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## SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL SUMMARY OF MTFP 2019/20 IMPACTS

### 1.1 Summary of Impacts for MTFP 2019/20

In order for the Council to fulfil its legal requirements under the Public Sector Equality Duty, members are asked to have due regard to the equality impact assessments supporting the proposals attached to this decision. An Equality Impact Assessment is a way of analysing changes to our services, policies and strategies and identifies potential impacts on characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010. This allows us to make informed decisions that can be evidenced and shared with interested parties.

The characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010 are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Whilst assessing the Protected Characteristics for Somerset it was established that there were additional characteristics that for Somerset had a real impact on the ability of people to access services and take part in the wider community. These additional local characteristics are rurality, low income, carers and military status.

This due regard should be considered with the duties set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty. So for the characteristics identified above will the change help or hinder:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

This summary of key impacts and the equality impact assessments have been developed to help councillors:

- debate the issues,
- consider proposed decisions,
- consider the viability of alternatives
- agree potential mitigating measures and note impacts which may not be able to be mitigated
- make informed and fair decisions

The Equality Act 2010 does not prevent the Council from taking difficult decisions which result in service reductions or closures for example, it does however require the Council to ensure that such decisions are:

- Informed and properly considered with a rigorous, conscious approach and an open mind.
- Taken following due regard having been given to the effects on the protected characteristics with the need to ensure nothing results in unlawful discrimination in

terms of access to, or standards of, services or employment as well as considering any opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations.

- Proportionate (that negative impacts, including those that cannot be mitigated, are proportionate to the aims of the policy decision).
- Fair, necessary and reasonable
- Only taken following appropriate consultation with those affected.

Creating a picture of how people are being affected by the Council's budget reductions and proposed future changes to services is difficult and complex. People are different in terms of their needs and expectations; people's interaction with public services and dependence upon public services vary. Life changing events such as the birth of a child, death of a partner or deterioration in health can alter, sometimes very quickly, a person's dependence on services. Living in rural communities may be a dream for some but for others it can also present challenges.

Consideration of the continuing need to reduce inequalities as far as possible must be integral to the budget reduction process. There must be an appropriate balance struck between, on the one hand being aware of the impact and risks, seeking to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts and, on the other, the benefit and necessity to making the saving to achieve a balanced budget. It is therefore inevitable that it may not be possible to mitigate all impacts.

### **Cumulative Equality and Diversity Impacts for the 2019/20 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)**

Based on the proposals put forward within this report there are a number of impacts, which, when looked at together, could have combined impacts on characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010. They are:

- There are a number of proposals that could affect **disabled people**. This could be through what services are available for people to access, the services that are available being reduced or their ability to navigate Somerset independently.
- **Women** are also more likely to be impacted by a combination of proposals. As women are still more likely to provide a child or adult caring role they could be disproportionately affected by the changes to support services for disabled people and young people.

When considering these identified cumulative impacts, it is also worth considering the outstanding elements from decisions taken in-year. This could be because the decision has been delayed due to consultation being completed or a phased implementation to a decision already taken. When these are looked at they can contribute or create new cumulative impacts such as:

- **Women** could be further impacted with the remainder of the reductions in funding to Advice Services. The additional reductions in youth services could place more of a burden on women who are more likely to be the main care givers in a home. This could then be further impacted by reductions to support provided to families.
- Taking these additional savings into account there could be a cumulative impact on **young people**. This would be through a further reduction in youth services, and the support provided to their parents through the GetSet services.

There are some mitigations identified within the individual proposals to minimise the impacts identified. This include

- working with the voluntary and community sector to provide some of the support services we currently provide
- providing sign posting and advice on alternative areas of support and services