

Stage 1 Equality Impact Assessment – Initial Screening

Assessor(s) Name(s):	Vicki Guildford, Revenues Manager
Directorate:	Revenues & Benefits
Date of Completion:	26 th February 2015 Reviewed 6 th Feb 2018

Name of Policy/Strategy/Service/Function Proposal

Section 13A Discretionary Relief Policy

The Aims, Objectives and Expected Outcomes:

The Council is required in accordance with Section 13A (1) (c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as inserted by the Local Government Act 2012, to consider reducing the Council Tax payable on any dwelling within the Isle of Wight area, through the award of a discretionary reduction. This policy seeks to provide guidance on when the council may award relief.

The Council will consider using its powers to reduce council tax liability for any council taxpayer or class of payer with the following criteria being used as a guide for eligibility;

- Requests for reductions in council tax liability will be required in writing from the council taxpayer, their advocate, appointee or a recognised third party acting on their behalf, with a full explanation as to why the reduction is requested, the period for the reduction is claimed and details of the applicants financial circumstances
- There must be evidence of hardship or exceptional personal circumstances that justifies a reduction in Council Tax liability and that they do not have access to other funds/assets that could be used to meet their council tax liability.
- The council must be satisfied that the council taxpayer has taken reasonable steps to resolve the situation prior to an application being made.
- The council taxpayer does not have access to other assets that could be realised and used to pay council tax.
- The council taxpayer will have explored and secured any lawful entitlement to other benefits, incomes and reductions prior to claiming a discretionary reduction.
- The amount outstanding must not be the result of wilful refusal to pay or culpable neglect

The duration and level of any council tax discretionary reduction will be determined individually. In determining the period of award, examples of the types of factors which may be appropriate for consideration are;

- **If the need is likely to be short-term**
- **If the council taxpayer is able to take steps to reduce their financial hardship**
- **When a particular event/milestone will be reached which will lead to increased Local Council Tax Support entitlement i.e. a family member reaches a relevant age which results to increased entitlement.**

Any reduction made is intended as short term assistance rather than a way of reducing council tax liability on a long term basis.

Please delete as appropriate:

- This is a new policy proposal

Key Questions to Consider in Assessing Potential Impact

Will the policy, strategy, service or council function proposal have a negative impact on any of the protected characteristics or other reasons that are relevant issues for the local community and/or staff?	No
Has previous consultation identified this issue as important or highlighted negative impact and/or we have created a “legitimate expectation” for consultation to take place? A legitimate expectation may be created when we have consulted on similar issues in the past or if we have ever given an indication that we would consult in such situations	No
Do different groups of people within the local community have different needs or experiences in the area this issue relates to?	Yes
Could the aims of these proposals be in conflict with the council’s general duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not?	No
Will the proposal have a significant effect on how services or a council function/s is/are delivered?	No
Will the proposal have a significant effect on how other organisations operate?	No
Does the proposal involve a significant commitment of resources?	No
Does the proposal relate to an area where there are known inequalities?	No
<p>If you answer Yes to any of these questions, it will be necessary for you to proceed to a full Equality Impact Assessment after you have completed the rest of this initial screening form.</p> <p>If you answer No to all of these questions, please provide appropriate evidence using the table below and complete the evidence considerations box and obtain sign off from your Head of Service.</p>	

Protected Characteristics	Positive	Negative	No impact	Reasons
Age			√	The scheme does not use age to determine entitlement.
Disability			√	There would be no differential impact due to disability
Gender Reassignment			√	The scheme does not use gender to determine entitlement.
Marriage & Civil Partnership			√	There would be no differential impact due to marriage or civil partnership
Pregnancy & Maternity			√	There would be no differential impact due to pregnancy or maternity
Race			√	There would be no differential impact due to race.
Religion / Belief			√	There would be no differential impact due to religion or belief.
Sex (male / female)			√	There would be no differential impact due to sex.
Sexual Orientation			√	There would be no differential impact due to sexual orientation.

Are there aspects of the proposal that contribute to or improve the opportunity for equality?	Yes
<p><i>If answered Yes, describe what these are and how they may be promoted or enhanced</i></p> <p>There is a requirement to consider hardship awards around the merit and criteria set out. The policy seeks to support those applicants where there is a genuine hardship and to assist those who have experienced an event or crisis irrespective of age, gender or disability or any of the protected characteristics.</p>	

Evidence Considered During Screening
<p>As this is a new policy it is for the council to determine the discretionary criteria in which applications can be considered as it is for the council to determine “as it sees fit”.</p> <p>The additional LCTS scheme, which has already been adopted, supports those on a low income and</p>

protects those deemed vulnerable within the scheme and other statutory discount and exemptions are awarded where applicable and this policy seeks to support those that for whatever reason fall outside of these reductions/classes.

Consideration of the number of domestic properties on Isle of Wight, potential number of applications that could be received, impact on collection rates if discretionary or statutory reductions were not applicable.

Consideration of financial implications of meeting the cost of any awards as council taxpayers will fund any reduction that is granted.

Head of Service Sign off:	Claire Shand
Advice sought from Legal Services (Name)	J P Thorne
Review Date	06Feb2018

A signed version is to be kept by your team and also an electronic version should be published on the council's website (follow the link from the EIA page on the intranet)

Stage 2 Full Equality Impact Assessment

Assessor(s)Name(s):	
Directorate:	
Date of Completion:	

Name of Policy/Strategy/Service/Function Proposal

The Aims, Objectives and Expected Outcomes:

Using the information provided in your initial screening, write a brief description of your policy, strategy, service or council function under assessment. It is important to focus on the reasons for a new or changed approach and what it intends to achieve. Include who the main beneficiaries or users are and the main groups of people with protected characteristics who are affected. State how this proposal fits with the council's corporate priorities.

Please delete as appropriate:

- This is a new policy/strategy/service/council function proposal
- This is a proposed change/review to/removal of an existing policy/strategy/service/council function (*check whether the original decision was equality impact assessed*)

Scope of the Equality Impact Assessment

Include any links to a previous equality impact assessment or work delivered by another Directorate/service or partner organisation. Describe the approach to be taken in data collection, stakeholder involvement and state who the stakeholders are.

Establish your monitoring and review arrangements.

Sources of evidence may include:

- *Service monitoring reports including equality monitoring data*
- *User feedback*
- *Population data – IW Facts and Figures (add link)*
- *Complaints data*
- *Published research, local or national*
- *Feedback from consultations and focus groups*
- *Feedback from individuals or organisations, other council departments, partner organisations etc*

Set out any data gaps that may need to be addressed and how you plan to address them and include in your action plan.

Analysis and assessment

Given the available information, what is the actual or likely impact on minority, disadvantaged, vulnerable and socially excluded groups? Is this impact positive or negative or a mixture of both? In particular set out how the council as a public body has met its duty to pay regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and advance the equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not.

Detail what concerns were identified during any consultation exercises together with any positive impact that has been identified and how this can be promoted or enhanced. Are there any concerns from consultation and data gathering that have not been taken on board, if so, please justify and explain the reason for this.

Does the proposal have the potential to cause unlawful discrimination (for example is it possible that the proposal may exclude certain groups of people from obtaining services or limit their participation in any aspect of public life?)

Set out in light of the consultation and data gathering what changes, if any you will make to the proposal

What can be done to reduce the effects of any negative impacts? Where negative impact cannot be completely diminished, can this be justified and is it lawful?

Recommendations

Please summarise the main recommendations arising from the assessment. If it is not possible to diminish negative impacts to an acceptable or even a lawful level the recommendation should be that the proposal or the relevant part of it should not proceed.

Action/Improvement Plan

The table below should be completed using the information from your equality impact assessment to produce an action plan for the implementation of the proposals to:

1. Remove or lower the negative impact, and/or
2. Ensure that the negative impact is legal under anti-discriminatory law, and/or
3. Provide an opportunity to promote equality, equal opportunity and improve relations within equality target groups, i.e. increase the positive impact

Area of impact	Is there evidence of negative positive or no impact?	Could this lead to adverse impact and if so why?	Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?	Please detail what measures or changes you will put in place to remedy any identified impact (NB: please make sure that you include actions to improve all areas of impact whether negative, neutral or positive)
Age				
Disability				
Gender Reassignment				
Marriage & Civil Partnership				
Pregnancy & Maternity				
Race				
Religion / Belief				

Area of impact	Is there evidence of negative positive or no impact?	Could this lead to adverse impact and if so why?	Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?	Please detail what measures or changes you will put in place to remedy any identified impact (NB: please make sure that you include actions to improve all areas of impact whether negative, neutral or positive)
Sex (male or female)				
Sexual Orientation				
HR & workforce issues				
Human Rights implications if relevant				
<p>Please remember - actions should have SMART targets and be reported to the Diversity Board (this should be done via your Directorate representative) and incorporated into your service/team Plans and /or objectives of key staff</p>				

Summary	
Date of Assessment:	
Signed off by Head of Service/Director	
Review date	
Date published	

Publishing checklist	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Plain English – will your EIA make sense to the public?</i> • <i>Acronyms – check you have explained any specialist names or terminology</i> • <i>Evidence – will your evidence stand up to scrutiny; can you justify your conclusions?</i> • <i>Stakeholders and verification – have you included a range of views and perspectives to back up you analysis?</i> • <i>Gaps and information – have you identified any gaps in services or information that need to be addressed in the action plan?</i> • <i>Success stories – have you included any positive impacts that have resulted in change for the better?</i> • <i>Action plan – is action plan SMART? Have you informed the relevant people to ensure the action plan is carried out?</i> • <i>Review have you included a review date and a named person to carry it out?</i> • <i>Challenge – has your equality impact assessment been taken to Diversity Board/Call Over for challenge?</i> • <i>Signing off – has your Head of Service/Director signed off your EIA?</i> • <i>Basics – have you signed and dated your EIA and named it for publishing?</i> • <i>A signed version to be kept by your team for review and electronic version to be uploaded on to the council’s website</i> 		