

Section A - Part 1 – Feedback from Overview Scrutiny Committees

1. Overview Scrutiny Committees received the draft revenue proposals in November 2020, and Cabinet received feedback in December 2020. The capital proposals reported to Cabinet in December 2020 were referred on to Overview Scrutiny Committees in January.

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

2. Scrutiny Overview Committee

2.1 1 December 2020

The Committee sought to understand the potential impact on the in-year budget of Covid-19 and how this may impact future years. The loss of income and additional spending were discussed along with the potential best and worst case scenarios.

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

- Leader
- Deputy Leader (Regeneration)
- Deputy Leader (Resilient Communities)
- Personnel and Business Support

2.3 As part of the presentation from Cabinet Members clarity was provided on the allocation and use of funding for the Towns Fund.

2.4 Council-wide proposals

- The Committee heard from the Leader on the overall financial position and noted that further savings proposals were required to present a balanced budget to Council.
- The Committee received feedback on the budget scrutiny that had taken place at the remaining Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- It was reported the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had discussed changes to the allocation of the adult social care budget.
- The Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered proposals to make changes to the Home to School Transport Service.
- The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee sought to understand the ambitions transformation programme and new models of working that were proposed.
- An overview of the budget discussions from the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee was provided.

2.5 The Committee resolved -
The draft revenue budget 2021/22 – 2023/24 be noted.

2.6 2 February 2021

Scrutiny Overview Committee were asked to consider the draft Capital Programme as reported to Cabinet on 9 December 2020, specifically in relation

to capital schemes that fall within services under the remit of this Committee, and for feedback to be taken into account in the finalisation of the budget by Cabinet on 10 February 2021 for recommendation to Council on 25 February 2021.

As the meeting is held on the day of despatch of this report, any recommendations will be verbally provided to Cabinet on 10th February.

3. Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3.1 3 November 2020

The Committee sought clarification on how the saving for Home to School Transport would be made from 2020/21 to 2023/24.

The Committee resolved -

- The Committee considered the draft revenue budget proposals relating to the remit of the Committee in order to formally report to the Cabinet.
- The Committee noted that consultation would be undertaken on all new 2021/22 policy proposals and that feedback would be presented to Cabinet on 9 December 2020.
- The Committee noted that further savings proposals would be presented to the Cabinet on 9 December 2020 in order for a balanced budget to be delivered by February 2021, and that these would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee for consultation.

3.2 5 January 2021

Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee were asked to consider the draft Capital Programme as reported to Cabinet on 9 December 2020, specifically in relation to capital schemes that fall within services under the remit of this Committee, and for feedback to be taken into account in the finalisation of the budget by Cabinet on 10 February 2021 for recommendation to Council on 25 February 2021.

The Committee resolved -

- The Committee are recommended to consider the draft capital budget proposals attached that relate to the remit of this committee.
- The Committee are asked to note that consultation continues on all revenue policy proposals previously reported, and that feedback will be presented to Cabinet on 10 February 2021, along with further revenue options to close the gap to ensure we set a balanced budget for 2021/22.

4. Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4.1 10 November 2020

Following challenge from Members, the Committee were provided with reassurance that the financial modelling used within the transformation plans for Children's Services would provide financial savings by achieving improved outcomes for young people and their families. For example, through new models of working, young people could be prevented from coming into care and foster care placement disruption could be avoided.

The Committee resolved -

- The Committee considered the draft revenue budget proposals relating to the remit of the Committee in order to formally report to the Cabinet on the policy proposals.
- The Committee noted that consultation would be undertaken on all new 2021/22 policy proposals and that feedback would be presented to the Cabinet on 9 December 2020.
- The Committee noted that further savings proposals would be presented to the Cabinet on 9 December 2020 in order for a balanced budget to be delivered by February 2021, and that these would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee for consultation.

4.2 **14 January 2021**

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee were asked to consider the draft Capital Programme as reported to Cabinet on 9 December 2020, specifically in relation to capital schemes that fall with services under the remit of this Committee, and for feedback to be taken into account in the finalisation of the budget by Cabinet on 10 February 2021 for recommendation to Council on 25 February 2021.

The Committee resolved –

- The Committee fully support the draft capital budget proposal that relates to the remit of this committee, that being the completion of works to the 4 designated locality buildings.
- The Committee note that consultation continues on all revenue policy proposals previously reported and that feedback will be presented to Cabinet on 10 February 2021, along with further revenue options to close the gap to ensure a balanced budget was set for 2021/22.

5. **Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

5.1 **19 November 2020**

Savings P6: Re-profile the highway maintenance mainstream budget for 2021/22 - A Member sought clarification regarding the re-profile of the highway maintenance budget for 2021/22. In response, the Executive Director confirmed that the re-profile would allow the Council to manage cash flow and revenue expenditure. This was confirmed as a temporary 1 year only saving due to the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic.

5.2 *Saving P8: Increased capitalisation of highway works* - A Member sought clarification regarding the increased capitalisation of highway works. In response, the Interim Director of Place confirmed that this increase capitalisation was created as a result of classification changes for highway works from revenue to capital expenditure. Due to the saving, there needed to be a long-term focus and monitoring on the condition of highways especially if the condition of highways deteriorated.

5.3 *Saving OP22 - Unauthorised Encampment Works* - A Member welcomed the increased expenditure with Unauthorised Encampments. However, there were concerns about the one-off investment as there was still a high number of vulnerable sites across the Borough. The Executive Director confirmed that whilst it was confirmed as a £100k cost pressure in 2021/22, the base budget would be adjusted in future years too.

- 5.4 *Saving P14: Bereavement Services – The sale of keepsake memorials and a range of personal memorabilia* - The Executive Director confirmed that the sale of memorials and memorabilia would enable the council to offer the service for individuals and families suffering bereavements.
- 5.5 *Saving OP102: Restructure and efficiencies within Regulatory Services and Community Protection* - A Member sought clarification regarding the restructure and efficiencies with Regulatory Services and Community Protection. The Executive Director responded that the council was developing a resilient communities model under the Economy, Environment & Communities directorate. As a result, the model would encompass a number of services from across the council including Regulatory Services and Libraries to make greater efficiencies and savings overall.
- 5.6 *Saving OP103: Review of existing fees and charges within resilient communities* - Member sought clarification in regard to review of existing fees and charges. The Executive Director informed that a detailed plan of the changes with fees and charges would be circulated to the Committee in writing.
- 5.7 The Committee resolved -
- The Committee considered the draft revenue budget proposals relating to the remit of the Committee in order to formally report to the Cabinet on the policy proposals.
 - The Committee noted that consultation would be undertaken on all new 2021/22 policy proposals and that feedback would be presented to the Cabinet on 9 December 2020.
 - The Committee noted that further savings proposals would be presented to the Cabinet on 9 December 2020 in order for a balanced budget to be delivered by February 2021, and that these would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee for consultation.
- 5.8 **21 January 2021**
Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee were asked to consider the draft Capital Programme as reported to Cabinet on 9 December 2020, specifically in relation to capital schemes that fall with services under the remit of this Committee, and for feedback to be taken into account in the finalisation of the budget by Cabinet on 10 February 2021 for recommendation to Council on 25 February 2021.
This report was simply noted by the Committee.

6. **Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

6.1 **26 November 2020**

The Committee were provided with further detail on the key proposals within the Adult Social Care budget. Members acknowledged that the announcement in relation to the Better Care Fund, was historically late and this made planning difficult. It was also noted that the proposal '*P10 Charge self funders to arrange care via adult social care*' would now be progressed in the financial year 2022/23.

6.2 Following challenge in relation to – ‘*OP91 Reduction of day care funded by direct payments*’ - the Committee were informed that the pandemic had provided opportunities for individuals to explore alternative options to the traditional day care centres. In response to concern that, whilst individuals had adapted to alternative options during the pandemic, people may be keen to return to their ‘normal activities’, the Committee were provided with reassurance that individual need and preferences would be assessed through support plans.

6.3 Members also sought clarification on ‘*OP97 Review of all resources including Goscote and shared lives*’. The Committee were provided with clarification that resources would be reviewed to ensure a focus on re-ablement activity; however, it was acknowledged that more traditional support would be needed by some individuals.

6.4 The Committee resolved -

- The Committee considered the draft revenue budget proposals relating to the remit of the Committee in order to formally report to the Cabinet on the policy proposals.
- The Committee noted that consultation would be undertaken on all new 2021/22 policy proposals and that feedback would be presented to the Cabinet on 9 December 2020.
- The Committee noted that further savings proposals would be presented to the Cabinet on 9 December 2020 in order for a balanced budget to be delivered by February 2021, and that these would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee for consultation.

6.5 **28 January 2021**

For Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the draft Capital Programme as reported to Cabinet on 9 December 2020, specifically in relation to capital schemes that fall with services under the remit of this Committee, and for feedback to be taken into account in the finalisation of the budget by Cabinet on 10 February 2021 for recommendation to Council on 25 February 2021.

This report was simply noted by the Committee.

Section A - Part 2 – Findings from Budget Consultation

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. Budget consultation took place between 29 October and 30 November, with some consultation extending into early January 2021.
- 1.2. Anyone who lives, works, studies, and visits or does business in the borough was encouraged to have their say on specific draft policy and operational proposals via an online survey, in writing / email or by phone. In light of Covid-19 restrictions no face to face consultation was conducted. Whilst anyone could comment on all draft policy and operational proposals, the focus for consultation was on proposals that have an impact on the public.
- 1.3. Information presented in this report should be considered alongside equality impact assessments and other supporting information. Table 1 and 2 on the following pages provide a quick reference list of the policy and operational proposals consulted on, the overall opinion following consultation; and the outcomes from EqlAs, where completed.
- 1.4. Single statements indicate the general overall opinion on each proposal whether: 'Support', 'Against' or 'Inconclusive / opinion divided'. Note that low numbers of people responded.
- 1.5. Following consultation and impact assessment, and consideration by Cabinet, the following changes are proposed to the final budget in relation to policy proposals:

Policy proposal Ref P10: Charge self-funders to arrange care via adult social care commissioners (brokerage service) – feedback was divided on this proposal from the general consultation. It has been determined that more specific consultation and equality impact assessment is required on this proposal prior to considering implementing and as such, that consultation will be undertaken as part of a wider piece of work relating to Adult Social Care charging within the Proud programme. This proposal is therefore withdrawn at this point.

Policy Proposal Ref P2: Finance - Adult Social Care Client Care Team - introduce charge for appointeeship management / support (consultation feedback divided) and **Policy Proposal Ref P3:** Adult Social Care Client Care Team - introduce charging for administration of deaths for appointees (consultation feedback against). An initial equality impact assessment has indicated a *“B - Adjustments are needed to mitigate adverse impact and to better promote equality”*. These are both year 2 proposals (2022/23) and specific consultation and equality impact assessment will be undertaken during 2021 and fed back to Cabinet as part of the 2022/23 budget setting cycle, at which point a decision will be made as to their inclusion or otherwise.

- 1.6. The remaining policy proposals are to be approved as originally set out. In relation to Policy Proposal Ref P13: Consider ceasing pest and animal control

service – there is considered a thriving private sector market which can provide a more effective and efficient service, therefore it is proposed to continue with ceasing this service.

- 1.7 All operational proposals set out in table 2 are proposed to be included in the final budget report, with mitigating actions where equality impact assessment identified the need for this.

Table 1. Quick reference list of policy proposals specifically consulted on

Policy ref number	Saving Proposal	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	Total £	EqIA decision A-D or not required (N/A)	Number of responses	Overall opinion following consultation
P1	Change, Grow, Live Contract - bring service back in house (general consultation)	122,714	467,714	590,428	C	37	Support
P1	Change, Grow, Live Contract - bring service back in house* (Service specific consultation)					29	Support
P2	Finance - Adult Social Care Client Care Team - introduce charge for appointeeship management / support	0	72,800	72,800	B	30	Divided
P3	Finance - Adult Social Care Client Care Team - introduce charging for administration of deaths for appointees	0	6,000	6,000	B	28	Against
P9	Charge developers for travel plans	0	30,000	30,000	NA	23	Support
P10	Charge self-funders to arrange care via adult social care commissioners (brokerage service)	15,000	15,000	30,000	NA	33	Divided
P11	Introduce council tax penalty charges for failing to notify a change of circumstance	150,000	0	150,000	NA	38	Support
P13	Consider ceasing pest and animal control service	87,606	0	87,606	B	39	Against
P14	Bereavement services – the sale of keepsake memorials and a range of personal memorabilia	1,000	0	1,000	NA	27	Support

**Service specific consultation (16 November to 7 December) in addition to the generic budget survey. 384 service users sent a questionnaire.*

Table 2. Quick reference list of operational proposals specifically consulted on

Policy ref number	Saving Proposal	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	Total £	EqIA decision A-D or not required (N/A)	Number of responses	Overall opinion following consultation
OP19	Building Control - Increase in fee paying services planning development and building control	37,000	0	37,000	NA	23	Support
OP63	Increase MOT charges	19,975	0	19,975	NA	26	Support
OP70	Review of permit scheme charges within statutory cap - permit costs to utilities companies for works on highways	40,000	0	40,000	NA	24	Support
OP71	Section 38 fees increase	45,806	0	45,806	NA	18	Support
OP74	Heritage and culture / Arts and events - increase fees and charges	9,351	9,351	18,702	B	26	Support
OP81	Concessionary "Move It" leisure scheme annual fee increase	63,000	0	63,000	C	39	Divided
OP103	Review of existing fees and charges within resilient communities	115,522	44,315	159,837	EqIA being finalised	23	Support
OP104	Provide pre license surgeries to individuals and businesses to support license applications	7,350	7,350	14,700	EqIA being finalised	18	Support
OP106	Charging for change of name deeds (registrars)	0	10,890	10,890	NA	24	Support

2.0 **Background**

- 2.1 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 policy proposals for 2021/22 to 2022/23 where applicable.
- 2.2 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

- 2.3 Consultation is an integral part of the budget setting process and a programme of consultation has taken place to consult and engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including service users and potential service users, residents, Non-Domestic Rate Payers, voluntary and community organisations, councillors and other key stakeholders.
- 2.4 Consultation took place between 29 October and early January 2021. Information on the draft proposals was made available in the 28 October 2020 Cabinet report and on the council's website www.walsall.gov.uk/budgethaveyoursay. Information was also included in the consultation document (questionnaire).

Communications and promotion

- 2.5 The consultation was announced in a news item on the council's website. This news item was viewed 130 times. Links to the budget consultation pages were posted on relevant service webpages and staff used budget consultation e-signatures.
- 2.6 Promotion of the consultation on social media was undertaken throughout the consultation period; in total 11 posts were published on the corporate Twitter and Facebook accounts to raise awareness of the consultation and direct people to the council's website. These were shared widely across Walsall Council service area accounts including Walsall4All, Public Health, Environmental Health, Clean & Green and the four localities' accounts.
- 2.7 Three local community Facebook groups with significant reach (3,000, 10,000 and 20,000 followers) were also engaged to promote the consultation to their networks on our behalf.
- 2.8 Information about budget consultation was also included in edition 13 of the COVID News from Walsall Council residents' newsletter, distributed to

60,000+ people on 5 November. The link to the consultation from the newsletter attracted 60 unique clicks.

- 2.9 Adverts were placed in the Walsall edition of the Express & Star newspaper on 7, 12, 14 and 17 November, with a daily average readership of 3,000.
- 2.10 Posters and postcards were printed with the intention of distributing them via the library ring and read service and at leisure centres, NAG and the Leather Museum, however Covid-19 local lockdown restrictions meant that these venues were forced to close and therefore the printed material could not be distributed in this way. Posters and postcards were, however, sent to Community Associations and to the MOT bay at Brownhills depot.
- 2.11 Information about the proposals was provided and further information could be sought on request. A budget phone line was made available for people to ring for further information or to make a comment.

Methodology

- 2.12 Consultation approaches have, as far as possible, been designed to be appropriate to the audience and to facilitate informed comment. In doing so particular groups and communities have been targeted and supported where necessary to understand the proposal(s) and have their say.
- 2.13 Of the 17 policy proposals, eight for 2021/22 impact directly on the public and were therefore specifically covered in this general consultation. Those relating to 2022/23 will be subject to further consultation.
- 2.14 Most operational proposals do not impact directly on the public as the changes are 'behind the scenes' however there are nine operational proposals involving changes to fees and charges. While operational proposals are savings that do not require Cabinet approval or formal consultation, public comments and feedback are sought as part of consultation on the wider budget and used in decision making / EqIAs.
- 2.15 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 was listed allowing respondents to select which 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?
- 2.16 In addition to the generic survey, Children's Services conducted service specific consultation in relation to proposal P1 Change, Grow, Live contract –

bring service back in house. A separate, more detailed questionnaire was distributed to users of the service and results have been analysed and reported separately in this report (see section 3.7).

- 2.17 In line with our statutory duty, Non Domestic Rate Payers (NDRP) were invited to have their say on the budget. 3,199 businesses and 734 voluntary organisations were emailed on 17 December giving them information about the budget / council tax and the opportunity to comment. This information was also made available on the council's website. The deadline for responses was 7 January 2021.
- 2.18 All feedback received has been collated, analysed and considered as part of the consultation process and used to inform equality impact assessments with findings being used to inform the decision making on the budget.

Petitions

- 2.19 No petitions have been received.

3. Summary of feedback

Generic survey results – policy proposals

- 3.1. The generic online survey was made available on the council's website from 29 October 2019 until 30 November 2020.
- 3.2. Responses to the consultation are particularly low this year, this is partly due to the Covid-19 crisis and the restrictions in place, but also due to the fairly non contentious nature of the proposals and the relatively low number of people potentially impacted by them.
- 3.3. The survey was opened and started a total of 302 times, of these 70 completed the questionnaire in full and 232 partially; meaning they started the questionnaire but did not complete it in its entirety – all responses have been captured and included in the analysis.
- 3.4. Not all questions in the survey were mandatory therefore some figures may not appear to tally. Likewise demographic questions were voluntary. The number of people answering a question is quoted throughout and should be borne in mind when interpreting the results (%s). %s are based on the number of people answering the question.
- 3.5. Of those starting the generic survey, 255 were residents of Walsall, 14 council employees, 1 community / voluntary organisation, 2 public sector organisations, 1 education sector, 2 other local authorities and 8 'other'. Note that not all questions were mandatory, nor did everyone go on to complete the questionnaire. Results are reported on the basis of the number of people who answered the specific question.

Policy Proposals

3.6 **P1: Change, Grow, Live Contract - bring service back in house**
(note a separate service specific consultation was also undertaken – closed 7 December. See section 3.7).

3.6.1 37 people commented on this proposal. Of those that answered the questions about them, most respondents (23) were aged over 35 and slightly more males than females commented on this proposal.

*Overall opinion following consultation: **Support.***

3.6.2 Overall 73% (27) people supported this proposal, with 6 people supporting it but with concerns / amendments. 4 people (11%) did not support it.

3.6.3 *How might this proposal affect you?*

Comments do not highlight any serious concerns and mostly welcome the proposal and the cost saving it would bring.

“This won’t affect me directly, but as a tax payer I support any proposal that can be shown to be more cost effective.”

Maintaining high quality services is for important for some.

“I am a user of the service at Palfrey and have been for almost 3 years. I have seen the quality of provision drop since CGL took over. They have reduced the offering. I would like to see the early years’ service back in house.”

“I am concerned that to achieve such high savings, the level of service provision will have to be reduced.”

“The delivery of these services is something that can’t be reduced therefore any saving to keep the service running is essential.”

One person felt that the service should remain in Palfrey as other community venues have recently closed.

“The venue needs to stay in Palfrey, you’ve taken away our library, the Palfrey CA has gone there is nothing left for the community. I do support the council running the service instead of CGL but the location NEEDS to stay in palfrey, can the old South Walsall Library building not be used or even the My Place youth centre or the Seed Hut at Palfrey Park.”

3.6.4 *Alternative suggestions for how this saving could be made or income generated.*

An alternative suggestion included finding a council owned building in Palfrey from where the service could be delivered. One person was concerned about

the impact the move would have on current users.

“By moving the location to a council owned building but WITHIN PALFREY.”

“Relocating to Birchills would not allow the service adequate access to those in the central and south area, and limit ability of those in need to engage with the service. Early years/help has already been scaled back as far as it can go in Walsall.”

3.7 Service Specific Consultation on P1: Change, Grow, Live Contract - bring service back in house

*Overall opinion following consultation: **Support.***

- 3.7.1 In addition to the generic questionnaire, which was available for anyone to complete, those who had used the service during 2019/20 were sent a more detailed questionnaire to complete and return. Key stakeholders were also contacted by email and invited to comment.
- 3.7.2 384 householders had used the service in 2019/20 and were sent a letter explaining the proposal and a paper questionnaire to complete and return in a freepost envelope. Alternative formats and support was offered including; completing the questionnaire online, completing it over the phone with support from multi-lingual Early Help Officers / translation service, as well as other formats on request.
- 3.7.3 Consultation on the re-location of the Family Hub commenced 9 November 2020, closing on 7 December 2020. CGL were asked and encouraged to share and promote the consultation with parents on our behalf. By the closing date 24 households and 5 stakeholders had responded.

Feedback from CGL service users

- 3.7.4 Demographic questions were voluntary and a full break down of demographics is available separately. Results show that of the parents/carers that responded, most respondents were female (22), many were of Asian ethnicity (11), a small cohort were single parents (4), were aged between 27 and 50. The majority (14) lived within the WS1 postcode area with (7) living in WS2 and between them had 16 children with the highest proportion being of preschool age (8).
- 3.7.5 With regards to disability, households were asked to state if they, their partner or child had any disability/additional needs. Four parents/carers identified themselves as having a disability/illness, seven identified their children as having a disability/illness and 4 identified their partner as having a disability/illness.
- 3.7.6 Most reported their child having a learning disability (5) and / or a behaviour / development issues (5). 3 had a mental health condition.

3.7.7 Of the 24 households that responded, there was an equal split of those using the Family Hub, with 11 (50%) utilising more than one service available;

- Early Years Support (7)
- Parenting Support/Programmes (7)
- Health Services, key stakeholder partners including Midwifery Support, Health Visitor Sessions, School Nursing and Speech & Language services (7) (key stakeholder partners)
- Early Help One to One Support (7)

3.7.8 When asked what is most important to them, the majority (15) said the location, followed closely by the staff (13) and the support provided by the staff (10).

3.7.9 Respondents were specifically asked what impact, if any, the relocation of the service might have on them / their children. Comments highlighted some concerns about the distance of the proposed location from the existing Family Hub, a few raised concerns about free local parking and one alternative suggestion made.

No concerns personally -

“Not a great deal as I would have to use either a bus or car to attend and continue using the service”

“No impact on me personally but I know a lot of my friends will not be able to make Birchills as they walk to the current location”

Distance a concern -

“A bus to Bradford Street and then walking to the wharf. Not convenient”

“It will be difficult to get to - no available transport”

“Unfortunately, I would not be able to attend in Birchills as it is too far to walk, I have 3 kids and it would not be worth it to get a bus just for a session that will be one hour & half”

“It is way too far to attend. The price of the bus fare time restrictions to get there and back for other school runs. Been on the door step, they are always there to support straight away. I could not afford the travel there & back to Birchills”

“The location, will be far”

“I don't have transport so wouldn't be able to attend sessions elsewhere. It would mean myself & my children have fewer socialisation opportunities but ultimately I'm concerned it would hinder my children's development (i.e. weight checks , no play groups)”

3.7.10 Alternative suggestion / general observation -

“Devastating, you have the old Palfrey nursery site available for use.”

“The community will lose a great service as located building which currently (prior to COVID) is easy to access”

“I think it’s a shame to move this service from Palfrey”

3.7.11 In terms of adverse impact, 10 parents/carers said they did not feel this proposal would adversely affect them, however, some went on to comment;

“There is very limited provision in Walsall for pre-school aged children and believe closing this centre will be detrimental for children in the community”

“No, but too far to travel”.

“I think by taking away South Street, you will effect a wide community of people. Everyone, of any race, ethnicity or gender is truly welcome. Everyone is treated the same, regardless of social status. A move the centre you will be isolating a lot of community who are pressured into not being sociable. The centre has done wonders to breakdown OUTDATED beliefs”

“Not having a car, I feel it’s unfair these services will not be accessible to me if moved to Birchills”.

3.7.12 Overall half of all parents/carers said that they would carry on using the service at the proposed location (12 parents/carers). 7 said they would find similar services within the local area and 5 said they would stop attending. Of the 5 who stated they would stop attending, all said they utilised the Early Years Support and Parenting Workshops available.

3.7.13 Whilst some parents / carers have reservations about the proposed relocation of the service, none raise any major concerns or adverse impacts.

Feedback from key stakeholders

3.7.14 The following stakeholders responded to the consultation;

- Kids an organisation that delivers the Cygnet programme, stay and play groups for children with SEND and holiday activities families.
- The Black Country Telford and Wrekin Independent Visitor Service support looked after children and young people through the recruitment of volunteers who are then trained to go on to become an Independent Visitor.
- The Speech and Language Service
- School Nursing Service and

- Black Country Impact project who offer support and advice to help young people find work.

3.7.15 The majority of the stakeholders who responded were pleased that the services will be continuing and that a potential relocation would not affect their service delivery or service users.

The Kids Organisation

3.7.16 The Kids organisation raised a concern around the accessibility of a potential new venue/building and the need for parking facilities close by in particular for families with disabled children.

“In terms of location of the building itself the KIDS staff do not feel this would be an issue in terms of them being able to access it for work. There is a concern as to how families will be able to access this building, particularly those with disabled children who require parking facilities close to the building.”

The Speech and Language service

3.7.17 The Speech and Language service were supportive of the service overall but did have reservations about the service relocating.

“We have always recognised the importance of being part of the services provided to the communities across Walsall through the children centre settings. It is a great privilege to be part of such a valuable service to the community and to work alongside the multi-disciplinary teams to be able to access all the diverse needs of our families”

3.7.18 They did share some reservations about losing a community base in the Palfrey area and access to services that are close to where families in need live.

“Lots of our families find it very difficult to access services that are not close to where they live and struggle to meet their children’s needs if they are not able to attend their appointments.”

“The staff at the Central and South Family Hub are very effective at building strong relationships with the families and support them to attend appointments, overcoming personal circumstances that prevent them from doing this.”

3.7.19 The Speech and Language service appreciate that a relocation would potentially provide greater opportunities for joint working as part of a multi-disciplinary team.

“...the Birchills premises will provide greater opportunities for co-location of services and joint working.”

The Independent Visitor Service

3.7.20 The Independent Visitor Service was disappointed to hear about the potential relocation, as they felt the current central location is easily accessible by public transport allowing them to operate within 4 Local Authority areas, the building is well resourced, equipped and provides a pleasant learning environment for new volunteers.

“We were surprised and disappointed to hear the news about the relocation proposal. As a service we are facing the ongoing challenges this year has brought and we are working very hard to maintain the level of support our young people require.”

3.7.21 They felt that a potential move may affect the recruitment, training and retention of volunteers, specifically that they may have to spend additional time and funds sourcing alternative venues with facilities for training and interviewing. They have been reassured that the potential new locality hub is closer to the town centre and will still be available for their use.

“Our volunteers are facing home and work challenges of their own and so we are equally keen to ensure we offer them a very positive and supportive volunteering experience with us.”

“Loss of facilities that enable the recruitment of volunteers to take place effectively – interview rooms, printer / scanners, parking, ease with which centre rooms can be booked.”

“Additional time to travel to other venues, sourcing other venues e.g. training and interviews, facilities, booking appropriate rooms for training.”

“Losing the facility would be an impact on our budget as its very tight”.

“Changes to the literative, postal address, alternative training venue, costs attached to that.”

School Nurse Service

3.7.22 The School Nurse Service advised they were;

“Happy for relocation to be considered and south to be taken in house. Our relationship with CGL has never been as straight forward or productive as with rest of localities”.

Impact Service

3.7.23 Impact Service advised;

“There are some changes coming up for us also, however for the time being we are still very much receiving referrals from CGL staff and will continue to do so. From my point of view, the change in location will not affect the work that we do”.

3.7.24 Overall stakeholders are supportive of the proposed relocation of the service and although note that for some it will be further to travel, none raise any major concerns.

3.8 **P2: Finance – Adult Social Care Client Care Team – introduce charge for appointeeship management / support**

3.8.1 As a 2022/23 saving full and detailed consultation will take place at a later date. Initial feedback has been collected. 30 people commented on this proposal. Of those that answered the questions about them, most respondents (21) were aged over 35 and slightly more females than males commented on this proposal (54% female responses).

*Overall opinion following consultation: **Divided.***

3.8.2 Overall 53% (16) people did not support this proposal and a further 10% (3) supporting but with concerns / amendments. 11 people (37%) supported the proposal.

How might this proposal affect you?

3.8.3 No respondents indicated an impact to them directly but two referenced it having an impact on family members.

3.8.4 Although it is not clear if respondents use the service or know someone who does, some comments raised concerns regarding the ability to pay.

“This has to be means tested for those on benefits. Many vulnerable people living in supported living or care who are on benefits will struggle to pay £7 a week.”

“My disabled daughter who will be on benefits would struggle to pay £7 a week.”

Alternative suggestions for how this saving could be made or income generated

3.8.5 No service related alternative suggestions were made.

3.9 **P3: Finance – Adult Social Care Client Care Team – introduce charging for administration of deaths of appointees**

- 3.9.1 As a 2022/23 saving, full and detailed consultation will take place at a later date. Initial feedback has been collected. 28 people commented on this proposal. Of those that answered the questions about them most respondents (20) were aged over 35 and slightly more females than males commented on this proposal (52% female responses).

*Overall opinion following consultation: **Against.***

- 3.9.2 Overall 61% (17) people did not support this proposal and a further 11% (3) supporting but with concerns / amendments. 8 people (29%) supported the proposal.

How might this proposal affect you?

- 3.9.3 Comments highlight concern regarding ability to pay and how the fee is calculated / applied.

“Is this a means tested charge? Unfair if hardworking people who pay council tax, have to pay for leisure use, and any other payment where means testing stops non-working persons from being charged or paying. Further information required.”

“The estates of some people who have appointees might be very small and family members may struggle to pay funeral costs.”

“Absolutely disgusting how about people that can’t afford to lose that money.”

Alternative suggestions for how this saving could be made or income generated.

- 3.9.4 Alternative suggestions relate to the cost.

“Lower the charge to £150. Only apply to families that cannot do this themselves.”

“Again I feel this must be means tested for those on benefits as with the rising costs of funeral charges they would struggle to pay.”

“Don’t see why direct payments use the middle man (DPSS). Day services fees are far cheaper than a PA.”

3.10 **P9: Charge developers for travel plans**

- 3.10.1 23 people commented on this proposal. Of those that provided demographic information most respondents were aged over 35 and the majority of respondents (61%) that commented on this proposal were male.

*Overall opinion following consultation: **Support.***

3.10.2 Overall 83% (19) people supported this proposal and a further 4% (1) supporting but with concerns / amendments. 3 people did not support the proposal.

How might this proposal affect you?

3.10.3 Comments made reflected that respondents did not feel personally impacted by the proposal but present different perspectives.

“Again, doesn’t affect me directly but large profits made from planning and construction projects should directly pay a cost for any help provided by the local authority.”

“By charging for this it would mean that developers are less likely to take travel plans into account and thus have a negative impact on Walsall residents.”

Alternative suggestions for how this saving could be made or income generated.

3.10.4 No alternative suggestions were made.

3.11 P10: Charge self-funders to arrange care via adult social care commissioners (brokerage service)

3.11.1 33 people commented on this proposal. Of those that provided demographic information most respondents were aged over 35 (24 respondents) and the majority of respondents (52%) that commented on this proposal were female.

*Overall opinion following consultation: **Divided.***

3.11.2 Overall 52% (19) people did not support this proposal. Whilst 36% (12) respondents indicated they fully supported the proposal a further 12% (4) supported but with concerns / amendments.

How might this proposal affect you?

3.11.3 Comments made were generally negative about the proposal and the impact it may have on those affected.

“Appalling idea, unfair bias towards hardworking people who have paid into a system whereas others haven’t tried or wanted to.”

“Charging for a request to change a care provider may mean that some people will be stuck with unsuitable care. They may be reluctant to change provide due to the cost.”

3.11.4 There were also comments relating to the proposed cost.

“These costs must be reasonable.”

“Lower the fees. I agree in principle but it seems too high.”

“There are enough costs involved and I feel that these are not reasonable costs especially as what little they are saving.”

Alternative suggestions for how this saving could be made or income generated

3.11.5 A variety of alternative proposals were suggested.

“Reduce or remove free use of leisure services to unemployed. There must be a processing cost and wear and tear cost.”

“Look at cutting the packages of people who are claiming too many hours that are paid for by local authorities.”

“Charge individual and care provided equally.”

“Look elsewhere for savings such as the heating in the civic centre or the Enabling Technology as I’m sure costs could be saved here instead.”

3.12 P11: Introduce council tax penalty charges for falling to notify a change of circumstance

3.12.1 Although this is listed as a policy proposal, under Council Tax legislation there is no legal requirement to consult on this issue, however as a policy proposal it has been included as part of budget consultation.

3.12.2 38 people commented on this proposal. Of those that provided demographic information most respondents were aged over 35 and the majority of respondents (59%) that commented on this proposal were male.

*Overall opinion following consultation: **Support.***

3.12.3 Overall 68% (26) people supported this proposal and a further 13% (5) supporting but with concerns / amendments. 7 people (18%) do not support it.

How might this proposal affect you?

3.12.4 Comments made reflected the opinions of respondents rather than any actual impact on them personally.

“This does not affect me directly but I support this because residents should ensure that the council has full information as it affects their council tax liabilities.”

“Might annoy me less with people getting away with it.”

“If the current situation has impacted the council budget it has certainly effected households much more! Increase in council tax and introducing penalties is being absolutely inconsiderate of circumstances.”

Alternative suggestions for how this saving could be made or income generated.

3.12.5 Alternative suggestions made were connected to council tax.

“Examine other areas around the collection of council tax that could raise more revenue and deter late or non-payment, in addition to this proposal.”

“Follow up none payment of Council Tax and stop letting the same people off.”

“This is a good idea but must be well advertised as a policy change and not apply to vulnerable groups,”

3.13 P13: Consider ceasing pest and animal control service

3.13.1 39 people commented on this proposal. Of those that provided demographic information most respondents (28) were aged over 35 and the majority of respondents (63%) that commented on this proposal were male.

*Overall opinion following consultation: **Against.***

3.13.2 Overall 51% (20) people do not support this proposal whilst 31% (12) indicated they fully supported the proposal. A further 18% (7) supporting but with concerns / amendments.

How might this proposal affect you?

3.13.3 Comments made highlight concerns about cost and impact on cleanliness in the borough.

“Ceasing this service could bring a surge in prices of alternative providers as there would be less competition. This could mean that people choose not to deal with the pest problems which would create a greater problem.”

“Animal and pest control assists in the cleanliness of the town. I believe the borough will suffer if this service is removed.”

“A service we have used before but would not be able to afford services provide by a private company. In times of increasing poverty this problem is going to get worse.”

3.13.4 Some comments focused on the council’s reputation and responsibilities.

“Alternative providers charge an arm and a leg for their services. The council has a responsibility to ensure people can live safe and without worrying about pests in their houses. If families are struggling with everyday expenses, they cannot afford to pay for such services, especially when they have children who can be affected.”

“The council has more accountability to the public and is therefore trusted by Walsall residents and won’t overcharge unnecessarily and other private companies may not provide the same level of service or have the same accountability if things go wrong. Private companies may also overcharge residents and rip them off.”

“Most people know that they go to the council for these services. If they are no longer available, people might not want to use a private provider and the pest situations will escalate.”

Alternative suggestions for how this saving could be made or income generated.

3.13.5 Alternative suggestions made were connected to costs and charges.

“If the council ensure the local housing providers, i.e. Whg etc. provide deep cleans in between changes of tenancy the other services can then become a cost to the tenant or property owner.”

“Increase the charges to be in-line with alternative providers. Keeping it in house at the council provides resident with the knowledge that they are paying a fair price and are not overcharged.”

“Sell the service correctly, ensure that people know it exists – people I have suggested it to thought it had ceased a long time ago!”

“The service for rat infestations should be free. It is going to get worse. This should be supported by an increase in council tax. It should also be supported by all households not just working families.”

3.14 **P14: Bereavement services – the sale of keepsake memorials and a range of personal memorabilia.**

3.14.1 27 people commented on this proposal. Of those that provided demographic information most respondents were aged over 35 and the majority of respondents (73%) that commented on this proposal were male.

*Overall opinion following consultation: **Support.***

3.14.2 Overall 59% (16) support this proposal whilst 33% (9) indicated they did not support the proposal. A further 7% (2) supporting but with concerns / amendments.

How might this proposal affect you?

3.14.3 Although 59% of respondents indicated support for the proposal, comments made highlighted concerns about quality and competition from existing providers.

“There are already companies that provide this service, it does not generate enough income to make it worth it.”

“This will bring in even less income than the pest control service you wish to scrap. People won’t buy these from the council as it’s normally done from the funeral providers.”

“Just no.”

“The idea seems plausible but the way it is described makes it sound really tacky and inappropriate.”

“Promote it a bit, if done in a tasteful way I believe it could be quite popular.”

Alternative suggestions for how this saving could be made or income generated.

3.14.4 No alternative suggestions were made.

3.15 Thoughts on paying more council tax

3.15.1 As well as specific questions about draft policy and operational proposals, the generic survey sought feedback on paying a bit more council tax. Consultation was conducted before the Autumn Spending Review 2020 (25 November) when the Chancellor announced that local authorities will be able to levy a three per cent adult social care precept. The consultation referenced a potential 1.99% increase in council tax, the maximum allowed before triggering a referendum.

3.15.2 Results show that of the 79 people who responded 40 (51%) feel that paying more council tax would have a big impact on them and 26 (33%) some impact. 11 (14%) felt it would have no impact and 2 people did not know.

3.15.3 Many comments from those who say it would have a big impact on them related to the lack of wage increases in line with increases in council tax.

“My pension doesn’t increase in line with all the bills I have to pay.”

“My wage hasn’t gone up in 5 years yet all my bills have.”

"You call it "a bit more" but wages are not increasing at the same way in which household bills are."

"We're a one income family and the rise in council tax is a big strain on our monthly outgoing's."

"Council Tax has constantly risen much higher than my wages. Because I have a large family and earn average wage I have to pay in full. It is already my largest bill other than food."

3.15.4 Some comments reflect the negative impact Covid-19 has had on their household finances.

"Since COVID we have lost our income through redundancy and it would put us to the bread line if not over it with another increase."

"10% reduction in wages, then have been on 80% of this reduced rate for months then council wants to up bills..."

3.15.5 Amongst respondents who feel an increase would have some impact on them some say that increasing council tax appears to be the easy way to find money and say that more should be done to find savings from within the council.

"At this time, losing more money is never going to be good. This is the easy route though, rather than charge us more why don't you take a good long look at yourselves and what you're doing and make the savings there instead?"

"It appears this is the easiest way to obtain funds, should we not be concentrating on other ways...?"

3.15.6 Some question what they are getting in return.

"I don't feel we are getting value for money. There is no improvement in council services so what are we paying for?"

"As a long-time resident of Walsall I have seen the standard of service drop as the council tax increases. We are all under pressure in a day to day activities to get the maximum value and increase efficiency. Many of us now expect little of WMBC and this low expectation appears to have been validated by many, many years of experience.....It's quite simple really, we pay you to provide services, if you are unable to achieve these services then say so and give a valid reason why."

3.15.7 Others feel a small increase would have no impact on them and are more open to an increase.

"45p a week is not a massive increase and if it results in better service provision then I am for it."

“The increase would be minimal and would be no different than the large increase in the WMP precept levied this year. If charging more can secure services, or perhaps even increase some, then it is a price worth paying. It's no good residents complaining about reduction in services without being willing to pay more - either in Council Tax or other taxes.”

“Even for band C it's only just over £2.50 per month, the price of a coffee (that we're not allowed to buy)”.

3.16 Statutory consultation on the draft budget and council tax

3.16.1 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 consulted on the current and preceding years' expenditure proposals, as well as the proposed council tax increase for 2021/22.

3.16.2 On 17 December, emails outlining the draft budget and explaining the adult social care precept were distributed electronically to 3,199 businesses and 734 community and voluntary organisations (One Walsall CVS network). As well as providing a link where further information could be found the email invited people to have their say via an online form.

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

3.16.4 By the final closing date of 7 January 2021, 4 responses had been received. 3 responses were from residents and 1 from a housing association. 2 residents fully supported a 1.99% increase and 1 did not support it. One suggested that the increase should be used to help support the vulnerable.

“We need to support those elderly/disabled more.”

3.16.5 The resident who did not support a 1.99% increase in council tax said;

“The current premium is already higher than other local authorities in the same bandings.” And that “Any increase is hard to take in the current economic climate.”

3.16.6 One resident supported a 4.99% increase (inclusive of 3% precept for adult social care), whilst 2 did not support it.

“Massive increase on top of other essential utility bills. A lot more than inflation and the increase in the average salary.”

3.16.7 Whg (housing association) supported a 1.99% increase but with concerns / amendments and made the following comment;

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

“Our community is already financially deprived with many families struggling to feed themselves or heat their homes. We have seen record rises in the number of people using the food bank and new claimants of Universal Credit. The economic situation is still very difficult and it is expected to remain so for a long time. The government’s furlough scheme is due to end and we should expect further economic deprivation and hardship as a result. Any increase in council tax is only going to add to the pressure felt by our communities and will push some families into further hardship.”

Section A - Part 3 – Budget proposals 2021/22 – assessing equality impact

- 1.0 Cabinet, on 28 October 2020 (*Draft Revenue Budget 2021/22-2023/24 and in-year Position 2020/21*) agreed a summary of new revenue policy savings for consultation. All managers responsible for policy proposals, and operational proposals with the confirmed requirement for EqIA, were requested to carry out an assessment.
- 1.1 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

Information required in the EqIA

- 1.2 An 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.

What course of action does the EqIA suggest?

- 1.3 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

- 1.4 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

- 1.5 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

- 1.6 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

- 1.7 When an EqlA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination and needs to be reviewed immediately.
- 1.8 17 policy proposals for 2021/22 were considered for their impact on protected characteristic groups. Following consultation and feedback analysis, policy proposals had an equality screening resulting in a number not requiring further assessment as there was no perceived impact on protected characteristics. However, 6 policy proposals were required to undergo in-depth Policies, Procedures and Services (PPS) EqlA.
- 1.9 In addition, operational proposals were considered for equality impact and 48 will require an assessment prior to implementation, however, these largely do not impact on residents or members of public and are concerned with internal efficiencies. A summary of this work is briefly referred to in the sections Emerging Technology and Proud Programme.
- 1.10 The table below shows the emerging outcomes for the assessed policy proposals.

Ref	Decision	Number of EqlAs
A	No major change required – implement	0
B	Adjustments needed to mitigate adverse impact	5 - 3 relate to

	and to better promote equality – adjustments implemented	2022/23 and will be subject to further review
C	Continue despite possible adverse impact – action plan in place and monitoring undertaken	1
D	Stop and rethink the proposal	0

1.11 The EqlAs that resulted in B or C outcomes are further reviewed by the Equality and Diversity team and considered by Cabinet members, giving 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.

In-depth Analysis of the 2021/22 Policy Proposals

1.12 The policy proposals for implementation in 2021/22 were reviewed as follows:

Ref Number	Proposal	EqlA Decision	Update/ Comments
P1	Change, Grow, Live Contract – bring service back in house.	C	EqlA identified negative impact on a group of children and young people with either a disability or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). As a mitigation it was agreed that the children will continue to receive support within their home, school or new location. In addition a proportion of parents/carers currently using the service have a disability or illness. As a mitigation the parents will be receiving Early Help one to one dedicated support. This support will be offered within their own home and where internet access is available all parenting courses will be also online.
P2	Finance - Adult Social Care Client Care Team - introduce charge for appointeeship management / support	B 2022/23 proposal	Initial assessment undertaken suggesting adjustments are needed to mitigate adverse impact and to better promote equality - adjustments will be identified and implemented and the EqlA updated in 2021 in advance of the 2022/23 budget setting cycle.
P3	Finance - Adult Social Care Client Care Team - introduce charging for administration of deaths for appointees	B 2022/23 proposal	Initial assessment undertaken suggesting adjustments are needed to mitigate adverse impact and to better promote equality - adjustments will be identified and implemented and the EqlA updated in 2021 in advance of the 2022/23 budget setting cycle.
P4	Organisational redesign to deliver Intelligent Client Model across Asset Management, Capital Projects and Facilities Management	Not Required	No perceived impact on protected characteristics.

P5	Redesign of Occupational Health contract	B	EqIA identified potential negative impact for employees with disability related conditions, pregnant women and older employees seeking specialist advice on reasonable adjustments. Mitigation includes better communication and training for managers about OH referral thresholds and providing more detailed HR advice on reasonable adjustments. Consultation with Trade Unions is currently ongoing.
P6	Re-profile the highway maintenance mainstream budget for 2021/22	Not required	No perceived impact on protected characteristics.
Ref Number	Proposal	EqIA Decision	Update/ Comments
P7	Increased capitalisation of staff costs	Not required	No perceived impact on protected characteristics.
P8	Increased capitalisation of highway works	Not required	No perceived impact on protected characteristics.
P9	Charge developers for travel plans	Not required	No perceived impact on protected characteristics.
P10	Charge self-funders to arrange care via adult social care commissioners (brokerage service)	N/A	An Eqia will now be undertaken as part of the ASC Charging model review.
P11	Introduce council tax penalty charges for failing to notify a change of circumstance	Not required	No perceived impact on protected characteristics.
P12	Reduction to voluntary organisation	B 2022/23 proposal	Initial assessment undertaken suggesting adjustments are needed to mitigate adverse impact and to better promote equality - adjustments will be identified and implemented and the EqIA updated in 2021 in advance of the 2022/23 budget setting cycle.
P13	Consider ceasing pest and animal control service	B	Whilst there is no clear impact on protected characteristics, the project will continue to review any possible adverse impacts as the council approaches implementation. This will include a review of low income pockets in Walsall to determine any possible link between low income and any protected characteristic. The Equality team will monitor this action.
P14	Bereavement services – the sale of keepsake memorials and a range of personal memorabilia	Not required	No perceived impact on protected characteristics.
P15	Finance - change to	Not	No perceived impact on protected characteristics.

	minimum revenue provision	required	
P16	Biodiversity	Not required	No perceived impact on protected characteristics.
P17	Active Living Centres - External marketing & promotion partnership development	Not required	No perceived impact on protected characteristics.

2.0 Summary of findings from the Cumulative EqIA (including organisational change)

2.1 As well as policy proposals there are 104 operational proposals in relation to 2021/22 and 2022/23 relating to operational changes such as staffing restructures, the use of new technology and new ways of working. Most operational proposals do not impact directly on the public as the changes are 'behind the scenes' however they may introduce new way of working or change current systems and processes.

2.2 While the operational proposals are savings that the service can decide to implement and they do not require Cabinet approval or formal consultation, the proposal owners were required to consider equality impact of these changes in 91 of the proposals. Some of the emerging trends have been summarised as follows:

Emerging Technology

2.3 Equality, diversity and inclusion in the workforce leads to more innovation, more opportunities for all, better access to talent, and better business performance. Therefore, emerging technology offers opportunities to train people to harness new ways of working, promote equality, diversity and inclusion, and learn new skills for the digital age. We carried out several organisational change EqIAs linked to organisational change budget proposals 2021/22. These assessments relate to technological advances within services. Digital transformation can support equality and diversity by designing in these requirements right at the start of any new process or service design.

2.4 The tech industry is arguably one of the biggest drivers of social innovation, so championing change around the perception of women in the workplace should probably come as second nature. However, globally, the tech industry has a long way to go in closing the skills gap, as well as the perception gap around women in technical and leadership roles.

2.5 People with disabilities should also benefit from emerging technology. Inclusive approaches will ensure that such technology makes a difference in the lives of all potential users. Technology can lower barriers that people with disabilities encounter in their daily and working lives, such as speaking, travelling, reading, and writing. It can allow 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.

2.6 We will also see new technology being utilised for Members, as paperless meetings will become the norm, in due course. This will be monitored for impact on anyone with a disability.

3.0 Proud Programme

3.1 The work of the Walsall Proud Programme can be seen in a number of proposals, particularly around efficiencies arising from the reviews and consolidation of administration and business support functions across the council into a single hub and with the customer access management (CAM) programme. The latter will see a link into emerging technology. Both of these areas are subject to consultation, but it is clear that we will be seeing redesign in the services we provide, internally and externally, that will impact on people with protected characteristics. Improving customer experience is at the heart of the Proud Programme and, as such, the council is developing ways of working that meet customer expectations and reflect changing demands for the future. Through CAM, the council has embarked on a programme of work in relation to how customers contact us and access the council's services. This will deliver significant improvements to customer experience, outcomes and efficiencies across the whole council, whilst increasing accessibility and convenience for customers, including through the use of digital channels.

4.0 Impact of those with disabilities and mental health conditions

4.1 OP 81 - Concessionary "Move It" leisure scheme annual fee increase - The eligibility criteria for accessing the Move It scheme is:

- Over 60 years old;
- Household income of under £18,500;
- Having a medical condition that a GP has advised would benefit from increased physical activity;
- Have been advised by a health professional that future health is at significant risk due to excess weight;
- Full time student;
- Being a parent of a junior who meets any of the above criteria.

4.2 The increase in fees, whilst not exorbitant, could have a direct impact on people with health conditions, those overweight, as well as Students and Carers. This is notwithstanding the potential to impact on people over 65 and those with disabilities. Consultation demonstrated a general acceptance that fees may need to be increased, whilst acknowledging possible adverse effect. Subsequently, the Service will be continuing to review the impact of these

change upon implementation and will also be monitoring the uptake on subscriptions.

5.0 Parents and carers of children and youth with disabilities

- 5.1 Efficiencies within the Parenting Team - Over the past 12 months Early Help has been reviewing the parenting programme, methods of delivery and impact, with the recent Covid-19 situation the adaptive ways of delivery has also encouraged the overall reflection, taking on board 'self-help tools' virtual delivery, on line courses and 121 direct intervention. Parents/carers with disabilities or who have children with disabilities or additional SEND needs will be offered a range of interventions and ways to attend the parenting/information and training awareness sessions to suit individual needs.
- 5.2 Review of Black Country Women's Aid contract - The Proud programme plans set out a number of key developments which will need to be considered to inform the future commissioning of Domestic Abuse services, as well as a number of wider partnership developments to inform the future commissioning of a Children's Services funded DV provision. Currently going through consultation, this may have an implication on sex and will be monitored to ensure any negative impact is mitigated.

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

- 6.1 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. In order to make part year savings in 2021/2022, it is proposed that the council take on the delivery of these services with staff transferring. Whilst there would be no change to service provision, the service will need 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.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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.

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

6.5 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.

7.0 **Workforce impact – older age, pregnancy and disabled employees**

7.1 Another policy proposal that identified potential adverse impact in relation to workforce was the Occupational health contract (P5), proposing some changes to the criteria for occupational health referrals.

7.2 The initial EqIA showed a negative effect in relation several protected characteristics, including:

- older employees to be adversely impacted by inability to access OH service (i.e. for conditions more likely to affect older employees) or fore 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.

7.3 The mitigation action plan includes guidance for managers/employees and HR confirming the criteria to be used for OH referral threshold. Managers should ensure that they give full consideration as to whether the case meets OH threshold criteria and to discuss with Senior HR Advisor if 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.

7.4 Alternative formats (audio and Easy Read) for disabled employees will be made available on request. Liaison will also be as required with the appropriate Council procured services; audio formats from Walsall Society for the Blind and Easy Read from the Community, Equality and Cohesion team, via the ITTE service.

7.5 P2 - Adult Social Care Client Care Team - introduce charge for appointeeship management / support and P3 - Adult Social Care Client Care Team - introduce charging for administration of deaths for appointees; are 2022/23 proposals and further consultation and equality impact assessment will be carried out prior to consideration for implementation as part of the 2022/23 budget setting cycle.

7.6 P12 (Reduction to voluntary organisation) has submitted an initial EqIA as a year 2 (2022/23) proposal. Initial suggestions are that the proposal will provide a neutral impact, as the focus of savings will be on non-added value activities or

activities delivered through other sources. However, this will be confirmed following further consultation, particularly with One Walsall.

- 7.7 P13 (Consider ceasing pest and animal control service) - Whilst there is no clear impact on protected characteristics, the project will continue to review any possible adverse impacts as the Council approaches implementation. From the consultation, this will include a review of low income pockets in Walsall to determine any possible link between low income and any protected characteristic. The Equality team will monitor this action.

8.0 Ongoing EqlAs and implementation

- 8.1 EqlAs are live processes that continue to be updated and monitored during the budget considerations as well as during the implementation. Some will not have completed full consultation and engagement. The Equalities team has engaged with proposal holders and are working with them and their proposals to ensure that equality is being considered throughout the process. An update will be provided for the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Corporate Equality Group (CEG) quarterly.

9.0 Equalities Monitoring Process

- 9.1 Findings from the cumulative impact assessments and corrective actions are monitored quarterly by Equality Champions, Departmental management teams, CMT and CEG where updates will be provided as appropriate.
- 9.2 The Equality team will carefully consider the full impact of all EqlAs, particularly those linked to the Proud Programme and Technological changes introduced, with the support of CMT and CEG. 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 CEG and reports provided to Cabinet/CMT as required.