

# Priority Based Budgeting 2014/15 – 2016/17

Summary of HRA Equality Impact Assessments 2014/15

## Equality at Stevenage Borough Council

Stevenage Borough Council as a service provider, employer and community leader is committed to achieving equal opportunities for everyone. We want to deliver services that are fair, accessible and open to everyone who needs them.

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) are an important part of the process in ensuring that our intention is translated into action. They help to ensure that decisions are made in a fair, transparent and accountable way, considering the needs and the rights of different people in the community.

Based on the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, the EqIA considers the impact on the following groups when making decisions, updating policies and starting new projects:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marital status
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

Although non-statutory, the Council has chosen to adopt the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion in considering the impact on people in terms of their social or economic background.

EqIAs also help the council to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). The Duty states that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is unlawful under this Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

# Priority Based Budgeting 2014/15 – 2016/17

## Summary of HRA Equality Impact Assessments 2014/15



### Savings Proposals 2014/15

Prior to their consideration at Executive in November 2013, the savings proposals were reviewed to determine any potential impact on Stevenage residents in terms of their protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. The majority of these have no public impact and so have not been subject to any further EqIA.

Where a negative, positive or disproportionate impact is likely, Heads of Service and other appropriate managers have developed Brief or Full EqIAs. These have been summarised over the following pages and will inform the decisions made at Council in January 2014. Action to mitigate or further analyse the impact on equality groups is identified where appropriate.

The following activity has also taken place:

7 December 2013 – Town-wide consultation on proposals at Café Choice

November 2013 – January 2014 – EqIAs finalised

### Savings Proposals 2015/16 and 2016/17

Savings proposals for subsequent years as part of the three-year priority based approach have also been reviewed to determine any potential impact on local people. These savings will be agreed in principle in the first instance, and will be subject to further assessment and agreement as part of future annual Budget-setting processes.

Those that are likely to affect equality groups will also have EqIAs completed. These will be completed during the financial year leading up to their expected implementation.

Saving Ref	Saving proposed	Summary of impact	Action	Contact Officer
HS9	Reduce void rent loss	<p><b>Positive</b>  <b>Socio-economic:</b>            Improving the process for bringing properties back into a lettable condition will have a positive impact on people who face socio-economic disadvantage (54% of tenants are in receipt of benefits, as at 30 October 2013).  <b>Other:</b>            This will improve the quality of life of future tenants and their families who will have less time to wait to move into a new property. The council's relationship with tenants should also be improved.</p>	None	Mike Haynes
HS11	Merge Housing administrative functions into one team	<p><b>Positive</b>            This proposal should allow front-line Housing staff to devote more time to managing the council's relationship with tenants and other users of the Housing service, and to consider opportunities to further meet the needs of our diverse tenants.</p>	None	Mike Haynes
HS20	Move to annual invoicing for leaseholders and reduction in rent statement runs	<p><b>Age, Disability, Race, Socio-economic:</b>            The provision of online accounts may have a negative impact on some people from particular groups.</p> <p>Consultation feedback has not identified any negative impact on equality groups.</p>	<p>Investigate opportunities to increase tenants' access to the internet in advance of Universal Credit. (31 March 2017)</p> <p>Review the impact after a full twelve months to consider if it is more negative than anticipated. (31 March 2015)</p>	Mike Haynes

## Brief Equality Impact Assessment

### For a minor operational change / review / simple analysis

What is being assessed?	<b>HS9: Reduce Void Rent Loss</b>	What are the key aims of it?	This service manages void properties. Any delays in bringing a property back into a lettable condition would delay the commencement of a new tenancy. This review intends to take a lean systems approach to void management with one team taking ownership from the date notice is given by the outgoing tenant to the date the property is let.		
Who may be affected by it?	Applicants for council Housing				
Date of full EqIA on service area (planned or completed)	N/A				
Form completed by:	Mike Haynes	Start date	29/10/13	End date	30/10/13
		Review date	N/A		

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	All current policies and procedures will be reviewed. New procedures will be created using best practice from within the sector.	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	Not as yet since the review has only just commenced.
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Explain the <b>potential positive, negative or unequal impact</b> on the following characteristics and <b>how likely</b> this is:			
Age	See other	Race	See other
Disability	See other	Religion or belief	See other
Gender reassignment	See other	Sex	See other
Marriage or civil partnership	See other	Sexual orientation	See other
Pregnancy & maternity	See other	Socio-economic <sup>1</sup>	Improving our process for bringing properties back into a lettable condition will have a positive impact on people who face socio-economic disadvantage. Evidence shows that 54% of our housing tenants are in receipt of benefits.
Other	There will be no negative or disproportionate impact on housing applicants, including people from any particular equality group.		

<sup>1</sup>Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

Where there is a likely <b>positive impact</b> , please explain how it will help to <b>fulfil our legislative duties</b> to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities	Improving the time taken to bring properties back into a lettable condition will not only save council time and resources, but will improve the quality of life of future tenants and their families, who will have less time to wait to move into a new property.	Encourage good relations	Providing an improved service can only lead to a better landlord/tenant relationship.

**What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?**

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline

Approved by Strategic Director:  
Date:

**Matthew Partridge**  
**30 October 2013**

## Brief Equality Impact Assessment

### For a minor operational change / review / simple analysis

What is being assessed?	<b>HS11: Merge Housing administrative functions into one team</b>	What are the key aims of it?	<p>This is an internal service providing assistance to front line staff. Merging admin duties into one larger team will build resilience of our service, providing office cover during periods of staff absence and supporting a culture of shared responsibility of duties.</p> <p>This proposal will improve back office services by allowing front line staff to devote more time to managing the council's relationship with tenants and other users of the Housing service. This will also allow and encourage front-line staff to consider opportunities to further meet the needs of our diverse tenants.</p>			
Who may be affected by it?	Council tenants Front-line Housing service staff					
Date of full EqIA on service area (planned or completed)	N/A					
Form completed by:	Mike Haynes	Start date	29/10/13	End date	30/10/13	
		Review date	N/A			

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Manager knowledge and experience	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	
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Explain the <b>potential positive, negative or unequal impact</b> on the following characteristics and <b>how likely</b> this is:			
Age	See other	Race	See other
Disability	See other	Religion or belief	See other
Gender reassignment	See other	Sex	See other
Marriage or civil partnership	See other	Sexual orientation	See other



Explain the <b>potential positive, negative or unequal impact</b> on the following characteristics and <b>how likely</b> this is:			
Pregnancy & maternity	See other	Socio-economic <sup>2</sup>	See other
Other	There will be no negative or disproportionate impact on tenants, including people from any particular equality group. This proposal will support our front-line staff in meeting the needs of and building relationships with our tenants, which may also support people from equality groups.		

Where there is a likely <b>positive impact</b> , please explain how it will help to <b>fulfil our legislative duties</b> to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	See 'Other' above	Promote equal opportunities	See 'Other' above	Encourage good relations	See 'Other' above

**What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?**

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline

**Approved by Strategic Director: Matthew Partridge**  
**Date: 30 October 2013**

<sup>2</sup>Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

## Brief Equality Impact Assessment

### For a minor operational change / review / simple analysis

What is being assessed?	<b>HS20: Move to annual invoicing for leaseholders and a reduction in rent statement runs</b>	What are the key aims of it?	<p>To avoid unnecessary statements being provided to those tenants who regularly pay their rent or service charges and do not have any arrears. Currently leaseholders receive two statements per year (to reduce to one) and tenants receive four (to reduce to three and then two). Tenants in arrears will continue to receive regular correspondence. The provision of online accounts for those with internet access will support residents to be reminded of their statement of rent as and when they wish.</p>		
Who may be affected by it?	Council tenants & leaseholders Front-line Housing service staff				
Date of full EqIA on service area (planned or completed)	N/A				
Form completed by:	Mike Haynes	Start date	29/10/13	End date	6/1/14
		Review date	N/A		

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<p>The majority of our tenants and leaseholders do not have arrears and as such there is not a need to keep reminding them that their rent or service charge account is up to date.</p> <p>We consulted with 14 tenants who attended our Café Choice event in December 2013. All were White British, 77% were aged under 65 and 42% considered themselves to have a disability.</p> <p><b>Leaseholder statements</b> Only 2 respondents were leaseholders and they both advised they preferred to receive their statements annually.</p> <p><b>Rent statements</b> 49% of respondents said that would like to receive up to two statements a year, 14% said they preferred three a year and 21% preferred online statements only. The remainder of tenant respondents made no comment.</p>	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	There is a need to improve access to the internet for all social housing tenants due to the introduction of Universal Credit.
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Explain the <b>potential positive, negative or unequal impact</b> on the following characteristics and <b>how likely</b> this is:			
Age	See other	Race	See other
Disability	See other	Religion or belief	N/A
Gender reassignment	N/A	Sex	N/A
Marriage or civil partnership	N/A	Sexual orientation	N/A
Pregnancy & maternity	N/A	Socio-economic <sup>3</sup>	See other
Other	<p>The provision of online accounts may have a negative Impact on some people in terms of age, disability, first language and socio-economic factors such as access to the internet and computers. Whilst internet use in Stevenage is higher than average for Hertfordshire, some tenants and leaseholders do not have a computer and/or the skills/knowledge to use one to gain access to the internet.</p> <p>The Housing team are investigating the ways and means of increasing tenant IT access in advance of the introduction of Universal Credit within various facilities including libraries, community centres and the CSC.</p>		

Where there is a likely <b>positive impact</b> , please explain how it will help to <b>fulfil our legislative duties</b> to:			
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities	Encourage good relations

### What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
Investigate opportunities and identify the means by which we can increase tenants' access to the internet in advance of the introduction of Universal Credit	Mike Haynes	As part of project to implement Universal Credit	31 March 2017
Review impact after a full 12 month cycle. If impact is more negative than anticipated, complete a full EqIA to consider mitigation and improvement activity.	Mike Haynes	As part of project to implement Universal Credit	31 March 2015

**Approved by Strategic Director:** **Matthew Partridge**  
**Date:** **6 January 2014**

<sup>3</sup>Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.