

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.

4. Trade union representatives

4.1 A meeting was held with trade union representatives on 21 January 2020 to consult on the Council's draft Council Plan and budget proposals for 2020/21.

4.2 The Leader of the Council opened the meeting and thanked the trade union representatives, and through them staff, for another year of hard work. The Leader updated the meeting that although there was some very welcome flexibility to invest in services next financial year, the Council continued to manage a difficult financial position. Lobbying by the County Council and wider sector had been effective in raising awareness of the social care demand pressures that the Council was managing and additional social care funding had been granted for next year as a result. Members and officers would continue to proactively lobby for adequate funding for East Sussex in the longer term, with focus on securing fair funding in the Fair Funding Review that Government had recommitted to deliver this year.

4.3 The Assistant Chief Executive outlined the budget proposals to be considered by the Cabinet. Government had announced additional grant funding for social care in the 2019 Spending Round and allowed councils to raise another 2% Adult Social Care Council Tax precept, which had generated £6.6m additional funding for 2020/21. The proposed budget made provision for this to be used to invest in projects to reduce future demand for adults and children's social care services; invest in highways and improving residential homes for children with disabilities; and defer planned savings in children's safeguarding, libraries services and trading standards. This was in addition to Cabinet's decision in November 2019 to defer planned Early Help family key worker savings to avoid unnecessary in-year redundancies.

4.4 Following the introduction, trade union representatives raised questions and views on the Cabinet papers, which are set out below.

Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) planning

4.5 Trade union representatives welcomed the proposals for investment and deferring savings, particularly in Trading Standards, but shared concerns about the longer-term

financial situation, particularly the £12.5m budget gap that was projected by 2022/23. It was confirmed that the budget proposed for 2020/21 was balanced and no new savings were required in addition to the £3.5m identified in February 2019, outlined in Appendix 4 of the Cabinet report. These would be implemented through the usual process with any savings that involved changes to services subject to formal consultation and detailed Equality Impact Assessments. Officers committed to continue to keep trade unions informed as plans for future years were developed.

4.6 Trade union representatives welcomed the lobbying already undertaken by the Council and encouraged Members and officers to continue to lobby on behalf of staff, as they were impacted by changes to staffing from service reductions. All agreed that further lobbying ahead of the Fair Funding Review to highlight the specific factors driving demand in East Sussex was key to securing resource to close the gap in future years.

Devolution

4.7 Trade union representatives asked if Members or Chief Officers had further information on what was expected to be included in the Devolution White Paper announced in the post-General Election Queen's Speech. Mayoral Combined Authorities were expected to continue to be a feature of the Government's devolution offer as the Queen's Speech had committed to increasing the number of mayors. Government had also said it intended for devolution to 'level up' powers and investment in regions across England and to unlock economic growth potential. Further details would be known when the White Paper was published.

Health and Social Care

4.8 Trade union representatives asked for further information on national strategic plans for health and social care, including whether a social care green or white paper was still expected.

4.9 NHS England had published the NHS Long Term Plan in January 2019 which had a focus on community and primary care. Local health and social care providers were required to submit medium term plans to deliver on ambitions in the Long Term Plan. ESCC had worked with health partners to develop an East Sussex-wide health and social care plan, which would be considered by the Cabinet at their meeting on 28 January. The plan aligned with existing County Council objectives, built on existing joint work and progress on integration of services made through East Sussex Better Together and Connecting 4 You, but had important widened scope for collective work on prevention, children and young people (led by ESCC), community care, urgent care, planned care and mental health.

4.10 The Prime Minister had committed to bring forward plans to reform social care this year, but robust local plans to drive the changes needed to improve the health, social care and wellbeing of the East Sussex population needed to be in place should this not be delivered.

Climate Change

4.11 Trade union representatives asked what provision was being made to respond to the climate emergency and deliver on the County Council's agreed target for its own operations to be net zero as soon as possible, and in any event by 2050.

4.12 The ambition of ESCC's net zero target was discussed. While other local authorities and organisations had set targets to be net zero by 2030, the Leader was clear that ESCC's target was both ambitious in aiming for net zero at the earliest opportunity, but realistic and practical in recognising the scope of change this would require and the time that could take.

4.13 The Director of Communities, Economy and Transport explained that the first step in delivering on this target was determining ESCC's current emissions output, to inform action required to reduce emissions and provide a baseline to measure progress against. This work was being done alongside borough and district council partners that had also agreed net zero targets. It was recognised additional resource was required and £55k had been allocated in the proposed budget for climate change staff resource to support delivery of an action plan once the baseline had been identified. There was however a limit to what the County Council could achieve on its own. In general, council estates only accounted for around 1-2% of emissions in their county area. Councils had ability to influence through areas such as transport planning but Government leadership, resource and intervention would be required to deliver emissions reduction beyond that.

Council Tax

4.14 Trade union representatives raised concerns about the impact of the proposed Council Tax increase on staff who were also residents, particularly lower paid staff.

4.15 The Leader confirmed that Members were very conscious of the impact of Council Tax increases on residents, particularly as total Council Tax rates in the county were already relatively high. The total proposed increase in ESCC's element of Council Tax for 2020/21 (1.99% Council Tax and 2% Adult Social Care Precept) generated an increase of £57.24 per year on a Band D property, or £1.10 per week. The money this raised was critically needed and allowed budget proposals for deferring some savings and investing to improve public services residents relied on.

Business Rates Retention

4.16 Trade union representatives asked for clarification on the changes to the County Council's business rates retention arrangements.

4.17 The Chief Finance Officer explained that the Government had discontinued Business Rates Retention Pilots for all authorities, other than those that had been granted retention schemes through devolution agreements. The 2019/20 75% Business Rates Retention Pilot for East Sussex would end in April and ESCC would re-enter a business rates pooling arrangement with the borough and district councils and East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service. Although there were minor net benefits to ESCC of both the 75% retention pilot and pooling arrangements, greater retention of growth in business rates was not a viable funding model for ESCC. Despite ongoing efforts to attract new businesses to the county, the nature of the local economy and natural environment of East Sussex meant there were limited opportunities to grow businesses with a property square-footage that could generate the growth required to fund demand for social care services.

Managing service demand growth

4.18 Trade union representatives recognised the rising demand for services, particularly from adults and children presenting with higher needs that required more complex care and support, and asked what steps the Council was taking to manage this demand.

4.19 The Lead Member for Children and Families explained that the No Wrong Door pilot that was proposed to be introduced in 2020/21, was expected to improve support to children within or on the edge of the care system. In North Yorkshire, the scheme had resulted in significant reductions in arrests, missing episodes, hospital admissions, use of Independent Fostering Agencies, and in the time children spent in care. There was no guarantee, but it was hoped that this investment would have similar outcomes for East Sussex.

4.20 More broadly, the Council's robust business planning process, RPPR, ensured the County Council was taking informed decisions on how to best use available resources to

meet and curtail rising demand, supported by an evidence base and evaluation of the performance of all activities.

Corporate Improvement Partnership with West Sussex County Council

4.21 Trade union representatives welcomed the new partnership arrangement with West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) but raised concerns it would increase work for East Sussex County Council staff.

4.22 The Leader was pleased ESCC had been asked to take part in the new and innovative model for peer support in local government and had been working closely with the Leader of WSSCC. ESCC was expected to benefit from the partnership, including in opportunities to learn from WSSCC how we could do some things differently to improve outcomes. A review of the arrangement would be undertaken at the end of March and the expectation was that the arrangement would be taken forward on the basis of no detriment to ESCC and our staff.

Brexit

4.23 Trade unions asked when the County Council expected to know more about any potential impact of Brexit on East Sussex or the County Council. More would be known about the impact of Brexit, and our future trading relationship with the EU, after 31 January and as negotiations progressed this year. The County Council would monitor negotiations and new legislation, particularly on fisheries, agriculture and trade.

Final Local Government Finance Settlement

4.24 The Chief Finance Officer confirmed the final Local Government Finance Settlement was expected after the budget was due to be set by County Council. Significant changes to the provisional Settlement were not expected and the Chief Operating Officer would be given delegation, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, Leader and Deputy Leader, to adjust presentation of the Budget Summary to reflect the final settlement.

Corporate Office Accommodation

4.25 Trade union representatives raised that plans for utilisation of core administrative office accommodation was of priority interest for staff and the Chief Operating Officer confirmed further information would be available soon and plans would be reported to Cabinet in the spring.

Redeployment Policy

4.26 Trade union representatives commended the County Council's redeployment policy for both supporting staff and making best use of the Council's resources.

5. Young people

5.1 An update on the County Council's budget proposals and draft Council Plan for 2020/21 was shared at the new East Sussex Youth Cabinet's meeting on 26 January 2020. The Youth Cabinet fed back that they were pleased that the Council was still planning to make a case to Government about the difficulties with funding for important services for children and adults.

5.2 The Youth Cabinet raised three questions, to which the following responses have been given:

1. We understand that some cuts will not be made this year. But if more cuts need to be made next year or the year after, what are the most important things the Council wants to keep doing?

The County Council agreed its East Sussex Core Offer in 2019, to set out the services we think it is most important that we continue to provide with the funding currently available to councils. Detail of all the services we prioritised in our Core Offer is provided on the County Council's website: <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/yourcouncil/about/keydocuments/coreoffer/>. The Core Offer also allows us to take an informed and strategic approach to planning future savings by setting out some of the things we would stop doing if we have to make further savings.

The Core Offer takes account of the County Council's four agreed strategic priorities which guide the planning of all our activities. The priorities are:

- Keeping vulnerable people safe
- Helping people help themselves
- Driving sustainable economic growth
- Making the best use of resources – including investing in preventative work to reduce people's need to use council services in future

2. How will the Council put pressure on the Government to explain that there is not enough money for important services?

Cabinet Members and Chief Officers will continue to lobby with MPs, seek meetings with ministers, and work with our local partners and through partnerships such as the South East 7, County Councils Network and Local Government Association to strongly emphasise that Government must allocate additional funding for local government for councils to be able to continue to provide vital and effective services. We will emphasise that local government has an important role to play in responding to challenges such as climate change and can support local communities to flourish if given the resources to do it.

3. What can the Council do to help with our 'Protect the environment' campaign?

At the November 2019 Children's Takeover Day, youth groups from across East Sussex supported two schemes the County Council was planning to promote that would enable and assist local residents to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and/or to install solar panels at a reduced rate. In February, officers will meet with the new Youth Cabinet to discuss these schemes in further detail, help develop a communications plan for their environment campaign for 2020, and discuss any other areas the Youth Cabinet wish to work with the County Council on to deliver their campaign.

The County Council will also amplify the Youth Cabinet's campaigning to protect the environment by lobbying Government, with our partners, for the leadership and resources to support action to reduce emissions and protect the natural environment in East Sussex.

6. Business Representatives

6.1 The Leader and Deputy Leader, supported by officers, met with Team East Sussex (TES) business representatives on 27 January 2020 to consult on the budget proposals for 2020/21 and draft Council Plan. Following a presentation and opening comments from the Leader and Assistant Director for Economy, the following issues were discussed with business representatives:

Investing additional unallocated funding

- The option of investing the additional unallocated funding for 2020/21 in economic development activity to reduce future need for services was discussed. It was confirmed that the option had been considered and while the Council recognised investment in the local economy could improve the prosperity and wellbeing of communities and help reduce the need for services in the longer-term, investment with more immediate outcomes was needed to manage demand. Further growth in demand for social care services was projected and the Council was managing an in-year overspend in Looked after Children's Services for 2019/20, so there was an urgent need to invest revenue on activity that could reduce demand and costs in social care services in the short-term. The Accommodation and Floating Support and No Wrong Door projects were expected to be self-funding within two years and were hoped to reduce the need for future savings, enabling the Council to maintain its activity in other areas.
- Whilst it was recognised that GVA growth continued to rise in East Sussex, along with the number of jobs, the county's economic performance still did not meet with South East average. As a consequence, driving sustainable economic growth remained a core strategic priority for the County Council and ESCC would continue its investment and activity with TES partners to deliver this in 2020/21.
- In the longer-term, fundamental reform of the allocation of funding for local government was needed to close the gap between funding and demand and ESCC would continue to lobby for a fair funding formula that accounted for local need in the coming year. Growth in the local economy did not necessarily translate into growth in business rates income, so the Council would also continue to emphasise in its lobbying that locally generated council tax and business rates income alone were not sufficient to fund need in East Sussex.

Innovation

- The option of investing the additional unallocated funding in Research and Development to improve service delivery was also raised. Opportunities for innovation were routinely explored by the Council and had resulted in work such as Thrive, which had kept Looked after Children numbers in East Sussex constant while they had increased in other authorities; and the East Sussex Better Together partnership to integrate health and social care services. The No Wrong Door project proposed to be introduced in 2020/21 was an innovative approach to improving support for children within or on the edge of the care system that had delivered a range of positive outcomes in North Yorkshire. The Council worked closely with partners and through groups such as the County Councils Network and Local Government Association to explore opportunities for innovation; and inspections (such as the Ofsted inspection of Children's Services in 2018) confirmed that the Council was incorporating best practice with evidence-based innovation to achieve high quality services. The Council would remain open to new ways of working and welcomed insight from partners.
- The role of automation and artificial intelligence in delivering future savings was also considered. Investment in technology had delivered improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council's services, particularly in Adult Social Care and health, and would continue to play an important role in the future. It was recognised that there could be opportunities to look locally to procure technological solutions and innovations.

Inclusive and Clean Growth

- The opportunities for inclusive growth along the South Coast to reduce the need for Council services was discussed. The meeting agreed that economic growth that provided good local employment opportunities, reduced worklessness and improved

communities' physical and mental health would play a significant role in reducing need in the county. The Local Industrial Strategy was an opportunity for delivering inclusive growth, as was regeneration anticipated to be delivered through the shift to carbon neutrality and green energy. Retrofitting homes, for example, could provide jobs and business opportunities. Place-making and inclusive community working were felt to be key to inclusive growth.

- Resourcing for investment in a low carbon local economy was considered. The East Sussex Environment Strategy, which would prioritise activity to reduce carbon emissions in East Sussex, had been developed through a sub-Board of TES to ensure it had the input and ownership of local businesses. ESCC still had a gross spend of over £800m which provided significant buying power to drive social and environmental goals in the local economy.
- Opportunities to upskill residents for green jobs were discussed and although there were currently minimal local jobs in clean energy/industry, the numbers were growing and when a critical demand for skills was reached, Skills East Sussex would provide a mechanism for businesses from the sector to work with skills providers to generate appropriate training programmes.

Regional Investment

- The meeting recognised that there remained a need to make the case for investment in East Sussex and the South East under the new Government, particularly given the focus on increasing prosperity in the Midlands and the North. It was agreed joint lobbying was required and should demonstrate the distinctiveness of the South East region from London, the importance of maintaining the region's economic output, and the need for infrastructure investment, particularly around the strategic ports that supported economic activity across the country. TES representatives were encouraged to join ESCC in talking to local MPs about how East Sussex could secure investment and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership was intending to meet with MPs to make the region's case.

Brexit

- It was agreed vigilance for any impact of Brexit on businesses in the county would need to be maintained.

Economic development activity

- The role and coordination of the County Council's economic development function and borough and district councils' economic development functions were considered. Through partnership working with borough and district councils, care had been taken to avoid any duplication of functions whilst ensuring activities were complementary. Borough and district councils tended to be more focussed on local place-making, while the County Council added value to and complemented these activities through infrastructure provision and planning, business finance and skills programmes.

6.2 The Leader thanked all for attending and for their helpful comments and insights which would inform Members' decisions in the final stage of the budget setting process. Any additional comments and questions following the meeting were welcome and could be sent to the Leader, Deputy Leader or officers.