

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 2020-21	
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 2020. In line with government guidance the proposed increase in housing rents is 2.7% from April 2020 and an increase in services charges of 2% with the exception of District heating charges which will remain the

same.

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 20,200 homes, 544 leasehold homes and 3,375 garages with a turnover from rents and other sources approaching £82m per annum (excluding the sale of new properties). This includes 1315 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 the previous 4 years. 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 by up to 2.7% for 2020-21

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 6,000 homes that are paying rent at the government's standard).

- **Key findings**

There are currently 19,980 council tenants of which 10,264 (51%) would be directly affected by a rent increase as they will pay from their household income also there are 4,135 tenants (21%) who receive part Housing Benefit and therefore will be impacted to a less extent.

The remaining tenants 5,581 tenants (28%) are not affected by a rent increase as they receive full Housing Benefit.

- **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.

Last year the Housing Service 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. It has also invested and committed to invest over £80m into building more council and affordable homes over the next 3 years. In addition there are further pipeline schemes over the next 5 years still to be approved.

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	07/11/2019
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	18/11/2019
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	19/11/2019
Gerry Gillen	Solicitor	

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	18/11/2019
Report title and date	Housing Revenue Account Rent and Service Charges 2020/21
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	