

Cherwell District Council

Equality Impact Assessment

Budget and Business Planning 2021/22: Overarching Equality Impact Assessment

Context and Purpose

The Equality Act (2010) states that public bodies, including councils, need to take extra steps to stop discrimination: this is known as the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Act defines discrimination as the less favourable treatment of a person, because of a protected characteristic, as compared to others who do not share that characteristic. The legislation also applies where there is a belief that the person who is disadvantaged has a particular protected characteristic, even if that is not the case.

These protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership

Cherwell District Council sets out its approach to equalities, diversity and inclusion, including how we meet the Public Sector Equality Duty, in the [Including Everyone](#) framework. Including Everyone sets out how the Council goes further than the protected characteristics in the Equality Act by also considering the impact our decisions have on:

- People living with social deprivation
- Rural communities
- Those leaving care
- Carers
- Those in our armed forces community

Equality Impact Assessments

All Council decisions are reviewed for equality impact at the appropriate level of detailed analysis depending on the potential service impact of the proposed change. This allows for the review of the potential impact of new and updated policies and service delivery decisions on those with the protected and additional characteristics. Where there is potential for material service impact, a formal Equality Impact Assessment is completed. This overarching assessment is made in support of the Budget and Business Planning proposals 2021/22. Additional individual impact assessments have also been published where specific proposals have the potential for material service impact.

Assessing Equality Impact does not guarantee that a change will never have a negative impact, but it is intended to ensure policies meet the diverse needs of individuals. Equality Impact Assessments also ensure that the outcomes of a proposal are considered, with the potential benefits maximised and possible challenges mitigated, within the overall funding available.

Section 1: Summary details

<p>Directorate and Service Area</p>	<p>All Directorates and Service Areas</p>
<p>What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).</p>	<p>This assessment sets out the overall impact that the budget and business planning proposals have on a range of equality and diversity characteristics, including the nine protected characteristics defined under the Equality Act 2010, and sets out any mitigations that have been put in place against possible negative impacts.</p>
<p>Is this a new or existing function or policy?</p>	<p>This impact assessment provides an overview of the 2021/22 budget and business planning proposals and so comments on changes to existing programmes as well as new proposals.</p>
<p>Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).</p>	<p>This assessment covers the overall budget and business planning proposal for Cherwell District Council and seeks to highlight key evidence and intelligence that the Council has used to assess the impact of its budget proposals on the nine protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>The Council has also assessed the impact on those living in rural areas, those living with social deprivation, armed forces communities and carers.</p> <p>The assessment has not identified any bias, unfair advantage or disadvantage to any groups or individuals. Where potential negative impacts have been identified, mitigations have been put in place to reduce impact.</p> <p>For rural communities, we have mitigated potential negative impacts on a number of proposals including the reduced scope for additional community development programmes where we will seek to place a duty on developers to fund community development activities in new communities via our Local Plan. Where we are proposing to reduce the cleaning of village streets, we will mitigate the impact by working with communities to promote community approaches to maintaining the public realm.</p>

	<p>Where we have proposed to review or introduce fees for car parking, garden waste and public toilets, we have benchmarked these against neighbouring and similar local authorities to ensure that we manage the impact of change. We recognise that the impact of these changes may fall on particular groups and so have balanced the need to maintain these facilities for the good of all residents and in particular those in several of the protected groups who rely most on these services. For example, the public toilet proposals may impact more on those in certain protected groups who are more likely to rely on these facilities including elderly people, people with certain disabilities and those who are pregnant or caring for young children. However, increasing charges helps to ensure the future viability of this service and in particular helps to meet the needs of those protected groups. The potential impact is also mitigated by ensuring that there are easy means to pay, including contactless. Those disabled people accessing the RADAR scheme, which operates at all facilities, will not be subject to charges. For the review in car parking charges we will continue to make sure that those eligible for Blue Badges are exempt from these charges.</p> <p>The proposals include changes to the way we provide customer services, including the closure of three LinkPoint offices and the withdrawal of directly managed cash and card payment machines. While these changes have the potential to impact service users, the increasing range of alternative options and associated changes in the choices customers are already making in how they access services and make payments mean that no negative outcomes have been identified for any specific group of service users.</p> <p>Expanding services like bulky waste collection has the potential for positive benefit for those in rural areas, those with disabilities or those without access to transport while generating additional income for the Council.</p> <p>Finally, we have proposed to make the Cherwell Link residents' magazine publication principally online. We have mitigated the impact on those who are digitally excluded by ensuring that print copies will still be produced for local libraries and other public buildings, recognising that these is a risk associated with this mitigation during restrictions placed on public places due to COVID-19.</p>
<p>Completed By</p>	<p>Lauren Rushen</p>
<p>Authorised By</p>	<p>Robin Rogers</p>
<p>Date of Assessment</p>	<p>December 2020</p>

Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p>The Council's budget and business planning proposals are designed to enable us to deliver the key priorities in our Business Plan to enable communities to thrive and businesses to grow. Our strategic priorities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- housing that meets your needs- leading on environmental sustainability- an enterprising economy with strong and vibrant local centres- healthy, resilient and engaged communities <p>In addition, key themes including Climate Action, Addressing Inequality and the Covid-19 Recovery will be critical in supporting the delivery of the Council's overarching priorities and vision.</p> <p>This budget and business planning round has been impacted by reduction or ongoing uncertainty in major funding streams including the New Homes Bonus Grant and Business Rates. In addition, significant budget pressures have arisen due to reduction in income due to Covid-19, alongside the additional costs incurred. In combination this is resulting in an extremely challenging budgeting and business planning process as set out in the main Budget and Business Planning reports.</p>
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<p>Proposals Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>This impact assessment covers all savings proposals across Public Health and Wellbeing, Place and Growth, Commercial Development, Assets and Investment, Communities, Adults and Housing, Regulatory Services, Customers and Organisational Development. Details of proposals are set out in the main Budget and Business Planning proposals.</p> <p>Changes to fees and charges are addressed in the associated Fees and Chares schedule. Any increase to fees and charges may impact on those with more need to use a service, including due to an individual having one or more of the protected characteristics. Changes to fees and charges are proposed after consideration of inflation, service need, bench-marking and market opportunities. Where material service impact has been assessed from changes in charges these will be addressed through the equality impact assessment process that supports decision making on the budget and business planning report or the later specific decision making process associated with review and any subsequent proposed change.</p>
<p>Evidence / Intelligence List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact</p>	<p>In considering the impact of budget proposals before they are formally agreed, the Council undertakes a detailed process of democratic and community engagement. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) of health and wellbeing needs, and the associated Equalities Briefing and Cherwell District Profile to consider the impact of proposals as they are drawn up and in the development of this overarching assessment. The Council's JSNA can be found here; • Using data gathered as part of developing the Including Everyone Framework which can be found here; • A public consultation process, the results of which are published alongside the Budget and Business Planning proposals; • A democratic process including agreement of proposals by Executive, analysis and comment on those proposals by Budget and Business Planning Committee, and adoption of the budget by Full Council. Each of these stages provides an opportunity to invite comment and engagement from the public and representatives of particular organisations or population groups.

Section 3: Impact Assessment

<p>Assessing the evidence and impact on those with the protected and additional characteristics</p>	<p>Age: In 2019 there were 150,503 residents in the Cherwell district, 3,600 of which were aged 85+. Cherwell's population is ageing with the 85+ population predicted to increase by 88% by 2037. There were 42,861 people aged under 25 in Cherwell in 2018 (28.7% of the total population), this is slightly lower than the figure for the rest of the county where around 31% of the population is aged under 25. It is estimated that around 36,600 older people (aged 65+) living in Oxfordshire have never used the internet.</p> <p>Potential negative impact is identified for older people who may be less likely to have online access in relation to moving Cherwell Link from a print magazine to an online newsletter. This is mitigated by supplementing the online newsletter with a small print run, with copies distributed to public spaces such as libraries, family centres and leisure centres, recognising that these is a risk associated with this mitigation during restrictions on public spaces due to COVID-19. Potential impact is identified for older people with respect to the introduction of charges for garden waste collection in line with other councils, as this group is thought more likely to use the current service. This impact is mitigated by ensuring that the service charge is set at an affordable level and recognising that maintaining the service even with a charge is of greater benefit than ceasing or reducing the service. Alternative options do exist such as the use of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) or home composting. Older people may also be more likely to be users of public conveniences and so may be more impacted by the increase in charges. Again, the rate has been set at a level bench-marked and assessed as affordable. The potential impact is also mitigated by ensuring that there are easy means to pay, including contactless. The increase in charges for facilities in Bicester in summer 2020 has not resulted in issues or complaints.</p> <p>Disability: Around 19% of the South East population have a disability, Oxfordshire is slightly lower than the regional average at 13%. As of 1 April 2019, there were 1,701 adults receiving long term social care for learning disabilities in Oxfordshire from Oxfordshire County Council Adult Social Care services. 3,718 children and young people aged between 0-25 are registered with a disability in Oxfordshire, 743 of which are from Cherwell. In 2019 67,577 adults were diagnosed with depression of which 16,534 were in Cherwell.</p>
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The enhanced provision of alternative contact channels as an alternative to travelling to LinkPoint locations has the potential to benefit those with some disabilities that make attending face to face appointments difficult. A potential positive benefit of moving the Cherwell Link newsletter online is noted for some people with visual impairments who will in future be able to access it in a format which can be read by screen readers. People with some disabilities may be more likely to be users of public conveniences and so may be more impacted by the increase in charges. Again, the rate has been set at a level which has been benchmarked and assessed as affordable. The potential impact is also mitigated by ensuring that there are easy means to pay, including contactless. The increase in charges for facilities in Bicester in summer 2020 has not resulted in issues or complaints. Those disabled people accessing the RADAR scheme, which operates at all facilities, will not be subject to charges. Potential impact is identified for people with disabilities with respect to the introduction of charges for garden waste collection in line with other councils, as this group may be less able to access alternative provision such as HWRCs. This impact is mitigated by ensuring that the service charge is set at an affordable level and recognising that maintaining the service even with a charge is of greater benefit than ceasing or reducing the service.

Gender Reassignment: There is limited information available on gender identity and data at a local level is not available. During the 2018-19 financial year, there were 379 applications for gender recognition certificates in the UK but this will be under representative of those whose gender identity does not match the sex they assigned at birth. No specific issues relating to gender reassignment have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Pregnancy and Maternity: There were 1,754 live births in Cherwell in 2018 and is a comparatively higher fertility rate to the county average. No specific issues relating to pregnancy and maternity have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals. However, we will continue to ensure that our public conveniences are safe places for all people to use insofar as possible including those who are pregnant or caring for young children and may be more likely to make use of this service. Pregnant people and those looking after young children may also be more likely to be users of public conveniences and so may be more impacted by the increase in charges. The rate has been set at a level bench-marked and assessed as affordable. The potential impact is also mitigated by ensuring that there are easy means to pay, including contactless. The increase in charges for facilities in Bicester in summer 2020 has not resulted in issues or complaints.

Marriage and Civil Partnership: Only county level data could be sourced for this protected characteristic. At the time of the 2011 Census there were 128,400 married households in Oxfordshire and 682 registered same-sex civil partnerships. Same sex marriage became legal in 2014. In 2016 in Oxfordshire there were 3,501 marriages of opposite sex couples and 84 same-sex marriages. No specific issues relating to marriage and civil partnership have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Race including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality: In the 2011 Census, 92.17% of Cherwell's residents were white (86.34% English/Welsh/Northern Irish/British, 0.78% Irish, 0.07% Gypsy or Irish Traveller and 4.98% Other white), 4.26% were Asian/Asian British (1.68% Pakistani, 1.18% Indian, 0.13% Bangladeshi, 0.46% Chinese and 0.80% Other Asian) 1.38% were Black/African/Caribbean/Black British and 0.39% were other ethnic groups. The majority of ethnic minority populations in Cherwell are based in Banbury.

Religion or belief: The question on religion and belief in the 2011 Census survey was voluntary and 67.7% of residents in Cherwell responded to this question. 94.2% of those that responded said that they were Christian, the largest non-Christian group stated that they were Muslim (2.3%) and 25% of respondents said that they had no religion or belief. No specific issues relating to religion or belief have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Sex: In Cherwell in 2019 there were 75,832 females (50.3%) and 74,671 (49.6%) males. No specific issues relating to sex have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Sexual Orientation: There is limited data on sexual orientation defined as people identifying as heterosexual/straight, gay/lesbian, bisexual or another sexual attraction. It was estimated that there was a total of 12,300 people aged 16+ in Oxfordshire identifying as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual in 2018. No specific issues relating to sexual orientation have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Rural Communities: Oxfordshire is the most rural county in the South East at 2.6 people per hectare and 40% of our population live in smaller towns and villages.

The enhanced provision of alternative contact channels as an alternative to travelling to LinkPoint locations has the potential to benefit those living in rural communities by making interaction with the Council easier. Potential impact is identified for people living in rural communities with respect to the introduction of charges for garden waste collection in line with other councils, as this group may be less able to access alternative provision such as HRWCs. This impact is mitigated by ensuring that the service charge is set at an affordable level. Alternative options do exist such as home composting.

Armed Forces: In April 2019 there were 9,550 regular armed forces personnel stationed in Oxfordshire and in March 2019 there were 6,592 recipients of pensions/compensation under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme, War Pension Scheme and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme in the county.

A potential positive benefit of moving the Cherwell Link newsletter online is identified for armed forces families or personnel stationed on bases or out-of-district as they will in future be able to access the newsletter and stay in touch with the District wherever they are located.

Carers: In 2018-19 there were a total of 4,105 carers in Oxfordshire who were registered and receiving a service in the form of a carer's assessment or direct payment from a pooled budget. It is estimated that there are 13,254 unpaid carers in Cherwell. No specific issues relating to carers have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Carer leavers: Care Leavers face many challenges as they move into adulthood, such as those relating to careers, education, accommodation and personal change. This impact assessment has identified no specific impact of our budget and business planning proposals on Care Leavers.

Areas of Social Deprivation: Although Oxfordshire is generally considered to be relatively affluent, there are pockets of deprivation and a number of these are located in Cherwell wards. Parts of Banbury Cross and Neithrop, Banbury Ruscote, Bicester South and Ambrosden, Bicester West, Kidlington East, and Launton and Otmoor are within the 20% most deprived areas of Cherwell.

There is not considered to be any adverse impact on those living with social deprivation, who may be more likely to be occupy properties affected by a proposed review of rent in Build! Properties. This is

because the increase is limited and processes in place ensure that tenants who are eligible to have their housing costs paid either through Housing Benefit or Universal Credit can continue to have the whole amount covered.

Potential negative impact is identified for people living with social deprivation who may be less likely to have online access, in relation to moving the Cherwell Link newsletter online. This is mitigated by supplementing the online newsletter with a small print run, with copies distributed to public spaces such as libraries, family centres and leisure centres, recognising that there is a risk associated with this mitigation during restrictions on public spaces due to COVID-19.

Potential impact is identified for people living with deprivation with respect to the introduction of charges for garden waste collection in line with other councils, as this group may be less able to afford the charge. This impact is mitigated by ensuring that the service charge is set at an affordable level. Alternative options do exist such as the use of HWRCs or home composting.

The overall budget proposals have been developed with the objective of effectively targeting services so that we continue to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, including those living with deprivation, and fulfil our statutory duties.