

## APPENDIX 8

# Assessing the Impact on Protected Characteristics, the Welsh Language and Socio-Economic Disadvantage

For help to complete this form see the *How to Undertake an Equality Impact Assessment* leaflet. You are also welcome to contact Delyth Gadlys Williams, Policy and Equality Officer on ext. 32708 or [DelythGadlysWilliams@gwynedd.llyw.cymru](mailto:DelythGadlysWilliams@gwynedd.llyw.cymru) for further assistance.

The Council is required (under the Equality Act 2010) to consider the effect any change in policy or procedure (or the creation of a new policy or procedure), has on people with protected equality characteristics. The Council also has a general duty to ensure fairness and foster good relations. A timely Equality Impact Assessment must be undertaken before making any decision on any relevant change (i.e. which has an effect on people with protected characteristics).

The Council is also required, under the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011) to consider the effect of a change in any policy or procedure (or the creation of a new policy or procedure), in its opportunities for people to use Welsh and to ensure that Welsh is not treated less favourably than English. This document therefore ensures that these decisions protect and promote the use of the Welsh language.

From April 1st 2021 the Council has a duty to have due regard to tackling socio-economic disadvantage in strategic decisions.

### 1) Details

#### 1.1. What is the name of the policy / service in question?

The Council's Budget for 2025/26.

#### 1.2 What is the purpose of the policy / service that is being created or amended? What changes are being considered?

Setting an annual budget is a statutory requirement for the Council, as well as being a key step in maintaining good financial stewardship.

### **1.3 Who is responsible for this assessment?**

Dewi Morgan, Head of Finance.

### **1.4 When did you commence the assessment? Which version is this?**

March 2024, when considering the Council's financial outlook for the period 2025/26 to 2027/28 immediately following the establishment of the 2024/25 Budget. At that time, it was expected that it would be possible to set balanced budgets in these two years without further savings being discovered.

The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan was approved by Cabinet on 14 May 2024 – this plan identified a significant gap that would need to be filled by a combination of Council Tax increases and cuts if the settlement remained without an increase, as was being suggested at the time.

Detailed work commenced on 11 December 2024, the date of the announcement of the provisional local government revenue and capital settlement: 2025 to 2026.

The provisional settlement has shown that the Council will have to continue to seek financial savings for 2025/26 if we are to set a balanced budget, but there is a need for far fewer cuts than originally envisaged. Each of the individual savings' schemes has been subject to an equality impact assessment.

## **2) Action**

### **2.1 Who are the stakeholders or partners you need to work with to undertake this assessment?**

A number of actions have been taken when preparing this budget:

- Discussions between service accountants and senior officers in the departments to consider bids and savings plans.
- All Council members invited to a budget seminar on 28 January 2025.
- Close collaboration between the Chief Executive, Corporate Directors, and finance officers in the consideration of bids.
- Cabinet Members have had the opportunity to express their views on the assessment of bids.
- Governance and Audit Committee has the opportunity to scrutinise the budget on 6 February.
- Cabinet to consider the draft budget on 11 February and make a recommendation to the Full Council.
- Full Council to set budget for 2025/26 and set Council Tax rate on 6 March.

**2.2 What measures have you taken to engage with people with equality characteristics, regarding the Welsh language or with communities (either of place or of need) that live with socio-economic disadvantage?**

The budget outlined here seeks to continue to provide appropriate outcomes for all residents of the county. The increase in Government funding this year is not sufficient to meet demand for services as well as inflation, therefore in order to set a balanced budget there is a need to look for further financial savings.

Every savings plan that is now in the programme for implementation has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment at the time it was introduced. It is recognized that there is potential for an impact that would disproportionately affect those with protected characteristics, but the departments that own the savings have proposed efficiency savings plans rather than cuts. In addition, the individual savings plans have been subject to appropriate impact assessments that support the financial decisions presented here.

The 'Gwynedd Council Financial Strategy 2025-2026' public consultation went live on the Council's website on 28 November to 20 December 2024. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather public opinion of which public services were more important to them. The results will assist the advisers with establishing a financial strategy and setting a budget for the financial year 2025-2026.

**2.3 What was the result of the engagement?**

There has not been a consultation process.

## 2.4 On the basis of what other evidence are you operating?

The 2025/26 budget is framed on an "incremental" principle. That is, the 2024/25 budget will be used as a base budget, making a number of adjustments before arriving at a draft budget for 2025/26:

- Staff Pay Inflation
- Other Inflation (suppliers)
- Increase in levies
- Adjustments to reflect changes in demography
- Financial bids to address service pressures
- Technical adjustments to the budget
- Increase or decrease in borrowing and interest costs on balances
- Realising savings that have already been agreed
- Additional savings that must be introduced

All of the financial bids and savings plans have been subject to equality impact assessments themselves.

In planning our budgets for the continuity of Council services, our accountants have taken account of equality at all levels, using data and evidence on demographics and trends when planning at a strategic level. Similarly (but more specifically) in reaching a decision on individual savings plans, the heads of Council departments have analysed the impact of plans on services and monitored the impact appropriately.

As well as meeting inflationary pressures, all services have the right to submit a request for resource if they consider that an additional budget is needed to ensure that services continue. The amounts shown under the heading "pressures on services" recognize that the Council provides adequate funding to ensure that our financial arrangements do not adversely affect the level of services provided. Full details can be found in Appendix 2 and shows that a significant part of the total permanent revenue bids go to social care.

## 2.5 Are there any gaps in the evidence that needs to be collected?

No

### 3) Identifying the Impact

**3.1 The Council must give due regard to the effect any changes will have on people with the equality characteristics noted below. What impact will the new policy/service or the proposed changes in the policy or service have on people with these characteristics?**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>What type of impact?*</b>	<b>In what way? What is the evidence?</b>
<b>Race (including nationality)</b>	Positive	The fundamentals of our budget, and the system that leads up to it, is to have a positive impact on the lives of the people of Gwynedd.
<b>Disability</b>	Positive	The bidding procedure detailed in Appendix 2 includes additional expenditure on social services and delaying or eliminating savings in this area.
<b>Sex</b>	Positive	The fundamentals of our budget, and the system that leads up to it, is to have a positive impact on the lives of the people of Gwynedd.
<b>Age</b>	Positive	The recommended budget includes a significant increase in the budget of the Adults, Health and Well-being Department.
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Positive	The fundamentals of our budget, and the system that leads up to it, is to have a positive impact on the lives of the people of Gwynedd.
<b>Religion or belief (or non-belief)</b>	Positive	The fundamentals of our budget, and the system that leads up to it, is to have a positive impact on the lives of the people of Gwynedd.
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	Positive	The fundamentals of our budget, and the system that leads up to it, is to have a positive impact on the lives of the people of Gwynedd.
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Positive	The fundamentals of our budget, and the system that leads up to it, is to have a positive impact on the lives of the people of Gwynedd.
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	Positive	The fundamentals of our budget, and the system that leads up to it, is to have a positive impact on the lives of the people of Gwynedd.

<b>The Welsh language</b>	Positive	<p>The Council's budget includes ensuring that resources have been put in place to support fully bilingual services.</p> <p>The Council's Corporate Plan is the Council's main policy document and includes a number of schemes that promote the Welsh language. The budget is being drawn up to implement that policy.</p> <p>In drawing up the budget, particular attention was given to the Well-being of Future Generations Act, including the seven well-being goals. That includes addressing the sixth aim, 'Culture and the Welsh Language'.</p>
<b>Socio-Economic Disadvantage</b>	Positive	<p>The nature of the Council's services means that the pressures on services address socio-economic inequality since the measures recommended to deal with pressures on services take this into account.</p> <p>The Council's budgets, and in particular the successful bids, are designed to ensure that the authority can continue to direct resources to reduce discrimination on the grounds of socio-economic disadvantage.</p> <p>Any increase in the Council Tax rate is a financial pressure on the people of Gwynedd, but over 8,100 receive some support towards their Council Tax through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Elected members will come to a decision on the appropriate balance to be found between council tax increases and the need to provide services to the people of Gwynedd.</p>

- 3.2 The Council has a duty under the 2010 Equality Act to contribute positively to a fairer society by promoting equality and good relations in its activities regarding the following characteristics – age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race, gender reassignment, disability and pregnancy and maternity. The Council must give due attention to the way any change affects these duties.**

<b>General Duties of the Equality Act</b>	<b>Does it have an impact?*</b>	<b>In what way? What is the evidence?</b>
<b>Abolishing illegal discrimination, harassment and victimisation</b>	No	It is believed that none of the effects mentioned in 3.1 will lead to discrimination, harassment, or victimisation.
<b>Promoting equal opportunities</b>	Positive	Setting the budget is based on considerable work over a number of years of ensuring that a budget is in place that reflects the needs and requirements of the people of Gwynedd.
<b>Encouraging good relationships</b>	Neutral	The budget is set within clear boundaries, and the balance of successful bids and savings responds to the real pressures on services.

**3.3 How does your proposal ensure that you work in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011), to ensure that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than English and that you seize every opportunity to promote the Welsh language (beyond providing services bilingually) and increase opportunities to use and learn the language in the community?**

The Council's Plan is the Council's main policy document and includes a number of schemes that promote the Welsh language. The Cyngor Gwynedd Plan for 2023-28 was adopted by the Full Council on 2 March 2023 and reviewed in March 2024. The budget is being drawn up to implement that policy.

This year, in drawing up the 2025/26 Budget, the Council had to identify new savings plans, as well as consider the practicality of savings that had previously been identified as savings to be removed from departmental budgets and had already been approved in previous years. The statutory processes included the completion of an equality assessment which includes a question about impact on the Welsh language. When decisions about savings were discussed in the 2020/21 Budget report, it was concluded that **no impact** had been identified on the Welsh language but that there is a need to monitor this on implementation.

When preparing the Budget reports annually since 2021/2022, consideration is given to the intended impact of these budgets on the Welsh language. In line with practice an equality assessment has been completed which includes a question about the impact on the Welsh language. This procedure continues for 2025/26.

**3.4 What other measures or changes could you include to strengthen or change the policy / practice in order to have a positive impact on people's opportunities to use the Welsh language, and to reduce or prevent any adverse effects that the policy / practice may have on the Welsh language?**

This is a financial policy, and we believe that the current policy achieves the best of our legal and statutory capacity in that regard in terms of having a positive impact on the language.



**3.5 How does the proposal show that you have had due regard to the need to address inequality caused by socio-economic disadvantage? (Note that this is about closing inequality gaps rather than just improving outcomes for everyone)?**

The establishment of the Council's budget is the result of specific actions that take account of the previous year's base budget and the steps that then need to be taken to reflect adjustments that need to be considered to deal with budget pressures for the following year. In addition, the budgetary position of all Council services is subject to detailed review three times a year, to identify any areas where action is needed to deal with underspends or overspends – particularly if budgets are not sufficient to deal with pressures on services. The nature of the Council's services means that the pressures on services reduce socio-economic inequality as the measures to deal with pressures on services take this into account.

There is a need to present savings plans this year in addition to those that exist in the programme from previous years. All have been subject to a detailed assessment to ensure that inequality due to socio-economic disadvantage is reduced.

Some of the bids recommended to be funded include several specifically designed to reduce inequality caused by socio-economic disadvantage. These are detailed in Appendix 2.

**3.6 What other measures or changes might you include to strengthen or change the policy / practice to show that you have had due regard to the need to reduce disproportionate outcomes as a result of socio-economic disadvantage, in accordance with the Socio-Economic Act?**

The requests for additional expenditure to deal with service pressures ("bids") have been the subject of detailed assessments by a number of officers and members and we are therefore confident that all steps that are practically possible to reduce socio-economic disadvantage in drawing up the budget have been taken.

#### **4) Analysing the Results**

##### **4.1 Is the policy therefore likely to have a significant, positive impact on any of the above and what is the reason for this?**

There will be an overall positive impact from the continuation of services that were seen as priorities to be protected and funded to meet the additional level of demand.

##### **4.2 Is the policy therefore likely to have a significant, negative impact on any of the above and what is the reason for this?**

Any increase in Council Tax will have an impact on the financial position of the people of Gwynedd, and a higher increase than usual is recommended this year, which is necessary to ensure that the Council's financial position remains sustainable for the future.

##### **4.3 What should be done?**

Choose one of the following:

Continue with the policy / service as it is robust	✓
Adapt the policy to delete any barriers	
Suspend and delete the policy as the detrimental impacts are too big	
Continue with the policy as any detrimental impact can be justified	
No further action at this time because it is too soon to decide, or there is insufficient evidence	

##### **4.4 If continuing with the project, what steps will you take to reduce or mitigate any negative impacts?**

Departments will work to ensure that they mitigate any negative impacts.

**4.5 If you are not taking any further action to delete or reduce the negative impacts, explain why here.**

Elected members will come to a decision on the appropriate balance to be found between council tax increases and the need to provide services for the people of Gwynedd.

## **5) Monitoring**

**5.1 What steps will you take to monitor the impact and effectiveness of the policy or service (action plan)?**

It will be necessary for the Full Council to decide annually on the setting of the budget and tax rate.

The savings will be challenged at the Performance Challenge Meetings three times a year and reported to Cabinet as part of individual Cabinet Members' performance reports. In addition, a Savings Overview report will be presented to Cabinet and to the Governance and Audit Committee three times a year.