

**Cross-Cutting Service and Community Impact Assessment
Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20-2022/23****Report of the Policy & Performance Service Manager****Context**

Oxfordshire County Council has delivered significant savings over the last decade, both as part of our role in bringing down the public sector deficit through reduced government funding, and in order to reinvest in meeting demand growth and funding priorities.

The county council's budget is designed to enable us to meet our key priorities for a Thriving Oxfordshire – thriving people, thriving communities, and a thriving economy. This is achieved through priority-based budget setting, while listening to residents and delivering value for money.

Meeting the rising demand of caring for older people, adults with disabilities, and keeping children safe remains a key priority. Investment in support for Oxfordshire's most vulnerable children and adults are central to the budget – with the children's social care budget set to more than double in the decade to 2023. Investment in road maintenance is also increasing.

To meet these pressures, we need to work more efficiently, redesign our service delivery to reflect the changing needs of our communities and maximise our income and investment opportunities. As a result our proposed budget contains options for a variety of saving measures.

Service and Community Impact Assessments

At each annual budget, and when major changes are proposed outside the budget setting process, Service and Community Impact Assessments (SCIAs), enable us to review the potential impact of new and updated policies and service delivery decisions on specific individuals, communities, partner organisations and providers.

While it does not guarantee that a change will never have a negative impact, a SCIA is intended to ensure policies meet the diverse needs of individuals and communities in Oxfordshire, and that the outcomes of a proposal are considered, with the potential benefits maximised and possible challenges mitigated, to the extent possible within overall funding available.

We publish the SCIAs produced every year during the budget setting process, in addition to completing an overarching SCIA drawing together the information from across the budget into a coherent high-level assessment.

In considering the impact of budget proposals before they are formally agreed, the Council undertakes a detailed process of democratic and community engagement, enabling a broad range of those affected by proposals to set out what the impact might be, and how negative impacts can be mitigated.

This includes

- Using the Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment of health and wellbeing needs, and the associated Equalities Briefing, to consider the impact of proposals as they are drawn up, as SCIA's for each proposal are developed, and as the cross-cutting SCIA is prepared.
- A democratic process including agreement of proposals by Cabinet, analysis and comment on those proposals by Performance Scrutiny, and adoption of a budget by Full Council, at each of which the public, and representatives of particular organisations or population groups, are entitled to request to speak, in order to highlight their perception of proposed changes and suggestions for how proposals could be improved.
- Formally asking people for their views on our budget proposals and our proposed Council Tax level for 2019/20. The consultation booklet and online response form are available from 6th December at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/budget. Alternatively consultation booklets will be placed in local libraries, and email views accepted to budget@oxfordshire.gov.uk. The closing date for comments is Sunday 6 January 2019.

Individual SCIA's are then produced on individual proposals as they are developed and implemented, this ensures that an appropriate level of detailed analysis is completed and action taken where identified to mitigate any potential negative impacts and maximise potential benefits, and that all decisions are taken with a full understanding of their potential implications.

Equalities

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 places a number of duties on local government. In particular the following three elements:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic, and those who do not.

One way in which the Council can show that it has had due regard to the statutory need to promote equality is by assessing the impact of proposed budget and services changes on service users and Council-paid staff, particularly in relation to people with a "protected characteristic". The legally 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

In addition to the characteristics above, the Council also considers the effect of the proposals on those in particular geographies (in particular rural and urban areas) and on areas of deprivation.

In addition to undertaking Service and Community Impact Assessments, Oxfordshire County Council also recently reviewed our Equality Policy and Strategy for 2018-22. In doing so, eight objectives were developed. Objective 4 is of particular relevance to the Service and Community Impact Process.

1. It is important that we know who our customers are and so we will ask you to tell us more about you when you contact our customer service centre and/or our complaints team
2. We want to know what people think about the services we provide, so we will ask for feedback on our services to make sure we can take your views into account in future and our services meet everyone's needs
3. We will improve access to our public website and other digital services we provide to make sure all residents are able to access the information they need as easily as possible
4. We will improve the quality of the data we collect about our residents and service users to make sure it is as current as possible. This will help us to respond better to the differing needs of our communities when planning and designing services.
5. We want to make sure that our public buildings are accessible to all our residents and staff. We will review access to buildings we maintain to ensure that they are as accessible as possible
6. Some of our services are provided by other agencies or organisations. We will make sure they know about our commitment to the equality duty, the protected characteristics and their role in helping us meet our objectives.
7. We will improve the diversity of our workforce so it better reflects the diversity of our communities.
8. We will improve how we support our employees with disabilities so they can be fully involved in the workplace, access career development opportunities and be successful at work.

In respect of this objective, Chapter 3 of the Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment examines data relating to the population of Oxfordshire, with a particular focus on those characteristics which are covered by this assessment. The Chapter is attached as Appendix 1.

Assessing Service and Resource Planning Proposals

- Age

Changes to Home to School Transport are being worked up in detail including through a Cabinet Advisory Group of elected Councillors. Changes to entitlement of this nature are necessarily likely to be most significant for those of school age and their

parents/carers, and in the case of transport provided due to special educational needs or disabilities, to those with disabilities or their carers.

We remain committed to finding ways to manage the costs of the overall budget, and across the Medium Term Financial Plan the proposal is for spending on Home to School Transport to be £3.2m higher than previously planned.

We are open to creative solutions for transport, and committed to finding transport options for those requiring transport due to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities which transport them effectively and efficiently, keep them safe, and where possible build their future independence as adult transport users.

There are proposals to deliver savings from the cost of care provided to older people at home. Necessarily this is most significant to those in the age range receiving this care. The proposal is to ensure that care packages are reviewed so that they remain appropriate to the service user's needs and eligibility – as often more intense care can be needed for a shorter period, which can then be scaled back. This is judged to be an equitable and proportionate approach, which should not disadvantage those with age-related care needs.

- Disability

The budget proposes that the council's investment and support for Wellbeing and Employment should be reviewed, with the potential to make activity more targeted, and more focused on outcomes, at a lower cost, including through improved engagement with the voluntary sector.

This employment work predominantly supports adults who have difficulty accessing the labour market due to disability or other condition. As a result if the review does not deliver improvements the impact is mainly on this group. However at present the intention is that the review should deliver improved outcomes overall.

The budget proposes that the county council reduce spending in two areas of mental health provision where the Council makes a contribution to NHS commissioned services. Should this result in a reduction of service availability or standards, this would necessarily have the most significant impact on those with mental health conditions. The proposed reduction of mental health spend within the "core social care offer" is to be phased in, and is considered to be equitable relative to spending on other groups.

By way of mitigation, the county council would continue to deliver those mental health provisions required by law, retaining £6.2m of the current £8m annual spent. The county council and the NHS are committed to continuing to work closely together to improve outcomes for the population of Oxfordshire.

A further proposal represents a saving from working to identify how the existing clusters of mental health support for those with autism and/or acquired brain injury can effectively support those service users who are currently being supported outside the pathway.

This will involve some people accessing alternative support, and is intended to ensure support meets their needs, as well as being delivered at lower cost. In mitigation of any potential disbenefit from this change, the council will support the person in any transition whilst ensuring that the support they receive meets their needs.

In designing and implementing the proposed changes to Adult Social Care pathways, the council will ensure that potential adverse impact on quality or availability of service is minimised

The budget also anticipates savings from the amount allocated to care packages through robust assessment of needs, and more effective procurement of care home places. The intention is that these would not result in any changes to or reduction of eligibility for support.

Similarly, reduced costs for Learning Disability packages are anticipated from assessing whether the most expensive packages of care are required on an ongoing basis or whether, in some cases, the level of need reduces once people are settled into their new home or placement.

- Gender reassignment

No specific issues relating to gender reassignment have been assessed as likely to be impacted as a result of this budget round. Mental health is frequently reported as being a particular challenge for many transgender people, and changes to mental health funding are addressed elsewhere in this SCIA.

- Pregnancy and maternity

No specific issues relating to pregnancy and maternity have been assessed as likely to be impacted as a result of this budget round.

- Race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality

No specific issues relating to race have been assessed as likely to be impacted as a result of this budget round.

- Religion or belief – this includes lack of belief

No specific issues relating to religion or belief have been assessed as likely to be impacted as a result of this budget round.

- Sex

Overall no specific issues relating to sex have been assessed as likely to be impacted as a result of this budget round.

There is an indirect impact in that women remain more likely to be primary caregivers and therefore where changes to services mean that less is done by the council, and more is done by families, for instance in transporting children to school, the impact of this is likely to be greater, overall, on women.

- Sexual orientation

No specific issues relating to sexual orientation have been assessed as likely to be impacted as a result of this budget round. Mental health is reported as being worse overall among those with minority sexual orientations, and changes to mental health funding are addressed elsewhere in this SCIA.

- Marriage and civil partnership

No specific issues relating to marriage or civil partnership have been assessed as likely to be impacted as a result of this budget round.

- Rural and urban equity

Changes to provision of Home to School Transport are overall more likely to affect those living in places where transport is required – generally more likely to be rural than urban, particularly with regard to mainstream transport provision as the statutory entitlement is based partly on distance. This is addressed elsewhere in this SCIA.

Some procurement savings in social care are predicated on commissioning across a larger geographic area in partnership with other councils. While greater distances between service user and service can have a particular impact in rural areas, they may also have an impact on urban service users who may normally access services at the very local level. Overall the proposals in this budget round are not considered to have a disproportionate impact on either of the groups under this heading.

- Deprivation

It is generally the case with changes in public service provision that the impact of any reduced provision, or provision which the service user feels is to their detriment, will have a greater impact on those who are less able to make their own alternative arrangements.

Addressing this challenge at an overall level is outside the scope of this SCIA, however in service and resource planning overall the council is conscious of the needs of the most vulnerable, including those whose vulnerability relates to lack of financial or other resources. Where relevant this is addressed within the individual SCIA for each budget proposal.

Impact on Staff

Oxfordshire County Council recognises the contribution that every employee makes, values individual differences, and encourages respect for all. To support a fair and equal working environment, free from discrimination and harassment, we have policies on Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace and Dignity at work. In addition to monitoring staff, the council also monitors the protected characteristic status of those applying for jobs, shortlisted, and appointed.

At a broad level, the council workforce has:

- low levels of people from ethnic backgrounds,
- low levels of people with a disability
- a higher proportion of women than men
- proportionally fewer young people than in the population
- and fewer people beyond retirement age (though this is to be expected).

We are working towards achieving a diverse workforce that fully reflects our community. The council annually monitors the extent to which we achieve this. We have some successes, including a gender pay gap much smaller than the overall average (median 0.1%, mean 3.5%). However the data also tell us we have some key areas to focus on:

- Encouraging all staff to declare their ethnicity so we can understand the extent to which our workforce reflects the community
- Encouraging more young people to choose to work for Oxfordshire County Council and better understand the reasons why young people leave
- Further work should be carried out to understand any barriers for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the recruitment process, especially at shortlisting and appointment stages.
- Have clear plans to tackle areas where gender is underrepresented.

Given the extent to which the council's future plans are predicated on transforming the way we work, it is important that the make-up of the council's workforce is considered, and staff are involved at both the level of individual services and the council as a whole – while retaining the overall focus on improving outcomes for residents, and value for money.

This will be considered in detail as part of any proposed service changes, and individual SCIA's will be produced to ensure potential impacts and mitigations are identified.

It remains the case that on the largest assumptions for post reductions through transformation, the number of posts lost would be smaller than the number of staff who choose to leave the council due to resignation or retirement each year, though this cannot be guaranteed to be the case within each service area or role.

For more detail The Council's Equality in Employment 2018 Report available at <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/about-your-council/working-oxfordshire-county-council/fairness-and-equality-work>

Officer Contact

John Courouble
Research and Business Intelligence Manager
john.courouble@oxfordshire.gov.uk
07968 242072