

Stage 1 Equality Impact Assessment – Initial Screening

Assessor(s) Name(s):	VICKI GUILDFORD
Directorate:	RESOURCES
Date of Completion:	OCTOBER 2017

Name of Policy/Strategy/Service/Function Proposal
POLICY FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATIONS FOR DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS RATE RELIEF

The Aims, Objectives and Expected Outcomes:
<p>The Policy sets out the criteria and process for considering and determining applications from business ratepayers for discretionary business rate relief.</p> <p>The outcomes from the policy are to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) support appropriate organisations that deliver outcomes to the community that relate to the priorities of the council b) enable appropriate organisations to start, develop or continue with their activities, that deliver outcomes to the community that relate to the priorities of the council , which without granting discretionary relief they would be unable to do. c) To support and enable appropriate businesses to start, develop and continue with their operations that deliver outcomes directly related to the Council’s Economic strategy d) To ensure that the financial impact of awarding discretionary business rate relief is justified in terms of the local outcomes achieved by the organisation receiving it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is an existing policy that is being updated in the light of legislative changes and the Council’s current and future priorities.

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 the updated policy will direct any relief given to those organisations that support community needs and deal with inequalities
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 the organisations likely to make applications for relief will have different charitable/ community aims and objectives that support different groups
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 any relief given will complement and help achieve council priorities
Will the proposal have a significant effect on how other organisations operate?	Potentially as the granting or not of discretionary relief may impact on their ability to maintain their activities
Does the proposal involve a significant commitment of resources?	It depends on the number and cost of applications approved but the value of outcomes delivered should outweigh the costs.
Does the proposal relate to an area where there are known inequalities?	Not specifically but the criteria used to make a decision to award discretionary relief will treat organisations that have an impact on reducing inequalities positively
<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	√			Priority for granting discretionary relief will be given to organisations that deliver outcomes for older and vulnerable people	
Disability	√			Priority for granting discretionary relief will be given to organisations that deliver outcomes that support people with disabilities	
Gender Reassignment			√	▲ ▼	
Marriage & Civil Partnership			√		
Pregnancy & Maternity			√		Not specifically but the criteria used to make a decision to award discretionary relief will treat organisations that have an impact on reducing inequalities positively
Race			√		
Religion / Belief			√		
Sex (male / female)			√		
Sexual Orientation			√		

Are there aspects of the proposal that contribute to or improve the opportunity for equality?	Yes
Priority for granting discretionary relief will be given to organisations that deliver outcomes that reduce inequalities	

Evidence Considered During Screening
Experience of the operation of the existing policy and applications received. The updated policy is about a fair and equal process for considering and determining applications for business rate relief.

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The criteria used are based on the priorities of the Council and are outcome focused.	
Head of Service Sign off:	Claire Shand
Advice sought from Legal Services (Name)	Justin Thorne
Date	October 2017

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):	VICKI GUILDFORD
Directorate:	RESOURCES
Date of Completion:	OCTOBER 2017

Name of Policy/Strategy/Service/Function Proposal
BUSINESS RATES POLICY FOR THE GRANTING OF DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

The Aims, Objectives and Expected Outcomes:
<p>The Council has a number of legal powers that enable it to award discretionary business rate relief. There have been changes as a result of the Localism Act and further changes being introduced as a result of the Business Rate Retention Scheme .Further reduction in resources will be faced due to reductions in Public Spending cuts and consequent reductions in grant. The Policy is being updated to reflect these changes and to ensure that applications are considered against clear criteria that support the Council’s current and future priorities.</p> <p>The specific outcomes from the policy are to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) support appropriate organisations that deliver outcomes to the community that relate to the priorities of the council b) enable appropriate organisations to start, develop or continue with their activities, that deliver outcomes to the community that relate to the priorities of the council , which without granting discretionary relief they would be unable to do. c) To support and enable appropriate businesses to start, develop and continue with their operations that deliver outcomes directly related to the Council’s Economic strategy d) To achieve a cost neutral position by ensuring that the cost of any discretionary relief given is matched by at least a commensurate value/saving in outcomes achieved by the organisation receiving it that directly benefit the achievement of the Council’s priorities.

This is an existing policy that is being updated in the light of legislative changes and the Council's current and future priorities.

Scope of the Equality Impact Assessment

The discretionary business rate relief policy sets out the criteria and process by which applications will be considered for granting relief. It applies to all business ratepayers either as a charity, not for profit organisation, community amateur sports club, or an individual business.

The Council is not obliged to grant any discretionary relief and needs to balance the loss of income that would arise from any relief given and the need to meet such loss by reducing services and/or increase council tax or fees and charges.

Because of this the policy seeks to balance any loss of income against the benefits/outcomes that will be delivered by the organisations supported by granting discretionary relief. The benefits/outcomes assessed are based on criteria that directly relate to the priorities of the council. These priorities include support to organisations that deliver benefits and outcomes for older and vulnerable people, those with disabilities and those that reduce inequalities.

Requests for discretionary relief will be submitted by standard application forms and assessed against the agreed criteria on a case by case basis. A record will be kept of all applications received those agreed and those refused with the reasons for refusal. The overall position will be reported to the Cabinet Member for Resources and relevant information incorporated within the quarterly finance performance reports.

Analysis and assessment

The proposed scheme incorporates the criteria and process for considering applications for discretionary relief. It is wider than the existing policy in that it includes general applications from business in accordance with the wider powers under the Localism Act. The criteria for all applications are directly linked to supporting organisations that deliver outcomes that relate to the priorities of the Council particularly related to older and vulnerable people and the economic strategy. The overall policy, therefore will be positive in equality terms. Having a set process and criteria will enable applications to be assessed fairly.

Recommendations

This is an updated policy that sets out a clear and equitable process for considering applications for discretionary relief. The criteria are consistent with the priorities of the Council and balance the outcomes to be achieved by organisations against the cost to the Council of granting any discretionary relief. At this stage there are no mitigating actions required.

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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
Age	positive	no		
Disability	positive	no		
Gender Reassignment	No	no	The granting of discretionary relief is not an entitlement	
Marriage & Civil Partnership	No	no	Any relief granted will be a benefit to the organisations involved	
Pregnancy & Maternity	No	no	The criteria for assessing applications	
Race	No	no	Are directly related to the	
Religion / Belief	No	no	Priorities of the Council	
Sex (male or female)	No	no	The overall policy and its application will be kept under review	
Sexual Orientation	No	no		
HR & workforce issues	No	no		
Human Rights implications if relevant	No	no		

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Summary	
Date of Assessment:	October 2017
Signed off by Head of Service/Director	Claire Shand
Review date	October 2017. No changes as a result of the consultation other than greater clarity on a number of points
Date published	