

Chesterfield Borough Council Equality Impact Assessment - Full Assessment Form

<i>Title of the policy, project, service, function or strategy:</i>	Budget Strategy Implementation Plan (Stage 1)	
<i>Service Area:</i>	Finance	
<i>Section:</i>	Finance	
<i>Lead Officer:</i>	Theresa Channell	
<i>Date of assessment:</i>	31.10.23	
<i>Is the policy, project, service, function or strategy:</i>		
<i>Existing</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Changed</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>New / Proposed</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Section 1 – Clear aims and objectives

1. What is the aim of the policy, project, service, function or strategy?

The purpose of the Budget Strategy Implementation Plan is to set out the next stages in the Council's plans for developing the medium-term financial plan for 2024-25 to 2027-28. It leads on from the Budget strategy that was approved by Cabinet and Council in July.

At this stage in the plan, Cabinet is being asked:

1. To approve the launch of a Budget Conversation with residents, businesses and stakeholders across the borough to set out the challenges that the Council is facing and to seek feedback on the proposed strategic approach to achieving a balanced MTFP.
2. To authorise officers to progress with the delivery of the operational savings proposals set out in the budget strategy implementation plan – stage 1.
3. To approve the delivery of savings proposals set out in the budget strategy implementation plan – stage 1, that require a Cabinet decision.

4. To approve in principle the proposals set out in the budget strategy implementation plan – stage 2.
5. To authorise officers to progress the development of the proposals through to appropriate decision-making, in line with the Councils constitution, including carrying out more specific engagement and consultation activities as required to support the decision making.

Launching the budget conversation and communications will ensure local people understand the size and scale of the challenge, and that future expectations are managed.

Scope of this EIA

This initial EIA measures the impact of items 1-3 above - launching the budget conversation, and proposals at stage 1 of the implementation plan. As the stage 2 and further budget proposals (4-5 above) are developed, individual equality impact assessments will be undertaken to help identify mitigating action as appropriate and to enable an assessment of the cumulative impact of the budget decisions.

2. Who is intended to benefit from the policy and how?

The council, like local authorities across the country, is facing extreme pressures on our budgets, due to a variety of factors outside of our control. These include ongoing risks and uncertainties over future Government funding, the long-term financial impact of Covid-19 and a period of exceptionally high inflation which means the cost of buying goods, services and contracts has risen across the board.

Resident benefits:

The Council needs to set a balanced budget for 24/25, and develop a medium term financial plan. The budget strategy and implementation plan will enable the Council to take steps to close the gap and balance the budget. This will benefit the local community by ensuring the Council is able to continue statutory services in the most efficient way, and where possible, that it can continue to provide those discretionary services that matter most to people, but we will need to move towards delivering these in a cost neutral way.

Staff benefits:

As an employer we value our staff greatly and, working with our trade unions, we're committed to protecting jobs and services as far as we can over the coming years. Doing all we can to avoid compulsory redundancies is

central to this commitment.

We have already taken steps under this theme, by looking at vacant posts to see if any can be removed, and updating our Voluntary Early Retirement and Voluntary Redundancy procedures. We have also launched a new scheme that has been offered to all employees so what we can understand who may be interested in leaving the Council on voluntary terms. This also provides the opportunity to consider whether savings proposals relating to other budget themes e.g., stopping a service, might be more readily achieved by releasing employees through the Voluntary Early Retirement and Voluntary Redundancy scheme.

3. What outcomes do you want to achieve?

The Council needs to set a balanced budget for 24/25, and develop a medium term financial plan. Our Budget Strategy (approved in July 2023) set out 6 themes to guide our next steps:

- Identifying general efficiencies
- Increasing income and establishing a stronger commercial focus where appropriate
- Transforming how we deliver services
- Reviewing statutory and discretionary services – potentially reducing or stopping some services
- Making sure the size and scope of the organisation is right, in the context of our financial position
- Reviewing the ownership and use of council buildings and assets

4. What barriers exist for both the Council and the groups/people with protected characteristics to enable these outcomes to be achieved?

The Council has historically provided a range of discretionary services in addition to its statutory functions, and has delivered services to an excellent standard.

The costs of delivering services are increasing due to a period of exceptionally high inflation which means the cost of buying goods, services and contracts has risen.

The cost-of-living crisis and the long-term impact of Covid-19 mean that the Council's income is much lower as people have less disposable income to pay for services that the Council provides.

Many discretionary services are provided at a cost to the council. This means that the income produced by people using the services does not cover the cost of delivering them. The Council will need to make sure discretionary services are cost neutral in order to keep providing them. The Council is looking at ways to deliver services more efficiently and in different ways, but this may mean that customers need to pay more for services.

Modernising and delivering services in different ways may include taking advantage of digital ways of working and taking forward the learning and opportunities that have arisen through the period of the covid pandemic and over the past 18 months. This will involve considering the way we engage with customers, helping people find the services they need as efficiently as possible. It is important that the Council ensures that services continue to be accessible for all whilst modernising them.

5. Any other relevant background information

The Council's Budget Conversation webpage collates background information relating to the Council's budget.

Section 2 – Collecting your information.

6. What existing data sources do you have to assess the impact of the policy, project, service, function or strategy?

Existing systems and data including:

- Corporate and service specific customer usage and satisfaction data in relation to our services broken down by protected characteristics (published on the website as part of the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty responsibilities. – Equalities Data)
- Employee equalities profile published on the website as part of the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty responsibilities.
- Performance data in relation to service delivery – through individual services and the Council Plan

- performance monitoring
- Budget Strategy and monthly Budget Monitoring Reports

Section 3 – Additional engagement activities

7. Please list any additional engagement activities undertaken when developing the proposal and completing this EIA. Have those who are anticipated to be affected by the policy been consulted with?		
Date	Activity	Main findings
Ongoing	Resident and customer feedback about the Council's services is captured regularly on an ongoing basis.	Reports are published on the Council's website and trends are considered. This information will be used alongside budget conversation feedback and service information to support the development of proposals.
Ongoing	Monthly budget monitoring sessions with Tier 4 managers and requests for savings proposals.	Savings proposals put forward have been reviewed and form the basis of the budget implementation plan.
Ongoing	Monthly briefing sessions with Tier 4 Managers and Directors.	Feedback and queries regarding the VR/VER scheme, and development of the budget implementation plan.
June – Sept 23	Consultation with Trade Unions on the relaunch of the VR/VER scheme	
09/23	Launch of VR/VER scheme	120 employees expressed an interest in the scheme. Applications are being considered.
19/10/23	Engagement with Tier 4 managers on the proposals within the Budget Implementation Plan and communication with employees.	Further service specific meetings established to progress engagement and consultation with employees and wider public.
w/c 30/10/23 – 7/11/23	Service specific consultation and engagement with staff affected by proposals put forward in the Budget Implementation Plan	TBA

15/11/23	Planned launch of the public 'Budget Conversation'.	TBA
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Section 4 – What is the impact?

8. Summary of anticipated impacts

At this stage, it is not possible to fully measure the impact of the proposals on those people who have protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, or how the geographic spread of budget proposals will be felt across all areas of the Borough.

Our initial equality impact analysis of the stage 1 budget implementation plan indicates that the council is focused on making a wide range of changes in order to balance its budget, and whilst the majority of identified savings through efficiencies are linked to internal systems and processes, there are some that impact our staff, residents and partners.

Proposals that impact on staff will be implemented in line with the Council's existing policies and procedures, for example, Voluntary Redundancy and Early Retirement scheme, and the Restructuring Redeployment and Redundancy policy, which have been subject to separate EIAs.

We will ensure ongoing equalities monitoring of the impact of service changes to identify trends in disproportionate or unanticipated impact at an early stage to address them. This reporting will be monitored across the Council at senior levels in order to measure the cumulative impacts and identify appropriate mitigating actions.

Our programme of engagement on the medium-term financial plan, the 'Budget Conversation' will enable us to have an ongoing dialogue with our communities and partners about proposals as they are developed, to enable us to identify any barriers and impacts on protected groups. Focussed consultation and engagement will take place in relation to specific proposals as appropriate.

Our Budget Conversation will follow our corporate community engagement standards to ensure engagement is inclusive and accessible to our communities.

As the stage 2 (and further) budget proposals are developed, individual equality impact assessments will be undertaken to help identify mitigating action as appropriate and to enable an assessment of the cumulative impact of the budget decisions.

9. Summary of anticipated impacts for Stage 1 Proposals

Proposal	Positive impacts anticipated	Negative impacts anticipated	Mitigating action identified
Streamline reception services following customer services move to town hall	Customers will be directed towards a single one-stop accessible reception desk.	<p>No negative impacts have been identified for customers with protected characteristics.</p> <p>Potential reduction in staffing required due to co-location of reception services.</p> <p>An equalities profile of the team/s impacted has been produced and will be used to assess any disproportionate impact should the mitigating action identified opposite not be sufficient.</p>	All employees have been offered the opportunity to apply for VR / VER so that the Council can avoid compulsory redundancies wherever possible. The VR / VER scheme has been subject to a separate EIA.
Reduce caretaking requirements at town hall	None identified.	<p>Potential reduction in staffing required due to co-location of reception services.</p> <p>An equalities profile of the team/s impacted has been produced and will be used to assess any disproportionate impact should the mitigating</p>	All employees have been offered the opportunity to apply for VR / VER so that the Council can avoid compulsory redundancies wherever possible. The VR / VER scheme has been subject to a separate EIA.

9. Summary of anticipated impacts for Stage 1 Proposals			
Proposal	Positive impacts anticipated	Negative impacts anticipated	Mitigating action identified
		action identified opposite not be sufficient.	
Reduce contribution to local plan reserve	None identified.	None identified.	N/A
Fund economic development service costs from ring-fenced business rates for two years	The Economic Development team delivers skills activity that includes specific outcome targets around reducing the rate of youth (18-24 years) unemployment and reducing the level of economic inactivity amongst the working age population. This relates specifically to helping people with a disability or limiting long term condition to find meaningful employment.	None identified.	N/A
Review of recycling contract operations	None identified.	None identified.	N/A
Minor changes to street cleansing operational arrangements	None identified.	Potential reduction in staffing required. An equalities profile of the team/s impacted has been produced and will be used to assess any disproportionate impact should the mitigating action identified opposite not be sufficient.	All employees have been offered the opportunity to apply for VR / VER so that the Council can avoid compulsory redundancies wherever possible. The VR / VER scheme has been subject to a separate EIA.
Reduce operational resources for car parking cash collection arrangements	Quicker and more convenient way for customers to pay for parking. Demand for cash payment is reducing.	Certain groups of customers may have a preference for cash payment rather than digital alternatives.	It will still be possible for people to pay for parking using cash.

9. Summary of anticipated impacts for Stage 1 Proposals			
Proposal	Positive impacts anticipated	Negative impacts anticipated	Mitigating action identified
		<p>Potential reduction in staffing required.</p> <p>An equalities profile of the team/s impacted has been produced and will be used to assess any disproportionate impact should the mitigating action identified opposite not be sufficient.</p>	All employees have been offered the opportunity to apply for VR / VER so that the Council can avoid compulsory redundancies wherever possible. The VR / VER scheme has been subject to a separate EIA.
Reshape of markets service delivery linked to changes in operational requirements	None identified.	<p>Potential reduction in staffing required.</p> <p>An equalities profile of the team/s impacted has been produced and will be used to assess any disproportionate impact should the mitigating action identified opposite not be sufficient.</p>	All employees have been offered the opportunity to apply for VR / VER so that the Council can avoid compulsory redundancies wherever possible. The VR / VER scheme has been subject to a separate EIA.
Enterprise centres – review commercial operating position <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor cost reductions • Review charges to tenants • Use UKSPF efficiently 	None identified.	None identified.	N/A
Introduce charges for plans for footpath diversions and highway diversion orders	None identified.	None identified.	N/A
Leasing out vacant floor space in Healthy Living Centre	None identified.	None identified.	N/A
Winding wheel – review charges to	None identified.	None identified.	N/A

9. Summary of anticipated impacts for Stage 1 Proposals			
Proposal	Positive impacts anticipated	Negative impacts anticipated	Mitigating action identified
commercially run operations			
Implement robotics process automation to reduce administrative burdens	None identified.	<p>Potential reduction in staffing required in 2025/26.</p> <p>An equalities profile of the team/s impacted has been produced and will be used to assess any disproportionate impact should the mitigating action identified opposite not be sufficient.</p>	It is anticipated that the staffing saving will be delivered through managing staff turnover or a future VR/VER, as the saving is not to be delivered until 2025/26.

10. Have all negative impacts identified in the table above been mitigated against with appropriate action?			
X Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A	<i>If no, please explain why:</i>

Section 5 – Recommendations and monitoring

11. How has the EIA helped to shape the policy, project, service, function or strategy or affected the recommendation or decision?

Due consideration has been given to the proposals at stage 1 and mitigating action identified.

12. How are you going to monitor the policy, project, service, function or strategy, how often and who will be responsible?

We will ensure ongoing equalities monitoring of the impact of service changes to identify trends in disproportionate or unanticipated impact at an early stage to address them. This reporting will be monitored across the Council at senior levels in order to measure the cumulative impacts and identify appropriate mitigating actions.

As the stage 2 (and further) budget proposals are developed, individual equality impact assessments will be undertaken to help identify mitigating action as appropriate and to enable an assessment of the cumulative impact of the budget decisions.

Section 6 – Knowledge management and publication

Please note the draft EIA should be reviewed by the appropriate Service Manager and the Policy Service **before** WBR, Lead Member, Cabinet, Council reports are produced.

Reviewed by Head of Service/Service Manager	Name:	
	Date:	DD/MM/YY
Reviewed by Policy Service	Name:	Katy Marshall
	Date:	31.10.23
Final version of the EIA sent to Policy Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Decision information sent to Policy Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	