

Cabinet

3 March 2026

Entering into South West Flood and Coastal Shared Service

For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

Local Councillor(s):

Senior Leadership Team:

J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

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Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

- 1.1** Responding to the climate and nature crisis and responding to the impacts of climate change is a clear priority for Dorset Council as captured in its council plan. Recent extreme weather events have led to impacts such as flooding and coastal erosion, and it is important that Dorset develops a strategic approach to developing greater resilience for Dorset's economy, communities and housing.

These are issues that are areas of concern for Dorset's communities and residents, and the council recently ran a climate resilience citizen's panel that set out a series of concerns and future areas of focus. This work was supported by an advisory panel of key stakeholders including the Environment Agency and Wessex Water, and will feed into the development of an overarching climate adaptation strategy.

January's storm Chandra affected connectivity, with a corresponding impact on businesses and residents. With some areas seeing the highest ever recorded water levels, the county saw property flooding and risks to safety. As part of Dorset's emerging strategic approach to climate resilience, this paper identifies how joining the South West Flood and Coastal partnership can help

to provide a stronger plan and response for flooding and coastal erosion in Dorset that will better support Dorset's communities. Through improvements to infrastructure and supporting Dorset's residents to be empowered and better prepared, the county will become more resilient to climate change.

South West Flood and Coastal (SWFaC) is a shared service operating between BCP Council (host authority) and East Devon District Council ([South West Flood and Coastal](#)). They also provide a consultancy service to Torridge District Council, Exeter City Council, Teignbridge District Council and Dorset Council. It is proposed to improve service level by joining SWFaC, through their existing Shared Service Agreement (SSA), allowing existing Dorset Council staff to fully integrate into their structure and for SWFaC to report to Dorset Council as the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) service.

It is important to note that this has distinct advantages over simply accessing as a consultancy service. In particular, it gives access to greater resources as demand in Dorset increases and ensures Dorset's needs will be prioritised.

The new approach will strengthen Dorset's ability to bid for external Grant in Aid funding, increase capability, reduce reliance on consultancy support and deliver more projects, enabling communities to be more resilient. This collaborative approach will support a stronger community led focus, with town & parish councils, neighbouring authorities and external agencies working better together.

And it creates a single partnership working from BCP, through Dorset to East Devon, working cooperatively and in the best interests of all residents instead of the current fragmented approach.

2. **Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 Cabinet supports entering into a Shared Service Agreement for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management with South West Flood and Coastal (BCP Council & East Devon District Council).
- 2.2 Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Services to negotiate, authorise and enter into the Shared Service Agreement, following Dorset Council's governance processes for entering into agreements.

3. **Reason for the recommendation(s)**

There are many advantages to joining the partnership. Through this collaborative approach:

- Communities become more resilient to climate change
- Enables access to increased external funding through a larger capital programme
- The local economy is strengthened through improved network resilience
- As part of the council's strategic approach to deliver more climate resilience in line with the council plan priority, closer working is achieved with town & parish councils and the Environment Agency to support and empower local residents to better protect themselves and their properties
- The partnership is more attractive in the recruitment market
- Dorset gains greater resilience for service provision due to staff numbers
- Dorset Council supports the Environment Agency (EA) to meet their 'properties protected' targets
- Capital programmes are smoothed allowing consistent resourcing
- Dorset Council reduces reliance on consultancy support for day-to-day activities

4. **The report**

4.1 Taking a more strategic approach through collaboration with Dorset's town & parish councils, external organisations such as the Environment Agency and neighbouring authorities is key to providing better flooding resilience in Dorset (including the ultimate development of a climate adaptation strategy). The Environment Agency promote collaboration to meet local flooding needs within communities. Helping community engagement, participation and empowerment in response to flooding supports:

- New social practices and processes
- New social relationships working collectively and collaboratively
- Changing routines and beliefs, learning
- Local needs in and within communities

Joining the SWFaC partnership will be a key step in enhancing this collaborative approach, leading to a stronger community focused response to flooding and coastal erosion.

4.2 SWFaC acts with BCP as the host body. SWFaC have a proven track record of securing external funding through the national Grant in Aid programme provided by DEFRA and administered by the Environment Agency. SWFaC is structured to provide specialist experts to manage relevant assets and secure

additional funding. By entering the shared service, consistent management of the BCP, Dorset and East Devon coastline will be provided.

- 4.3 To join the shared service, staff from Dorset Council's existing FCERM team will move into SWFaC with BCP as the host organisation. Dorset Council will then see the collective benefit of having access to a greater pool of knowledge, experience and bidding power. Increasing the size of SWFaC has advantages over the existing arrangement as work demands can be spread across the partnership, reducing peaks and troughs of workload.
- 4.4 It is proposed that current Dorset Council employees would transfer to the host organisation, BCP Council, who manage SWFaC. This will be in line with TUPE legislation ensuring protection of their current pay, terms and conditions.
- 4.5 The SWFaC Shared Service model is focused on staffing and skills. Each Council within the agreement retains control of their objectives and budgets. The governance is such that the service reports to a board of Client Managers (one at each authority) and Councillors (relevant Cabinet Member at each authority).
- 4.6 A wider pool of staff will provide access to a greater breadth of shared knowledge and expand the range of particular specialists across the member authorities. Collaboratively working through the partnership and with other external agencies is likely to yield greater results, the outcomes of which will be the provision of an enhanced level of service for our communities and greater external funding investment in Dorset.

5. **Alternative options considered**

- 5.1 Continue to work as Dorset Council FCERM, supplemented by consultancy support from SWFaC and private sector consultants.
 - 5.1.1 Retaining the current model would simply demonstrate how the Local Lead Flood Authority duty is discharged by Dorset Council. However, Dorset Council can clearly show how the duty is discharged through the governance of the recommended option.
 - 5.1.2 Retaining the current model would be sub optimal as it doesn't benefit from the advantages of working as part of a larger team with a wider pool of knowledge and specialisms. Through the partnership Dorset Council would see greater collaborative working with neighbouring authorities and government agencies. Working within a larger structure is likely to support better training and staff development, whereas the limited size of Dorset

Council's FCERM team restricts these benefits. Moving to the recommended model is likely to involve a short period of disruption for existing Dorset Council employees working in this team, although it's anticipated that the greater benefits of the recommended option will be quickly realised.

6. **Legal considerations**

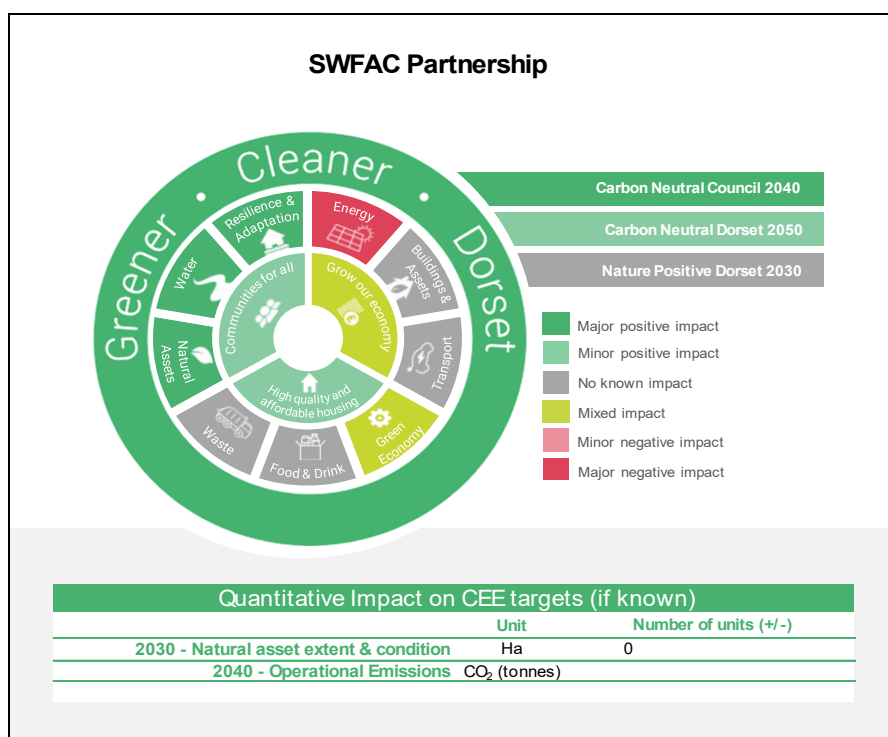
- 6.1 BCP to act as single employer for any growth of the shared service (recruitment).
- 6.2 The method for our employees to join the partnership if a single employer model is used.
- 6.3 As a shared service, Dorset Council would continue to discharge the Local Lead Flood Authority duties, with SWFaC staff undertaking those objectives.
- 6.4 The shared service agreement will include an appropriate exit strategy/clause, as is usual for this type of agreement.

7. **Financial implications**

- 7.1 Joining SWFaC is likely to increase growth of the capital programme through bids for national grant funding to deliver potential projects.
- 7.2 Each authority maintains control of their FCERM budgets with revenue maintenance and capital project budgets hosted independently.
- 7.3 The Dorset Council investment into the Shared Service will be reflective of the current net cost of running the current service. The budget for the shared service would reflect the people costs and any associated revenue costs such as equipment / IT / training / HR, etc.

8. **Natural environment, climate & ecology implications**

- 8.1 A positive impact on climate resilience is expected through a programme that improves resilience. The climate wheel demonstrates an anomaly around energy that is incorrect, this is because the climate wheel negatively scores projects relating to assets that do not introduce renewable energy options. As the assets relating to FCERM do not relate to buildings, the energy impact should be regarded as neutral.



9. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1 Improved resilience against property flooding and risks to health arising from flooding and coastal erosion.

10. Other implications

- 10.1 None identified

11. Risk implications

- 11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Low

12. Equalities

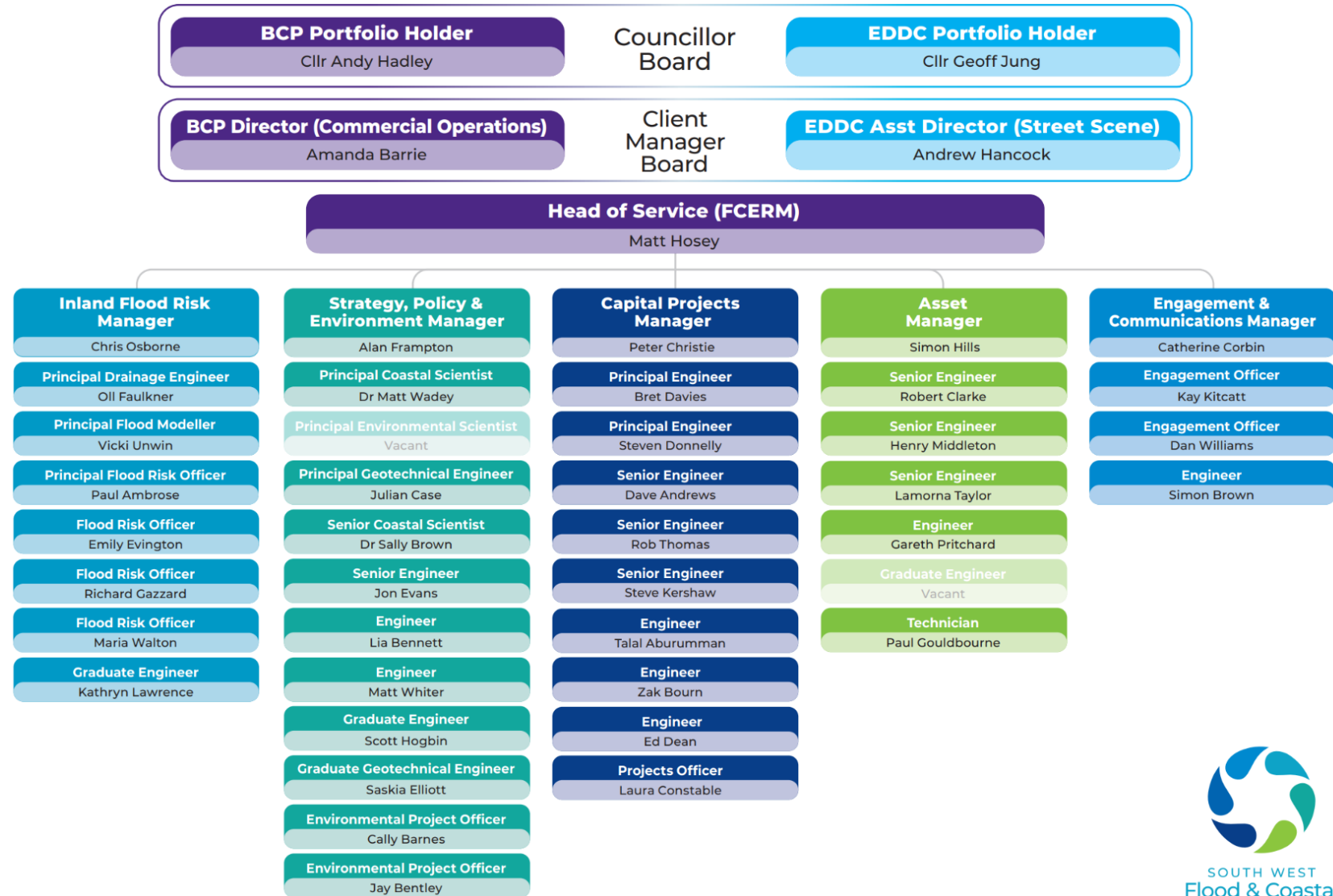
12. See 13. 4

13. Appendices

- 13.1 Existing South West Flood and Coastal Structure Chart

South West & Flood & Coastal Service Structure

14 August 2025



13.2 Joining the shared service follows the successfully established model of the Hampshire and West Sussex coastline <https://coastalpartners.org.uk/>. The existing Head of Service of SWFaC was instrumental in setting up and managing this partnership and SWFaC operates using the same form of agreement.

13.3 Climate wheel outputs

ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	major negative impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	mixed impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	major positive impact
Water	major positive impact
Resilience and Adaptation	major positive impact

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Grow our economy	neutral
High-quality and affordable housing	minor positive impact
Communities for all	minor positive impact

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
Energy	
Provide advice and/or signpost business to sources of information on how they can become more resource efficient	There are no obvious opportunities within the scope of FCERM to introduce this.
consider opportunities to generate renewable energy on the land	Options to be considered where appropriate
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	

Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	
No recommendations found for this category	
Natural Assets & Ecology	
Use the opportunity to connect existing habitats using wildlife corridors	FCERM Strategies seek to protect habitats or mitigate the impacts of flooding or coastal erosion on them. Watercourses will act as wildlife corridors.
Water	
No recommendations found for this category	
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	

13.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Dorset Council Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM)

Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

Proposal for Dorset Council Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) to potentially join the South West Flood and Coastal Partnership (SWFaC).

2. Is this a (please delete those not required):

Other (please explain)

This is a proposal which would enable an improved delivery model for flood and coastal erosion risk management across the Dorset Council area. Responding to the climate and nature crisis is a clear priority for Dorset Council with a cross-cutting impact of both flooding and coastal erosion. Greater resilience would be gained by joining the partnership and has positive benefits for our economy, communities and housing.

The proposal to join the South West Flood and Coastal partnership would help to provide a stronger plan and response for flooding and coastal erosion in Dorset. Ultimately, the proposed operating model seeks to better support our communities. Through improvements to infrastructure and supporting our residents to be empowered and better prepared, we will improve our resilience.

Is this (please delete those not required):

Internal (employees only)

External (residents, communities, partners)

Both internal and external

This proposal almost entirely impacts internal employees as it will affect our staff. The proposal is anticipated to bring positive outcomes by switching to the improved delivery model, therefore no negative impacts for any external people have been identified so far.

Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

Joining the partnership will give Dorset Council access to a greater skills base and allow the BCP, Dorset and East Devon coastline to be managed through one body. Inland flood management will benefit in the same way. The overall objective is to better manage our assets and flood duties, therefore positively benefiting our communities.

Please provide the background to this proposal.

South West Flood & Coastal provides a coordinated shared service between BCP Council and East Devon District Council. The partnership is well established and recognised as a strong delivery model for effective flood and coastal erosion management. If political support is given by BCP and Dorset Council's Cabinets, Dorset Council's FCERM team will join the partnership lead by BCP. The mechanism for this may be transfer under TUPE.

Evidence gathering and engagement

What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g national statistics, employee data):

Employee data has been used for this assessment. This was produced on 3rd February 2026.

What did this tell you?

The raw data gathered has provided insight into the potential impact to Dorset Council (DC) employees should a TUPE transfer to the SWFaC partnership occur. Any TUPE transfer legally protects an employee's rights when a service is

transferred to a new employer, and this includes contractual terms and conditions of employment.

The raw data is attached and indicates a largely neutral impact on existing DC employees; however this would need to be explored further should a TUPE transfer be confirmed and measures agreed.

The current cabinet paper for this proposal anticipates that employees will continue to work flexibly and in a hybrid manner across the partnership with desk availability at all three Councils (BCP, DC and EDDC.) Staff are likely to be able to choose where they work with meetings at either location from time to time

Whilst the detail is not known yet, there is likely to be some consultation about an appropriate centre of duty, with the requirement for travel across the geographical partnership area to be defined and confirmed. As this is clarified it will be necessary to understand the impact on employees, specifically those with caring responsibilities and disabilities.

Employees are currently required to travel as part of their roles and responsibilities; however, this geographical area may become wider depending on their role. It is not anticipated that employees will suddenly start travelling a lot more than the currently do as a lot of work is done online. Senior leaders are committed to ensuring work bias suits an individual's location.

Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

There has been early high-level engagement with both employees impacted by this proposal, as well as engagement with Corporate Directors, Heads of Service and Service Managers.

Trade Union Colleagues have been engaged as part of the early proposals for this potential change. As the Cabinet paper continues to progress through the approval and consideration process, engagement with the trade unions will consider accordingly.

HR Colleagues have been involved in the analysis of the EQiA data related to this proposal.

Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

Further advice and guidance is sought from the Equalities and Diversity Officer in relation to this point.

Is an EQiA required?

Yes

Assessing the impact on different groups of people

For each of the protected characteristics groups below, please explain whether your proposal could have a positive, negative, unclear or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is and if unclear or negative please explain what mitigating actions will be taken.

use the evidence you have gathered to inform your decision making.

consider impacts on residents, service users and employees separately.

if your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option.

see guidance for more information about the different [protected characteristics](#).

Key to impacts

Positive Impact	the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Neutral Impact	Two-thirds of this grouping are fifty years old or above, however there is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups. Any consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Disability	Unclear	The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Care Experience	Neutral Impact	There is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups. The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Neutral Impact	There is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups. The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral Impact	There is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups. The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Pregnancy and maternity	Unclear	The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated. Policy and legislative additional protections are in place for employees which will be followed during any consultation.
Race and Ethnicity	Neutral Impact	There is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups. The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Religion and belief	Neutral Impact	There is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		groups. The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Sex (consider men and women)	Neutral Impact	There is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups. The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Sexual orientation	Neutral Impact	There is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups. The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
People with caring responsibilities	Unclear	The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Rural isolation	Unclear	The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Socio-economic deprivation	Neutral Impact	There is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups. The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Single parents	Unclear	The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Armed forces communities	Neutral Impact	There is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups. The consultation will provide

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

Age

All employees will be treated equally, regardless of age; there is no retirement age for the workforce.

Where there are pathways to employment (care leavers between the age of 16 and 25), employees who are in scope, we will need to ensure that we meet our Corporate Parenting responsibilities. If this applies, the Apprenticeship and Work Based Learning Team will have been made aware.

We will provide equality of opportunity for all employees and will ensure that individual differences and the contributions of all employees are recognised and valued throughout any consultation process.

Disability

Reasonable adjustments can be requested to help remove or reduce a barrier faced by employees who have a disability or health condition.

As part of business-as-usual processes, we will continue to support colleagues through their new or existing Reasonable Adjustment Passports and update them to reflect any changes in travel requirements.

Pregnancy and Maternity

If employees are on family leave, they will be engaged with and communicated to in a fair and inclusive way in line with TUPE Legislation. They will be offered support to ensure that they are able to take part equally to all employees.

We do not hold information centrally on employees who may currently be pregnant, however, this information may be known to managers at a local level if the employee has chosen to make their manager aware. We will encourage all employees as part of any consultation process to make us aware of any concerns or issues that may impact on their ability to participate.

Sex (Men and Women)

Change can be daunting as it may impact long-established care arrangements that are difficult to change. Therefore, as part of any consultation, employees will have an

opportunity to express their circumstances for consideration. Efforts will be made to balance the individual's needs with those of the business.

All employees have a statutory right to request flexible working arrangements.

Rural Isolation

The centre of duty for the new service will be is not yet clear, which may cause uncertainty. Employees are currently required to travel as part of their roles and responsibilities; however, this geographical area may become wider depending on their role. It is not anticipated that employees will suddenly start travelling a lot more than the currently do as a lot of work is done online. Senior leaders are committed to ensuring work bias suits an individual's location.

It is anticipated there will continue to be a balance between office working and option of hybrid working based on business need. We will work with employees to understand and work through any issues and apply excess travel provisions to help mitigate any impact.

Social-economic

The social economic local protected characteristic focusses on the place a person lives. It is noted that this proposed transfer may cause stress and anxiety due to uncertainty. During this time, the workforce is supported through engagement with managers and leaders, and a range of resources is available to help employees.

Lone Parents

Although there are no employees who have declared themselves lone parents, we must be mindful that an individual's surrounding support system can vary, regardless of whether they are a lone parent. We must be aware that two thirds of employees have not provided a response to this characteristic and this should continue to be explored through any TUPE consultation period.

People with caring responsibilities

Change can be daunting as it may impact long-established care arrangements that are difficult to change. Therefore, as part of any consultation, employees will have an opportunity to express their circumstances for consideration. Efforts will be made to balance the individual's needs with those of the business.

All employees have a statutory right to request flexible working arrangements.

The service will continue to refer to the Good Practice Guidance for Employees who are Carers to ensure that our change management process reflects the needs of carers. We also need to be mindful that two thirds of employees did not respond.

General Initial Reflections

We will review our assessment as required based on the information known at various points in the proposed transfer process, specifically after Cabinet Review and should any proposed TUPE transfer proceed.

All employees will be treated equally regardless of their protected characteristic(s). However, if someone declares a protected characteristic, reasonable adjustments will be made to enable them to fully participate in the consultation process, if applicable. This will also continue after the outcome, ensuring that reasonable adjustments/ adaptations are implemented to positively support those with protected characteristics.

14. Background papers

14.1 None

Report sign-off

15. This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)