

Harlow District Council

Equality Impact Assessment – Local council tax support scheme

Name of service, function or policy being assessed	Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25 This Equality Impact Assessment has been developed considering the following national Equality Impact Assessments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Finance Bill: Localising support for council tax • Local Government Finance Bill: Technical reforms to council tax • Local Government Finance Bill: Summary impact assessment
Service/Department	Finance / Revenues and Benefits
Names and roles of officers completing the assessment (indicate Lead officer)	Donna Beechener, Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits (Lead Officer)
Contact telephone number of Lead officer	01279 446245
Date assessment completed	1 December 2023

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 review of an existing 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 need's 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 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 quantitative (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>NB. Attach copies of the relevant data that you are using for this assessment</p>	<p>The scheme was originally modelled based on existing costs, taking account of a potential council tax increase, demand for the scheme and the reduction in Revenue Support Grant. The scheme was originally modelled to be cost neutral, but current estimates are that the scheme costs more than the current level of grant received.</p>	<p>It is not possible to identify the actual grant received to support the scheme as this has been subsumed into overall formula funding.</p>
2.2	<p>What qualitative 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 for 2024/25 for working age claimants does not vary from the current scheme. Consultation is legally required where there are proposed changes to the scheme.</p>	

3. Consultation

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			
	Key Questions	Notes	If further consultations are needed/ planned – state with whom, by whom, when and how is this going to be done?
3.1	What consultations have been held and with whom did you consult? What were the main issues raised?	Public consultations have been carried out annually, prior to the introduction of the policy and when changes have been considered. Consultations were conducted by way of an online questionnaire. The consultation was publicly announced.	The scheme will be reviewed annually, and if changes are proposed, then further public consultation will be conducted.
3.2	What consultations were held specifically with the equality target groups? What were the main issues raised?	In introducing a local council tax support scheme in 2013, 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.	As 3.1
	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 work together to devise the support scheme. HDC – Corporate Housing; Resource Management Department for Work and Pensions Department of Levelling Up & Communities.</p> <p>Each LA participating in the Essex project will conduct their own EQIA. DWP & DHLUC 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.

		State evidence of impact or potential impact/How helps to promote equality
4.1	<p>Gender – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy/function on women, men and transgender people And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	None identified
4.2	<p>Disability – 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) 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>Age – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy/function on different age groups And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	<p>Older people (Pensionable Age); 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 liable to pay council tax will be required to</p>

		<p>pay more than that afforded under CTB.</p> <p>The Council has agreed an exceptional hardship fund to assist those in extreme hardship.</p>
4.4	<p>Race – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy/function on different black and minority ethnic groups, including Gypsy and Traveller communities</p> <p>And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	None identified
		State evidence of impact or potential impact/How helps to promote equality
4.5	<p>Sexual orientation – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on lesbians, gay men, bisexual and heterosexual people</p> <p>And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	None identified
4.6	<p>Religion/belief – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on people of different religious/faith groups and also upon those with no faith</p> <p>And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	None identified
4.7	<p>Socio-economic disadvantage – identify any impact on those who have a low income, or whose family circumstances/history may affect their ability to access services e.g. carers and the cared for; pensioners; single-parents; long-term unemployed; history of abuse/domestic violence; benefits claimants; housebound; chronically</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>Any other groups, if appropriate e.g. children leaving care; pregnant or breast-feeding mothers; carers etc</p>	<p>Parents will continue to receive a child allowance. 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>
		Notes
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>	None identified.

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