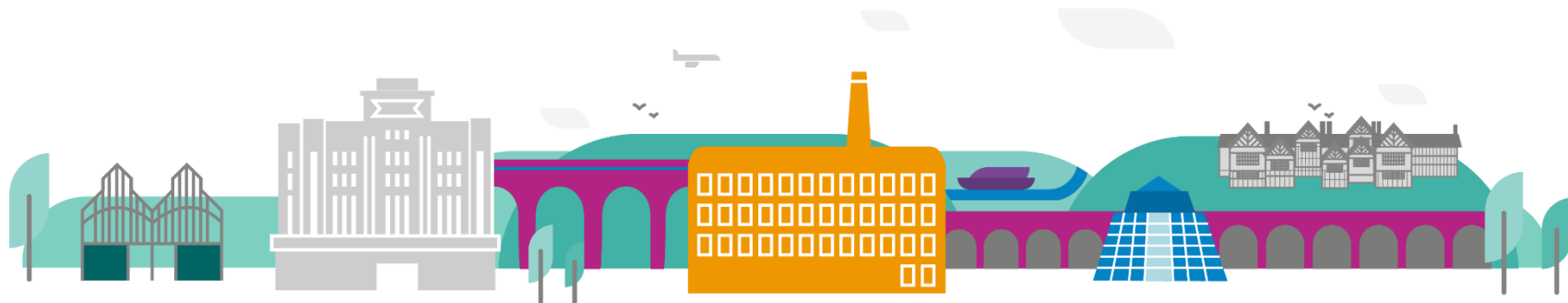# Equality Impact Assessment
Medium Term Financial Plan – Radically Digital
January 2022

Equality Impact Assessment

Title of report or proposal	Medium Term Financial Plan – Radically Digital programme		
Lead officer(s)	Business Relationship / Transformation Managers	**Date**	January 2022

Aims and desired outcomes of the proposal
Are you trying to solve an existing problem?

The council's assessments of the financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the Council, outlined within the latest review of our medium-term financial plan (MTFP), identifies a budget gap of £34.185m to 2023/24. The council has committed to a transformation led strategy which aims to manage service demand, deliver services more efficiently ensuring value for money is achieved, and focus on the outcomes for Stockport residents and businesses. We have identified a contribution in 2022/23 of over £10m in savings from transformation and robust corporate governance from across the organisation. This will be delivered through four programmes of work:

- Demand management
- Value for money and commissioning
- Robust corporate governance
- Radically digital

To understand the impact of our proposals on our community we will undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) for each of these programmes of work.

This EqIA aims to assess the impacts of the Radically Digital programme of work, and should be considered alongside EqIAs for the remaining three programmes of work as well as a cumulative review for the whole of the MTFP programme. This programme will review processes (internal and external), maximising opportunities to automate and remove failure demand by improving citizen experience. This includes increasing access to services online and self-serve so that people can easily access information and support in line with 21st century expectations of citizen experience. This will involve a fundamental change in how council services are accessed and experienced – increased digital self-serve and automating processes as far as possible. This may include automating standard operational decision making where possible and introducing newly designed communication channels to meet the needs and expectations of our citizens. We will continue to ensure that all citizens can access our services through the routes that are best designed to their needs.

Scope of the proposal
Include the teams or service areas from the Council and outward-facing services or initiatives

Our digital workstreams and areas of focus include;
- Process improvement/ efficiency (internal)
- Process improvement/ efficiency (external)
- Digital inclusion
- Digital infrastructure

- Robust technical foundations
- Improved data / intelligence
- Improved information advice and guidance online – our Stockport.gov site

For our residents and customers this will mean;
- Accessing our services online, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For those who can't self-serve, we will ensure there is an assisted digital approach available. We also have a workstream focused around digital inclusion and improving digital skills.
- Accessing services online will include;
  - Clear information on our website about what services are available and how to access them.
  - Being able to report issues in the borough across all our services, including things like flooding, noise nuisance and fly tipping.
  - Online application and payment for all services.
  - Accessing service information and finding support when it is needed.
  - Tracking issues that you have reported to see what is being actioned.
  - Tracking the status of an application you have made.
  - Viewing all billing information online at any time, such as your Council Tax bill.

The following proposals within the Radically Digital business case don't have a direct impact on service provision or staff and therefore an EqIA is not required:
- Digital mailroom - review and reduce usage of printing. Review incoming and outgoing mail to identify alternatives such as hybrid mail and portals.
- Centralised printing costs - reducing the number of printers and the scope of the contract
- Consolidating IT services - telephony based savings related to non-renewal of contracts
- Electronic documents and records management system (EDRMS) saving related to non-renewal of contracts
- Libraries - Books, publications and other media – review of spend; Merge of management positions/restructure
- Review registrars certificate deadlines – payment for priority service
- Citizen Services - vacancy management
- Taxi licensing - through digitising the service we are able to reduce costs and therefore the subsidy of licensing from the general fund without increasing fees over and above inflation.

We will be reviewing all services for automation opportunities. An EqIA will be completed where any proposal has an impact on service delivery following this review.

What are the possible solutions you have been / will be exploring?
You should refer to any business cases, issues papers or options appraisals

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The business case for this programme of work was approved by Cabinet in September 2021. This can be found here, in item 6(ii): Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 21st September, 2021, 6.00 pm - Stockport Council

Who has been involved in the solution exploration?
Please list any internal and external stakeholders

- Members
- Service users
- Senior Managers of services in scope

What evidence have you gathered as a part of this EqIA? Which groups have you consulted or engaged with as part of this EqIA?
Sources can include but are not limited to: Statistics, JSNAs, stakeholder feedback, equality monitoring data, existing briefings, comparative data from local, regional or national sources.
Groups could include but are not limited to: equality / disadvantaged groups, VCSFE organisations, user groups, GM Equality panels, employee networks, focus groups, consultations.

This equality impact assessment is a live document and will include evidence gathered from engagement and consultation as the project progresses.

The proposals that are a part of this workstream that are likely to require consultation and / or engagement are the projects related to automation and self-service.

Baseline data

The data used in Step 1 are from widely available datasets such as.

- Census 2011 data for Stockport (the most recent Census data available)
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA) data for Stockport

Libraries data

- Service user data
- Data from previous consultation and engagement

Are there any evidence gaps that make it difficult or impossible to form an opinion on how the proposed activity might affect different groups of people?

To be determined post-consultation

Step 1: Establishing and developing the baseline

Characteristic	Demographic of residents / service users	What works well How does the current provision or service meet the needs of people in different protected characteristics?	Current problems / issues This could include low levels of access or participation from certain demographic groups in current service or scheme; or disadvantages or barriers for particular groups
Age	• Percentage age breakdown for Library membership for financial year 20/21 is listed below: 	Borrower Age	Percentage Breakdown of borrowers based on age
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0 - 4	0.88%
5 - 9	4.95%
10 - 14	7.47%
15 - 19	7.92%
20 - 24	7.91%
25 - 29	7.45%
30 - 34	10.13%
35 - 39	9.10%
40 - 44	7.93%
45 - 49	6.34%
50 - 54	8.74%
55 - 59	4.76%
60 - 64	3.78%
65 - 69	3.40%
70 - 74	3.71%
75 - 79	3.05%
80 - 84	2.13%
85 - 89	0.33% | • In the year 2020-21, 21% of book borrowers in Stockport were aged under	• Libraries are accessible for residents, irrespective of age to visit and access services, including those who are socially isolated • Residents can access a range of Library Services remotely including renewing Library loans and accessing online services, such as downloading e-books and e-audiobooks • Home Library Service provides deliveries of pre-selected resources to residents every three weeks who cannot access a Library due to age or mobility issues	

Characteristic	Demographic of residents / service users	What works well How does the current provision or service meet the needs of people in different protected characteristics?	Current problems / issues This could include low levels of access or participation from certain demographic groups in current service or scheme; or disadvantages or barriers for particular groups
	• 20, 66% were aged 20-64, and 13% were aged 65+. • Stockport has more older people and fewer younger adults than the national average. The median age of Stockport is 41 compared to the national average of 39. • 2018 data estimated that 18.4% of Stockport residents are aged 0-14; 9.7% are aged 15-24; 51.9% are aged 25-64; and 19.9% are aged 65 and over. • Of those aged 65 and over, 9.4% are 75+; 2.8% are 85+; and 1.0% are 90+. • It is likely that the older population of Stockport will increase – projections show that 2 in 9 residents will be aged 65 or over by 2030. • Older populations are more common in more affluent areas. • Older residents are less likely to have the means (whether connection, devices or skills) to access services and information digitally.		
Disability Consider people with physical disabilities, sensory impairments, learning disabilities and mental health issues	• 44% of Stockport residents have a long-term health condition, which increases with age with 92% of those 85 and over. • 34% of Stockport households have at least one member with a disability. • The proportion of children with SEND is twice as high in more deprived areas of Stockport.	• Libraries are accessible for residents to visit and access services • Residents can access a range of Library Services remotely including renewing Library loans and accessing online services, such as downloading e-books and e-audiobooks • Home Library Service provides deliveries of pre-selected resources to residents every three weeks who cannot	

Characteristic	Demographic of residents / service users	What works well How does the current provision or service meet the needs of people in different protected characteristics?	Current problems / issues This could include low levels of access or participation from certain demographic groups in current service or scheme; or disadvantages or barriers for particular groups
	• An estimated 6,430 of young people (age 5-19) have a mental health disorder. • At present, library services only collect data on library users related to age, so details for library users regarding other demographic data is not known.	access a Library due to age or mobility issues • Library staff support visually impaired residents at Walthew House by providing visits and talking books • Hearing Aid Batteries available from all Stockport Libraries • Libraries work with The A-Team to ensure services support members of the Autistic Community	
Gender reassignment A person whose individual experience of gender may not correspond to the sex assigned to them at birth.	• At present, library services only collect data on library users related to age, so details for library users regarding other demographic data is not known. • It is not known how many transgender people live in Stockport, but UK-wide estimates believe this to be around 1% of the population.	• Libraries are accessible for residents, irrespective of gender to visit and access services. • Residents can access a range of Library Services remotely including renewing Library loans and accessing online services, such as downloading e-books and e-audiobooks	
Maternity and pregnancy	• At present, library services only collect data on library users related to age, so details for library users regarding other demographic data is not known. • Birth rates have risen since 2000 in Stockport, although over the last 5 years, fertility rates have been stable, with 3,302 live births in 2018, a rate of 64.3 per 1,000 women. • Birth rates have grown most rapidly in the most deprived areas of Stockport, which represent 35% of the population yet account for 45% of new births.	• Libraries offer a range of books to support maternity and pregnancy • Residents can access a range of Library Services remotely including renewing Library loans and accessing online services, such as downloading e-books and e-audiobooks	

Characteristic	Demographic of residents / service users	What works well How does the current provision or service meet the needs of people in different protected characteristics?	Current problems / issues This could include low levels of access or participation from certain demographic groups in current service or scheme; or disadvantages or barriers for particular groups
Marriage and Civil Partnership	• At present, library services only collect data on library users related to age, so details for library users regarding other demographic data is not known. • According to 2011 data, in Stockport 47.5% of people are married, 10.8% cohabit with a partner of the opposite sex, 0.7% cohabit with a partner of the same sex, 24.2% are single and have never married or been in a registered same sex partnership, 8.9% are separated or divorced.		
Race Not all ethnic groups will have the same experiences so if possible specify whether the impact is likely to be different for different ethnic groups e.g. Indian people, people of Black Caribbean heritage. This also includes Gypsy and Traveller populations	• At present, library services only collect data on library users related to age, so details for library users regarding other demographic data is not known. • 2011 data shows that Stockport is less ethnically diverse than the national average. 92% of Stockport residents are White and 8% are from a Black, Asian or Ethnic Minority background. This data is from 2011 and it is expected that these groups have changed since then as the diversity of the borough is increasing over time. • Diverse communities having a younger age profile than the rest of the borough. • People who identify as Asian Pakistani are the biggest non-White British / Irish population. • The distribution of diverse communities within Stockport is not even, with the areas of Heald Green, Cheadle and Gatley, and Heatons South being	• Libraries are accessible for residents, irrespective of ethnicity to visit and access services. • Libraries work in partnership with representatives of BAME community in Stockport including EAICO and Rising Stars North West	

Characteristic	Demographic of residents / service users	What works well How does the current provision or service meet the needs of people in different protected characteristics?	Current problems / issues This could include low levels of access or participation from certain demographic groups in current service or scheme; or disadvantages or barriers for particular groups
	particularly diverse where the BAME population reached 20% in the 2011 Census.		
Religion or Belief	• At present, library services only collect data on library users related to age, so details for library users regarding other demographic data is not known. • The largest religious group in Stockport is Christianity with 63% of the population identifying as Christian, although this is decreasing over time. Those with no religion are the second-most common (25%), which has been increasing alongside the Muslim population (3.3%). • These populations are also not even across Stockport. 50% of Muslims in the borough live in Heald Green, Cheadle and Gatley, and Heatons South. Gatley has a large Jewish community.	• Libraries are accessible for residents, irrespective of religion or belief to visit and access services.	
Sex	• At present, library services only collect data on library users related to age, so details for library users regarding other demographic data is not known. • 50.5% of the population of Stockport is female and 49.5% is male, in line with the national average.		
Sexual orientation People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual	• At present, library services only collect data on library users related to age, so details for library users regarding other demographic data is not known. • It is not known how many lesbian, gay or bisexual people live in Stockport, but	• Libraries work in partnership with representatives of LGBTQ+ community in Stockport to deliver events and activities	

Characteristic	Demographic of residents / service users	What works well How does the current provision or service meet the needs of people in different protected characteristics?	Current problems / issues This could include low levels of access or participation from certain demographic groups in current service or scheme; or disadvantages or barriers for particular groups
	UK-wide estimates believe this to be around 5-7% of the population.		
Socioeconomic status	• 2016 data shows that 38% of the population of Stockport live in areas of higher than average deprivation. • 6% of residents in Stockport claim Job Seekers' Allowance / Universal Credit. From October 2019 to February 2021, Universal Credit claimants doubled from 4,725 to 10,685. • 2019 data showed that 0.56% of households in Stockport were noted to have destitution, and it is likely that the pandemic has increased this. • Residents living in poverty or from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to have the means (whether connection, devices or skills) to access services and information digitally.	• Libraries provide public access PCs for job seekers to use	
Other Please add in here any additional relevant comments or feedback where the protected characteristic is not known			
You are encouraged to consider the below characteristics where you have relevant data, especially if your proposal is predicted to disproportionately impact one or more of these groups.			
Carers			

Characteristic	Demographic of residents / service users	What works well How does the current provision or service meet the needs of people in different protected characteristics?	Current problems / issues This could include low levels of access or participation from certain demographic groups in current service or scheme; or disadvantages or barriers for particular groups
Those experiencing homelessness		• Libraries are a safe, non-judgemental space where those experiencing homelessness can spend time. Libraries work closely with Stockport Homes and Wellspring to provide support as and when required	
Veterans			
Asylum seekers and refugees			

Step 2: Identifying impacts the proposal will have compared with the baseline

Impact no.	Characteristic	Positive or negative impact	Impact source	Impact details and rationale	Additional information
Add more rows where needed		*Is the impact positive or negative?*	*How have you become aware of an impact or inequality? Is it from research, have you been advised by another party, has a member of the public or a stakeholder made you aware, did someone from this or another characteristic make the claim?*	*What is the impact or inequality that has been identified? What is the frequency of claim for it? What is the rationale behind the issue, inequality or impact claimed?*	*Is there any evidence to support or deny the claim? Provide full details. Has the inequality or impact claimed been tested with people from the relevant characteristic? Have you researched the claimed issue? If yes, what has been learned and from what source(s)?*

Impact no.	Characteristic	Positive or negative impact	Impact source	Impact details and rationale	Additional information
1	**Age – older people**	Negative	Business case, previous research from DigiKnow	People in Stockport who are have limited or non-existent access to the internet are more likely to be older and would benefit the most from accessing services online. The move towards digitalised services will increase the risk of these people unable to access vital information and council services and could lead to increased risk of social exclusion and deprivation.	[Stockport-DigiKnow-2018-20-Final-Programme-report-June-2020-v2.0-3.pdf (digitalstockport.info)](Stockport-DigiKnow-2018-20-Final-Programme-report-June-2020-v2.0-3.pdf)
2	**Age – younger people**	Positive		Introduction of Open Plus at four extra Libraries would widen access for residents who register access to Library 8am – 8pm Monday – Friday and 9am – 5pm Saturday and 9am – 4pm Sunday. This could benefit young people who are in school during the day and can only access the library outside of school hours.	
3	**Disability**	Negative	Business case, previous research from DigiKnow	Similarly to impact 1, people in Stockport who have limited or non-existent access to the internet are more likely to be disabled or in poor health and would benefit the most from accessing services online. The move towards digitalised services will increase the risk of these people unable to access vital information and council services and could lead to increased risk of social exclusion and deprivation.	[Stockport-DigiKnow-2018-20-Final-Programme-report-June-2020-v2.0-3.pdf (digitalstockport.info)](Stockport-DigiKnow-2018-20-Final-Programme-report-June-2020-v2.0-3.pdf)
4	**Disability**	Positive	Business case	Improving the quality of information found on the council website, making this jargon-free and easy-to-understand and improving signposting will help people with difficulties reading and processing information to be able to access support and find the information they need.	
5	**Disability**	Negative	Business case	Change in staffed hours at Libraries may impact residents who visit Library during those hours. This might mean that those who need additional help or support to access library services are excluded.	

Impact no.	Characteristic	Positive or negative impact	Impact source	Impact details and rationale	Additional information
	Gender reassignment			No impacts specific to this group known.	
	Maternity and pregnancy			No impacts specific to this group known.	
	Marriage and Civil Partnership			No impacts specific to this group known.	
	Race			No impacts specific to this group known.	
	Religion or Belief			No impacts specific to this group known.	
	Sex			No impacts specific to this group known.	
	Sexual orientation			No impacts specific to this group known.	
6	**Socioeconomic status**	Positive	Business case	Introducing free Wi-Fi to more public spaces will increase internet access for those who cannot afford or are not able to get Wi-Fi at home and will therefore widen access to these groups.	
7	**Socioeconomic status**	Positive	Business case	Introduction of Open Plus at four extra Libraries would widen access for residents who register to access Wi-Fi at a Library 8am – 8pm Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm Saturday and 9am – 4pm Sunday. This may widen access to those in full time work, or those with non-standard working patterns such as shift work or working multiple jobs. Similarly this would widen access for residents who register to access Public PCs and / or Wi-Fi to support job seeking.	

Impact no.	Characteristic	Positive or negative impact	Impact source	Impact details and rationale	Additional information
8	**Socioeconomic status**	Positive	Business case	Improving the quality of information found on the council website, making this jargon-free and easy-to-understand and improving signposting will help areas with lower literacy rates to be able to access support and find the information they need.	
9	**Socioeconomic status**	Negative	Business case, previous research from DigiKnow	People in Stockport who are have limited or non-existent access to the internet, due to being on a low income for example, would benefit the most from accessing services online. The move towards digitalised services will increase the risk of these people unable to access vital information and council services and could lead to increased risk of social exclusion and deprivation.	Stockport-DigiKnow-2018-20-Final-Programme-report-June-2020-v2.0-3.pdf (digitalstockport.info)
You are encouraged to consider the below characteristics where you have relevant data, especially if your proposal is predicted to disproportionately impact one or more of these groups.					
	Carers				
10	**Those experiencing homelessness**	Positive	Business case	Introducing free Wi-Fi to more public spaces will increase internet access for those who do not have access to Wi-Fi through homelessness and will therefore widen access for people experiencing homelessness	
	Veterans				
	Asylum seekers and refugees				

Step 3: Identifying mitigating factors to minimise negative impacts

Impact no.	Impact summary	Suggested mitigation and rationale	Source of suggestion	Evidence for solution	Feasibility
	Give a brief summary of the issue/inequality /impact	*What is being suggested to mitigate for this. What is the rationale behind the suggestion?*	*Where does this suggestion come from? Have you consulted the characteristic(s) affected for solutions?*	*What evidence is there that the suggestion would solve the problem? How have you learned this? Has this been done elsewhere?*	*Within the financial envelope, how feasible is this solution? What are the cost implications? Could it indirectly affect anyone else? Can any other body help with the solution? If yes, how?*
1, 3, 9	The move towards digitalised services will increase the risk of people unable to access vital information and council services.	The DigiKnow programme is a growing network of support for the digitally excluded in Stockport has already made an impact in terms of reducing digital exclusion in Stockport. This programme of work formed a key part of the Borough Plan for Stockport and will help mitigate and lessen the impact on digitally excluded residents. The business case also notes that assisted digital routes to help are also considered within the proposals.		[Stockport-DigiKnow-2018-20-Final-Programme-report-June-2020-v2.0-3.pdf (digitalstockport.info)](Stockport-DigiKnow-2018-20-Final-Programme-report-June-2020-v2.0-3.pdf)	Feasible – already part of Borough Plan
5	Reduced staffing hours in libraries may limit access for those who need additional support from staff	Residents can still access Libraries when staff are available. Staffed hours follow results from consultation in 2019 which identified core staffed hours for Libraries.	Business case, previous consultation results	Previous consultation results	Feasible – already part of library operations and business case proposals

Please state if there are any additional comments or suggestions that could promote equalities in the future.

Step 4: Conclusions and outcome

If you have <u>not</u> undertaken any community engagement for this EqIA, please indicate this and explain why.
This document will include evidence gathered from engagement and consultation as the proposals progress.
If there are impacts identified that cannot be mitigated against, are there any justifications for not taking any action to improve the negative impacts that have been identified?
Due to the nature of the MTFP process there are likely to be many and immediate negative impacts upon residents of Stockport and council staff. The council faces many financial pressures and risks and balancing the pandemic response, alongside core service delivery requirements, whilst delivering longer term change is acutely challenging. Delivering a resilient budget can only be achieved through difficult decisions, robust prioritisation and ambitious changes in the way we work if we are to continue to meet the needs of local people today and in the future.   The longstanding lack of clarity regarding medium term local government financing remains a significant challenge in providing resilient public services. We will be continuing to work closely with leaders across Local Government to continue to lobby for a fair and sustainable funding regime for local public services.
Are there any adverse impacts that can be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group, or for any other reason? Please state why.
N/A

Are there any other proposals or policies that you are aware of that could create a cumulative impact?
This is an impact that appears when you consider services or activities together. A change or activity in one area may create an impact somewhere else.
Any cumulative impacts of the MTFP proposals will be addressed in an upcoming officer report for cabinet in January 2022.

Based on your equality impact analysis, please indicate the outcome of this EqIA.

	Please indicate the outcome of the EqIA and provide justification and / or changes planned as required.	
A.	No major barriers identified, and there are no major changes required – proceed.	☐
B.	Adjustments to remove barriers, promote equality and / or mitigate impact have been identified and are required – proceed.	☒
C.	Positive impact for one or more of the groups justified on the grounds of equality – proceed.	☐
D.	Barriers and impact identified, however having considered available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the aim of the policy or practice – proceed with caution, knowing that this policy or practice may favour some people less than others. Strong justification for this decision is required.	☒
E.	This policy identifies actual or potential unlawful discrimination – stop and rethink.	☐
Please describe briefly how this EqIA will be monitored. When will this be reviewed? What mitigating actions need to be implemented and when?		

Many of the proposals contained within this document are in their early stages. Therefore this will be a live document which is updated as each programme progresses in line with the milestones referenced within the business cases.