

Appendix 9.

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: HRA Business Plan, Rent Setting and Service Charges 2025-26	
Directorate: ACH & PH	Service area: Housing
Lead person: Lindsay Wynn, HRA Business Planning Manager	Contact number: 07342718601
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	
<p>The annual HRA Business Plan rent setting, fees and charges report sets out all proposed income and expenditure for the HRA for the next 30 years as required by HRA self financing.</p> <p>Strategic allocation of resources within the HRA for period of 30 years.</p> <p>Specifically responding to changes in government policy, macro-economic environment, shifting the focus of the plan towards investment in existing stock while ensuring the continuation of housing growth.</p> <p>HRA Business Plan, rent setting, fees and charges 2025-26 provides information on the</p>	

positioning of the HRA Business Plan to deliver large scale planned investment to existing stock, deliver 1,000 new Council homes by 2027 and deliver against the Council Plan.

The overall financial strategy for the proposed HRA Business Plan is focused on:

- Improving tenant’s homes and addressing non-decency
- Improving thermal comfort and bringing energy costs down
- Continuing the housing growth programme
- Modernising the housing service to improve customer experience

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? <i>(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)</i>	X	
Could the proposal affect service users? <i>(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)</i>	X	
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics? <i>(Consider potential discrimination, harassment or victimisation of individuals with protected characteristics)</i>	X	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal? <i>(It is important that the Council is transparent and consultation is carried out with members of the public to help mitigate future challenge)</i>		X
Could the proposal affect how the Council’s services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom? <i>(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from commissioning or procurement)</i>		X

<p>Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices? <i>(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from your HR business partner)</i></p>		x
<p>If you have answered no to all the questions above, please explain the reason</p>		

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 HRA Business plan, rent setting, fees and charges report reviews the proposed income and expenditure for the HRA over the next 30 years it therefore indirectly influences what services can be delivered for Council tenants.

The HRA Business Plan responds to some of the above concerns by maintaining investment in Tenant Involvement Services and the housing management teams to deal with issues of ASB, financial inclusion and engaging with under-represented groups.

The Business plan maintains investment in housing stock which allows investment in properties to install insulation, new heating systems etc. which tackle the fuel poverty agenda and the need for tenants with disabilities to have their homes heated to a warmer temperature than non-disabled tenants.

The Business plan responds to the needs of communities for affordable housing through gearing funds towards building 1000 new Council homes by 2027. The tenure, size and type of accommodation (including Disabled person units) has been informed by the Strategic Housing Market assessment.

The plan continues to invest over £1m in additional resources per year into front line housing services to support the most vulnerable tenants. These tenants will have protected characteristics.

The proposed rent policy of increase rents by 2.7% may adversely affect U25's on benefit as this group is paid a lower rate of benefits. It may also affect those on low incomes. An affordability analysis of such groups has been undertaken and relevant support packages identified for such groups.

The Business plan itself does not commission services but details how the Housing Service will be funded and each service area has policies and strategies detailing how service will be delivered which will each have an Equality analysis.

• **Key findings**

The Council currently owns circa 20,000 homes, 617 leasehold homes and 3,385 garages with a turnover from rents and other sources approaching £104m per annum.

The HRA Business Plans purpose is to outline how resources will be spent over the next 30 years ensuring we have a viable Housing Service that meets the needs and tenants and citizens of Rotherham.

The HRA Business Plan and through the application of housing policies (such as the allocation policy) will have a positive impact by breaking down some of the barriers that people face in accessing housing specific to their needs; whatever their specialist needs may be. The analysis of housing need by different need groups will help ensure that the strategy has a positive impact across all protected characteristics.

The strategy will align with other key strategies and frameworks across the Council as part of the "One Council" approach. Links to other key documents;

- Council Plan and Year Ahead Plan
- Housing Service Plan
- Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy
- Financial Inclusion Strategy
- Tenant Engagement Framework
- Housing Strategy

• **Actions**

Monitor the demographics of tenants being evicted
 Monitor the impact of the new build houses by analysis the number of lettings according to the tenants protected characteristic.
 Monitor attendance of tenant engagement events.
 Respond to consultation feedback through Planning Applications.

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	19/11/24
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	19/11/24
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	Paul Elliott Head of Housing Income and Support Services

5. Governance, ownership and approval

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

Name	Job title	Date
James Clark	Assistant Director of Housing	25/11/24

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 November 2024
Report title and date	HRA Business Plan, Rent Setting and Service Charges 2025-26
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	16 December 2024
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	21 November 2024