November. The Board were keenly aware of the limited funding available and that all the options before it had the potential to deliver significant benefits. To help with its prioritisation task therefore the Board agreed its discussion of the options would be informed by the following factors:

- that a priority for the Board would be a focus on safeguarding issues and supporting the most vulnerable;
- that the Board understood that reduced levels of support can have a disproportionately negative impact on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged (despite the best efforts of officers). Members were therefore keen to focus on identifying options that would maximise the interests of individuals in this group;
- that a further guiding principle for Members was the adoption of a 'holistic approach' to the individual which recognises their journey from child to adult (and the Council's role in supporting vulnerable individuals in this group at these different stages of life);
- that the Board agreed to recommend overall priority be given to services that support the most vulnerable children and young people. The Board made this decision on the basis that further support for this group had the potential deliver both short and long-term benefits for the individual. The Board reached this conclusion as they heard evidence that higher levels of support for the most vulnerable had the potential to leave them better placed to cope with the transition to adult life;
- that in addition to the longer-term benefits for the individual, the Board also felt its focus on the individual's journey from child to adult services brought a preventative element to its prioritisation task. Members heard that improvements in the levels of support available to vulnerable young people had the potential to decrease demands on adult social care services. This indicated to the Board that a focus on children's services would could help reduce demand on both departments in a way that would not be possible if adult services were given overall priority.

2.2 The Board agreed to recommend to Cabinet the following one-off funding options as its priorities:

1. **Children's Services reprofile of safeguarding savings** (£0.586m in 2020/21). The Board heard that the re-profiling of the savings for this service would allow proposed savings to be deferred for a year. The Board identified this as its top priority given its focus on the most vulnerable.
2. **Children's Services No Wrong Door** (£3.375m over the three years to 2022/23). The Board heard that this is a model developed by North Yorkshire County Council which works with adolescents aged 12-25 with complex challenges, via multi-agency hubs. If implemented the model would require significant change over an estimated period of two years. The expectation would be though that in time the model would result in the reduced use of expensive agency residential placements. Further benefits would also potentially include:
  - Young people being able to stay in their communities and within their families;
  - Increased partnership accountability and responsiveness and improvements in the safety and stability of young people; and
  - The model would become part of Core Services and therefore the ongoing cost would be offset by savings.

3. **Children's Services Disability Children's Homes** (£0.242m in 2020/21). Members were informed that investment to model this service area would help create additional capacity and reduce the costs of residential care placements in the independent sector by keeping more children within local provision.
4. **Adult Social Care Home Care Commissioning** (£0.110m in 2020/21). Whilst the Board accepted that overall priority should be given to children's services activities which are focused on the most vulnerable, Members were also keenly aware of the pressures on the services provided by the Adult Social Care and Health department. With this in mind, the Board were particularly appreciative of the importance of the County Council's home care contracts and noted the recommissioning process the department have recently commenced. Members agreed that recommissioning provides an excellent opportunity to test out different approaches to Home Care provision. Given the value of the contracts they also noted the relatively small estimated cost for this funding option and its potential to produce significant and wide-ranging benefits.
5. **Adult Social Care/Children's Services Accommodation and floating support** (£0.987m, £0.582m, £0.260m in 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 respectively). The Board heard that poor accommodation can have serious long-term effects on both physical and mental health and wellbeing. It also noted that this option had the potential to be of benefit to clients of both the Children's Services and Adult Social Care and Health departments. With regard to adult social services, the Board was particularly mindful of the potential improvements this might help deliver to Rough Sleepers.

2.3 Members of the Board were keen to acknowledge that all nine of the one-off funding options which had originally been prioritised by the People Scrutiny Committee had potential clear benefits and that the list above should not be seen as an indication that Members were not supportive of the other options. However priorities 1 to 5 were considered of most importance and relevance.

### **3. East Sussex Wider Strategic Partners**

3.1 The Leader and Deputy Leader, supported by officers, met with representatives of the Council's wider strategic partners on 13 January 2020. The meeting was attended by representatives of public, private and voluntary sector partners and service user groups. A presentation was given, which recapped the Council's strategic priorities and the financial and demographic context that had required ESCC to set its Core Offer. Partners were updated on the Council's latest financial position, the additional funding Government had provided for social care in recognition of the pressures ESCC and others had lobbied on, and the opportunity for the Council to make provision in 2020/21 to spend additional unallocated funding on not taking some planned savings, investing in projects to reduce future demand, and/or increasing capital investment. 21 partner organisations were represented at the meeting and ESCC is grateful to all partners for the comments and feedback provided.

3.2 The following issues were discussed in the meeting:

- The option of retaining the additional unallocated funding in reserve for future use was raised. There was a need to balance prudent planning for future uncertainties with not being seen to raise but not use additional funding through the planned Council Tax increase and Adult Social Care precept, especially as East Sussex already had high Council Tax levels. Cabinet was therefore expected to recommend that County Council

agree to prioritise use of the unallocated money on prudent activity to manage pressures and future demand, although retaining the funding in reserve was another option available.

- Strategic commissioning was discussed, particularly how ESCC could continue to work with commissioned providers to simplify the contract bidding process, given all partners had reduced capacity; and ensure the resource available was adequate for the service capacity required and accounted for inflation. It was confirmed that a range of factors were considered when commissioning services, including the impact on providers' workforce, recruitment and capacity, and building inflation into longer-term contracts. Where the resource available was not sufficient to provide a service, the expectations for that service were fundamentally reviewed. The impact of the increase in the National Living Wage on the County Council and providers for 2020/21 was being worked through. Challenges providers had in granting pay uplifts to staff were noted.
- The causes of the in-year overspend in Children's Services were discussed. The majority of the increased costs were from supporting Looked after Children requiring higher level and more bespoke support to keep them safe. A small proportion of the increased costs were from supporting Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). In response to those costs, the Council was working to increase SEND provision within the county to reduce costs and improve outcomes for children and young people; and one proposal for use of the additional unallocated funding in 2020/21 was to adapt a disability unit. The decision by Cabinet in November to not make family key worker sayings in 2019/20 or 2020/21 was welcomed by partners, as key workers were important for preventing escalation of need at the earliest opportunity.
- Concerns about deterioration in the condition of local roads were raised and an update on provisions to improve their condition was provided. The maintenance approach taken through the East Sussex Highways Contract was driven by an asset plan. Overall road condition had gradually improved in East Sussex, however to bring the condition of the overall highways network up to good condition would cost many times more than ESCC was currently able to invest. The asset plan enabled ESCC to determine the best use of available resources. The challenge was communicating the overall success of the current approach to residents, given that with the scale of work many would not necessarily see the benefits of the significant investment made. The Highways Contract and current investment strategy included contingency for improvements following bad weather and this would be kept under review as future adaptation to a changing climate was required.
- Partners recognised ESCC's experience that a small proportion of residents required the statutory services that the majority of ESCC's funding was spent on, as those residents were particularly vulnerable, their needs were high and they required support from a range of agencies. Strategic and collaborative working across partners and sectors would continue to be key to ensuring collective resources were effectively used to support those people.
- Partners offered to lobby, on the pressures on public services and the sustainability of the provider market, which was welcomed and would be powerful for reinforcing lobbying by the County Council. It was agreed joint lobbying was needed on the upcoming Government review of SEND and that the voice of voluntary sector partners, service user groups and parents would be particularly important.
- It was acknowledged that work to help people help themselves was vital for managing demand within current resources and a question was raised on whether more could be

done to communicate to residents what modern public services could offer and what residents could do to help themselves. The Core Offer was ESCC's mechanism for explaining to residents what the County Council could be expected to provide in the current financial climate and following the national decision to reduce spending on public services post-2010. Specifically in health, the NHS Long Term Plan emphasised prevention and helping people avoid the need for acute care. This was an ongoing joint endeavour with health colleagues and it was agreed that national leadership was required.

- Surrey and Sussex Association of Local Councils updated the group on a report published in 2017 which mapped the work of all layers of local government in West Sussex and how these services could better work together to meet the needs of residents. The intention to undertake similar work to map the work of parish councils in East Sussex to identify any additional opportunities for joint working was welcomed.
- Similarly, the opportunities afforded by the new corporate improvement partnership arrangement with West Sussex County Council and ongoing joint working with South East 7 partners were recognised.

3.3 Partners were encouraged to contact the Leader, Deputy Leader or Chief Officers if they wished to any make further comments on the budget following the meeting.