

Cumulative Equalities Assessment: Budget Proposals 2023/24

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this equality assessment is to provide an analysis of the likely impact of the council's budget savings proposals on residents and community groups with 'protected characteristics' as defined by the Equality Act 2010. The nine protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership¹, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity. Section 149, Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) of the Equality Act 2010 requires the council in the exercise of its functions to have regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the act;
2. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not;
3. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

Whilst not a statutory requirement, it is our policy that where relevant an equality analysis should also cover socio-economic equality implications.

The council is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion. It seeks to ensure that all residents, employees and stakeholders are treated fairly and receive appropriate, accessible services and fair and equal opportunities. This commitment requires that equality considerations play a key role in our decision making processes; and in understanding the effect of our policies and practices.

Approach to considering equalities

The budget savings proposals have all been subject to an Equality Analysis (EA) screening, which helps to establish their relevance to the council's equalities duties and determine whether or not a full EA is required. The screening assesses the potential or likely impact on service users and employees with protected characteristics. Guidance issued to all officers on how to undertake an EA, provides that a full EA will not be required if it is clearly demonstrated that there will be no negative equality impacts. However, EAs are living documents

¹ Bullet point 2 and 3 does not apply to marriage and civil partnerships.

and if - as projects/proposals develop and further evidence of impacts becomes available – any unforeseen impacts emerge, they should be reviewed.

This document highlights the equality impacts for the 2023-24 budget proposals. Individual EA screenings for each proposal and full Equality Analyses are attached.

Nine proposals have been identified as requiring a full EA. The equality impacts concerned with these proposals are summarised in this report. The council must carefully consider and have regard to the impact of its savings proposals on the PSED; and take a reasonable and proportionate view regarding the overall impact and seek to mitigate impacts where possible.

Overall Assessment

No direct discrimination has been identified as a result of the budget proposals. A small proportion of the savings proposals may have a negative impact on equality of opportunity and may have a negative impact on opportunities to promote good relations, however measures have been identified to offset this.

These impacts will be kept under review. The proposed budget saving proposals are considered reasonable and have shown due regard to the PSED.

2 DEMOGRAPHY OVERVIEW

Key facts about Brent's demographic profile are taken from the data sources [Population change in Brent](#) and the [Equality profile of Brent](#). They show the make-up of the borough, help us to identify potential impacts; and identify the increasing pressures and demand for council services. Please note that some of this information will be updated when final data sets are available from the Census 2021.

- Brent is home to around 335,300 residents and is the seventh largest borough in London.
- The borough has a population density of 7,652 people per square kilometre – the 14th highest density in England, and the highest in Outer London.
- Brent has high levels of population churn: in 2017-18, 32,600 people moved into the borough and 34,000 moved out – a turnover rate of 201 per 1000 population – 24th highest out of 317 areas in England, and second highest across Outer London.

- Brent's population increased by 27% between 1998-2018. In recent years, the borough's population change has been driven, primarily, by natural change (more births than deaths) as opposed to net migration. The birth rate has fallen over the year but remains well above the national average.
- Projections indicate that this pace of growth is set to continue: the population is expected to rise by a further 25% by 2041, faster than the London average (22%) and more than double the England average (10%). If realised, this would equate to an additional 84,800 residents by 2041.
- In line with national trends, the population is ageing: by 2041, the number of Brent residents aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 85% – an additional 34,900 older residents by 2041. The child population is also expected to grow, albeit more slowly, by 12% by 2041 (+8,600 children).
- Population growth will be concentrated in the areas where significant housing development is planned. The wards of Tokyngton and Alperton are expected to see the fastest growth: considered together, they are projected to accommodate an additional 47,600 residents by 2041.

A summary of the key protected characteristics in Brent are as follows:

Age

- Brent has a relatively young population. In 2018, the median age of the population was 35 in Brent, the same as in London, but five years lower than the national average (40 years, England). In Brent, 29% of the population is aged over 50 compared with 37% across England. Conversely, 39% of the borough's population is aged 25-49 compared with 33% in England. Brent has a higher proportion of children aged under ten compared with England (14% vs. 12%). The population has been ageing in recent years and this is expected to continue.

Disability

- Around one in seven Brent residents have a long-term health problem or disability that limits their day-to-day-activities in some way. The prevalence of disability rises sharply with age: more than half of all residents aged 65 and over had a long-term health problem or

disability.

Gender reassignment

- The Government Equalities Office tentatively estimates that around 0.3-0.8% of the UK population are transgender. In Brent, this would equate to between 1,000 to 2,500 people. Since the Gender Recognition Act came into force, only a small minority have obtained a Gender Recognition Certificate: 0.007% of the UK population (4,910 people across the UK since 2005).

Marriage and civil partnership

- In 2015, 960 marriages or civil partnerships took place in Brent – of these, 29 (3%) were same sex marriages or civil partnerships, the same as the percentage nationally but lower than the percentage in London (5%).

Pregnancy and maternity

- Brent has relatively high birth rates. In 2018, there were 4,705 births in Brent – which equates to 68.1 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 – well above the national rate (59.2). Three quarters of all births in Brent were to women born outside the UK (75%) – this is the highest rate in England and Wales, reflecting the diversity of the borough's population.

Race

- Two thirds (67%) of the Brent population are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. Brent's largest single ethnic group is the Indian population – who comprise 17% of residents – the fourth largest in London. Brent is the second most ethnically diverse borough in London, after Newham (according to the Simpson's Diversity Index).

Religion or belief

- The borough's three largest religious groups are Christian (41%), Muslim (19%) and Hindu (18%). Overall, 82% of residents had a religion – the fourth highest rate in England and Wales. The borough has the second largest Hindu population in England and Wales, and the 10th largest Muslim population (as a percentage of the population).

Sex

- The gender split in the population is 51% male and 49% female. The proportion of men is highest in the 20-34 age group where they comprise 54% of the population. In contrast, women make up a higher proportion of the Borough's elderly population: 62% of those aged 85 and over are female.

Sexual orientation

- Statistics about the size of the LGB population vary considerably and there is no single widely accepted measure. The 2017 GP Patient Survey found that 4.6% of Brent residents surveyed identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or 'Other' – below the London average (5.4%) but above the national rate (3.3%). Figures from the 2017 Annual Population Survey provide lower estimates for both London and England (3.2% and 2.6%).

3 IMPACT OF SAVING PROPOSALS

Summary 23/24 budget proposals

Although initial equality screenings have been undertaken to ascertain impact in terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), some of the proposals are in their formative stages and still to be developed or are subject to consultations. Consequently, as the proposals are developed further equality analysis will be undertaken to assess the PSED. It is important to note that several of the proposals have identified no impact on the PSED. Where a full equality impact assessment has been carried out, this is noted next to the proposal.

The proposals are:

AH01: Homecare Reductions: Post Covid increases in homecare, driven by increased need and hospital discharge, introduce new reablement service and reduce double handed care packages to manage demand and increase independence.

AH02: Not in-sourcing Reablement: Commission a reablement service through the market, which will deliver the same benefit for residents and for demand but will cost substantially less to deliver than bringing the service in house

AH03: Reduction in cost of Learning Disability Placements: Proposal to support more people with a Learning Disability to live as independently as possible and to continue to reduce Residential Placements

AH04: Extra Care Void Saving: Reduce the number of care home placements, reversing the increase driven by health during Covid, re-focusing on extra care placements filling voids and new extra care schemes as alternatives that promote more independence

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken reviewing all levels of support highlighted in AH01 - AHO4

AH05: Mental Health Placements : Working closely with housing and secondary MH services to improve the recovery pathway post Covid, in particular reducing supported living placements and increased access to General Needs accommodation

AH06: Reductions in Staffing: Deliver the plan to increase the number of permanent staff in a very challenging recruitment market and reduce the Adult Social Care agency staffing

AH07: Digital / Transformation Savings - online forms, single view dashboards, integration of applications with Mosaic, assistive technology, electronic document management, Direct payments automation and reduction in overpayments; and potential for increased alignment with CYP DP team. Automation of manual case review processes

CYP01: Early Help: Savings proposals will be a combination of establishment savings achieved by deleting posts and reducing some commissioned services

CYP02: Inclusion and Virtual School: Reducing the Supporting Young People Contract, ('Connexions'). **A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken**

CYP03: Localities - Care Packages reduction: Care package reductions for families receiving support from the 0-25 children and young people with disabilities teams. **A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken**

CYP05: Looked after Children and Permanency: Review of agency worker usage and implementation of a vacancy factor. **A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken**

CYP06: Forward Planning Performance & Partnerships: Proposed savings will be made through the commissioning of placements for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

CYP07: Safeguarding and Quality Assurance: Savings will be made through the management of vacant posts and a reduction of the CYP training budget. **A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken**

CYP08: Setting and School Effectiveness: Proposed savings will be made by a reduction in staffing costs within the core school effectiveness team

CYP09: Digital / Transformation Savings: Admin - case management, RPA, Mosaic enhancement (alerts), electronic document management, removing manual processes and excel. Schools' admissions chatbots/virtual agents. Direct payments automation and reduction in overpayments; potential for increased alignment with ASC DP team. CAMS dashboard

CR01: Planning Service Staff: Reduce planning staff by 5% (3.5 FTE) achieved by natural turnover/deletion of vacant posts. Would impact ability to provide planning service and policy framework

CR02: Brent Works / Brent Start: Proposal to combine advisors across both Brent Start and Brent Works via turnover / vacancy management

CR03: Brent Start Programme Leader: Proposal to merge a position with another programme to delete this provision in Brent Start via vacancy management

CR04: Regeneration Capitalisation: Opportunity for further capitalisation for 4 years, whilst Wembley housing zone schemes are built

CR05: Town Centre managers: Reduction of one Town Centre manager

CR06: Strategy & Engagement restructure: Reduction in IAG Contract. Non appointment of new posts identified in the new structure

CR07: Communications restructure: Reduce the cost of Communications by moving to a business partnering model

CR08: Digital / Transformation Savings: Automation, chatbot, virtual agents. Dashboards for contract monitoring and demand management. Any changes to structures, alignment and commissioned services from Employment and Skills OBR. IoT e.g., potholes, better tech for field officers (Powerapps) to increase efficiency.

RS01: Removal of first class envelopes from the Civic Centre: Removal of first class envelopes from Civic Centre to reduce postage spends. First class postage will remain available in the Post Room but only for those requiring first class postage

RS02: Staffing changes: Staffing changes across the Improvement & Performance Team and the Digital Post Room teams. Duties to be covered by existing staff once re-evaluation of JD's and staff consultation has been carried out

RS03: IEG and Resilience contract reduction & Staffing reductions due to systems automation: Reduction in the usage of the Resilience contract and creation of in house applications to replace IEG

RS04: Online diary and reporting system and booking citizenship ceremonies: Online diary and reporting system equivalent to current product bought in house use of corporate. Online booking Citizenship ceremonies incorporating facility for payment for private ceremonies

RS05: Staff reorganisation: Staff reorganisation in the Revenue & Debt team

RS06: Reduction in licensing, corporate printing, supplies and services, delivery of ICT roadmap, staffing. Reduction in licensing spend through applications rationalisation; Reduction in corporate printing spend through continued move to digital options; Reduction in ICT and Transformation supplies and services spend; Reduction in Brent's contribution to the shared ICT service through realisation of savings through delivery of roadmap projects; Reduction in staffing in Transformation service

RS07: Digital / Transformation Savings: Online forms, chatbot/virtual agent, RPA, further reduction in print, aligning systems

RS08: Libraries stock: Reduction in Libraries stock budget

RS09: Increase Council Owned Temporary Accommodation Portfolio: Build a new Temporary Accommodation scheme of up to 100 units (similar to Anansi House), providing better quality and more affordable accommodation for people who would otherwise be in private sector nightly paid accommodation

RS11: Increase portfolio of Council Managed Temporary Accommodation (TA)

RS12: Street Light Dimming: Identify areas where lighting levels can be reduced to secure energy cost savings

RS13: Waste disposal – Education and outreach insourcing: Reduction in residual waste stream in order to secure increased recycling rates and reduced waste disposal payments to WLWA

RS14: Review Payments to WLWA: This proposal seeks to recover any over-payment of waste disposal charges made by Brent that may be retained by WLWA and held as reserves by that organisation.

RS15: Increased use of Proceeds Of Crime Act: Subsidise Regulatory Services area with use of POCA income

RS16: RLS related - Environmental Services Review: Environmental Services review staff structures as part of RLS Phase 2 review

RS17: RLS related Review of BTS: Detailed service review, route optimisation and alternative means of transport. **A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken**

RS18: RLS Related - Negotiate RLS cost reduction: Potential to reduce cost as part of RLS competitive dialogue tendering approach

RS19: RLS related - Rationalisation of Environmental service budgets: A rationalisation of the budgets within Environmental Services has taken place in anticipation of the savings required for the RLS project.

FR01: Reduction in staffing: Savings will be made from the creation of a centralised Oracle support function in IT, a proportion of Head of Finance management oversight of master data and systems control is no longer required

FR02: Digital / Transformation Savings: Transformation will enable automation of transactional activity across the whole of the Finance function and improvements in management self-serve as a result of Oracle Cloud enhancements which will deliver savings

FR03: External support for Internal Audit activity: Reduce use of external support to internal audit service

FR04: Civic Centre Office Let: Lease further floors of the Civic Centre to external organisations / tenants to generate revenue

FR05: Increase car park/EVCP charge: Considered feasible to increase civic centre parking charge and also charging rate for EVCP provision without impacting demand.

FR06: Security Service Transformation: Service transformation to be implemented following the detailed review of security provision across all Brent's operational buildings after staff TUPE'D across from the previous out-sourced provider in summer 2021

FR07: Rationalise soft FM service: Rationalising soft FM services (cleaning) to meet reduced portfolio demand

FR08: Commercial Staffing Review: Review capitalisation of staffing costs and replace interims with permanent staff

GOV01: Reduction in staffing via restructure: Proposed savings to be made from reduction in posts and more efficient allocation of tasks

GOV02: Restructures in HR: This saving would introduce a new model for advisory support in HR and reduce the number of advisory posts in HR by one in 2023/24 and by one in 2023/24.

GOV03: Reduce Corporate Learning and Development Budget: Reduction in budget held by HR for Corporate training

GOV04: Administrative and Miscellaneous Efficiencies: Increased advert via LinkedIn for recruitment advertising - reduction in publications

GOV05: Increase income target for recoverable legal work costs: S106 and other third-party income increase

GOV06: Reduce Legal Fees Budget: Reduce the provision in the legal budget for payment of court fees and the costs of advice and representation by barristers in cases brought by or against the council

GOV07: Cessation of DX Postal service: This savings would involve discontinuing use of the legal document exchange service through which documents for the court, barrister's chambers and solicitor's firms are currently sometimes despatched

GOV08: Miscellaneous expenses reduction: Miscellaneous expenses reduction. This saving would remove a budget utilised for unplanned overhead expenses

GOV09: Administrative and Miscellaneous Efficiencies: This proposal concerns aligning salary budgets with the establishment

GOV10: Procurement restructure: Review structure of the Procurement team with overall impact leading to a reduction in the establishment by 1 FTE

GOV11: Digital / Transformation Savings: Electronic document management, further implementation of DocuSign, sharing documents with external parties via M365, chatbots for routine HR and Legal queries

CORP1: Digital / Transformation Savings: Commissioning, Performance and Communications review

CORP4: Procurement savings: To be managed by the Commissioning and Procurement Board. All contracts on pipeline will come to the board to review contract specifications in order to deliver savings

CORP5: CMT Savings: Savings from June 2022 CMT Restructure

CORP6: RLS related - Environment department saving; A rationalisation of the budgets within Environment has taken place in anticipation of the savings required for the RLS project.

Proposals requiring a full equality assessment

The proposed savings look to generate income for the council or have other positive impacts on service users. Few proposals were identified during the screening process as having an anticipated negative impact. Attached to this report are the supporting EA screenings for each savings proposal as well as the full Equality Analysis (the latter of which are summarised below).

AH01: Homecare Reductions; AH03: Reduction in Cost of Learning Disability Placements; AH04: Reduction in Care Home Placements

The proposal outlines a reduction in residential placements, where service users would be moved to supported living or extra care services, increasing independence and tailoring their care and support around their needs. This is in line with Brent's aim to use services that promote independence and choice within care and has formed a fundamental objective of the Brent Supported Living programme.

Initially, service users may experience some negative impact, due to the significant change in the type of care that they are provided as well as the level of care they are given, such as being introduced to different carers, being in a different location and a different way in.

Every change to a package of care is assessed for individually by a qualified professional, trained to understand legislation including the Care Act 2014 and the Equalities Act 2010. Protected characteristics are considered as part of an holistic assessment and if the practitioner is of the opinion that the client requires additional support to manage changes then they will ensure appropriate interventions are put in place to minimise the impact.

However, no negative impact is expected over the long term, as all reablement packages are subject to a personalised assessment of need before they are prescribed and any change to existing services will be subject to an assessment/review of the individual's needs. The service will also be monitored and evaluated regularly to ensure the efficiency of the service.

All moves are done working closely with the person and their family or advocate to live as independently as possible and to continue to reduce Residential Placements.

CYP02: Inclusion and Virtual School: Reducing the Supporting Young People Contract:

It is proposed that savings will be made by a reduction in the contract value of the Supporting Young People Contract ('Connexions') by the value of £80K. The full impact will be mitigated by £40K of education funding (e.g., pupil premium funding) being allocated to the service to enable a dedicated advisor from the provider Prospects to be maintained within Brent Virtual School.

Overall, the contract will continue to provide essential support to children and young people to ensure that they have positive journeys into adulthood.

However, a reduced service could impact on the number of young people who are in education, employment or training post-16 in relation to the most vulnerable groups. A number of mitigation measures will address these:

- The impact of the saving will be reduced by £40K being provided towards the contract through Brent Virtual School funds
- The contract will focus on vulnerable young people most at risk of being NEET to mitigate any negative impacts.
- Young people with SEND will be supported through improved 14+ transition planning at annual reviews of Education, Health and Care Plans led by schools to mitigate any impact.
- As a Council priority there is separate, targeted work underway through the Black Community Action Plan to support and motivate young people into education, employment and training and to provide access/exposure to employment opportunities that will mitigate the impact.

CYP03: Localities - Care Packages reduction: Care package reductions for families receiving support from the 0-25 children and young people with disabilities teams.

The proposal is to implement a Resource Allocation System (RAS) in the 0-25 service. This should provide a fairer and more consistent allocation of care packages for families and some current high cost packages are likely to be reduced. This will require a reassessment of the level of support being received by some families, both in terms of direct payments and care at home support. However, using this allocation scheme is likely to create a more consistent decision making in relation to the calculation of the size of care packages.

Potential negative impacts have been identified in relation to age and disability. It is likely that the proposal will impact on the level of support and payments being received with some families experiencing a reduction in the size of their care packages. This will be

because using the new assessment tool their assessment did not support the current level of care package. Work to explore how these impacts can be mitigated will be determined following the pilot.

A level of engagement has been undertaken with key stakeholders through the Brent Care Forum and before the RAS is implemented, a pilot scheme will run between December 2022 and February 2023 prior to full implementation in April 2023. This will help to identify any issues and concerns that arise. Furthermore, the number and type of challenges or complaints regarding care packages will be monitored and feedback from the Brent Parent Carer Forum will be sought to ensure that support is provided during the process and any feedback and suggestions are reviewed throughout implementation.

Equality analysis will continue to be conducted and reviewed, and any impacts monitored and mitigated against where applicable.

CYP05: Looked after Children and Permanency: Review of agency worker usage and implementation of a vacancy factor

The proposal sets out achieving savings through the management of vacant posts. This includes not recruiting to vacant posts in social work teams and realigning workload. An increase in vacant posts would require a redistribution of work to manage caseloads and redistribution of support for practice development.

Potential negative impact on age (under 25's provision) due to lack of resource over a period of time. The posts are being held vacant and work has been redistributed. This is possible in the short term, however, could have a much more significant impact if the roles were deleted permanently. This would affect the quality and consistency of social work practice for looked after children as the remaining service and team managers would be expected to undertake these tasks in addition to their existing job requirements over a longer period of time.

Staffing pressures could have the following impact:

- Less time and attention from allocated social workers due to higher caseloads
- Less capacity within teams for reflective practice which could impact on ability to understand, identify and respond to children and young people's needs, increasing pressures on existing resources which will impact the timeliness and quality of service to children, young people and families.

As highlighted above these concerns are only likely to arise if the roles were permanently deleted, mitigations will be put in place including monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the policy on caseloads and team functioning, mid-year review of the policy/proposals by HOS to ensure service is meeting statutory functions for all children and young people.

The Equality Assessment will be reviewed and updated as necessary to ensure any changes or impacts are monitored and evaluated on a regular basis.

CYP07: Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

Savings will be made through the management of vacant posts and a reduction of the CYP training budget. It is proposed that 4 social work posts will no longer be funded in the Locality Service. These savings will be achieved through the removal of funding for 2 social work posts in the AST team (Early Help service) and not recruiting to 2 vacant posts in the long term Locality social work teams. It is proposed that the 2 AST posts will be funded from other sources. The reduction of 2 posts in the Localities teams will lead to fewer case holding social workers and this will be managed by reallocating cases to other workers within the service.

This service provides support to children and their families up to the age of 18. It is young people in this age range who will be affected.

Staffing pressures could have the following impact:

- Less time and attention from allocated social workers due to higher caseloads
- Less capacity within teams for reflective practice which could impact on ability to understand, identify and respond to children and young people's needs.

The impacts of the reduction of posts will need to be carefully monitored and reviewed over time. The size of caseloads will need to be carefully tracked as will the quality and timeliness of the casework being completed. Detailed caseload analysis would need to take place before April 2023 in order to identify which teams could best cope with the loss of a social worker post.

RS17: Review of Brent Transport Service

It is proposed that a review of Transport Services is conducted in order to inform savings options. This will assist in establishing how well travel and transport services currently perform and identify cost reduction potential along with service quality and compliance

improvement opportunities. Areas that will be under review include users of the Brent Passenger Transport Service, children with physical and/or learning disabilities and adults who use day centres, families and carers of users of the service, Brent Passenger Transport staff and associated contractors and school staff and day centre staff.

Currently the service is mainly focused on younger and older age groups and therefore any change will disproportionately affect those groups. The nature of the impact will depend on the individuals and their disability. People with learning disabilities may find any change in transport drivers and escorts very unsettling.

The proposal is likely to have negative impacts in terms of the 'disability' and 'age' protected groups, as SEN children are likely to be affected by changes to individual routines, which can cause anxiety. Also, users may experience longer or additional travelling in order to access the service. Carers, whilst not protected themselves under the Equality Act 2010, are protected from indirect discrimination if they are caring for someone with a disability. Parent carers of SEN children may also be affected by outcomes of this proposal as their children would be affected.

Currently there are no impacts as the proposal is only to review the services. Equality analysis would continue to be conducted and reviewed, and any impacts monitored and mitigated against where applicable.

Increase in Council Tax by 4.99% in 2023/24

In order to deliver a legally required balanced budget, it is proposed to increase Council Tax by 4.99%, where 2% is ring fenced for Adult Social Care and 2.99% is a general increase. The proposal will generate an additional £7m of recurring income for the Council and therefore avoid having to make further savings to key council services such as adult social care and children's services.

This will impact on all residents within Brent who are eligible to pay Council Tax. The proposal will impact on all residents in the borough who are liable to pay Council Tax. As the increase has universal application, no one particular group with protected characteristics is targeted.

An increase in Council tax will impact on residents and potentially affect those from protected groups harder. However, for the most vulnerable residents, the Council Tax Support scheme will partially or fully mitigate this impact for those households who are living on low incomes and are eligible for Council Tax Support. Furthermore, single households will have the impact mitigated by the 25% discount offered to single households.

In addition, further staff training will be provided to equip officers with the awareness to identify where a discretionary payment may be appropriate, and how such requests should be assessed, and opportunities to improve equality monitoring data. Further mitigating actions are also available for residents and are highlighted in under the socio-economic implications section.

4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Of the EAs that have indicated a negative impact, they have been related to the protected groups of disability and age. However, at this stage the impacts are considered to be short-term and part of a process that will eventually bring about improvements to the same.

5 SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

Certain groups within the population are more likely than others to live in a low income household. Low income is defined as living on household incomes below £20,000 per year, after tax and deductions (Brent Resident Attitude Survey 2018). In Brent, survey analysis shows that those living on lower incomes are more likely to be from Black ethnic groups; residents with a disability or long-term illness; older residents; those with no qualifications; those who are not in work; and those who live in social housing.

The proposal regarding increasing council tax has the potential to negatively impact on families and residents from lower socio-economic groups. This will be mitigated by early and accessible communication with residents affected, continuing to offer support for vulnerable residents, and more effective working with partners to ensure resources are used effectively.

The Council is aware of the cumulative impact of the cost of living crisis and the support that our residents and service users may require at this time. The following support has been made available:

Financial Support: households across Brent can access financial assistance through the following funds

- Resident Support Fund: this is available to Brent residents who are having difficulty due to unforeseen financial circumstances. Brent residents can apply for financial support, for up to £1000, to help with energy bills and other household expenditure
- Household Support Fund (HSF): The Government's HSF has been used to provide support to Brent households with the cost of food and fuel in the form of food vouchers, grants, and financial support to food aid organisations
- Discretionary Housing Payment: A one off payment can be provided to assist with rent shortfall, rent deposits and rent in advance if a Brent resident needs to move home

Certain eligibility criteria need to be met to access financial support.

Support and Advice: Brent hubs can provide support and advice to Brent residents who are struggling to pay their utility bills this winter. This can include assistance with completing funding applications for support from local and national schemes, including the Brent Resident Support Fund, referral routes to other advisory agencies who specialise in energy support such as Green Doctors and SHINE, referral routes to food banks and emergency supermarket vouchers and urgent support with topping up pre-payment gas and electricity meters

Food Aid and Vouchers: Supporting the families / carers of approximately 12,000 eligible children and young people with supermarket vouchers during each of the school holidays since December 2020.

Some of the proposals outlined in the report will be mitigated by early and accessible communication with residents affected, continuing to offer support for vulnerable residents, for example through the Brent Hubs and digital assistance, and more effective working with partners to ensure resources are used effectively.

6 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

Of the budget proposals that were subject to an equality screening, several have staffing implications arising from staff restructures or service redesign. Where there are staffing implications for a third party, the council will work with the third party organisation to ensure that the equality implications are understood, and appropriate steps taken to minimise any adverse impacts.

To mitigate against compulsory staff redundancies, a number of the proposals will achieve a reduction through giving up vacant posts or through natural turnover. In these cases, it is considered that there will be no impact on characteristic groups.

Whenever the council is required to undertake compulsory redundancies, full EAs will be undertaken as part of the consultation process. For proposals that include a reduction in the number of posts and redundancy implications, a meaningful assessment on the equality impact is not possible at this stage as no individuals (and therefore protected characteristics) have been identified for assessment. Equality Analyses in these cases will be carried out closer to the time of the start of the restructure.