
West Berkshire Council Strategy 2023 – 2027 Consultation Feedback - Summary Report

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	23 March 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Lynne Doherty
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	15 March 2023
Report Author:	Catalin Bogos – Performance, Research and Consultation Manager
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4312a

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 For Members to note the feedback received from the consultation on the Draft Council Strategy that will inform the updated final draft Council Strategy 2023-2027. The updated final draft Council Strategy 2023-2027 shall be considered for approval at the Council meeting in May 2023.
- 1.2 A new strategy is needed to set the Council's direction for the next four years by defining new priority areas based on changes to the external and internal information about residents' needs, including the feedback received from our residents' surveys and consultations.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the feedback received to the draft Council Strategy that will inform the updated final draft Council Strategy 2023-2027.
- 2.2 To note the updated final draft Council Strategy 2023-2027 shall be considered for approval at the Council meeting in May 2023.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	The MTFs will be fully aligned with the new Council Strategy.
Human Resource:	None.

Legal:	None.			
Risk Management:	None.			
Property:	None.			
Policy:	The Council Strategy is part of the Council's approved Policy Framework.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Executive is to note the feedback from consultation in finalising the Council Strategy aims to expand the understanding of the impact of the proposed outcomes and priorities have on local residents and reduce inequalities.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			The new Council Strategy is setting the strategic direction for the next four years with expected improvements on a number of prioritised areas. Changes in policy impacting on groups of population with protected characteristics will involve specific Equality Impact Assessments.
Environmental Impact:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			The report highlights respondents' views about proposed outcomes in relation to protecting the environment.
Health Impact:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			The report highlights respondents' views about proposed outcomes in relation to health and wellbeing.

ICT Impact:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			The report highlights respondents' views about proposed outcomes in relation to ways of delivering services, including using ICT.
Digital Services Impact:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			The report highlights respondents' views about proposed outcomes in relation to ways of delivering services, including digitisation of services.
Council Strategy Priorities:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			The report highlights respondents' views about proposed/draft priorities which will impact on finalising these priorities.
Core Business:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			By its definition, the Council Strategy sets the agenda for the Council's core business.
Data Impact:		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The report expands the evidence base used to produce the Council Strategy by reporting respondents' views on the draft Council strategy 2023 – 2027.
Consultation and Engagement:	This paper reports to findings following public consultation on the draft Council strategy 2023 – 2027.			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The Council has consulted on the draft Council Strategy 2023 – 2027, as a new strategy is needed to cover the next electoral cycle setting up the priority areas and the outcomes the Council will be focusing on whilst continuing to deliver all the mandatory services.
- 4.2 This paper is summarising the findings of the consultation on the draft Council Strategy 2023 – 2027. These findings will inform the process of finalising the Council Strategy document before asking the Council to approve it at their meeting in May 2023.
- 4.3 The response rate to the consultation has exceeded the levels achieved for previous similar consultations on the draft council strategies. Responses have been received from residents, partner organisations and service providers, councillors and council employees.
- 4.4 The majority of the respondents stated that they 'Agree' or 'Strongly agree' with the proposed priorities and associated outcomes. 'Protecting and enhancing our environment' is the priority with the highest percentage of positive responses (75%).

'Stronger communities' had the lowest (63%) as a relatively higher proportion of respondents (23%) 'Neither agreed nor disagreed' with this priority.

- 4.5 Some of the residents who responded to the consultation provided additional qualitative feedback to express support for particular aspects of the priorities and outcomes included in the draft strategy or to highlight areas that they would prioritise.
- 4.6 The qualitative responses have been grouped in a few broader themes. The feedback received from respondents will be considered by officers and councillors in the process of finalising the Council Strategy 2023 - 2027.
- 4.7 A final version of the Council Strategy 2023 – 2027 will be submitted for approval by the full Council after the May 2023 elections, together with a report outlining any changes made to the draft strategy.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 The Council Strategy 2023 - 2027 will set out what the Council aims to achieve over the next four years. This includes its priority areas and the outcomes it seeks to achieve through the delivery of the strategy.
- 5.2 A new strategy is needed as the previous Council Strategy expires on the 31st of March 2023.
- 5.3 Comments were invited on the draft Council Strategy 2023 – 2027 (see Appendix C) between 13th January and 26th February 2023. Comments were able to be submitted by the public or organisations via an online survey or through paper copies. The consultation was published on the Council's website and social media channels, and media releases were sent to the local media. Key target groups, organisations and stakeholders were also contacted directly by email and encouraged to comment. Posters have been distributed and displayed at key Council's locations promoting the consultation and hard copies were available at corporate buildings.

Background

- 5.4 A total of 178 responses were received in response to the consultation exercise, which is higher than the numbers received in response to previous similar consultations on draft council strategies. These responses can be summarised as follows (multiple options selection was allowed):
 - (a) 161 (90.4%) from residents of West Berkshire;
 - (b) 8 (4.5%) from West Berkshire Business owners,
 - (c) 3 (1.7%) from employees of a West Berkshire Business
 - (d) Other responses were from West Berkshire Council employees (9.6%), Town and Parish Councillors (5.6%), District Councillors (1.1%), partner organisations (2.2%), West Berkshire Council service providers (0.6%), other (Education and School governors).

- 5.5 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the public sector equality duty which, in the exercise of its functions, includes the requirement to have due regard to eliminate discrimination, to advance equal opportunity and foster good relations. As a result it was decided to offer an opportunity for respondents to provide information on their equalities characteristics:
- (a) The age groups 45-54, 55-64 and 65-74 had the highest proportion of respondents (ranging from 14.9% to 33.1%).
 - (b) A total of 91.1% of the people that responded were from a White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British ethnic background.
 - (c) Of the total respondents: more females responded to the consultation and 0.8% selected 'Other' for their gender;
 - (d) 27.5% of total respondents consider themselves to have a disability.
 - (e) 9.6% were the primary carer for an elderly or disabled person.
 - (f) Between 23% and 37% of respondents did not respond to some of the equalities questions.

6 Themes resulting from the qualitative analysis of the responses to the consultation

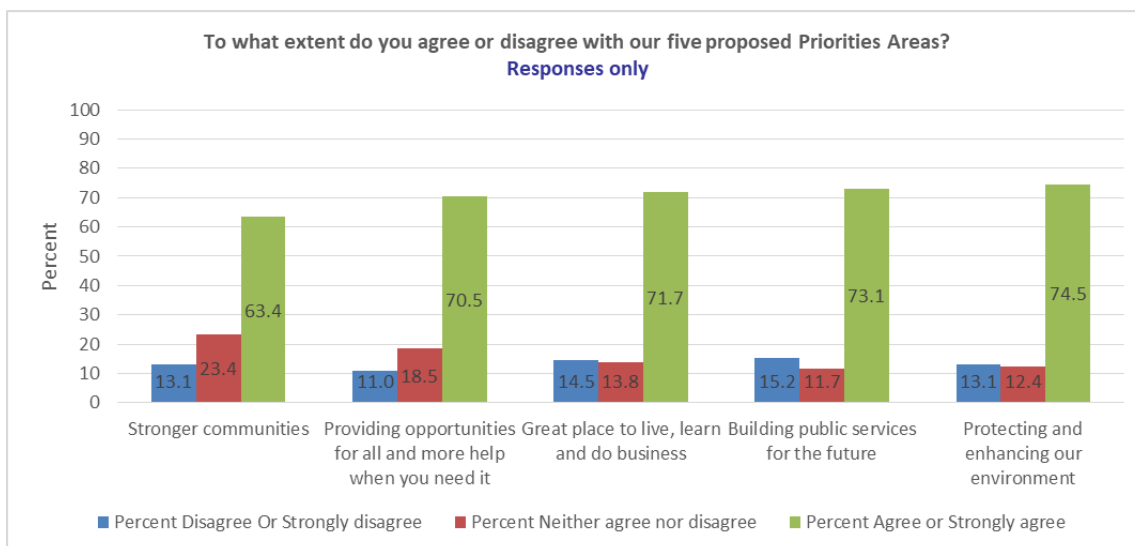
- 6.1 A number of distinct themes have resulted from the qualitative analysis of the 178 responses received as part of the consultation activity.
- 6.2 The themes are listed starting with the one that included the highest number of comments/responses.

Theme 1: Clarity about the reassurance provided that the Council will continue to deliver the statutory functions

- 6.3 The vast majority of respondents (139 of 173 respondents) agreed that it is clearly stated in the strategy that the Council will continue to deliver its statutory functions, in addition to the proposed priority areas of the Council Strategy.
- 6.4 21 of the 34 respondents that disagreed with this statement went on to explain their answers through similar responses to the other questions of the survey and which are listed below.

Theme 2: Positive feedback on the proposed priorities and commitments

- 6.5 68 of the 147 respondents who rated the priorities, 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' with **all six** priority areas. Individual priorities scored between 108 (75%) positive responses for 'Protecting and enhancing our environment' to 92 (63%) for 'Stronger communities' priority. For the latter there is a relatively higher proportion of people that provided a neutral answer (23%), compared to 12% to 19% for the other priorities.



6.6 Comments included: ‘These areas of importance are central to us all’, ‘We agree with and support your priority areas, but would like to know more. [additional suggestions are provided for partnership working]’, ‘Agree with the priorities but would like to see the details about how these will be delivered, ‘Looks like they have been given good thought and analysis.’, ‘All these are vital parts of what WBDC should do, and they should not be played off against one another.’, ‘I agree with them.’, ‘I think that the priority areas are wholly appropriate and reflecting high quality services provided by the Council and the ambition to improve them further.’

Theme 3: Priorities and commitments are too generic

6.7 21 of 178 respondents expressed views that the way in which the priorities and outcomes were written could potentially make it difficult to measure progress towards the delivery of the Council’s priorities. They suggested that ‘SMART’ (Simple, Measurable, Achievable, realistic and Time bound) objectives should be included. Some indicated that the text should be clearer. A few respondents suggested that financial information for the delivery of the priorities and outcomes should be included.

Theme 4: Roads’ resurfacing and fixing potholes

6.8 18 of the 178 respondents commented that repairing or resurfacing the roads in the district should be prioritised. Some of the answers were more specific, for example mentioning repairs of rural roads, re-painting faint markings, or the broader aspects of path and pavement repairs, addressing drainage issues and overhanging vegetation.

Theme 5: Planning policies and planning process to protect the environment and heritage

6.9 14 of the 178 respondents added comments suggesting that planning should be prioritised. Their comments included demands to ensure that housing developments are allowed only in the right places, are accompanied by the appropriate developments of infrastructure and services (schools, health centres, roads, shops/supermarkets etc.) and that the unique character and ‘village’ heritage is preserved and conservation areas are protected. Some also commented about improvements needed regarding the timeliness of the planning process. It is also suggested that the Council Strategy should

reference key initiatives and infrastructure developments included in the Council's Capital Programme.

Theme 6: Climate emergency actions

6.10 14 of the 178 answers showed support for prioritising actions to address the climate emergency. A range of suggestions have been made, including setting up the response to the climate crisis as the overarching priority, greener transport/more charging points for Electric Vehicles, installing recycling bins in all public areas, decarbonisation of public services, nature-based solutions to address climate resilience, flood protection, air quality (increasing tree canopy, more climate- and nature- friendly use of land, procurement processes to support a green economy, the Council to support change of behaviours relating to pollution and litter, increase biodiversity, water quality of rivers, river habitats, environmental housing policies, dis-investment from petrochemical industry. Five respondents consider it important that the Council should show leadership, be an exemplar in this area and produce better plans to tackle climate emergency related issues.

6.11 In addition, four respondents expressed some disagreement with prioritising climate emergency actions, considering that the terminology of 'climate emergency' should be better defined, the evidence should be clearer and actions costed. They made links with the cost of such actions compared to the benefits which could be achieved, expressing reservations about deciding on massive spending on this area.

Theme 7: Improve recycling

6.12 12 of the 178 responses added suggestions to enhance recycling. These suggestions focused on a number of specific areas, including easier access to the waste and recycling centres (by reducing rules, eliminate booking and charges), to add recycling bins to all public areas, that a wider range of materials should be recycled through kerb collection service, to reduce the number of bins/boxes by adopting mixed recycling to make it easier for residents to recycle more, the availability of food waste collection should be expanded to reach all residents.

Theme 8: Support businesses, the high street, town centres and rural communities (local shops etc.)

6.13 12 of the 178 respondents highlighted that it is important to support businesses, our high streets, our rural and small businesses. Responses included suggestions that individual shops should be supported, employers enabled to remain in the district, support should be provided to local farmers. Expected outcomes in this area relate to thriving town centres and services available locally to residents in urban and rural areas.

Theme 9: Focus on health and wellbeing, provide recreational, sports and leisure facilities

6.14 11 of the 178 responses included suggestions about focusing on the health and wellbeing of the residents. These range from prioritising working with the Council's health sector partners (e.g. Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Partnership) to build a dementia-friendly world, or continuing to support

young people's mental health after they leave school, to ensuring sport and leisure facilities (indoors and outdoors) are available for the benefit of residents' health and wellbeing.

Theme 10: Streets' and other public spaces' cleanliness

6.15 9 of the 178 respondents provided comments recommending that the strategy should include outcomes relating to cleaner streets and public spaces. The areas mentioned include care of green spaces, tackling overhanging greenery, roadside rubbish, fly tipping, more street/pavement sweeping, keeping pavements and car parking areas tidy.

Theme 11: Supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable residents, including helping them to help themselves

6.16 8 of the 178 respondents commented on the importance of supporting the most vulnerable residents. The majority of these answers focused on the importance of providing help to people with additional needs, disabilities and carers. Suggested actions include, to encourage vulnerable people to be part of the community, to ensure provision for children with special educational needs, to support older people, including by providing quality care homes and tackling loneliness/isolation. In contrast, three of the responses suggested that people should be helped to help themselves or to reduce reliance on public services which they see as unaffordable.

Theme 12: Education, skills, apprenticeships

6.17 8 of the 178 responses provided comments to highlight the importance of education and skills for prioritisation in the Council Strategy. They fed back that education is an essential outcome for residents and that they would like to see better schools which should not be overcrowded. In addition to focusing on education attainment and vocational education, comments suggest a focus on other educational opportunities such as apprenticeships, upskilling people already in employment, but also on ensuring sufficient teachers for West Berkshire's schools.

Theme 13: Public transport/alternative transport options

6.18 7 of the 178 responses considered that public transport and alternatives to the more polluting options should be included in the Strategy. Some also linked the prioritisation of public transport with enabling residents to opt for solutions supporting a cleaner environment. It is also seen as an essential service for rural communities. Better train service to London is also mentioned, in particular following the electrification of the line.

Theme 14: Other feedback

6.19 The responses to consultation included other points that are not part of the themes listed above and had been mentioned only by a few people:

- Prioritisation of housing, including affordable
- Ensuring a free library service

- Give a particular priority a higher/lower importance
- Bidding for funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Access to buildings or to bus stops for people with disabilities
- Health and police services to be better resourced, to increase their availability and visibility
- Some suggesting that the Council Tax burden upon payers should be reduced (and reduce services), whilst others mentioning higher Council Tax and better services
- Applying the culture, processes, business models and technologies of the Internet era to respond to customer's raised expectations of service delivery
- Public toilets availability
- Town and Parish Councils and partner organisations welcomed commitments in the strategy about working together and fed back that they are open for stronger partnership working.

Proposals

6.20 It is proposed that the feedback from the public consultation, summarised in this paper, is considered as part of the process of finalising the Council Strategy 2023 – 2027 and that the response to this feedback, together with the final version of the Strategy, are reported for approval to the Council's meeting post-election.

7 Other options considered

7.1 An alternative option was to continue to focus on the priorities set in 2019 for the Council Strategy 2019 – 2023. However, this option was disregarded as significant changes in the internal and external context in which the Council operates, evolving needs of our residents as highlighted by the evidence base and by the feedback received from residents through the representative residents' survey and from consultation exercises.

8 Conclusion

8.1 A good level of response was received to the consultation on the Draft Council Strategy 2023 - 2027 from individuals and on behalf of a number of organisations.

8.2 The feedback received in response to the public consultation on the Council Strategy shows that a high proportion of residents agree or strongly agree with the priority areas and the outcomes suggested in the draft Council Strategy.

8.3 Some of the respondents have provided additional details, highlighting the importance of particular priorities or outcomes for them. All responses have been analysed and grouped by themes in order to inform the process of finalising the Strategy, before asking the Council to approve it, together with the response to the feedback received from consultation, in May 2023.

9 Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix A - Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) - Stage One
- 9.2 Appendix B – Data Protection Impact Assessment
- 9.3 Appendix C – Draft Council Strategy (the version published for consultation in Jan 2023)

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Item is Urgent Key Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Report is to note only | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Wards affected: All wards

Officer details:

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E-mail: Catalin.Bogos@westberks.gov.uk

Appendix A

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) - Stage One

What is the proposed decision that you are asking the Executive to make:	To inform the Executive about the feedback to consultation which will be used to finalise the Council Strategy 2023 - 2027.
Summary of relevant legislation:	Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the public sector equality duty which, in the exercise of its functions, includes the requirement to have due regard to eliminate discrimination, to advance equal opportunity and foster good relations.
Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the Council's priorities for improvement? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes • Support everyone to reach their full potential • Support businesses to start develop and thrive in West Berkshire • Develop local infrastructure including housing to support and grow the local economy Maintain a green district • Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships 	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The feedback from consultation detailed in this report will inform the decisions about the new priorities for the Council for 2023-27.
Name of Budget Holder:	n/a
Name of Service/Directorate:	Strategy and Governance/Resources
Name of assessor:	Catalin Bogos
Date of assessment:	10/03/2023
Version and release date (if applicable):	n/a

Is this a ?		Is this policy, strategy, function or service ... ?	
Policy	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	New or proposed	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Strategy	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Already exists and is being reviewed	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Function	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Is changing	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Service	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
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(1) What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?

Aims:	To disseminate the feedback from public consultation.
Objectives:	Decision makers note the feedback from consultation and use it to inform the draft final version of the Council Strategy 2023 – 2027.
Outcomes:	The report is noted at the Executive’s meeting and the feedback informs the final draft version of the Council Strategy 2023 – 2027 for approval at full Council’s meeting post May 2023 elections.
Benefits:	The views of the respondents to consultation are informing the final version of the Council Strategy.

(2) Which groups might be affected and how? Is it positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this?

Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Age	If approved, the suggested priorities and outcomes within the draft strategy will contribute to improved outcomes for all local people.	The draft Council Strategy has been developed using a wide range of evidence about resident need, including resident’s views. This paper further expands on highlighting the feedback from consultation which will inform the final draft version of the strategy.
Disability		
Gender Reassignment		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		
Pregnancy and Maternity		
Race		
Religion or Belief		
Sex		
Sexual Orientation		
Further Comments:		

(3) Result

Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If approved, the suggested priorities within the draft strategy will contribute to improved outcomes for all local people.	
Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If approved, the suggested priorities within the draft strategy will contribute to improved outcomes for all local people.	

(4) Identify next steps as appropriate:	
EqlA Stage 2 required	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Owner of EqlA Stage Two:	
Timescale for EqlA Stage Two:	

Name: Catalin Bogos

Date: 10/03/2023

Please now forward this completed form to Pamela Voss, Equality and Diversity Officer (pamela.voss@westberks.gov.uk), for publication on the WBC website.

Appendix B

Data Protection Impact Assessment – Stage One

The General Data Protection Regulations require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) for certain projects that have a significant impact on the rights of data subjects.

Should you require additional guidance in completing this assessment, please refer to the Information Management Officer via dp@westberks.gov.uk

Directorate:	Resources
Service:	Strategy & Governance
Team:	Customer Engagement & Transformation
Lead Officer:	Catalin Bogos
Title of Project/System:	Council Strategy 2023-2027
Date of Assessment:	10/03/2023

Do you need to do a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)?

	Yes	No
<p>Will you be processing SENSITIVE or “special category” personal data?</p> <p><i>Note – sensitive personal data is described as “ data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person’s sex life or sexual orientation”</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will you be processing data on a large scale?</p> <p><i>Note – Large scale might apply to the number of individuals affected OR the volume of data you are processing OR both</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will your project or system have a “social media” dimension?</p> <p><i>Note – will it have an interactive element which allows users to communicate directly with one another?</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will any decisions be automated?</p> <p><i>Note – does your system or process involve circumstances where an individual’s input is “scored” or assessed without intervention/review/checking by a human being? Will there be any “profiling” of data subjects?</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
Will your project/system involve CCTV or monitoring of an area accessible to the public?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Will you be using the data you collect to match or cross-reference against another existing set of data?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Will you be using any novel, or technologically advanced systems or processes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Note – this could include biometrics, “internet of things” connectivity or anything that is currently not widely utilised</p>		

If you answer “Yes” to any of the above, you will probably need to complete [Data Protection Impact Assessment - Stage Two](#). If you are unsure, please consult with the Information Management Officer before proceeding.