

## HARLOW DISTRICT COUNCIL

### EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT – LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

This provisional Equality Analysis has been made to provide decision makers with a provisional idea of the potential effect of these proposals ahead of the consultation process. A further Equality Impact Assessment will be made once the consultation is closed and the results known.

<b>Name of service, function or policy being assessed</b>	<p>Localised Council Tax Support Policy 2013-14</p> <p>This Equality Impact Assessment has been developed considering the following national Equality Impact Assessments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government Finance Bill: Localising support for council tax</li> <li>• Local Government Finance Bill: Technical reforms to council tax</li> <li>• Local Government Finance Bill: Summary impact assessment</li> </ul>
<b>Service/Department</b>	<p>Finance, Revenues and Benefits</p>
<b>Names and roles of officers completing the assessment (indicate Lead officer)</b>	<p>Donna Mason, Head of Revenues and Benefits (Lead Officer) Bill Pearmain, Senior Benefits Officer</p>
<b>Contact telephone number of Lead officer</b>	<p>01279 446245</p>
<b>Date assessment completed</b>	<p>7<sup>th</sup> December 2012</p>



### 1. Aims of the policy/service/function and how implemented

	Key Questions	Notes
1.1	Is this a new policy/service/function or a review of an existing one?	This is a new policy and function
1.2	Briefly state the main purpose of the policy/service/function?	To help people with low incomes to afford their Council Tax liability, in line with the Local Government Finance Act 2012.
1.3	Briefly state the main activities of the policy/service/function?	Payment of Council Tax Discounting of Council Tax
1.4	Who are the main beneficiaries? Whose needs is it designed to meet?	Those liable for Council Tax within Harlow. Adults on a low income with low savings Any authority that can levy a Council Tax
1.5	Which staff carry out the policy/service/function?	Revenues And Benefits assessment staff

## 2. Information Gathering and Data Collection

	Key Questions	Notes	If further data collection is needed – state by whom, when and how is it going to be done?
2.1	<p>What <b>quantitative</b> (numerical) data do you already have (e.g. national and local demographic data, equality monitoring data, employee data, customer profile data etc) about those who use or will use the policy or service?            What gaps are there in the data?            What else do you need?</p> <p><b>NB. Attach copies of the relevant data that you are using for this assessment</b></p>	<p>All reasonable options have been modelled using Council Tax Benefit expenditure for the year 2011/12 and 2012/13, anticipating changes in population dynamics and demand and the reduction of 10% in grant, the scheme has been modelled to be cost neutral and savings options have been combined to reach the anticipated saving.</p>	<p>The actual grant figures have been confirmed by the Government and are in line with the estimated amount.</p>
2.2	<p>What <b>qualitative</b> data do you already have (e.g. results of customer satisfaction surveys, results of previous consultations, staff surveys, analysis of customer complaints/comments, feedback from community groups or individuals etc) about those who use or will use the policy or service?            What gaps are there in the data?            What else do you need?</p>	<p>The proposed scheme varies little from the current scheme apart from the fact that those of working age in receipt of Council Tax Benefit will need to pay some, or more Council Tax. The consultation obtained qualitative data about this change.</p> <p>The majority of respondents to the consultation agreed that with the concept that all people of working age should have to pay some council tax.</p>	

### 3. Consultation

<b>Please state below what formal or informal consultation has taken place or that you are planning to hold with appropriate stakeholders in relation to this policy/function</b>			
	<b>Key Questions</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>If further consultations are needed/ planned – state with whom, by whom, when and how is this going to be done?</b>
3.1	<p>What consultations have been held and with whom did you consult?</p> <p>What were the main issues raised?</p>	<p>A public consultation was conducted for a period of six weeks, commencing on 6/08/2012. The consultation was conducted by way of an online questionnaire.</p> <p>The consultation was publicly announced, and in addition all 5,500 working age recipients of the current council tax benefit were notified of the proposed local scheme &amp; of the consultation.</p>	<p>The scheme will be reviewed annually, and if changes are proposed, then further public consultation will be conducted.</p>
3.2	<p>What consultations were held specifically with the equality target groups?</p> <p>What were the main issues raised?</p>	<p>Representatives of equality target groups were identified and contacted electronically alerting them to the consultation and asking them to participate. Locally and nationally concerns were raised about the new liabilities created for those unable to work due to disability. We have addressed these by confirming that the current system of applicable amounts which protect these groups will remain in place.</p>	<p>As 3.1</p>

	Key Questions	Notes	If further consultations are needed/ planned – state with whom, by whom, when and how is this going to be done?
3.3	<p>Is the Council working in Partnership with other organisations to implement this policy/function? Should this be taken into consideration? (E.g. Agreeing the equalities monitoring categories) Should the partnership arrangements have an EIA?</p>	<p>All major precepting authorities in Essex, which are working together to devise the support scheme. HDC – Corporate Housing; Resource Management Department for Work and Pensions Department for Communities and Local Government .</p> <p>Each LA participating in the Essex project will conduct their own EQIA. DWP &amp; DCLG have undertaken EQIA's which are publicly available.</p>	As 3.1

**Note**

- It is a legal requirement that consultation takes place with appropriate stakeholders as part of the EIA process.
- You must ensure that you record all the main areas of concern raised by equality and customer groups during consultations and how you aim to address these concerns.

**4. Assessment of Impact**

Based on the data you have analysed and provided, and the results of the consultation or research you have undertaken, list below how the policy or function will or does work for each of the following equalities groups.

Identify any differential impact and consider whether the policy/function meets any particular needs identified for each of the six equalities groups.

**NB:If you do identify any adverse impact you must:**

- a) **Seek appropriate advice as to whether it is highlighting unlawful discrimination or is potentially discriminatory, and**
- b) **Identify steps to mitigate any adverse impact**

**Include any examples of how the policy or function helps to promote race, disability, age and/or gender equality.**

		<b>State evidence of impact or potential impact/How helps to promote equality</b>
4.1	<p><b>Gender</b> – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy/function on women, men and transgender people</p> <p style="text-align: center;">And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	None identified
		<b>State evidence of impact or potential impact/How helps to promote equality</b>

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4.2	<p><b>Disability</b> – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on disabled people (ensure consideration of a range of impairments including visual and hearing impairments, mobility impairments, learning disability etc)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	<p>All Disability Living Allowance Benefits will continue to be disregarded thereby protecting those with specific long term conditions who fall within this group. People with disabilities will continue to receive additional premiums as part of the calculation.</p> <p>The above helps to “advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.”</p>
4.3	<p><b>Age</b> – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy/function on different age groups</p> <p style="text-align: center;">And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	<p>Older people (60+); This group is specifically protected under Government Regulations.</p> <p>Younger people (17-25); 17 year olds may be disadvantaged indirectly if their parents have to pay more as a result of this policy. People over 18 of working age will be required to pay more.</p> <p>The Council has agreed an exceptional hardship fund to assist those in extreme hardship.</p> <p>Children (0-16); None identified</p>
4.4	<p><b>Race</b> – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy/function on different black and minority ethnic groups, including Gypsy and Traveller communities</p> <p style="text-align: center;">And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	<p>None identified</p>
		<p><b>State evidence of impact or potential impact/How helps to promote</b></p>



		<b>equality</b>
4.5	<p><b>Sexual orientation</b> – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on lesbians, gay men, bisexual and heterosexual people</p> <p style="text-align: center;">And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	None identified
4.6	<p><b>Religion/belief</b> – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on people of different religious/faith groups and also upon those with no faith</p> <p style="text-align: center;">And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	None identified
4.7	<p><b>Socio-economic disadvantage</b> – identify any impact on those who have a low income, or whose family circumstances/history may affect their ability to access services eg. carers and the cared for; pensioners; single-parents; long-term unemployed; history of abuse/domestic violence; benefits claimants; housebound; chronically ill;</p>	<p>The impact of the proposed scheme will be felt most by those of working age who are not disabled, some of the affects will be mitigated by more generous incentives to work.</p> <p>The Council has agreed an exceptional hardship fund to assist those in extreme need.</p>

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4.8	<p><b>Any other groups, if appropriate</b> e.g. children leaving care; pregnant or breast-feeding mothers; carers etc</p>	<p>Parents will continue to receive a child allowance and family premium as part of the calculation, which is consistent with the Council's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Working parents receive a higher disregard of their earnings reflecting their childcare costs.</p> <p>The Council has agreed an exceptional hardship fund to assist those in extreme hardship.</p> <p>The above helps to "advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not."</p>
		<b>Notes</b>
4.9	<p>Are there any additional measures that could be adopted to further equality of opportunity in the context of this policy/service/function and to meet the particular needs of equalities groups that you have identified?</p>	<p>None identified.</p>

**NB**

Please provide a summary overview by completing the Section overleaf, ticking the relevant boxes to confirm the outcome and findings of this assessment process

## Appendix C

It is also essential that you complete an action plan based on your assessment (see form EIA.2) and attach this to your Equality Impact Assessment form (EIA.1) form. This is a vital component of the equalities impact assessment process.

Include all of the measures that you will take to improve the policy/function for the different equalities characteristics, e.g. staff training, positive action, revisions to policy, monitoring of your action plan, etc.

Once you have completed the forms EIA.1 and EIA.2 please sign and date and:

- a) Send a copy to your Head of Service for endorsement
- b) Keep a copy as a record of the processes you have been through in carrying out the EIA
- c) Send a PDF copy of the signed and endorsed EIA form plus enclosed action plans to the Corporate Equalities Group via the HDC Community Liaison Officer [equalities@harlow.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@harlow.gov.uk)

**5. Summary Overview of EIA**

As a summary overview of information and findings provided in the earlier sections of this Equality Impact Assessment, please tick the relevant boxes as appropriate to denote the OUTCOME of this process for each of the Equality Characteristics.

Equalities category	No adverse impact AND promotes equality and diversity <i>Please tick ✓ if appropriate</i>	No adverse impact BUT equality and diversity NOT promoted <i>Please tick ✓ if appropriate</i>	Evidence of adverse impact <i>Please tick ✓ if appropriate</i>
Gender and transgender	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Age			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sexual orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Religion and belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Socio-economic disadvantage			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**NB:** Tick relevant box as appropriate and based on information provided in section

Note

- If you are unsure of any aspect of this Equality Impact Assessment process you can seek guidance from your service representative on the Corporate Equalities Group or from the HDC Community Liaison Officer who can be contacted on [equalities@harlow.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@harlow.gov.uk) and extension 6388.
- Once the EIA form has been completed please ensure all enclosures are attached then sign and date the form, ensure it is countersigned by your Head of Service, keep a copy for your records and send a PDF to [equalities@harlow.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@harlow.gov.uk)

Signed  
Project Manager .....

Countersigned  
Head of Service .....

Print Name .....

Print Name .....

Date .....

Date .....

Under the Freedom of Information Act, this completed EIA form will be placed on the Harlowweb and be available on request to the general public.