

## **Equality Impact Report: Budget 2020/21**

Implementation date      1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021  
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### **1      Decide whether this report is needed and, if so, describe how you have assessed the impact of the proposal.**

- 1.1. One of the County Council's most significant strategic decisions is the budget and the service plans and commitments which it is designed to deliver. In setting the budget the County Council must be aware of and consider a range of statutory and other legal responsibilities. These responsibilities must inform the decision to set the budget and the Council must explain how it undertakes that process of consideration. The public sector equality duty is an important element of this process for delivering a rational and lawful budget.
- 1.2. The public sector equality duty is the duty to have regard to the impact of proposals on persons and groups with protected characteristics. The Council discharges the public sector equality duty through several measures, particularly by applying detailed consideration of such impacts arising from the planning and implementation of service changes, especially where those changes reduce current service levels or reduce the funds available to deliver them. The public sector equality duty impact is best understood and assessed using detailed service and customer information held or secured by those leading, planning and implementing service change. The information is used to support the decisions which generate service plans. The County Council takes the budget decision on the basis that this arrangement for discharging the public sector equality duty is in place.
- 1.3. Where statutory or some other customer or public consultation is required to help the impact assessment work, this is included as part of change planning and implementation. Where specific service user data is required to better understand the potential impact on those with protected characteristics, this is secured. Different levels of assessment or different forms of data gathering are used dependent upon the needs of the particular service plan under consideration. The overall budget proposal explains how these different approaches apply in relation to the body of service plans.
- 1.4. The Cabinet Report in July considered a list of major, strategic savings, requiring a Cabinet Member decision, in July 2019 and agreed to progress some initiatives in the autumn. Where required to inform the decision proposed, the Council followed a clear process of consultation, including the range of legal responsibilities to be met. All the proposals for Cabinet Member decision were available for pre-scrutiny by the relevant Select Committee, including consideration of the information from consultations

and impact assessments. In December 2019, the Performance and Finance Select Committee considered the plans for all savings proposals.

- 1.5. The Medium Term Financial Strategy report provided to the Performance and Finance Select Committee in October 2019 (updated in December) set out the considerable financial challenges the County Council faces in 2020/21 and for the following years. While the Council has received notification of some funding increases in 2020/21, it continues to face service demand pressures, especially in social care for adults and children, that are rising much more steeply. This means the Council must consider further significant reductions to achieve a balanced budget. Impact assessment is undertaken in that context.
- 1.6. The scale of savings planned for 2020/21, at £18.4m does also need to be viewed in the context of a draft overall net revenue budget of around £594m and future investment to meet service demand and other pressures which is estimated to increase the net budget by around £76m by 2023/24 compared to 2019/20, despite assumed continued reductions in funding support provided by the Government.
- 1.7. The savings measures included in the budget report to balance the budget contain further information on how the equality impact work will be addressed as part of each proposed saving.
- 1.8. The background to the budget for 2020/21 is continued further increases in demand pressures for acute and essential services on which many of our more vulnerable residents rely and that these demand increases will outstrip any Government funding changes. As such, a programme of well-considered and planned savings is essential to ensure the Council achieves its legal duty to approve a realistic and balanced budget, with the minimum adverse impact for residents.

#### **Settlement Funding Assessment 2019/20 to 2020/21**

	<b>2019/20 £m</b>	<b>2020/21 £m</b>	<b>Change £m</b>	<b>Change %</b>
West Sussex	78.0	79.3	1.3	1.6
England	14,559.6	14,796.9	237.3	1.6

- 1.9. 2020/21 is the first year for a decade when the County Council's core funding (Settlement Funding Assessment) has not decreased. Over this period, the Council has had to make £240m of savings and needs to find £18.4m more in 2020/21. Adding to the increasing difficulty in identifying and implementing yet more savings, the Council also faces the continuing and intensifying pressure from the significant rising demand for council services. For example, West Sussex has a high and increasing proportion of the population are aged over 65 at 23.0%, compared with the average for England of 18.4%. For people over 85, the proportions are 3.5% of the population in West Sussex compared to 2.5% for England.

1.10. The emphasis in budget planning continues to be on delivering efficiencies, cost reductions and income generation with a view to protecting front line services along with the West Sussex Plan priorities. The Council's overarching aim has been to avoid arbitrary or across the board budget reductions, as these would not reflect the Council's priorities and would be more difficult to assess in terms of impact on the broad range of responsibilities, including the public sector equality duty. Instead the Council has focused on specific measures to both understand impacts and address any adverse impacts for services or support. In all cases, unless stated otherwise, each service prepares an impact assessment to inform the eventual decision based on the Council's standard approach to its public sector equality duty so that the decision making has full regard to such assessment.

## **2 Describe any negative impact for customers or residents.**

2.1. Accumulated service reductions and funding constraints, combined with service demand pressures will present risks of negative customer impact. Efforts have been made when compiling the savings programme to minimise the impact on residents generally and on those with a protected characteristic. A key example of introducing measures to manage the ever higher demand for services would be £1.9m efficiencies in Adults and Health for Lifelong Services, through supporting individuals with lifelong disabilities or autism and other complex needs. By taking a more holistic view of customers throughout their lives and from promoting independence, better care outcomes and better value for money are expected to be delivered, for example from innovative approaches to high cost residential placements and greater use of community assets.

2.2. Of the total savings planned for 2020/21 a significant number arise from measures that are deemed to be efficiencies from the following broad categories:

- Contractual (£3.7m)
  - Savings arising from procurement work, collaboration with procurement or improved contractual terms
- Fees, charges and other income streams (£1.8m)
  - Opportunities to increase income via increased charges, cost recovery or new avenues such as sponsorship or commercial income from property
- Operational Changes (£13.5m)
  - Optimising all opportunities within current arrangements to deliver better value for money, such as by changing processes.

2.3. The above areas would be expected to have no or only a minimal impact on any group with a protected characteristic.

- 2.4. Strategic decisions, where the relevant Cabinet Member has made a decision in a key area amount to around £5m. Every effort has been made to indicate the nature of these decisions at an early point in planning for 2020/21, to provide for consultation and maximise consideration of measures to mitigate any adverse effects of the proposals.
- 2.5. The Council has made efforts to continue to provide residents with a core service, even in areas where a reduction to a discretionary activity has needed to be considered. Work will be done on equalities impacts and how to mitigate any potentially harmful effects within the individual case for decisions to be taken and their implementation.

### **3 Describe any positive effects which may offset any negative impact.**

- 3.1. The report highlights significant continued or new investment in services to support the West Sussex Plan priorities and which should result in a positive impact for residents including those with a protected characteristic.
- 3.2. For example, within the 2020/21 revenue budget to support the **Best Start in Life** and **Independence for Later Life** aims, additional funding is proposed for both younger and older residents across the county to meet the forecast rising demands on these services. For Children and Young People the additional funding is £28.4m (28%), for Adults and Health, the increase in funding is £3.1m (1%). While these represent the net sums, the gross funding increase to meet the existing and ongoing demands placed upon these services is £32.0m for Children and Young People and £10.3m for Adults and Health.
- 3.3. Due to the increasing demand for these acute services, the Council has again had to propose to raise the Adults Social Care precept by the maximum 2% permitted for 2020/21. The Council has spent the amounts raised from this precept to help meet the rising cost pressures and demand from increasing customer numbers and complexity in Adults Social Care.
- 3.4. The additional funding for Children's services includes £12.0m investment in the Children First Improvement Plan and £12.4m allocated to meet demand for placements.
- 3.5. Longer term, the County Council is working on service transformation plans to address the issue of rising demand coupled with reduced Government funding to continue to protect priority services as far as possible.
- 3.6. Service transformation, led by relevant Executive Directors and Directors, will be critical to ensuring a future sustainable budget. The Whole Council Design approach has been reviewed. West Sussex County Council does not have the capacity to deliver all the projects in the original programme at the same time. The Council will focus on Service Redesign and refresh its view of priority activities. Further development work to agree detailed benefits is being undertaken with the relevant Executive Directors and Directors who will lead the projects. At this early stage in delivery, £2.4m

of this target is provided for in next year's budget, to follow mobilisation late in the current financial year.

- 3.7. The Council is also seeking to enhance its income streams, such as from business rates, where the county, district and borough councils benefit from additional revenues arising from economic growth under the business rate retention system. This assumption, coupled with a council tax rise of 1.99% for core services and 2.00% for the Adults Social Care precept means that other funding streams are being used to offset the continuing reduction in our core financial support from Government. The Council's total proposed increase in council tax is 3.99% and has been set at a rate just below the level where a referendum would be required. This increase generates an additional £25.7m, which helps protect services and mitigates the financial impact of reduction on our core funding from Government.
- 3.8. As well as the revenue budget, the County Council will be asked to approve an updated capital programme for 2020/21 to 2024/25. The capital programme sets out how the County Council proposes to invest in assets to deliver the Council's vision for and its commitment to West Sussex. For example, the capital programme includes the provision of modern, maintained and fit for purpose educational facilities, providing the correct numbers of school places in the correct locations, giving an environment where children can thrive.
- 3.9. The Council is committed to ensuring continued economic growth and prosperity, working with our partners to understand the needs of businesses and provide the infrastructure and skills for them to succeed and grow in West Sussex. The capital programme proposes a package of works designed to stimulate economic growth, directly providing or contributing to the creation of over 10,000 jobs, delivering nearly 600,000 square metres of commercial floorspace in key locations and unlocking the potential for over 15,000 new homes. These investments provide a basis for a stronger financial position from which to develop plans for services.

#### **4 Describe whether and how the proposal helps to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.**

- 4.1. One of the key aims of developing specific savings proposals, rather than simply assume across the board budget cuts, is to plan savings that balance the budget on the basis of protecting front-line services and delivering West Sussex plan priorities.
- 4.2. In preparing the savings outlined, it is believed that no individual group whether it be by age, sex, race, disability, gender reassignment (including transgender), sexual orientation, religion or belief or any other identifiable group will suffer from discrimination, harassment or victimisation as a direct consequence. The focus on elimination will be addressed in service plan and implementation.

**5 Describe whether and how the proposal helps to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**

5.1. The savings identified by services will be expected to maintain equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. This is part of the work that will take place ahead of the individual equality impact work on each saving area.

**6 Describe whether and how the proposal helps to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**

6.1. The savings identified by services will be expected, where possible, to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

6.2. This is part of the work that will take place ahead of the individual equality impact work on each service area.

**7 What changes were made to the proposal as a result? If none, explain why.**

7.1. Strategic savings decisions were published in July 2019 (in the forward plan) and where appropriate, had a consultation phase as well as being previewed at the relevant Select Committee. Changes to proposals will have been addressed in the evaluation of consultation and representations and recorded in specific decision reports or identified for clarification in service plan implementation. One example is the decision to close seven libraries an hour earlier, at 6pm, when footfall is lowest, rather than close smaller libraries.

**8 Explain how the impact will be monitored to make sure it continues to meet the equality duty owed to customers and say who will be responsible for this.**

8.1. Monitoring will be through equality impact work at individual service level and also business planning and performance framework planning processes. Hence each Directorate will be responsible for monitoring the impact on their own services

**To be signed by a Director or Head of Service to confirm that they have read and approved the content.**

Name



Date

13<sup>th</sup> January 2020

Your position

Director of Finance and Support Services

DRAFT