

APPENDIX 3

Equality Impact Assessment

To be completed for ALL assessments Stage 1

<p>Policy Name</p>	<p>Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2020/21</p>
<p>Relevance <i>Summary - of Stage 1- Screening</i></p>	<p>The implementation of Universal Credit within the area requires the Council to change its approach to Council Tax Reduction, given the high administrative burden of monthly changes and alterations to applicant’s income.</p> <p>There is a requirement to introduce a simplified scheme which can be easily administered without significant additional costs being placed on the Council. The current scheme is too reactive to minor changes in applicant’s income leading to constant changes in Council Tax liability.</p> <p>The scheme changes will only apply to working age applicants – pension age applicants are covered by the Prescribed Requirement Regulations determined by Central Government.</p> <p>The move to an income-based scheme (without the complexities of a full means tested as required by the current scheme).</p> <p>The changes will provide the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplified claiming arrangements for all working age applicants; • Certainty, at present, multiple changes are leading to some taxpayer’s receiving a large number of Council Tax bills per year as their Council Tax Reduction is amended • The maximisation of applicant’s entitlement with clear straightforward messages to claim; • Speed of processing, applications will be dealt with more efficiently and without the need for significant levels of evidence; • Reduced administration costs. The changes will prevent the administration costs from rising year on year which would be inevitable under the current scheme.

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	<p>It should be noted that the overall costs of the scheme (the amount of monies available to taxpayers) will not change although, through the operation of the new scheme, lower income applicants may receive more support.</p>
<p>Likely impact</p> <p><i>Please summarise your conclusions on the proposal's likely impact –negative, positive, or neutral. Please also include a brief explanation of how the proposal was assessed?</i></p>	<p>For a large number of applicants, the proposals will have little or no impact. However, it should be noted that certain groups may experience either reduced or increased support – details are given below.</p>
<p>Positive or Neutral Impact :</p> <p><i>If you consider the outcome of this matter will have a Positive or Neutral impact, no further action is required at this time.</i></p>	<p>The majority of applicants will experience little change however, from the current modelling, the following groups may see an increase in support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lone parents; • Couples with one child; • ESA claimants who receive the Support Component; • Certain disabled applicants
<p>Negative Impact :</p> <p>Proceed to EIA Stage 2</p> <p><i>List the actions that you intend to take to prevent or limit any potential adverse or negative effects on different community groups.</i></p>	<p>Certain applicant groups may be affected due to the changes in the scheme. Details are provided below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single applicants – minor adjustments to entitlement • Couples (no children) – adjustments to their entitlement due to the income ranges; • Larger families who have two children or more may receive less support given their higher level of available income; • Some disabled applicants may have an adjustment to their support depending on their available income. <p>In all cases where there is a reduction in support, the Council will look to mitigate this by the use of an Exceptional Hardship Fund which is available and which, on an individual basis, can ‘top up’ support for those applicants who are experiencing exceptional hardship.</p> <p>Applications can be made to the Council at any time for this and an individual assessment of need will be undertaken by staff.</p>

APPENDIX 3**Monitoring**

Please summarise the action you intend to take to monitor the actual impact of the policy.

Monitoring will be undertaken monthly until a final decision on the policy is made by full Council

Once agreed and implemented, monitoring will continue throughout the new financial year

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EIA Stage 1 – Screening (Partial Assessment)

Keep all versions of your EIA. An EIA should be finalised once a final decision is taken.

Guidance Notes	EIA Stage 1 – Screening (Partial Assessment)
	<p>1.1 Title of product, project or policy</p> <p>Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2020/21</p>
<p><i>Include its main aim(s); activities and beneficiaries</i></p>	<p>1.2 Brief details about the product, project or policy</p> <p>To change the working age Council Tax Reduction Scheme with effect from 1st April 2020.</p> <p>It should be noted that pensioners will not be affected by the changes as their scheme is prescribed by Central Government.</p> <p>The main aim of the Council Tax Reduction scheme is to provide support for council taxpayers who have a low income.</p> <p>There is a requirement to introduce a simplified scheme which can be easily administered without significant additional costs being placed on the Council. The current scheme is too reactive to minor changes in applicant’s income leading to constant changes in Council Tax liability</p>
<p><i>Will the proposed decision have consequences for local communities or the people that we employ?</i></p> <p><i>Is the proposed policy likely to affect either our relations with certain groups or the relationship between different groups?</i></p>	<p>1.3 Is the proposed product, project or policy relevant to the Council’s general objective to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different community groups?</p> <p>Whilst the intention of the scheme is not to reduce the overall level of support available to working age applicants, there will inevitably be a redistribution of support with some winners and losers.</p> <p>To mitigate any losses, the Council maintains an exceptional hardship fund which can be applied for by any applicant</p>
<p><i>Could these consequences differ for different groups?</i></p> <p><i>Do people of different groups have different expectations of the policy?</i></p>	<p>1.4 Is the equality impact of this proposal likely to be positive or neutral? If the answer is yes, submit this report & summary to Management Team.</p> <p>The overall effect of the changes proposed will be a redistribution of support with the large majority of applicants receiving a positive effect. The proposed increase in maximum support will be of benefit to the majority of low-income applicants</p>

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Guidance Notes	EIA Stage 1 – Screening (Partial Assessment)
<p><i>Is there any evidence that any part of the proposed policy could discriminate unlawfully, directly or indirectly, against particular groups of people? Please explain why.</i></p>	<p>1.5 Is the equality impact of this proposal likely to be negative? <i>If the answer is yes or you are unsure, proceed to a full assessment.</i></p> <p>As mentioned in 1.4 the overall effect of the changes will be positive, however, as with all changes there may be some applicants who will be negatively affected. As such the Council will look to offer further support through its Exceptional Hardship Scheme.</p> <p>All applicants, where it is identified that their support may reduce, will be approached to establish whether additional support should be provided, subject to the individual financial circumstances.</p>

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EIA Stage 2 – Full assessment

Keep all versions of your EIA. An EIA should be finalised once a final decision is taken.

Guidance Notes	EIA Stage 2 – Full assessment
	Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2020/21
<p><i>What are the aims of the policy?</i></p> <p><i>What is it designed to achieve?</i></p> <p><i>Why is it needed?</i></p> <p><i>What outcomes are expected? Who are the main beneficiaries? How will outcomes be measured? What are the risks, and do any of them relate to the Council's objective to promote equality?</i></p>	<p>2.2 Description of product, project, or policy</p> <p>Introduction of a replacement Council Tax Reduction Scheme from 1st April 2020 for all working age applicants.</p> <p>It should be noted that Pension Age applicants are cover by Central Government's Prescribed Scheme.</p> <p>Full details of the changes are given in the Stage 1 assessment.</p>
<p><i>Could the proposed policy affect different groups in society differently?</i></p> <p><i>Will the policy or its implementation break the law or have the potential to break the law?</i></p> <p><i>Is there a public concern (in the media etc) that this function or policy is discriminatory?</i></p> <p><i>What do stakeholders think?</i></p> <p><i>What does available data, information, research, or consultation responses reveal about the likely impact of the policy?.</i></p>	<p>2.3 Is there any evidence to suggest that this could affect some groups of people differently? Is there an adverse impact? What are the reasons for this adverse impact?</p> <p>The new scheme will do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the level of support for those applicants on the lowest incomes; • Significantly reduce the number of changes per annum experienced by a large number of applicants, especially those on Universal Credit; • Reduce the number of Council Tax demands issued due those changes and thereby protect the overall collection rate of the tax. <p>Whilst the majority of applicants will either have little change or a positive change, there may be some applicants who experience a reduction in support.</p> <p>From the modelling undertaken, these are likely to be larger families (where they have more than two dependants), whose third or subsequent child was born on or before 1st April 2017. At the present time the scheme allows for these dependants. Any new applications</p>

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	<p>will be limited to allowing for up to two dependants only in line with the changes made in Council Tax Reduction, Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.</p> <p>Where any applicant is likely to be adversely affected, the Council will contact them directly and offer additional support through the Exceptional Hardship scheme depending on the individual’s financial circumstances.</p>
<p><i>Will it promote equality? Cite the evidence to support your conclusion</i></p>	<p>2.4 Will the proposed policy have a positive or negative effect on our objective to promote equality of opportunity? Will it help eliminate discrimination in any way, or encourage or hinder community relations?</p> <p>The new scheme generally is more generous than the current, with maximum support being set at 90% rather than the current level of 80%.</p> <p>The scheme provides more support to those applicants on lower incomes and will provide increased certainty in relation to ongoing Council Tax liability, as it will not be subject to constant change.</p> <p>The claiming and administration process is simplified and it will both encourage taxpayers to claim any entitlement and will in no way hinder community relations</p>
<p><i>How was this EIA completed? How did you engage or involve stakeholders like the staff diversity networks?</i></p>	<p>2.5 Include a brief explanation of how this policy was assessed, and for major proposals include details of the consultation methods used.</p> <p>As required by legislation the following consultation was undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with Major Precepting Authorities (details included with the Cabinet Report); • Consultation with the public during the period dd/mmm/yyyy to dd/mmm/yyyy (full details are included with the Cabinet Report)
	<p>2.6 If the proposed policy/proposal/project does have an adverse impact? Can that impact be justified?</p> <p>As identified above, some applicants may experience a reduction in support. However, where that occurs, the Council will contact applicants direct and offer further assistance through the Exceptional Hardship Scheme on a case by case basis.</p>

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	<p>The change to the scheme is fully justified given the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased support to applicants overall; • The simplification of the scheme and administration generally; • Providing a more stable tax base and ensuring that Council finances through Council Tax are maintained; and • Providing all applicants with minimal changes to their council Tax liability.
<p><i>What measures do you intend to take mitigate any negative or adverse impact on particular groups?</i></p>	<p>2.7 If the impact cannot be justified, how do you intend to deal with it?</p> <p>Not applicable</p>
<p><i>Indicate how you intend to evaluate the successful implementation of the proposal? How will this evaluation assess impact on equality?</i></p>	<p>2.8 How do you intend to monitor the impact of this proposal on the Council’s objective to promote equality?</p> <p>Changes to the scheme will be monitored monthly throughout the financial year 2020/21.</p> <p>If any unintended consequences arise, Cabinet will be informed. The scheme will be reviewed in 2020.</p>