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## **Joint leadership arrangement with East Sussex County Council**

### **Background**

- 1** In December 2019 the County Council approved the appointment of the Chief Executive of East Sussex County Council to be also Chief Executive of West Sussex County Council as part of a broader proposal for support and assistance for corporate improvement. The agreement started on 6 January 2020 and the aim was for a first review after around three months. There is provision to review the arrangement following the County Council elections in May 2021. The three month review has been delayed by the current public health emergency.
- 2** The arrangement met the County Council's need to secure stable and effective executive leadership within a reasonable time scale and to show that the County Council was acting quickly and responsibly to address identified challenges. The broader arrangement with East Sussex County Council to provide support and capacity to improve was supported through an agreement between the two Councils using s.113 Local Government Act 1972.
- 3** The agreement sets out the aims of the proposal in tackling the County Council's corporate challenges to become more effective and efficient and describes how mutual support and assistance will be available for shared improvement activity. These arrangements have been deployed in a number of ways during the six months of the agreement.
- 4** The arrangement was also proposed so as to make best use of areas of common challenge and shared areas of responsibility and partnership working which already existed between the two Sussex County Councils and the benefits of closer working.

### **Review of the arrangement**

- 5** The Governance Committee has considered whether the arrangement continues to meet the needs of the County Council by reference to the original aims:
  - To achieve early and real stability in the Council's executive leadership;
  - To provide direct mutual support for areas of corporate challenge;
  - To enable the Council to address governance challenges effectively; and
  - To provide assurance to the Government and external agencies that the Council has the capability and capacity to improve.
- 6** The Committee received assurances about activity under each of these aims and the Committee felt that stability has been achieved and maintained and that the joint appointment of chief executive has been a success. The executive leadership team has held joint management events with colleagues in East Sussex and there has been valuable and continuing use of advice, support and the sharing of best practice in most areas of the Council's service operations.
- 7** The good governance review was diverted by the current public health emergency but has now identified a number of valuable work streams to bring improvements to all areas of the Council's governance, culture and ways of working. The current emergency has also reinforced the value of such close working in partnership.
- 8** Part of the learning from the current events will further enable members to evaluate the overall benefits of the arrangement when the opportunity arises for

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members to take stock of the impact and of the Council's response to the emergency and the joint working which has been a feature of the activity.

- 9** The Governance Committee has confirmed its support for the continuation of the arrangement with East Sussex County Council. Further detail will be brought to the Committee as part of a future report on the Good Governance Review.
- 10** The arrangement for the joint appointment meant a saving on the previous costs associated with the post of chief executive. No additional costs arise from the operation of the mutual support agreement - all support and cross-council working being undertaken without charging.

### **For information**

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### **Background papers**

None