

Summary comments for Cabinet – People Scrutiny RPPR Board (16.12.22)

1.1. The People Scrutiny RPPR Board met on the 16 December 2022 and agreed comments to be put to Cabinet, on behalf of the parent Committee, for its consideration in January 2023. The information supplied to the Board to support its discussions comprised of:

- a Local Government Association (LGA) briefing on the Autumn Statement 2022;
- a summary of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Local Government Finance Policy Statement 2023/24 – 2024/25; and
- the draft portfolio plans for the Adult Social Care and Health and the Children’s Services Departments.

1.2. The Board met before the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2023 to 2024 was published on 19 December 2022. The Board received an update from the Chief Finance Officer at their meetings on the finance briefings circulated and asked clarifying questions on publication of Council Tax limits and specific grants.

1.3. The comments of the People Scrutiny RPPR Board are set out below:

Adult Social Care and Health

1.4 The Board received an update from the Director of Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) on the draft ASCH portfolio plan, and noted that the delay to implementation of the planned reforms to Adult Social Care charging would provide greater capacity for the Department to focus on delivery of other priority plans and agendas in the coming year. These included:

- Working with health partners to deliver the Sussex Integrated Care Strategy and its pan-Sussex priorities to grow and support the health and care workforce, improve the use of digital technology and information, and support stronger partnerships and collaboration at a locality level.
- Developing an integrated community model to strengthen links between community health and social care services, borough and district councils, and voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations and ensure a joined up offer in East Sussex.
- Preparing for reintroduction of Care Quality Commission assurance inspections in 2023.
- Working with partners to: maximise financial inclusion and coordinate a cross-sector response to the rising cost of living; provide support to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, including through ongoing delivery of the Homes for Ukraine scheme; and build community networks, with this work all brought together under a new Partnerships Team.

1.5 The Board welcomed the draft Portfolio Plan for ASCH and supported the priorities and plans set out within it, which responded to strategic challenges for ASCH (such as around workforce, digitisation and safeguarding) that the Committee had considered in the last year. No changes were requested.

1.6 The Board had concerns about the ongoing real-terms reduction to the Public Health Grant that had been signalled nationally. The Board received assurances that uncertainty around future allocations was factored into planning and any reductions in the grant in 2023/24 would be managed through the Public Health Reserve.

Children's Services

1.4. The Board received an update from the Director of Children's Services, Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability and Lead Member for Children and Families on the Department's priorities for the coming year, outlined in the draft Children's Services Portfolio Plan.

1.5. The Board discussed the draft plan and priority areas of work outlined, and asked:

- if health visiting targets were being met, which the Director confirmed was an area of focus and challenge for the service;
- about challenges with recruitment in, and community access to, schools;
- questions to understand the Department's strategy around use of Special School Placements and mainstream provision in meeting Special Educational Needs (SEN), and the role of cost and parental choice in determining provision;
- about mechanisms for assessing the performance of, and inclusion in, academies;
- about progress with reshaping the internal structures of the Education Division; and
- about parental concerns around SEN provision potentially driving increasing numbers of children being Electively Home Educated.

1.6. The Board supported the draft Children's Services Portfolio Plan and the plans and priorities within it. No changes were requested.

1.7. The Board agreed that, in light of previous updates the Committee had received on particular challenges with improving school attendance in the county, the Board was supportive of the Department's work to improve school attendance and that this should be a priority area of focus in the coming year.