ANNEX 2: INTERNAL CONTEXT

Local Priorities, Our Improvement and Change Programmes

2.1 Since the 2020 Council Plan's focus on service and corporate improvement:

- Children's Services have made significant improvements demonstrated by the March 2023 full Ofsted inspection.
- Funding pressures affecting the High Needs block have grown, leading to a High Needs Recovery Plan. The Council is well-placed to deliver and benefit from the proposals in the SEND National Improvement Plan but it remains challenging, particularly after 2025/26.
- The Fire & Rescue Service has made significant progress reflected in the HMICFRS 2022 inspection. The Community Risk Management Plan shows how the service will manage risks and explains how it will contribute to delivering Plan priorities.
- Adult Social Care is focusing on the priorities identified in its strategy 'The life you want to lead' and delivering its improvement programme ahead of the first round of CQC inspections expected this year.
- Support for employment and skills is increasingly important as a major local employer and an enabler of growth in the West Sussex economy.
- The Council's 4,000km of roads and 3,956km of footways are essential to the local economy. Increased investment is inhibited by a real-terms drop in Government capital funding and inflationary pressure. The 2024/25 grant would need £3.665m (17.5% increase) to match 2017/18 spending. The backlog of maintenance for carriageways exceeds £151 million. The Council is actively considering options to increase investment but this would increase the budget gap in 2024/25 and 2025/26 further as a result of increased borrowing costs on capital or increased revenue expenditure.

2.2 The Council will deliver major corporate change programmes over the next two years:

- The Smarter Working programme has introduced a model of hybrid working that prioritises business needs and offers flexible working to support recruitment and retention and enhance staff wellbeing, help protect the environment, rationalise our estate and reduce overheads.

- Digital/IT Strategy – Work to shape and define how the Council will use new digital technologies in the way it works, how it engages with customers and the infrastructure in the County to ensure connectivity, including artificial intelligence.

- Oracle Fusion – work is underway to replace our existing SAP system with Oracle Fusion. This complex project, when implemented and fully embedded, will improve processes in Finance, Payroll, HR and Procurement and improve how suppliers interact with the Council.