

Appendix E EQIA Council Tax Increase



Council Tax Increase

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

December 2024

Date created	December 2024
Approved by	Cabinet/SLT
Owner	Clare Fletcher, Strategic Director
Version	1.0
Author	Brian Moldon – Assistant Director of Finance
Business Unit and Team	Finance

Please [click this link](#) to find the EqIA guidance toolkit for support in completing the following form.

For translations, braille or large print versions of this document please email equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

First things first:

Does this policy, project, service, or other decision need an EqlA?

Title:	Council Tax Increase	
Please answer Yes or No to the following questions:		
Does it affect staff, service users or the wider community?		Yes
Has it been identified as being important to particular groups of people?		Yes
Does it or could it potentially affect different groups of people differently (unequal)?		Yes
Does it relate to an area where there are known inequalities or exclusion issues?		No
Will it have an impact on how other organisations operate?		No
Is there potential for it to cause controversy or affect the council's reputation as a public service provider?		No

Where a positive impact is likely, will this help to:	
Remove discrimination and harassment?	No
Promote equal opportunities?	No
Encourage good relations?	No

If you answered 'Yes' to one or more of the above questions you should carry out an EqlA.

Or if you answered 'No' to all of the questions and decide that your activity doesn't need an EqlA you must explain below why it has no relevance to equality and diversity.

You should reference the information you used to support your decision below and seek approval from your Assistant Director before confirming this by sending this page to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

I determine that no EqlA is needed to inform the decision on the Council Tax increase for 2025/26.

Name of assessor:

Decision approved by:

Role:

Role:

Date:

Date:

Equality Impact Assessment Form Appendix C

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

What is being assessed?		Council Tax Increase			
Lead Assessor	Brian Moldon			Assessment team	Revenues and Benefits
Start date	01/04/2025	End date	31/03/2026		Finance
When will the EqIA be reviewed? (Typically every 2 years)	01/01/26				

Who may be affected by the proposed project?	Residents of the borough								
What are the key aims of the proposed project?	<p>To increase Council Tax in 2025/26 by a total 2.99%, this equates to increase of £7.15 to £246.41 for a band D property.</p> <p>Whilst it is recognised that any Council Tax increase will have a negative impact on Council Taxpayers, this is justified as the increases in Council Tax are considered necessary to mitigate against the impact of reductions in central government funding to enable the Council to achieve its' overall savings targets and provision of services and set a balanced budget as required.</p> <p>When Government determines the funding available to each Council as part of the settlement, it presumes that councils will increase up to the maximum allowed. For Stevenage it is 2.99% for 2025/26.</p> <p>It should be noted that majority of residents are in bands C and below and the increase in those properties are as follows:</p>								
		Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H

	Number of Households	1,703	6,888	21,753	3,369	3,261	981	434	16
	SBC 2024/25 Council Tax	£159.51	£186.09	£212.68	£239.26	£292.43	£346.60	£398.77	£478.52
	SBC Proposed 25/26 Council Tax	£164.27	£191.65	£219.03	£246.41	£301.17	£356.93	£410.68	£492.82
	Increase	£4.76	£5.56	£6.35	£7.15	£8.74	£10.33	£11.91	£14.30

For residents not in receipt of Council Tax Support, they will be liable to pay the full amount of the proposed increase. Resident is full receipts of CTS will only pay a maximum of 8.5% of their Council Tax.

What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:				
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities	The Council has agreed a Council Tax Support Scheme (November 2024 Cabinet) where elderly CTS claimants are protected in law and their wards will always be based on 100% of the council tax charge. Working Age claimants will be based on 91.5% of their council tax liability.	Encourage good relations

			Stevenage also has an exceptional hardship scheme available.		
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What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<p>Council Tax system (CTB1 form)</p> <p>Financial Settlement confirming the referendum limits for SBC below 3%</p> <p>Herts-Insight data</p> <p>Council Tax Support Scheme</p>
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In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?	
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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	Residents may be experiencing exceptional economic hardship as well as increases in energy, food and fuel costs. This may have a greater impact on older people and disabled people, who may have additional needs for heating and to run particular equipment, and may also have lower income / be reliant on pensions and/or benefits.	Unequal impact	The increase is applied to all properties; it is not possible to exempt any particular groups. Residents who are living in single occupancy will receive 25% discount, and elderly residents entitled to Council Tax Support will receive 100% discount, whilst working age entitled to Council Tax Support will receive discount up to 91.5%.
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	This affects all adults that live within the Borough. There is support available through the Councils CTS scheme and the discretionary hardship fund. The Council are continuing to provide the current CTS scheme at a maximum 8.5% for working age person and up to 100% for older persons. Council Tax payment options, such as 12 monthly and 44 weekly instalments in a year via direct debit and standing order are offered at the billing stage. The availability of the Discretionary Council Tax Hardship fund is promoted through Council Tax Support notification letters, in Council Tax reminder and final notices, on the Council's website. Applications for assistance from other				

discretionary schemes such as Discretionary Housing Payment and where appropriate assistance is awarded under the Discretionary Council Tax Hardship fund as well.

Stevenage has an estimated total population of 90,146 at mid-2023. It has a lower proportion of elderly people compared to the national average and Hertfordshire as a whole.

	Stevenage	Hertfordshire	England
Aged under 16	18,413 (20.5%)	20%	18.5%
Aged 16 to 64	57,731 (64%)	62.6%	62.9%
Aged 65 and over	14,002 (15.5%)	17.4%	18.7%

CTS data as at December 2024 and 2023

	2024		2023	
	Numbers	Percentage	Numbers	Percentage
Working Age	4,141	54.1%	4,663	56.9%
Elderly	3,517	45.9%	3,537	43.1%
Total	7,658	100%	8,200	100%

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		Unequal impact	The increase is applied to all properties; it is not possible to exempt any particular groups.
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>In terms of Council Tax Support, disabled households are those where a disability related welfare benefit is in payment. We recognise that people with disabilities are historically disadvantaged and face greater barriers when accessing information about services and therefore consider disabled households to be more vulnerable than other households.</p> <p>Within the 2021 Census data, 15,468 (or 17.3%) residents assessed themselves as disabled under the Equalities Act 2010.</p> <p>The Council are continuing to provide the current CTS scheme therefore, there are no additional adverse impacts on this protected group resulting from these proposals.</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					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	✓
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on residents within any of these protected characteristic groups.</p> <p>The increase is applied to all properties; it is not possible to exempt any particular groups.</p>				

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
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Marriage or Civil Partnership

Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	✓
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on residents within any of these protected characteristic groups.</p> <p>The increase is applied to all properties; it is not possible to exempt any particular groups.</p>				
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		Unequal impact	✓
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on residents within any of these protected characteristic groups.</p> <p>The increase is applied to all properties; it is not possible to exempt any particular groups.</p>				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Race					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	✓
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on residents within any of these protected characteristic groups.</p> <p>The increase is applied to all properties; it is not possible to exempt any particular groups.</p>				
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					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	✓
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on residents within any of these protected characteristic groups.</p> <p>The increase is applied to all properties; it is not possible to exempt any particular groups.</p>				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Sex					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	✓
Please evidence the data and information	<p>There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on residents within any of these protected characteristic groups.</p>				

you used to support this assessment	The increase is applied to all properties; it is not possible to exempt any particular groups.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Sexual Orientation e.g., straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	✓
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on residents within any of these protected characteristic groups.</p> <p>The increase is applied to all properties; it is not possible to exempt any particular groups.</p>				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

<p align="center">Socio-economic¹</p> <p align="center">e.g., low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement</p>					
Positive impact		Negative impact	Council Tax increase could negatively affect residents in a lower socio-economic standing as they will have a financial challenge.	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Using the Herts Insight data, it shows Stevenage is ranked 117 most deprived lower tier authorities out of 317 from the 2019 data, the previous data from 2015, had Stevenage at 137. There is limited data held to break this down further.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Identify and support those who are struggling utilising various support streams, the main one being Council Tax Support (CTS) where currently there are 4,141 working age and 3,517 elderly claimants receiving CTS. CTS scheme is a variable scheme based on each person's individual circumstances which is then used to assess their level of entitlement. On top of this, the Council operates an		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

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.

	Exceptional Hardship Scheme for short time emergency fund.		
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Additional Considerations					
Please outline any other potential impact on people in any other contexts					
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)		

Consultation Findings

Document any feedback gained from the following groups of people:

Staff?			
Voluntary & community sector?			
Other stakeholders?			

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
	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?
Monitor through the monthly reports to establish the impact of the council tax increase and the challenges relating to affordability and provide residents with support accordingly.	Promote the support that the Council offers through the Council Tax Support Scheme and Exceptional Hardship Scheme.	Revenues and Benefits staff	Ongoing	Current practice is to ensure staff continue to support residents who are struggling to make payment either through considering the schemes available or through providing payment plans

Approved by Assistant Director: Brian Moldon

Date: 14.01.25

Please send this EqlA to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk for critical friend feedback and for final submittance with the associated project.