

## Appendix 9 - Equality Impact Assessments

### 2024/25 Savings Proposals – 7 February 2024

#### 1. Introduction

This paper provides Members with information to help them fulfil their equality duties; it should be read in conjunction with the Equality Impact Assessments that have been prepared and provided for each budget reduction proposal in advance of the 7 February Executive meeting.

#### 2. Public Sector Equality Duties

The Equality Act 2010 (Section 149) sets out public sector equality duties, which elected Members must consider. Members will recall that the general duties are to have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Advancing equality of opportunity involves having due regard to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

#### 3. Due Regard

'Due regard' is the regard that is appropriate, in all the particular circumstances. Members must also pay regard to any countervailing factors. The weight to be given to the countervailing factors is a matter for Members. There is no requirement to take certain steps or to achieve certain results. The duty is only to have due regard to the need to take the relevant steps.

## 4. Protected characteristics

These general equality duties cover the following protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- and marriage and civil partnership. (This protected characteristic applies only to general duty 1.)

In addition to these areas (protected by the general duties) council EIAs also consider the impact on people on a low income.

## 5. Considering the equality duties

When considering the equality duties listed above in 2, thought must be given to the following areas:

- Meeting different needs includes, for example, taking steps to take account of disabled people's needs.
- Fostering good relations includes having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it.
- Compliance with the general equality duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.
- The general equality duty also applies to other organisations that carry out services on behalf of the Council.

## 6. 2024/25 Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)

To aid understanding and the consideration of these important equality duties, officers have completed initial EIAs for each proposed budget reduction.

The potential impact on equalities groups has been assessed as:

- High
- Medium
- Low
- None – If there are no identified impacts on any protected group

Consideration is then given if the impact is likely to be ‘negative’ or ‘positive’. Taking account mitigating action that is planned or in place, most of the savings are considered to have no, low, or in some cases a positive impact on service users. If the impact has been assessed as potentially having a negative ‘medium’ or ‘high’ impact on service users, then a detailed EIA has been undertaken and is included within this report.

Where the proposals are not yet developed to a stage to allow a more detailed EIA to be completed, such as:

- The development of Family Hubs (SPTC01/C02)
- Proposals listed in Adults Transformation (ADTR01/ADTR02 )
- The transformation of Children’s Social Care Services (CHRT01)
- Home to School Transport (CHTR02)

More in-depth consultation and data analysis will take place as the proposals are taken forward. These EIAs will be prepared taking into account the detailed proposals for further consideration and decision in line with the council’s normal decision-making processes.

As appropriate the detailed EIAs include information about the impact on users of services and council staff, the detailed EIAs include the following important information:

- An assessment of the relevance of the budget proposal to the general equality duties and the protected characteristics.
- Where appropriate, collection and analysis of equality information to ensure equality issues can be fully explored and considered.
- Plans for and results of consultation and engagement with the people affected by proposed changes, to further understand the equality implications of the proposals. (Any consultation and engagement activity will be proportionate to the significance of equality issues to the budget decision)

## 7. Diversity in North Somerset

It may also be helpful for Members to reflect on the diversity profile of North Somerset.

**The Office of National Statistics 2021 Census results** indicate that North Somerset has a population of 216,728 people, 111,422 Female and 105,306 Male

Age group	Population	Percentage
<b>Total</b>	<b>216,728</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>0-15</b>	<b>38,162</b>	<b>17.6</b>
<b>16-64</b>	<b>126,696</b>	<b>58.5</b>
<b>65+</b>	<b>51,870</b>	<b>23.9 ((including 85+ - 7,352 (3.4%))</b>

**Sex** – There are slightly more females (51.4%) than males (48.6%) in North Somerset. This is in line with the national figures – 51.0% female and 49.0% male)

**Race** – People from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds make up 4.29% of North Somerset’s population compared to 6.87% of the South West area and 18.95% nationally.

An additional 5.31% of people in North Somerset are from 'Other White Groups', which include Irish, European and other White groups. This compares to 5.29% in the South West and 7.51% nationally.

The 2021 Census asked people to identify their first language:

Main language	North Somerset	England
Does not apply	2.87%	3.19%
English (English or Welsh in Wales)	93.32%	87.90%
Welsh or Cymraeg (in England only)	0.02%	0.01%
Other UK language	0.00%	0.01%
Other European language	2.93%	4.36%
Asian	0.59%	3.41%
African	0.05%	0.36%
Sign language	0.03%	0.05%
Other language	0.20%	0.72%

**Disability** - Disabled people make up 18.7% of the North Somerset population, 40,533 people. This compares to 17.3% of the population nationally.

**Religion and Belief** – 46.6% of the population indicate that they are a Christian, with 45.26% indicating they have no religion, those with a religion other than Christianity make up 1.83% of the population.

Nationally the profile is: 46.32% Christianity, 36.67% no religion and 10.99% other religions.

**Sexual Orientation** – 90.60% of the population of North Somerset indicate they are Straight or Heterosexual, a further 6.76% of people opted to not answer the question. 2.64% of the population of North Somerset identify as Gay or Lesbian, Bisexual or all other sexual orientations.

Nationally the profile of 89.37% Straight or Heterosexual, 7.46% did not answer, 3.17% identify as Gay or Lesbian, Bisexual or all other sexual orientations.

**Gender Identity** – this was a voluntary question in the 2021 Census. In North Somerset 94.46% of people identify as the same gender that was registered at birth. 5.20% opted not to answer the question with 0.34% of people identifying as having a different sex registered at birth but no specific identity, Trans woman, Trans man, Non-binary or all other genders.

Nationally this compares 93.47% of people identify as the same gender that was registered at birth. 5.98% opted not to answer the question with 0.55% of people identifying as having a different sex registered at birth but no specific identity, Trans woman, Trans man, non-binary or all other genders.

**Unpaid Carers** – in North Somerset 4.80% of the population provide up to 19 hours of unpaid care per week, 1.60% between 20 and 49 unpaid care hours a week and 2.40% of people in North Somerset provide more than 50 unpaid care hours per week.

Armed Forces Community – 4.3% of the population of North Somerset have previously served in the UK Armed Forces or the UK reserve Armed Forces

**Deprivation** - Within the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019 the local authority district with a rank of 1 is the most deprived, and the area ranked 317 is the least deprived. North Somerset is ranked at 221.

North Somerset's rank of 221 for overall deprivation compares to a range of 48 to 274 in the South West. Torbay is the most deprived local authority area (48) in the South West, and Bath and North East Somerset is the least deprived (274). North Somerset has 5 LSOAs within the most deprived 5% in England, all within South and Central wards of Weston-super-Mare. There are 12 LSOAs within the least deprived 5% in England, these are spread across the district.

## 8. Consultation on the 2024/25 EIAs

Draft EIAs were published through the council's website on 21 December 2023, and Members have been encouraged to review and comment on them.

A stakeholder discussion group was held on 12 January 2024 to share information about the 'medium' or 'high' impact EIAs and to seek feedback on the issues raised.

The discussion group included representatives from:

- Citizens Advice North Somerset
- Voluntary Action North Somerset
- Disability Access Group
- Stand Against Racism and Inequality
- North Somerset People First
- Race Equality North Somerset

Helpful comments have also been received from UNISON.

Any further comments received on the EIAs prior to Members considering the Council's budget at their meeting of 20 February 2024 will also be shared with Members.

### 8.1 Summary of consultation with the Equality Stakeholder Group

At the consultation meeting information about the council's overall budget position was shared including information about our available resources, areas for budget growth and savings proposals.

The Equality Stakeholder Group welcome the opportunity to support the development of the EIAs by providing their views on the proposals made. It is important to note that their role within the process is not endorse, or otherwise, the budget proposal but to share their expert opinion on how they believe the changes will impact on the communities they represent and support.

They provided specific comments on each of the presented budget proposals, and these have been summarised below and incorporated into the EIAs.

In addition to specific comments, the group noted the cumulative impact of the 3 proposals listed below, with all having a potential greater impact on those in rural areas in North Somerset. When changes are made to transport or services based in localities in urban areas the availability of road networks, public transport, alternative services are often more easily obtained, in rural communities this will be more limited potentially leading to greater isolation and further inequalities in these areas.

## **8.2 Equality Stakeholder Group comments on 'medium' or 'high' impact EIAs**

Helpful, constructive feedback was received on the detailed EIAs that were presented as having a potential 'medium' or 'high' impact on equality groups, these included:

### **CHTR02/PD19/20 – Review the provision of Home to School Transport services**

- Concerns about the differences in impact for those who live in urban and rural areas, with those in urban areas having better access to walking routes, cycle ways etc.
- The impact (financial, time) on some families who may rely on home to school transport to help them manage travel to work, transport of other school aged children etc.
- Concerns re safety if young people travelling on public transport, particularly for disabled young people.
- What opportunities are there to link with voluntary services, other commercial services to support the delivery of the service?

### **SPCT02/PD18 – Review the delivery model of community transport**

- More information about the routes, usage etc should be added to the EIA to help the understanding of the impact
- Concerns re the greater impact in the North of the area as the Weston-super-Mare is well served with other forms of public transport
- Information was shared re the importance of transport for particularly older and disabled people using community transport for social and connectivity purposes, any reduction to the service could result in increased social isolation for those groups.
- The lack of confidence some disabled people have in accessing public transport

### **SPTC01/CH02 – The development of Family Hubs**

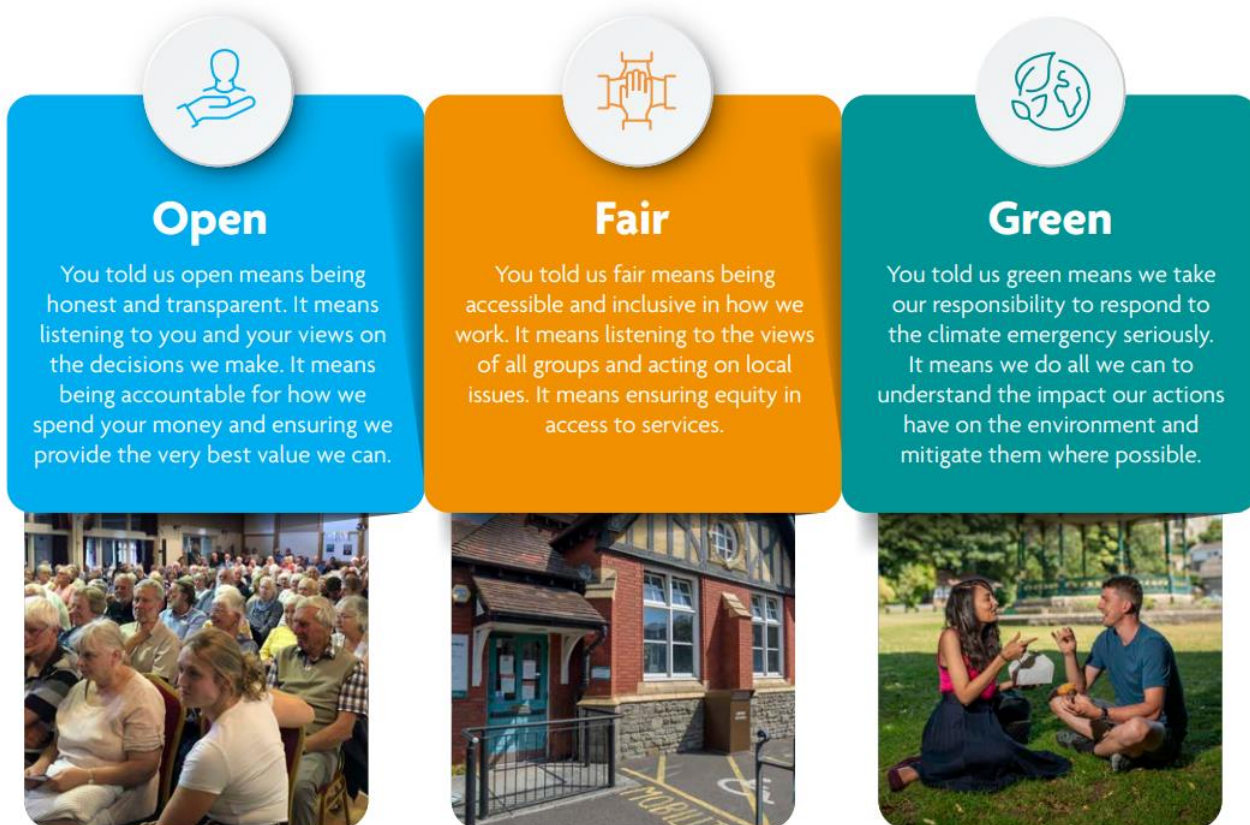
- The need for the project to consider preserving the important local relationships with equality groups that Children's Centres have developed within their locality, for example Yeo Valley with the Gypsy and Traveller community.
- Culture, literacy, disability, income can all effect the way that the services are accessed. The services offered by Family Hubs should be fully accessible. Transport to the buildings, accessibility within the building itself and the accessibility for all of digital and outreach services all need to be considered.
- Offer of support from the Equality Stakeholder Group to help inform the development of Family Hubs.
- Concerns that the centralising of Family Hubs will have a disproportionate impact on those who live in the rural areas of North Somerset.



### 8.3 Consultation on council budget and spending

As part of the Corporate Plan and budget development process we undertook an extensive engagement and consultation programme with residents and stakeholders, including Town and Parish Councils and equalities groups. This programme aimed to gather views to inform the development of the Corporate Plan ambitions and budget development including priorities and suggestions for saving and transformation options and was held in two phases, the engagement element for development and then the consultation element once drafts were produced.

Full details of the engagement and consultation programme are published with the papers for Executive on 7 February. Particular themes related to equalities groups include being inclusive in how we work, ensuring good access to services linked to equity of provision, and strengthening how we communicate, engage and consult. We have reflected these themes in our updated vision:



The infographic consists of three vertical panels, each with a colored background and a circular icon at the top. The first panel is blue and titled 'Open', featuring an icon of a hand holding a person. The second panel is orange and titled 'Fair', featuring an icon of hands holding a person. The third panel is teal and titled 'Green', featuring an icon of a globe with hands. Below each panel is a photograph illustrating the concept: a large group of people at a meeting for 'Open', a building entrance for 'Fair', and a man and woman talking on a lawn for 'Green'.

**Open**

You told us open means being honest and transparent. It means listening to you and your views on the decisions we make. It means being accountable for how we spend your money and ensuring we provide the very best value we can.

**Fair**

You told us fair means being accessible and inclusive in how we work. It means listening to the views of all groups and acting on local issues. It means ensuring equity in access to services.

**Green**

You told us green means we take our responsibility to respond to the climate emergency seriously. It means we do all we can to understand the impact our actions have on the environment and mitigate them where possible.

We have also committed to undertaking a systematic review of our success in across the Corporate Plan and MTFP period in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion using the Equality Framework for Local Government. It will be a key driver for how we will assess our progress against our equality commitments and statutory duties

## 9 Initial EIAs that identified a potential ‘medium’ or ‘high’ impact

The tables below provide a summary of the area initially assessed as ‘medium’ or ‘high’ impact and the mitigating actions being taken to reduce the level of potential impact wherever possible.

### Theme Reference: CHTR02

Children’s Transformation – Home to Schools Transport Services

**PD20** – Transformation activity to manage the increasing demand for home to schools transport services for children and young people within North Somerset

**2024/25 saving - £650,000**

<b>Reason for Full EIA</b> – Medium impact as a result of the potential changes for school aged pupils including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and those who are from low-income households			
<b>Summary of impacts listed in EIA</b>			
Disabled people	Medium	People in particular age groups	Medium
People from different ethnic groups	No	People in particular faith groups	No
Men or women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	Low	People who are married or in a civil partnership	No
Lesbian, gay or bisexual people	No	Transgender people	No
People on a low income	Low	Other groups, Parents and Carers	Low
<b>Impact level before mitigation: Medium</b>			
<b>Mitigation listed in EIA includes:</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considering a wide range of ways in which young people can travel to school</li> <li>• Engagement with stakeholders to ensure the best options are identified for the young people affected by any changes to the way they travel to school</li> <li>• Considering the ways in which young people can be supported through life skills development and Independent Travel Training enabling independence and supporting transition to adulthood</li> <li>• Early communication of any changes with young people affected and their parents and carers</li> </ul>			
<b>Impact level after mitigation: Low</b>			

**Theme Reference: SPTC01** – Services we provide to the community – Children’s Centres

**CH02** – The development of Family Hubs

**2024/25 saving - £150,000**

<b>Reason for Full EIA</b> – Any proposed changes to our Children’s Centres will have an impact on all children and families that use the centres across North Somerset. But we know there is a potential for changes to have a ‘high’ impact for parents and carers. Also a potential ‘medium’ impact on disabled people, those on a low income, people from different ethnic groups, women and certain age groups including children as some centres provide specific activities for these groups.
<b>Summary of impacts listed in EIA</b>



Disabled people	Low	People in particular age groups	Low
People from different ethnic groups	Medium	People in particular faith groups	No
Men or women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	Medium	People who are married or in a civil partnership	No
Lesbian, gay or bisexual people	No	Transgender people	No
People on a low income	Medium	Other groups: Parents and Carers	High
<b>Impact level before mitigation: High</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing engagement with Equality Stakeholder Group to ensure inclusion is considered in the development of Family Hubs.</li> <li>• Development of outreach service and improved online services from the Family Hubs</li> <li>• The accessibility of Family Hubs will be considered in their development</li> <li>• More detailed analysis of service use to be considered before implementation</li> </ul>			
<b>Impact level after mitigation: Medium</b>			

**Theme Reference: SPTC02 – Services we provide to the community – Transport PD18 – Review the delivery model of community transport 2024/25 saving £55,000**

<b>Reason for Full EIA –</b> The initial EIA assessed the potential impact as ‘high’ as we know that Community Transport is most likely to be used by older people, disabled people and those with a low income.			
<b>Summary of impacts listed in EIA</b>			
Disabled people	Medium	People in particular age groups	Medium
People from different ethnic groups	No	People in particular faith groups	No
Men or women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	Low	People who are married or in a civil partnership	No
Lesbian, gay or bisexual people	No	Transgender people	No
People on a low income	High	Other groups Those who live in rural areas of North Somerset	Low
<b>Impact level before mitigation: High</b>			
<b>Mitigation listed in EIA includes:</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with current Community Transport providers to encourage them to diversify the portfolio of their work.</li> <li>• A re-focus of Demand Responsive Transport for those with no access to a public bus network</li> <li>• Improved information about current bus network and timetables will be made available in Spring 2024</li> <li>• Consideration of work that could be done with bus companies to improve disabled people’s confidence to travel on public transport</li> </ul>			
<b>Impact level after mitigation: Medium</b>			

## 10. Impact on North Somerset Council staff

Given the scale of budget reductions, it is inevitable that there will be some impact on our staff. The council's stated policy is to avoid compulsory redundancy whenever possible, if workforce changes are required, we will commence consultation at the earliest possible opportunity, irrespective of the number of employees involved.

The following staff impacts have been identified in the published EIAs:

- The transformation of Childrens Social Care Services is currently underway, including a review of staffing structures, however it is anticipated that this will be positive as there is a recognition of the challenges faced in Childrens Social Care. The review also anticipates positive opportunities for training and career progression. (CHTR01/CH03)
- There are currently no identified staffing reductions in the proposal to develop family hubs however there maybe changes to work base location (SPTC01/CH02)
- One vacant post (since May 2022) will be deleted in libraries. There will also be a reconfiguration of hours of work to give better staff coverage across the week (SPTC01/PD16)
- A review of senior staffing structures is taking place in Adults Directorate. The review will seek to ensure parity and fairness. There is a potential impact on 2 posts, both vacant. (TWWW01/ASS15)
- A proposed review of staff structure in Placemaking and Growth will take place, savings could be met through the deletion of at least 1 vacant post (TWWW01/PD25)
- The plan to close and redevelop Castlewood will require staff who are currently based in Castlewood to have a new office base either at the Town Hall or other office across the district (TWWW02/CSD08)

Please note that the TWWW02/CSD08 – Savings following the closure and redevelopment of Castlewood is recorded as 'Low' impact for Service Users, but 'Medium' Impact for staff before mitigation. The full EIA includes a list of actions that are being taken to reduce the impact on staff to low. Please see full EIA for more information.

### 10.1 Diversity across Council Workforce

It may be helpful for Members to be aware of the overall profile of the Council's workforce, which is shown below, dated December 2023:

The Council currently employs around 1,560 people outside of schools.

**Age** - the age profile of the non-school workforce is shown in the table:

Age Range	Percentage
16 - 20	0.9%
21 - 30	11.6%
31 - 40	19.7%
41 - 50	26.2%
51 - 65	38.2%
Over 65	3.3%

**Sex** – 74.5% of the non-school workforce are female.

**Ethnicity** – 85% of the non-school workforce are from English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British Groups. The remaining 15% are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and 'Other White' groups. (Figures based on the number of staff who have declared their ethnicity on iTrent)

**Disability** – 15.6% of council staff have declared that they have a disability. (Figures based on the number of staff who have declared if they have a disability on iTrent)

**Gender re-assignment, sexual orientation & religion or belief** - there is insufficient data currently held to accurately report on the workforce profile in relation to these areas

## 11. Cumulative impact of Budget Reduction Proposals

### 11.1 Introduction

Creating a picture of how people are being affected by the Council's budget proposals and proposed future changes to services is difficult and complex. People are different in terms of their needs and expectations; people's interaction with public services and level of support they need will vary considerably.

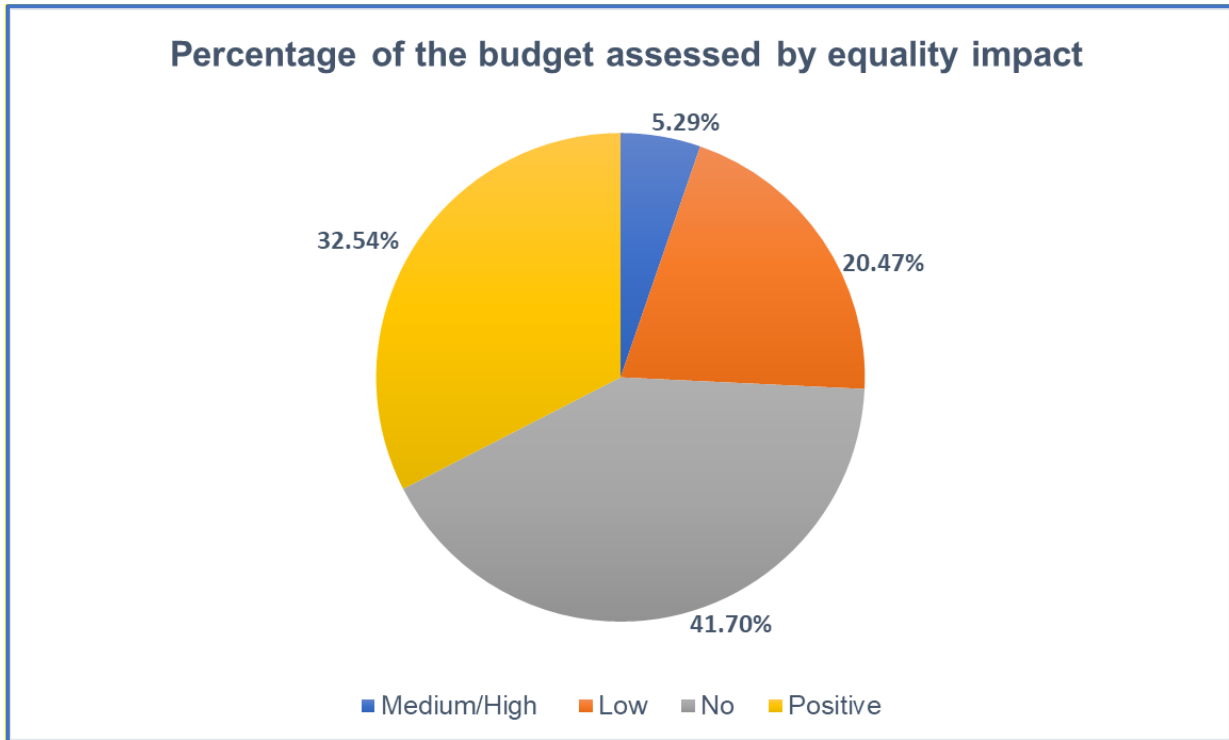
The publication of all EIAs at the same time and altogether in one place (in this report and on the council's website), in advance of Council considering the 2024/25 budget, should help Members gain an overall picture of the impact of the proposed changes.

In addition, this report identifies areas where protected groups may potentially be more effected by the budget reductions and how they have been considered in more detail and mitigating actions proposed.

### 11.2 Summary of Equality Impact Assessments

Analysis of the EIAs, show that 50 budget reduction proposals, grouped into 13 themes and have been assessed as having the following potential impact on equality groups:

- 9 assessments indicate that service users should see a positive impact as a result of the budget proposals. The value of these proposals is £5,262,000 or 32.54% of the value of the proposed budget savings.
- 16 assessments indicate that there should be 'no' impact on equality groups through the implementation of the budget reduction proposals. The value of these proposals is £6,743,000 or 41.7% of the value of the proposed budget savings
- 22 assessments indicate that there could be a 'low' impact on some equality groups through the implementation of the budget reduction proposals. The value of these proposals is £3,309,000 or 20.47%% of the value of the proposed budget savings.
- 3 assessments indicate that there could be a 'high' or 'medium' impact on some equality groups through the implementation of the budget proposals. The value of these proposals is £855,000 or 5.29%% of the value if the proposed budget savings. Although it should be noted that after mitigation actions it is assessed that the impact in both 'high' and 'medium' impact savings will be reduced.



### 11.3 Positive Impacts

9 of the 2024/25 budget proposals have identified a positive impact on equality groups. Improvements and innovations in delivering services has resulted in improved outcomes for service users, the method of delivery may have changed but positive outcomes are being achieved, examples of these include:

- Building on the existing housing with support plans to accommodate a shift away from residential care options (ADTR02/ASS08)
- Implementing a proactive approach to provide support, debt and recovery advice to ensure service user debts do not increase (ADTR01/ASS12)
- The ongoing development of Technology Enabled Care (TEC) and reablement services to improve long term outcomes for those using adult social care services. (ADTR01/ASS04)
- The re-set and re-design of the delivery of children’s social care to improve outcomes for those children who are currently looked after or on the edge of care. (CHTR01/CH03)

### 11.4 ‘No’ Impact Assessments

Through their assessments officers have identified 16 areas where they do not anticipate any impact on equality groups because of a change planned in the budget reduction proposals. Examples of the type of savings proposals which would have ‘no’ impact on equality groups include:

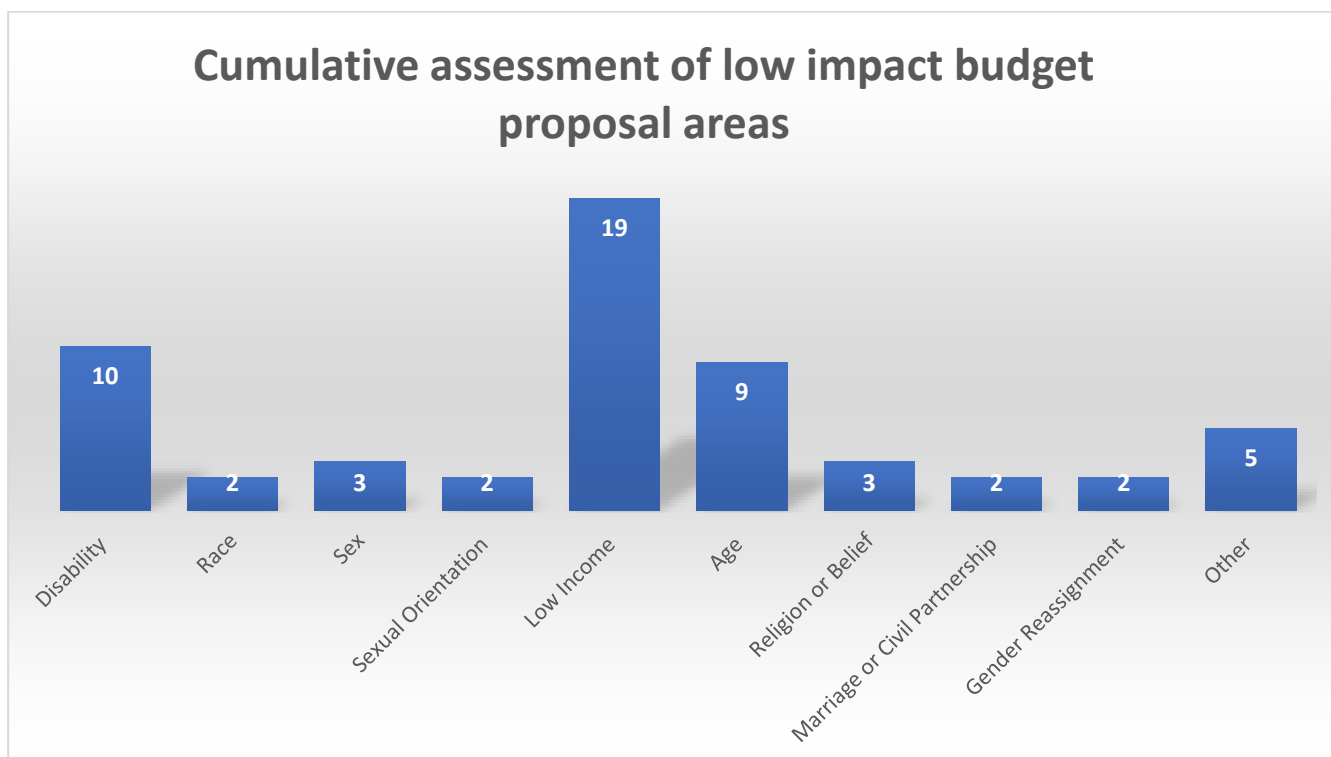
- Technical financial adjustments
- A review of services and contracts provided by external organisations to ensure maximum efficiencies
- Expansion of the commercial waste service.

- Changing the way we manage council assets by considering a Corporate Landlord Model

### 11.5 'Low' Impact Assessments'

22 proposals have been identified as having a potential 'low' impact on one or more equality groups.

The table below indicates the cumulative total of officer's assessments of the areas with a low impact:



Of note in this assessment is the impact on those on a low income, those in specific age groups whether older people or children, and disabled people

**Low income** – We acknowledge the risk that a cumulative impact of multiple proposals which aim to increase charging may have a negative impact on households who have a low income and people living in poverty unless this is adequately mitigated. We have worked to ensure price increases are kept as low as possible. We have also addressed this risk as far as possible by protecting frontline services and prioritising services for those most in need. Changes in important areas such as social care will continue to adopt a means tested approach to ensure affordability of any proposed changes.

**Age** – A significant amount of our services are 'age -based', either for children or older people so by default any changes to those services will have an impact on those in a particular age group. Any changes to those services need to ensure they consider the way that people of different ages access services, for example this includes the consideration of the way that older people access information and services when planning digital and online services, young people rely on public transport to access facilities etc.

**Disability** – Any proposed changes to services must ensure that they continue to consider the need to provide accessible and alternative solutions to enable disabled people to access information and services. Any changes in charges for services that aim to benefit or support disabled people should also be reviewed to ensure we are not impacting upon our duty to advance equality of opportunity.

The impact on service users and council staff continues to be monitored as budget proposals are implemented and measures put in place to further reduce impact wherever possible.

## 12. Conclusion

Whilst the MTFP for 2024/25 is proposing higher levels of savings than have been required in previous years, the council's budget proposals do also include increased spending plans of over £30 million and over half of this increase will be put into supporting adults and children's social care and transport related budgets.

From an equalities perspective it is very positive to note that the much of the focus associated with the delivery of the £16 million of savings proposals continues to be on driving efficiencies from reviewing the way that we work, transforming our services and also reviewing income to ensure that the council principles of full cost recovery and not subsidising discretionary services are maintained as all of these proposals will help to protect front line services wherever possible. In particular the approach to:

- Maximising independence and well-being in Adult Social Care and providing needs based services to our children and young people and also
- Reviewing our assets and delivering efficiencies within our processes and the commissioning of our contracts

This is reflected in there being just 3 budget proposals that have been identified as having a potential 'high' or 'medium' impact EIAs.

Through a more detailed review of these savings, officers have identified a range of options to mitigate the impact of the savings and the potential level of impact has been reduced in all 3 budget proposals.

## 13. Monitoring the Impacts of the budget reduction proposals

Within each EIA there is detailed information about the mitigating actions that are being taken to ensure that any impact is reduced where possible. The budget proposals are regularly monitored by the Corporate Leadership Team, the Executive, and Policy & Scrutiny Panels.