

## Equality Impact Assessments

### Background Information

Service area:	Council-wide
Directorate:	Council-wide
Budget proposal reference number/s:	2024/25 budget – Overarching EQIA
Completed by: Ellen McManus-Fry Date: 29/01/2024	Approved by: Date:

#### **Provide a brief explanation of the budget proposal/s:**

- What are the intended outcomes?
- Who will be affected by the proposal?
- Does this conflict with any statutory responsibilities or requirements?

#### Introduction

The 2024/25 budget details how the Council intends to use the financial resources available to it to deliver services to residents of the Borough. To a large extent services are determined by the statutory framework in which local authorities operate. Where there is discretion, the Council serves as the framework for decision making. The financial situation for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead is currently challenging, as it is for many local authorities, and the requirement to set a balanced budget and establish a secure financial footing in the longer term necessitates difficult decisions about where to target limited financial resources.

In assessing the impact of this budget, it is important to recognise that the majority of the Council's spending is directed towards Children's and Adults' Services. The individuals and families accessing and supported by these services include a disproportionate number with particular protected characteristics, such as older adults accessing social care; disabled individuals and their families and carers; and children in care. The overall impact of changes in Council spending can therefore be expected to show a bias towards those groups.

The current economic climate presents significant challenges for the Council and the residents it serves, and so there is a drive towards more efficient and appropriate use of its spending. The Council is committed to protecting the most vulnerable members of our community, whilst pursuing cost-effective solutions to support the enablement and empowerment of those with a lower level of need alongside a longer-term approach of prevention and early intervention.

To support these aims of protecting our most vulnerable residents the budget includes proposed increased spending on:

- Adults social care - £5.7m additional spending to meet the rising costs of care and to ensure that the budget is based on the numbers of adults requiring support. This is alongside transformation of the service.
- Additional investment into children's services to meet rising demand, costs of care and legal fees.

- £400,000 additional funding for temporary accommodation to meet rising demand and costs.

### Equality impact assessment process

The consideration of the impact upon protected characteristics and vulnerable groups has been paramount through this budget process. As part of the process, savings proposals were reviewed to identify those where equality impact assessment was necessary, and this assessment was undertaken to highlight relevant equality considerations and the potential mitigations which may be employed. These EQIAs were subsequently published as part of the consultation on the budget and attracted feedback from the public.

Investment (growth) proposals, where not driven by statutory requirements, have been driven by the Council Plan and related plans and strategies. The Council Plan was itself developed with regard to protected characteristics and is linked to the council's Equality Objectives.

In the case of both savings and growth proposals, further EQIAs will be required if and when proposals are agreed and as delivery plans are developed. There will therefore be additional opportunities to refine our understanding of the equality impacts involved and to explore measures to avoid or mitigate negative impacts upon vulnerable groups.

### Consultation

The public consultation was widely promoted through multiple external and internal channels, and available in both digital and hard copy format to maximise its accessibility. Engagement was undertaken with a range of voluntary groups and organisations to increase the diversity of respondents and ensure that individuals who may be disproportionately impacted had the opportunity to respond.

Among the respondents to the consultation, there was an overrepresentation of middle-aged adults (45-64 years) and people from a white ethnic background. People under 45 years are underrepresented, whereas the proportion of respondents over 65 reflects the proportion of that age group in the wider population. Specific engagement was undertaken with the Youth Council who submitted a collective response to the budget. There was a significant underrepresentation of respondents from black and ethnic minority backgrounds, although a large proportion (18%) preferred not to state their ethnicity. The proportion of respondents who stated they had a disability was lower than would be expected, based on recent census data. However, the consultation survey was promoted through the Disability and Inclusion Forum and the Learning Disability Partnership Board received a briefing and provided feedback on key budget proposals. Consultation responses have been considered in the development of this budget and further consultation on specific proposals will be undertaken prior to implementation.

### Equality Impact Analysis

	<p><b>How do the protected characteristics influence the needs of individuals within this proposal?</b></p> <p><b>How might these characteristics affect the impact of the proposal?</b></p> <p><b>(If no influence on impact, state 'N/A')</b></p>	<p><b>Overall impact</b></p>
<p><b>Age</b></p>	<p><u>Older people</u></p> <p>The changes to and reviews of adult social care are focused on promoting independence and reablement and making best use of assets within the community and within an individual's family. These proposals follow evidence-based approaches that seek to provide the right service at the right time so that residents are able to live independent lives for as long as possible, whilst maintaining their safety. Overall, this should have a positive impact upon older adults who access adult social care.</p> <p>The proposal to develop a nursing home, owned by the Council and run by Optalis, will increase the capacity for state-funding nursing care and will provide good quality care to individuals with higher levels of need in a cost-effective way. The proposals around developments to the existing reablement service; an increased capacity for reviews of domiciliary and 1:1 care arrangements; and the consideration of alternative arrangements to residential accommodation will increase the opportunities for people to remain independent and in their own homes. Other proposals which may affect older people include the proposals to use Direct Payments and Individual Support Plans to enable more personalised support, and greater engagement with the support offered by community groups in order to provide a greater degree of flexibility in the care (and associated costs) available to individuals.</p> <p>Proposals that affect how services and information are delivered may also affect older people, such as replacing the out of hours noise service with a smartphone app-based system which may negatively impact older people who are less comfortable with this technology. Similarly, ending the publication of the Around The Royal Borough magazine and prioritising digital channels of communication may negatively impact older people, who evidence shows place a higher priority on printed information. The changes to the in-person</p>	<p>There will be some negative impacts through necessary savings, particularly where individuals experience disadvantage related to a combination of protected characteristics, such as age and disability. However, the overall approach is designed to improve outcomes in the medium term, to mitigate impacts to the most vulnerable and to strengthen preventative services, and will therefore have an ultimately positive impact.</p>

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	<p>services and facilities currently provided at the Guildhall may also have a similar impact to older people who prefer in-person interactions.</p> <p>Older people, specifically those with dementia, will also be negatively affected by the removal of the Library Inclusions Officer post and the associated services that role supports.</p> <p><u>Children and younger people</u>            Younger age groups will be disproportionately affected by changes to Children's Services. Within this group, children with disabilities and from lower socio-economic groups will experience greater impact due to their overrepresentation among those children and young people who are in care or in need.</p> <p>The focus on a 'Family First' approach will impact on children by considering placements with family/friends as an alternative to a children in care placement.</p> <p>The reduction of home to school transport to statutory levels will affect children over 16 years although the statutory provision will maintain it for those most in need of this service.</p> <p>Some of the proposals on the provision for residents with learning disabilities and mental health care needs are expected to benefit younger adults in particular by increasing the local provision for supported, independent living and enabling more service users to stay closer to their family home.</p> <p>The proposals around local temporary accommodation provision will also benefit children in families affected by homelessness by enabling them to maintain local school places.</p> <p>Children, including infants and those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, may be negatively affected by the removal of the Library Inclusions Officer post and the associated services that role supports.</p>	

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<p><b>Disability</b></p>	<p>The changes to and reviews of adult social care are focused on promoting independence and reablement and making best use of assets within the community and within an individual's family. These follow evidence- and experience-based approaches to reduce dependency and ensure that individuals receive appropriate levels of care and support which enable them to achieve better outcomes, and should therefore have a positive impact upon disabled individuals who access social care.</p> <p>This includes the creation of supported living accommodation in Windsor for adults with learning disabilities, the 'Shared Lives' programme and reviewing opportunities for independence in the lives of individuals with learning disabilities or mental health care needs.</p> <p>Proposed changes to community day support intend to expand the activities and services provided by Boyn Hill Day Centre. However, reductions in other location-based day services in Windsor will impact those individuals who access those services. A number of transport options will be provided to facilitate access and a consultation is also planned on this proposal. Dialogue with affected residents and their carers will be undertaken where necessary to support them in understanding and accepting these changes.</p> <p>Proposals that affect how services are delivered may also affect disabled people, such as replacing the out of hours noise service with a smartphone app-based system which may negatively impact disabled people if the system does not fit their accessibility needs. Similarly, ending the publication of the Around The Royal Borough Magazine and prioritising digital channels of communication may negatively impact disabled people, who evidence shows place a higher priority on printed information. The changes to the in-person services and facilities currently provided at the Guildhall may also have a similar impact to disabled people who prefer in-person interactions and have accessibility needs.</p>	<p>As above</p>

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	<p>The physical accessibility needs of individuals with disabilities will also be considered in order for disabled residents to benefit from proposals such as temporary accommodation provision.</p> <p>Disabled people, particularly those with learning disabilities and autism, may be negatively affected by the removal of the Library Inclusions Officer post and the services and partnership work that role supports.</p> <p>Children with disabilities may also be impacted by the reduction of transport to school provision to statutory levels.</p>	
<p><b>Sex</b></p>	<p>Potential impacts around the protected characteristic of sex are primarily based on sex-based biases within those accessing certain services.</p> <p>The majority of older people in residential care are female, so the proposals around nursing and residential care would have a greater impact on female residents.</p> <p>Other sex-specific impacts include the consideration of the specific needs of women presenting as homeless in the provision offered at the John West facility, and the potential negative impact to men of the loss of the Library Inclusions Officer post and the men's health activities it supports.</p>	<p>As above</p>
<p><b>Race, Ethnicity and Religion/Belief</b></p>	<p>The potential impacts related to race and ethnicity are primarily related to disproportionate representation of certain ethnic backgrounds and religious beliefs within those accessing certain services.</p> <p>The proposed changes to the Hackney Carriage and private hire appeals process will disproportionately affect black and ethnic minority individuals who make up the majority of licenced drivers in the borough.</p> <p>The recent increase in asylum seekers presenting as homeless or rough sleeping means that the provision of more temporary accommodation within the borough will have a positive impact upon this group.</p>	<p>As above</p>

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	<p>The review of the offer of transport to school provision to excluded pupils may have a disproportionate impact on children from certain ethnic groups, as the likelihood of exclusion varies with ethnicity.</p>	
<p><b>Sexual Orientation and Gender Reassignment</b></p>	<p>The budget is unlikely to disproportionately or differentially impact individuals based upon this protected characteristic.</p>	
<p><b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b></p>	<p>The budget is unlikely to disproportionately or differentially impact individuals based upon this protected characteristic.</p>	
<p><b>Care experience*</b> (children in care and care leavers)</p>	<p>The implementation of a 'Child by Child' savings plan will impact on children in care by reviewing placements to ensure that they meet the needs of the children and young people and should be expected to have an overall positive impact.</p>	<p>As above</p>
<p><b>Socio-economic disadvantage*</b> (e.g. low income, poverty)</p>	<p>Individuals living in socio-economic disadvantage will be mainly affected by increases to or introduction of charges and reduction of supported services. The impacts of recent increases in fees and charges, including parking fees, were covered in separate papers and will not be discussed here.</p> <p>Some of the proposals within Adult Social Care should benefit those on lower incomes by providing alternatives to higher cost nursing care, such as council-run placements and community support, and allowing access to a wider range of national benefits to support their care.</p> <p>Individuals experiencing socio-economic disadvantage associated with homelessness will benefit from the provision of temporary accommodation at John West House.</p> <p>Ending the publication of the Around the Royal Borough Magazine and prioritising digital channels of communication may negatively impact people experiencing financial difficulty, who evidence shows place a higher priority on printed information.</p>	<p>As above</p>

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	<p>People experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, particularly those who meet certain criteria in terms of indices of deprivation, may be negatively affected by the removal of the Library Inclusions Officer post and the services that role supports.</p> <p>The review of the offer of transport to school provision to excluded pupils may have a disproportionate impact on children experiencing socio-economic difficulties as data shows that children in receipt of Free School Meals are more likely to be excluded.</p>	
<p><b>Marriage and Civil Partnership</b> (in respect of employment discrimination only)</p>	<p>The budget is unlikely to disproportionately or differentially impact individuals based upon this protected characteristic.</p>	
<p><b>Armed Forces Community*</b> (in respect of access to public services)</p>	<p>Members of the Armed Forces community may be negatively affected by the removal of the Library Inclusions Officer post and the Army Covenant work that role supports.</p>	<p>As above</p>

\*These are not legally protected characteristic and there is no legal requirement to consider the impact upon these groups. However, they are voluntarily included here to enable consideration of the impact of the budget upon other groups who experience certain types of disadvantage

**Where a potential negative impact has been identified, what measures would be put in place to mitigate or minimise it?**

The Council is committed to ensuring that all residents, particularly those who may be most vulnerable, are supported to achieve positive outcomes, and that they have the benefit of efficient, cost-effective services which take account of their needs as individuals and enable them to thrive and live independent lives.

The impact of some proposals, particularly those involving a move to digital services and information sharing, will be mitigated through improvements in the information available on the RBWM website and a more targeted approach to the use of other means of engagement and communication. The change to the in-person Community Day Support services will be mitigated through an expanded transport offer. Clear, timely communication with service users and effective coordination with delivery partners will also



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be important in mitigating any negative impacts to individuals accessing adult social care and Community Day Support.

Where appropriate, individuals will be signposted to alternative services and resources delivered by partners or by other organisations within the community. This approach also aligns with work being carried out across the Council to strengthen community-based services and develop preventative solutions, to reduce demand on high threshold services and enable residents to achieve better outcomes.