

**Report to:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 13 November 2018  
**By:** Chief Executive  
**Title of report:** Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)  
**Purpose of report:** To set out the proposed East Sussex County Council Core Offer, the latest Medium Term Financial Plan and the areas of search for savings which will be used to develop proposals for the Council's budget for the next three years

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## **RECOMMENDATION:**

**Cabinet is recommended to:**

- **Consider and comment on the proposed Core Offer by 2020/21 (Appendix 1);**
  - **Note the latest update on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) (Appendix 2); and**
  - **Agree the areas of search for savings (Appendix 3)**
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## **1. Core Offer Development**

1.1 The Cabinet agreed in July that the next steps of the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process was to ground our planning in a "Core Offer". The Core Offer is an articulation of what officers consider the minimum outcomes a competent and efficient Council could expect to be able to provide by 2020/21 having regard to East Sussex County Council's agreed priorities with the resources it anticipates having available to it over the next three years. It's backdrop is the saving of £129m made over the last eight years, and the work we have done to ensure we are efficient and maximise the availability of resources to front line services. The Core Offer is ambitious but realistic: seeking to maintain our track record of delivering excellent services, innovation and providing good value for money. The Core Offer is an articulation of what we believe local people most need from the Council. This is based on the Council's agreed priorities, local knowledge, evidence of need and demand and Members' ambitions for East Sussex. It will act as a focus for our planning on how best to deploy the £390m/pa funding we will have by 2021/22. Agreement is not being sought now to reduce services to the Core Offer. Decisions relating to changes in policy, service delivery and reductions in services leading to only the Core Offer being provided, will be taken in the usual way through the RPPR process and in accordance with the Council's constitution.

1.2 The proposed Core Offer set out in Appendix 1 is based on the four priority outcomes that Members have agreed: driving sustainable economic growth; keeping vulnerable people safe; helping people to help themselves; and making best use of resources. This means that we will continue to support economic development because the County's economy lags behind the rest of the South East and providing access to high quality employment is the single most important thing that can be done to reduce avoidable reliance on public services. It also means that some element of preventative services are included in the Core Offer where they prevent immediate need for more costly interventions. Enabling people to help themselves to live independently gives better health, wellbeing and quality of life for individuals and families and reduces the need for more costly intervention in the very short term.

1.3 The Core Offer will need to evolve over time as the needs of local people change and new ways of meeting needs become available.

1.4 The Core Offer is not the ideal that we would wish to be able to provide but seeks to capture what is most appropriate and possible in a time of austerity. We have already removed a number of early intervention and preventative services, which we know help to maintain the resilience of communities and individuals and whose removal may lead to increased costs in the long term. The proposals which form the Core Offer make further reductions in these services. However, building local people's long-term health and wellbeing is better than stepping in when families and individuals are in crisis so the Council would want to reinvest in these areas if our financial situation were to improve.

1.5 We will also continue to innovate and be creative about how we work to make the best use of the available resources. Extensive work and change will be required by the County Council and with partners to deliver the Core Offer as effectively as possible. We will work across the Council to make sure that we are maximising the use of all funding and resources to achieve the best outcomes we can for local people, including the best use of public health resources. We will also continue to compare our costs and practices with others to make sure we are making the best of every penny we spend.

1.6 The partnership work we undertake with all or local partners, particularly with health and the voluntary and community sector, will continue to be vital and also evolving in nature.

1.7 Getting the Core Offer right and clear, so that we can use it in discussion with residents, businesses, the Government, our partners and stakeholders is crucial. This means being clear about what is most needed from the Council for children and young people in the county, for adults with disabilities or who are vulnerable, for older people and what our universal offer is to all residents. This will ensure that we are looking across the Council at our offer to residents and businesses rather than through any departmental silos.

1.8 The Core Offer will help us in our lobbying with Government to set out the realistic level of funding we need to continue to serve local people adequately. We have listed both the areas that we consider should be included in the current Core Offer and the proposed current areas that would be excluded. The Core Offer proposed by Chief Officers is set out in Appendix 1. In drawing it up and considering the resources required to deliver it, Chief Officers have aimed to be realistic but ambitious about the level of service that can be maintained with minimum resources. It will however rely on a huge effort by our already reduced workforce, continued creativity and innovation working with our partners and may risk our ability to meet statutory guidance and deadlines.

## **2. Medium Term Financial Plan**

2.1 The latest update of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is set out in Appendix 2. Whilst we have had the Chancellor of the Exchequer's budget announcements which have implications for local government, the direct effect on our position will not be certain until we receive the provisional local government settlement which is expected on 6 December. The Budget included welcome announcements of some additional funding for Children's and Adults' Social Care of £410m nationally in 2019/20. In addition £240m has been announced to help relieve winter pressures on the health system, continuing the winter pressures allocation of £240m already announced for 2018/19. We do not know, however, what the County Council's share of the £410m will be; whether the Government will split the funding between Children's and Adults or whether it will be for Councils to decide how to spend their shares and what, if any, conditions will be placed on the funding. £420m was also announced to fix potholes and carry out other highways repairs in 2018/19. Again we do

not know how much of this East Sussex will receive or what restrictions will be placed on the use of funding. The additional funding, whilst helpful, is one off. It will not, therefore, change our savings requirement, unless the Government gives a commitment to replicate the funding for remainder of the MTFP period. Neither is it sufficient to close the budget gap. The Chancellor, although saying austerity is coming to an end, also said that plans may need to be reviewed if there were to be a no-deal Brexit and that the next period would be one of “continued financial discipline”. Funding for local government is therefore unlikely to improve and may get worse. Further savings are therefore inevitable unless new Government funding becomes available.

2.2 There are a number of other areas of uncertainty. For example we still await the outcome of the bid by East Sussex Councils to be a business rate retention pilot. In the longer term the Government is still working through proposals for future funding of local government once it has removed all Revenue Support Grant. All these factors will have an effect on our MTFP. In addition, work continues on a number of proposals that finance and support the changing costs of service delivery. The paragraphs below set out how these scenarios may affect the current MTFP.

2.3 The projection of Government funding is based on what has been confirmed in the latest Local Government Financial Settlement. The Council’s funding will reduce by a further net £15.1m over 2019/20-2021/22. In the same period there are unavoidable costs to cover projected inflation, demographic and service pressures of £64.8m. This equates to a real term loss of purchasing power over this three year period of £79.9m. Forecast increases in Council Tax receipts brings £34.2m additional funding but this still leaves a shortfall in spending power of £45.7m, which represents the current forecast savings requirements.

2.4 The updated MTFP sets out a worst case scenario deficit budget position by 2021/22 of £45.7m.

<b>MTFP (cumulative)</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
Total Resources	(374,254)	(381,027)	(390,411)
Total Expenditure	390,979	417,362	436,112
<b>Total Budget Deficit</b>	<b>16,725</b>	<b>36,335</b>	<b>45,701</b>

2.5 The annual budget deficits are set out in the table below:

<b>MTFP (annual)</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
Annual Budget Deficit	16,725	19,610	9,366
Savings from move to Core Offer	(5,844)	(4,495)	(1,972)
<b>Remaining Annual Budget Deficit - subject to further areas of search</b>	<b>10,881</b>	<b>15,115</b>	<b>7,394</b>
<b>Cumulative Budget Deficit</b>	<b>10,881</b>	<b>25,996</b>	<b>33,390</b>

2.6 The development of the Core Offer has identified savings of £12.3m (Appendix 3), leaving a total deficit of £33.4m to be identified. The work continues on the following areas of search, with the “indicative range” showing the potential opportunities to contribute towards the total deficit:

2.7 *National funding (indicative range: £0-6m for permanent relief; £5-7m for one-off funding)*

There are potential positive impacts of a number of national funding streams:

- recent Budget announcements (see para 2.1 above);
- further announcements from the provisional and final Local Government Settlement;
- the Fair Funding Review: a revised formula for Local Government funding allocation is awaited. The timeline for implementation is 2020/21;
- Business Rates Retention 75% Pilot 2019/20 (one year only): ESCC together with Eastbourne BC, Hastings BC, Lewes DC, Rother DC and Wealden DC, have submitted a bid to be a pilot area for 2019/20. The potential gain for the authority has been estimated at £1.6m. The successful bids will be announced as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement;
- Business Rates Retention (BRR): the longer term model for BRR has yet to be announced and will be informed by the learning from the 75% BRR Pilot for 2019/20;
- Comprehensive Spending Review 2019: Central Government is set to review funding allocations to all departments, which will impact from 2020/21 but no information is available at this stage; and
- Older People Social Care Green Paper: now delayed until the autumn but unlikely to provide additional funding until after the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and General Election.

2.8 *Cost of Operations (indicative range: £2m-4m):* including:

- the assessment of inflation, using Office of Budget Responsibility and CPI indices;
- the review of current fees and charges, assessing levels of collection, comparing with benchmarking data and assessing the opportunities to raise existing, and set new, fees and charges; and
- through established protocols, assess the level of pressures and appropriateness of funding through the MTFP; and
- improving the way we work across the council through: technology, digital and Artificial Intelligence; removing duplication and improving efficiency and commercialisation.

2.9 *Financing (indicative range: £3m-8m):* including:

- updating the Treasury Management Strategy, with consideration of the basis for the calculation of the Minimum Revenue Provision, opportunities to reduce the cost of debt and increase the level of investment income;
- updating the Capital Strategy, with consideration of the impact of current capital programme slippage, reassessment of service needs and opportunities for refinancing the programme, including reduction in the revenue contribution to capital; and
- reviewing the overall use of Working Capital to support the MTFP.

2.10 The areas of search and possible impact of national funding announcements, add a significant level of complexity in setting a balanced budget for 2019/20 and a deliverable MTFP to 2021/22. Options will be developed in the intervening period to Cabinet in January 2019 and Full Council in February 2019.

2.11 In addition to all these areas of uncertainty, the effects of Brexit on the economy of the country, the duties the Government expects us to carry out and the workforce available to both the Council and the service providers on whom we rely, particularly in the Care Sector, remain unclear. It will be an additional factor that we need to take into account as the details of any deal and the practical realities begin to emerge.

### **3. Savings proposals**

3.1 The initial savings proposals attached at Appendix 3 would take the Council to its Core Offer and would reduce the budget by £12.3m over the next three years. They will be subject to consultation and impact assessment before any final decisions are made, but Cabinet's agreement to these areas of search for savings is sought ahead of further work and scrutiny.

### **4. Communication, Consultation and Lobbying**

4.1 The Council is using its best endeavours to live within its means and is continuing to work to make sure it is making the best use of resources. It remains unlikely, however, that even the Core Offer will be sustainable by the end of the next three year planning period. Lobbying will continue, therefore, to try to achieve a realistic settlement from Government in the short term leading up to the Comprehensive Spending Review. We will also make the case that in the long term, a truly "fair funding review" needs to recognise that the resources needed to meet local need cannot be raised from East Sussex residents and businesses. The economy and demography of the County mean that it is imperative that national funding solutions are found to fund the growth in demand for social care for older people.

4.2 In addition, the Council is asking for more local discretion about what services it provides and the choice to charge for some services. If funding is all to be obtained locally, local people should have a greater say in what is provided with that funding.

4.3 A programme of communications and engagement is being launched with residents, staff, stakeholders and partners about our Core Offer. We will also be carrying out statutory consultation and impact assessment on the overall budget proposals. More detailed impact assessments and consultations with those likely to be affected will be carried out in advance of any specific saving proposal being considered.

### **5. Staffing Impacts and Implications**

5.1 Moving to a Core Offer and the need to make savings may lead to a reduction in staffing. These are yet to be identified and quantified. The County Council has established robust employment protection policies and will continue to try and avoid making compulsory redundancies, wherever possible.

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***As one council***

We will:

- be driven by the needs of our residents, businesses and communities and focus on our four priority outcomes;
- be democratic, open and honest about our decision making;
- work with all our partners to make sure there is a shared view of priorities and that we make the most of opportunities and resources available in East Sussex;
- work effectively with the community and voluntary sector;
- work well as a single organisation;
- provide the best quality service we can within the resources we have available;
- compare our cost and performance against others to make sure we provide value for money;
- learn from others to improve outcomes for residents;
- ensure that as much money as possible is directed towards front line services;
- lobby hard to protect and promote the interests of East Sussex.

***Customer Service***

We will:

- respond to formal complaints and statutory information requests;
- seek to provide information and services online wherever possible.

The proposed change from our current offer is that:

- we will expect people to use the online resources available and will provide automated responses wherever possible, so people may not always get an individualised reply to enquires.

***Protecting and supporting vulnerable people***

***Children at risk***

We will:

- provide a statutory social care offer to safeguard children at risk of harm. This includes: protecting children; looking after children who are in care, helping care leavers become successful adults and managing efficient and effective fostering and adoption services;
- we will provide an Early Help Service for 0-19 year olds where it helps us manage the demand for higher cost services, including an integrated service with Health Visitors for 0-5 year olds;
- we will work with partners to prevent young people from offending and to respond effectively when they do.

The proposed change from our current offer is that:

- we will reduce the training and preventative services that social workers can use to work with children and families. Though not statutory, these services are an important contributor to preventing children requiring a child protection plan or being taken into care;
- a reduction in the Early Help offer to families. A review, which will include consultation, is underway. Consideration will be given to working with fewer families and focussing our support to those families most at risk of social care intervention and the problems that are most likely to lead to crisis (mental health, substance misuse and domestic violence).

## **Special Education**

We will:

- carry out statutory assessments of children with Special Education Needs (SEN), where there are significant barriers to learning;
- use our best endeavours to secure the right educational provision for those with the greatest need;
- fulfil our statutory duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of disabled children who meet the threshold under the Continuum of Need;
- where possible, work to build capacity in Early Years settings to ensure vulnerable pupils can attend a pre-school setting from 2 years old and can be supported to attend and succeed in mainstream schools.

The proposed change from our current offer is that:

- there will be a reduction in the timeliness of our response to assessment of SEN;
- we will set up fewer annual review meetings, including post 16 students, which may mean that fewer plans are ceased and costs within plans may increase;
- there will be a reduction in the preventative activity that we undertake with schools to support children with additional needs to be successful and remain in mainstream education.

## **Adults**

We will:

- provide information and advice for all those seeking care and support;
- assess need and arrange help for individuals and their carers who are eligible for support from Adult Social Care;
- provide support that reduces the need for social care in the longer term and/or prevents the need for a more expensive service;
- continue to ensure that we safeguard vulnerable adults who are at risk of harm or abuse.

The proposed change from our current offer is that:

- we will remove the subsidy we currently give to meals in the community;
- we will review support plans for working age adults to ensure they continue to deliver high outcomes and represent best practice and value for money.

## **All Children**

### **Schools**

We will:

- operate a light-touch monitoring of the performance of maintained schools. We will use our best endeavours to intervene when a school is at high risk of failure;
- encourage the Regional Schools Commissioner to intervene where academies in East Sussex are under-performing;
- use our best endeavours to improve the outcomes of pupils vulnerable to under-achievement;
- promote post-16 participation in education and training, including provision and support for young people with learning difficulties/disabilities.

The proposed change from our current offer is that:

- we won't offer a school clerking service;
- we won't offer our current programme of support to schools to help them to improve;

- we will reduce the support to develop school partnerships, federations or move to academy status.

### **School planning and access**

We will:

- plan to have enough Early Years and school places where they are needed;
- co-ordinate and administer the admission process;
- provide home to school transport where we have a statutory duty to do so.

### ***Universal offer to all residents***

### **Highways and Transport**

We will:

- maintain roads, pavements, bridges, structures, highway drainage and verges and carry out repairs to our current standards;
- investigate road accident sites and take measures to prevent recurrence where this is possible;
- carry out safety audits of proposed highways improvement schemes;
- manage the national concessionary fares scheme and provide limited bus subsidies where they provide access to vital services, education and employment for communities which would otherwise be cut off;
- enforce civil parking restrictions where they are in place;
- carry-out strategic planning of the highways network to help to ensure the County's transport needs are met now and in the future;
- provide footpath clearance on priority and popular rights of way routes, maintain the Definitive Map and respond to public requests for footpath diversions and searches.

The proposed change from our current offer is that:

- we will reduce our maintenance of rights of way and expect landowners to maintain footpaths on their land.

### **Economy and Trading Standards**

We will:

- provide access to high quality employment to reduce avoidable reliance on public services by acting as a strategic economic authority that intervenes, in partnership, decisively and cost effectively where it can make a difference, especially by leveraging in external funding;
- carry out food sampling and food inspection where the risk is high; carry out reactive animal health disease control and take enforcement action where necessary.

The change from our current offer is that:

- there will be a reduction in our preventative and support work, to business, to people vulnerable to scams and the reduction in routine inspection may increase public health risks.

### **Waste Management**

We will:

- dispose of waste collected by the borough and district councils and provide sufficient waste sites to meet national guidance.

The proposed change from our current offer is that:

- there may be further reductions in the number of household waste recycling sites in the county.

## **Planning & Environment**

We will:

- fulfil our statutory duties on planning, development control, flood risk and environmental management, including specialist environmental advice where required;
- provide emergency planning services.

## **Libraries**

We will:

- provide a library service which meets our assessment of current and future needs.

The proposed change from our current offer is that:

- we will keep our Needs Assessment and Accessibility Analysis under review, and as a result we may in future provide a reduced library service.

## **Public Health**

We will:

- provide a core service to Clinical Commissioning Groups;
- provide nationally mandated functions: currently these are sexual health services, drugs and alcohol treatment, NHS health checks and the national child weight management programme;
- fulfil our health protection duties;
- deploy the Public Health resources to improve health and wellbeing in support of the County Council's agreed priority outcomes.

## **Archives and Records**

We will:

- manage the records which we are required to keep by law. We will meet our basic statutory duties as a Place of Deposit for public records at The Keep including a basic level of public access to those records.

The proposed change from our current offer is that:

- We will not be able to provide the same level of support to customers of The Keep when requesting archive material, both in person and online and we will not provide an educational outreach offer.

## **Gypsies and Travellers**

We will:

- manage our current portfolio of permanent and transit sites.

## **Registration Service**

We will:

- fulfil our duties to register births, deaths and marriages.

## **Community Safety**

We will:

- deliver our local Community Safety priorities, commission effective substance misuse and domestic abuse support services and fulfil our statutory duties in relation to Prevent; Modern Slavery and the Crime and Disorder Act.

## **Support Services**

We will:

- work in partnership with others to provide the best value for money, ensuring professional and modern support to front line services as efficiently as possible so maximum resource is focussed on front line delivery;
- manage our assets and central financial resources, including Treasury Management, capital and reserves prudently and effectively to support the County Council's business and sustainability.