

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

This EqIA is for:	Catering & Facilities Management Service – Operating Model	
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Department and Team	Place, Catering and Facilities Management	Date: 28/1/2025
Assessment approved by:	Mark Walker	

EqIA form

Part A: Impact, consultation, and proposed mitigation

1 Executive summary and the general potential impacts of the proposal?

Introduction

The Catering and Facilities Management Service (CFM) is a large and complex set of frontline services, delivering a range of important discretionary services and products to a variety of customers, internal and external to the County Council. It has however faced a number of challenges in recent years the result of which is that the County Council has had to meet the budget shortfall created by the income generated not covering the full costs of providing those services.

A comprehensive exercise has been undertaken to explore how these valued services could continue to be delivered in a way that both continues to offer high quality services and products to customers but in a more financially sustainable way for the Council.

The Cabinet decision report on 6th February contains two elements, firstly seeking approval to work with a Preferred Partner to establish a Joint Venture partnership to deliver services going forward, and secondly seeks approval to increase prices in the Service to cover inflationary cost rises.

At this stage, this EqIA is a 'as best as can be' assessment of the proposal and is limited to giving consideration to information available and anticipated effects. Further regular monitoring would be required to ensure any negative impacts are appropriately mitigated.

Challenges Faced

As a predominantly Traded Service, CFM operates on a commercial basis and is expected to fully recover all of its costs. CFM has faced significant financial pressures over the last few years and is currently predicted to run at a shortfall of £2.5M for 2024/25 with the potential for the shortfall to increase in coming years.

These shortfalls have resulted from a number of events largely outside the Council's control, and as a result, the Council's priorities now are focussed on minimising exposure to future financial risk. Given that the Service is currently unable to trade on a break-even basis, this led to the exploration of potential options for the future operating model.

Review Work

Review work was undertaken to determine the most appropriate option for C&FM that would most effectively address the financial challenges whilst achieving desired outcomes.

The services in scope include:

- **Schools Catering** – including the provision of an estimated 5.28m school meals this year, 3.33m being free school meals and 1.96m being 'paid for' school meals. These meals are supplied to those schools who choose to buy into the Council's catering service.
- **Building Cleaning**
- **Facilities Management**
- **Landscaping and Grounds Maintenance**
- **County Enterprise Foods** – including provision of the Meals at Home service to primarily support older residents in their own homes.

A range of potential options from leaving the service unchanged, exiting the market completely or outsourcing some or all the service have been fully considered. Analysis undertaken has identified that these options did not present the same breadth of benefits that creating a joint venture partnership with an external partner who possesses the appropriate expertise, scale and experience to assist delivery of high-quality services and products in a more cost-effective way could.

As described in the Cabinet Decision Report, the Council's Place Select Committee has been actively engaged and consulted on the review and developments of proposals since December 2023. In spring 2024, a cross-party Place Select Committee task and finish review group of Elected Members considered all options in detail and identified that a joint venture partnership would be most beneficial to staff, customers and the council as it would cause minimal disruption, maximise the full potential of the service, protect staff terms and conditions while addressing the ongoing financial challenges faces. A dissenting view from one Councillor was recorded and considered throughout the scrutiny and decision-making process.

The advantages and disadvantages identified of a Joint Venture partnership were:

- **Advantages**
 - Keeps the service in its current format.
 - Would provide operational independence from the council and thus increased commercial capabilities.
 - Staff able to retain their current T&Cs.
 - As an independent entity, it will have the opportunity and flexibility to grow and design new services attracting more customers.
 - Council to retain influence over strategic direction of business.
- **Disadvantages**
 - Limited control over independent entity.
 - Possible staff resistance to accept transfer to third party.
 - Possible disruption to existing standards of service provided.
 - Some specialist smaller schools may be left without provision/service provider.

Following a cabinet decision in summer of 2024, a procurement process was designed involving competitive dialogue in order to maximise the potential advantages and minimise the disadvantages identified.

Potential Impacts

Financial: The service has not been able to cover all of its costs for last 5 years. The Council has therefore been subsidising the delivery of these discretionary services from its budget, having to effectively divert monies away from other core service provision which could be used to support the most vulnerable and those with protected characteristics in other ways.

If approved, the transfer of the services to a Joint Venture Partnership (including all staff and contracts with customers) should mitigate future financial risk to the Council through a partnership that can achieve cost efficiencies, reduced overheads, and offer improved performance. A partnership would be able to develop and implement a commercially sustainable model ensuring longevity for the service, its staff and the high-quality services for customers.

Service: If approved, the Council would retain an ongoing interest in, and influence over, the operation of the partnership through appropriate commercial and governance documentation setting out the arrangements. This partnership would give the Council input into key strategic decisions, such as school meal pricing, quality of products and services (including school meals and Meals at Home). In addition, the Council would have an appropriate presence on the Board of Directors allowing the Council a degree of control over quality of service and service levels provided.

Staff: CFM currently employs a total of 1900 on a part time/full time basis. All staff will initially transfer to the Joint Venture Partnership on commencement in line with the with 'TUPE' – the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations.

A broad demographic spread (of staff) is illustrated in the tables below.

Female	Male	Full time	Part time	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	65+
1574	326	173	1727	19	151	340	547	734	109

BME	Not BME	Not Declared	Declared disability	No declared disability	Not Declared
70	1324	506	44	1296	560

(BME: Black & Minority Ethnic)

A review of the demographics indicates that 83% of the staff are female and that 73% are over 46 years of age.

Central Support Services of the Council: CFM currently contributes £1.5M towards Central Support costs for support such as Human Resources, Finance, Procurement and Legal. Transferring CFM services to a Joint Venture Partnership would mean that this contribution would be lost and in turn would require work by the Council to understand and mitigate its impact. That piece of work has now commenced.

2.a Who are the main internal and external stakeholder groups that will be affected? *This question is to help you think about the potential groups that your decision/piece of work/policy might affect.*

Stakeholder groups	Tick
Children/Young people	Yes
Parents	Yes
Families	Yes
Residents	Yes
Older people	Yes
Employees/staff	Yes

Schools	Yes
People with disabilities	Yes
Other, please state	N/A
Other, please state	N/A

2.b Protected Characteristics: Is there a potential positive or negative impact based on:

Protected Characteristic or group	Positive impact (please describe)	Negative Impact (please describe)	Neutral impact/non applicable (please tick)	Mitigations (please add how you will address the negative impact or explain why it is not possible to do so)
Age	Possible – reducing the subsidy to the service through an effective Joint Venture Partnership will free Council funds up that they might be used to support older or younger people or indeed any group with protected characteristics.	Possible – the age workforce demographics is predominantly 46 years of age or higher. Further, the service provides meals to older adults through the Meals at Home Service as well as school children.		The Joint Venture Partnership will in the main carry on as it currently does on commencement, with all staff transferring in. The quality of product and services will be maintained in the proposed partnership but delivered in a more cost-effective manner.
Disability	No	Possible – County Enterprise Foods offers Supported Employment opportunities. The County Enterprise Foods, Meals at Home Service, offers nutritious home delivered meals and safe and well checks to those receiving care. Some disabled service users will receive services.		The potential Joint Venture Partnership will look to grow this element of the service providing further employment opportunities/potential. The proposed partnership should offer high quality products, in a more cost-effective way for the Council at a more affordable price.
Gender reassignment	N/A	N/A	Neutral	N/A
Pregnancy and maternity	N/A	N/A	Neutral	N/A
Race	N/A	N/A	Neutral	N/A
Religion or belief	N/A	N/A	Neutral	N/A
Sex	N/A	Possible - the make-up of the workforce is weighted towards women in the workforce.		The Joint Venture Partnership will in the main carry on as it currently does on commencement, with all staff transferring in.

Sexual orientation	N/A	N/A	Neutral	N/A
Marriage or Civil Partnership	N/A	N/A	Neutral	N/A
Care Experience*	No	Possible – the County Enterprise Foods, Meals at Home Service, offers nutritious home delivered meals and safe and well checks to those receiving care.		The Joint Venture Partnership will in the main carry on as it currently does on commencement. It will also look to develop the services offered by County Enterprise Foods.
People who use different languages, including British Sign Language	N/A	N/A	Neutral	N/A
Another group, please state	N/A	N/A	Neutral	N/A
Another group please state	N/A	N/A	Neutral	N/A

At this stage it is not feasible to be able to define or state with any certainty the impact on any groups with protected characteristics. The Council will retain a presence within the board of the Joint Venture Partnership if approved thereby allowing it to influence the strategic decisions of the partnership that might affect these groups. This influence would be used to actively seek to minimise and/or mitigate any negative impact to Protected Characteristics or group.

3.a Does this policy/activity rely on, relate to or mention any other policy, please detail.

No.

3.b Consultation and Engagement: Where there are potential negative impacts for protected characteristics these should be detailed including consideration of the equality duty, proposals for how they could be mitigated (where possible) and meaningfully consulted on:

A number of relevant mitigations for the groups with protected characteristics that might be impacted are detailed in the section above.

The formation of a Joint Venture Partnership should in general be positive for staff, customers and the Council with more cost-effective, high-quality, better value for money services being delivered with opportunities to grow the services being exploited. The Council will have ability to be involved in the governance of the partnership in order to actively monitor any adverse impacts and shape mitigations.

Ongoing engagement and communication with staff, customers and senior Elected Members has been a priority throughout the work to review the service and potential future models. A communication strategy and supporting plans were developed to ensure customers and staff have been informed of progress at key points throughout the work so far.

Trade Union colleagues have also been engaged and were involved in the Place Select Committee Scrutiny Task and Finish Group. They have also been involved in relevant competitive dialogue

sessions in the procurement process focussed on staffing matters.

Further briefings have been provided to schools through the Early Years and Schools Forum and the Primary Education and Trust Board. Additional updates for the Trade Unions have been provided through the Central Joint Consultative and Negotiating Panel and also the Place Department Joint Consultative Panel.

More formal staff engagement has included:

- Letter sent to all staff informing them of proposed changes by Service Director
- Regular updates via newsletter (Frontline Focus) by Service Director.
- Briefing Document updates distributed by Service Heads to all staff.
- Unions kept informed of all proposals and developments.

More formal customer engagement has included:

- Letters sent to schools informing them of proposed changes by Service Director.
- Briefings have been provided to schools through the Early Years, Schools Forum and the Primary Education and Trust Board.
- Other customers have been contacted and informed of the proposed changes.

A list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) to clarify various aspects of the process has been developed such as the effects on staff, training opportunities and the council's future role in the delivery of the services. This will be made available online and will continue to develop and be updated to ensure all colleagues have the latest information.

Additionally, should the proposal to form a Joint Venture Partnership be approved by the Cabinet, following further work to finalise and sign a contract, the Council would move into the mobilisation/transition phase. This will include formal consultation with staff, comprehensive communication updates, and support for all staff members to adapt to the changes effectively.

Staff meetings, webinars and consultation events across the county will be organised in weeks and months after any decision is taken to establish a joint venture partnership that staff can attend and ask any questions.

3.c Ongoing Monitoring: Please detail when you would like to revisit this policy/project/piece of work for review of equality impact.

Subject to approval of the Joint Venture partnership, the Council would retain an ongoing interest in, and influence over, the operation of the partnership. This would be in the form of an appropriate presence on the Board of Directors allowing the Council a degree of control over the quality of services, service levels and prices charged.

The Council would be able to continue to monitor the quality of service levels as well as the impact of any changes on those with Protected Characteristics by way of Staff Surveys, Service Level Surveys, Customer Satisfaction Surveys.

In addition, the Council would be in a position to monitor and influence that the Joint Venture partnership has an appropriate Equality, Diversity & Inclusion policy and a Social Value policy and that they are implemented appropriately.

3.d Publishing

Do you intend to publish this report? **Yes**

If you do not intend to publish this report, please explain why:

Do you intend to attach this EqlA to a report **Yes**

Part B: Feedback and further mitigation

4 Summary of consultation feedback and further amendments to proposal / mitigation

Once the Council has made a decision to enter into a Joint Venture Partnership, further statutory staff consultation and further engagement will begin.

Feedback received and lessons learnt from these sessions will be fed back into the mobilisation process and actioned as appropriate.

Next steps and extra information:

Completed EqlAs should be sent to equalities@nottscc.gov.uk

EqlA's should be published on the Nottinghamshire County Council website here, [Completed Equality Impact Assessments \(EqlAs\) | Nottinghamshire County Council](#) unless there is a good reason not to make this document available to the public. To get your EQIA published you should use this form, [Request a website content change or addition | Nottinghamshire County Council Intranet \(nottscc.gov.uk\)](#)

EqlA's should be attached to reports for decision makers to consider [Report writing | Nottinghamshire County Council Intranet \(nottscc.gov.uk\)](#)

Useful links:

[When you can provide a separate or single-sex service | Equality and Human Rights Commission \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](#)

[Health & Safety Management System | Nottinghamshire County Council Intranet \(nottscc.gov.uk\)](#)

[LGBTQ+ Staff Network | Nottinghamshire County Council Intranet \(nottscc.gov.uk\)](#)

[Black Workers Network | Nottinghamshire County Council Intranet \(nottscc.gov.uk\)](#)

[Disabled Employees Support Network | Nottinghamshire County Council Intranet \(nottscc.gov.uk\)](#)

[Corporate and departmental equalities groups | Nottinghamshire County Council Intranet \(nottscc.gov.uk\)](#) Please contact your departmental equality group chair for further support.