

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty which states that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

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

This document demonstrates how the Council is meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty by setting out the findings of an equality analysis that has been undertaken in relation to a proposed change to assess whether it has a disproportionate impact on people who share a protected characteristic. The Council's Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) process covers additional groups not 'protected' by section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, including care leavers and care experienced adults.

1. Background

Directorate	Community Safety
Service area	Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS)
Title of the proposed change being assessed i.e. the policy, service or other development	Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024/25

Describe the purpose of the proposed change and the intended outcomes
<p>The purpose of the MTFS is to give financial expression to the Council Strategy, Building Back Better in Gloucestershire 2022-26 for the next four-year period. The MTFS sets out the Council's high-level funded plan for achieving its vision and priorities, balancing available financing and spending ambitions. It highlights the financial projections for financing, spending (revenue and capital) and reserves.</p> <p>The MTFS is prepared annually and covers the four-year period 2024/25 to 2027/28. It links decisions on resource allocation with decisions on policy priorities as set out in the Council Strategy. This EqIA is Appendix 4 of the MTFS 2024/25 – 2027/28 report being considered by Cabinet on 31 January 2024.</p> <p>Each Directorate's priorities and plans for the year are set out in their Commissioning Intentions which are included in Annex 1 of the MTFS. Proposals for cost increases (investment) and cost reductions (savings) are driven by these Commissioning Intentions.</p>

Who is affected by the proposals?

Service users:	Yes
Wider community:	Yes
Workforce:	Yes
Other (please specify):	

Decision to be taken and decision maker	Cabinet decision on 31 January 2024: To recommend the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), 2024/25 revenue and capital budgets and Precept to Council
Person(s) responsible for completing this assessment	Finance and Compliance Manager
Date of this assessment	December 2023

2. Information and Data Collection

This table summarises the Council-wide approach to engagement and consultation. Details of the information and data collected (including through engagement and consultation exercises) for each budget proposal are set out within section 3.

Stakeholders	Engagement and Consultation
<p>Service Users / Wider Community</p>	<p>Following a decision by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Change (details here), a public consultation on the Council's draft budget for 2024/25 took place over a five-week week period between 7 December 2023 and 11 January 2024.</p> <p>To raise awareness of the budget consultation and how people could provide their views on the proposals, information was made available via the county council's website, Information was also shared with local media contacts and via the County Council's social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, X, Nextdoor) and with subscribers of Council e-newsletters.</p> <p>Posters were also displayed in libraries and in other GCC buildings.</p> <p>There were reminders throughout the consultation period to make sure there were multiple opportunities for interested parties to see the relevant information and the invite to respond.</p> <p>A budget consultation booklet was produced and made available on-line and in hard copy via libraries. Other formats were available upon request.</p> <p>A questionnaire was also produced to help collate views. This was available online, in hard copy and in other formats, in the same way as the booklet.</p>
<p>Workforce</p>	<p>The formal budget consultation included the sharing of information with the recognised trades unions including council, teaching and fire unions and provision of a collective consultation meeting.</p> <p>Information was shared with County Council staff via the weekly e newsletter and via the front page of the intranet.</p>

	<p>Staff networks were also sent information, with a request to provide their views and promote the consultation through their communications channels and networks.</p>
Partners	<p>Information was shared with public sector partners, via the Warning and Informing Communications Group with a request to raise awareness of the budget consultation within their individual organisations and share information through their communication channels.</p> <p>Information was also shared with town and parish councils, a range of community groups, young people organisations, with a request that they share information through their communication channels and local networks.</p>
Other	<p>Information was shared with county councillors, asking them to take part in the consultation and to support the County Council to raise awareness by sharing information through their communication channels and local networks.</p>

3. Equality Assessment, Actions and Monitoring and Review

3.1 – Status Quo

See the ‘Needs Analysis’ section of the Commissioning Intentions which identifies equality, diversity and inclusion related issues.

3.2 – The Proposed Changes: Revenue

Also see the ‘Equalities Response’ section of the Commissioning Intentions which sets out the equality, diversity and inclusion related priorities identified through the needs analysis and summarises the actions that will be taken to address these.

Service Users				
Budget Change Proposal	Summary of the information and data gathered, including through engagement and consultation	Protected Characteristics / Additional Groups	Summary of the assessment of the potential or actual impact on those who share the protected characteristics or are in the additional groups	Actions to further maximise the positive impact or minimise the negative impact Arrangements for monitoring and review
Revenue Cost Increases (Investment)				
HMICFRS Improvement Plan - staffing Staffing investment to address the recommendation of Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue	The Improvement Plan has been subject to internal consultation with staff	Protected Characteristics All Additional Groups All	Positive The Improvement Plan highlights the role of cohesion / inclusion taking full account of important areas of development for Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service and	Monitoring and Review Progress against the Improvement Plan will be monitored by Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Scrutiny Committee.

<p>Services (HMICFRS) inspection.</p>			<p>takes full account of protected characteristics. The plan aims to improve our prevention, protection and response service wide to drive and enable good practice which will, in turn, have a positive impact on the elimination of discrimination, equality of opportunity and the promotion of good relations.</p>	
<p>Increase in Fire safety staffing (Fire Safety Advisors x 3) Investment in staffing to meet statutory and Service requirements to Inspect, engage with and educate businesses on their obligations under The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.</p>	<p>Internal communication with the Senior Leadership Team. This investment will support the Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) for inspection, education & engagement for enforcing 'The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order' 2005. The RBIP was produced using,</p>	<p>Protected Characteristics All</p> <p>Additional Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carers ▪ Care leavers / care experienced adults ▪ Geography (for example, urban and rural areas) ▪ Socio-economic disadvantage ▪ Vulnerable groups of society 	<p>Positive This proposal further enables Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service to fulfil its statutory duties to enforce 'The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005'. This is a new entry level role into fire safety with no requirement for existing qualifications which enables the service to broaden the</p>	<p>Actions Recruitment process to include consideration of suitable reasonable adjustments to enable any applicants from disability protected characteristic group.</p> <p>Monitoring and Review Outcomes will be monitored within existing department KPI/LPIs</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National technical guidance. ▪ Buildings data and other statistics ▪ Intelligence about the local community ▪ Existing community risk profiles 		<p>essential criteria so applications from underrepresented groups can be considered.</p> <p>Negative Due to nature of the role (conducting physical inspection safety visits and working onsite with businesses to comply) it will have a negative impact on certain groups within the disability protected characteristic, for example sensory impairments or loss.</p> <p>Regulation activities are subject to national codes of practice and legislative requirements.</p>	
<p>Control room staff increase</p>	<p>Internal communication with the Senior Leadership Team</p>	<p>Protected Characteristics All</p> <p>Additional Groups All</p>	<p>Positive This will improve staff wellbeing as there will be less pressure to cover for absences through overtime.</p>	<p>Actions To run a process to recruit two further crew managers. This will consequently lead to recruitment of two new</p>

			<p>The additional two posts will increase capacity within control to enable all staff to undertake the required training in line with National Operational Guidance and the new National Fire standards. It will also enable increased opportunities for collaboration with other departments and blue light services thus improving equality of opportunity (in comparison to operational firefighting staff) to the predominantly female staffing group, supporting course attendance and control staff development away from a busy shift pattern.</p>	<p>Firefighter Control positions. We will ensure that the recruitment runs alongside our positive action campaign to encourage a representation of our communities.</p> <p>Monitoring and Review We will request assistance from the EDI group to review the training records of the team and cover required from staff on a regular basis to ensure that we are meeting the aims set.</p> <p>Where relevant a specific Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken to consider the equality impact as detailed proposals are developed.</p> <p>Workforce planning will oversee the recruitment</p>
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				and promotion processes.
Increase in operational equipment costs	<p>High price increases have been affecting the budget drastically. GFRS's dedication to its diverse workforce has also added to the increase of costs.</p> <p>Financial Monitoring Group was consulted and has been aware of the increases of prices and the effects of these.</p>	<p>Protected Characteristics All</p> <p>Additional Groups All</p>	<p>Positive Allows GFRS to invest in its diverse staff, this includes people with disabilities. An example of this is a Firefighter who needs Waterproof hearing aids to be able to be Water Rescue trained. With increase in budgets, examples like this become easier.</p> <p>Other reasonable adjustments have been highlighted for many members of staff with protected characteristics.</p>	<p>Actions Continue to liaise with the various internal health and safety forums.</p>

Revenue Cost Reductions (Savings)				
Review of post within HQ	Consultation through Senior Leadership Team	Protected Characteristics All Additional Groups All	Neutral This role is not a front facing role and will not impact on our communities or the Service that we provide.	Actions Monitoring and review will be carried out as part of the overall management of the service.
Income Target				
Income 3% Increase Review of fees and charges in line with inflation		All	To ensure that fees and charges keep pace with the true cost of providing services	Actions Where relevant a specific Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken to consider the equality impact as detailed proposals are developed

3.3 – The Proposed Changes: Capital

Service Users				
Capital Programme	Summary of information and data gathered, including through consultation and engagement	Protected Characteristics / Additional Groups	Summary of assessment of the potential or actual impact on those who share the protected characteristics or are in the additional groups	Actions to further maximise the positive impact or minimise the negative impact Arrangements for monitoring and review
Capital Cost Increases (Investment)				
Replacement of GFRS Boat Fleet including trailers & vehicles	All staff users consulted at the end user stations, Gloucester and Tewkesbury. Lead Instructors liaised with via the working groups. The Community Risk Management Plan dictates that flooding and water response is the 3 rd highest risk in Gloucestershire.	All staff consulted, staff users include a variety of groups with protected characteristics. Many Female firefighters have expressed concerns regarding dressing/undressing in PPE in public.	The Response vehicles include a private dressing area to increase privacy for all firefighters who are currently having to change in full view of other staff and public.	Monitoring and Review A similar vehicle is in service in other FRS and use can be reviewed. The introduction of this asset with greatly improve staff privacy whilst maintaining an adequate response to the public.
Replacement of GFRS Environmental Protection Unit and 10 GFRS front line pumping units	Engagement with other Fire & Rescue Services (FRS) through meetings with the national Transport Operators		Positive This replacement programme does not affect anyone of any particular age.	Actions Equipment Stowage – during the build phase members of the project team will make regular

	<p>Group (TOG) was undertaken to ascertain what impacts, if any procuring a new EPU and 10 front line fire appliances would have on those with protected characteristics.</p> <p>The Service undertook an engagement with other FRS using Workplace (NFCC networking platform) on their EQIA process when procuring new appliances.</p> <p>A working group consisting of operational fire-fighters from both the On-Call and Whole-Time departments was created and engaged with in order to harness the views and opinions of all sections of the operational workforce on what is required in the new vehicles to maintain and improve inclusivity.</p>		<p>Because of the accepted standard of general occupational requirements needed to be a fire fighter this programme does not impact on any group (however individual risk assessments would be carried out in the event of any particular individual needs related to an appliance or EPU use).</p> <p>Through consultation with a large selection of fire fighters (both male and female), this replacement programme benefits our increasing demography of female fire fighters by providing the opportunity to develop innovation to enable reduced access height of equipment including ladders and other heavy items by way of improved racking, shelving and gantry systems and the</p>	<p>visits to the factory to attend scheduled meetings to ensure all equipment is stowed in a manner that allows all operational staff access. A representative from the ED&I Allies group will also be invited.</p> <p>Monitoring and Review Individual risk assessments will be conducted for any individual or group identified as listed in this document.</p>
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	<p>Engagement sessions were held with all operational staff that operate the Environmental Protection Unit to identify key equality requirements. Informal discussions with operational staff were undertaken to identify key equality requirements that are required in the new appliances that does not hinder operational activities.</p> <p>An EQIA was shared with the GFRS ED&I Allies staff network group. This group has staff representation from both GFRS and GCC. Suppliers and coach builders of fire appliances were consulted during the specification phase to establish best practice on vehicle stowage, fitment and build types</p>		<p>ability to lower vehicles by controlled use of air suspension or use of a tail gate system.</p>	
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	incorporating equality aspects in terms of use and access.			
Investment to support the funding of a service wide refresh of Thermal Imaging Cameras and associated support equipment	For procurement of Thermal Image Cameras consultation has been carried out with the Breathing Apparatus Working group, Learning and Development and Operational Assurance. Informal discussions with Operational Crews when visiting stations. Other Fire and Rescue Services.	Protected Characteristics All Additional Groups All	Positive The modern technological advances of cameras available has made cameras much smaller and lighter. This has been highlighted as a positive for many people protected characteristics including our large percentage of female firefighters. Neutral This replacement programme does not affect anyone of any other particular protected characteristic. Negative None highlighted	Actions During the tender process consultation will be undertaken with a wide range of operational crews, including instructors at Severn Park. Monitoring and Review Full tender process with robust testing and quality checks that aligns with Equality Impact Assessment.

3.4 The Proposed Changes: Workforce

As at 30 September 2023, 4,244 individuals were employed by the County Council, including employees from the Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service, but excluding those individuals who are engaged on casual or temporary contracts. The relevant workforce equality reporting is available online ([here](#)) including the Annual Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report.

The proposals within this year's MTFs do not require large scale workforce change. There are a number of proposals which increase staffing to support the delivery of services including increasing the capacity to support the delivery of the council's equality objectives. There are also individual proposals which may require some local service restructuring and therefore may impact the nature and number of roles. The Council provides a toolkit and specialist HR (Human Resources) advice to assist managers when planning restructures and other organisational change projects. This helps to ensure that the process of change management is carried out fairly and on an equitable and transparent basis, incorporating the principles of the Public Sector Equality Duty and other statutory requirements. This toolkit is kept under review and updated as necessary to ensure it remains relevant and legally compliant. The Council proactively seeks to minimise compulsory redundancy via the use of redeployment. Where service organisational changes involve alterations to buildings or office accommodation, the Council ensures that the design of such changes comply with accessibility standards together with making reasonable adjustments to support the workforce to undertake their roles.

The Council will continue to support the retention of staff. To achieve this, we offer and promote a range of flexible working practices and family friendly policies as well as agile working. We continue to operate voluntary purchase of additional leave and voluntary reduction to working hour's schemes, which were initially launched in 2013 and have been extended due to their popularity. We also provide several sacrifice schemes and other staff benefits. We actively promote our hard to fill professional roles and are reviewing our pay and reward scheme to ensure that it is fit for purpose and attracts a wide range of candidates including those with protected characteristics. We are a Disability Confident employer and have signed the Race at Work charter.

The Council communicates and engages with staff through a variety of processes including employee voice groups, staff networks, formal consultation and negotiations with Trade Unions, internal communications channels and team meetings.

The Council is in the third year of the three-year action plan and continues to develop actions for the future; this includes having regard to the Equality Framework for Local Government to inform the future equality strategies. We have employee networks for black, asian and minority ethnic employees; employees with caring responsibilities; employees with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees and young employees. The Dignity at Work


network is one of the initial points of contact for any employee who believes they are experiencing bullying and harassment in the workplace.


The Employee Networks have continued to engage and support workforce equality projects alongside our colleagues in Human Resources and Organisational Development. The Employee Networks provided input on this Workforce Equality Report, providing feedback on the findings, suggesting recommendations, and agreeing terminology.

Support is provided through the Occupational Health and Safety services, including professional face to face counselling to support staff in appropriate cases. The Council continues to sign up to the Mindful Employer Charter and the Occupational Health team keeps support and advice under review to enable managers and staff to have relevant information available. A Health and Wellbeing Action Plan was agreed in 2023 and this is currently being implemented.

During the pandemic, we have piloted programmes to proactively encourage employees to improve their health and reduce the potential for future physical and mental health problems. Some of these programme are on-going. We have also introduced MIND (managing mental health at work) training for all managers. In addition, we have proactively worked with managers to help them support their teams recognising that this was a very difficult period for many individuals and families, and this has had an impact on both physical and mental health.

4. Approval

Signature of Executive Director	
Name of Executive Director	Mark Preece, Chief Fire Officer
Date	18.1.2024

Signature of Cabinet Member	
Name of Cabinet Member	Cllr Lynden Stowe Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Change
Date	22 January 2024

