

## **Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment (Annual Plan and Budget)**

### **1. Overview**

- 1.1 This appendix describes the most significant equality pressures confronting each main service area, informed by an equality analysis. It highlights the effect of policy and governance changes; an overview of positive and neutral impacts; and a service impact overview. These outcomes are based upon spending decisions taken during the last two years and changes resulting from the 2022/23 budget. The analysis also highlights a number of cumulative impacts that may arise resulting from the 2022/23 budget.
- 1.2 It is important to note that the budget is the financial expression of the Everyone's Essex Annual Plan and our operational intent, and where known, the equality impact of change is disclosed. However, there are a number of individual decisions that will arise over the period of the 2022/23 budget. These will be subject to specific and more detailed equality impact assessments in line with the Council's Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) guidance. Political decisions will only be taken once effective and meaningful engagement has taken place on a need-by-need basis.
- 1.3 In making this decision we must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, i.e. have due regard to the need to:
  - (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
  - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
  - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 1.4 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. In addition, marital status is a relevant protected characteristic for 1.3(a)
- 1.5 The PSED is a relevant factor in making this decision but does not impose a duty to achieve the outcomes in s149. It is only one factor that needs to be considered and may be balanced against other relevant factors.
- 1.6 Part of the equalities governance is to ensure that equality impact assessments are undertaken when considering new and/or revised policies to inform and underpin good decision making processes. This also helps us pay due regard to our equality obligations.
- 1.7 The Equality Act also says that public bodies must pay 'due regard' to equality. This means that we must:
  - Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;

- take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.

## **2. Identified high level cumulative equality impact**

- 2.1 At this stage, it is not possible to fully measure the cumulative 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 rural and urban areas of Essex.
- 2.2 However, a preliminary equality analysis of the planned activity and budget proposals for 2022/23 indicates that the council will continue to make the majority of identified savings through efficiencies linked to internal systems and processes. The Covid-19 pandemic has continued to change the way in which most council employees carry out their work. The savings proposals that have been identified to frontline services have been developed to ensure cost effectiveness whilst maintaining a high standard of service delivery. Consequently, it is likely that the budget proposals in the coming year will have limited negative impacts on the communities that we serve.
- 2.3 Key impacts from this initial analysis across the portfolios are outlined from section 5 below.

## **3. Mitigating actions which will be considered**

- 3.1 **Monitoring of impact:** Services must 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 should be monitored Council-wide at senior levels within the Council in order to identify cumulative impacts and mitigating actions. Consideration should be given to working with other partners in this monitoring and evaluation where appropriate.
- 3.2 **Informing decision-making:** The findings of this monitoring should be used to inform the budget-setting process year on year.
- 3.3 **Equality Impact Assessments:** As the budget proposals are developed, individual equality impact assessments will be undertaken. This will include an assessment of who is likely to be impacted by the changes, whether they are considered to have 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010 and if they are, what mitigation activity is proposed to ensure that they will not be disproportionately affected. These will all be reviewed to provide an assessment of the cumulative impact of the budget decisions.
- 3.4 **Targeting based on need:** Resources and services should clearly identify specific needs of different groups at an early stage in order to be most effective and meet needs at first contact wherever possible e.g. through consultation.
- 3.5 **Gaps in monitoring:** Where gaps in monitoring have been identified during the equality impact assessment process, steps should be taken to fill these in the

forthcoming year. This will enable better modelling of potential impacts and assessments in future.

#### **4. Strategic focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

- 4.1 The Council is fully committed to addressing the challenges facing communities and supporting residents to live better lives. Everyone's Essex: our plan for levelling up the county 2021-2025 sets out how services are responding to and are planning for these challenges with a key focus on tackling inequalities across the County. Three themes have been identified – Renewal, Equality, Ambition – to ensure we are well placed to address the challenges ahead. Alongside these themes, that run through everything we do, we are focused on 4 areas where outcomes really matter for the quality of life of our residents.

They are:

- the economy
  - the environment
  - children and families
  - promoting health, care and wellbeing for all the parts of our population who need our support
- 4.2 This commitment to equality and inclusion is shared by partners and is firmly rooted in the long-term Vision for Essex: The Future of Essex. This outlines commitments to improve the life chances and experiences for all Essex residents. A key ambition within the Vision for Essex is to share prosperity with everyone, an ambition that is vitally important to the Council.
- 4.3 The Everyone's Essex Annual Plan and Budget for 2022/23 gives effect to this in the following ways:
- By ensuring that the savings are balanced across service areas and are not targeted at the most vulnerable
  - By driving savings through the delivery of efficiencies and through the reform of services to improve outcomes and make them more cost effective
  - By continuing to invest in services and activities that will reduce inequalities and support better lives for all residents

#### **5. Policy and Governance Context**

- 5.1 The proposed social care precept may adversely impact some residents of Essex; however residents on the lowest incomes will remain eligible for support with their bills via their local council tax support schemes (operated and maintained by the city, district and borough councils). The increase proposed relates to a specific social care precept that will be ring-fenced for adult social care. This should positively impact on vulnerable adults within Essex by helping to protect and improve social care services.
- 5.2 The localisation of council tax benefit (introducing new payees to council tax as a result of national policy changes) was implemented in 2013/14 alongside a

scheme for hardship and investment in collection initiatives including Citizens Advice support. Over this time, the 12 billing authorities have sustained collection rates against this backdrop, ensuring no negative impact on other council tax payers. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic we have seen a reduction in collection rates, although they are still at a high level. Our budget proposes continuation of the investment into collection and hardship for 2022/23.

- 5.3 We have joined forces with the borough, district and city councils and police and fire authorities to tackle council tax fraud across the county. The programme:
- ensures those entitled to discounts or exemptions on their council tax are receiving the right support;
  - has introduced extensive regular reviews to ensure the levels of benefits people receive are correct;
  - encourages people to notify councils if their circumstances change, and the consequences of not doing so, to enable councils to take swift and appropriate action against people fraudulently claiming council tax benefit.
- 5.4 The budget will be discharged against a background of continuing intense pressure across the health and care system in Essex, particularly in light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

## **6. Portfolio Impacts Overview**

### Adult Social Care and Health

- 6.1 The priority is to operate sustainably while fully meeting our legal obligations and in so doing ensure adults, carers and families have access to the information, advice and tools they need to enable them to live ordinary lives, safely and independently, for as long as possible. The Council currently supports around 17,000 adults, of which about 9,000 are older people, some 5,000 are people with learning disabilities, over 2,000 are people with physical or sensory impairments and around 800 are people with mental health needs.
- 6.2 Operational conditions remain exceptionally challenging with the combined impact of the ongoing pandemic, labour shortages and market fragility being felt across the system as a whole.
- 6.3 In practical terms this means that our priority remains ensuring the safety of vulnerable adults and the continuity of the services they depend on. Over the last year we have taken a number of urgent decisions that have allowed us to implement a range of measures to support the market and promote continuity of supply. It is anticipated that further measures of this sort will be required this year.
- 6.4 We have an excellent relationship with our providers, working with them very closely and we are confident that this will continue. Together we are

developing a Market Strategy that recognises the challenging times we are in and sets out our approach to maintaining and developing our market in this context.

- 6.5 Against this background it is important that we continue to operate as efficiently as possible to help ensure we can continue to support the most vulnerable in our communities.
- 6.6 It is against this challenging background that included within the total net budget of **£470.2m** (total gross budget is **£737.3m**) are budget savings proposals of **£21.7m** (4.6% of the net budget or 2.9% of the gross budget) that need to be made in order to achieve financial sustainability and to accommodate demographic and inflationary pressures in 2022/23.
- 6.7 The main areas that will see changes as a result of our budget proposals are set out in the following paragraphs.

- (a) **Learning Disability** – The Council aims to support individuals with learning disabilities and/or autism to ensure their needs are being met and to enable them to achieve their outcomes and life aspirations. The main vehicle for this is the Meaningful Lives Matter Programme (MLM) which is now in its second year.

The programme seeks to:

- a) develop individual potential and independence by providing the infrastructure, opportunities and support people need to flourish and
- b) to make this happen by working with the market to ensure there are appropriate alternatives to traditional care models that support this approach, including reducing reliance on residential care.

It is anticipated that MLM will ensure that people's needs are appropriately and sustainably met, promote better and more sustainable long-term outcomes and in so doing generate **£4.6m** in efficiencies.

The detailed Equality Impact Assessment undertaken indicates that no equality group will be adversely impacted by the 'Meaningful Lives' approach detailed above. Indeed, with specific regards to the Learning Disability, this approach is expected to have a high positive impact on this equality group.

- (b) **Mental Health** – We are undertaking a review of our partnership arrangements and a new partnership agreement with our provider has been put in place to support the delivery of the outcomes of this review as they emerge. The intention is to ensure that we provide effective support for adults in the most efficient manner possible, ensuring they are receiving the least restrictive but appropriate levels of support to meet their needs, support and enable their recovery and build resilience. This approach will promote better outcomes for the adults and allow us to use our resources more efficiently. It is anticipated that this review will generate efficiencies of some **£647,000** in 2022/23 whilst allowing us to continue to fully meet our

legal obligations and provide more person centred support for individual adults for example through the development of more flexible accommodation options that better reflect individual needs.

**(c) Technology, and Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) -**

In July 2021 the Council launched a new county-wide care technology service to ensure that people have a better technology support offer from the Council to enable them to live independently and to prevent the escalation of needs. This is a key enabler to helping the Council fulfil its Care Act 2014 duties to prevent, reduce and delay the onset of care needs and can reduce:

- the need for Hospital admission
- the need for residential care
- the need for increased domiciliary care packages
- loss of independence

Care technology can support people of all ages, including working age adults with learning disabilities, older people, and those with physical and sensory impairments.

We will only use technology solutions to meet need where we have assessed this option as being safe and appropriate for the adult. Where it is not appropriate, we will ensure alternative support is offered where the adult has been assessed as having eligible needs in line with provisions of the Care Act 2014.

Through a combination of more efficient provision and the cost avoidance that appropriately meeting need through technology solutions provides we expect to generate efficiency savings of **£4.9m** in 2022/23.

**(d) Older People** – Through our “Connect” programme we are undertaking a full review and change programme, addressing 5 key areas that were identified from a 2019 diagnostic exercise. 3 of these cover the critical pathways that support adults going into and leaving hospital, one looks at Community Social Care decision making, and one addresses process and practice within our Reablement at Home offer.

The objective is to ensure that the adult is offered the most appropriate support for them by optimising services around what adults need, and by working to improve the volume of adults who can be supported, with an emphasis on people being enabled to return home where this is possible, with support to regain as much independence as possible.

Pressures in the domiciliary care market and workforce pressures mean there is a risk that not as many older people benefit from reablement and domiciliary care services as is desired, leading to an increased use of residential placements on discharge from hospital. This will be regularly monitored and mitigated through joint working with partners to ensure the focus remains on supporting people’s independence and return home and

that, in the event of a temporary residential admission, that the person is supported home as soon as appropriate.

It is anticipated that this approach will enable us to both fully meet the needs of adults and generate some **£9.8m** in efficiencies in 2022/23 and pave the way for a more sustainable operating model in future years and offer better outcomes for adults requiring support. Alongside these new ways of working, data points will be developed that, alongside a Lived Experience capture, will be used in local and countywide improvement cycles to ensure we mitigate any negative impacts on adults who use services.

- (e) **All care groups** - In addition to the work set out above we will continue to work with our market to develop new models for meeting need, for example through the development of micro-providers to enable adults with Direct Payments to have more choice over how they use them. In parallel we will develop the infrastructure required to support this new approach. We anticipate that as this model develops it should generate some **£895,000** in efficiencies in 2022/23.

- 6.8 In order to ensure that the Council pays due regard to the PSED, individual equality impact assessments will be undertaken in order to ensure there are mitigating actions, where possible, to minimise any adverse impact on citizens accessing Adult Services.

#### Children's Services and Early Years

- 6.9 Children's Services and Early Years purpose is to protect children and young people from neglect and abuse, and to promote their development and wellbeing. The Council will continue to work with partners to provide a wide range of early help, family support and social work interventions, to help families improve their lives and support children to overcome early childhood trauma, look forward to a brighter future and achieve their aspirations. As Corporate Parents, the Council will do its best to see that this happens for children in care and care leavers.
- 6.10 To do this well and get best value for money, the Council aims to be at the forefront of best practice. It will always learn from the most forward-thinking innovations and positive developments in the social work profession, as well as from the children, young people and families the Council works with.
- 6.11 The portfolio has identified budget savings proposals of **£2m** for 2022/23.
- 6.12 £1.75m is made through one-off use of carried forward under spend (from 2021/22), or contribution from partners and will have no impact to service users.
- 6.13 £250,000 relates to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and proposals to maximise the use of grant funding into the portfolio. No impact on service users is anticipated.

- 6.14 In order to ensure that the Council pays due regard to the PSED, individual equality impact assessments will be undertaken in order to ensure there are mitigating actions, where possible, to minimise any adverse impact on children, young people and their families.

#### Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance

- 6.15 The portfolio has identified budget savings proposals of **£318,000** in 2022/23.

- 6.16 £250,000 relate to efficiencies following lean reviews and support service redesign within Customer Services, £40,000 relate to additional income expected from the Leading Greater Essex Programme, with the remaining £28,000 linked to realising efficiencies across the Strategy, Insight and Engagement team.

- 6.17 These changes are not expected to impact on the level of service provided to residents. Individual equality impact assessments will be undertaken where necessary.

#### Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs

- 6.18 The portfolio has identified budget savings proposals of **£4.9m** in 2022/23.

- 6.19 £2.5m of which relate to more efficient use of our buildings. These changes are not expected to impact on the level of service provided to residents.

- 6.20 A further £1.1m of proposed savings relates to a reduction in planned contributions to the insurance reserve owing to a downward trend in insurance claims over recent years.

- 6.21 Other savings across the portfolio relate to one-off under spends carried forward, reducing waste, controlling demand and contract management. These changes are not expected to impact on the level of service provided to residents.

- 6.22 It is not considered that the savings proposals will have an adverse impact on persons who share any relevant protected characteristic. However, an equality impact assessment will be completed as part of the governance and decision making for each individual project.

#### Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport

- 6.23 Savings proposals of **£5.6m** have been identified for the 2022/23 financial year. These are categorised into the main areas outlined below:

- (a) Partnership improvements and efficiencies within the Essex Highways partnership (highways maintenance) has proposals totalling **£4m**; Benefits are being achieved through seeking continuous improvements, economies of scale, energy efficiencies, increasing income opportunities and different ways of delivering services more efficiently.



(b) Efficiencies of **£860,000** through changes in approach to working with other partners which will be subject to thorough service review.

(c) Ongoing energy efficiencies from the transfer to LED across the Highways infrastructure which will generate cost reduction of **£428,000**.

(d) Other contractual efficiencies have been identified totalling **£283,000** as a one-off opportunity within Park and Ride.

6.24 For the majority of these proposals above it is not considered that they will have a disproportionate impact on people who share any relevant protected characteristic, if there are some cost reductions that could potentially impact people with protected characteristics as detailed implementation plans are worked up.

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6.25 The portfolio has identified savings proposals of **£52,000** in 2022/23. The majority of which relates to efficiencies through support services.

6.26 These changes are not expected to impact on the level of service provided to residents.

6.27 Individual equality impact assessments will be undertaken where necessary.

#### Other Operating Costs

6.28 The portfolio has identified budget savings proposals of **£550,000** in 2022/23.

6.29 £300,000 of savings relates to increased dividend contribution from the Council's wholly owned Local Authority Trading Company Essex Cares Ltd.

6.30 The remaining £200,000 of saving is proposed through better cash management and reducing the interest payable on borrowing.

6.31 These changes will not impact on the level of service provided to residents.

6.32 Individual equality impact assessments will be undertaken where necessary.

#### Waste Reduction and Recycling

6.33 The portfolio has identified savings proposals of **£762,000** for 2022/23.

6.34 £212,000 of which will be delivered by efficiencies through undertaking a forensic review of budgets and analysing current and historic trends to accurately forecast waste tonnage volumes, contractual and non-contractual spend and optimising our waste infrastructure for maximum utilisation.

- 6.35 The remaining £550,000 is anticipated to be delivered by reviewing the waste infrastructure we operate, in particular Recycling Centres, to ensure that the service is fit for purpose to meet the demands of Essex residents in the future.
- 6.36 There are not expected to be any impacts to protected groups at this stage but an equality impact assessment will be completed as part of the governance and decision making for each individual project.