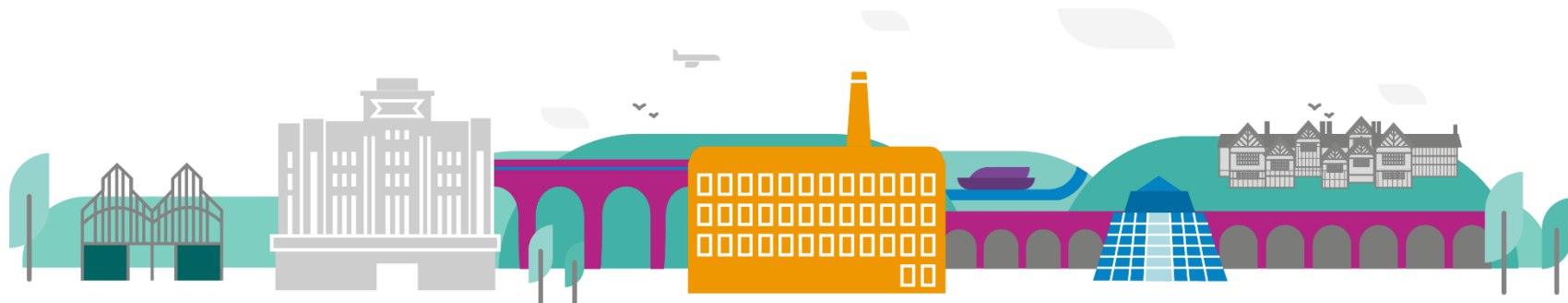# Corporate, Resource Management & Governance
Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Proposals
Equality Impact Assessment
December 2023

Equality Impact Assessment

Title of report or proposal	Corporate, Resource Management & Governance Scrutiny Committee – Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Proposals		
Lead officer(s)	Business Relationship Manager/ Transformation Lead	**Date**	December 2023

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

The report analysed in this EqIA outlines our strategic approach in responding to the review of the medium-term financial plan (MTFP). The budget proposals being considered by the Cabinet aim to address financial and demand challenges, enable longer term transformation, and ensure the delivery of shared strategic partnership ambitions. Our collective focus is on actions which deliver outcomes to support and enhance our communities and businesses across Stockport.

To understand the impact of our proposals on our residents and communities we will undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) for each of these programmes of work. This EqIA aims to assess the impacts of the proposals brought to the Corporate, Resource Management & Governance Scrutiny Committee, and should be considered alongside EqIAs for the remaining programmes of work as well as a cumulative assessment for the whole of the MTFP programme.

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

The report includes proposals covered by the Finance & Resources portfolio, primarily focussed on the Corporate and Support Services Directorate, which include:

- Service redesign/ staffing review – rationalising, reconfiguring and reducing our Corporate and Support Services offer. Smaller teams/ reductions in posts. Proposals include looking at all corporate support services.
- Increasing income – reviewing income potential, fees and charges for all Corporate and Support Services. Proposals include: Complaints support to schools – small increase in complaints service charges to schools to balance the cost of delivering the service; Revenues and Benefits – increased deputyship caseload in Client Finance.
- Service efficiencies – reviewing and exploring all Corporate and Support Services budget areas to identify opportunities to reduce costs and deliver services more efficiently. Proposals include efficiencies in relation to: Member training budget and mayoral hospitality budget; Integrated Care System arrangements; Insurance; AMI chatbot.
- Digital enabled savings – proposals in Corporate and Support Services include: digital procurement; and an in-house self-scanning solution.

Details of proposals can be found in the corresponding report.

The vast majority of these proposals don't have a direct impact on service provision therefore an EqIA is not required for most of these proposals at this stage.

Proposals that do require an EqIA are:

- Service redesign/ staffing review
- Service efficiencies – AMI chatbot non-renewal

The Corporate and Support Services digital enabled savings included here don't include changes to services that will affect residents and customers therefore an EqIA is not required in relation to these at this stage:

- Digital procurement - digitisation and automation of some internal forms and processes related to procurement service requests.
- Self-scanning - developing an in-house solution to replace the scan and self-serve product currently in use in Libraries and council receptions, stopping spend on the current contract. This is a technical project and requires minimal change to how residents interact with the scanning solution.

The council-wide Digital Strategy and programme includes reviewing our processes and increasing access to on-line solutions such as digital self-serve and automation options, so that our residents can easily access information and support. We will also continue to review internal processes to maximise automation opportunities. For our residents and customers, this involves a fundamental change in how council services are accessed and experienced, and we recognise that there will always be some people unable to get online. For these residents and those with more complex queries, we will continue to offer non-digital support.

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

All proposals being explored are listed in the corresponding reports.

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

CSS senior management and relevant service teams have been consulted during proposal development.

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, where appropriate, as the project progresses.

Population information gathered from: Census 2021 data; service user data, JSNA data.

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?

It is important to note that details for some of the proposals are not known at time of writing and so it is difficult to predict what potential impacts might be. It is recommended that EqIAs are performed at the project level whilst these projects are being shaped.

Step 1: Establishing and developing the baseline

Characteristic	Demographic of residents / service users
Age	• Stockport has more older people and fewer younger adults than the national average. The median age of Stockport is 42 compared to the national average of 40. • 2021 data shows 20% of Stockport's population are over 65. 61% are aged 15-64, and 20% are under 15 years old. • 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. • An estimated 6,430 of young people (age 5-19) have a mental health disorder.
Gender reassignment A person whose individual experience of gender may not correspond to the sex assigned to them at birth.	• 2021 data suggests that less than 0.5% of the Stockport population is transgender.
Maternity and pregnancy	• 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.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	• According to 2021 data, in Stockport 46.4% of people are married or in a civil partnership. • 45.1% are same-sex couples living together, and 0.4% are opposite-sex couples living together. 0.9% of residents are married or in a civil partnership but are not living together.

Characteristic	Demographic of residents / service users
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	• 2021 data shows that Stockport is as ethnically diverse as the national average for England. 87% of Stockport residents are White and 12% are from a Black, Asian or Ethnic Minority background. • Ethnically diverse communities tend have a younger age profile than the rest of the borough. • People who are 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, Gatley, and the Heatons being particularly diverse. Some of these areas, the proportion of ethnically diverse communities is over a third of the total population.
Religion or Belief	• According to 2021 data, the largest religious group in Stockport is Christianity with 48% of the population identifying as Christian, although this is decreasing over time (a 15% percentage point decrease since 2011). Those with no religion are the second-most common (40%), which has been increasing alongside the Muslim population (5.5%). • These populations are also not even across Stockport. People living in the south of the borough are more likely to be Christian and Muslims make up around 20-25% of the population in areas of Heald Green and Gatley. Gatley also has a large Jewish community.
Sex	• 51% of Stockport residents are female and 49% are male, in line with the national average.
Sexual orientation People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual	• 2021 data shows that around 3% of the Stockport population are lesbian, gay, bisexual or other. • 2021 data shows 1.2% of the Stockport population is living as a same-sex couple (this includes couples who are married, in a civil partnership, or unmarried / never registered a civil partnership).
Socioeconomic status	• 2021 data looking at 4 areas of potential deprivation (education, employment, health and housing) shows that 49% of households in Stockport were deprived in at least one of these 4 areas. • Areas of deprivation were more common in the central and northern parts of the borough. • 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 and the cost of living crisis has increased this.
Other Please add in here any additional relevant comments or feedback where the protected characteristic is not known	• According to 2021 data, 2.3% of households in Stockport had no members that have English as their main language, and 0.8% cannot speak English at all. • 91% of people living in Stockport were born in the UK. 4.8% of people in Stockport have a non-UK identity
Carers	
Care leavers	
Those experiencing homelessness	• 2.5% of people in Stockport have previously served in the armed forces.
Veterans	

Characteristic	Demographic of residents / service users
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
	Age – older people	-		There is no known evidence to suggest that these groups will be disproportionately impacted by the proposals.	
	Age – younger people	-		There is no known evidence to suggest that these groups will be disproportionately impacted by the proposals.	
1	**Disability** Consider people with physical disabilities, sensory impairments, learning disabilities and mental health issues	Negative		**Service Efficiencies (AMI chatbot)** The removal of AMI chatbot from the Council website may mean that it takes residents using the Council website longer to find the information that they are looking for. People who may be unable to use the phone to ask for help for reasons of social anxiety or physical reasons may have used the AMI chatbot as a more personal touch than trying to find something on the website alone and may be disproportionately impacted by not having access to the chatbot to help them find this information.	
	Gender reassignment A person whose individual experience of gender may not correspond to the sex	-		There is no known evidence to suggest that these groups will be disproportionately impacted by the proposals.	

Impact no.	Characteristic	Positive or negative impact	Impact source	Impact details and rationale	Additional information
	assigned to them at birth.				
	Maternity and pregnancy	-		There is no known evidence to suggest that these groups will be disproportionately impacted by the proposals.	
	Marriage and Civil Partnership	-		There is no known evidence to suggest that these groups will be disproportionately impacted by the proposals.	
	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	-		There is no known evidence to suggest that these groups will be disproportionately impacted by the proposals.	
	Religion or Belief	-		There is no known evidence to suggest that these groups will be disproportionately impacted by the proposals.	
2	**Sex**	Proposals	Negative	**Service redesign/ staffing review** The majority of council staff are women, therefore any impacts of this proposal on staff such as staffing changes are likely to disproportionately affect women.	
	Sexual orientation Consider how the proposed	-		There is no known evidence to suggest that these groups will be disproportionately impacted by the proposals.	

Impact no.	Characteristic	Positive or negative impact	Impact source	Impact details and rationale	Additional information
	policy may differently impact people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual				
	Socioeconomic status	-		There is no known evidence to suggest that these groups will be disproportionately impacted by the proposals.	
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	-		There is no known evidence to suggest that these groups will be disproportionately impacted by the proposals.	
	Care leavers	-		There is no known evidence to suggest that these groups will be disproportionately impacted by the proposals.	
	Those experiencing homelessness	-		There is no known evidence to suggest that these groups will be disproportionately impacted by the proposals.	
	Veterans	-		There is no known evidence to suggest that these groups will be disproportionately impacted by the proposals.	
	Asylum seekers and refugees	-		There is no known evidence to suggest that these groups will be disproportionately impacted by the proposals.	

Step 3: Identifying mitigating factors to minimise negative impacts

Impact no.	Impact summary	Suggested mitigation and rationale	Evidence for solution	Feasibility
1	Removal of the AMI chatbot from the Council website may negatively impact people with physical disability/ social anxiety who may find it hard to use the phone to find the information they need	Improvements in the Council website design and accessibility should help to mitigate the impact of not having the AMI chatbot, making information more easily accessible for all via the search facility. Residents can continue to ask for help via the Council Contact Centre, and planned development of a contact us page on the Council website.		Included in proposals
2	Service restructures and subsequent staffing changes could result in council staff feeling stressed	Careful and skilful design will be needed to mitigate this and increased wellbeing support should be made available to all affected colleagues.		Included in 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.

We have sought views on all our change proposals through our overall budget public consultation.

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?

The council faces many challenges including external financial pressures, balancing the pandemic response while continuing to deliver core service. Ensuing all this is delivered whilst delivering longer term change is acutely challenging. Delivering a resilient budget can only be achieved through difficult decisions, robust prioritisation and ambitious change. The way we work and the services we provide should meet the needs of local people today and in the future.

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.

Please see MTFP cumulative equality analysis.

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?

This EqIA will be returned to at various stages of proposal development.

It is recommended that EqIAs should be implemented at the project level.