

Customer Access Review

Initial Screening

Screening details	
Assessment area	Budget setting 2016-17
Date of screening	February 2016
Directorate and Service	Internal Services, Financial Services
Manager	Tim Sams
Officer conducting screening	Helen Griffith
Screening questions	
1	What are the aims and objectives of the activity or proposal? To set balanced budget for year.
2	Who will be affected by the activity or proposal? All residents via Council Tax levels and Housing tenants via rents
3	<p>Is there any indication that different groups of people have or will have different needs, experiences, issues or priorities in relation to the activity or proposal? Consider this in relation to the protected characteristics of age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, race, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Please explain: Proposals will not result in any changes to service levels but in line with government policy, rents will rise slightly for residents of supported housing schemes amongst which there is a higher % of residents with needs related to age and disability. Rents for general needs tenants will reduce under government legislation.</p>
4	<p>Please indicate which aims of the General Equality Duty the activity or proposal is relevant to</p> <p>a) To eliminate unlawful discrimination and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Please explain: The differential increase in rents to some in a protected group could be relevant to this classification.</p> <p>b) To advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Please explain: The differential increase in rents has been allowed by government in order to provide important funding for residents of supported housing schemes while ministers analyse the findings of a review into costs. This will help to protect these service and hence the users.</p>

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		c) To foster good relations between the people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
		Please explain:	
5	Please identify the degree to which the activity or proposal has been assessed as relevant to equality	High – The activity or proposal shows a high degree of relevance to one or more protected characteristic and / or one or more aim of the General Equality Duty	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Medium – The activity or proposal shows a moderate degree of relevance to one or more protected characteristic and / or one or more aim of the General Equality Duty	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Low – The activity or proposal is not relevant to any protected characteristic and / or any aim of the General Equality Duty	<input type="checkbox"/>
Screening outcome			
If the Initial Screening has identified a high or medium ranking, a full Customer Access Review is required If a low ranking has been identified, a full Customer Access Review is not required			
6	As a result of this Initial Screening, is a full Customer Access Review required?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes Go on to complete a full Customer Access Review	<input type="checkbox"/> No Send this Initial Screening to the Policy & Projects Officer

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Full Assessment

Assessment details		
Assessment area		Supported Housing Rents
Date of assessment		February 2016
Directorate and Service		Dartford Borough Council, Strategic Directorate (External Services), Housing Services
Manager		Peter Dosad
Officer conducting assessment		Alison Haines/ Peter Dosad
Step 1: Scoping the assessment		
1	What are the aims and objectives of the activity or proposal?	To add the typical annual increase to Supported Housing Rents in line with government policy, in order to protect current service provision.
2	Who will be affected?	Tenants of Supported Housing Schemes
3	How does the activity or proposal contribute to: a) any key performance indicators? b) policies, values or objectives of Dartford Borough Council?	To positively impact on income maximisation for a service which costs more to provide. Income maximisation is a Council objective. This activity could also affect the KPI for rent arrears.
4	Which aspects of the activity or proposal are dictated by legislation/regulation and where do we have discretion in how they are delivered?	The Housing Bill is currently going through Parliament. The Government decided early February 2016 to exempt supported housing from the 1% reduction to general needs housing rents for one year while ministers analyse the findings of a review into supported housing costs, as it recognises that this type of housing requires intensive housing management which results in increased costs for providers. The concern is that applying the 1% reduction to supported housing rents would seriously impact on service providers ability to deliver the current level of service to the vulnerable client groups affected. The increase of 0.9% in base rents will therefore help to offset the additional expense of supporting our frailer and more vulnerable tenants in their own homes.

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Step 2: Information collection

Note: Equality and Diversity information for Dartford can be found at <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/Facts-and-figures-about-Kent/equality-and-diversity-data>

5	<p>What do you know about the groups of people who will be affected? i.e. demographic information in relation to the protected characteristic groups (age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, race, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment)</p>	<p>Before moving to supported housing, each tenant has a needs and risk assessment undertaken to ensure that they meet the criteria for support. This type of housing is only available to people with disability, age or mobility issues and the assessments are based solely on the level of support needed to live independently. Of the 492 tenants currently living in supported accommodation, 95 (19.31%) are on full housing benefit and 298 (60.57%) are on part-housing benefit – because of this, 79.88% of current supported housing tenants are unlikely to be affected by the increase as their rent is being paid by housing benefit, either in part or in full. There are 99 tenants who are currently not receiving any housing benefit and therefore just over 20% of the group will be impacted by this increase.</p>
6	<p>What consultation has taken place with affected groups? Please describe who was consulted and the key findings</p>	<p>A consultation on the draft proposals in the budget was made available on the Council's website prior to the budget being printed. However, as the Government had not, at that stage, announced their intention to relax the 1% reduction in respect of supported housing, this consultation did not highlight the sheltered housing rents increase and would not have attracted those tenants views.</p>
7	<p>Are there any gaps in information? If so, what additional research and/or consultation is needed to ensure that affected groups needs and views are taken into account?</p>	<p>The Council has never before consulted with tenants about rent increases or decreases. The policy has always been to maximise HRA income and report accordingly in the annual budget report. The new rents to be applied from 4th April 2016 have been updated on the Housing system (Capita) and the files for the rent change letters must be produced next week to allow enough time to print and post letters by the legislative deadline. Given the lateness in the Government's announcement, it would not be feasible to consult with tenants now and still meet that deadline. DBC is required to give 4 clear weeks notice in writing of any change to the rent charges so letters must be posted during week commencing 29th February 2016.</p>

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Step 3: Assessing the equality impact

8	<p>Consider whether the activity or proposal has or will have any positive or negative equality impacts on the protected characteristic groups in relation to the following aims of the General Equality Duty:</p> <p>a) tackling unlawful discrimination b) promoting equality of opportunity c) promoting good relations</p> <p><u>NOTES:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Initial Screening will have identified which aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty are relevant to the activity or proposal for consideration • For existing activities, consider how they are working in practice for each relevant protected group • For new proposals, consider whether there is anything that could give rise to positive and negative equality impacts for each relevant protected group • If there is no identified equality impact, please tick the 'No Impact' box and explain why in question 9 • If the equality impact is unclear, please tick the 'Unknown' box and explain why in question 9 				
		POSITIVE IMPACTS	NEGATIVE IMPACTS	NO IMPACT	UNKNOWN
a	Age	Important additional funding in line with Government intentions, helping to ensure continued support service provision for this vulnerable client group.	A small amount of additional rent in line with previous practice. The exemption from the general needs decrease in rent is applied in order to protect these important services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b	Disability	Important additional funding in line with Government intentions, helping to ensure continued support service provision for this vulnerable client group.	A small amount of additional rent to pay in line with previous practice. The exemption from the general needs decrease in rent is in order to protect these important services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c	Gender (including reassignment)			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d	Race			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e	Religion/Belief			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f	Sexual Orientation			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g	Pregnancy/Maternity			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	If 'no impact' or 'unknown' was selected, please explain	There is no reason to expect these characteristics to be more or less prevalent in sheltered housing than it would be in general needs housing therefore it is considered that there is no impact.			

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10	If Dartford Borough Council works with partners to deliver the activity or proposal, please describe any circumstances that could give rise to positive or negative equality impacts between different groups	N/A
11	Any other comments	

Step 4: Action plan

11. Based on the information in Steps 1 to 3, please list the actions that will be taken to address:

- a) any gaps in information and consultation
- b) how any negative impacts on equality will be mitigated or eradicated

a) If additional information and/or consultation is required or the impact is still unclear, what actions will you put in place to gather the information you need?

Information needs	Action	Intended outcome	Date for completion	How this will be monitored	Responsible officer
Inform tenants affected	Discuss at DBRF meeting on the 8.3.2016	Tenants are informed	8.3.2016	Minutes of meeting to be kept	Head of Housing
Seek views of Councillors	Assessment highlighted in budget report	Views of Councillors	23.2.2016	Minutes of meeting to be kept	Financial Services Manager

b) If any negative impacts on equality were found, what actions will you put in place to mitigate or eradicate these impacts?

Identified impacts (and who is affected)	Action	Intended outcome	Date for completion	How this will be monitored	Responsible officer
Rent increase for supported housing residents	Ensures residents forum & Councillors are informed	None - in reality the rent increase is in accordance with the normal annual process	1.3.2016	Sign off minutes	Head of Housing

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Step 5: Decision making and future monitoring		
13	Which decision making process does this Customer Access Review need to go through? i.e. who does this need to be approved by?	Relevant Director
14	How will you continue to monitor the impact of the activity or proposal on the equality groups?	Regular monitoring of the supported housing rent accounts will be carried out via the rents team
15	When will you review this Customer Access Review?	At rent setting next year if a similar situation reoccurs
Step 6: Final steps		
16	Once this Customer Access Review has been approved, send this assessment to the Policy & Projects Officer	
17	If the subject of the Customer Access Review is going to committee, summarise your findings in the committee report	
18	Implement the actions identified from this Customer Access Review and ensure progress is monitored and recorded	