

# Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer

**Organisation prepared for**

**Somerset County Council**

**Version**

**0.9**

**Date Completed**

**9 June 2020**

## **Description of what is being impact assessed**

Unitary local government is the model of governance in place throughout much of England, all metropolitan areas, many non-metropolitan areas and counties and all of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. As such, there are no equalities issues inherent in the unitary model or the decision to move from a two tier system to a unitary system.

Subsequent policy decisions made and implemented by any future unitary Shadow Executive or Somerset Council will be subject to detailed EIA's to assess the impact of those decisions on residents, businesses and staff in line with all equalities legislation

All councils in Somerset agree that we can't continue as we are.

Somerset County Council believes forming a single unitary will enable a whole-system approach to the challenges that we face. It can provide a platform from which to achieve improvements to service quality, resilience, reduction of considerable duplication, address the current resident confusion as to who provides which services and to deliver significant annual cost savings. With the right design, it can also enable a new form of engagement with communities, so that people, young and old, can have their say about service provision, performance and quality and where to prioritise resources and target savings. Most councils which surround Somerset are already benefiting from a unitary model including Dorset, Wiltshire, Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, Torbay, Plymouth, and Cornwall. Somerset is missing out and falling behind in the South West region.

Somerset County Council believes that new and radical approaches are needed to help people live better lives, whilst reducing demand, creating a greater sense of community whilst helping to reduce social isolation. A unitary model that enables engagement with excluded people and groups will support and maximise community resilience and prosperity.

Phase 1 of this project is to produce a Business Case and Implementation Plan for the creation of one Council for Somerset. The Business Case will be debated and decided by Full Council in July 2020 and will describe what a single Council would be. The provisional timeline is that the Secretary of State will consider the Business Case in Autumn 2020. The Business case will be aligned with the statutory responsibilities of local government but also describe and evaluate the four options appraised and recommend the preferred option in such a way that the public, businesses, other public sector partners and the Secretary of State can assess and feedback on the proposed case. The recommended way forward is for a single council, reducing from 4 District Councils and one County Council to one single Council. Further detail of how this will be achieved will be further scoped/defined during implementation.

If the bid is approved by the Secretary of State work would then begin to implement a single Council with a Vesting date of April 2022. This assessment considers the impact of the proposals set out in the Phase 1 Business Case only. However, it is important to highlight that the design of the single Council will be an iterative process which will be further defined during the implementation phase which will take place between October 2020-April 2022, and associated policy and implementation decisions will be subject to senate EIAs..

This document and its findings remain under review: as more detail is developed and more data acquired, the EIA will be further defined.

If and when the design of any new Council is undertaken, this Equalities Impact Assessment will be reviewed.

## **Evidence**

**What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups?** Sources such as the [Office of National Statistics](#), [Somerset Intelligence Partnership](#), [Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#), Staff and/ or [area profiles](#), should be detailed here

Data on Somerset has been obtained from the 2011 census and can be found at <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/equality-and-diversity/>. Highlights from this census can be found below;

## **Age**

Somerset has an ageing population, with all Districts having a higher proportion of their population being over 65 than the national average. Rural West Somerset has a notably high proportion, and in parts of Minehead almost half of the people are aged over 65.



age-group-profiles-  
for-somerset.pdf

## **Disability**

At the time of the 2011 Census, 99,664 people in Somerset identified themselves as having a long-term health problem or disability which limited their day-to-day activity. This equates to around 1 in 5 of the population. 43,988 people's lives were limited 'a lot' and 55,676 people limited 'a little'. A higher proportion of women than men report having a long-term health problem or disability. Overall, over half of people aged 65 or over in Somerset have a long-term health problem or disability, rising to 83% of those aged 85 or over. Prevalence is most common in areas with older populations: in parts of Minehead and Burnham-on-Sea around 1 in 3 residents have a limiting condition.



disability-and-health-  
profiles-for-somer

## **Marriage & Civil Partnership**

More than half of Somerset adults aged 16 or older are married or in a same-sex civil partnership, but the proportion of co-habiting families has risen from 8% to 10% in the past decade. There were 215 households containing couples in a same-sex civil partnership, 85% of them without children in the household.

Full data for Somerset in the 2011 Census are shown in the table below:

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>All persons</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
<b>All categories: Marital and civil partnership status</b>	435,382	210,003	225,379
<b>Single (never married or never registered a same-sex civil partnership)</b>	120,825	65,730	55,095
<b>Married</b>	224,255	112,246	112,009
<b>In a registered same-sex civil partnership</b>	699	317	382
<b>Separated (but still legally married or still legally in a same-sex civil partnership)</b>	10,322	4,615	5,707
<b>Divorced or formerly in a same-sex civil partnership which is now legally dissolved</b>	44,329	19,232	25,097

<b>Widowed or surviving partner from a same-sex civil partnership</b>	34,952	7,863	27,089
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**Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups?** If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

Engagement exercises have been carried out including 500 phone interviews with Somerset residents and a further 350 phone interviews with Somerset businesses, plus engagement with the voluntary sector and local town and parishes through a simple web survey. These have all been considered when drafting the Full Business case and Equalities Impact Assessment. This will also be referred to and considered when updating this EIA in the future. All stakeholders will be consulted, and views considered and will feed into the review of the Equalities Impact Assessment.

**Analysis of impact on protected groups**

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

<b>Protected group</b>	<b>Summary of impact</b>	<b>Negative outcome</b>	<b>Neutral outcome</b>	<b>Positive outcome</b>
<b>Age (Public and staff)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Different age groups are expected to be impacted in different ways at different times during the implementation phase. It is not possible to evidence or assess these impacts at Business Case stage.</li> </ul>	□	⊗	□

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any disproportionate impacts will be identified and considered in data collection, consultation, decision-making and other activity, including due regard as we move ahead with implementing a new unitary authority, if approved.</li> </ul>			
<b>Disability (Public and staff)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Different disability groups are expected to be impacted in different ways at different times during the implementation phase. It is not possible to evidence or assess these impacts at Business Case stage.</li> <li>Any disproportionate impacts will be identified and considered in data collection, consultation, decision-making and other activity, including due regard as we move ahead with implementing a new unitary authority, if approved.</li> <li>Information will be produced in a format that is accessible to those with a Learning Disability.</li> <li>Information will be provided in alternative formats, upon request, for those where English is not their first language including British Sign Language.</li> </ul>	□	⊗	□
<b>Gender reassignment (Public and staff)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At this stage of the proposal (Business Case) it is not possible to evidence or assess any impacts to individuals of this protected characteristic.</li> <li>Any disproportionate impacts will be identified and considered in data collection, consultation, decision-making and other activity, including due regard as we move ahead with implementing a new unitary authority, if approved.</li> </ul>	□	⊗	□

<p><b>Marriage and civil partnership (Public and staff)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At this stage of the proposal (Business Case) it is not possible to evidence or assess any impacts to individuals of this protected characteristic.</li> <li>• Any disproportionate impacts will be identified and considered in data collection, consultation, decision-making and other activity, including due regard as we move ahead with implementing a new unitary authority, if approved.</li> </ul>	□	⊗	□
<p><b>Pregnancy and maternity (Public and staff)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At this stage of the proposal (Business Case) it is not possible to evidence or assess any impacts to individuals of this protected characteristic.</li> <li>• Any disproportionate impacts will be identified and considered in data collection, consultation, decision-making and other activity, including due regard as we move ahead with implementing a new unitary authority, if approved.</li> </ul>	□	⊗	□
<p><b>Race and ethnicity (Public and staff)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At this stage of the proposal (Business Case) it is not possible to evidence or assess any impacts to individuals of this protected characteristic.</li> <li>• Any disproportionate impacts will be identified and considered in data collection, consultation, decision-making and other activity, including due regard as we move ahead with implementing a new unitary authority, if approved.</li> </ul>	□	⊗	□

<p><b>Religion or belief (Public and staff)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At this stage of the proposal (Business Case) it is not possible to evidence or assess any impacts to individuals of this protected characteristic.</li> <li>• Any disproportionate impacts will be identified and considered in data collection, consultation, decision-making and other activity, including due regard as we move ahead with implementing a new unitary authority, if approved.</li> </ul>	□	⊗	□
<p><b>Sex (Public and staff)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People of different gender groups are expected to be impacted in different ways at different times during the implementation phase. It is not possible to evidence or assess these impacts at Business Case stage.</li> <li>• Any disproportionate impacts will be identified and considered in data collection, consultation, decision-making and other activity, including due regard as we move ahead with implementing a new unitary authority, if approved.</li> </ul>	□	⊗	□
<p><b>Sexual orientation (Public and staff)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At this stage of the proposal (Business Case) it is not possible to evidence or assess any impacts to individuals of this protected characteristic.</li> <li>• Any disproportionate impacts will be identified and considered in data collection, consultation, decision-making and other activity, including due regard as we move ahead with implementing a new unitary authority, if approved.</li> </ul>	□	⊗	□



<b>Other, e.g. carers, veterans, homeless, low income, rurality/isolation, etc. (Public and staff)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is expected that transition to a single tier of local government in Somerset would promote the achievement of the equality outcomes in s149 Equality Act 2010 ("Equality Outcomes"). For example, through exercising of combined functions, joined-up strategic decision-making, and funding streams.</li> </ul>	□	□	☒
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The more easily understandable governance structure of a single local authority versus two-tier working is expected to have a positive impact on all people, including those exhibiting protected characteristics, in terms of "one door to access all services", greater accessibility and accountability.</li> </ul>	□	□	☒
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cabinet office guidance states that unitary local government is the model of governance in place throughout much of England, all metropolitan areas, many non-metropolitan areas and counties and all of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and as such, there are no equalities issues inherent in the unitary model or the decision to move from a two-tier system to a unitary system. Subsequent policy decisions made and implemented by any future unitary Shadow Executive or Somerset Council will be subject to detailed EIAs to assess the impact of those decisions on residents, businesses and staff in line with all equalities legislation.</li> <li>Any disproportionate impacts will be identified and considered in data collection, consultation, decision-making and other activity, including due regard as we</li> </ul>	□	□	☒

	move ahead with implementing a new unitary authority, if approved.			
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**Negative outcomes action plan**  
 Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

<b>Action taken/to be taken</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>How will it be monitored?</b>	<b>Action complete</b>
Establish equalities framework to be followed during implementation	01/04/2021	Project team	During implementation and through new authority processes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify HR data need and establish new/transitional HR processes as appropriate	01/04/2021	Project Team	During implementation and through new authority processes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agree communication strategy, with detailed plans tailored to meet the needs of the different audience groups, both public and staff.	01/04/2021	Communication Manager	During implementation and through new authority processes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Undertake EIAs on specific changes to service delivery, policy and processes	01/04/2021	Project Team	During implementation and through new authority processes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Publish equalities objectives for the new Council	01/04/2021	Project Team	During implementation and through new authority processes	<input type="checkbox"/>



Consultation and engagement with trade unions	Ongoing	HR/OD Team	Consultation and through new authority processes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clear, accessible and easy to understand information tailored to all protected groups and stakeholders, and provision of means to participate in consultations, including support for people/staff to adapt to change.	Ongoing	Project Team and Communications Manager	During implementation and through new authority processes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>

**If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.**

- Dialogue between all affected Authorities should be maintained during any reorganisation to ensure appropriate transition arrangements in service provision and access to services for those affected before appropriate alternative arrangements are established.

<b>Completed by:</b>	<b>Andrew Pulsford/Jamie Cooksley</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>15/06/2020</b>
<b>Signed off by:</b>	<b>Dr Carlton Brand</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>15/06/2020</b>
<b>Equality Lead/Manager sign off date:</b>	<b>Tom Rutland 15/06/2020</b>
<b>To be reviewed by:</b> (officer name)	<b>Andrew Pulsford</b>
<b>Review date:</b>	<b>15/09/2020</b>