

Surrey County Council Budget 2019/20 - Equality Impact Assessment

Summary

1. This report summarises potential impacts on residents and Surrey County Council staff arising from service changes that will contribute to the improvement of services for residents as well as supporting the council to realise a sustainable budget for the 2019/20 year. It also includes mitigating actions to maximise positive impacts and minimise adverse impacts. This report should be read with a number of appendices, including individual Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), the Part A) Transformation Proposals – Delivering Better Services for Residents Cabinet report of 29 January 2019, and the Part B) Revenue and Capital Budget 2019/20 and Key Financial Strategies to 2024/25 Cabinet report of 29 January 2019.
2. The transformation proposals have been grouped into the following themes:
 - a. Promotion of choice and control for residents
 - b. Changing the way we work, internally and for residents
 - c. Prioritising spend to make us financially viable
 - d. Maximising our income streams without disadvantaging residents.
3. These reflect the strategic actions the council is taking to transform into a modern organisation that provides effective, good quality services, with a focus on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable people of Surrey. These actions form part of the activity the council has committed to in the [Organisation Strategy 2019-2023](#), which articulates how we will contribute to the [Community Vision for Surrey in 2030](#). Achieving our ambitions relies on the best allocation of our resources, which may entail taking difficult decisions about how our services look in the future. The council's transformation programme seeks to reform the function, form and focus of the organisation so there will be significant impacts on services and our relationships with residents, partners and staff that need to be understood.
4. Some of the work programmes associated with the 2019/20 budget aim to transform our workforce and working practices so we are able to meet the simultaneous challenges of reduced funding from central government and increasing demand for our services. Others aim to increase customer satisfaction and achieve economies of scale by changing the way residents access the information and services they need.
5. We are also working to anticipate and prepare for future increased demand on services by improving the use of data to drive evidence-based decision making, commissioning and transformation. All of these will lead to improved performance and more informed decisions about how we allocate resources and provide services.
6. Given the scale and complexity of change required, the council's savings proposals for 2019/20 have been analysed as a whole. This exercise has highlighted the potential for some resident groups to be impacted by multiple savings proposals. The following groups have been identified:
 - a. Families, young children and expectant mothers
 - b. Older adults
 - c. People with physical, mental or learning disabilities
 - d. Carers

Our Duties

7. When approving financial plans, Members must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 which requires them to have due regard to the need to:
 - a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
 - b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic¹ and persons who do not share it²; and
 - c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
8. Members are also required to comply with Section 11 of the Children Act 2004, which places a duty on the Council to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
9. Cabinet must read each individual EIA (listed in Paragraph 19) in full and take their findings into consideration when determining these proposals. Having 'due regard' requires that Members understand the consequences of the decision for those with the relevant protected characteristics and consider these alongside other relevant factors when making decisions. In addition, consideration of equality is an ongoing process and should take into account evidence from consultation and engagement activity and other data sources where appropriate.
10. 'Due regard' also means that consideration given to equality matters should be appropriate in the context of the decision being taken. This means Members should weigh up equality implications against any other relevant factors in the decision-making process. In this case the most significant other matters are:
 - a. the statutory requirement to set a balanced budget;
 - b. the ambitions the council has for Surrey as a place, which are set out in the [Community Vision for Surrey in 2030](#) and the [Organisational Strategy 2019-2023](#)
 - c. the priorities within the council's [Confident in Surrey's Future: Equality, Fairness and Respect Strategy 2015 – 2020](#)
 - d. the [demographic pressures](#) facing the council's services that include a rising population with projected increases in the number of older residents and children and young people. Increases in these age groups are placing, and will continue to place, additional demands and pressures on adult and children's social care services and local schools.

¹ The protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 are as follows: Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy/maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation. Marriage and civil partnership are also protected characteristics for the purposes of the duty to eliminate discrimination.

² In addition to this, Surrey County Council considers impacts on Carers when undertaking Equality Impact Assessments as they are protected under the Act by association with someone with a protected characteristic listed in paragraph 14.

Council Tax

11. The council believes that raising Council Tax by 2.99% is likely to have minimal impact for most households as it does not constitute a large proportion of outgoings. If the council was to seek to agree a lower Council Tax increase, the effect of this would be a need to further reduce services, as we seek to set a balanced budget without the drawdown of reserves. This could lead to a greater impact on the most vulnerable people in Surrey with the council having fewer resources to support them.
12. Overall, the increase is modest, at 81p per week for a Band D household, and there are a number of Council Tax relief/support schemes in place through district and borough authorities to mitigate the effects of rises for those on low incomes or with specific circumstantial factors. Information about these schemes are available from individual district and borough websites.

Surrey County Council Savings Proposals 2019/20 - Strategic Actions

13. An assessment of service proposals has been undertaken. When taken together, service proposals can be categorised as the following strategic actions;
 - a. **Promotion of choice and control for residents.** This relates to increasing introduction of self-service for residents in several areas, including more flexibility in ways they can contact the council. Alongside this, the council is continuing to increase the numbers of people who exercise control over budgets for their own care, such as through Direct Payments in Adult Social Care, as well as supporting families to remain together where possible as part of changes in Children's Services.
 - b. **Changing the way we work, internally and for residents.** This relates largely to changes to working practice in the Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care and Children, Families and Learning Directorates which include using digital technology and supporting our workforce to be more productive to enable transformation projects and deliver productivity gains, developing new technologies, becoming a more agile organisation and thinking creatively about resource allocation within services.
 - c. **Prioritising spend to make us financially viable.** This will help us make sure we are delivering the right service, to the right people, every time. It involves focussing on reablement and rehabilitation, assessing for long term needs when a person is at their best and reviewing care packages in a culture of optimism within Adult Social Care. Where the council is moving toward delivering services in a manner similar to other local authorities of comparable size these are being undertaken to ensure the most effective allocation of resources.
 - d. **Maximising our income streams without disadvantaging residents.** This encompasses areas in which the council is considering commercial opportunities, as well as introducing charges for some services we offer, including as part of changes in Highways, Transport and Environment and continued service development in Adult Social Care.

14. These actions demonstrate how the council is intending to become a modern organisation, which is responsive to the needs of residents and is financially sustainable, including increased access to services through digital technology, more effective allocation of its resources to support the most vulnerable residents in Surrey and transforming back-office processes to enable the council to invest more in front-line service delivery.
15. We are also introducing these changes out of necessity. Since 2010, the council has faced the twin financial pressures of falling government grants and rising need for its services. Although we have made significant efficiency savings in this time, and raised Council Tax, we have had to draw down £88 million from reserves since 2014 to ensure a balanced budget each year. Reserves are now at a level where it is not sustainable to continue this approach. We do not expect a significant change in the wider financial outlook for local government in the medium term, and therefore has embarked upon a programme of transformation to ensure its services and finances are sustainable.
16. Prioritising spend in the current context of funding constraints and increased demands means we will need to target some of our services more at the people who need them most and this is reflected in proposals for service transformation. These proposals are examined in individual EIAs (**Annexes 1a – 7b**).

Surrey County Council Savings Proposals 2019/20 – Equality Impact Assessments
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17. The Equality Act does not require an EIA to be carried out, however we think an EIA is the best way to demonstrate that the equality impacts have been identified and considered. We have reviewed the whole package of savings proposed for 2019/20 to determine whether an EIA is needed or not. For those transformational services changes where residents are most likely to see tangible changes, individual EIAs have been completed and reviewed as part of the council's commitment to understanding the impact of its decisions, especially on those with protected characteristics. These are available to read in **Annexes 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a, 7a and 7b**. Our assessment of the likely impacts of these started when proposals were being formed. Proposals will only be implemented after due regard has been given to the need to achieve the three aims set out in Section 149 of the Act (paragraph 7 of this report).
18. It is open to the council to formulate its budget proposals (having regard to the likely impact on protected characteristics), and then at the time of developing any policies, the council will consider in greater detail the specific impact of the proposed policies that might be implemented within the budgetary framework. Where it is the case that decisions on how to achieve savings within the agreed budget will be taken in-year, subsequent decisions will be taken by the relevant Cabinet Member and Executive Directors, and shall be made based on a clear understanding of what the potential impacts might be.
19. There are seven individual Equality Impact Assessments for Cabinet and Council to consider when giving due regard to the proposals outlined in the budget:
 - 1) Recommissioning of Children's Centres in Surrey (**Annex 1a**)
 - 2) Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy (SEND) (**Annex 2a**)

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- 3) Transforming Libraries and Cultural Services in Surrey (**Annex 3a**)
 - 4) Proposed changes to Surrey's Community Recycling Centres (CRCs) (**Annex 4a**)
 - 5) Surrey County Council (SCC) Review of English National Concessionary Travel Scheme Enhancements (**Annex 5a**)
 - 6) Adult Social Care Transformational Savings EIA (**Annex 7a**)
 - 7) Customer Experience EIA (**Annex 7b**)
20. These individual assessments represent the proposals which, if approved, will or are likely to change how residents currently access or receive services and therefore require consideration of what potential equality implications may be, and how these could be mitigated.
21. As some of the other savings proposals within the budget are still in a formative stage, services are not yet in a position to assess the full impacts of these. Where impacts are identified at a later date, the relevant Cabinet Member and Executive Director will be required to consider new information and give them due regard as proposals are implemented.
22. Members should also recognise that within the EIAs attached to this budget, some impacts that are described are necessarily high level as a result of the stage which some of the transformation projects are at. As any unanticipated effects become apparent further down the line, Cabinet will be informed of these as appropriate.
23. Some savings within the 2019/20 budget will not have any direct effect on residents or service delivery. These savings will be found through mechanisms such as budget adjustments and removal of vacant posts.
24. The following section assesses the council's savings for 2019/20 in a cross-cutting way and considers the cumulative impact of some of these changes. Members may consider this cumulative analysis alongside the individual EIAs but must still read, consider conscientiously and give due regard to each individual EIA document when making decisions on the proposals outlined in the budget.

<u>Surrey County Council Savings Proposals 2019/20 – Cumulative Impact</u>

25. Analysis of the EIAs shows that the groups with the potential to be cumulatively affected by the changes proposed for 2019/20 are as follows. Impacts on each stakeholder group are identified along with proposed mitigations.
26. **Protected characteristic: Age and Pregnancy and Maternity - Families, young children and expectant mothers.** This is due to the partial shift away from place-based service delivery of a high number of Children's Centres toward a targeted approach for the most vulnerable children and the use of main centres in locations where children are most likely to be adversely affected by deprivation. This change reflects best practice elsewhere, as well as our own strategic principles; redesigning the way families can access these services will allow us to assist those most in need.
27. Any potential changes to the delivery of cultural services, subject to analysis of recent consultation and any future consultation that may also be required, could also disproportionately impact on this group as young children and their parents make up a higher percentage of the user groups of these services. We know from recent engagement that residents are positive about the idea of co-location of services and

shared spaces, as well as being supportive of using new technologies to more effectively deliver services.

Mitigations:

- a. Comprehensive consultation has taken place in recent months in order to understand how the council can work with residents to ensure minimum disruption following service changes, and engagement with partner organisations is underway to discuss how potential alternative delivery mechanisms, if any, could be utilised.
- b. These steps will address some of the potential impact that families, young children and expectant mothers may especially feel. Further detail of mitigation can be found within the Recommissioning of Children's Centres EIA (**Annex 1a**) and the Review of Cultural Services EIA (**Annex 3a**)

28. **Protected characteristic: Age - Older adults.** Changes within Adult Social Care have the potential to cumulatively impact on elderly residents, including any decisions the council takes to target services toward the most vulnerable and therefore the need to think flexibly about how care is provided to other service users. Any potential increased reliance on family, friends and community networks may bring with it quality assurance and/or safeguarding concerns.

29. Changes to the local market arising from service alterations within Adult Social Care, such as exit by providers from the local area, could impact on older residents who purchase care directly from these organisations. The council will undertake a co-design approach in order to minimise some of these impacts, but the move toward self-service for residents and an increased reliance on digital platforms for contacting the council may make it further difficult for these groups to raise concerns or queries.

Mitigations:

- a. Staff will be trained and supported to have effective conversations with residents at the point at which they access services, including growing the knowledge base of the organisation in order to lead to effective signposting to community-based resources.
- b. The council work with the voluntary, community and faith sector providers so that any reduction in grants and contracts are evaluated across the system, targeted and undertaken in adherence to the principle of the Surrey Compact.
- c. Those persons eligible for a statutory service will continue to receive it in accordance with their assessed needs
- d. This will address some of the potential impact that older adults may especially feel. More information and further mitigation can be found within the Adult Social Care Transformational Savings EIA (**Annex 7a**).

30. **Protected characteristic: Disability - those with physical, mental or learning disabilities.** Though these groups are foremost likely to be affected by the planned strategic shift from residential to community provision and associated savings of that project, all other proposals that alter the way residents access council services, such as an amalgamated single front door approach, present the risk that individuals in this group will be negatively affected as they may find it more difficult to self-serve or use digital platforms than other residents. People belonging to this group are also likely to be affected by changes to the companion pass scheme, and the future development of the SEND strategy.

Mitigations:

- a. A targeted and coordinated approach which includes the introduction of more specific support plans with clearer outcomes for service users, as well as clear communication and support to care companies who can work with the council to shape their offer around direct payments and find creative solutions to deliver best value for money. As part of changes to the way residents can contact the council, mediation or translation services for those with communication difficulties will continue to be used so that all residents are able to make their views heard.
- b. Though the council originally consulted on the removal of the Companion Pass, following consultation feedback it has been decided to retain the application of this pass between 9:30am and 11:00pm on weekdays, all day at weekends and bank holidays, so that any qualifying disabled bus pass holders who need assistance to be able to travel can take someone with them who can travel for free as well during the times specified.
- c. These steps will address some of the potential impact that people with learning, mental or physical disabilities may especially feel.

31. **SCC additional characteristic: Carers.** As Adult Social Care shifts toward more creative and informal ways of thinking about care, whilst continuing to fulfil statutory responsibilities to deliver plans based on levels of assessed need, there may be some degree of initial anxiety for those with caring responsibilities as they adapt to any new arrangements. There may also be a feeling that these individuals are obliged to provide care they are unable to cope with or do not currently provide. Other service changes that may specifically impact carers include changes to the Companion Pass travel system and increases to different fees and charges that are already in place.

Mitigations:

- a. The use of new digital platforms and the alignment of multiple points of access into one front door for residents will be a positive impact of service changes for those who require clear and concise information in an accessible format, or who may have regular contact with the organisation. This will address some of the potential impact that carers may especially feel as a result of service proposals.
- b. Any concerns with these new ways of working or communicating will be captured by services and adjustments made accordingly. Finally, flexible ways of working may make arrangements easier for those staff members with caring responsibilities. Further information can be found in the Customer Experience EIA (Annex 7b)

Surrey County Council Savings Proposals 2019/20 – Other Impacts
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32. The council is aware that some elements of the Transformation Programme could result in unexpected or unintended impacts on residents, which we are not yet in a position to fully assess. This cumulative analysis highlights some of the high level impacts that we are able to define at this time, as they relate to the projects mentioned.
33. Through reviewing all of the Equality Impact Assessments undertaken as part of the budget process, it is noted that there are other areas in which decisions that the

council is taking are likely to impact on service delivery for residents which are not mentioned in the seven EIAs attached.

34. Changes to arrangements for Looked after Children (LAC), as part of the wider Family Resilience Transformation Plan, are intended to ensure that all children receive the right help at the right time, which will improve services for children, young people and their families as well as reduce our over-reliance on independent placements comparative to our peer authorities. Whilst the intended effects of this change will mean increased in-county provision and support for in-house foster carers, there is the possibility that placement choice may be reduced, resulting in the potential for higher placement instability. Effective planning and completion of Sufficiency Plans will help identify the needs of LAC, so that gaps in provision can be proactively addressed.
35. The SEND Travel Assistance Policy continues the introduction of a wider variety of travel assistance options that are better adapted to the needs of children and young people, from the previous financial year. The service has actively promoted its independent travel training offer since the launch of the new arrangements in September 2018, and is currently devising a Travel Assistance Communications plan to continue to engage with residents around impacts of the policy change and potential mitigations.
36. A review is underway to assess the services the Highways, Transformation and Environment Directorate provides, including the future of public bus provision in Surrey. As the review progresses and proposals developed, reports will be presented to Cabinet with completed EIAs following stakeholder consultation and engagement.
37. Service changes attached to the Countryside Review, a continuation of savings from previous financial years, entail a reduction in contribution to hosted partnerships and a reduction in Rights of Way work. The public who visit the countryside, and those who benefit from some of the activities run by the partnerships experiencing funding reductions, are likely to continue to be affected. The service will continue to monitor the impact of these changes and make adjustments as appropriate as the impacts become apparent.
38. Changes to working practices in the Customer, Digital and Transformation directorate are likely to impact staff in a variety of ways. More flexibility and an 'agile' approach to working bring with it benefits for those staff members who are able to take advantage of this flexibility through, for example, working remotely or utilising digital to more effectively manage workloads. Early assessment suggest that those staff with protected characteristics may be less able to adapt to these changes and are the most likely to be affected. Those departments implementing new ways of working will monitor how members of staff are able to adapt and provide training and make adjustments as necessary.
39. Although there are difficult choices to make, our EIAs illustrate the commitment of the council to understanding the effects of decisions made and to mitigate negative impacts where possible. We will closely monitor the impact of decisions taken, especially those on the groups outlined within this section as potentially being at particular risk of impact.

Mitigations

40. As part of this equality analysis work, services have developed a range of mitigating actions that seek to offset impacts of savings proposals (as outlined in paragraphs 20 - 27 and in the EIAs themselves) on residents and staff with protected characteristics. In general terms, the Council's approach to mitigating impacts has been, or will be as strategic principles are developed into more formative proposals, to adopt one or more of the following:
- a. Putting service users and staff at the heart of service re-design, using co-design and consultation methods to produce services that are responsive and focus on supporting people that need them most. This means bringing together the right people early in the process to understand the issues and then decide what can be done collectively to improve outcomes.
 - b. Undertaking ongoing evaluation of the impacts of changes to services so we can build further evidence of who is affected by them, to refine and strengthen the mitigations that are in place and to document and respond to unforeseen negative impacts.
 - c. Providing tailored information to service users that are impacted negatively by savings proposals so they can draw on their own resources or seek further support either from the council or partner organisations.
 - d. Ensuring any changes to staffing levels or staff structures are completed in accordance with the council's human resources policies and procedures and take account of the impact these changes have on the workforce profile. In particular, there may be positive career opportunities for staff with protected characteristics as a result of this activity.
 - e. Increasing opportunities for residents to access council services in new and easier formats, such as through the use of digital technologies. Additional support will be provided for residents who may need help to adapt to the new formats, such as some older or disabled people.
 - f. Ensuring that staff with protected characteristics are fully supported with training and adjustments as appropriate to allow them to access the new ways of working the transformation proposals give rise to and for all staff to be equipped to support residents to do the same.

Conclusions

41. As part of our drive to become a modern and efficient organisation, the council is undertaking changes in the way we deliver some services to residents. Some of these changes have necessitated Equality Impact Assessments to be undertaken to identify any groups with protected characteristics who may be impacted by these proposals.
42. This report has summarised the main themes and potential impacts on residents arising from savings proposals for the 2019/20 year, as well as mitigation activity.

The scale of change the council needs to go through is significant, and will affect the residents that depend on our services. However, this report demonstrates, as part of our commitment to ensure that no-one is left behind, that we will always consider how these changes affect the most vulnerable residents and how we can support them through this period of transformation.

- 43. This summary report should be read only in conjunction with each individual EIA.**