

Overview and Scrutiny: Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) boards 2011/12

This table is a summary of the outcomes, observations and findings of the scrutiny RPPR Boards held in December 2011.

All the scrutiny boards considered draft Portfolio Plans and attempted to assess the impact of both any significant budget cuts facing the County Council over the coming years and those activities where savings are not necessarily being proposed but which account for significant use of resources. Scrutiny boards are largely supportive of the plans being put in place and the means being proposed to protect front line services as far as practicable. As a consequence of this work, they have identified new priorities for scrutiny work programmes in the coming year.

All the RPPR boards emphasised the continuing importance of presenting RPPR information in an open, clear and understandable way.

Adult Social Care & Community Safety

Board: Councillors Pragnell (Chairman), Barnes, Healy, Ost, Taylor and S. Tidy

Lead Members: Councillors Elkin and Bentley

Observer: Councillor Sparks

RPPR Board on 22 December 2011

The proposed savings and impacts are endorsed subject to the following comments and observations:

The Board:

- fully recognised the uncertainty regarding future NHS funding for social care from 2013/14 onwards and the significant impact that the loss of this funding would have on the department's budget.
- welcomed the strategy in place to smooth the impact of any loss of NHS funding on the community care budget, including the protection of resources for reablement and prevention and robust management of the community care budget through more rigorous reviewing processes. Part of this strategy involves the carrying forward of a departmental underspend into 2013/14 which requires Cabinet support.
- wishes to highlight important risks facing the department from changes within the NHS – both structural changes in terms of commissioning arrangements and changes to patient pathways as a result of new commissioning intentions and the impact of the Clinical Strategy being developed by East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust. These developments are expected to rebalance NHS care towards community settings and it is unclear whether the required level of investment in community health services will be delivered. The impact on Adult Social Care is not yet clear and should be closely monitored throughout the year.

Portfolio Plan - Adult Social Care

Policy steer 1: Improve user and carer choice and control about how their needs are met, promoting the universal offer, including signposting, irrespective of their ability to pay.

- the LEAN project to streamline the self-directed support pathway is anticipated to achieve £1m of savings but there is significant work to do to implement this approach through Project Pathway.
- workforce needs identified through the LEAN programme, notably in occupational therapy, will be addressed through Project Pathway.

Policy Steer 2: Commission collaboratively to stimulate a diverse local market and ensure that services are developed and improved in response to locally identified needs.

- the ongoing work to reduce unit costs for home care and residential care was welcomed since this enabled the resources available to stretch further.
- additional funding agencies had shown interest in participating in the commissioning grants prospectus.
- the benefits of investment in supported housing in terms of maximising people's independence and therefore reducing their reliance on care was highlighted. The importance of working with District and Borough Councils was emphasised.

Policy steer 3: Continue to invest in prevention and early intervention to keep people healthy and to maximise opportunities for rehabilitation and recovery.

- the department's overall strategy to achieve a sustainable budgetary position relies on the success of reablement and prevention. If these approaches are not as successful as envisaged in reducing the need for ongoing care packages there will be a significant impact on the overall budget. There is a process of continuous improvement in place.
- There is a need to evaluate the impact of reablement and prevention in terms of 'downstream benefits'. Processes are being put in place to enable patients to be tracked through the system which will enable more robust research and evaluation in the future. In the meantime, benchmarking is used to assess performance.

Policy Steer 4: Improve protection for vulnerable adults at risk from harm by working in partnership, including continuously enhancing workforce skills in prevention and early intervention.

- work with other agencies, such as East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, to identify vulnerable people should be included.

Policy Steer 5: Ensure appropriate support for children and young people with disabilities, and their families, including supporting young people aged 16-25 with complex and special needs to make a smooth transition into adult life.

- No comments – the transition service is very recently launched and requires time to become established.

Policy Steer 6: Continue to make a strategic shift in Adult Social Care resources towards Older People's Services over the next five years (2010-2015), to reflect our demography and to ensure our resources are fairly and equitably distributed.

- the Board welcomed the fact that the strategic intention is reflected in the medium term financial plan.
- the Health and Wellbeing Strategy to be developed by the Health and Wellbeing Board will include examining demographic projections for the county to ensure decisions about use of resources are based upon the best possible information about needs.

Portfolio Plan - Community Safety

Policy Steer 1: Work with partners and the Police and Crime Commissioner to strategically lead continuous improvements across the whole community safety agenda.

- there is significant uncertainty around the future use of community safety grants which will be transferred to the new Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex. The work underway to prepare for this change was welcomed as it will ensure that the priorities identified in East Sussex are evidenced and presented to candidates for the post of Commissioner, and it will make the case for continued funding of successful initiatives within the county.
- the reference to 'working with partners' in the policy steer was welcomed, as optimising opportunities for integration with partners such as health services will be essential to maximising the use of limited resources.
- whilst additional resources are not available for work with families with complex needs, there will be a focus on using existing resources across departments and agencies more effectively.

Audit, Best Value & Community Services

Board: Councillors Sparks (Chairman), Barnes, S Shing and B Tidy

Lead Members: Councillors Freebody & Glazier

Observer: Councillor Stogdon

RPPR Board on 22 December 2011

The proposed savings and impacts are endorsed subject to the following comments and observations:

Portfolio Plan - Corporate Resources

Policy Steer 1 & 2 - Ensure resources align with key priorities and that effective financial management is in place across the Council; and

Maintain and improve high standards for governance, internal control and risk management.

- The focus on performance and innovation as a means of generating income and driving down costs is to be applauded.

Policy Steer 3 - Ensure top class procurement practices to help deliver effective service outcomes across the Council.

- The Build East Sussex initiative and the insurance top-up scheme are to be welcomed for the effective balance they strike between reducing costs for the Council and ensuring local small and medium enterprises are supported.
- Members noted the proposed improvements resulting from the service review of procurement and sought assurance that the move to category management would not adversely affect the Council's work to support local SMEs. Officers confirmed that support for the local economy would remain a key theme in any new procurement arrangements.

Policy Steer 4 - Ensure the Council's property estate and operations are efficient and fit for purpose.

- There is a clear value in reducing maintenance costs and floor space through "agile working". However there is also a need to understand the long term value of a site and costings over a 30 year period, not just annually.

Policy Steer 5 - Ensure the Council's carbon footprint and utility costs are as low as possible.

- The Economy, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee recommendation that the street lighting pilot is rolled out countywide to reduce the Council's carbon footprint is welcomed.
- There is a clear and pressing need to reduce the Council's carbon footprint as much as possible ahead of the upcoming increase in the cost of carbon from £12-£30 a tonne under the Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme.
- The Council should look to focus on the issue of scarcity of water and ensure that the recycling of water is being maximised.

Policy Steer 7 - To improve the health and well-being of our communities, reduce health inequalities and improve life expectancy in East Sussex.

- Life expectancy differs dramatically within districts; therefore it would be more accurate to measure comparative life expectancy by output area rather than by district when assessing targets for Public Health.
- There is a necessity to look at Public Health responsibilities from a strategic perspective. Working with partner organisations in health and education will help to ensure that there is an integrated public health system countywide, which in turn will help the Council to meet its own performance targets.

Performance targets should be set as soon as is practical after the government finalises resource allocation for Public Health.

Portfolio Plan - Community Services

Policy Steer 2 - Embed the Library Service in communities to: reflect the expressed needs of the customer; encourage people to get the skills they need for employment; promote learning/literacy and improve access to services.

- The Council should look to engage with other organisations when developing service provision in towns. In particular, the Council should look to see if library buildings can be shared with other service providers such as GP surgeries.
- There were currently no plans to close libraries.
- There is sufficient reassurance that the service review of libraries will consider whether the Mobile Library Service is fit for purpose and that any changes to the service will reflect the needs of the customer.

Portfolio Plan - Strategic Management and Economic Development

Policy Steer 1 - Raise the prosperity of East Sussex through a sharp focus on employment, skills and planned infrastructure.

- Detailed criteria for the selection of the wind turbine feasibility project over other projects such as biomass boilers are not set out. However it is understood that there is a strong case for income generation from wind turbines and that the proposed planning feasibility project will look into this.
- The impact of the reduced profile of the Adult Learning and Skills Partnership Board in recent years should be made clearer. The role is now focused on oversight and influence rather than provision and this is likely to affect how targets for performance measures are set.
- Elected members have an important role to play as informed ambassadors of the Council. This role should be utilised by the Council for the super-fast broadband project. Members should be encouraged to attend parish and town council and community organisation meetings to inform the attendees about the proposals and timeline for the implementation of the project once it has been developed.

Policy Steer 5 - Ensure that residents, staff and key stakeholders are engaged in and informed about the key changes impacting on them.

- The East Sussex County Council website is a key engagement tool for residents, staff and key stakeholders and this is ensured in part through its adherence to the Plain English Campaign. Although there is reassurance that the in-house monitoring will be effective, it is essential that we maintain the excellent standard of plain English on the website.

Children's Services

Board: Councillors Ensor (Chairman), Field, Lock and Whetstone

Lead Members: Councillor Elkin, Bennett and Belsey

Observers: Councillor Sparks and Stogdon

RPPR Board on 21 December 2011

The proposed savings and impacts are endorsed subject to the following comments and observations:

Policy steer 1: Protect children and young people at risk from harm and neglect

- Against a backdrop of increasingly prolonged court processes, steps being taken to reduce court costs and delays for care proceedings and special assessments are welcome along with development of appropriate performance indicators.
- ESCC has the highest rate of referrals to social care of all our statistical neighbours with an estimated 235% increase in 2010/11 over 2008/09 figures; the causes are inadequate filtering, in particular by the police, and failing to 'hold the risk' lower down the system by other agencies and services.
- There are anomalies in the way authorities count contacts and referrals that need to be resolved; East Sussex counts some that other authorities do not.
- Actions being taken are welcome and are critical for the success of the Social Care Transformation Programme.

Policy Steer 2: develop resilience in families through providing early co-ordinated help for children aged 0-11 and streamlined support for families with multiple problems

- Welcomed the assurance that there is currently no intention to reduce funding to Parent Support Advisers (PSAs) either by Children's Services or schools.
- Steps being taken to ensure that procedures are being followed properly are welcome so as to ensure that the new protocols agreed between Children's Services and health partners are being implemented; for example, to ensure effective operational working between the Family Outreach Service and health visitors.

Policy steers 3 & 4: Improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers; and

Support children and young people with disabilities, and their families, including supporting young people aged 16-25 with complex special needs to make a smooth transition into adult life

- Noted the difficulties in acquiring clear evidence that respite breaks for families or carers demonstrably reduce the incidence of family breakdowns or prevent more expensive interventions 'further down the line'. Agreed that further analysis would help to provide a more targeted service in future, for example by trying to correlate changes in outcomes with policy changes on respite break provision over previous years.

Policy Steer 6: identify, challenge and, where appropriate, support those schools and settings most vulnerable to underachievement in order to maximise young people's chances of fulfilling an economically active future life.

- At first sight the increasing independence of schools, with growing numbers of academies and free schools accelerating an underlying trend, does not appear to be fully reflected within the policy overview and forward plan. The overarching assumption appears to be that the local authority (primarily through the Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service) still has a major role to play in contributing to school improvement, but more clarity is needed as to how this will be undertaken in future and how effective it will be. These factors support the proposed approach:
 - The local authority retains a statutory duty for school improvement; further clarity is awaited on how this role will be carried out both nationally and locally for academies and free schools.
 - Not all schools wish to convert to academies, especially many of the primary schools; the timescale for most of those that do is likely to be two years.
 - There remains direct local authority intervention and support in some 30% of schools that are under performing at any one time.
 - The local authority retains an important strategic role for access/admissions and special education needs (SEN).
 - Dialogue with all schools, regardless of type, is in place to establish the level of continuing support required from the local authority; most academies wish to retain partnership working with the authority.
 - It is important to retain and work towards key educational attainment targets County wide. We need to continue to send out a clear message that the County Council has high education ambitions for every child regardless of school.
- Local Members need clear notification when schools in their division fall within a category of either OFSTED or local authority concern; this currently does not appear to happen in all cases.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) profile shows a trend of reducing achievement at the Foundation Stage (end of reception year). Increased liaison between children's centres and primary schools to enable children's centres to target key families and to ensure smooth transition into the reception year is welcome.

Social Care Transformation Programme: outline business case

The overall approach of this programme is endorsed but greater clarity is needed about the nature of early intervention measures envisaged on the ground. The risks associated with this programme will need very close monitoring.

Funding for this capital bid is recommended to Cabinet as the Programme has:

- been based on models that have been successful elsewhere, primarily in urban and unitary councils.
- the potential to resolve a wide range of problems and 'bottlenecks' with the current system; for example, resources currently spent assessing, and often re-assessing, family risks will be re-directed towards direct and early intervention.

- the potential to improve outcomes for families and children.

Economy, Transport & Environment

Board: Councillors Stogdon (Chairman) and Freeman Lead Member: Councillor Maynard

Observer: Councillor Sparks

RPPR Board on 15 December 2011

The proposed savings and impacts are endorsed subject to the following comments and observations:

- Rights of Way maintenance and staffing: medium impact saving of £285,000 (0.9% of the budget): care should be taken to manage public disaffection and to clarify the longer term legal and financial implications, i.e., to provide an assurance that longer term liabilities would not be increased by making this short term saving.

Policy steer 1: improve the condition of our roads:

- The general approach and specific initiatives are supported.
- Street lighting: local pilot schemes to save energy through switching street lights off at certain times, or using lower wattage or dimmed lanterns, appear to be so successful that it makes sense to expand these schemes as rapidly as possible across the County. The proposed capital investment should, if possible, be expanded even further to help minimise future liabilities such as the Carbon Tax and increasing energy costs.
- The appointment of local highway stewards is welcomed although not all Members have yet heard from them. Making contact with local members and parish clerks should be an early priority for stewards.
- Highways performance indicators are being formulated and the public satisfaction measures will assume great importance given that the public were 'least satisfied' with pavement and road maintenance in the 2010 residents' panel survey. The progress made over the past two years resulting from additional funding to improve A and B roads in the County is welcomed and has resulted in many favourable comments by the public. Continuing this type and level of investment should be considered to ensure we maintain and enhance the public satisfaction with our highways work.

Policy steer 2: Achieve a fair balance between economic growth and the protection of our urban, rural, and coastal environment, and

Policy Steer 1 (Strategic Management and Economic Development): Raise the prosperity of East Sussex through a sharp focus on employment, skills and planned infrastructure

- The expenditure per head of population on economic development is 40% of the benchmark figure (2009/10). Part of the reason for this is that East Sussex has chosen to exercise this discretionary activity through local leadership and influence rather than by significant 'direct intervention'.
- The new focus of linking the Council's capital programme to economic development is endorsed and supported. The detailed criteria for

selection of individual economic development schemes are not set out and it would be helpful in future if a clear rationale is provided for projects put forward. This applies particularly to potentially controversial proposals such as the wind turbine feasibility project where, without such a rationale, it is not possible to demonstrate whether this is the most appropriate, or a particularly popular, means of providing income and renewable energy for East Sussex. Any rationale needs to demonstrate also that any alternative or additional options for investment in economic development have received proper consideration.

- The annual cost per hectare for the management of East Sussex open spaces (£20.92 in 2009/10) is significantly larger than the benchmark figure (£7.32); an explanation is requested in due course.

Policy Steer 3: Minimise the amount of the country's waste sent to landfill or landraise.

- The overall approach and specific initiatives are endorsed.
- The currently high waste disposal costs for East Sussex compared to the benchmark figure are expected to improve relative to other authorities who have not yet entered into disposal contracts. The benefits of the ERF will lead to significant reductions in the use of landfill and improved performance generally, as evidenced by Hampshire who was one of the first to enter into a disposal contract.
- Raising public awareness of what happens to waste in East Sussex together with other specific initiatives (e.g., collecting food waste) should reduce the volume of waste produced.

Policy Steer 4: Make our roads safer

- The statistics show an improving road safety picture in East Sussex for 2010 and 2011 but in 2009/10 we still compared poorly with other authorities on road traffic casualties over the nationally used 4-year period.
- County Council expenditure on road safety per head of population (£4.80 in 2009/10) is 20% less than the benchmark figure (£6.06). This raises the question as to why there is this difference and whether our expenditure on road safety is sufficient.
- The work to clarify the role of the Safer Sussex Roads Partnership and the East Sussex Casualty Reduction Board to bring about efficiencies and reduce duplication is welcomed.
- Care is needed not to give an impression that engineering solutions only have a minimal role in improving road safety in future. The criteria for schemes should be examined to take account of long term data and local perception of the safety of particular roads.
- The effectiveness of road safety education in directly reducing road casualties remains hard to prove due the acknowledged difficulty of collecting enough data to demonstrate 'cause and effect'. However, we should continue to try to collate the evidence as it emerges to ensure that our programmes are effective and provide value for money.

