

Cumulative Equality Impact Assessment

Budget Savings Proposals 2024/25

1. Purpose of Report

This report assesses the equalities impacts of the savings proposals set out in the Council's Budget for 2024-25. It provides an assessment of the likely cumulative impacts of the suite of budget savings proposals on residents with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, and the actions to reduce or mitigate any identified negative impacts.

There are significantly more savings proposals this year, due to the significant medium-term budget gap. When setting this budget, we have been mindful of the need to continue protecting those in greatest need or at most risk from cuts. Where possible, savings focus on optimising efficiencies in service delivery. However, some difficult decisions are being made.

This cumulative impact assessment focuses on the impact of savings proposals on residents. Impacts relating to staff as a result of the savings proposals e.g., deletion of vacancies, changes to "back office" staffing and risk of redundancies are assessed through HR processes, including Workforce Board.

2. Our legal responsibility – the Equality Act 2010

The Public Sector Equality Duty, set out in the Equality Act 2010, requires public bodies to pay due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who do not.

The nine protected characteristics are:

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

An Equality Impact Assessment is not a legal requirement in England, but it is an established and credible tool for demonstrating and evidencing due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is required by law.

We need to understand the effect and impact of our policies and practices, service delivery and decision-making. Although the Council is not legally obligated to reject savings or growth proposals that could have negative impacts on any groups, it must consider the impact of its proposals on the Public Sector Equality Duty, take a reasonable and proportionate view about the overall impact on particular groups, and seek to mitigate potential negative impacts where possible.

3. Context

3.1 Barking and Dagenham population statistics

Having a deep understanding of the borough's population is essential in effectively assessing the impact of our decisions on our residents. Since 2001 there has been significant change in the make-up and characteristics of the population. The latest [Census](#) and [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) reveal the following about our residents:

The population has grown significantly faster than other places

- The population size (on Census Day) was 218,900. This had grown by 17.7% since 2011 – the third highest growth rate in England and Wales.
- The population is expected to grow another 42% to 309,000 by 2041.

...Barking and Dagenham is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse communities

- The borough has seen the greatest increase in ethnic diversity between 2011 and 2021 with the percentage of non-White British residents rising by 18.6 percentage points over that decade.
- Two in five residents were born outside of the UK. Nigeria (4.31%), Romania (4.30%) and Bangladesh (4.24%) were the three countries outside of England where most foreign-born residents were born.
- 16% of the population are Black African – the highest proportion in England and Wales.
- 10% of residents are Asian Bangladeshi – the fourth highest proportion in England and Wales.
- The most common language of residents whose main language is not English is Romanian (4.8%) followed by Bengali (3.1%).
- Islamic faith has grown in the borough since 2001 – the percentage of Muslim residents has increased by 20 percentage points. Nearly a quarter of residents are Muslim.
- 45.4% of residents are Christian, down from 56% in 2011.

...and one of the youngest, with many young families

- 57,100 (26.1%) of residents were aged under 16 on Census Day – the highest proportion in England and Wales.

- There are 9,400 (12.8%) lone parent households with dependent children – the highest proportion in England and Wales
- Average household size is 2.96 – the fourth highest average household size in England and Wales

Our community is also diverse in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity

- Barking and Dagenham is the local authority with the highest proportion of trans women (0.25%) and the third highest proportion of trans men (0.24%) in England and Wales.
- 2.3% of the population identified as LGB+ (those who described their sexual orientation as something other than heterosexual).

Residents experience some of the highest levels of deprivation in the country

- 46,100 (62.4%) households in the borough have at least one measure of deprivation – the highest proportion in England and Wales
- 46% of children are estimated to live in poverty - the third highest rate in England and Wales

The self-reported health of the population is worse than most places in England and Wales and we have one of the highest levels of disability in London.

- 29.8% of households have at least one person who identifies as disabled – the highest proportion in London.
- 4.8% of residents reported that they consider themselves to be in “bad” or “very bad” health. After standardising for age, this is higher than average for London and England

To find out more about the borough and its people, visit:

<https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/about-borough>

3.1. LBBB Corporate Plan priorities and Equality Objectives

The Council’s Corporate Plan 2023-26 sets out the vision of the Council to make Barking and Dagenham a place people are proud of and where they want to live, work, study and stay, whilst ensuring that no-one is left behind.

There are seven strategic priorities by which this vision will be achieved:

- Residents are supported during the current Cost-of-Living crisis.
- Residents are safe, protected and supported at their most vulnerable
- Residents live healthier, happier, independent lives for longer
- Residents prosper from good education, skills development and secure employment
- Residents benefit from inclusive growth and regeneration
- Residents live in and play their part in creating safer, cleaner and greener neighbourhoods
- Residents live in good housing and avoid becoming homeless

To support our priorities a set of principles have been developed to be applied to our work across the whole Council. These principles, together with our values and culture, will drive service delivery, performance, and innovation:

- Work in partnership
- Engage and facilitate co-production
- Be evidence-led and data driven
- Focus on prevention and early intervention
- Provide value for money
- Be strengths-based
- Adopt a "health in all policies" approach
- Strengthen risk management and compliance.

Developed alongside the seven strategic priorities as part of the Council's Corporate Plan 2023-26 are our Equality Objectives. As a public sector organisation, we are obligated through the Public Sector Equality Duty to publish Equality Objectives at least every four years.

The Council's Equality Objectives for this period are:

- **Addressing structural inequality:** activity aimed at addressing inequalities related to the wider determinants of health and wellbeing, including unemployment, debt, and safety.
- **Providing leadership in the community:** activity related to community leadership, including faith, cohesion, and integration: building awareness within the community through a programme of equalities events.
- **Fair and transparent services:** activity aimed at addressing workforce matters related to leadership, recruitment, retention, and staff experience; organisational policies and processes including use of Equality Impact Assessments, commissioning practices and approach to social value.

3.2. MTFS budget gap

The Council is facing a significant shortfall in its budget to reach a balanced budget for 2024/25 which has predominantly arisen because of significant cost pressures arising from high inflation, increases in interest rates, continued challenges of cost-of-living crisis, increases in demand and/or change in the needs of existing service users and uncertainty about public sector finances.

The updated MTFS identifies a 2024/25 budget deficit of £8.809m, after allowing for savings proposals totalling £15.595m and growth proposals totalling £54.129m. The cumulative budget deficit increases to £17.317m by 2026/27. This EIA is concerned with the current, well-developed proposed savings for 2024/25. Officers and members are continuing to work together to identify further potential areas for budget savings.

It is crucial that savings are delivered. Failure to deliver savings will result in an overspend in 2024/25.

3.4 Local government funding

The financial sustainability of the whole of Local Government is under stress and this has been seen by a number of Local Authorities issuing a Section 114 notice, effectively signifying their inability to deliver a balanced budget. However, what is different now is that the reason for these notices is purely that increases in funding have not kept pace with expenditure.

There has been a significant reduction in funding from Central Government, with the key measure of Core Spending Power, continuing to show reduced level of funding since 2010. The 2023/24 financial year saw an average increase of 9.2% in core spending power (CSP) – the government’s measure of overall core funding – for London boroughs from £8.01bn to £8.75bn. However, despite the overall increase, CSP for London Boroughs will remain 18% below 2010 levels in real terms. For every £1 we received 10 years ago, we now receive just 63p.

3.3. Inflation and increasing costs

Macroeconomic factors have impacted the Council’s finances considerably with inflation causing cost rises and increase in interest rates slowing down development activity. This in turn has resulted in negative impact on the Council’s wholly owned companies which in turn have impacted on the Council’s ability, via its General Fund, to obtain projected returns.

3.4. Cost-of-Living Crisis

We are experiencing the biggest Cost-of-Living crisis in over 30 years. Rising inflation and increasing costs have significantly impact on our residents – costs of food and bills have risen at rates that many residents cannot keep up with. Our residents are more vulnerable than most to this, due to the existing level of deprivation and the residual effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. We recognise the enormity of this crisis for our residents – which is why we made supporting them through the crisis one of the Council’s seven corporate priorities for 2023-26.

Building on progress and success of our combined response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Cost-of-Living Alliance brings together the Council, community and faith groups, and invited businesses in the borough to provide effective and holistic help for those in need at the earliest opportunity.

There is an extensive range of support available to residents during this challenging time, including:

- **BD Money** - BD Money is a local website here to help residents manage their money including maximising income, benefit entitlement, access to grants and debt advice.
- **Credit Union partnership** - BD Money has partnered with [Leeds Credit Union](#) to provide access to a range of loan and saving products to those who live and work in Barking and Dagenham.
- **Warm Spaces** - Together with local partners, we’ve created a network of warm spaces across the borough for residents, including in some of our Community Hubs, to meet other people and have a cup of tea to stay warm, without having to put on the heating at home as much.

- [Cosy Homes scheme](#) - we're continuing to work with E.ON to offer free cavity, external wall and loft insulation. More than 2000 households in Barking and Dagenham have received free measures since 2020.
- Food banks – across the borough can provide emergency food parcels if a resident is temporarily unable to provide for themselves.
- [Community Food Clubs](#) - Community Food Clubs led by community and voluntary sector partners offer free and discounted meals, food packages, food supplies and household goods.
- [Free holiday activities](#) for young people eligible for free school meals
- Council Tax Support - Eligible residents aged over 18 can get up to 25 per cent discount on their council tax bill depending on their income, savings, household and circumstances.
- Hardship schemes: Funds to support vulnerable households most in need of help with the rising living and energy costs such as gas, electric, water and food costs. Additional support also includes white goods, winter clothing, essentials for work related costs such as travel and broadband.

Further information about how the Cost-of-Living Alliance and the Council are supporting residents can be found [here](#).

4. Equality Impact Assessment Process

Where a savings proposal has a direct or indirect impact on residents, an Equality Impact Assessment has been completed. These assessments have outlined the proposal and the purpose of the change, identified the potential positive and negative impacts of the proposal and outlined steps that will be taken to maximise positive impact and mitigate or minimise negative impacts, where possible.

There are 78 savings proposals as part of this year's budget report. Of this 78, 23 of them were initially assessed as having potential impact on residents, the way that they access or experience services, or their outcomes, with an additional 7 requiring further development before it is clear whether the proposal will impact on residents. The other savings proposals were focused on optimising efficiencies in service delivery or changes to staffing (the impacts of which are dealt with through HR processes).

Of these 23 proposals, nine EIA screening tools have been completed and eight full EIAs. The other budget proposals (13) are put forward for a decision, subject to the proposal being further worked up, including consultation and a full consideration of the impact on residents with protected characteristics by services, in collaboration with the Strategy and Equalities Team. These will be presented for decision at a future point in time when the proposals have been further developed taking into account the results of the consultation and the equalities impact assessment.

5. Consultation

An online consultation, consisting of a budget quiz and a survey, was open between 20 December 2023 and 21 January 2024. The survey received 209 responses and 115 people took part in the budget quiz. 98.6% of the respondents were residents of the borough.

There was a budget Facebook Live Q&A on Tuesday 16 January 2024 with Cllr Rodwell, Leader of the Council, and Cllr Twomey, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Core services. It had 892 views.

55 local businesses were consulted on 2024/25 budget proposals at the Barking and Dagenham Business Forum conference on 24 January.

The results of the consultation are included in the budget report (Appendix F).

6. Cumulative Equality Impact of Budget Savings Proposal

The individual Equality Impact Assessments and screening tools have been collated and assessed for the cumulative impact on people with protected characteristics.

Many of the Equality Impact Assessments and screening tools found that the proposals would have either positive impacts on people with protected characteristics, or no material impact, due to the changes being proposed not changing the services that residents would receive, or how they access or experience a service, or their outcomes as a result.

Despite this, the overall cumulative assessment is that there is a **potential negative impact** because of the budget savings proposals for 2024/25. However, where potential negative impacts have been identified because of the savings proposed, there are actions outlined that will mitigate or minimise the negative impacts, as much as possible. Officers have considered how residents will be able to continue to access alternative support and services.

In light of the extremely challenging fiscal situation and the need for services to remain financially sustainable, the conclusion is that the Council's proposals for achieving savings are considered reasonable and have shown due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

7. Summary of impacts by protected characteristic

Based on individual Equalities Impact Assessments the following protected characteristics are potentially impacted negatively by one or more of the savings proposals for 2024/25:

Age

- **Reduce/adjust care packages for adults in receipt of double-handed care at home (Adults Social Care - 24 2 25 P&R S02)** The proposal to reduce or adjust care packages for adults in receipt of double-handed care at home may cause stress and anxiety. To minimise/mitigate this impact, the service will provide individual assessments to identify and provide alternative care to meet their needs. Alternative care will only be provided where it is safe to do so. There will be ongoing communication and support through the changes to reduce stress and anxiety.
- **Close Gascoigne Road Care Home (Adults Social Care- 24 2 25 P&R S06)** The residents who currently reside at this care home will have to move. For people under 65, there can be limited options and services available to meet their needs. Alternative provisions may be out of borough.

Reassessment of needs and alternative placements sought to meet individual needs, with every effort made to keep people in the borough.

- **Reducing community events programme – Barking Folk Festival and Eid at Eastbury (Strategy - 24 2 25 STR S01)** Barking Folk Festival attracts relatively small numbers of residents, but as one of our free community events, there will be some families who now miss out. However, the Council will continue to stage some free community event across the summer to minimise this impact.

Disability

- **Reduce/adjust care packages for adults in receipt of double-handed care at home (Adults Social Care- 24 2 25 P&R S02)**
The proposal to reduce or adjust care packages for adults in receipt of double-handed care at home may cause stress and anxiety. To minimise/mitigate this impact, the service will provide individual assessments to identify and provide alternative care to meet their needs. Alternative care will only be provided where it is safe to do so. There will be ongoing communication and support through the changes to reduce stress and anxiety.
- **Close Gascoigne Road Care Home (Adults Social Care- 24 2 25 P&R S06)** The residents who currently reside at this care home will have to move. For people under 65, there can be limited options and services available to meet their needs. Alternative provisions may be out of borough. Reassessment of needs and alternative placements sought to meet individual needs, with every effort made to keep people in the borough.
- **Deletion of the Mental Health Vocational Support Service (Community Solutions - 24 2 25COMSOL S07)** The service has an active workload of 200 residents, with secondary mental health conditions, who benefit from a targeted support offer informed by individual needs, strengths and vulnerabilities – they are unlikely to make best use of a generic service. To support these people, there will be a well-planned transition to alternative support services and a decommissioning plan to provide assurance and coordinate the process.

Race

- **Reducing community events programme – Barking Folk Festival and Eid at Eastbury (Strategy - 24 2 25 STR S01)** The Barking Folk Festival has sought to celebrate a range of cultures, so there will be a reduction in the number of opportunities the borough has to promote community cohesion via this event. However, the Council will continue to stage some free community events across the summer and support community cohesion through other activities.

Religion or Belief

- **Reducing community events programme – Barking Folk Festival and Eid at Eastbury (Strategy - 24 2 25 STR S01)** The Council will no longer be supporting the Eid at Eastbury event. In 2023, this amounted to a high per-head subsidy for those who attended the event. However, the Muslim community staged multiple other Eid events without Council support. Al Madina mosque is able to organise its own Eid event.
- **Review the Participation and Engagement Function (Community Solutions - 24 2 25COMSOL S04)** The Participation and Engagement Team work closely with and coordinate, build and maintain relationships with faith leaders, including supporting the Faith Leaders Network. The proposed service review reduces capacity in this team, and risks loss of local knowledge and relationships with the faith communities. The negative impacts could be minimised by ensuring the retained function adapts a work plan that prioritises limited resource and capacity to be targeted most effectively.

Socio-economic disadvantageⁱ

- **Reducing community events programme – Barking Folk Festival and Eid at Eastbury (Strategy - 24 2 25 STR S01)** Barking Folk Festival attracts relatively small numbers of residents, but as one of our free community events, there will be some families who now miss out. However, the Council will continue to stage some free community event across the summer to minimise this impact.
- **Deletion of the Mental Health Vocational Support Service (Community Solutions - 24 2 25COMSOL S07)** This proposal results in a reduction of support to help residents get closer to the job market. To support people who would have benefitted from this service, there will be a well-planned transition to alternative support services and a decommissioning plan to provide assurance and coordinate the process.
- **Controlled Parking Zones and proposed increases to parking permits (My Place - 24 2 25 MY PLACE S01, 23 2 25 MY PLACE S01 and 24 2 25 MY PLACE S02)** There is acknowledgement that increases in prices will affect those with socio-economic disadvantage more than others. However, there is no proposed increase in residents permits (which have stayed the same since 2016), and benchmarking with neighbouring boroughs show the changes to charges are relatively low and intended to ensure environmental improvements to the community.
- **Cemetery Fees and Charges (My Place – 24 2 25 MY PLACE S08)** Given that Barking and Dagenham is one of the most deprived areas in the country, and we are experiencing a national cost-of-living crisis. This means that rising costs will impact on people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage more than those not. This is the reason that fees have only been increased by 10% and not in line with surrounding local burial authorities, which are still more expensive.

There are no disproportionate impacts relating to:

- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

8. Monitoring

The lead officer for each proposal will be responsible for ensuring that the equality considerations remain at the forefront of decision making as each of these proposals are progressed and implemented. This will include monitoring impact as these proposals are developed and implemented. Equality Impact Assessments should be live documents which are updated as more information becomes available and therefore services will ensure the impact is closely monitored.

ⁱ Socio-economic disadvantage is not a Protected Characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010. LBBD considers the impact of decisions on people with socio-economic disadvantage as best practice given the levels of deprivation experienced in our borough.