

Appendix B – Equalities Comprehensive 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 potential impacts; and a service impact overview. These outcomes are based upon changes resulting from the 2023/24 budget. The analysis also highlights a number of cumulative impacts that may arise resulting from the 2023/24 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 2023/24 budget. These will be subject to specific and more detailed equality impact assessments in line with the Council's Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment (ECIA) 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 Equalities Comprehensive 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 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 **Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessments:** As the budget proposals are developed, individual Equalities Comprehensive 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.
- 3.4 Where no mitigating factors can be identified to a change to a policy, process or practice, which may affect one or more protected characteristics adversely, ECIA authors must provide Cabinet Members with clear options by which to base their political decision making on.
- 3.5 In addition to considering the nine protected characteristics when completing an Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment, consideration of the following areas is also required in terms of impact and mitigation:
- Digital accessibility
 - Levelling up (priority cohorts and places)
 - Inclusion health groups and other priority groups
 - Geographical areas
 - Families
 - Climate

Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessments are reviewed to provide an assessment of the cumulative impact of the budget decisions.

- 3.6 **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.
- 3.7 **Gaps in monitoring:** Where gaps in monitoring have been identified during the Equalities Comprehensive 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 2023/24 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 council tax increase 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 element of the

increase relating to the specific social care precept 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. Our budget proposes an increase in the investment into collection and hardship for 2023/24.

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 heightened inflation and the lasting impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

6. Portfolio Impacts Overview

Adult Social Care and Health

6.1 The priority is to operate in a manner that is fiscally sustainable while fully meeting our obligations, and in this context, we remain committed to ensuring that we do what is required to keep adults safe. We will 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 at any point in time supports around 16,000 adults in long term care, of which about 9,000 are older people, 4,000 are people with learning disabilities and autism, over 2,000 are people with physical or sensory impairments and around 700 are people with mental health needs. In addition to those adults, we impact the lives of many other people on a short-term or regular basis. This includes people carers, people in reablement, people in receipt of care tech, and people supported into employment, safeguarding activity to keep people safe, as well as support through information and guidance.

- 6.2 Operational conditions remain exceptionally challenging with the combined impact of the significant demand pressures, labour shortages and market fragility being felt across the system, while at the same time seeking to implement significant reform and prepare for the new CQC inspection regime.
- 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 several urgent decisions that have allowed us to implement a range of measures to support the market and promote continuity and adequacy of supply. It is anticipated that further measures of this sort will be required in 2023/24.
- 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. It is not enough to address the needs of today; we must ensure we can meet those of the coming decade.
- 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 **£506.4m** (total gross budget is **£809.8m**) are budget savings proposals of **£15.5m** (3% of the net budget or 2% of the gross budget) that will aid achievement of our financial sustainability goals.
- 6.7 The main areas that will see changes because of our budget proposals are set out in the following paragraphs.

(a) **Disabilities (Learning, Physical and Sensory)** – 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 third 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 met in a person centred manner that promote better and more sustainable long-term outcomes and in so doing promotes a more efficient use of

resource. We anticipate that this will generate **£4.5m** in efficiencies, while ensuring we meet the eligible needs of the adult. The detailed Equalities Comprehensive 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, physical and sensory impairments, this approach is expected to have a high positive impact on these equality groups.

There will also be a review of transport provision with an anticipated saving of **£129,000** through contract efficiencies.

- (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, 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 will reduce the length of stay in hospital or other setting, and have the supported living available, with an active plan to enable the move on to independence. We are also enhancing provision so that there is a wider range – from intensive support to lower intensity support. This promotes independence for the adults and means that more people will be supported in lower cost accommodation suitable to their needs.

It is anticipated that this review will generate efficiencies of some **£500,000** in 2023/24 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 at the time of presentation and as their recovery progresses and they regain more independence.

(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 expanding the service into Working Age Adults and increasing the referrals in Older People we expect to generate efficiency savings of **£400,000** in 2023/24. The cost avoidance will appropriately meet the needs through technology solutions provided.

- (d) **Older People** – Through our “Connect” programme we are undertaking a full review, addressing 5 key areas that were identified from a 2019 diagnostic exercise. Three 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, the person is supported home as soon as appropriate. This approach will also be supported with work on an Extra Care offer which effectively utilises the capacity available to us, including the development of ‘Stepping Stone’ flats which can help people who require a stay in an independent living setting as they recover from a hospital stay, savings of **£67,000** are included in the budget in relation to extra care schemes.

It is anticipated that this approach will enable us to both fully meet the needs of adults and generate some **£4.3m** in efficiencies in 2023/24 as we progress towards 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 capture Lived Experience and will be used in local and countywide improvement cycles to ensure we mitigate any negative impacts on adults who use services.

Further efficiencies will be achieved through a review of older people's day services, contractual savings of **£1m** are included within the budget. A **£100,000** equipment saving is included and will be delivered by driving more effective prescribing practices for equipment provision.

(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 **£50,000** in efficiencies in 2023/24. A **£1m** improved income collection target is included within the budget and will be achieved through increased resources in the Finance Transactional Services team as well as a review of the bad debt provision balance.

(f) A substantial amount of investment within this budget is set for inflation requirements in the market. Some changes to the modelling of this were made which released **£2.9m** of budget when compared to prior modelling. There is still commitment to support inflation pressures across the market within the affordability of this budget.

6.8 To ensure that the Council pays due regard to the PSED, individual Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessments will be undertaken to ensure there are mitigating actions, where possible, to minimise any adverse impact on citizens accessing Adult Services. Where there are no mitigating factors, policy authors will need to set out the options based on the adverse impacts for political decision making to take place.

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 **£1.8m** for 2023/24 (1% of net budget).

- 6.12 £900,000 relates to reviewing the provision of services to young people to ensure that demand is met internally and externally in the most appropriate way. Separately we will work with the market so that care placements are procured in the most efficient way maximising value for money for Essex residents.
- 6.13 Under our Placement Strategy we are seeking to place children in care within a family setting as evidenced through our Essex fostering programme. This will therefore reduce the reliance on the independent market realising a £510,000 saving in 2023/24
- 6.14 £350,000 of budget proposals relate to our workforce structure and through working more efficiently. Service users will be unaffected by these changes.
- 6.15 In order to ensure that the Council pays due regard to the PSED, individual Equalities Comprehensive 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. Where there are no mitigating factors, policy authors will need to set out the options based on the adverse impacts in order for political decision making to take place.

Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance

- 6.16 The portfolio has identified budget savings proposals of **£1m** in 2023/24 (3% of net budget).
- 6.17 The Youth Service have identified savings of £188,000 being delivered as follows
- £150,000 due to increasing income budgets to match the income being generated within the service.
 - £17,000 relates to a removal of a post. The duties will be carried out by 5 current employees who will receive a salary uplift. The £17,000 is therefore the net saving after the additional cost of salary uplifts.
 - £21,000 relates to a redesign of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme where schools will be charged for the delivery of their Duke of Edinburgh programmes.
- 6.18 £300,000 relates to a review and redesign of the staffing structure within the Libraries service to reflect the staffing requirements to deliver the Everyone's Essex Library Plan. Some funding will also come from the Levelling Up reserve to fund projects and resources.
- 6.19 £130,000 of the savings are due to additional planned income, largely from increasing the Deputyships Service and Legal Service income budgets to match to the income being generated.

- 6.20 £259,000 relates to the deletion of a number of vacant posts and other staff savings, with the remaining £37,000 linked to realising efficiencies across the Chief Executive's Office function.
- 6.21 These changes are not expected to impact on the level of service provided to residents. Individual Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessments will be undertaken where necessary. Where there are no mitigating factors, policy authors will need to set out the options based on the adverse impacts in order for political decision making to take place.

Devolution, the Arts, Heritage and Culture

- 6.22 The portfolio has identified budget savings proposals of **£150,000** for 2023/24 (3% of net budget).
- 6.23 £100,000 of which relates to a change in operating model for car parking and enforcement, delegating ECC powers to Chelmsford and Colchester City Councils, which is expected to result in an 8.5% increase in car parking income. The remaining £50,000 relates to service improvements for food, beverage and retail, including the introduction of an electronic point of sale system to improve stock control, sales analysis and profitability, and the growth in retail provision in ECC managed visitor centres.
- 6.24 There are not expected to be any impacts to protected groups at this stage but an Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment will be completed as part of the governance and decision making for each individual project. Where there are no mitigating factors, policy authors will need to set out the options based on the adverse impacts in order for political decision making to take place.

Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning

- 6.25 The portfolio has identified budget savings proposals of **£2m** in 2023/24 (20% of net budget).
- 6.26 £2m relates to a one off draw down of development management reserves and £28,000 relates to reducing partnership contributions.
- 6.27 There are not expected to be any impacts to protected groups at this stage but an Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment will be undertaken as necessary. Where there are no mitigating factors, policy authors will need to set out the options based on the adverse impacts in order for political decision making to take place.

Education, Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability

- 6.28 The portfolio has identified budget savings proposals of **£654,000** for 2023/24 (3% of net budget).
- 6.29 £100,000 relates to a managed vacancy factor within school crossing patrols. No impact on service users is anticipated.
- 6.30 £10,000 relates to income generation from a new school improvement offer to schools to be implemented from September 2023. No impact on service users is anticipated.
- 6.31 Adult Community Learning has identified savings of £487,000 of which £187,000 will be achieved through property rationalisation, removal of nursery provision £139,000, and repurposing a vacant role to generate additional apprenticeship income £161,000. While the removal of nursery provision may impact on working families who use these services, the potential for alternative support for ACL learners will be explored.
- 6.32 Skills will deliver savings of £57,000 through income generation and to fund one off costs for the careers magazine through an already approved reserve, thus removing the expenditure from the core budget. No impact on service users is anticipated.
- 6.33 In order to ensure that the Council pays due regard to the PSED, individual Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessments will be undertaken in order to ensure there are mitigating actions, where possible, to minimise any adverse impacts. Where there are no mitigating factors, policy authors will need to set out the options based on the adverse impacts in order for political decision making to take place.

Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs

- 6.34 The portfolio has identified budget savings proposals of **£9.7m** in 2023/24 (9% of net budget).
- 6.35 £1.4m relates to Property, of which £845,000 is due to property rationalisation within the operational estate. £430,000 is a result of a managed fund reduction and efficiencies within contracts and other smaller savings totalling £80,000 relate to car parking revenue generation and off site storage savings. These changes are not expected to impact the level of service provided to residents.
- 6.36 £1.9m relates to reductions in staff budgets across support services, many due to the deletion of vacant positions. These savings are not expected to impact on the level of service provided to residents.
- 6.37 £5m relates to a staffing review that will be undertaken across the organisation. Once the review is completed, the saving will be allocated across portfolios in-line with the decisions that will be taken to how the saving will be delivered.

- 6.38 £1m saving will be realised following the renewal of the Council Tax Sharing Agreement between Districts and the County Council. The new arrangements will enable greater targeted support to districts with higher levels of deprivation, more money distributed through fixed investments that ensure sufficient resources are in place within each district's collection and compliance teams, whilst still providing a financial incentive for districts to maximise the collection of council tax.
- 6.39 An £80,000 saving will be delivered as a result of commencing transformation of the Engagement Hub. Through improved use of technology and workforce management the Contact Centre will benefit from staffing efficiencies. The transformation process will positively impact the customer journey and upskill Contact Centre agents.
- 6.40 A £50,000 staff saving in the Customer Services Compliance and Complaints team will be realised. This is a right-sizing of the budget and reflects the existing lean operation. There will be no impact on the service received by residents.
- 6.41 At this stage it is not considered that the savings proposals will have an adverse impact on persons who share any relevant protected characteristic. However, an Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment will be completed as part of the governance and decision making for each individual proposal. Where there are no mitigating factors, policy authors will need to set out the options based on the adverse impacts in order for political decision making to take place.

Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport

- 6.42 Budget proposals of **£3.6m** have been identified for the 2023/24 financial year (3% of net budget). These are categorised into the main areas outlined below:
- Reducing the hours of operation of some of our streetlights and rolling out our LED conversion programme totalling **£1.3m**
 - Increased income from enforcement of road traffic order contraventions, expanding our on-street parking offer and use of our assets for advertising totalling **£624,000**
 - Removal of ad hoc survey work **£459,000**
 - Removal of surplus passenger transport budget through efficiency savings associated with concessionary fares totalling **£1.2m**
- 6.43 For the majority of these proposals it is not considered that they will have a disproportionate impact on people who share any relevant protected characteristic. Individual Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessments will be undertaken where necessary as detailed implementation plans are worked up. Where there are no mitigating factors, policy authors will need to set out the options based on the adverse impacts in order for political decision making to take place.

Leader

- 6.44 The portfolio has identified budget savings proposals of **£180,000** in 2023/24 (4% of net budget), the majority of which relate to efficiencies through support services.
- 6.45 These changes are not expected to impact on the level of service provided to residents.
- 6.46 Individual Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessments will be undertaken where necessary. Where there are no mitigating factors, policy authors will need to set out the options based on the adverse impacts in order for political decision making to take place.

Waste Reduction and Recycling

- 6.47 The portfolio has identified budget proposals of **£876,000** for 2023/24 (1% of net budget).
- 6.48 £151,000 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.
- 6.49 The remaining £225,000 is 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. Additional supports in place for residents who cannot access online services.
- 6.50 £500,000 is on hold pending the government guidance on charging for construction and demolition waste.
- 6.51 There are not expected to be any impacts to protected groups at this stage but an Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment will be completed as part of the governance and decision making for each individual project. Where there are no mitigating factors, policy authors will need to set out the options based on the adverse impacts in order for political decision making to take place.