

Financial Decisions 2016-2017

Budget Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

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This is an Equality Impact Assessment of the Medium Term Financial Plan. Under equality legislation, the Council has a legal duty to pay 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and
- foster good relations between different groups.

The duty to pay 'due regard' is required to be demonstrated in the decision-making process. Assessing the potential equality impact of proposed budget changes is the means by which we show 'due regard'.

Methodology

The assessment is in five stages.

Stage 1 A review of the proposed budget changes to identify "significant and relevant changes", meaning:

- a) proposals with savings of £50,000 and over
- b) identifying those that have a potential impact on one or more protected groups

Those proposals left were then passed forward to stage 2.

Stage 2 Proposals that were similar were brought together to better facilitate assessment

Stage 3 EqIAs were conducted on all "significant changes" identified
There is a choice of four different recommendations that can result from these assessments.

Green	Savings are made as there is potential to improve the advancement of equality of opportunity
Green-Amber	Adjustments have been identified (or will be made) to remove barriers or to better promote equality.
Amber	Carry on despite having identified some potential for an adverse impact or a possible missed opportunity to promote equality.
Red	Stop and rethink when an EqIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination

A draft assessment accompanied the Medium Term Budget Cabinet Review in December 2015

Stage 4 Information was fed into lines of enquiry in the consultation process and adjustments have been made to seven savings

Stage 5 The final report was compiled including updates to the published assessments.

The following tables summarise the results of these stages:

Table 1: A Summary of Initial Assessments

Overall number of proposals	No. of proposals that are not significant (Stage 1a)	No. of proposals that are unlikely to have an impact on one or more protected groups (Stage 1b)	No of EqIAs conducted (Stage 2)
131	44	70	13 (from 17 savings)

The summary below contains the outcome of those assessments at stage 2 and recommendations.

Table 2: Stage 2 Assessments

	EqIA Completed	Ref.	Recommendation
1	Residential Placements	S16	Green
2	Changes to Intermediate Care Services	S128	Green
3	Homecare measures I – reduce demand and review packages	S17, S19	Green
4	Homecare measures II – cease provision of some services	S20, S21	Green-Amber
5	Sheltered Housing	S24,	Green-Amber
6	Changes in Older People’s services	S25, S26	Green-Amber
7	Learning Disability Review	S27	Green-Amber
8	ASC Charging	S28	Green-Amber
9	Community & Cultural Review	S34	Amber
10	Improved Home to school transport	S35	Green-Amber
11	Options for support young people in care	S41	Green
12	Reduction in temp accommodation costs	S51, S52	Green
13	Rationalisation of Play Areas	S77	Green-Amber

Impact on Services

An Equality Impact Assessment was conducted on all 131 savings proposals of which 17 were considered as being 'significant' and 'relevant' to equality. Similar decisions have been brought together to produce 13 in-depth assessments.

These assessments recommend that:

- In five (5) green areas, savings continue, as there is a potential to improve the advancement equality of opportunity.
- In seven (7) green-amber areas, adjustments have been/are made to remove barriers or better promote equality. Adjustments are identified below.
- In one (1) amber area, to continue despite having identified some potential for an adverse impact or a possible missed opportunity to promote equality. In this case, the justification is included in the EqIA and is in line with the duty to have 'due regard'. Consideration has been made to whether there are sufficient plans to reduce the negative impact and to monitor the actual impact.
- There are no (0) red areas, it is recommended that savings not continue, as there is a potential for unlawful discrimination.

Impact and pressures

Budget pressures are the extra spending challenges, contained in the budget, many of which will ensure that the council meets the needs of vulnerable people. Of the 45 pressures, 27 pressures will advance equality of opportunity. These include:

- increases in reablement activity, which is designed to help a people restore their independence and do as much as they can for themselves, rather than someone doing things for them, in particular those affected by service changes to residential placements and homecare measures
- measures to meet increases in demand due to sizeable changes in demography, so that the Council has to ensure that services are based on statutory eligible needs and that people's needs are regularly reviewed
- activities that meet the needs of the most vulnerable people with disabilities, children and older people

Overall, the impact in 2016/17 may seem to fall slightly more heavily on older people, however, in the last four years this group has been proportionately more protected and put together pressures and savings show a redirection in support for older people, based on eligible needs and reablement. Moreover, the Council is faced with challenging increases in demand in areas such as fostering and homelessness, which will make a focus on its primary duties essential.

Table 3: Summary of the areas where it is recommended to continue without adjustments

Area of Work	Assessment
Residential Placements	There is significant investment in services that support improving independence and wellbeing, including reablement services (see last section). As a result, there is evidence for a reduction in the number of people needing to be supported in long-term residential care placements.
Changes to Intermediate Care Services	The proposed saving is a small health element of support which will no longer be required with the closure of the building. The closure is required due to the size of the works required to Orchard House. Following a formal review of Intermediate Care Services later this month a decision will be made where the money can be most usefully reinvested in reablement services.
Homecare measures I – reduce demand and review packages	The positive work of reablement services has seen a reduction in the number of people needing care packages. Where people have needs investment of £300k to increase the capacity in Intermediate Care will lead to a reduction in the cost of homecare.
Options for support young people in care	There will be a reduction in the use of higher cost placements, particularly those provided by the commercial sector – often at a distance from Milton Keynes – for older young people. This will be achieved in a planned and safe way.
Reduction in temp accommodation costs	The higher costs of the use of temporary accommodation will be avoided by the increased proactive securing of permanent accommodation. Permanent housing is the best solution to tackling the problems of homelessness.

Table 4 contains Budget proposals where adjustments have been made or being considered to remove barriers identified by the EqlA or to better promote equality. The proposed adjustments will remove the barriers identified.

Table 4: Summary of adjustments being made

Area of Work	Adjustment Made/Being Made
Rationalisation of Play Areas	Using the standard from the Local Plan the accessibility – in terms of both disability and locality – and the “play value” of play areas will improve, however the number of play equipment items will decrease.

Area of Work	Adjustment Made/Being Made
Sheltered Housing	Where people have eligible care needs, these are assessed and care packages are provided to meet the assessed needs. Of the 805 tenancies, only 109 have care packages. This suggested that a universal approach is not effective and could lead to indirect discrimination against those who just happen to be in the scheme. The schemes could be restructured with active involvement of tenants to provide this service through a contribution.
Homecare measures II – cease provision of some services	These are services that neighbouring Councils have ceased to provide, being beyond the requirement of the Care Act. Since the draft budget, adjustments have been made. For example, the laundry service will be expanded beyond its client base to those who do not have eligible care needs, generating additional income from charging. The longer-term plan for the service will be included in the review of Independent Living Services, which will take place during 2016/17.
Changes in Older People's services	Day Centres - the original plan has been reviewed in light of representations that a geographical approach might be more effective. Community call – the service will no longer be offered to the external market but changes in the staff rota will deliver savings but maintain an effective service.
Learning Disability Review	Increases in the use of direct payments and community access will promote independent living. A Shared Lives programme to be adopted as an alternative service. Shared Lives is the equivalent of an Adult Placement Scheme in people's homes. Families and support workers continue to have concerns regarding the need for a 'structured life', which will require good communication to help them through the changes.
ASC Charging	There is a need for review following introduction of the new Personal Independent Payment Benefit (PIP) to ensure equitable treatment of benefits when service users are being financially assessed to pay towards the cost of care. This will ensure against indirect discrimination.
Improved Home to school transport	Adjustments will ensure that the service fully meets the statutory requirement in terms of the qualifying distances. A larger number of journeys will be made on public transport, sometimes with an expectation that parents or carers accompanied their children on the journey. Those most at risk, such as those in temporary accommodation will be protected.

Table 5 outlines those areas where the recommendation is to continue, despite having identified some potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality. In these cases, the justification is included in the EqIA and is in line with the duty to have 'due regard' and reasons are provided.

Table 5: Summary of the justification for accepting a potential adverse impact

Area of Work	Cabinet should have due regard to:
Community & Cultural Review	These changes, which were initiated under the community and cultural services review (CCSR) may yet have an adverse impact but there is a commitment to finding more creative and sustainable models for the delivery of libraries, children's centres and youth services, including information advice and guidance, other than to simply closing them. This remains the objective of this work. The first year of planned changes was successfully implemented. Partners, including local schools, have engaged well and are continuing to assist with the development of options for ongoing service delivery at a lower cost to the Council. Solutions in this area also ensure that other changes in the area of early years' settings training and advice are mitigated.

Impact on the Equality for the Workforce

The budgetary decisions were tested to consider whether they are free from discriminatory factors, that the selection of staff at risk was fair. To answer the proportion of those that are at risk for all major characteristics was compared against the proportion within the establishment as a whole. A statistical test will be applied to gather whether we can be 90% confident that the result is fair and free from discrimination.

The result suggested that the proportion of people with different characteristics was in line with that which would have been found from a random sample with a confidence of 90%.