

**Kent County Council
Equality Analysis/ Impact Assessment (EqIA)**

Directorate/ Service: Strategic & Corporate Services - Finance

Name of decision, policy, procedure, project or service: Draft 2020-21 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) (which include proposals to increase Council Tax and our Budget Strategy)

Responsible Owner/ Senior Officer: Dave Shipton

Version: 4

Author: Simon Pleace, Revenue and Tax Strategy Manager

Pathway of Equality Analysis: tbc

Summary and recommendations of equality analysis/impact assessment.

- **Context**

Each year the County Council is responsible for agreeing the overall revenue and capital budgets and in particular the amount of Council Tax it requires to precept from District Councils and the consequence on the rate for Council Tax charged for County Council services for each property band. The budget approved by County Council sets out the amounts to be delegated to individual directorates and their overall proposals how this is planned to be spent. Corporate Directors and/or Cabinet Members have delegated authority to make in-year changes within prescribed limits, changes above these limits have to be agreed by the Leader/Cabinet.

The Council's overall medium term plan is set out in the strategic statement "[Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes](#)". The draft 2020-21 budget and MTFP supports this strategic statement. The strategic statement recognises that we will need to deliver our services with our available funding and that the Council structure will have to be as efficient as possible.

This Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on the overall budget strategy. All the individual proposals, which are subject to their own implementation timeframe, will be subject to their own separate Equality Impact Assessment, consultation and assessment procedures at the appropriate time. Corporate Directors and/or Cabinet Members will have delegated authority to make changes to their individual spending plans following consultation and detailed evaluation of the impact of the individual proposals (which are subject to their own specific timeframe).

- **Aims and Objectives**

The draft budget and MTFP for the budget campaign represent a high level strategic plan setting out:

- summary of the forecast position for the next financial year and high-level estimates for the following two years
- the overall resources estimated as likely to be available for the forthcoming financial year
- the estimated Council Tax to precept from district councils for the forthcoming year
- an indication of how the resources would be deployed to the main service areas of the council

Issues raised during the consultation and engagement campaign will be considered by Cabinet Members and reported to individual Cabinet Committees in January following publication of the full draft budget proposals prior to these committee meetings. This full draft will include any amendments arising from the consultation through the budget campaign and the outcome of the Government's annual Budget which is due to be announced in the autumn and subsequent provisional local government finance settlement expected in November/December. Committees will be asked to consider the full draft budget (including the latest version of this equality impact assessment) as it affects their portfolios, whether it reflects the views expressed following the campaign, and recommending any further changes to the final draft budget prior to consideration at full County Council on 13th February 2020.

The final draft budget (including any changes from committees) will be presented to Cabinet on 27th January 2020 together with the outcomes from the consultation.

- **Summary of equality impact**

Adverse Equality Impact Rating: Currently judged to be between Medium and High

Attestation

I have read and paid due regard to the Equality Analysis/Impact Assessment concerning the Draft 2020-21 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan. I agree with risk rating and the actions to mitigate any adverse impact(s) that has / have been identified.

Head of Service

Signed: Dave Shipton

Name: Dave Shipton

Job Title: Head of Policy, Planning and Strategy

Date: 15 October 2019

DMT Member

Signed: Zena Cooke

Name: Zena Cooke

Job Title: Corporate Director of Finance

Date: 15 October 2019

Part 1 Screening

Could this policy, procedure, project or service, or any proposed changes to it, affect any Protected Group (listed below) less favourably (negatively) than others in Kent?

Could this policy, procedure, project or service promote equal opportunities for this group?

Protected Group	Please provide a <u>brief</u> commentary on your findings. Fuller analysis should be undertaken in Part 2.			
	High negative impact EqIA	Medium negative impact Screen	Low negative impact Evidence	High/Medium/Low Positive Impact Evidence
Age		Internal action is required following agreement on the strategy Impact Assessment will be undertaken when draft budget plans are disseminated to budget holders. Also, responses to the consultation on the budget strategy will be taken into consideration when the final decisions on the 2020-21 budget plans are made at County Council in February 2020.		The scale of the financial challenge which the authority faces arising from a combination of increasing spending demands, partly offset by increases in central government grants and limits on our ability to raise council tax means that it is likely the budget will have some proposals which will have a high impact. The budget proposals include income generation and efficiency, transformation and policy savings necessary to balance spending with the likely funding available to the Council. In determining this funding, we have had to estimate the grant from government and keep Council Tax as low as possible.
Disability				
Sex/Gender				
Gender identity/ Transgender				
Race				
Religion and Belief				
Sexual Orientation				
Pregnancy and Maternity				
Marriage and Civil Partnerships				
Carer's Responsibilities				

				<p>Efficiency savings can be categorised as those which provide the same or similar levels of service as the current year but at lower cost. Transformation savings provide services in a different and improved way at less cost.</p> <p>Policy savings require a change in KCC policy regarding either the level at which services are provided or who services are provided for</p> <p>Further individual Impact Assessment will be undertaken following consultation prior to the publication of detailed budget in January</p>
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Part 2

Equality Analysis /Impact Assessment

Protected groups

ALL

Information and Data used to carry out your assessment

A profile of the population of Kent can be found on this link:

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/Facts-and-figures-about-Kent/equality-and-diversity-data>

The Council has a statutory responsibility to consult on its proposed budget and level of Council Tax under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and under KCC's constitution. The County Council plans to discharge this responsibility via the following:

- a plain English description of the overall level of funding we anticipate from council tax and the government settlement and the gap against forecast spending demands.
- the campaign will be supported and promoted through social media, including the potential use of chatbot technology
- two simple questions covering the Council Tax options for 2020-21 including the general level of council tax and a separate question specifically related to the adult social care levy
- questions about KCC's overall budget strategy and respondents spending priorities
- a free text section which allows respondents to make any other comments about the budget proposals
- all the published information will be available via the Council's website and will also be available in alternative formats on request
- all beneficiaries will be invited to submit comments/suggestions on the proposals in the budget campaign
- workshops will also take place with other key stakeholders e.g. voluntary sector, parish councils, KCC staff groups etc.
- detailed discussion will take place with Trades Union representatives

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alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk or telephone on 03000 421553

- Elected county councillors will have the opportunity to examine the proposals in the draft budget prior to County Council

The campaign is being launched in October. Inevitably this means that figures can only be estimates. In particular we will not have received the outcome of grant settlements from central government or the calculation of the Council Tax base from district councils. Nonetheless, launching the campaign early allows the Council to set out its estimates including some of the forecast additional spending demands which need to be addressed no matter what the outcome of these unknown aspects. It also allows respondents the ability to comment about local spending priorities.

Consultation on the overall budget proposals is not a substitute for consultation or undertaking an EqIA before implementing individual elements of the proposed budget. Rather, this will help to inform future decisions as we are asking for residents' views on spending priorities. Having set the budget this will not preclude making changes following detailed consultation as long as changes are in accordance with the Council's Constitution and Financial Regulations.

The Council has reviewed the presentation of its budget book and MTFP over the last few years to try to make it more transparent and make the data more understandable. Inevitably the budget is a plan and there will be variations arising during the year. These variations are reported through the in-year budget monitoring. We have reviewed both the Budget Book and monitoring reports to make the data sources consistent.

Who have you involved consulted and engaged?

Anyone who is liable to pay Council Tax in Kent and Kent residents
KCC service recipients
KCC staff
Local businesses
Voluntary sector organisations
Parish and District councils
Kent County Council elected Members

Analysis

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Budget proposals could impact on staff working in services, clients of those services and stakeholders involved with those services.

The consultation process outlined above provides an opportunity for those that believe they may be affected to comment on the impact of both the overall strategy. It is essential that the responses to both this consultation on the overall strategy and individual detailed consultations to support specific aspects of the proposed budget are considered in light of the overall financial constraints which have been imposed on local government following the Spending Round 2019 (announced on the 4 September 2019) and subsequent local government finance settlements.

The budget is being developed in line with the Council's strategic statement and the best estimate of the fiscal environment for local government and Kent County Council in particular. The budget plan aligns the estimated limited financial resources with the priorities set out in the strategic statement. To that extent we have assessed the impact against these priorities and there has been a positive impact in terms of investing additional spending into areas of highest priority.

More detailed assessments will be carried out by individual directorates prior to implementing any changes. It will be necessary to commence the more detailed consultation on individual elements prior to the County Council agreeing the budget in February. Where this is the case it will be made clear that any consideration is subject to the County Council agreeing the overall budget. Without this separation of consideration of the overall strategic parameters it would be impossible to carry out detailed impact assessments.

Adverse Impact:

It is inevitable that some of the changes in the draft budget proposals may have an adverse impact, although it is too early to say at this time. In a time of rising demand for our services it is inevitable the authority has to review the way it provides services and we cannot carry on providing services in the same way as we have in the past. One of the aims of the transformation savings is to produce different or better outcomes for less public money. Efficiency savings are aimed at delivering the same or similar outcomes for less money.

We have sought to engage more openly about Council Tax as inevitably tax rises can have an adverse impact on individuals and families. In particular the County Council has asked separate questions about the overall level of Council Tax to fund all council services and the specific additional levy for adult social care services. The County Council has no other ability to mitigate the

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impact of Council Tax other than the overall Band D charge for the whole county (the charges for other bands are set proportionately to Band D by legislation). District councils are responsible for agreeing local discounts for low income working age households

Positive Impact:

The budget proposals include some discretionary investment, particularly to support maintaining capital investment programme and adjusting budgets in light of the latest forecast spending trends. Maintaining the capital programme is a key element of the stimulating economic growth including supporting local jobs working on local projects, stimulating housing, tackling congestion and providing facilities to equip young people with the skills they will need to enter the future jobs market.

We are looking into the best way to meet the Council's objective to provide additional help to care leavers towards their council tax as a particular disadvantaged group.

We are also looking to extend concessionary bus travel to disabled adults based on a Council Motion.

JUDGEMENT

The policy, strategy or service is major because of high cost, or potential to affect a large number of residents of Kent

- KCC will consult on the Budget Proposals
- The budget proposals have been developed throughout the year to take account of the likely resources available to the Council, financial performance during the current year, alignment of finance with priorities set out in the council's medium term financial plan and engagement with members/senior officers/stakeholders at all appropriate stages in the process.
- Detailed screening can only take place once the key strategic parameters have been agreed by the County Council.
- Further this Equality Impact Assessment will be revisited following the consultation period.

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- **No major change** - no potential for discrimination and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken
- **Adjust and continue** - adjust to remove barriers or better promote equality
- **Continue the policy** - despite potential for adverse impact or missed opportunity. Set out the justifications: there is no justification for direct discrimination; and indirect discrimination will need to be justified according to the legal requirements.

Internal Action Required YES

At this stage, it's too early to know whether there is any adverse impact on any particular group. Directorates are responsible for completing individual EqIA on their specific proposals and developing their own action plans.

Equality Impact Analysis/Assessment Action Plan

Protected Characteristic	Issues identified	Action to be taken	Expected outcomes	Owner	Timescale	Cost implications
ALL	Potential impact on all Kent residents	Consultation with residents	Better understanding of the impact of proposals on residents. Opportunity for innovation explored	Dave Shipton	16 October – 25 November 2019	BAU
ALL	Potential Impact on service	Consultation with CVS	Better understanding of the impact of proposals on CVS and service	Dave Shipton	16 October – 25 November (including a specific CVS	BAU

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			users. Opportunity for innovation explored		event on 28 October)	
ALL	Understanding the potential cumulative impact (both positive or negative) on specific protected characteristics	Key stakeholders and interest groups relating to Protected Characteristics identified pre consultation to be included in consultation.	Better understanding of the impact of proposals in relation to Protected Characteristics. Opportunity for innovation explored			

Have the actions been included in your business/ service plan? Yes