

Appendix 6

Equality impacts: budget proposals, January 2017.

1. Introduction and legal background

This Appendix outlines how the impacts of the Council's budget proposals have been considered from an equality perspective within the People & Communities Directorate Plan, the Place Directorate Plan and the Resources Directorate Plan.

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against an individual because of certain personal characteristics ('protected characteristics'). The law also requires that equality issues are considered by public bodies as part of decision making, especially where reductions or closures are proposed.

2. Actions so far

- Budget proposals in each of the Directorates have been considered individually and alongside each other to begin to identify and mitigate any unexpected or unintentional cumulative impacts.
- Potential equality impacts have been identified through documents produced for the medium term and strategic review proposals. The initial proposals set the high level intentions, identifying if service redesign was proposed and, where sufficient data was available, identifying any potential impacts upon different groups. The finer detail of how the proposals will be implemented will follow in due course, and it is recommended that comprehensive equality analysis is carried out as proposals are developed. This will help to ensure that opportunities to enhance equality are utilised, and any possible negative impacts or barriers for particular groups are identified and, if possible, mitigated.
- Budget proposals are being presented to Policy Development and Scrutiny panels during January 2017 and commentary from these panels will be reported to the Resources PDS Panel.

It should be noted that this is year two of a four year plan; the report appended to the 2016 budget papers contains detail of many budget items that are already being progressed.

3. Directorate Proposals

Across the Council, every attempt has been made to achieve efficiencies through service redesign, with minimum reduction in services or disproportionate increases in charges.

The Council's Human Resources policies already ensure there is full consultation and consideration of staffing matters and that employment-related equality issues are fully taken into account.

In order to achieve our ambitious vision for the area, four corporate priorities have been identified in the Corporate Strategy 2016-2020. The intention is that these four priorities will drive the work of the Council. The four priorities are: a strong economy and growth; a focus on prevention; a new relationship with customers and communities; an efficient business

The budget proposals with the potential for particular equality impacts have been listed below under the relevant priority areas.

4. From reactive to preventative

- a. **The Front Door Review** will place a greater emphasis on providing health advice and guidance, and on preventative and self-care issues- along with further links with voluntary sector providers- will help to ensure that statutory services are made more easily available for those in need. Service users will be supported to maximise their independence and packages will not build unnecessary dependency on funded services, resulting in improved outcomes.
- b. **Remodelling Education Support and School Services**, scaling back the support to schools, in line with Government initiatives, may limit the scope of preventative work with schools that are vulnerable and in need of support. There may be opportunities for greater trading with schools and academies and wider opportunities for income generation or working with neighbouring authorities. We will continue to target vulnerable schools and ensure that if we do withdraw from some service areas, schools are sign-posted to alternative services.

5. Customer and community focus

- a. **The Modern Libraries Review** will see the Keynsham model (of a joint One Stop Shop and Library service) developed in Bath and Midsomer Norton. Integrating services in three main population centres will see an increased focus on the new digital agenda, helping people to access resources and gain appropriate skills as well as focusing on children and families and developing skills for the economy. Access to three million books across Libraries West will be maintained with the browsing experience being enhanced through innovative use of digital technology. In rural areas the impacts will depend upon local community solutions and have potential to enable longer opening hours and more vibrant community hubs and shared facilities. In the redevelopment of One Stop Shops, consideration needs to be given to improving disabled access to the external and internal environments. Specific equality impacts will differ depending upon geographical area: further

equality impact assessments will be undertaken as the proposals are developed.

- b. The transfer of some **Children's Centre** buildings to community ownership could benefit local organisations through more effective use of the buildings as well as reduce unnecessary overheads for the Council. The current service will continue to run.
- c. The **Youth Connect Service** proposal seeks to maintain the Council's commitment to delivering its statutory requirements, whilst also encouraging and enabling local community groups to develop the additional capacity in key areas that will offer supplementary services for young people. This could result in a change in the model and/or provider of services in some localities. Any reduction in the size and remit of the Council-run service may impact on service delivery and our early help offer. The aim of the review will be to minimise any negative impact on outcomes for young people
- d. Options to manage demands in **Adult Social Care** due to demographic increases (in older people, older people with mental ill health, people with learning disability and those with physical impairment) may have a number of impacts. In some instances, users and carers may have a more limited choice of care setting. Some people with lower level support needs currently accessing funded services may be unable to access such services in the future. They would instead be given advice, guidance and information on preventative services that are widely available, and also how they can take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing.
- e. Exploring efficiencies through **Day Care** services will involve maximising independence, realigning transport provision and reducing longer term dependency on funded care for people with learning disabilities. There is potential reduced access to the existing model of service for some people with learning disability as the service model is redesigned with a shift away from the current, traditional day-centre model.
- f. **Transport- Moving People from A to B** will look at the opportunities to improve customer options whilst also being cost effective. This will include a review of how we enable people to travel more independently when they are accessing special education or adult social care settings. Options will include working with service users to use community transport rather than dedicated buses and taxis; phasing in eligibility assessments for home to school transport and encouraging people to cycle or walk to their destination where possible. This will need to be considered in conjunction with the Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) as bus subsidies will become a joint function managed under the power of the MCA. Any options including changes to eligibility times for concessionary fares will also need to be considered in the context of the MCA as this will be the Concessionary Travel Authority.
- g. Moving to a **Digital by Choice** approach will help customers access what they need quickly and more efficiently. Also this will enable better use of data to target services. Care will need to be taken to ensure that those who do not

currently access services online are given support to be able to do so, or alternative options put in place.

6. An efficient business

- a. Combining some **adoption** responsibilities and activities through the creation of a regional adoption service, Adoption West, will allow for family finding to become more effective and efficient. The joining of six local authorities will provide children and adopters with a more consistent service as well as providing opportunities to develop more efficient and effective support systems to the process of recruiting and assessing adopters
- b. The **Early Years nursery provision** proposal will see a review of existing Council owned and run nurseries. The review will ensure there is sufficient private provision and no impact on the overall capacity for nursery places. The private sector has been able to absorb the movement of children to independent nursery providers from Council-run nurseries in some locations. Elsewhere, the Council will explore the option of assisting other organisations to take on the running and management of nurseries to ensure that sufficient places remain available across communities
- c. Implementation of **Your Care Your Way** and the prime provider dynamic purchasing system for community services and home care and residential and nursing care home provision should realise improved outcomes for individuals as they are able to access services that are focused on maximising their independence rather than building unnecessary dependence, as well as achieving efficiencies in systems and processes.
- d. Simplifying the application and administration process of **the Local Council Tax Support Scheme** will ensure that funds are targeted at the most disadvantaged, whilst giving the best value for money.
- e. In respect of **transport**, service delivery is being changed and structures reviewed to enable more customer-focused arrangements- e.g. moving to more personalised budgets in relation to SEN transport options.
- f. Whilst **Bereavement Service** charges will be increased by 12%, an option for cheaper funerals will be developed for consideration.
- g. **Arts Development** will cease to solely fund cultural activity via commissioning or grant, except where matched funding has been secured from strategic partners where we are able to demonstrate we can add value with matched funding.

7. Cumulative impacts

The proposals identified in this report have the potential to impact on people across the full range of protected characteristics. In addition, whilst considerations of socio-economic status are not a requirement of the Equality Act public sector duty, the “narrowing the gap” agenda remains a key focus for the Council and its partners. It will be important to ensure that all these impacts are considered alongside each other as further details are developed (and within any consultation), in order to identify the cumulative impacts. These impacts will be assessed and managed

through the Council's relevant programme and project management and other governance processes.

8. Recommendations

The following recommendations have been identified to be incorporated into the Council's programme and project management for each change proposal, delivered as appropriate:

Inclusive consultation. Where consultation is arranged as part of taking any of these proposals forward, it is vital that a diverse range of people take part to ensure that any additional equalities impacts are highlighted and addressed. A variety of methods should be used to access consultees. The Equalities Team can advise on this and also on how to access participants from groups representing different equality strands. The [Independent Equalities Advisory Group](#) can also provide further guidance on likely impacts, and ways of mitigating these.

Clear communication. Wherever it is planned to introduce changes, it is important to ensure that the communication and publicity strategies are accessible to disabled people (for example, people with visual impairments or learning disabilities) and also those for whom English is an additional language. The Council has commissioned Language Empire to assist with [Interpreting and Translation](#) where necessary.

Incorporating equality issues within commissioning specifications. Where proposals include commissioning or recommissioning external providers, detailed equalities requirements should be built into contract specifications. This will ensure that best practice relating to equality in delivery of services is continued and improved upon when delivered by external partners.

Workforce training and development. A number of the proposals contained within this report hinge upon the ability of officers to recognise opportunities where it is possible to further advance equality (for example, to improve disabled access to facilities/services). It is also important that officers are aware of and sensitive to the particular needs of different groups of people. Equalities training is available as part of the Corporate Training offer, and bespoke training can also be arranged by the Council's Equalities Team.