

Equality Impact Assessment: *Housing Rents and Service Charges 2024-25*

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.

Committee name and date:	Report Title	Decisions being recommended:	People with protected characteristics potentially impacted by the decisions to be made:
Executive Committee 10 th January 2023	Housing Rents and Service Charges 2024-25	That Executive recommend that Council approves:	See below

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rents of Council dwellings are increased by 7.7% from 1 April 2024 • Garage rents are increased by 7.7% from 1 April 2024 • Service Charges are increased by 7.7%, from 1 April 2024 	
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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	Reason
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		Low Impact	
<p>Race and ethnicity (including Gypsies and Travellers; migrant workers; asylum seekers).</p>	<p>Neutral</p>		<p>Increasing rent and service charges by the amounts specified will have a neutral effect on protected groups.</p> <p>In October 2017, the Government announced its intention to set a long term rent policy in respect of annual rent increases on both social rent and affordable rent properties of up to CPI plus 1% from 2020, for a period of 5 years. The policy on rents for social housing came into effect from 1 April 2020.</p> <p>The CPI figure for September 2023 was 6.7%, so under this policy the Council is permitted to apply a rent increase of 7.7% for 2024/25.</p> <p>Rents of garages and service charges fall outside the scope of the Government's rent policy. Authorities are expected to set reasonable and transparent charges which reflect the service being provided to tenants.</p> <p>There is an appreciation of the costs of living crisis on tenants of ECC. However, in addition to this we need to consider that tenants benefited from 1% rent cuts per year between 2016/17 and 2019/20, which resulted in the HRA losing £7.9m over the 4 year period, so our base-line rents are already lower than previously anticipated over a 30 year business plan.</p> <p>A lower than permitted increase would place a financial constraint on the HRA and result in a lower base-line position for future year rents.</p> <p>In 2023/24 rent increase the government capped rent increases at 7% where the actual CPI + 1% would have resulted in an increase of 11.1%. This resulted in reduction in rental income of approximately £2.5m over 3 years whilst the costs of materials and labour continued to increase at inflationary levels.</p>

			<p>Tenants on low income will have their rents met by Housing Benefit (HB full or partial) or Universal Credit (UC), so it will save the Government money as opposed to the tenant (23% full HB, 12% partial HB and 20% in receipt of UC).</p> <p>Officers continue to work to assist households in financial difficulty where possible, including the administering of Government funds to support those households in need.</p>
<p>Disability: 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.</p>	<p>Neutral</p>		<p>See box 1 above</p>
<p>Sex/Gender</p>	<p>Neutral</p>		<p>See box 1 above</p>
<p>Gender reassignment</p>	<p>Neutral</p>		<p>See box 1 above</p>
<p>Religion and belief (includes no belief, some philosophical beliefs such as Buddhism and sects within religions).</p>	<p>Neutral</p>		<p>See box 1 above</p>
<p>Sexual orientation (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual).</p>	<p>Neutral</p>		<p>See box 1 above</p>
<p>Age (children and young people aged 0-24; adults aged 25-50; 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).</p>	<p>Neutral</p>		<p>See box 1 above</p>

Pregnancy and maternity including new and breast feeding mothers	Neutral		See box 1 above
Marriage and civil partnership status	Neutral		See box1 above
<u>Actions identified that will mitigate any negative impacts and/or promote inclusion</u>			

Officer: Sarah Hemming
Date: 5th December 2023