



# EBC Rapid Finance Review April 2023

# Robust and deliverable improvement plan

- The Plan, which must continue to be subject to **robust performance management and assessment**, should face periodic review and refreshment, perhaps whenever there is a major revision to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), **to ensure its ongoing relevance and adaptation to changing priorities**
- **Governance of the Plan should also be reviewed periodically**, with the relationships between its oversight and other governance arrangements (for capital and assets, for example) vigilantly monitored. This will help preserve the mutually supportive interplay between initiatives, which currently relies significantly on senior officer efforts
- **The prominence accorded to the Plan in other strategic documents, such as the Corporate Plan, should be retained** and built upon. For example, there should be as many explicit linkages as possible between the Plan and the MTFP

# Address reliance on tourism and leisure income

**By the end of 2023** the new council should set out its objectives on **tourism, income, and economic diversification** in an overarching strategy. The strategy should;

- Include principles, goals (with indicative timelines), and resource requirements
- Explore the advantages and challenges inherent in the trust model in managing tourist income, with any learning from the Towner Gallery experience detailed
- Investigate potential benefits for council income that might accrue from its efforts to diversify the Eastbourne economy

# Address risks to financial stability

We recommend that the council:

- Continues to avoid complacency about savings targets and **maintains a prudential and risk-averse posture on spending**
- **Satisfies member interest in debt and treasury management** through suitable briefings on principles and practice
- Redoubles its efforts on **partnership and collaboration**, to enhance its resource base
- **Examines its broader financial resilience.** We are confident in the abilities of the finance team. At a suitable moment, it might make sense to build on the initial Assurance Review with work to investigate the council's budget management expertise at operational level. We will be happy to advise on how such an assessment might be conducted

# Generation of additional capital receipts

We recommend that the council produce a **thorough, integrated, and strategic approach to property by the end of 2023**. This should:

- **Explicitly reference the Recovery and Stabilisation Plan goals**
- Be consistent with and support the work to **reduce tourism-income dependency and diversify the local economy**
- Accordingly describe the character of the **council's desired 'target' portfolio of held assets**. This should be supported by a clear taxonomy detailing asset type and purpose. Retained assets could be classed as commercial or regeneration-related. Moreover, the portfolio's implications for income and investment should be made explicit
- **Reinforce the current restrictions on spend** by setting out a presumption against new asset acquisition and associated increases in indebtedness. The permissible circumstances for new investment should be made explicit and should relate to exceptional or unforeseen circumstances