

## Equality Impact Assessment: *Housing Rents and Service Charges 2021-22*

The Equality Act 2010 includes a general duty which requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- **Eliminate discrimination**, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- **Foster good relations** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

Authorities which fail to carry out equality impact assessments risk making poor and unfair decisions which may discriminate against particular groups and worsen inequality.

<b>Committee name and date:</b>	<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Decisions being recommended:</b>	<b>People with protected characteristics potentially impacted by the decisions to be made:</b>
Executive Committee 11 <sup>th</sup> January 2022	Housing Rents and Service Charges 2022-23	That Executive recommend that Council approves:	See below

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rents of Council dwellings are increased by 4.1% from 1 April 2022</li> <li>• Garage rents are increased by 4.1% from 1 April 2022</li> <li>• Service Charges are increased by 4.1%, with the exception of charges specified in paragraph 13.3, from 1 April 2022</li> </ul>	
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**Factors to consider in the assessment:** For each of the groups below, an assessment has been made on whether the proposed decision will have a **positive, negative or neutral impact**. This is must be noted in the table below alongside brief details of why this conclusion has been reached and notes of any mitigation proposed. Where the impact is negative, a **high, medium or low assessment** is given. The assessment rates the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

**High impact** – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.

**Medium impact** –some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence

**Low impact** – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive or Negative Impact	High, Medium or Low Impact	Reason
<p><b>Race and ethnicity</b> (including Gypsies and Travellers; migrant workers; asylum seekers).</p>	<p><b>Neutral</b></p>		<p>Every year the Council reviews the rents and service charges that apply to its housing and garage stock. This is to take account of inflation and any other financial factors in order to ensure we have the income to deliver a high quality housing service to all tenants and garage renters.</p> <p>As a local authority we must observe government legislation and guidance when it comes to levying rents. The Council is permitted to apply the current policy of increasing rents by CPI plus 1%, which equates to 4.1% for 2022/23.</p> <p>Service Charges will be increased by 4.1%, with the exception of charges specified in paragraph 12.3, from 1 April 2022. Garage rents will be increased by 4.1% also.</p> <p>Increasing rent and service charges by the amounts specified will have a neutral effect on protected groups.</p> <p>It could be argued that because the proposed rent increase is 1% higher than the current rate of inflation (based on the September CPI rate) that the impact on all groups would be negative, albeit low. However, tenants have all benefitted from four year's rent cuts of 1% per year in the recent past. This increase will go a little way to redress that imbalance which cost ECC (and therefore deprived tenants of potential significant investment) around £7.9 million</p> <p>Not to increase rents by the maximum allowable will potentially damage the services we deliver (particularly our new build and retrofit plans which will ultimately cut energy bills and improve the</p>

			<p>local environment) and adversely affect the health and well-being of tenants.</p> <p>Again it could be argued that some people with protected characteristics have lower incomes than those without (or possibly no incomes at all apart from welfare benefits) and so would be adversely affected by rent rises. But the fact is that people with sufficiently low incomes will receive housing benefit or universal credit so will be largely insulated from any rent increases such as those proposed.</p> <p>Even with the proposed rent and service charge increases Exeter City Council rents are among the lowest in the city. For example, last year the average weekly rent for a two-bedroom property in the private sector was over £184. For Housing Associations it was over £89; while for Exeter City Council tenants the average rent was £77.51.</p>
<b>Disability:</b> as defined by the Equality Act – a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse impact on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.	<b>Neutral</b>		See box 1 above
<b>Sex/Gender</b>	<b>Neutral</b>		See box 1 above
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	<b>Neutral</b>		See box 1 above
<b>Religion and belief</b> (includes no belief, some philosophical beliefs such as Buddhism and sects within religions).	<b>Neutral</b>		See box 1 above
<b>Sexual orientation</b> (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual).	<b>Neutral</b>		See box 1 above
<b>Age</b> (children and young people aged 0-24; adults aged 25-50;	<b>Neutral</b>		See box 1 above

younger older people aged 51-75/80; older people 81+; frail older people; people living with age related conditions. The age categories are for illustration only as overriding consideration should be given to needs).			
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b> including new and breast feeding mothers	<b>Neutral</b>		See box 1 above
<b>Marriage and civil partnership status</b>	<b>Neutral</b>		See box1 above
<b><u>Actions identified that will mitigate any negative impacts and/or promote inclusion</u></b>			

**Officer:**

**Date:**