

Appendix 2 – Place Scrutiny Committee RPPR Board Comments to Cabinet

- 1.1. The Place Scrutiny RPPR Board met on the 6 December 2023 and agreed comments to be put to Cabinet, on behalf of the parent Committee, for its consideration in January 2024. The information supplied to the Board to support its discussions comprised of:
 - an RPPR Board overview report;
 - a Local Government Association (LGA) briefing on the Autumn Statement 2023;
 - the draft portfolio plans for the Communities, Economy and Transport (CET), Business Services (BSD) and Governance Services (GS) Departments; and
 - an interim report on the responses to the public survey.
- 1.2. The Board met before the provisional local government finance settlement 2024 to 2025 was published and therefore the Board was not able to comment in detail on the Council's budgetary position.
- 1.3. The comments of the Place Scrutiny RPPR Board are set out below:

Financial outlook

- 1.4. The Board noted the impacts of the announcements made in the Government's Autumn Statement on council finances, in particular that there was no further funding for Children's Services where there were particular pressures, and the confirmation of existing grant arrangements for social care. The Board understood that the announced increase in the National Living Wage was likely to have an impact on the Council's financial position through increased wage costs particularly for commissioned services in Adult Social Care.
- 1.5. The Board noted that the Autumn Statement included an announcement on plans for public sector productivity measures and the expectation to increase productivity growth by at least half a per cent a year. The Board suggested that Cabinet seeks to clarify what this might mean for local authorities and any potential financial impact on the Council.
- 1.6. The Board also noted the Government's announcement on offering Level 2 devolution powers to some councils that cover a whole county area. The Board suggested that the Council keeps a watching brief on developments in this area.

Communities, Economy and Transport draft portfolio plan

- 1.7. Footway Maintenance - The Board discussed whether there was potential to add a performance target for footway (pavement) maintenance, similar to the one used for roads, and the practical constraints in relation to this. The Board suggested that the Place Scrutiny Committee give further consideration to this as part of its ongoing work programme.
- 1.8. Artificial Intelligence (AI) – The Board noted the potential opportunities and risks of increasing the use of AI in providing council services. The Board suggested that Cabinet explores the opportunities for AI to achieve further efficiencies and improvements in the delivery of services. The Place Scrutiny Committee would wish to be involved in any future work to explore the increased use of AI.

1.9. The Board noted that the recent Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge made a number of recommendations to which the Council has published a response. The Board suggested that actions to address the Peer Challenge recommendations are included in the relevant Portfolio Plans where appropriate (e.g. a review of the partnership arrangements for countywide action on climate change).