

People Scrutiny Committee – Comments to Cabinet 2022

1.1 The People Scrutiny RPPR Board met on the 13 December and agreed comments to be put to Cabinet, on behalf of the parent committee, for its consideration in January 2022. The information supplied to the Board to support its discussions comprised of relevant extracts of the Local Government Association’s briefing on the Autumn Budget and Spending Review and the draft portfolio plans for the Adult Social Care and Health Department and the Children’s Services Department.

1.2 The comments of the People Scrutiny Committee RPPR Board are set out below:

Adult Social Care and Health

1.3 The Board received an update from the Director of Adult Social Care on the reforms to Adult Social Care (ASC) announced in 2021, focussing particularly on the most recent announcements made in the ASC Reform white paper. The Board clarified the Council’s latest understanding on the detail of the reforms and expected implementation in East Sussex.

1.4 The Board were concerned that important detail was still awaited from Government on how the ASC reforms to charging announced earlier in the autumn would be implemented in practice, as this is needed to undertake informed budget and service planning, particularly given the potential impact the reforms could have on ASC. The Board also questioned whether the ambitions of the latest ASC reform White Paper, particularly the ambition to deliver tailored care, were achievable in light of the underlying service and workforce pressures facing the Department and wider care system.

1.5 The Board welcomed the draft Portfolio Plan for Adult Social Care and Health and supported the priorities and plans set out within it. No changes were requested. In discussing the plan and the Department’s work, the Board:

- highlighted the importance of ensuring new and existing housing was accessible to enable people to stay in their own homes for as long as possible;
- encouraged consideration of options for alternative models of care, which the Director confirmed the Department and care providers actively explore;
- sought assurance on the latest position in face-to-face delivery of ASC services following disruption earlier in the pandemic; and
- discussed measures to improve workforce recruitment and retention, welcoming recent success in recruiting Newly Qualified Social Workers.

Children’s Services

1.6 The Board received an update from the Director of Children’s Services on the Department’s priorities for the coming year, including in responding to national policy changes and delivering priorities and programmes outlined in the draft Children’s Services Portfolio Plan. The Board discussed these areas and:

- requested information on the potential impact of the Government’s ambitions for all schools to join a multi academy trust and remove school improvement grants to local authorities;
- asked about the mechanisms in place to ensure inclusion and the roles of schools in the community was upheld when schools joined academies trusts; and

- sought assurance social workers had manageable and safe case-loads, which the Director confirmed the Department monitored closely and took steps to address when they were too high.

1.7 The Board agreed to report to Cabinet that they are very concerned about the potential for savings to be made in the Early Help service.

1.8 The Board supported the draft Children's Services Portfolio Plan and the plans and priorities within it.

General comments to Cabinet

1.9 The Board were disappointed the Levelling Up White Paper has not been published in line with the Government's original timeline, as it was expected that the further detail this would provide on the levelling up agenda would have a range of implications for the County Council that the Board were keen to understand.