

PART A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provide a record of both the process and decision. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality and diversity
- whether or not equality and diversity is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an Equality Analysis (Part B).

Further information is available in the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance – see page 9.

1. Title	
Title: Housing Revenue Account Rents and Services Charges Report 2022-23	
Directorate: Finance & Customer Services	Service area: Finance Business Partnering – Adult Care, Housing and Public Health
Lead person: Mark Scarrott	Contact number: Extn 22007
Is this a:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategy / Policy	<input type="checkbox"/> Service / Function
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
If other, please specify	

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening
The impact on existing and future council tenants of increasing housing rents and service charges from April 2022. The proposed increase in housing rents is 4.1% from April 2022, an increase in services charges of 2% in line with the Council's policy on fees and charges and increases to District Heating Charges of 15% in 2022/23. This is a result of the significant rise in energy prices which is expected to

impact significantly on the direct operating costs of the district heating schemes.

3. Relevance to equality and diversity

All the Council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – borough wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality and diversity.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, civil partnerships and marriage, pregnancy and maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc.

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community?		√
Could the proposal affect service users?	√	
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics?	√	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal?	√	
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?	√	
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices?		√

If you have answered no to all the questions above, please explain the reason

If you have answered **no** to all the questions above please complete **sections 5 and 6**.

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above please complete **section 4**.

4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity

If you have not already done so, the impact on equality and diversity should be considered within your proposals before decisions are made.

Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below using the prompts for guidance and complete an Equality Analysis (Part B).

• **How have you considered equality and diversity?**

The Council currently owns circa 20,019 homes, 572 leasehold homes and 3,335 garages with a turnover from rents and other income sources approaching £85m per annum (excluding the sale of new properties). This includes approx. 1,270 properties in the Council's District Heating Scheme.

Some of the key elements of the Housing Strategy are to support housing growth, achieve and maintain properties to the decent homes standard, keeping all tenants safe, tackling fuel poverty, providing a customer focus and efficient housing repairs service and provide an effective support service for all neighbourhoods within the borough.

Under Government rent setting rules all social housing providers have had an enforced rent reduction of -1% over 4 years to the end of 2019/20. The Rent Standard is published by Government to ensure all social housing is affordable and follows the same rules and regulations in terms of setting rent. The latest advice published enables Social Housing providers to increase rent by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for inflation + 1% and that this formula is confirmed for the next 5 years. This enables the Council to increase rents for council tenants by up to 4.1% for 2022-23. There are also a number of properties under shared ownership where rents can be increased by up to 5.4% in line with the agreed formula of Retail Price Index (RPI) + 0.5%.

When re-letting a void property the Council policy to date has been to increase the rent to formula rent (as a result we now have 7,651 homes that are paying rent at the Government's standard).

• **Key findings**

Circa 264,000 people live in Rotherham Borough, about half living in and around the main urban area of Rotherham. Rotherham has a similar age profile to the national average and in common with the national trends, the population is ageing.

Central Rotherham has a younger population than average whilst the more suburban and rural areas, mainly in the south of the borough, have older age profiles. One in four residents (25.2%) are aged 60 years or over and 22,500 people (8.5%) are aged 75 years or over. Rotherham has 56,900 children aged 0-17 (21.6% of the population). Rotherham's Black and minority ethnic (BME) population was 8.1% in 2011 and is now estimated at around 11%. The central area of Rotherham is far more ethnically diverse than the rest of the Borough.

The 2011 Census showed that 56,588 (22%) of Rotherham's population had a long-term

health problem or disability and 11.3% said their day-to-day activities were limited a lot by long term conditions (8.3% nationally). In November 2016, 30,296 Rotherham residents (11.6%) claimed Disability Living Allowance (16,680), Personal Independence Payment (6,100) or Attendance Allowance (7,516).

Despite improvements overall, some areas of Rotherham are affected by high economic and social deprivation. Rotherham is the 44th most deprived district in England according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019, which showed 21.6% of residents living in the 10% most deprived areas nationally.

The Housing Service undertake an annual survey of tenants' views, referred to as the Star (Standard Tenant Assessment Response) Survey which supports how resources are targeted and allows the Council to benchmark satisfaction with other social housing providers. The most recent survey found:

- 80% of tenants are satisfied with the overall service provided.
- 80% of tenants are satisfied with the quality of their home.
- 78% of tenants believe their rent provides value for money.
- 48% of tenants were satisfied that their views were listened to and acted upon.
- Satisfaction with grounds maintenance and estate services were varied across the borough.

One in six homes is rented from the council and although house prices have risen over the years, they are about half the national average.

The Council currently owns circa 20,019 homes, 572 leasehold homes and 3,335 garages with a turnover from rents and other income sources approaching £85m per annum.

There are 14,262 Council tenancies in receipt of Housing benefit/Universal Credit who would not be directly affected by an increase in rent and 5,455 tenancies that would be directly affected by a rent increase as they would pay from their household income. The tenants in receipt of benefit (housing benefit or UC) which would see their benefit entitlement adjusted to meet an increase in rent are:

- 6070 are on Universal Credit
- 4913 tenants are on full HB
- 3279 tenants on part HB

• **Actions**

A key priority is the ongoing work mitigating the impact of welfare reform and general financial pressures tenants face. The Council is committed to minimising any effects of welfare reform on tenants and to do this through continuing early intervention and arrears prevention. Our efforts will continue to be in supporting tenants to continue to pay their rent; by offering additional support to vulnerable tenants to help with money, benefits and debt advice; this is being done through our Financial Inclusion team. The past year has seen the Advocacy and Appeals service transfer into the Financial Inclusion team and as such funding for Money Advice Officers to support tenants in rent arrears manage priority debts.

APPENDIX 3

Over the last few years the Housing Service has invested more into front line and general fund services, an additional £1m per year into the front line to provide more support for our most vulnerable tenants and £1.6m per year into housing support services.	
Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	27/10/2021
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	03/11/2021
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	Mark Scarrott – Finance Manager – Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

5. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:

Name	Job title	Date
Owen Campbell	Head of Finance – Adult Care, Housing and Public Health	25.11.21

6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.

A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.

Date screening completed	03/11/2021
Report title and date	Housing Revenue Account Rent and Service Charges 2022/23
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	20 December 2021
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	