

Initial Equality Screening Assessment (Part A)

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.

Directorate: Finance and Customer Services	Service area: Finance
Lead person: Rob Mahon	Contact number: 01709 254518

1. Title:

Is this a:

Strategy / Policy

 Service / Function

 Other

If other, please specify

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

The Council is required to set a balanced budget for 2022/23 and presented that balanced budget at Cabinet in February 2022. The budget report outlines the Council's available resources from core government funding, grants and those resources generated through local taxation, and how those resources will be utilised across the Councils services.

The Budget and Council Tax Report 2021/22 noted that £18.1m of agreed budget savings and cost reductions were required to be delivered across the medium term. As per our Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) update to Cabinet on 20th December 2021 we remain confident that the remaining savings will be achieved, but over a longer timeframe, most of them by the end of 2024/25. We are therefore maintaining the current budget strategy but delivering it over a longer period. As such there are no additional savings built into the budget for 2022/23 that require

their own EIA.

In addition to the revenue budget the Council's revised capital programme will be approved as part of the budget report. The Council's capital programme will be approved as part of the Capital Strategy section of the budget report.

Finally, the budget report will approve the Council's Treasury Management Strategy, and prudential indicators. This report covers how the Council intends to manage its debt, borrowing for new investments, cashflow and banking procedures and risk. The prudential indicators provide the key framework for how that strategy will be managed.

The Budget sets the framework within which Cabinet makes its decisions. Therefore detailed impact assessments of those decisions will be undertaken as they are made.

The specific equality implications that arise from the Councils Budget will be addressed through Directorate and service budgets aligned to service plans that now include an equalities section.

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, carers, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and any other relevant characteristics (for example socio-economic status, social class, income, unemployment, residential location or family background and education or skills levels).

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

employment practices?		
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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 prior to carrying out an **Equality Analysis**.

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 and use the prompts for guidance.

The budget report provides an indication of the key challenges that the Council faces, and the specific challenges faced by each directorate along with an indication of the aims and objectives of those directorates.

The ongoing financial challenges faced by the Council are similar to those of other local authorities. The financial pressures faced by local authorities are largely as a result of previous reductions to Government funding, increased demand for social care services as a result of a growing population, market cost pressures within the provision of social care and the impact of inflation.

This budget challenge means that the Council must be responsible in its budget setting approach, prioritising investment and savings proposals that best contribute to the Council's priorities as identified within the Council Plan to best meet the needs of Rotherham's residents and ensure that best value is demonstrated across the breadth of Council services.

The Council Plan was approved at Council on the 12 January 2022, setting out the Council's strategic themes:

- Every neighbourhood thriving
- People are safe, healthy, and live well
- Every child able to fulfil their potential
- Expanding economic opportunity
- A cleaner, greener local environment.

All directorates will continue to work together over the next three years to achieve the commitments set out within each of the themes. The Equality Analysis document accompanying the Council Plan report to Council set out that within the five themes of the Council Plan there would be a series of universal offers aimed at all of Rotherham's residents, while several actions were specifically aimed at tackling inequalities and issues

of access. These were set out in more detail within the Equality Analysis accompanying the Council Plan report.

The budget proposals for 2022/23 include provision for £11m additional costs for adult social care and recognition that there are no further budget savings which could be made within that service. Similarly, the Children's Services budget has been reprofiled to ensure that service levels can be maintained whilst a longer period of time is taken to deliver the service transformation plans and associated cost reductions.

The budget proposals also prioritise £2.7m revenue budget investment across the following themes, mirroring the Council Plan priorities :

- Every neighbourhood thriving
- People are safe, healthy and live well
- Every child able to fulfil their potential
- Expanding economic opportunity
- A cleaner, greener local environment
- One Council approach

The Council is aware that many residents will be facing rising household costs. In recognition of this the Council proposes to provide a further Local Council Tax Support Top Up scheme across the financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24. Based on current caseloads this is expected to provide additional support to approximately 14,500 households. The Council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme was fully reviewed in 2018 and careful analysis within the review confirmed that it is the most vulnerable claimants of support who are reliant on the maximum level of CTS of 91.5% support for a working age household. It is these claimants who will benefit most from the proposed CTS top-up.

The Capital Programme section of the report will seek approval for a series of new investment proposals, prioritised following a process of review and scrutiny of options. The proposals include Neighbourhood Road Safety measures and investment in decarbonisation measures for Council buildings which will contribute to the achievement of the Council's NZ30 target. The linked financial revenue implications of the capital programme have been factored into the Council's revenue budget.

A public consultation ran from December 20th until January 23rd and responses have been considered in finalising the budget proposals. A report reflecting the consultation is appended to this report. No specific equality implications were raised as part of the consultation. However within the consultation responses there were:

- Six mentions of facilities, services or activities for children and young people (e.g. services or support for children with special educational needs or disabilities, and investing in voluntary sector organisations to engage with young people).
- Three mentions of issues relating to social care.

As indicated in Section 3, the specific equality implications that arise from the Councils Budget will be addressed through Directorate and service budgets aligned to service plans that now include an equalities section. Within this process, all Directorates will complete, or will have already completed an equality screening or analysis to ensure due

regard has been given and that there is an understanding of the effects of a strategy, policy, service on those from a protected characteristic group.

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

- **Key findings**

- **Actions**

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis: n/a

Date to complete your Equality Analysis: n/a

Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title): n/a

5. Governance, ownership and approval

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

Name	Job title	Date
Judith Badger	Strategic Director – Finance and Customer Services	22 February 2022

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 22 February 2022

If relates to a Key Delegated Decision, Executive Board, Council or a Significant Operational Decision – report date and date sent for

publication	
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	22 February 2022