

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Initial Screening Form



Screening determines whether the policy has any relevance for equality, ie is there any impact on one or more of the 9 protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership*
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief (including lack of belief)
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

1. Policy/service/function title	Finance – General Fund budget reports
2. Lead officer (responsible for the policy/service/function)	Karen Watling
3. Is this a new or existing policy/service/function?	Budget setting is an annual requirement.
4. What exactly is proposed? (Describe the policy/service/ function and the changes that are being planned?)	<p>Babergh: an increase in Council Tax of 2.99%. Mid Suffolk: an increase in Council Tax of 2%.</p> <p>Babergh & Mid Suffolk: new income bands and contribution rates for the 100% Local Council Tax Reduction (Working Age) Scheme</p>
5. Why? (Give reasons why these changes are being introduced)	<p>To be able to produce a balanced budget and because if we freeze council tax increases then even where a surplus exists the gap between income and expenditure will only become wider, exacerbating the structural funding challenge. If Council tax is not increased then greater savings would be required from service budgets, which would be likely to have a greater impact on those with protected characteristics.</p> <p>The Council introduced an ongoing 100% Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme last year. It is proposed to update the Income Bands by the Consumer Price Index (6.7%) as for other welfare benefits to ensure the scheme continues to support the most vulnerable households.</p>

<p>6. How will it be implemented? (Describe the decision making process, timescales, process for implementation)</p>	<p>Cabinet will recommend but ultimately it will be a decision made by Full Council through a future report.</p>
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<p>7. Is there potential for differential impact (negative or positive) on any of the protected characteristics?</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Identify how the impact would affect the specific equality strand.</p> <p>Council Tax increases are applied universally (ie to the property) so there is nothing to suggest differential impacts on protected characteristics. It may impact in a greater way on those experiencing poverty but that is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act.</p> <p>The Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme was introduced and is still available to support those on low incomes.</p>
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<p>8. Is there the possibility of discriminating unlawfully, directly or indirectly, against people from any protected characteristic?</p>	<p>No</p>
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<p>9. Could there be an effect on relations between certain groups?</p>	<p>No</p>
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<p>10. Does the policy explicitly involve, or focus on a particular equalities group, i.e. because they have particular needs?</p>	<p>No</p>
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If the answers are 'no' to questions 7-10 then there is no need to proceed to a full impact assessment and this form should then be signed off as appropriate.

If 'yes' then a full impact assessment must be completed.

Authors signature Tom Barker

Date of completion 1/2/2024

Any queries concerning the completion of this form should be addressed to the Equality and Diversity Lead.

* Public sector duty does not apply to marriage and civil partnership.