

Cabinet – 9 February 2022

Corporate Budget Plan 2022/23 to 2025/26, incorporating the Capital Strategy; and the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2022/23

Portfolio: Councillor M Bird – Leader of the Council (Lead Portfolio)

Related Portfolios: All

Service: Finance – council wide

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 To provide the revenue and capital resource envelope for delivery of the council's aims and objectives and ensure that the statutory framework is met by recommending the statutory determinations (gross expenditure and income and council tax requirement for the year) and council tax bands, the capital programme and the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy to Full Council for approval.

2. Summary

- 2.1 This report contains several sections as follows:

Section A for Cabinet approval - Findings from Budget Consultation: Financial Year 2022/23+ and Cabinet Responses. This section is for Cabinet's consideration and approval:

- **Part 1** - Report on findings from Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- **Part 2** - Report on findings from budget consultation.
- **Part 3** - Report on findings from equality impact assessments.

Section B for Cabinet approval and recommendation to Council consists of:

- **Part 1** - The Revenue Corporate Budget Plan and Capital Programme; comprising the final revenue and capital budget following consideration of consultation feedback and equality impact assessment by Cabinet. This also includes the Capital Strategy and the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy.
- **Part 2A** - Treasury Management and Investment Strategy as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice (2017). It includes details on the Prudential Code Indicators (PCIs) for the next three years and asks Cabinet to

approve them and recommend adoption of these to full Council. The Strategy both complies with the Local Government Act 2003, and also provides an additional framework over and above the statutory minimum for monitoring performance.

- **Part 2B** - Treasury Management Policy Statement as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice (2017).

3. Recommendations

3.1 That Cabinet note:

- a) That at the time of despatch of this report, the final local government settlement for 2022/23 has not been received. Any changes will be included within the final papers to Council.
- b) That at the time of despatch of this report, the precepting authorities (fire and police) had not formally notified the authority of their final council tax precept levels for 2022/23. Draft figures have been included. Final figures will therefore be provided prior to or at the Council meeting of 24 February 2022 should they change.
- c) That at the time of despatch of this report, the levy authorities, (Environment Agency and West Midlands Combined Authority - Transport Levy) had not formally notified the authority of their final demand for 2022/23. Estimates have been used for the Transport Levy based on informal communication. (The final Transport Levy is expected to be approved early February, and will be included within the final papers to Council).
- d) That the council tax base, set by the S151 Officer under officer delegations, is 71,803.35 for 2022/23.
- e) The feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees on the draft capital programme and revenue budget and responses to recommendations, as set out in **Section A - Part 1** of this report, and general consultation feedback.
- f) The amendments to the revenue budget arising from the provisional settlement, including changes to the savings proposals identified since the October Cabinet report, as set out in section 4.25.
- g) That Members must have due regard to consultation feedback and the public sector equality duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) when making budget decisions.

3.2 That Cabinet approve:

- a) The attached report as set out in **Section A - Part 2 and Part 3**: The Findings from Budget Consultation: Financial Year 2022/23+ and Cabinet responses and that Members have had regard to their duties in relation to consultation, and in relation to the public sector equality duty, in forming their budget recommendations.

- b) That delegated authority be given to the S151 Officer to make any necessary amendments, after consultation with the Leader (Portfolio Holder for Finance), to take account of the final local government settlement, final levies and precepts, final grant allocations and final technical guidance or legislation on the budget; and to make any necessary amendments to the statutory determinations and council tax bands to take account of those changes and the resulting final analysis of the budget and for these amendments to be submitted and therefore recommended to Council at its meeting on 24 February 2022, after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance (Leader of the Council).
- c) Approve deferral of the policy service change as set out in section 4.28, Table 1 of this covering report.
- d) That delegated authority be given to the S151 Officer, after consultation with the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive, to agree the council's final contribution to the West Midlands Combined Authority.

3.3 **Cabinet is asked to approve and recommend to Council, subject to receipt of the final local government settlement, final precepts and levies, receipt of final grant allocations, technical/legislative guidance and final specific grant allocations (*substitute figures and resolution to be provided to Council by the S151 Officer to take account of any changes arising from these*) the following:**

3.3.1 Revenue

- a) The financial envelope of resources for 2022/23 as set out in **Section B - Part 1** "The Revenue Corporate Budget Plan and Capital Programme".
- b) A Walsall Council net council tax requirement for 2022/23 of £138.43m and a 1.99% increase in council tax, plus a further 1% increase for Adult Social Care precept (total council tax increase of 2.99%).
- c) That the recommendations of the S151 Officer in respect of the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the budget calculations and the adequacy of reserves **be approved**, including the levels of central contingency and an opening general reserve of no less than £16.11m, as set out in the S151 Officer Section 25 statement in **Annex 11** of the Budget Plan.
- d) The (estimated) levies below for outside bodies and Cabinet **approve** that the final figures **be substituted** for these provisional ones once they are available at the Council meeting on 24 February 2022. (An estimate has been used within this report based on informal notification from the authorities).

LEVY	AMOUNT (£)
West Midlands Combined Authority Transport Levy	11,411,844
Environment Agency	83,781

- e) The following statutory determinations (references are to the Local Government Finance Act, 1992 as amended), and subject to any final changes arising from receipt of final precepts and levies, receipt of final grant allocations,

technical/legislative guidance and final specific grant allocations, **and Cabinet approve that these will be substituted** at the Council meeting on 24 February 2022 for the final figures once received:

- I. **£703,984,510** being the aggregate gross expenditure, which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) (a) to (f) of the Act.
- II. **£565,559,260** being the aggregate income which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) (a) to (d) of the Act.
- III. **£138,425,250** being the amount, by which the aggregate at (e) (I) above exceeds the aggregate at (e) (II), calculated by the council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its council tax requirement for the year.
- IV. **£1,927.84** being the amount at (e) (III) above, divided by the council tax base of 71,803.35, calculated by the council in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (average council tax at band D).

V. Valuation bands

Being amounts given by multiplying the amount at (e) (IV) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5 (1) of the Local Government Act 1992, is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the council in accordance with Section 30 and 36 of the Act as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwelling listed in different valuation bands.

A	B	C	D
1,285.23	1,499.43	1,713.63	1,927.84
E	F	G	H
2,356.25	2,784.66	3,213.06	3,855.68

- f) The draft precept from the Fire and Rescue Authority and the Police and Crime Commissioner, issued to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992, for each of the categories of dwelling shown below and Cabinet **approve** that the final figures **be substituted** once they are available at the Council meeting on 24 February 2022.

PRECEPTING AUTHORITY	VALUATION BANDS			
	A	B	C	D
Police And Crime Commissioner	125.03	145.87	166.71	187.55
	E	F	G	H
	229.23	270.91	312.58	375.10
Fire & Rescue	A	B	C	D
	45.35	52.91	60.47	68.03
	E	F	G	H
	83.15	98.27	113.38	136.06

- g) That having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at (e) (v) and (f) above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30 (2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the amounts of council tax for 2022/23 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below and Cabinet **approve** that the final figures **be substituted** once the final precepts are available at the Council meeting on 24 February 2022.

A	B	C	D
1,455.61	1,698.21	1,940.81	2,183.42
E	F	G	H
2,668.63	3,153.84	3,639.02	4,366.84

- h) That notice **be given** of the council tax within twenty one days of it being set by publishing details of the same in the “Express and Star” newspaper circulating in the Authority’s area.
- i) That the S151 Officer **be instructed** to take all necessary action in relation to council tax, community charge and national non-domestic rates, including, where appropriate, the signing of all documents, billing, the giving of notices and the taking of necessary steps to ensure collection thereof.
- j) That the S151 Officer **be given delegated authority** to make transfers to and from reserves in order to ensure that reserves are maintained as necessary and in particular, adjusted when reserves are no longer required, or need to be replenished.
- k) That, pursuant to Section 52ZB and 52ZC of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the relevant basic amount of council tax for the Council is not excessive in relation to determining whether a referendum is required.

3.3.2 Capital

- a) The allocation of capital expenditure plans as set out in **Section B - Part 1** “The Revenue Corporate Budget Plan and Capital Programme” and that the capital and leasing programme as set out in **Annex 9 be approved** bearing in mind the principle that unless affordable from within current resources, specific projects funded by borrowing will not be commenced until a payback agreement is in place. Schemes funded from grant will commence when final allocations are published.
- b) That the S151 Officer be **given delegated authority** to determine how each source of finance is used to fund the overall capital programme and to alter the overall mix of financing as necessary, to maximise the flexibility of capital resources used and minimise the ongoing costs of borrowing to the council.
- c) That the S151 Officer, after consultation with the Leader (Portfolio Holder for Finance), be **given delegated authority** to release capital resources held back for any contingent items that may arise (earmarked capital receipts for essential or emergency spend), and also for any match funding requirements that may be required of the council in order to secure additional external capital funding (e.g. bids for government or other funding).

d) The Capital Strategy set out in **Annex 8** of the Budget Plan **be approved**.

e) The Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy set out in **Annex 10** of the Budget Plan **be approved**.

3.3.3 Treasury Management

1. **Section B – Part 2A** – The Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2022/23 onwards, including the council's borrowing requirement, borrowing limits, and the adoption of prudential indicators, **be approved**.

2. That decisions to effect movements between conventional borrowing and other long term liabilities, such as leases, **be delegated** to the S151 Officer.

3. That decisions to use capital receipts or borrowing within the framework of approved prudential indicators **be delegated** to the S151 Officer.

4. **Section B – Part 2B** – Treasury Management Policies, **be approved**.

4. Report detail - Know

4.1 The council's budget is a financial representation of the organisation's plans. It is constructed as an integral part of the council's planning processes and aligned to its priorities and objectives. The attached Budget Plan at **Section B Part 1** sets out the revenue and capital plans for service delivery for 2022/23 and beyond.

Council Corporate Plan priorities

4.2 The budget is the financial plan supporting delivery of the organisations key objectives and priorities. The budget process is a four yearly cycle, updated annually, aiming to support delivery of council priorities and outcomes within the available resources. It aims to achieve this through the delivery of efficiencies, income reviews and service reviews and redesign to redirect existing and reducing resources to areas of high council priority in order to deliver the council's outcomes. This budget has been prepared using the council's high level purpose and priorities as outlined in the council's currently approved Corporate Plan.

Risk management

4.3 Budget Plan: The council reviews corporate financial planning and budget principles in accordance with the medium term financial framework (MTFF). The budget setting process includes a comprehensive financial risk assessment to determine key risks and their impact on the budget. Services undertake risk assessments of their services and budgets by identifying risk factors, potential changes to service delivery and funding streams. This ensures that adequate budgetary provision is available to cover unforeseen future events. This successful approach is now embedded and is used to inform the level of earmarked and general reserves.

4.4 The identification of risks, and level of reserves, is referred to in the S151 Officer (Chief Finance Officer) **Section 25 statement** at **Annex 11** of the Budget Plan. It is unlikely that all risks identified will arise, however new risks may also emerge. Managers are required to deliver services within their approved budget. Any known

changes in service demand or costs arising from legislative or government demands are identified and dealt with within the overall revenue budget. The level of reserves should be sufficient to cover all but the most unusual of events. Any in-year use of general reserves may require replenishment to ensure the opening level of reserves is as recommended by the MTFF.

Financial implications

- 4.5 The council must set a balanced budget to meet its legal requirements as set out under legal implications. This report proposes cash limits for services to deliver the council's key priorities.

Legal implications

- 4.6 The legal duty for a council's finances falls within S151 of the Local Government Act 1972. Arrangements for the proper administration of the council's affairs are secured by the S151 Officer.
- 4.7 Cabinet recommend the revenue budget and capital programme envelope to Council. Councils are responsible for making a calculation in accordance with sections 31A to 37 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended). This includes the statutory determinations (aggregate gross expenditure, gross income, council tax requirement for the year and setting the council tax for a financial year).
- 4.8 Under the Local Government Act 2003 (s25), an authority must set a council tax and balanced budget, giving 14 days' notice of the council tax level prior to the date of billing. The Council must set a budget before 11 March of each year. This will include the S151 Officer's Section 25 statement that deals with the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of the reserves for which the budget provides, together with an assessment of risk. This is provided at **Annex 11** of the Budget Plan.
- 4.9 The Local Government Act 2003 and supporting Regulations require the Council to have regard to the Prudential Code and to set prudential indicators for the next three years to ensure that the council's capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable. The Act requires the Council to set out its Treasury Strategy for borrowing and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy (as required by investment guidance issued subsequent to the Act); this sets out the council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments. This is provided at **Part 2** of the Budget Plan.
- 4.10 In recent years Central Government has capped the level of council tax rises. For 2022/23, the Government have announced that local authorities will again need to seek approval of their electorate via a local referendum if they propose to increase council tax levels by 3% or above as confirmed as part of the provisional local government settlement on 16 December 2021, inclusive of the 1% ring-fenced for Adult Social Care.
- 4.11 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 placed a general duty on every local authority in England to take such steps as it considers appropriate to secure that representatives of local persons (or of local persons of a particular description) are involved in the exercise of any of its functions, among other things by being consulted about the exercise of the function. The duty to consult that is imposed on councils comes from two other sources:

- Specific legislation, such as the education act duties to consult on certain services etc., and,
- The common law duty, which is well established in law.

4.12 Our approach to consultation was reported to Cabinet in October 2021 and feedback is provided in **Section A - Part 2** of this report.

4.13 The 2010 Equality Act, whilst not imposing a specific duty to consult, lays a requirement to have due regard to the equality impact when exercising its function. As a public body, the council is required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), as set out in the Equality Act, 2010. The PSED requires the council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. Failure to meet these requirements may result in the council being exposed to costly, time-consuming and reputation-damaging legal challenges.

4.14 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is the chosen procedure, by the council, for checking the lawfulness of decisions in relation to the impact on people with certain characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010. Equality Impact Assessment analysis is contained in **Section A - Part 3** of this report.

4.15 Saving plans, prior to implementation, will include consideration of equality impact, legislative and other requirements, duties or obligations imposed by statute, secondary legislation or guidance upon the council, specifically in the context of proposals which involve changes to service provision.

Procurement Implications / Social Value

4.16 There are no direct implications arising from this report. Any procurement implications as a result of the development of Proud service redesign benefits will be set out within the relevant redesign proposals as they are developed.

Property implications

4.17 There are no direct implications arising from this report. Any direct property implications as a result of service redesign will be set out within the relevant redesign proposals as they are developed.

Health and Wellbeing implications

4.18 There are no direct implications arising from this report. Any direct health and wellbeing implications as a result of service redesign will be set out within the service redesign proposal as they are developed.

Staffing implications

4.19 There will be some staffing implications arising from this report. The contribution of the trade unions will be important in the council achieving its key aims and objectives particularly in these challenging times. Officers and members will consult widely with them on the employee implications of service redesign and delivery.

- 4.20 Staff affected by proposals arising from identified Proud benefits will be supported as appropriate throughout the process and the number of redundancies will be minimised wherever possible.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.21 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIAs) are undertaken on proposals as they are developed and reported to Cabinet to allow them to consider any revisions required to the final budget for recommendation to Council.

Assessing the impact of proposed changes to policies, procedures, services and organisational change is not just something the law requires; it is a positive opportunity for the council to ensure it makes better decisions, based on robust evidence.

Failure to meet the requirements in the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) may result in the council being exposed to costly, time-consuming and reputation-damaging legal challenges. Equality Impact Assessment analysis is contained in **Section - A Part 3** of this report.

Climate Change

- 4.22 This report is prepared with consideration of the council's Climate Change Action Plan, and directors are required to ensure proposals are assessed, as appropriate, against the six key areas of the plan: strategy, energy, waste, transport, nature, resilience and adaptation.

Consultation

- 4.23 For our services to meet the needs of local residents, and of the community at large, it is essential that our plans and policies take into account the views of local people and others who use our services. We use a broad range of consultation methods to ensure as far as possible that people have sufficient information to comment, as well as the time and any necessary support they require to enable them to have their say. All feedback gathered is collated and carefully considered, along with other information, as part of the decision making process.
- 4.24 Stakeholder consultation has been undertaken with elected councillors through Overview and Scrutiny Committees, and with national non domestic ratepayers and voluntary and community organisations on the budget and draft council tax increases. Budget consultation has also been undertaken with residents and other stakeholders. Further consultation will be undertaken, as appropriate, with all stakeholders as detailed proposals are developed as part of planned Proud service redesign activity. Full details of the consultation process and findings is presented in **Section A - Part 2** of this report.

Amendments to the Revenue Budget

- 4.25 Since the draft revenue budget was presented to Cabinet in October 2021, there have been a number of funding announcements and technical changes to the budget;

these can be summarised as follows:

- The provisional 2022/23 Settlement was received on 16 December 2021. This confirmed permission for social care authorities to raise additional funding through a 1% adult social care precept in 2022/23, which has now been included within the final budget proposals, raising £1.34m for adult social care services;
- The Settlement also confirmed an additional £636m Social Care grant to be made available for the remaining Spending Review period, with Walsall's element confirmed as £4m; a new but one-off £5.2m Services Grant and £912k of one off funding for 2022/23 relating to the continuation of New Homes Bonus and Lower Tier Services Grant;
- Additional investment in services, including; additional investment to support demand within adult social care and children's following a review of existing and future forecasts; investment to fund shortfalls in income projections and investment to fund major capital projects;
- Approval by the S151 Officer, under delegations, of the council tax base and NNDR1 return in January 2022;
- A number of transfers to/from reserves to smooth financing of one-off costs.

4.26 The impact of the overall changes since October 2021 on the MTFO and savings requirement is shown below, resulting in a revised saving requirement for 2022/23 of £18.86m (reduced from £20.14m).

Movement in savings requirement - detail					
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Savings required per Cabinet on 20 October 2021	20.14	16.33	18.67	15.23	70.37
Investment / pay changes	9.14	3.87	0.27	(2.01)	11.27
Funding changes	8.11	(13.58)	(1.34)	(1.95)	(8.76)
Collection Fund changes	(0.28)	0.28	0.00	0.00	0.00
Transfer to / from reserves changes	(13.90)	8.68	1.46	0.64	(3.12)
Other changes including grants / income	(4.35)	(3.34)	(7.53)	(0.97)	(16.19)
Revised savings requirement	18.86	12.24	11.53	10.94	53.57
Variance – increase (decrease)	(1.28)	(4.09)	(7.14)	(4.29)	(16.80)

4.27 This revenue budget report presents a balanced budget subject to successful delivery of the £18.86m of identified benefits in 2022/23. The following summarises the changes made to the savings from those reported in October 2021, a reduction of £1.28m.

- OP109 - cross council efficiencies relating to administration and business support (£2.1m in 2022/23), and OP113 - cross council efficiencies relating to customer Access management (£2.9m in 2022/23) - £1.7m of this c£5m has been re-phased into 2023/24. Indicative plans have also been provided for the remaining £3.3m as follows:

- Regeneration & Economy - £260k of one off efficiencies from vacant posts in 2022/23 with a review of the service in 2023/24 planned to deliver this on an ongoing basis;
 - Resilient Communities - £61k from a review of libraries management;
 - Resilient Communities - £84k Efficiencies relating to Customer Access Management;
 - Place & Environment – Waste Management, £15k premium bulky waste collection service, £86k capitalisation of staff working on waste contracts, £180k capitalisation of wheeled bin stock (built into the draft capital programme), £21k vacancy management offset by (£82k) to fund a shortfall in saving OP62/65;
 - Place & Environment - Highways and Transport, £197k capitalisation of street furniture and car park resurfacing costs from existing capital allocations and £55k one off use of unallocated bus lane and parking income reserve (with ongoing savings for 2023/24 from further efficiencies within the service);
 - Place & Environment – Resilience Unit, £20k one off efficiencies from vacant posts in 2022/23 with ongoing efficiencies from 2023/24 within the service;
 - Place & Environment – Bereavement Services - £53k from a 2% increase in bereavement fees and charges (with a further £11k from the replacement of saving OP106 as referred to below);
 - Resources and Transformation - £784k from a council wide review of Enabling & Support Services;
 - Adult Social Care - £476k added to OP83/92, efficiencies attributed to implementation of an All Age Disability approach and development of a new target operating model and a further £657k of efficiencies attributed to the implementation of a Bettercare Finance System;
 - Customer Engagement - £435k from the review of grant funding, including Homelessness Grant.
- Additional saving of £297k – OP94 - a review of funding streams to support demand management;
 - Additional income generation of £120k:
 - Print and Design - £30k from external bodies;
 - Integrated Facilities Management - £30k from solar panels on our buildings;
 - Clean and Green - £30k from offering residential gardening services;
 - Active Living Centres - £30k from bookable gyms.
 - Saving OP3 – the development of a locality partnership offer in Early Help and implementation of a restructure following the 'change grow live' contract being bought in house - £99k remains as a saving in 2022/23, with the remainder of this proposal - £880k - being deferred from 2023/24 to 2024/25 to allow for the review of the service following expected Government policy changes and the impact of greater partnership working.

Further changes in the plans to deliver the savings set out in the report to Cabinet on 20 October 2021:

- OP62 Management of current 'silo' roles within waste, and OP65 Management restructure amended to 'Clean, Green & Leisure restructure and delivery model review' have been amalgamated and reduced by £82k, (now £602k in 2022/23),

with £21k from general staffing efficiencies from restructure of the service and to build in 3 month recruitment lag to posts outside restructure. The remaining £61k is planned to be delivered as part of the cross council review of efficiencies mentioned above;

- OP112 - Public Health (£800k in 2022/23). Contract efficiency savings of £500k and £300k from a review of the usage of the Public Health transformation fund. As the service is key to the councils response to Covid-19, a delay in implementation will mean this saving will not be achieved until 2023/24, and this will be mitigated by the one off use of Public Health grant reserve in 2022/23;
- OP83/92 – New ways of working within Resilient Communities and All Age Disability (£269k in 2022/23) have been merged and amended to ‘Efficiencies attributed to the implementation of an All Age Disability approach and the development of a new target operating model’ (further to the £476k identified above, this totals £745k);
- OP84 – New ways of working in Customer Access Management amended to ‘Staffing impact following the implementation of Bettercare Finance System’;
- OP89 – New ways of working (£1.18m in 2022/23) amended to ‘Reduction in new clients achieved through strength based working practices and development of resilient communities framework’;
- OP90 – Review of older people (£4.4m in 2022/23) split into two:
 - £3.30m - Efficiencies attributed to the review of existing Older People clients through strength based practice and development of a new target operating model;
 - £1.10m - Efficiencies attributed to the review of existing Learning Disability and Mental Health clients through strength based practice and development of a new target operating model;
- OP91 – Day care (£356k in 2022/23) amended to ‘Efficiencies attributed to the review of day care provision through strength based practice and development of a new target operating model’;
- OP100 – Bespoke webpage (18k in 2022/23) amended to ‘Capitalisation of staff costs within Housing Services - Bespoke webpage and web data entry form allowing customers to submit and manage their information in relation to additional licensing for HMOs and through securing additional income for delivery of capital schemes’;
- OP103/104 - Review of existing fees and charges within Resilient Communities and pre-license surgeries to individuals and businesses to support license applications merged into ‘Reduction in operational costs within Resilient Communities’;
- OP106 – Charging for change in name deeds within Registrars (£11k in 2022/23) removed and replaced with 2% increase in bereavement fees and charges (a further £53k included as part of the delivery plan to achieve cross council efficiencies as referred to above).

4.28 The draft revenue budget contains 5 policy proposals in respect of 2022/23, and 80 operational savings. Feedback from consultation and equality impact assessment results were received by Cabinet and are set out within this report (**Section A - Parts 1, 2 and 3**). Only 1 proposal requires a decision, as the remaining 5 are either full year effects of previous year’s decision, or have been approved in year. Cabinet are asked to approve the policy decision as set out in **Table 1** overleaf (under the heading Executive (Cabinet) Decision) and instruct Executive Directors to implement the resulting decision.

Table 1: Summary of revised policy savings and the Executive (Cabinet) decision				
Saving ref	Policy Saving Consulted on	2022/23 £	Decision required	Executive (Cabinet) Decision
<i>Children's & Customer Services</i>				
P1	Change, Grow, Live Contract - bring service back in house (Full year effect of 2021/22 saving)	(122,714)	N	Approved in 2021/22 to bring service back in house, therefore no further decision required
<i>Resources and Transformation</i>				
P2	Finance - Adult Social Care Client Care Team - introduce charge for appointeeship management / support	(72,800)	N	Approved in 2021/22 to introduce a charge for appointeeship management / support
P3	Finance - Adult Social Care Client Care Team - introduce charging for administration of deaths for appointees	(6,000)	N	Approved in 2021/22 to introduce a charge for administration of deaths for appointees
P4	Organisational redesign to deliver Intelligent Client Model across Asset Management, Capital Projects and Facilities Management (Full year effect of 2021/22 saving)	(42,726)	N	Approved in 2021/22 for organisation redesign of the service, therefore no further decision required
P5	Redesign of Occupational Health contract (Full year effect of 2021/22 saving)	(7,500)	N	Approved in 2021/22 for redesign of the Occupational Health contract, therefore no further decision required
<i>Economy, Environment and Communities</i>				
P9	Charge developers for travel plans – alternate saving identified in 2021/22 for use of one off additional s38 income. To be reviewed further for 2023/24.	0	Y	To approve the deferral of this saving to 2023/24, subject to consultation as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process.

Amendments to the Capital Programme

4.29 The draft capital programme was set out in the report to Cabinet on 20 October 2021, totalling £62.27m. The programme has increased by £124.69m to £186.96m in 2022/23 with the following amendments:

- Enterprise Zones reduction of (£11.35m) as the scheme is reprofiled over the period to 2025/26;
- Waste Management Strategy - increase of £7.43m with the scheme reprofiled into 2023/24;
- Telephony cloud based system - £150k. Involves the transfer all of our incoming phone lines to new technology, potentially replace desk phones with headsets and implement microsoft telephony;
- Pipeline investment opportunities carry forward of £25.84m from 2021/22 to fund emerging and pipeline regeneration and other major capital schemes, along with the re-phasing of the additional £8m planned for 2022/23 into 2023/24. This includes approved allocations for Regional Materials Recycling Facility (£651k), Street Lighting (£7.04m), Streetly Cemetery improvements (£430k), Willenhall Garden City Phase 1 (£2.68m), Children's Residential (£100k) and Looked After Children Foster Care refurbishment programme (£150k);
- External funding of £8.91m and a council contribution of £2.02m towards the Towns Deal award for Bloxwich and Walsall;
- Future High Streets Fund – re-phasing of £816k council funding into 2022/23;
- Children's play equipment of £490k;
- Capitalisation of wheeled bin stock of £180k linked to a new revenue savings proposal;
- Highways maintenance / Integrated Transport Block external funding increase of £1.72m;
- High Streets Fund – external funding reduction of £3.62m due to re-profiling into 2023/24;
- Darlaston baths external funding of £2.66m for replacement of boilers, installation of solar panels, LED lights and insulate pipework;
- Refurbishment works at the New Art Gallery from external funding of £50k;
- External funding to support energy efficiency - external wall insulation and solar PV panels (£6.78m);
- Inclusion of a number of proposed carry forward schemes from 2021/22 totalling c£90m (£67m council funded and £23m external funded).

5. Decide

5.1 As set out in the legal section, Councils are required to set a legal budget. This report is the final stage in that process and Cabinet are asked to approve the recommendations as set out, and recommend the budget to Council on 24 February 2022 for formal approval of the 2022/23 statutory determinations and council tax levels.

6. Respond

6.1 Following recommendation by Cabinet, this budget report and plan will be forwarded on for formal approval by Council on 24 February 2022.

7. Review

7.1 Following approval by Council on 24 February 2022, the 2022/23 budget will be formally set and monitored throughout the year. Council tax bandings will be set and bills formally produced and distributed in accordance with approved guidance.

Background papers

- Various financial and working papers;
- Corporate Budget Plan 2021/22 to 2023/24, incorporating the Capital Strategy; and the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2021/22 Onwards – Council 25 February 2021;
- Corporate Financial Performance 2021/22, Covid-19 update, approach to Budget Setting for 2022/23, and changes to the council's Tax Strategy - Cabinet 21 July 2021;
- Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2022/23 – 2025/26 - Cabinet 20 October 2021;
- Autumn Budget and Spending Review, and feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees on draft revenue and capital budget proposals 2022/23 to 2025/26 – Cabinet 15 December 2021;
- Settlement data;
- Equality Impact Assessments.

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Deborah Hindson
Interim Executive Director (s151 Officer)
9 February 2022



Councillor M Bird
Leader of the Council
9 February 2022

Section A - Part 1 - Report on findings from Overview and Scrutiny Committees

1. Overview and Scrutiny Committees received the draft revenue and capital proposals in November 2021, and Cabinet received feedback in December 2021.

This section summarises the comments and recommendations from each Committee and, where applicable, Cabinet's consideration of these.

2. Scrutiny Overview Committee – 9 November 2021

- 2.1 The Committee received a presentation from the Leader who outlined the Medium Term Financial Outlook (MTFO), investment and savings proposals and the draft capital programme. Members sought to understand what the impact of the budget savings would have on services to residents. The Executive Director (Resources & Transformation) explained that by utilising different ways of working it was possible to generate operational efficiencies but maintain services. Members noted the importance of scrutiny in reviewing the budget proposals and asked about the delivery plans for the proposed savings.

- 2.2 Members considered the budget proposals for services within the remit of the Committee. This covered proposals from the following portfolios:

- Leader of the Council
- Deputy Leader (Regeneration) - Customer
- Deputy Leader (Resilient Communities) - Partnerships
- Internal Services

2.3 Council-wide proposals

- Following questions about which Directorates were the most financially vulnerable the Executive Director (Resources & Transformation) explained that this was in areas which operated demand led services, such as Adult Social Care and Children's Services. This was because they were always vulnerable to significant unexpected demands and were the main source of risk within the budget and MTFO.
- A Member asked how much Walsall Proud was due to save? The Executive Director (Resources & Transformation) explained that £20m of savings through Proud would come through implementing new ways of working and new approaches across third party spend, income generation, customer access and technology during 2022/23.
- *OP saving 90 'Review of Older People existing long and new residential nursing and domiciliary placement costs support packages for learning disabilities including supported living and mental health'* - A Member expressed concern about the potential impact this saving could have on local residents and asked for reassurances that impact assessments had taken place? The Leader explained that no individual would be placed at risk and that the Council was making significant investment in mental health.

- 2.4 The Committee resolved -
- *Further details on OP saving 90 'Review of Older People existing long and new residential nursing and domiciliary placement costs support packages for learning disabilities including supported living and mental health' be provided to Members;*
 - *Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2022/23 – 2025/26 be noted.*

3. Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 1 November 2021

3.1 Members considered the budget proposals in detail. At the request of the Committee, the Executive Director provided further information on each of the savings proposals.

3.2 Members sought assurances on the level of savings being made in the service area and requested clarity on the Walsall Proud programme, in order to seek to understand proposed efficiencies and their impact on services. Assurances on these areas were provided by the Executive Director who described how this would change the delivery of services. She added that the Adult Social Care Directorate was receiving £9.4m of investment.

3.3 A discussion was held and strong concern was expressed by some members at the following savings proposals:

- OP90 - Review of Older People existing long term and new residential nursing & domiciliary care;
- placement costs support packages for learning disabilities including supported living and mental health.

Members expressed concern that this would impact upon the most vulnerable members of society and that mental health needs within the Borough may be exacerbated by the pandemic.

- OP91 - Reduction of day care funded by direct payments.

A Member expressed concern that care payments to day care providers were being driven down by the council, and this may affect their viability in the future.

- 3.4 The Committee resolved -
- *The Committee considered and noted the draft revenue budget proposals that related to the remit of the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.*

4. Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 18 November 2021

4.1 The Lead Accountant presented a report which provided an extract of the Proud draft revenue savings proposals, investments/cost pressures and draft capital programme which fall within the remit of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. There were no questions or comments from Committee members.

- 4.2 The Committee resolved -
- *That the report be noted.*

5 Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 23 November 2021

- 5.1 Members considered the budget proposals presented and sought further information and assurances on a number of the proposals contained within the report, including:

- *OP11 - Foster carer support - placement disruption*
The impact of this proposal on the recruitment and retention of foster carers was challenged. Officers provided assurance that this proposal aimed to avoid foster placement disruption, through the provision of a support team for foster carers. It was explained that savings would be achieved by preventing placement breakdown and avoiding the use of residential care. This would also produce better outcomes for children and young people.
- *OP7 – Mother and Baby – Daisy Project*
At the request of Members, further detail on this project was provided. The Committee was informed that this was a perinatal programme for parents who have had a previous child removed from their care and were at risk of having a recurrent infant removal. Where successful both savings and better outcomes were achieved. In situations where the intervention was not a success, earlier planning for the child was possible which also created improved outcomes for the child. The services seeks to remove the need for high cost residential assessment units, with purposeful assessments taking place pre-birth.
- *OP9 - Adolescent service - Turning Point - reduce number of adolescents coming into care*
The Turning Point service worked with families to prevent family breakdown, to prevent young people from becoming looked after and/or needing residential care.
- *OP13/45 - Grandparents plus - build in for future years*
Officers confirmed that 'Grandparents plus', supported the identification of children who could be transferred from being a looked after child to being subject to a special guardianship order. The service offers dedicated support to kinship carers.

- 5.2 The Committee resolved -

- *That the draft revenue budget proposals that related to the remit of the Committee, as shown in Appendix 1 and 2, and which will be presented to the meeting of the Cabinet on 15 December 2021, be noted.*

6. Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 25 November 2021

- 6.1 The Committee discussed a number of issues and appropriate clarification was provided by officers, as follows:

- Reductions in the use of agency and temporary staff, and the possible implications for the workloads of other staff. It was confirmed that there had been agreement for an increase in staffing, and it was expected that caseloads would be reduced accordingly and that there would be investment to encourage staff development.
- Increased traded services to schools. It was noted that there were services that schools needed to purchase and the Authority had been assessing what services were offered or could be offered to schools. This could also include packaging several services together in three-year programmes that would be beneficial, both to Walsall's schools and the Authority.
- The on-going design and build of the capital programme. It was confirmed that the Authority currently used the Solihull framework for contractor procurement processes. However, the ambition was to develop similar frameworks for the Walsall area or use national frameworks available through the sector.
- The number of schools anticipated to become academies and the impact for the Authority's budgetary focus. It was noted that the decision to become an academy lay with the school and that there were different types of federations and governance arrangements for academies. The focus for the Authority was school improvement and to work collaboratively with Walsall's schools.
- The arrangements to retain and develop existing skilled staff. The formal and informal arrangements were outlined, and included rigorous recruitment processes, induction, training and buddying programmes, together with other programmes to identify and develop new team leaders, and techniques to increase team efficiency and support staff, including huddle groups.

6.2 The Committee resolved -

- *That the draft revenue budget proposals that related to the remit of the Committee, as shown in Appendices 1 and 2, and which will be presented to the meeting of the Cabinet on 15 December 2021, be noted;*
- *That the draft capital schemes included in the draft capital programme that relate to the remit of the Committee, as shown in Appendices 3 and 4, and which will be presented to the meeting of the Cabinet on 15 December 2021, be noted.*

Section A - Part 2 - Report on findings from Budget Consultation

1. Background

- 1.1 Each year Walsall Council undertakes public consultation in preparation for the budget setting process. Residents, partners and other key stakeholders were invited to have their say on draft budget proposals for 2022/23 to 2023/24 where applicable.
- 1.2 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 placed a general duty on every local authority in England to take such steps as it considers appropriate to secure that representatives of local persons (or of local persons of a particular description) are involved in the exercise of any of its functions, among other things by being consulted about the exercise of the function. The 2010 Equality Act whilst not imposing a specific duty to consult, lays a requirement to have due regard to the equality impact when exercising its function.

Approach to consultation

- 1.3 Information on the draft proposals was made available in the 20 October 2021 Cabinet report and on the council's website at: www.walsall.gov.uk/budgethaveyoursay.
- 1.4 Consultation with a range of stakeholders, including residents, Non-Domestic Rate Payers, voluntary and community organisations, Councillors and other key stakeholders took place between 24 November and 31 December 2021.

Communications and promotion

- 1.5 The consultation was announced in a news item on the council's website (744 views) and was promoted on social media on the corporate Twitter and Facebook accounts. Facebook achieved a reach of 6,064 and 367 total clicks, Twitter 998 impressions and 23 clicks.
- 1.6 Information about the proposals was provided and further information could be sought on request.

Methodology

- 1.7 Consultation has, as far as possible, been designed to be appropriate to the audience and to facilitate informed comment. In doing so the needs of particular groups and communities have been considered, alternative formats and support to respond were made available on request. A dedicated budget email address and phone line was made available for people to call for further information or to make a comment.
- 1.8 The 20 October Cabinet report - Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2022/23 – 2025/26 included 6 policy proposals which were consulted on as part of the 2021/22 budget. All were subsequently approved and

therefore not included in this consultation. Operational proposals were covered in this consultation.

- 1.9 Operational proposals tend not to impact directly on the public as the changes are 'behind the scenes'. While operational proposals are savings that do not require Cabinet approval or formal consultation, public comments and feedback were sought as part of consultation on the wider budget.
- 1.10 Central to the consultation is to understand how the draft proposals, if approved, may impact on people / communities and to seek alternative suggestions for how the savings could be made. Feedback on all proposals was gathered via a short generic online questionnaire. Each proposal had a reference number allowing respondents to identify the proposal(s) they wished to comment on. The survey asked 3 key questions:
- What is your overall opinion on this operational proposal? (support, support but with concerns / amendments, do not support)
 - How if at all, might this proposal affect you?
 - Do you have any alternative suggestions for how this saving could be made or income generated?
- 1.11 Due to the operational nature of the proposals interest in the budget has been extremely limited and just 13 responses have been received with no one commenting on specific proposals. Nonetheless, some feedback given on the budget in general and council tax was received and is summarised here.

Petitions

- 1.12 No petitions have been received.

2. Summary of feedback - Comments on budget in general (residents)

- 2.1 An online survey was made available on the council's website from 24 November 2021 until 31 December 2021.
- 2.2 Of those completing the online survey, 12 were residents of Walsall and 1 business representative. Note that not all questions were mandatory. Results are reported on the basis of the number of people who answered the specific question. No one commented on a specific proposal. The following results are for residents only.
- 2.3 Some comments may reflect the lack of understanding of local government funding and what is and isn't under its control. As such some comments may seem irrelevant but are however included for completeness.
- 2.4 Three of the 6 comments received via the online survey mentioned council tax increases in relation to personal circumstances and affordability.

"Please do not increase the council tax as I cannot pay any more honestly that's as much I can afford now."

“Not happy with this budget, taking in account increases this is a big increase that I am not in favour of.”

“Putting up council tax. We don’t get any street cleaning, lights or maintenance of our roads due to where we live. But we have to pay exactly the same as the other residential areas that get this as part of their council tax and we have to pay extra.”

- 2.5 One comment mentioned a preference to see savings made in other areas rather than in social care.

“I note there are no plans to reduce councillor costs yet children's services and adult social care are the main impacted proposals.”

- 2.6 Two respondents offer suggestions for how savings could be made. One suggests selling the Saddlers Centre and introducing mandatory unpaid leave for council staff at Christmas. The other respondent feels that the way adult social care services are funded needs to change, where every adult should pay for services not just home owners. They also want to see councils trying to incorporate more options to raise revenues in adult social care.

3. Thoughts on paying more council tax to help protect services (residents)

- 3.1. The online survey also sought feedback on paying a bit more council tax, in particular an increase of 1.99% in general council tax and a further 1% Adult Social Care Precept. Details and figures were provided.

- 3.2. The majority of the 12 respondents do not want to see council tax increased. Results show that of the 12 people who responded 4 said ‘Yes increase general council tax by 1.99%’. Eight people said ‘No do not increase general council tax by 1.99%’.

- 3.3. Comments from residents who did not favour an increase in general council tax reiterate concerns about personal affordability and those of others. One person questions why Walsall’s rates are higher than neighbouring authorities.

“Can’t afford any more please do not increase.”

“Residents cannot afford this charge you will be increasing people's poverty yet cutting services they will need to cope.”

“We shouldn’t have to pay more. We pay enough as it is.”

“Walsall Council has without question the highest council tax bands in neighbouring authorities....Every single year the council tax rates increase by the allowed rate of 1.99%. You say that the majority of houses in the borough are in Bands A and B - unfortunately these are the people who feel the increase in council tax the most. Many of these people are on minimum wage or earn well under the average salary and knowing that there will be an increase in council tax every year, especially when council services are slightly reduced, is a source

of anxiety for many people. I don't believe council tax should be increased so that it can be more in line with other neighbouring authorities. I don't see why Walsall has the highest council tax rates in the local area."

- 3.4. The two respondents in favour of a 1.99% increase make general remarks.

"This would help to provide more money so it can't be taken off the children."

"So long as services are kept in place!"

- 3.5. In terms of a 1% Adult Social Care Precept, 3 respondents say yes apply it, 9 say do not apply it and 1 said don't know. Those not in favour don't want to see increases and thus have to pay more. One expresses concern for those on lower incomes and another questions paying more for less.

"Again. We should not pay more."

"As per my previous comments, a 2.99% would be completely worrying for lower paid residents especially."

"Why increase yet reduce service?"

- 3.6. One comment in support of the 1% precept expresses the importance of being able to finance vital services.

"As the partner of a receiver of social care I understand how important this service is."

- 3.7. Nine respondents say that paying a bit more council tax would have a 'big impact' on them, two said 'some impact' and 1 'no impact'.

4. Statutory consultation on the draft budget and council tax (NDRP)

- 4.1. As part of the council's statutory duty to consult^[2] with representatives of local non-domestic ratepayers (NDRP), businesses and community and voluntary organisations were invited to have their say on the current and preceding years' expenditure proposals, as well as the proposed council tax increase for 2022/23.

- 4.2. On 25 November, emails outlining the draft budget and explaining the adult social care precept were distributed electronically to 3,799 businesses and to community and voluntary organisations via the One Walsall CVS social media network. As well as providing a link where further information could be found the communication invited people to have their say via the online survey.

- 4.3. This information was also made available on the council's budget consultation pages: www.walsall.gov.uk/budgethaveyoursay

^[2] <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/14/section/65>

4.4. By the final closing date of 31 December 2021, 1 response from a business representative had been received. They did not comment on any specific proposals.

4.5. The one respondent did not support a 1.99% increase in general council tax, indicating it would have a big impact and commenting;

“Business rates for those who are still paying are already a struggle for most companies and are unfair when online retailers pay next to nothing.”

4.6. They also did not support a 1% adult social care precept, saying;

“No more increases.”

Section A - Part 3 - Report on findings from Equality Impact Assessment

1 Introduction

1.1 All managers responsible for savings proposals outlined in the draft budget report to Cabinet on 20 October 2021 were requested to carry out an assessment of each proposal.

1.2 An EqIA is the Walsall Council chosen procedure for checking lawfulness of decisions in relation to the impact on people with certain characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010. These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

1.3 Information required in the EqIA

EqIA must contain relevant data and sufficient analysis to enable members to understand the equality implications of a proposal and any alternative options. It must have satisfactory and appropriate information and be presented to decision makers in time for them to understand the effects of the proposal on people with protected characteristics. It must also;

- Consider whether action can be taken to mitigate any identified potential adverse impacts. Some proposals will affect everyone, but others will affect people from different equality groups;
- Consider whether action can be taken to enable the policy or decision to advance equality of opportunity for people who share a relevant protected characteristic;
- Request further research, consultation, or action is necessary.

1.4 What course of action does the EqIA suggest?

An EqIA should clearly identify the option(s) chosen and their potential impacts as well as document the reasons for this decision. There are four possible outcomes:

A - No major change required

When no adverse impact is identified and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken. To make this judgement, concrete evidence must be provided that people with protected equality characteristics (all groups) will not be affected adversely.

B - Adjustments are needed to mitigate adverse impact and to better promote equality

A plan is required which must include specific deadlines for actions to be completed in order for the decision to be implemented, e.g. alternative ways of providing the service,

signposting to other providers and ongoing monitoring of the impact. If there are further concerns following adjustments, the decision must be reviewed and action taken.

C - Continue despite possible adverse impact

Compelling reasons will be needed and mitigating actions are required to minimise adverse impact. An action plan is required which must include specific deadlines by which mitigating actions need to be completed in order for the decision to be implemented, e.g. alternative ways of providing the service, signposting to other providers and ongoing monitoring of the impact. If there are further concerns following adjustments, the decision must be reviewed and action taken.

D - Stop and rethink the proposal

When an EqlA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination and needs to be reviewed immediately.

2. Evaluation of EqlAs

2.1 Cabinet, on 20 October 2021 agreed a summary of revenue savings for consultation. All managers responsible for policy proposals, and operational proposals with the confirmed requirement for EqlAs, were requested to carry out an assessment. 6 policy proposals and 74 operational proposals were considered for their impact on protected characteristic groups. Each of the proposals had an equality screening and 30 were considered necessary, or having the potential to undergo an impact assessment process. Following consultation and feedback analysis, a number of proposals were reviewed or paused. The table below shows the outcomes for these proposals.

Ref	Decision	2022/23 EqlAs
A	No major change required	6
B	Adjustments are needed to mitigate adverse impact and to better promote equality (Includes initial EqlAs submitted and in progress)	10
C	Continue despite possible adverse impact	5
D	Stop and rethink the proposal	0
	Other decisions (e.g. sub-proposals, in progress)	9
	No EqlA required	50
	Awaiting confirmation of commencement to EqlA	0
	Total	80

2.2 The tables below provides further detail on those assessed as B, C or D. Where the outcomes showed B or C, the action plan is required to show the adjustments needed, how to reduce the impact or justify why it should continue despite the impact. No EqlAs were considered as D in this period. All EqlAs that resulted in initial B or C outcomes are further reviewed by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team and considered by Cabinet members, giving an opportunity to comment and, where applicable, amend the budget in terms of its fairness, equality duties and objectives, as well as future shaping of the services. Proposals continue to be monitored and managed following implementation.

2.3 A number of proposals continue to be subject to consultation and engagement and there is ongoing activity. In addition, some EqlAs that have been submitted, whilst not causing any particular concern around equality considerations, require further analysis or work prior to or as they are implemented. These have been categorised as C in the table above at this point. This demonstrates that we are keeping in close contact with the proposals and that the owner has shown equality considerations. All C's will be monitored corporately to ensure any required mitigating action is implemented and has the desired result.

2.4 Of the 6 policy proposals, 1 relates to 2023/24 and will be assessed as part of that budget setting process. The 5 policy proposals for implementation in 2022/23 period were reviewed as follows:

Ref Number	Proposal	EqlA	Update / Comments
P1 (Children's)	Change, Grow, Live Contract – bring service back in house.	C	The service was brought back in house in October 2021 and the assessment is being updated. The EqlA is being updated to confirm impact on children and parents with disabilities in accessing services after the relocation of the locality teams into one central hub.
P2 (linked to P3) (Resources & Transformation)	Finance - Adult Social Care Client Care Team - introduce charge for appointments management/support	B	There is impact on people aged 65+. The EqlA will mitigate the risk of discrimination by monitoring charges and the service.
P3 (linked with P2) (Resources & Transformation)	Finance - Adult Social Care Client Care Team - introduce charging for administration of deaths for appointees	B	As P2 above.
P4 (Resources & Transformation)	Organisational redesign to deliver Intelligent Client Model across Asset Management, Capital Projects and Facilities Management	N/A	This is in progress with consultation ending January 2022.
P5 (Resources & Transformation)	Redesign of Occupational Health (OH) contract	B	B – Mitigation in the action plan to ensure consistency, including the communication to confirm the criteria to be used for OH referral threshold

2.5 The 74 operational proposals for implementation in 2022/23 period were reviewed and the following table identifies the 11 which were assessed as a B or C. Those identified in the summary table above as 'Other Decisions' are either in progress or about to be assessed due to timing reasons (i.e. a later than April 2022 implementation date). Any assessed as other than A, will be reported to senior managers and members for further consideration prior to implementation.

Ref Number	Proposal	EqIA	Update / Comments
OP60 (Resources & Transformation)	Consider ceasing of physio contract - £12k	C	C - Further consultation recommended, as the provider of the Physio contract did not undertake equality monitoring of those who used the service, so impact is currently unknown.
OP83/92 (Adult Social Care)	Efficiencies attributed to implementation of an All Age Disability approach and development of a new Target Operating Model	C	An overall assessment cannot be made at present as this in the preparatory stages of implementation. Further information will be gathered and assessed.
OP84 (Adult Social Care)	Staffing impact following the implementation of Bettercare Finance System	B	Monitoring to establish impact, particularly around people with disabilities.
OP89 (Adult Social Care)	Reduction in new clients achieved through strength based working practices and development of resilient communities framework	B	Monitoring to establish impact, particularly around people with disabilities.
OP91 (Adult Social Care)	Efficiencies attributed to the review of day care provision through strength based practice and development of a new Target Operating Model	B	An overall assessment has not been concluded at present as this a 3-year plan. Further information will be gathered and assessed on quarterly basis.
OP97 (Adult Social Care)	Review of Resources including Goscote Centre and development of new Target Operating Model	C	Establish single point of access for referrals and start monitoring outcomes for people with different characteristics, as well as signposting to local support groups.
OP98A	Restructure within Money Home Job	B	Monitoring and review of any impact, particularly around people with disabilities.
OP107 (Children's)	Independent Living	B	Implementation of quarterly monitoring to assess known and unknown impact.
OP108 (Resources & Transformation)	Review of mobile phones contract	B	Monitor services for potential impact on people with disabilities.
OP109 /113 (Resources & Transformation)	Review of Enabling & Support Services	C	An overall assessment cannot be made at present as this in the preparatory stages of implementation. Further information will be gathered and assessed.
OP113 (Adult Social Care)	Efficiencies attributed to the implementation of Bettercare Finance System	B	Monitoring to establish impact, particularly around people with disabilities.

3. Emerging findings from the Cumulative EqIA

- 3.1 As well as the 6 policy proposals there are a further 83 operational proposals which in total deliver approximately £26m of savings over two years. These are savings which officers have delegations to implement; examples include restructures, back office savings, operational efficiencies and new ways of working.
- 3.2 Many operational proposals do not always impact directly on the public as the changes are a part of 'back office' administration. However, the introduction of new way of working can impact on accessibility and inclusion of people with protected characteristics. While operational proposals are savings that the service can decide to implement and they do not require Cabinet approval or formal consultation, proposal owners are required to consider the equality impact of these changes. Several trends to watch out for and monitor were evaluated by the EDI team:

3.3 Enabling Support Services and Proud

Some of the operational proposals are subject to the progression and delivery of the Enabling Support Services (ESS) workstream. So as to deliver the council's aspirations to better serve its customers and deliver improved outcomes and experiences, significant review of the ways of working is required. The ESS workstream is an integral part of the council's Proud programme, enabling the organisation to work more effectively through the adoption of new ways of working.

The ESS workstream is critical in achieving the change required to deliver successful and sustainable transformational change for the full range of workstreams and activities across the Proud Programme by enabling services to work more efficiently and effectively.

EDI is a key component in the delivery of quality services. Good practice means encouraging and promoting these values wherever possible. The ESS team will ensure that through their work, colleagues and service users are treated fairly and equally with dignity and respect. EDI will remain an integral part of service planning. The EqlA associated with ESS is currently categorised as C as a full assessment cannot yet be made due to timing. However, it is anticipated that the updated EqlA will ensure that decision making, partnership working and governance all promote EDI and that it remains at the centre of strategic planning.

The work of the Proud Programme can also be seen in the Customer Access Management (CAM) programme. The work in this area has seen the redesign of services that we provide, both internally and externally, that have impacted on people with protected characteristics.

Aligned to this and, subsequently, some budget proposals, are the Corporate Landlord model and Customer Experience Centre (CXC). As part of the council's transformation of how it manages its land and property assets, it has adopted this model, whereby all property related functions within the council have been brought together into a single Corporate Landlord service to ensure that a comprehensive and joined up approach is possible for the property portfolio.

The CXC project is one of the five pillars of the Customer Access Management workstream. Working through different phases, the initial EqlA focused on creating an evidenced view of customer needs and experience, defining the detailed principles and parameters for the future customer capability and a centralised model for customer management.

As work is ongoing in this workstream, and as some proposals remain subject to the updated EqlA for CAM and CXC as these proposals move through the phases (and, to a lesser extent, the Corporate Landlord EqlA), it can be seen that improving the customer experience remains at the heart of the Proud Programme. Previous equality considerations have seen the council developing ways of working that meet customer expectations and which reflect changing demands for the future.

3.4 Covid – 19 and emerging technology

It has been said that Covid-19 does not discriminate. However, as the United Nations has reported, the pandemic has magnified several forms of discrimination and

inequality that have been at work in our society for centuries.

Nationally, the economic impact of the pandemic has been unequal, entrenching existing inequalities and widening others. Older people, ethnic minorities and disabled people, particularly those in care homes, have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, leading to an increased reliance on unpaid carers, who are more likely to be women.

Women have dropped out of the workforce at staggering rates after trying to balance a crushing convergence of work and home life. Young people unfortunate enough to be entering the workforce or trying to secure internships have been turned away, their opportunities cancelled. Black, Asian and ethnic minority people continue to struggle for recognition, advancement, and representation at all organisational levels, especially in senior roles.

The Government has acknowledged the findings of Equinet, the European Network of Equality Bodies, who argued that differences in support for remote learning during the pandemic has threatened to widen inequalities for those who already perform less well than their peers. This would particularly impact boys, black pupils, some Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, pupils who need support in education, and those who are socio-economically disadvantaged.

However, emerging technology has had an opportunity to help bridge the equality divide and effect positive change across all sectors of business and society. Navigating the pandemic has been a challenge, to say the least. But the pandemic has also been a catalyst for technology to step up and help and make a difference to people's lives. This puts the council's social responsibility into action.

People with disabilities are benefiting from emerging technology. Inclusive approaches will ensure that such technology makes a difference in the lives of all users. Technology can lower barriers that people with disabilities encounter in their daily and working lives, such as speaking, travelling, reading, and writing. It allows them to participate and enjoy the benefits of the digital society, with the same access to information as everyone else. And, perhaps most importantly, new technology can allow people with disabilities to act more independently from others if they wish.

The budget proposal OP32 has seen new technology being utilised by Members, as paperless meetings will become the norm, in due course. This will continue to be monitored for impact on anyone with a disability.

3.5 **Finance and Insurance**

As evidenced in the Financial Conduct Authority's report, 'Diversity and inclusion in the financial sector – working together to drive change', Financial services have traditionally had challenges with diversity, particularly around age, disability and gender. The introduction of the Equality Act 2010 certainly helped the industry understand how the discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services applies in this area.

More recently, the industry has seen targeted action to drive meaningful change and lead the charge for equality. The submission of a number of budget proposal EqlAs around operational activities within the Finance service demonstrated a commitment

to and understanding of the importance of EDI at Walsall Council.

3.6 Children and young people with disabilities or SEND (0-19)

Policy Proposal (P1) Change, Grow, Live Contract - bring service back in house. Change, Grow, Live (CGL) is commissioned to deliver a 0-19 years Early Help whole family service to those families most in need in the central and south locality. The proposal was for the council to take on the delivery of these services with staff transferring. Whilst there was no change to service provision, the service needed to re-locate. 15 of the children and young people have either a disability or SEND. These children will continue to receive support within their home, school or new location. 17 of the parents/carers have a disability or illness, so all parents receiving Early Help one to one dedicated support are offered support within their own home and, if internet access is available, within their home. All parenting courses are available on line.

After careful consideration of engagement and consultation data, together with service user feedback and statistics, the outcome for this proposal was 'C' - continue despite possible adverse impact.

The proposal also identified adverse impact on a substantial group of parents with disabilities or illness which would make it harder for them to access the services after the relocation of the locality teams into one central hub. A number of other issues have been highlighted in relation to transport and distance from different communities.

The EqIA resulted in extensive action plan and monitoring schedule. The plan included exploring alternative community venues, more extensive outreach and home visits and more research into demographic data on changing communities.

The affected children will continue to receive support within their home, school or new location. 17 of the parents/carers have a disability or illness. All parents receiving Early Help one to one dedicated support are offered support within their own home and, if internet access is available within their home, all parenting courses are available on line.

With the budget proposal Independent Living (OP107), the council is seeking the provision of a range of Supported Housing accommodation and support for Young People who are aged 16-25. These are young people assessed as vulnerable by the Children in Need Service and for who Local Authorities have a statutory duty. This includes Children Looked After aged 16-17; Care Leavers aged 18-25; and homeless young people aged 16-29.

3.7 Independent living and homelessness

The Independent Living proposal has, as its aim, the commissioning of a range of accommodation that will provide the right young people with the right place and the right support to acquire the skills to live independently, and make successful transition to independent living.

The under 35's are a group which are affected by a number of welfare reforms and receive reduced levels of benefit. They are therefore more likely to be affected by homelessness. The Homeless Reduction Act (2017) is set to improve outcomes for young single people. These services are also targeted at young people who are

homeless, as well as those who are leaving care.

According to the 2016 JR Foundation report, 28% of all customers in poverty have a disability. Disabled people are therefore more likely to become homeless than non-disabled people. 31% of children from Asian and Black backgrounds live in low income households compared to 11% of white households. Black ethnic groups make up 7% of the homeless, but are only 2.4% of the resident population.

Women are also more likely to experience homelessness than men. The delivery of these services have been sought with the requirements of taking into consideration the key race, religion, cultural, genders and disabilities of people by the contractor. Further data can be collected on need and, where a customer has a disability, work is done to ensure their needs and aspirations are met.

3.8 Workforce impact – older age, pregnancy and disabled employees

One policy proposal that identified potential adverse impact on the workforce was the Occupational health contract (P5), proposing some changes to the criteria for occupational health referrals. The initial EqIA showed a negative effect on several protected characteristics, including:

- Potential for older employees to be adversely impacted by inability to access OH service (i.e. for conditions more likely to affect older employees). Or where seeking specialist advice on reasonable adjustments where these may relate to an age-related condition;
- Impact on employees who require specialist support or advice regarding reasonable adjustments as a result of a disability-related condition;
- Potential impact on employees who are pregnant and who may require assessment of reasonable adjustments required as part of a pregnancy-related condition.

The mitigation action plan includes communication to managers/employees and HR colleagues confirming the criteria to be used for the OH referral threshold. In addition, managers will give full consideration as to whether the case meets the OH threshold criteria and discuss with Senior HR Advisors any questions or concerns. The communication regarding the changes will be made available in other languages on request for employees whose first language is not English, through liaison with the council's Interpretation, Translation, Transcription and Easy Read service (ITTE).

Alternative formats (audio and Easy Read) for disabled employees will be made available on request. Liaison will also be as required with the Council's procured Interpretation, Translation, Transcription and Easy Read services, Word360.

Whilst an EqIA was undertaken for the cessation of the Physio contract (OP60), and was considered completed, it was strongly recommended by the EDI team that further consultation was undertaken as part of a review of the proposal. This consideration has allowed the EDI team to consider this proposal a C.

The main reason for this is that the provider of the Physio contract did not undertake equality monitoring of those who used the service. Whilst numbers of users, in itself, may not always present a true picture, it could have provided some justification, or otherwise, for the removal of the contract. In essence, without this data, it is impossible to acknowledge or deny equality impact through this closure.

Usage did reduce during the pandemic, which is understandable. The concern, of course, will be that without a service being available, council employees will have to access physiotherapy self-referral services through their GP/other health provider, who are currently experiencing unprecedented long waiting times.

Whilst being LBGT+ should not, in itself, prevent access to services, the experiences of invisibility, violence, discrimination and prejudice help to explain the poorer emotional health and wellbeing experienced by these communities. This contributes to barriers to accessing healthcare services, including physio. This may be particularly relevant to colleagues that have not come out, may have had negative experiences with their own GP and may now find any additional restrictions to accessing services a struggle to cope with. Specifically with Trans colleagues, during transition there may be the requirement to undertake bespoke physio appointments. In essence, removing the physio contract may provide another barrier to access health services, without knowing the usage of that service.

3.9 Those qualifying for Adult Social Care services

Demand for health and social care services is increasing. People are living longer and the older population is growing. As people age they become frailer and the incidence of dementia increases. In addition there are more people living with long-term health conditions and who have complex health needs.

The Adult Social Care Service Transformation Plan is a three-year programme of work, underpinned by a range of projects, which seek to deliver customer, and staff satisfaction and cashable savings, which supports the council's organisational transformation agenda.

The aim is the delivery of improved outcomes for citizens, underpinned by strengths based practice, with a focus on prevention, maximising and enhancing citizen independence, wellbeing and autonomy, community resilience, prevention and enablement. It is anticipated that this will lead to a reduction in the need for statutory services.

With the commencement of this EqIA, comes the anticipation that the proposal will have a positive impact on age, gender and disability as more women and older people access adult social care provision. The impact on all protected characteristics will be updated as further evidence is gathered.

There has been a need to consult on the reshaping of the council's Provider services. This is part of the long term work that has been delivered in terms of developing an all age approach and also through the ongoing work to continually achieve a strength based approach that asks people what their aspirations are.

The aim is to create a seamless and robust management and delivery model that supports the internal provider activities under the umbrella of one management structure and a streamlined front line team that have generic roles to deliver a mix of regulated and none regulated activities as part of the model.

This work is linked directly to all age, day opportunities and the promotion of meaningful activities focussing on a strength based approach, as well as the development of a new Target Operating Model. The reshape also fits within the priorities for the council's

transformation agendas.

Local and regional work has enabled the Service to consider the lessons learned from work undertaken recently by ADASS (Association of Director of Adult Social Care) as part of the Post Covid-19 review. In protecting characteristics, the reshape will provide different ways in which people can choose to receive their support, thus demonstrating inclusion across community based activities.

The intentions of the reshape is to ensure that Walsall Council continues to support local agendas and to deliver front facing outcomes with people referred into the Service, as part of time-limited intervention. Whilst the proposal is purporting to have a positive impact on people with protected characteristics, the EDI team is awaiting further information around how any potential impact will be mitigated on people with protected characteristics, so has marked the proposal as C. It should also be noted that some Adult Social Care budget proposals are linked into the CAM EqlA, so will be subject to work undertaken on that process.

4. Ongoing EqlAs and implementation

- 4.1 EqlAs are live assessments, continuing through the budget considerations as well as during the implementation. Some will not have completed consultation and engagement by the time Cabinet and Council meets and certainly not in time for this report. The EDI team has engaged with proposal holders, working with them and their proposals to ensure that equality is being considered throughout the process. An update will be provided as part of Corporate Management Team (CMT) quarterly monitoring.

5. Equalities Monitoring Process

- 5.1 Findings from the cumulative impact assessments and corrective actions are monitored quarterly by Equality Champions, Departmental management teams and CMT where updates will be provided as appropriate.
- 5.2 The EDI team will carefully consider the full impact of all EqlAs, with the support of CMT and Equality Champions. Emphasis will be placed on managing and mitigating any adverse impact to the services, within available budgets, and in consultation with their service users with protected characteristics. Managers implementing the service changes where potential impact has been identified will be responsible for any mitigating actions outlined. Progress will continue to be tracked quarterly by CMT and reports provided to Cabinet as required.