

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 intentions are 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 whereby 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.

Budget Options ~~Savings Proposals~~ 2017/18

Prior to their consideration at Executive in November 2016, all 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 drafted Brief EqIAs. These have been summarised over the following pages and will inform the recommendations made at Executive on 24 January 2017. Action to further analyse or mitigate the impact on equality groups is identified where appropriate.

The following activity either has or will take place:

November 2016 – EqIAs finalised considering further evidence and as
February ~~January~~ 2017 – necessary

Overarching EqIA developed considering the collective impact of the HRA and GF Budgets on equality groups

February ~~January~~ 2017 – Consideration of all completed EqIAs at Council

FINANCIAL SECURITY : 2016/17 Appendix H

Summary of draft Equality Impact Assessments

Saving Ref	Saving proposed	Summary of impact	Action	Contact Officer
DP41	Removal of additional £10,000 per year requested to carry out gardening works where tenant can't afford to do so.	<p>Age, Disability, Pregnancy & Maternity, Socio-economic: SBC's Concessions Policy provides for a 25% discount for works carried out by the council. However after this concession the cost of garden maintenance may still be unaffordable for some people.</p> <p>However we do not need to complete an EqlA because based on current levels of spending there should be no impact on the service. A residual budget of £18,000 has been retained compared to the spend of £8,900 in 2015/16.</p>	No further action or EqlA is required	Jaine Cresser
DP58	Remove additional Safeguarding Officer to be appointed to provide a central housing resource to deal with the increased number of safeguarding and domestic abuse cases.	It has been determined that there is not a need to complete an EqlA for this proposal. The bid to fund this post was originally made to support housing to meet its safeguarding adults responsibilities. Since then a corporate safeguarding adults policy has been completed utilising existing resources. The safeguarding team are leading on and managing the process, as some resource in the safeguarding team became available following the transfer out of the children's centres.	No further action or an EqlA is required.	Jaine Cresser
SR7	Review of Supported Housing service staffing and service efficiency	<p>Negative impact – possible but low</p> <p>Age The provision of community support for new private residents is on hold while we assess cost recovery of the service. This will be reviewed in line with the budget for 2018/19.</p> <p>Other There will be no impact on the cleaning of sheltered/flexicare housing schemes as there has been no reduction in cleaning time.</p>	Develop an EqlA and consult on the provision of community support to private and SBC Housing residents in setting the budget for 2018/19 (Deadline, Sep 2017)	Jaine Cresser

FINANCIAL SECURITY : 2016/17 Appendix H

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Saving Ref	Saving proposed	Summary of impact	Action	Contact Officer
SR8	Increase in Careline Alarm charges (£17,600 total, split £15,550 HRA and £2,050 GF).	This EqIA was developed and approved as part of setting the 2016/17 Budget (proposal S40), and has been included for reference.		Jaine Cresser
DP42	Supported Housing service charges	<p>Other</p> <p>This proposal will not be implemented until 2018/19. A full EqIA will be completed as part of the review of service charges in which this proposal will sit. There will be no impact as part of the 2017/18 budget. Residents will be consulted during 2017/18 as part of the review of service charges which will be implemented from 2018/19.</p>	A Full EqIA and consultation will be undertaken as part of the review of rent and service charges for 2018/19 (Deadline, Sep 2017)	Jaine Cresser
HRA	Rent and Service Charge setting for 2017/18	<p>Positive</p> <p>Socio-economic</p> <p>The rent decrease will be applied across all tenancies prescribed by the Work and Welfare Reform Act regardless of circumstances. Those reliant on Housing Benefit to cover their rent and HB eligible service charges represent 54% of the Council's tenants (the same as the year before) and won't be affected by the increase in service charges. Their HB award will be recalculated.</p> <p>The combined impact of the statutory rent reduction and the service charges set have resulted in 94.6% of tenants receiving an overall reduction in their rent and service charges.</p> <p>Negative / Unequal</p> <p>Age</p> <p>Around 427 properties will be subject to an increase in service charges of up to £3.31. Seventy-five of these will see an increase of more than £3 including one sheltered scheme – this increase is due to cost-recovery of communal electricity charges. For all other sheltered schemes, the tenants pay the full cost of their communal electricity and so increasing this charge to tenants in this scheme</p>		Jaine Cresser

FINANCIAL SECURITY : 2016/17 Appendix H

Summary of draft Equality Impact Assessments

Saving Ref	Saving proposed	Summary of impact	Action	Contact Officer
		<p>brings it in line with all of the others. Our data indicates that there is a higher proportion of people aged 18-29 years in flat blocks (for which service charges apply) compared with all SBC housing.</p> <p>Disability Northgate data on tenants in relation to disability was collected a number of years ago and is not up to date. This information was also disclosed at the tenants' discretion so some tenants may not have provided it. To give some context, the proportion of tenants living in flat blocks declaring a disability was very similar to the proportion living in all properties. Accordingly a disproportionate impact on these tenants is not anticipated.</p> <p>Socio-economic Properties exempt from this clause will have the rent increased by CPI + 1%. Those who receive services for which a service charge is made will be charged the actual cost of these services. As a result 427 tenants will see an increase in the charge which will be no more than £3.31 per week. As part of setting the 2016/17 HRA Budget the council chose to apply a one-off discretionary cap on service charges increases of £3. As only 75 tenants will see an increase in service charges of between £3.01 and £3.31, the council will not apply the cap this year.</p>		
CTSS	Council Tax Increase of 2.58% from 2017/18	<p>Negative but low Socio-economic The proposal to increase our element of Council Tax to all households will have an impact on all residents paying Council Tax, but particularly those working-age claimants currently in receipt of Council Tax Support (CTS). For a Band C property our element will rise from £172.02 to £176.46 per year (£4.44). CTS claimants are required to pay the first 8.5% towards their bill, which for a Band C</p>		

FINANCIAL SECURITY : 2016/17 Appendix H

Summary of draft Equality Impact Assessments

Saving Ref	Saving proposed	Summary of impact	Action	Contact Officer
		property will rise from £14.62 to £15.00 per year (38p). The amount of CTS they will receive is then calculated on the remaining 91.5%. A full EqIA was completed on the CTS Scheme when it was first designed in 2013 and is still valid since no changes have yet been made to the Scheme.		



Full Equality Impact Assessment

For a policy, project, service or other decision that is new, changing or under review

What is being assessed?		HRA and GF Savings Proposals and Rent and Service Charge Setting 2017/18					
Lead Assessor	Strategic Management Board			Assessment team	Karen Long	Keith Wilson	
Start date	October 2016	End date	January 2017		Janet Hagger	Emma Barron	
When will the EqIA be reviewed?		January 2018			Katrina Shirley		

Who may be affected by it?	All tenants, particularly Careline customers and residents in flat blocks.
What are the key aims of it?	<p>To set a balanced, fair and sustainable HRA Budget for 2017/18. The EqIA considers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DP41: Removal of additional £10,000 per year requested to carry out gardening works where tenants can't afford to do so • DP58: Remove additional Safeguarding Officer to be appointed to provide a central housing resource to deal with the increased number of safeguarding and domestic abuse cases • SR7: Review of Supported Housing service staffing and efficiency • SR8: Increase in Careline Alarm charges • DP42: Supported Housing service charges • HRA: Rent and Service Charge setting for 2017/18 • CTSS: Council Tax increase of 2.58% from 2017/18

What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities	<p>The setting of council Rent and Service Charges will comply with our policy to provide a fair method of calculating affordable rents and service charges for all of our tenants.</p> <p>SR8 The council's intention is to recover the costs for providing services thereby ensuring that they are not subsidised through the rental income received from tenants or the funds received from Council Tax payers. The same charges will apply to all service users at the end of the phasing-in</p>	Encourage good relations	

		period. This will be irrespective of tenure or equality characteristics.	
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What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Census data • E&D data on residents living in the sheltered schemes • E&D data on Careline customers • Welfare Reform and Work Act (http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2015-16/welfarereformandwork/documents.html) • http://www.parliament.uk/documents/impact-assessments/IA15-006F.pdf • Rent and service charge policy to be agreed by Exec January 2017 • Rent account information • Expenditure code HD110241100 • Record of work carried out to date by the community payback scheme • Data of those on full/partial housing benefit in receipt of our supported housing services (not private households) • Age profile of sheltered/flexicare housing tenants • Supported housing scheme profile data • Projected numbers of older people living in Stevenage over the next 5 years • Number of Council tenants over age of 55 not receiving supported housing services • Emergency call out statistics from 1 February 2016 – 10 June 2016 • Council Tax Support Scheme EqIA – 23 January 2013 • Council Tax calculations
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In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?	<p>A number of those who receive services for which there is a service charge payable will see an increase in their weekly charge. This relates to those who live in flats predominantly, as well as sheltered accommodation. We have recognised that this may cause financial difficulty for some people and will provide advice and support to help those who may have difficulty in making these payments. The DWP's impact assessment confirms that where a tenant is not in receipt of Housing Benefit (HB) and has no service charges, they will be better off financially through the 1% rent reduction.</p>
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Evidence and impact assessment

Explain the potential impact and opportunities it could have for people in terms of the following characteristics, where applicable:

Age					
Positive impact		Negative impact	<p>DP41 SBC’s Concessions Policy provides for a 25% discount for works carried out by the council. However after this concession the cost of garden maintenance may still be unaffordable for some people. However we do not need to complete an EqlA because based on current levels of spending there should be no impact on the service. A residual budget of £18,000 has been retained compared to the spend of £8,900 in 2015/16.SR7 The provision of community support for new Private residents is on hold while we assess cost recovery of the service. This will be reviewed in line with the budget for 2018/19.</p> <p>SR8 Many people who use the Careline service do so because they have vulnerabilities relating to age, disability or both, that mean they require additional support and reassurance to maintain a good quality of life. Customer data shows that 711 out of 858 (83%) Careline customers are over 65 years of age.</p> <p>HRA Around 427 properties will be subject to an increase in service charges of up to £3.31. Seventy-five of these will see an increase of more than £3 including one sheltered scheme – this increase is due to cost-recovery of communal electricity charges. For all other sheltered schemes, the tenants pay the full cost of their communal electricity and so increasing this charge to tenants in this scheme brings it in line with all of the others. Our data indicates that there is a higher proportion of people aged 18-29 years in flat blocks (for which service charges apply) compared with all SBC housing.</p>	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			



Disability			
e.g. physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness			
Positive impact		Negative impact	<p>DP41 SBC's Concessions Policy provides for a 25% discount for works carried out by the council. However after this concession the cost of garden maintenance may still be unaffordable for some people. However we do not need to complete an EqlA because based on current levels of spending there should be no impact on the service. A residual budget of £18,000 has been retained compared to the spend of £8,900 in 2015/16 SR8 The increase in Careline charges may result in some users who are unable to reprioritise their personal expenditure choosing to no longer use the service which could leave them at risk. This assessment is based on knowledge of the service and of the types of customers who use it. Robust, valid and up-to-date data relating to customers' disabilities is not available to support this comment.</p>
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		<p>HRA Northgate data on tenants in relation to disability was collected a number of years ago and is not up to date. This information was also disclosed at the tenants' discretion so some tenants may not have provided it. To give some context, the proportion of tenants living in flat blocks declaring a disability was very similar to the proportion living in all properties, and so a disproportionate impact on these tenants is not anticipated.</p>	
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Gender reassignment – N/A			
Positive impact		Negative impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	



Marriage or civil partnership – N/A				
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Pregnancy & maternity				
Positive impact		Negative impact	SBC's Concessions Policy provides for a 25% discount for works carried out by the council. However after this concession the cost of garden maintenance may still be unaffordable for some people. However we do not need to complete an EqlA because based on current levels of spending there should be no impact on the service. A residual budget of £18,000 has been retained compared to the spend of £8,900 in 2015/16	Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Race – N/A				
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		



Religion or belief – N/A					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Sex – N/A					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Sexual orientation – N/A e.g. straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Socio-economic¹ e.g. low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement				
Positive impact	<p>HRA The rent decrease will be applied across all tenancies prescribed by the Work and Welfare Reform Bill regardless of circumstances. Those reliant on Housing Benefit to cover their rent and HB eligible service charges represent 54% of the Council's tenants (the same as the year before) and won't be affected by the increase in service charges. Their HB award will be recalculated. The combined impact of the statutory rent reduction and the service charges set have resulted in 94.6% of tenants receiving an overall reduction in their rent and service charges.</p>	Negative impact	<p>SBC's Concessions Policy provides for a 25% discount for works carried out by the council. However after this concession the cost of garden maintenance may still be unaffordable for some people. However we do not need to complete an EqIA because based on current levels of spending there should be no impact on the service. A residual budget of £18,000 has been retained compared to the spend of £8,900 in 2015/16</p> <p>SR8 The increase in Careline charges may, subject to personal budget choices, make the service unaffordable for some of the current users. This service is not eligible for Housing Benefit. Some people will be affected by the introduction of charges for Careline that they currently do not pay for. To reduce the impact of this change the new charges will be phased in over the next 2-3 years.</p> <p>HRA Properties exempt from this clause will have the rent increased by CPI + 1%. Those who receive services for which a service charge is made will be charged the actual cost of these services. As a result 427 tenants will see an increase in the charge which will be no more than £3.31 per week. As part of setting the 2016/17 HRA Budget the council chose to apply a one-off discretionary cap on service charges increases of £3. As only 75 tenants will see an increase in service charges of between £3.01 and £3.31, the council will not apply the cap this year.</p> <p>CTSS The proposal to increase our element of Council Tax to</p>	Unequal impact

¹Although 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.

			<p>all households will have an impact on all residents paying Council Tax, but particularly those working-age claimants currently in receipt of Council Tax Support (CTS). For a Band C property our element will rise from £172.02 to £176.46 per year (£4.44). CTS claimants are required to pay the first 8.5% towards their bill which for a Band C property will rise from £14.62 to £15.00 per year (38p). The amount of CTS they will receive is then calculated on the remaining 91.5%. A full EqIA was completed on the CTS Scheme when it was first designed in 2013 and is still valid since no changes have yet been made to the Scheme.</p>		
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Other					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		DP42 This proposal will not be implemented until 2018/19. A full EqIA will be completed as part of the review of rent and service charges in which this proposal will sit. There will be no impact as part of the 2017/18 budget. Residents will be consulted during 2017/18 as part of the review of rent and service charges implemented from 2018/19.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			



What are the findings of any consultation with:

Staff?		Residents?	
Voluntary & community sector?		Partners?	
Other stakeholders?	A range of consultations are planned during 2017/18.		

Overall conclusion & future activity

Explain the overall findings of the assessment and reasons for outcome (please choose one) :		
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified		
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	2b. Continue as planned	The future viability of the HRA Business Plan will be reliant in part upon us being able to recover the cost of service provision where it's possible to do so in line with the Council's broader ambition in this regard. The setting of a balanced Budget for 2017/18 is dependent upon the proposals being approved.
	2c. Stop and remove	

Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations :				
Action	Will this help to remove, promote and/or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
DP41 Regular monitoring of income and expenditure for this gardening works budget during 2017/18. Assessing if there is any potential growth	Remove	Keith Wilson	March 2018	
SR7 Develop an EqIA and consult on the provision of community support to	All	Karen Long	Sept 17	



private and SBC Housing residents in setting the budget for 2018/19				
SR8 Develop a Full EqIA that covers all supported housing services and further considers the impact using available Careline user data, Housing Census profiling and other relevant information.	All	Karen Long	Sept 16	
DP42 A Full EqIA and consultation will be undertaken as part of the review of rent and service charges for 2018/19.	All	Karen Long	Sep 17	

Approved by Matt Partridge on behalf of Strategic Management Board

Date: 2 January 2017