

**Service and Resource Planning 2016/17 – 2019/20**  
**Cross-cutting Service and Community Impact Assessment January 2016**

**Introduction and approach to budget setting**

Based on existing plans, the County Council will have saved £292 million by 2017/18. Our net budget (excluding schools which are funded by a ring-fenced grant) is currently £417.3m.

As government reduces funding to local government, the county council has to continue to make budget savings. Now we have to find another £70 million over the next four years (2016/17 - 2019/20) and these savings will be harder to make. At the same time demand for our services is increasing, partly due to our ageing and growing population, and increasing demand for children's social care services. We continue to work hard to find savings from efficiencies and those with minimal impact on the front line, but the greater the reductions needed, the harder this becomes. As a result the council will have to make some tough decisions. Some county council services will be reduced or redesigned and some may stop altogether. The services left will be targeted at those who really depend on them – particularly children at risk of abuse and neglect, and adults who cannot look after themselves.

In developing the proposals for areas of savings, consideration has been given to both the council's legal duties regarding service provision and minimising, as far as possible, the impact that service reductions will have on communities and protected groups, including those defined in legislation such as the Equality Act, and those the Council itself has determined should be particularly considered.

However given the scale of the savings that are required it is clear that individually and cumulatively these changes are likely to have an impact on communities and particular groups defined in equalities legislation due to characteristics such as age, gender, and ethnicity, or the groups we additionally believe should be specifically taken into account - deprivation, and geography (rural or urban). While it will not be possible to avoid such impacts entirely given the scale of the financial challenge, we wish to ensure that they have been considered in developing proposals, and mitigating measures put forward where possible.

In order to make the best possible decisions for setting the budget a consultation exercise known as Talking Oxfordshire was held during the autumn of 2015. This generated a significant response and the full report can be found in section 4.11 of this report. The public were asked to specifically consider how the individual savings options 'might impact on people using the service and communities?' and this feedback has been used to help to identify what the cumulative impact of these proposals might be, as well as informing the development of more detailed impact assessments for individual proposals, that will be used to inform decisions about service implementation.

### Purpose of assessment

This report highlights the potential cumulative impact on protected groups and communities arising from the proposals for savings that will be considered by Council in February 2016.

It should be read alongside the impact assessments that have been produced for individual proposals - assessing the potential impact on protected groups and communities from a particular saving. These are available on the council's website.

A number of individual proposals are at an early stage, and more detailed impact assessments will be produced after the budget is agreed and as services develop plans for implementation. Similarly, impact assessment documents from previous years, or for policy proposals falling outside the annual budget cycle, will be updated where necessary as proposals develop. Comments on draft and initial assessments are therefore welcome and help to ensure we have fully considered the impact of decisions on communities and service users. Where potential negative impacts are identified for particular groups we will consult where appropriate to fully understand this, and/or will communicate directly with the people affected.

### Legislation

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 ("the 2010 Act") imposes a duty on the Council to give due regard to three needs in exercising its functions. The three needs are:

- 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.

Complying with section 149 may involve treating some people more favourably than others, but only to the extent that that does not amount to conduct which is otherwise unlawful under the new Act.

The need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages which are connected to a relevant protected characteristic and which are suffered by persons who share that characteristic,
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and which are different from the needs of other people, and
- encourage those who share a relevant characteristic to take part in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is disproportionately low.

- take steps to meet the needs of disabled people which are different from the needs of people who are not disabled and include steps to take account of a person's disabilities.

The need to foster good relations between different groups involves having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

One way in which the Council can show that it has had due regard to the statutory needs 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". 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

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 deprivation.

### Social Value

Under the Public Services (Social Value Act) 2012 the Council also has an obligation to consider how the procurement of services contracts with a life value of more than £173,934<sup>1</sup> might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the area affected by the proposed contract, and how it might act to secure this improvement. However, it is best practice to consider social value for all types of contracts, service delivery decisions and new/updated policies. In this context, 'policy' is a general term that could include a strategy, project or contract.

While the Social Value Act does not have direct relevance for the majority of the proposals under consideration, the Council is committed to the principles within it. When making decisions around contracting we consider how our commissioning activity might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area.

### Evidence / Intelligence

We hold and actively use data and other evidence to ensure that the Council, as far as is possible, is aware of and able to serve the needs of particular communities and groups in Oxfordshire. Key datasets about the county are available on the

<sup>1</sup> [EC Procurement Threshold for Services](#)

Oxfordshire Insight website, for use by staff, partner organisations, and the wider community. We use all these tools as a guide to support individual service level impact assessments and ensure that decisions that are being taken, as far as possible, protect services for those most in need.

In addition we use evidence received from consultations such as Talking Oxfordshire to inform decision making.

### **Overarching Impact Assessment:**

#### **Age & Disability**

17% of the county's population is over 65 and this is expected to increase to over 20% by 2031. Numbers of the very elderly (85 years plus) are projected to more than double by 2031.

In the 2011 Census, 14% of residents reported having a limiting long-term illness, health problem or disability which limited their daily activities or work.

Older people and those with disabilities are more likely to be users of adult social care services than the rest of the population. They will therefore be disproportionately impacted by savings from this part of the council budget, including reduced funding for dementia support, falls services and planned support (also known as warden schemes). However the council will continue to provide information and advice to help people identify alternative ways to meet their care and support needs, and to meet eligible social care needs following an assessment. This will ensure that appropriate support is still available for those with the greatest (eligible) levels of need arising from old age or disability.

The proposals to cease funding for day services provided by voluntary and community sector providers (Tier 2), the Health and Wellbeing Resource Centres provided by the Council and the Leonard Cheshire Trust (Tier 3), will affect older and disabled residents. However, many people using the services (around 95% using Tier 2, and up to 70% using Tier 3) do not meet the threshold of eligible needs for care and support. The Council will offer assessments to anyone currently using these services (and their carers) and meet their needs for care support if they are eligible.

There is also evidence that the majority of carers in the county are aged 65 or over, and a significant percentage of carers have a long term health condition or disability themselves. This means that they may be significantly impacted by the cumulative effects of proposed changes to services for carers, and the changes outlined above.

The council is to receive extra funding from both Better Care Fund and the ring-fenced 2% council tax rise for Adult Social Care (subject to agreement from council) and to some extent this will mitigate against the need for further reductions in funding that would have been likely to affect these protected groups even more significantly.

The proposed reductions for services in other areas such as subsidised buses and mobile libraries may affect older and disabled people disproportionately as they may be more reliant on public transport than the population as a whole and their ability to

access services that are located in larger communities will be restricted if they are reliant on bus routes that will no longer be provided. The council is working with local communities to develop community transport solutions where possible.

Reduction in overall highway maintenance budgets would mean that the authority will be less likely to redress the current levels of decline in the network and as such there will continue to be defects occurring within the footway and carriageway. Such defects may be expected to have a greater impact on the older people, blind and those with reduced mobility who may be more likely to trip and fall. To mitigate this impact, the service will continue to treat repairs that present a significant safety issue and undertake preventative treatments where appropriate.

At the other end of the scale, 21% of the population is under the age of 18 and the birth rate recently (2011) peaked at a multi-decade high. Vulnerable and disabled children are more likely to be users of children's social care and early intervention services and are therefore likely to be impacted by the budget proposals. The proposed changes to the Children and Family Centres will largely impact children, young people and families. This service change is subject to a detailed impact assessment that will be provided to Cabinet as part of the decision making process for this service change.

As pointed out by a number of respondents to the Talking Oxfordshire budget consultation a number of the budget reduction proposals will result in the reduction or loss of services that can be broadly described as 'preventative'. It is possible that there will therefore be some cumulative impact on those residents, including the very old, very young, and people with disabilities whose needs do not quite meet the statutory duties of the council and who may therefore be adversely affected by the implementation of a number of proposals. It is though very difficult to find robust evidence of which preventative services work effectively in preventing an escalation of need. Wherever possible the council will take account of any such evidence in designing services and mitigating the impact of the changes that are needed to reduce the budget. The impact on statutory services will also be kept under close review to inform future planning. We will also use our work on devolution to ensure that where preventative spend is effective and can therefore reduce the total cost to the public sector, we are able to take an holistic view with partners around the value of that spend.

### **Sex**

Women use some public services more than men. For example there are more women in old age than men and therefore women are more likely to access social care services. In addition, women are overall likely to spend a much greater proportion of their time on caring responsibilities meaning that they are more likely to access services targeted at young families and carers' services. The cumulative impact of the savings proposals has the potential to be significant for this group.

Over 70% of the council's workforce is female (rising as high as 96% in some services such as Early Years). Changes in staffing or conditions might therefore affect women in greater numbers. We will continue to carefully monitor the impact of changes to the workforce as a result of the budget proposals, to ensure employment

policies are applied fairly and to minimise any disproportionate impact on any particular groups. The council annually publishes a review of its progress in promoting equality of opportunity within the workforce.

### **Pregnancy & Maternity**

In addition to sex, there is the potential for some measures to have an impact on pregnancy and maternity. Reducing the number of Children and Family Centres may temporarily or permanently affect the provision of other services, such as health clinics and breastfeeding support groups that currently operate from some of the Children's Centres. This is mitigated both by locating the new centres in the most accessible locations relative to need, and through early engagement with partner organisations to ensure that their service plans reflect necessary changes and their services continue uninterrupted as far as possible.

### **Rural & Urban Communities**

Oxfordshire is a mixture of urban and rural areas: two of Oxfordshire's five districts (West and South Oxfordshire) are among the most rural in England, Vale of White Horse also has a majority of residents in rural settlements, and Cherwell also has a significant rural population. At the same time, two-thirds of the population live in built-up areas with a population of 10,000 or more. The largest settlement is Oxford, with a population of close to 152,500, or almost one-quarter of Oxfordshire's total population.

Prioritisation of reduced resources will mean a smaller number of physical locations for local services, as these services are reduced, co-located, merged with others or cease. This will need careful consideration in order to balance the need to prioritise the preservation of services where they are most needed (with concentrations of deprivation generally found in Oxfordshire's more urban areas) with the recognition that the accessibility of services is likely to have a far greater impact on rural service users who face longer distances to access alternatives, particularly in light of the potential to remove all subsidised bus services, the great majority of which serve isolated and small rural communities. Mitigation around this will include support to community transport schemes.

Proposed changes which may have a particular geographic impact include the additional savings from combining the current early intervention hubs with the current network of children's centres to create a service based around eight Children and Family Resource Centres. Potential geographic disadvantage was addressed in this development by using a methodology for the allocation of centres which ensured a broad geographic spread across the county (North, South, and Central), while using information on deprivation and need to identify locations within that spread.

As more council services are moved online, there would be a potential for disadvantaging those rural areas which have lower levels of access to broadband. This challenge will be significantly mitigated by the rollout of superfast broadband. The current Better Broadband for Oxfordshire programme was already planned to bring superfast broadband to at least 95% of premises by the end of 2017, and recently announced additional funding means it will be possible to exceed this target.

The programme has a further target of fibre enabling premises which will not have access to superfast broadband, to ensure they nonetheless have a minimum speed of 2Mbps.

Mobile library provision was reviewed and consulted upon in 2014. The 6 mobile libraries visit 289 stops including 102 children focused locations: primary schools; pre-schools; nurseries; playgroups. This service is highly valued by its customers and makes a significant contribution to combating rural social isolation (general service) and improving children's literacy (children's service).

However, it is felt that realistic alternative library provision can be available to customers and where customers are housebound or unable to access alternative provision, the Home Library Service will be offered. Digital library services (audio and e-books for example) are an increasingly important part of our offer to our customers.

Reductions in the budgets for areas such as road maintenance, grass cutting and tree maintenance are likely to particularly affect Oxfordshire's more rural communities. Our work with Parish and Town Council's on the Oxfordshire Together initiative is designed to mitigate the impact of some of the reductions.

### **Deprivation**

Oxfordshire has low overall levels of deprivation relative to England overall. However there are ten areas in Oxford City and four in Banbury and one in Abingdon which fall within the 20% most deprived areas in the country, with two of the Oxford City areas falling within the most deprived 10%. Deprivation also exists beyond these specific areas, with averages across an area not always telling the story of the individuals and families within it.

Deprived communities and individuals are necessarily often more frequent and intense users of many public services. The overall budget proposals have been developed with the objective of effectively targeting services so that we continue to meet our obligations to protect the most vulnerable. With regards to the proposed changes to the children's centres and early intervention hubs, significant analyses of local need, deprivation and accessibility have informed proposals for the location of Children and Family Centres and the outreach provision. Impacts will be mitigated by the creation of a Locality and Community Support Service to support and enhance universal service provision and by working with partners to ensure Centres are jointly-used.

There is a risk that a move to protecting only the most vulnerable across a range of services may create an effect for those just outside this threshold. Where possible, it is important to ensure that we have the required evidence base for making decisions about service consideration and change, and as far as possible protect those services which are needed by the most vulnerable. We will also continue to work closely with partners across the public sector and the voluntary and community sector in particular to help mitigate the cumulative impact of any changes.

### **Sexual orientation**

The proposal to remove funding for non-statutory HIV services could be regarded as having a higher impact on gay and bisexual men, given their higher rates of HIV prevalence. However this would be mitigated as future support for people with HIV could be integrated into Oxfordshire's core Adult Social Care services, with particular emphasis on ensuring information and advice, advocacy, assessments and support planning take into account service users' cultural, gender and sexual orientation related needs.

### **Other protected characteristics**

At this stage we have not identified any specific impacts of our proposals on people sharing the protected characteristics listed below, beyond those issues discussed above:

- Race
- Religion/belief
- Marriage/civil partnerships
- Gender reassignment

Report by:  
Maggie Scott  
Chief Policy Officer  
Oxfordshire County Council