

2025/26 Budget Equality Impact Assessment

1. The Project

Directorate:	Corporate Services
Theme or area:	Marketing and Communications
Lead Officer:	Deb Porter
Date:	3 December 2024

Budget Reference	Budget Proposal	2025/26 Budget reduction (£)	2026/27 Budget reduction (£)	2027/28 Budget reduction (£)
CSD05	Stop producing North Somerset Life and use other ways to engage with residents together with reducing the net cost of communications service through scaling back activity levels and increasing income from supporting specific programmes and projects.	£100,000	£0	£0

Description of the project:

Life magazine is delivered to about 107,000 households across North Somerset twice a year (spring/summer and autumn/winter) and is one of our important channels of communication as it's delivered to every household via Royal Mail, including residents who are digitally excluded.

The magazine highlights our services, aims and ambitions for North Somerset with articles on a wide range of subjects, such as recycling and waste, tackling the climate emergency, adult and children's social care initiatives, promoting our places, and more. It also regularly promotes our fostering service. Every foster carer who steps forward significantly reduces the council's expenditure on more costly children social care placements.

Paper and distribution costs are rising rapidly, though, and so stopping publication would save the council money. However, this could mean that local residents have less access to council news, information about our services and signposting for help, support and advice.

To mitigate this, we will continue to grow and develop our digital e-newsletter and other communications channels. The digital newsletter currently goes out to about 106,000 email addresses monthly and regularly has an open rate of about 45 per cent. We will continue to

gather email addresses where possible to increase this digital growth, as well as developing the North Somerset Life web microsite.

Summary of changes:

If we stop publication of the magazine completely, there will be no printed editions and we will need to rely on digital communication (the digital e-newsletter, Life microsite, social media) to get our messages across.

Are any of the proposals within this theme a continuation of a previous medium-term financial plan saving?

Yes No

If yes, please insert reference number and year of assessment?

Budget Proposal	Year of assessment	Budget Reference
Reduce printed edition of Life magazine from three to two per year, and increase income opportunities	2023/4	CSD7

If yes, please describe what steps you have taken to review the equality impacts from previous years?

Following the previous reduction in frequency for the magazine, we took a number of steps to mitigate the impact:

- We encourage readers of the e-newsletter to share the contents with anyone they know who isn't online. Wording at the bottom of each e-newsletter says: Do you know someone who would enjoy reading this e-newsletter but doesn't have internet access? Free internet access is available in all our libraries and staff can provide assistance to anyone who wants to read our online news and features. Just ask at the library counter.
- Free computer use in our libraries is also promoted. Each month a poster is displayed in each library location, outlining the stories in that digital edition. People are encouraged to ask at the library counter if they want to read any of these stories, and that they will be shown how to use the computers for free, with any pages printed out for free.
- Cardboard signs have also been produced to be displayed near the library computers, promoting the e-newsletter, microsite and social media accounts.
- Extra copies of the printed magazine were also delivered to VANS, for it to distribute through its community contact points, therefore helping to reach more marginalised groups of people.

2. Customer equality impact summary

Will the changes proposed in this project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) for any of these groups?

Insert X into one box per row, for impact level and type.

H = High, M = Medium, L = Low, N = None
 + = Positive, - = Negative

Protected or significant group	Impact Level				Impact type	
	H	M	L	N	+	-
Disabled people (Including the consideration of neurodiversity)		X				X
People from different ethnic groups				X		
Men or women (including those who are pregnant or on maternity leave)				X		
People who are LGBTQ+				X		
People on a low income		X				X
People in particular age groups		X				X
People in particular faith groups				X		
People who are married or in a civil partnership				X		
People who are undergoing gender reassignment				X		
Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents. Please specify:				X		

3. Explanation of customer impact

Disabled people: medium impact - we currently produce large print and audio editions of the magazine for visually impaired people. The audio editions are also available through a talking news service via Alexa devices. Stopping the magazine completely will mean visually impaired residents will not get news/information about council services in these formats. We are looking into whether it is possible and viable to include E-Life in audio format.

People on a low income: medium impact - people on lower incomes might have restricted digital access and therefore prefer a printed copy of the magazine through the door. They will potentially have less access to our alternative sources of information.

People in particular age groups: medium impact - our previous reader surveys (such as the Citizen’s Panel, Place Surveys and the BVPI General Survey) show us the magazine is popular and read by older people. There is a risk that we will be cutting them off from accessing council news.

The other impacts are listed as neutral because we don’t have data or information about council information preferences for these groups.

Please describe how you will communicate these changes to those impacted.

Through the digital e-newsletter, on the website and through social media. We are also exploring whether there are other suitable council maildrops we could use to promote further E-Life sign up.

4. Staff equality impact summary

Are there any staffing implications for this proposal? **Yes** **No**

Explanation of staff impact

A proposed 0.25FTE reduction in hours (9.25 hours) for the Marketing and Communications Publications Editor, who is a permanent member of staff who works 28 hours per week.

5. Cumulative equality impacts

Is this project linked to or likely to have an impact on any other service areas?

Not in 2025/26 although the planned mitigating actions linked to libraries could be impacted in future years due to the review of the libraries delivery model.

6. Action Plan

Are there any further actions that should be taken because of this Equality Impact Assessment?

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
People on low incomes who are more likely to be digitally excluded no longer receiving council information direct to their home in a printed format	Work with Citizens Advice Bureau, Job Centres and via the North Somerset Together Network to continue to share key council service information and news. Ensure residents are aware support, advice and help is available from North Somerset libraries and continue	Ness Andrews / Deborah Porter	September 2025

	<p>to promote E-Life stories via posters in libraries.</p> <p>Also consider other council service mailshots and signpost to accessing council services (via libraries etc) or signing up for E-Life.</p>		
<p>People with disabilities who receive council news and information via a printed copy of Printed Life through their door or via the online audio edition</p>	<p>We will continue to develop E-Life and encourage sign-up. We will also explore including E-Life in audio format via home devices (Alexa etc) so council news and information continues to be available in alternative formats.</p> <p>Ensure frontline service staff are aware of latest council information and news and can share this with residents.</p>	<p>Ness Andrews / Deborah Porter</p>	<p>March 2025</p>
<p>Older people who may not be digitally enabled who relied on a printed life magazine through their door for council news and information</p>	<p>Consider other council service mailshots and signpost to accessing council services (via libraries etc) or signing up for E-Life.</p> <p>Encourage friends and family to share council information and news with neighbours, family members etc who may be digitally excluded.</p> <p>Promote the library as a place to obtain the latest E-Life copy with support from library staff if needed.</p> <p>Ensure frontline service staff are aware of latest council information and news and can share this with residents.</p> <p>Poster displayed in libraries, CAB etc highlighting E-Life's key stories and that support is available to read the article if needed.</p>	<p>Ness Andrews / Deborah Porter</p>	<p>March 2025</p>

