

Report to: People Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 25 September 2023

By: Chief Executive

Title: Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)

Purpose: To provide an opportunity for the committee to prepare for further input to the Council's business and financial planning process, RPPR, during the autumn and winter.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The committee is recommended to identify any further work or information needed to support scrutiny's contribution to the RPPR planning process, for consideration at future meetings.

1. Background

1.1 In July the committee considered the year end Council monitoring report for 2022/23 and the 2023 State of the County report, focusing on the areas within the committee's remit. Taken together, these reports began to set out the context for planning for 2024/25 and beyond through the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process. Members were able to consider significant challenges and developments affecting services and ensure that the committee's work programme included key areas for further scrutiny.

1.2 Through the autumn the committee has the opportunity to continue to provide input to the planning process. This will include consideration of the RPPR update report to Cabinet in November and review of draft 2024/25 portfolio plans and the latest information on the financial context at the committee's RPPR Board in December. The committee's wider work programme continues to include more detailed scrutiny of specific topics which will bring further insight to the committee's contribution to RPPR.

1.3 This report provides an update on the planning process, including scrutiny engagement, and an opportunity for the committee to identify any additional information or scrutiny work required to support the committee's ongoing contribution, for consideration at future meetings.

2. Supporting information

2.1 The State of the County report set out our latest assessment of the evidence base and the developing policy and financial outlook which will inform planning for 2024/25 and beyond. The ongoing uncertainty in the planning context was outlined, including the challenging economic conditions and the evolving national policy agenda. Within this uncertain national environment, the report set out that we continue to experience increased demand for services locally, arising from demographic changes and increased need.

2.2 Over the summer, the challenging context for local government has persisted, with some national media coverage of the financial and service pressures facing councils, particularly in demand-led services such as children's and adult social care and special educational needs and disability (SEND). The Quarter 1 Council Monitoring report, to be considered by Cabinet on 28 September and Council in October, is expected to provide some initial indications of how national and local conditions are impacting on ESCC in year.

2.3 Government has made a number of announcements impacting councils, and ESCC specifically, over the summer, including on the future of Local Enterprise Partnerships, planning reforms, migration and asylum (including Royal Assent for the Illegal Migration Act), SEND reform pilots and Adult Social Care market sustainability and winter planning. An overview of key policy developments will be included in the RPPR update report to Cabinet in November and factored into planning through RPPR as usual. The King's Speech, scheduled for 7 November, will provide details of the Government's planned legislative agenda in the lead up to the next general election, expected at some point in 2024.

2.4 In terms of local government funding, the Autumn Budget Statement, scheduled for 22 November, may provide some indication of the outlook but the detail is expected to come in the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, anticipated in December or early January. A further one year financial settlement is anticipated for 2024/25, with any significant national reforms to local government funding unlikely before the general election.

2.5 The RPPR process, which brings together our policy, business and financial planning and risk management, continues to provide the robust mechanism to help us navigate the uncertain environment, supporting planning for 2024/25 and beyond and maintaining focus on our priority outcomes.

3. Scrutiny engagement in RPPR planning

3.1 This committee's input to the RPPR process is ongoing, both through specific RPPR reports to each meeting and through more detailed scrutiny of specific issues through the wider work programme.

3.2 Following on from consideration in **July** of the 2023 State of the County report and 2022/23 year end monitoring report, the **September** meeting provides a further opportunity to consider the key issues for services which will impact on planning for 2024/25 and any further information required by scrutiny to inform the committee's input to the RPPR process at sessions later in the autumn and winter.

3.3 The **November** committee meeting will provide an opportunity to review the latest update to Cabinet on planning for 2024/25, including the latest financial position.

3.4 The committee's **RPPR Board** will then meet on 15 December 2023 to agree detailed comments and any recommendations on the budget and emerging updated portfolio plans to be put to Cabinet on behalf of the committee in January 2024.

3.5 The **March 2024** meeting will enable the committee to review the process and its input into the RPPR process and receive feedback on how scrutiny input has been reflected in final plans. Any issues arising can be reflected in the future committee work programme.

3.6 Running alongside this process, there will be a number of opportunities for all Members to engage in the RPPR process.

4. Conclusion and reason for recommendations

4.1 To support its ongoing input to the RPPR process, the Committee is recommended to identify any further work or information it requires for consideration at future meetings.

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