

Equality Impact Assessment

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed

2020/21 Provisional Budget and Three-Year Medium Term Financial Strategy

Directorate: RESOURCES

Service: Council-wide

Name and job title of person doing the assessment

Name: Clare Muir

Job Title: Policy and Voluntary Sector Manager

Date of assessment: 20th November 2019

What is the aim of your policy or new service?

Full Council approved a revenue budget for 2019/20 including a three-year Medium Term Financial Strategy [MTFS] in February 2019. That budget was balanced over the three years and did not rely on the use of reserves.

In building an updated detailed budget for 2020/21 and MTFS for 2020/21 to 22/23 the need to re-validate the assumptions around the next two years and look to changes required by incorporating a further new year is required.

In monitoring and reporting on progress to deliver the existing planned three year savings through the savings tracker process, a number of individual proposals have been identified as being undeliverable in the manner in which they had originally been proposed. As a consequence, a number of savings are proposed to be removed (or deferred to later years)

which sees £3,025k of savings removed over the existing three-year MTFS period.

In addition to the above requested removal or re-profiling of existing agreed savings, a further £1,850k have been re-profiled into the fourth year 2022/23 which was not previously included in currently agreed MTFS but becomes part of the new planning horizon when setting the next MTFS.

Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

Residents and service users will benefit from the Council setting a balanced and affordable budget that ensures the Council's finances are sustainable. The budget is underpinned by funding service areas to meet the Council's wider priorities and service delivery themes set out in its Corporate Plan of:

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- Securing the economic success of Reading;
- Improving access to decent housing to meet local needs;
- Protecting and enhancing the life outcomes of vulnerable adults and children.
- Keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe.
- Promoting great education, leisure and cultural opportunities for people in reading;
- Ensuring the Council is Fit for the Future

Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?

Residents, businesses, councillors and council staff in Reading.

Our Citizens Panel has told us that the things that are the most important in making somewhere a good place to live are: level of crime, health services, public transport, clean streets and good schools and the things they believed most needed improving are: roads and pavement repairs, the level of traffic congestion, clean streets, the level of crime and affordable decent housing.

Assessment of Relevance and Impact

The draft budget proposes 77 new business cases for change set out in (Appendices 1-3). The Equality duty has been considered for each of these proposed savings. For 58 of these the Equality Duty is not relevant to the changes proposed or no negative impact is identified under the Equality Duty.

For 19 of the proposed changes an Equality Impact Assessment will be required as the proposals are developed. These are:

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Ref	Change Proposal	Reason for Equality Impact Assessment
DOR-2021-03 & 06	New Customer Services Strategy Making the Customer Service and Corp Improvement function more efficient	Improvements to Complaints and Information Governance will lead to enhanced service offering to customers. This proposal is likely to affect around 120 staff. The proposals for the changes in the operating model will be consulted on as per the organisations staff consultation process.
DEGNS-2021-04	Review of Rents on Garages and Shops	Increased costs for some tenants/leaseholders. May impact on accessibility and sustainability of local shops and may negatively impact some equality groups.
DEGNS-2021-07	Food waste and smaller bins	Possible that some (racial, disability, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others
DEGNS-2021-13	Fundamental Service review of Highways	The review aims to identify potential positive outcomes that can be implemented for external and internal stakeholders. But these have yet to be determined as the FSR has only just commenced.
DEGNS-2021-16	Cultural Services - internal reconfiguration and transformation	A review of service delivery is underway to be implemented for 2021/22.
DEGNS-2021-22	Borough wide Car Parking and Air Quality Management Strategy (BCAMS)	Aims to ensure the potential schemes are delivered and the aspirations of the Council's declared Climate Emergency and LTP are addressed. Statutory consultation will take place in December 2020.
DEGNS-2021-26	Fundamental Service Review - Parking	The review aims to identify potential positive outcomes that can be implemented for external and internal

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		stakeholders. But these have yet to be determined as the FSR has only just commenced.
DEGNS-2021-33	Fundamental Service Review - Business Support (Planning, Building Control & Regulatory Services)	A reduction in business support staff across the three service areas of 4 FTE as a result of improved service delivery mechanisms such as automation.
DEGNS-2021-34	FM/Building Cleaning Fundamental Service Review (FSR)	The review aims to identify potential positive outcomes that can be implemented. But these have yet to be determined as the FSR has not yet commenced.
DEGNS-2021-35	Parks and Cleansing Fundamental Service Review	The review aims to realise efficiency savings and improved outcomes for service users but these have yet to be determined as the FSR has not yet commenced.
DEGNS-2021-40	Fundamental Service Review - Housing	The review aims to identify potential positive outcomes that can be implemented but these have yet to be determined as the FSR has not yet commenced.
DACHS-2021-11	Asset Review	Service users and carers will be impacted as the new models may result in a move of service whilst more improved accommodation is sought. Providers may be impacted depending on the model of service chosen (e.g. increase or decrease of services purchased externally). Staff may be impacted depending on the chosen service delivery models.
DACHS-2021-16	Review of Public Health Expenditure	Public health investment in leisure services is being made to ensure all residents benefit from the improvement to health increasing physical activity levels can bring.

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		Mitigation plans will be developed to avoid potential impacts on other areas, however, some residents may potentially experience a reduction in the availability of other services, in particular: access to residential alcohol rehabilitation placements (from 3 per annum to 1), capacity to treat opioid/non-opioid users (a 5% reduction) and access to contraceptive services.
DACHS-2021-19	Supporting young people into adulthood	<p>The proposed change would ideally have only positive impacts on service users and their families, although the shift away from a long-term care to short-term intensive work focused on maximising independence could represent a culture shift in some cases that would require considered care planning and careful communication.</p> <p>The proposed change would impact on current staff in Adult Social Care and Brighter Futures for Children who currently support transitions clients. Consideration would also need to be given to how the proposed new service could be best situated to ensure that it receives a strategic direction from Education and Health as well as BFfC and ASC, and whether it would be disadvantageous for the team to form part of the Locality Team Workforce Review.</p>
DACHS-2021-20	Adult Social Care Day Service Reconfiguration	Any changes to the way day services are configured would impact on service users who use the services, their families / carers who may be reliant on it for respite and the day service providers themselves who may

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		<p>already be struggling in the current economic climate. As such the project will need to include intensive consultation with stakeholders to ensure that any proposals are co-produced.</p> <p>Depending on the option approved there may be implications for internal teams, for example Direct Payments or internal day services having more (or less) placements.</p>
DACHS-2021-21	Outcomes-Based Service Delivery	<p>Service users and their families could experience a shift from a "cared for" environment to a "supported to" environment; the rationale for and benefits of this approach will need to be discussed and agreed in the course of care planning sessions, progressing only if all parties agree that this is in the service user's best interest.</p> <p>Locality Team staff may (if the pilot is successful) face a culture change in moving away from the current "cared for" style of care planning to a more "supported to" style of care planning. This will require preparatory communications and case studies to demonstrate the value of this change (gathered from the Pilot phase).</p> <p>Workforce and Finance Teams will need to be consulted in the event that a decision is made to implement this approach to care planning across the directorate, as the shift will likely require additional wide scale training.</p>
DACHS-2021-22	Additional DACHS Staffing Efficiencies	<p>Whilst the intention remains to ensure that external customers receive a streamlined service depending on the changes required there may be impacts in how people access the</p>

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		DACHS services. Staff within the Directorate will be impacted by these changes and therefore formal consultation will be undertaken.
DACHS-2021-23	Enhanced Reablement for Mental Health & Learning Disability Service Users	Depending on the model chosen the way service users receive services may change for people with Mental Health issues or a Learning Disability. Staff will be required to work differently and will need to be trained accordingly.

Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken and the outcomes reported back for consideration by the relevant committee as proposals are developed.

The consultation on the Budget specifically asked what adverse impact the proposals might have. Both in response to this question and in response to the consultation in general, a number of respondents commented that an increase in Council Tax would have an impact on vulnerable groups most likely to experience low income particularly elderly people, people with a disability and families with young children.

Respondents suggested the impacts could be mitigated by communicating changes clearly and introducing more support for vulnerable groups. To improve communication with residents the Council is committing to:

- A new website design with an improved ‘news and updates’ function;
- A twice-yearly residents newsletter delivered to every household in the Borough;
- Monthly e-newsletters which anyone can sign up to receive;
- Better engagement with partners;
- Increased promotion of consultations and opportunities to influence Council policy and decision making.

The Council’s budget makes provision to help its care leavers with their Council Tax bills on a tapering basis. It should also be noted that other vulnerable groups are eligible for support with their Council Tax bills. The Government’s prescribed default scheme for older people can provide Council Tax Support of up to 100% dependent on circumstances. Those of working age can apply for support of up to 65% of their Council Tax Liability, through the Council’s Local Council Tax Support Scheme.

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The Council recently consulted on three changes to our current Council Tax Support scheme, which would benefit those eligible for Council Tax support. The changes remove the need to re-apply for Council Tax Support when migrating from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit; disregard Severe Disability Transitional payments from the income calculation; and provides greater clarity on the treatment of excess Council Tax Support. The consultation saw nearly 1,600 responses with over 80% in favour of the recommended changes, which will be implemented from the 1st April 2020.

The Council is also looking to adopt the Citizens Advice Council Tax Protocol to improve partnership working with the advice sector and better support those residents that are struggling financially. The process will result in better communication, with targeted campaigns to ensure residents are receiving all the support to which they are entitled.