

Surrey County Council Budget 2022/23 – Equality Impact Assessment

1. This report sets out the potential equality impacts on residents and Surrey County Council staff arising from setting a sustainable budget for the financial year 2022/23, that is intended to improve services for residents and secure greater value for money through greater efficiency. It also includes actions proposed to maximise any positive impacts of budget decisions and minimise any adverse ones.
2. Where a decision to change or reduce a specific service or part thereof has been made or is proposed to be made, the relevant Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) have been or, where detailed proposals are still being formulated, will be produced and made available for either individual lead Cabinet Members, Cabinet collectively and/or Council to review.
3. This paper must therefore be read in conjunction with the ‘Background Papers’ relating to EIAs listed in the budget report, as well as the 2022/23 Final Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 – 2026/27 and the Cabinet report of 25 January 2022.
4. The information in this report is intended to ensure that Members are able to pay due regard to the equality implications of the proposed budget for 2022/23.

Summary

5. In December 2020, Council adopted a refreshed Organisation Strategy 2021-2026 that set out a single guiding principle for everything we do – tackling inequality to focus on ensuring no-one is left behind. With regard to our budget, this means every pound spent by the council needs to be used as efficiently as possible, so we can concentrate our resources on supporting some of Surrey’s most vulnerable residents.
6. Given the scale and complexity of change required to deliver better outcomes while balancing our budget, the council’s efficiency proposals for 2022/23 have been analysed to understand positive and negative impacts on residents from protected groups, particularly where they may be impacted by multiple efficiency proposals. The following groups have been identified:
 - Adults of all ages with physical and learning disabilities and their carers
 - Children and young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, and their families
 - Older adults and their carers
 - Women, particularly those who work in areas where they make up the majority of the frontline workforce
7. Certain efficiency proposals will lead to more positive outcomes for some of Surrey’s residents. For example, improved practice to support looked after children will support them and their families to live better lives, as well as improving the efficiency of services. Changes in practice in Adult Social Care will also lead to better outcomes, such as reshaping our learning disability services and encouraging more community-based care options, helping to support people to move from residential to supported independent living.

8. Some efficiency proposals are in a formative stage, and as proposals are finalised, the specific equality impacts will be considered by the relevant Cabinet Member and Executive Director before any final decisions are made.

Our Duties

9. This analysis ensure Cabinet complies 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:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
10. Members are also required to comply with Section 11 of the Children Act 2004, which places a duty on the council to ensure service functions, and those contracted out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
11. Members of the Cabinet must read each individual EIA (listed in paragraph 14) in full and take their findings into consideration when determining whether to agree the 2022/23 efficiency proposals. Having 'due regard' requires Members to understand the consequences of the decision for those with relevant protected characteristics and consider these alongside other relevant factors when making decisions. In addition, consideration of equality is an ongoing process and needs to take into account evidence from consultation and engagement activity and other data sources where appropriate.
12. '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, which are set out in the [Community Vision for Surrey in 2030](#) and the Organisation Strategy 2021-2026;
 - c. the [demographic pressures](#) facing the council's services including 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.

Surrey County Council Efficiency Proposals 2022/23 – Individual Equality Impact Assessments

13. Officers have reviewed all efficiencies proposed for 2022/23 to determine which proposals require EIAs and which do not. For those changes where residents are most likely to see differences in the way services are delivered, and where the equality implications are well defined at the time of setting the budget, individual EIAs have been made available for review. Other proposals not included in this report where it is later realised there are equalities impacts, will require the completion of an EIA and the necessary approval before formal decisions are taken by the relevant

Cabinet Member and Executive Director.

14. There are four EIAs that have been made available to assist Cabinet and Council to give due regard to the proposals outlined in the budget. These have been reviewed by Cabinet to inform decision-making previously. EIAs available for review are:
- [Adult Social Care Transformation Efficiencies EIA](#) (approved by Cabinet Member for Adults and Health 11 January 2022)
 - [Libraries and Cultural Services Transformation EIA](#) (approved by Cabinet Member for Communities on 20 May 2021)
 - Twelve15 Restructure EIA (Approved by Head of Service 17 September 2021 – for further information, the service [should be contacted directly](#).)
 - [Single View of a Child Programme – replacement of existing case management infrastructure EIA](#) (approved by Programme Board 29 November 2021)
15. Some efficiencies within the 2022/23 budget will not have any direct effect on residents or service delivery (such as budget adjustments and removal of vacant posts), and therefore are not considered within this report.
16. The following section assesses the proposed efficiencies for 2022/23 in a cross-cutting way and considers the cumulative impact of some of these changes on particular groups with protected characteristics.

Surrey County Council Efficiency Proposals 2022/23 – Cumulative Impact

17. Analysis of the EIAs, as well as potential impacts identified by officers as efficiencies are in development, shows that the groups with the potential to be affected by multiple changes by efficiencies in the 2022/23 budget are:
- Children and young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, and their families
 - Older adults and their carers
 - Adults of all ages with physical, mental and learning disabilities and their carers
 - Women, particularly those who work in areas where they make up most of the workforce

Older adults and their carers, and adults of all ages with physical, mental and learning disabilities and their carers

Adult Social Care

18. There are many positive changes to Adult Social Care (ASC) services for older and disabled adults of all ages in Surrey. They will be encouraged and supported to build upon their strengths by exploring what care and support family, friends and their local communities can provide to meet their needs. We will extend therapy led reablement to all client groups in a community setting, continue to reshape our learning disability services to offer more creative community-based options and to support people to move from residential to supported independent living. We will continue to improve mental health and care in Surrey and roll out technology enabled care to enable people to remain independent at home with the reassurance they and their family need etc.

19. Carers will also benefit, with access to information, advice and support at times which are convenient for them through our digital information and advice offer. Carers may also benefit from the reassurance offered by Technology Enabled Care, with the person they care for being supported by a monitoring and responder service.

Potential negative equality impacts for older adults, adults with disabilities and their carers
Some decisions on placements for older and disabled people needing residential and nursing care that are offered at a distance may lead to concerns for their family and support network. There may be concern about how care provided by family, friends and community networks can be quality assured and any safeguarding issues addressed.
There is likely to be increased demand for services provided by the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) organisations we work with putting them under further pressure, potentially risking their sustainability and creating gaps in services for some of Surrey's most vulnerable residents.
There is a risk of reduced access to information, advice and services for digitally excluded residents who don't have access to equipment or are unable to receive support remotely.
Carers may be concerned about what these changes mean for them and the people they care for and their wellbeing. They may feel obligated to take on more of a caring role, which could lead to issues in work-life balance if they are employed or have a more detrimental impact on their health if they are an older carer.

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Libraries

20. As we move to more of a co-designed approach to our library services with residents, and develop more modern libraries, there will be many benefits for Surrey residents. For example, for residents with disabilities the expansion of digital activities is likely to bring positive benefits for people who have mobility issues and are less able to travel to and access physical spaces.
21. A restructuring of staff is also currently underway in the Libraries service, with an EIA set to be updated based on the outcomes of the consultation.

Potential negative equality impacts for older adults, adults with disabilities and their carers
Older people would be more likely to be excluded from digital engagement processes due to higher levels of digital exclusion among this resident group. This is because of lower levels of internet access or digital skills in this cohort.
Relocating library provision may affect service accessibility (in terms of public transport or vehicular access) and result in some users not being able to travel as easily to access services or incurring increased travel costs.
People with disabilities affecting mobility may face increased problems due to potentially significant changes to travel arrangements.
The introduction of new digital software and related processes may affect the experiences of residents with visual impairments.
Potential equality impacts of the restructure include the impacts on staff from older age groups who could be disproportionately affected by this restructuring. With 54% of the workforce being over 50, it is likely those within this age bracket would see most significant changes.

Heritage Service

22. It is anticipated that the Heritage Service will have a significant staffing restructure. The details of this are yet to be announced and the subsequent EIA will be completed in due course. If the restructure involved an overall reduction in staffing numbers, equalities impacts would need to consider the proportionate distribution of redundancies across protected characteristics.

Potential negative equality impacts for older adults, adults with disabilities and their carers
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The potential equality impacts that have been identified at this stage include that staff with disabilities may face detrimental changes to working conditions in the event changes to working style or structure are adopted.
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Children and young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and families

Children's Social Care

23. The introduction of Liquidlogic's Early Years Management Education System (EYES) will support a link to be made with Liquidlogic Children's Services (LCS) and Early Help Module (EHM), which will enable Children's Services to have a single view of the child. This means children, young people, and their families only have to tell their story to services once, increasing their chances of getting the right support from the right services at the right time.
24. The arrangements for Looked After Children (LAC) as part of the wider Family Resilience Programme continue to ensure that all children with protected characteristics receive the right help at the right time as part of the continuing drive to improve services for children, young people and their families. We are strengthening our in-house foster care provision using practice approaches that enhance our support to foster carers and children, and so further improve stability and outcomes for our children in care.
25. These changes have positive equalities implications for the most vulnerable young people by focusing on minimising distress through supporting children to remain in their families and for those already in our care, to achieve their reunification with their family where it is appropriate to do so.
26. As part of this transformation work, we are proposing to further specialise the use of our children's homes. This includes restructuring staffing establishment in the homes to ensure there are enough suitably skilled staff to meet children's needs, including strengthening job descriptions and career progression opportunities. This change will likely have positive equalities impact by ensuring those with specific needs are able to receive the care that they need.
27. Any equality impacts of these changes to staff will be made clear and mitigated within the consultation period of the engagement. As part of the preparatory work for specialising the homes the service will undertake an EIA to consider the impact of the proposals on young people who are/may be affected.

Potential negative equality impacts for children and young people
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A restructure of the services for children and young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) is proposed, reducing what is offered by 15 per cent,

to bring what we offer back into line with our statutory obligations. The revised service will prioritise statutory cohorts (for example SEND, Children Looked After, those supervised by YOS, etc.) which will result in a reduction in targeted support for those outside of these vulnerable cohorts. The potential negative impacts on equalities will mean that younger people who do not fit these criteria will miss out on support. This will likely have more severe impacts on children from lower income households.

Libraries

28. Modernising buildings in Libraries and Culture and providing more flexible, welcoming spaces that can accommodate a range of services and partnerships will deliver better value for money for residents.

Potential negative equality impacts for children and young people

Reconfiguring entrances and internal spaces may impact on service accessibility and user experience, for example, young children and users with disabilities may have accessibility issues. Mitigations are being put in place to address these potential impacts including seeking specialist, expert advice and support to design accessible spaces.

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Women, particularly those who work in areas where they make up most of the workforce

Twelve15

29. An efficiency proposal that focuses on restructuring arrangements with Twelve15 will have equality impacts that we need to consider. Twelve15 is a department that provides a number of services for schools and academies, with the largest of these being their catering services. It operates a 'traded' model and relies on the commercial contracts it holds for its revenue streams. A significant reduction in the number of these contracts due to the highly competitive nature of the market has meant that Twelve15's revenue has dropped considerably, and they have thus had to rethink their business model to make their contract acquisition and retention policies more adaptable to market pressures.
30. The focus of this restructure is reducing the overall numbers of staff within the Twelve15 team. As this is an internal change there will be no direct impact to service users/ residents. There are no indications that any age group will be disparately affected, though those over 55 will receive immediate payment of pension benefits - mitigating any potential impact on the socio-economic situation of these staff members.

Potential negative equality impacts for women

It is acknowledged that there will likely be a disparate impact on the basis of sex. The workforce is 96.26% female, and as part of the restructure, 43/46 of those impacted will be female. Given the natural imbalance within the staff numbers, not just within Twelve15 but across the industry, this is not something that can be mitigated. Nonetheless the impact will disproportionately be felt by female employees.

Libraries

31. A restructuring of staff is also currently underway in the Libraries service, with an EIA set to be updated based on the outcomes of the consultation.

Potential negative equality impacts for women

There is a negative disparate impact between the sexes. The workforce is 87% female, thus any major staff restructuring will likely have a disproportionate impact on female colleagues.

Council tax and Adult Social Care Precept

32. Although not an efficiency proposal, the Health & Social Care Levy, which is set by central government and is being funded through a 1.25 percentage points increase in National Insurance, has been assessed for potential equality implications, particularly for lower income households. This increase in tax, coupled with steep rises in the cost of living, will have a disparate impact on residents, depending on their current financial status.

Potential negative equality impacts

As of 2019, 10.7% of all households (53,000+) in Surrey were at or below the relative poverty line, with some areas of the county reaching as high as 26% of residents. Residents whose incomes are less stable will be more severely hit by any significant tax increases, whilst those with incomes tied to inflation, such as pensioners, will be better protected from significant cost of living and tax rises.

A rise in taxes and overall increase in the cost of living will have equality implications along socio-economic lines and across some protected characteristics. Families paying high care costs, due to looking after elderly relatives or those with disabilities, will already have higher than average household expenses, so will be more severely affected by slight drops in income. In addition, due to well-known earnings gaps between certain demographics, including women and those from ethnic minority groups, there is a risk that income disparities will widen.

Mitigations

33. Services have developed a range of mitigating actions that seek to offset impacts of efficiency proposals on residents and staff with protected characteristics. Further details on specific mitigating activities can be read in the EIAs appended to this report.
34. 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, consultation and engagement 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 deciding what can be done collectively to improve outcomes.
 - b. Investing in preventative activity to help enable better outcomes earlier and avoiding having to resource high-cost intensive activity that leads to greater pressures on our budget.

- c. Undertaking ongoing evaluation of the impacts of changes to services so we can build further evidence, and update our EIAs, on who is affected by them, to refine and strengthen the mitigations that are in place and to document and respond to unforeseen negative impacts.
- d. Providing tailored information to service users that are impacted negatively by efficiency proposals so they can draw on their own resources or seek further support either from the council or partner organisations.
- 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 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.
- g. 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.
- h. Engaging with the VCFS to help support potential gaps in services that might be created as a result of efficiencies. These charities and voluntary organisations have proven themselves effective in identifying where issues can arise in current service provisions as well as in their ability to deliver early intervention work.
- i. Working with District and Borough Councils to ensure their Council Tax Support Schemes are able to assist economically vulnerable households to offset any significant financial difficulties that might arise as a result of Council Tax increases.

Conclusion

- 35. As part of our continued efforts to ensure the council remains financially sustainable, we are changing the way we deliver some services to residents. Some of these changes require EIA to identify any groups with protected characteristics who may be impacted by these proposals. When taking a decision to set the budget, Members must use this paper to so they can discharge their duty to pay due regard to the equality implications of agreeing this package of efficiencies to balance the budget.
- 36. This report has summarised the main themes and potential impacts on residents arising from efficiency proposals for the 2022/23 year, as well as mitigating activity. The council continues to go through significant transformation, and we will continue to consider how these changes affect the most vulnerable residents and how we can support them to ensure that no-one is left behind.
- 37. **This report must be read in conjunction with each individual EIA**, as provided in Background Papers to the Cabinet Budget report.

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