

Diversity impact assessment

TITLE
CAPITAL AND REVENUE BUDGETS 2024/25 OVERARCHING DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (DIA)
DATE
February 2024
LEAD OFFICER.
Katey Durkin, Chief Finance Officer
1 Summary description of the proposed change
What is the change to policy / service / new project that is being proposed? How does it compare with the current situation?
Overarching Diversity Impact Assessment This Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) does not seek to duplicate the service specific DIAs. Instead, its purpose is to bring together their findings, summarising the cumulative impact that the budget proposals may have on people with protected characteristics within the Medway community and workforce (as defined in the Equality Act 2010). Each service is expected to carry out a DIA to support the proposals set out in the Budget 2024/25 report to Council. Budget 2023/24 The Capital and Revenue Budgets 2024/25 report sets out the Council's spending plans for 2024/25 and how it intends to resource the delivery of services. In accordance with the Constitution, this will be submitted to Council for consideration and approval on 29 February 2024.
2 Summary of evidence used to support this assessment
Eg: Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user. Eg: Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile
Evidence used to support this overarching DIA includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital and Revenue Budget Report 2024/25 <u>Proposals 2024/25</u> Budget changes have been proposed across a wide range of services as follows: Children and Adults (C&A) There has been significant growth in this budget in recent years and this continues with the budget for 2024/25, which reflects total growth (including Schools expenditure and pay uplifts) of £39.777million: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued increases in the complexity of need and the increasing cost of social care packages, including the increase to the Fair Cost of Care band rates in Adults Social Care and the impact of Unaccompanied Asylum

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Seeking Children in Children's Services along with the cost of transporting children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to school.

- Investment to strengthen the tracking, challenge and scrutiny of placement costs through continuing targeted reviews and work to ensure the council receives an appropriate health contribution to care.
- Investment in Adult Social Care to grow the workforce and move to an allocated social worker model, and to deliver a Transformation and Improvement Programme that will see investment in assistive technologies to promote independence, deliver cultural change and strengthen commissioning.
- The proposals also reflect Children's Services capitalising on the impact of the Ofsted rating of Good achieved in 2023 with projected reductions in the costs that had been required to implement the improvement programme, and a reduction in temporary staffing teams.

Regeneration, Culture and Environment (RCE)

The proposed budget for 2024/25 for RCE represents an increase of £4.039million, including pay uplifts. The budget reflects:

- The impact of inflation on contracts including waste management and disposal, and on rising utilities costs across the services including the corporate property estate.
- Significant additional income projections through increasing fees for services including Parking and Highways and reflects the full year impact of the introduction of the Safer Streets programme during 2023/24.
- Significant increases in the number of households and cost of providing temporary accommodation, though the proposals agreed by Cabinet in January to embark on a programme of provision of temporary accommodation mitigate this pressure.
- Reductions in the budgets for a range of functions, including festive decorations as these are now funded through sponsorship, carriageway and footway patching, a reduction in the street lighting energy, Greenspaces management and a review of contributions to external partnerships.
- A review of leisure provision, resulting in increased fees and charges and a reduction in free services currently offered, changes to the operations and increased charges for heritage sites, and the removal of the tourism function.

Business Support Department (BSD), Centralised and Corporate Management

The proposed budget for 2024/25 for Business Support represents an increase of £5.383million, including pay uplifts while the budget for Centralised and Corporate Management represents a further £2.841million increase. The budget reflects:

- The investment of £1.014million required in 2024/25 to deliver the Medway 2.0 transformation alongside the corporate savings of £2.150million that will be delivered through this work, until proposals are sufficiently developed for this to be allocated to services across the Council.

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- The impact of borrowing to fund the Council's capital programme, including the £41.925million temporary accommodation investment, and £20million for the repairs and improvements to Gun Wharf alongside the cost for the borrowing it will be necessary to undertake under a capitalisation direction.
- The addition of £940,000 to increase staffing capacity in Finance, HR and the Digital Teams following the CIPFA Resilience Report and additional resources required to support the Social Care legal caseload.

Where savings have been identified across, Directorate Management Teams have coordinated the completion of DIAs to support the proposals, ensuring any adverse impacts have been identified and actions implemented to mitigate these where appropriate.

3 What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

Is it likely to:

Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups

Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups

Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't

(insert Yes when there is an impact or No when there isn't)

Protected characteristic groups (Equality Act 2010)	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
Age	Yes	Yes	Yes
Disability	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gender reassignment	No	No	No
Marriage/civil partnership	No	No	No
Pregnancy/maternity	No	No	No
Race	No	No	No
Religion/belief	No	No	No
Sex	No	No	No
Sexual orientation	No	No	No

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Protected characteristic groups (Equality Act 2010)	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
Other (eg low income groups)	Yes	Yes	Yes

4 Summary of the likely impacts

Who will be affected?

How will they be affected?

Positive impact:

Budgets have been proposed to deliver the aspirations of the Administration, to deliver the Council Plan and preserve those services that are most important to residents.

The budget proposals are based on extensive analysis and assurance from members of the Council's senior leadership team. Portfolio Holders have worked with their respective Directors and Assistant Directors throughout the budget setting process. Overview and Scrutiny Committees have been consulted on the proposals as set out in the Draft Budget.

The proposals in the budget represent a continuation of the Council's transformation journey, with investment to improve service delivery in Adult Social Care and in the Medway 2.0 programme, to continue to make it quicker and easier for customers to access our services online. This will allow our customers to access services at a time that suits them, meet their expectations and delivers value for money. Any resident who wants to take advantage of new online processes can be supported in libraries by staff, or a volunteer computer buddy.

Adverse impact

Any adverse impact due to proposed budget changes is identified by Directorates through the completion of a service specific DIAs, which also supports services to make more informed choices about solutions which may mitigate potential adverse impacts.

Fees and Charges

The budget proposals have been formulated on an assumption that fees and charges would generally increase by the rate of inflation as at September 2023 CPI of 5.4%, however the principle is that fees and charges should cover the cost of the service delivered and where market conditions allow, greater increases have been applied. Any new charges or changes to service provision have been considered through the completion of service specific DIAs.

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5 What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?

What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?

Are there alternative providers?

Can demand for services be managed differently?

Consultation

For the 2024/25 budget, resident consultation was carried out through Medway's Citizens Panel. Through this consultation, residents were asked how the Council should reduce spending and/or increase income, and the four most common responses were:

- charge more for services that already charge fees (45%),
- transfer ownership of assets to community organisations (43%),
- increase the number of services the council charges for (38%), and
- increase Council Tax above 5% (33% of respondents).

This feedback supports a number of the proposals in this budget including increasing fees and charges and introducing new charges. More broadly, the results of this consultation and resident feedback will be reflected in the process to develop the budget for 2025/26 and beyond.

Following the decision on the budget for 2024/25, in some circumstances services will need to carry out consultation with service users. This will inform how specific services or programmes should be redesigned to meet user needs, balanced against the Council's financial resources.

Equality duty

The Council is committed to having due regard to s149 Equality Act 2010 as an integral part of its decision making. Carrying out DIAs helps to anticipate the likely effects of budget proposals on different communities and groups, and thereby assists the Council to comply with its equality duties when discharging its public function of budget setting. DIAs will be undertaken (or the existing DIA will be updated) before any final decisions that could impact on people with protected characteristics, are made through the Council's processes. This will enable services to make more informed choices regarding solutions which may mitigate potential adverse impacts.

Performance Review

In addition, the Council will continue to review the performance of services as part of the existing quarterly monitoring process to take account of the impact on people with protected characteristics when making decisions in future about services.

Action Plans

Where potential adverse impacts are identified, an action plan which sets out how the service will mitigate the impact will be included in the service specific DIAs. All DIAs and associated action plans are approved by Assistant Directors.

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Council Equalities and Workforce Policies

Existing council equalities and workforce policies are used to minimise or avoid negative impacts on staff, especially those with protected characteristics.

6 Action plan

Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence

Action	Lead	Deadline or review date
Carry out appropriate consultation once the overall 2024/25 budget has been approved by Council and incorporate the findings into new/updated DIA.	Assistant Directors	End of Q2 Sept 2024 (6 months)
Directorate Management teams (DMTs) to review cumulative risk of DIAs once completed and ensure action plans are completed	DMTs	End of Q2 Sept 2024 (6 months)

7 Recommendation

The recommendation by the lead officer should be stated below. This may be: to proceed with the change, implementing the Action Plan if appropriate, consider alternatives, gather further evidence

If the recommendation is to proceed with the change and there are no actions that can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impact, it is important to state why.

The budget decision will be made by Full Council on 29 February 2024.

Recommendations:

- Where decisions are yet to be made on how to implement cost savings, for specific services, DIAs will be undertaken (or updated) before such decisions are made. Consultation will be undertaken (where appropriate) to inform service specific DIAs.
- Directorate Management Teams to continue to monitor equalities impact of changes to services and assess cumulative impact of service changes across Directorates, including the delivery of DIA actions.

8 Authorisation

The authorising officer is consenting that the recommendation can be implemented, sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned, the Action Plan will be incorporated into the relevant Service Plan and monitored

Assistant Director

Phil Watts

Date of authorisation

February 2024