Herefordshire Council

Supplement to the agenda for

Council

Friday 7 February 2025

10.00 am

Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE

		Pages
9.	**2025/26 BUDGET, MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY - REVENUE - EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM 1224 - COMBINED BUDGET**	3 - 8

Herefordshire Council

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

1. Service Area/Directorate

Name of Head of Service for activity being assessed: Rachael Sanders
Directorate: Council wide
Name of lead person for this activity: Rachael Sanders
Individual(s) completing this assessment: Judith Tranmer
Date assessment completed: 15/01/2025

2. What is being assessed

Activity being assessed (eg. policy, procedure, budget, service redesign, strategy etc.)

2025/26 budget setting

The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires a council to set a balanced budget, with funding to fully meet the proposed expenditure. For 2025/26, a balanced draft revenue budget has been proposed which totals £231.5 million (2024/25 £212.8 million). The movements in both funding income and expenditure must be assessed for their impact on groups with protected characteristics in order to meet Equalities Act duties.

Process for EIA

All movements in funding and income between the 2024/25 budget and the proposed draft budget for 2025/26 have been assessed in line with the Equalities Act and the Council's EIA process and guidance. Some movements were initially scoped out of the EIA process because they were deemed as clearly having no impact on groups with protected characteristics. Remaining movements were assessed using the EIA screening checklist by the service area. Those movements where the EIA screening checklist scored 4 points or more were assessed using a full EIA form.

This full EIA form is a combined assessment for all of the budget movements.

Budget movements that do not require a screening checklist

These can be grouped by the following descriptions:-

1. Virements or corrections of budget due to funding or directorate changes to services where the service provided is not impacted.
2. Budget increases due to changes that are not optional to the council plus any direct impact of these changes, e.g. pay award, increases to employers national insurance contributions, contractual inflationary uplifts.
3. Budget changes due to the full year impact of budget decisions for the previous year.
4. Where EIA has already been completed as part of a contract award.
5. Budget changes to back office functions that do not impact service provision to the public.

Budget movements where an EIA screening checklist has been completed (but where a full EIA was not required)

1. Transport - £2.8 million increase in budget for increased demand and cost pressures in SEND, Home to School and Community transport.
2. Adult Social Care - £5.0 million net increase in budget for clients due to increased demand and cost pressures, including Learning Disability, Memory & Cognition, Physical Support and Sensory Support. Also including increase in budgets for temporary accommodation and community equipment due to increased demand pressures.

3. Children's Social Care - £1.8 million increase in budget to meet pressures in Short Breaks and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. Offset by £1.6 million reduction in placements budgets due to planned savings.
4. Children's Service Staffing - £2.4 million reduction in staffing budgets due to planned savings.
5. Gypsy/Property Site Services - £0.1 million increase in budget to support site maintenance.

In all instances above, the change in the budget was to reflect change in demand or volume of services or maintain current services. As such there isn't a change in the actual service itself.

Budget movements where a full EIA have been completed

1. Council Tax increase - The proposed draft revenue budget for 2025/26 is a balanced budget. The proposal includes a 4.99% increase in Council Tax (2.99% increase in core Council Tax and 2.00% adult social care precept). This is the maximum increase permitted without a referendum, and generates £11.4 million funding for council services.

What is the aim, purpose, or intended outcome of this activity?

The council is required to set a balanced budget each year under Section 31A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. Reductions in Central Government funding along with increases in budget pressures have meant that the maximum increase in Council Tax has been proposed to enable a balanced budget and to maintain financial sustainability of the council into the medium term financial strategy period.

Who will be affected by the development and implementation of this activity?

☒ Service users	☐ Visitors to the county
☒ Communities	☒ Carers
☐ Children	☐ Patients
☐ All staff	☐ All part-time staff
☐ Staff at a particular location	☐ Other:

Is this:

☒ Review of an existing activity/policy
☐ New activity/policy
☐ Planning to withdraw or reduce a service, activity or presence?

2. Background information and findings

What information and evidence have you reviewed to help inform this assessment? (name your sources, eg. demographic information, usage data, Census data, feedback, complaints, audits, research)

Office for National Statistics, Census 2021 data – population, age, disability.
Office for National Statistics, unemployment data (May 2024).
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) – Council Tax support claimants (September 2024).
Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – Children in Low income families (March 2024).

Summary of engagement or consultation undertaken (eg. who you've engaged with, and how, or why do you believe this is not required)

A public consultation was undertaken as part of the budget setting process. For 2025/26, this comprised an online budget simulator tool, a short online survey on council priorities and an event for local businesses. The analysis of consultation results will be included in the budget setting reports for Cabinet and Council.

Summary of relevant findings (it is possible that you will have gaps in your evidence. You must decide whether you need to fill in the gaps now, and if it is feasible to do so. It might be that collecting robust information forms part of your action plan below)

Age

The 2021 Census population data shows that 26% of the population of Herefordshire are aged 65 years and over. The MHCLG data shows that 42% of Council Tax support claimants are pensioners. This indicates that older adults are likely to be disproportionately impacted by an increase in Council Tax.

Disability

The 2021 Census population data shows that 6.7% of Herefordshire residents class themselves as disabled and limited a lot, and 10.3% class themselves as disabled and limited a little.

Sex

The 2021 Census population data shows that the gender split of older adults aged 65 and over is approximately equal (53% and 47%).

This indicates that there is no significant additional impact due to gender on use of council services for older adults.

Social/economic deprivation

The Office for National Statistics data for unemployment shows the level of unemployment in Herefordshire is 3.0%.

The DWP data for children in low income families shows that 5,938 children in Herefordshire are living in families classed as in relative absolute poverty.

3. The Public Sector Equality Duty

Will this activity have a positive, neutral or negative impact on our duty to:

Equality Duty	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation?	☐	☒	☐
Advance equality of opportunity between different groups?	☐	☒	☐
Foster good relations between different groups?	☐	☒	☐

Explain your rationale here, and include any ways in which you could strengthen the capacity of this activity to promote equality (remember to add anything relevant into your action planning below)

n/a

4. The impact of this activity

Consider the potential impact of this activity on each of the equality groups outlined below and explain your rationale. Please note it is possible for the potential impact to be both positive and negative within the same equality group. Remember to consider the impact on staff and service users (current and potential) and partner organisations. It may be useful to include data within these sections if you know the diversity make-up of the people likely to be affected.

Equality Group	Potential positive impact	Potential neutral impact	Potential negative impact	Rationale
Age (include safeguarding, consent and child welfare)	☒	☐	☒	Council Tax increase – Positive impact The proposed increase in Council Tax income will fund higher spend on services, including services for older people and children/younger people. Demand and complexity of demand within these services has been increasing, along with inflationary pressures as a result of general cost inflation as well as the impact of National Living Wage and employer's National Insurance increases. The increased budget for these services will support sustainability of these statutory services and will benefit this group in the longer term. Council Tax increase – Negative impact The proposal to increase Council Tax by 4.99% has the potential to negatively impact all residents of the

Equality Group	Potential positive impact	Potential neutral impact	Potential negative impact	Rationale
				county, including those with protected characteristics. Council Tax increase – Mitigations Residents on low or fixed incomes may be disproportionately impacted by the proposed increase in Council Tax. Residents continue to be supported through the existing Council Tax Reduction and Hardship schemes.
Disability (consider attitudinal, physical, financial and social barriers, neuro-diversity, learning disability, physical and sensory impairment)	☒	☐	☒	Council Tax increase – Positive impact The proposed increase in Council Tax income will fund higher spend on services, including services for people with disabilities. Demand and complexity of demand within these services has been increasing, along with inflationary pressures as a result of general cost inflation as well as the impact of National Living Wage and employer's National Insurance increases. The increased budget for these services will support sustainability of these statutory services and will benefit this group in the longer term. Council Tax increase – Negative impact The proposal to increase Council Tax by 4.99% has the potential to negatively impact all residents of the county, including those with protected characteristics. Council Tax increase – Mitigations Residents on low or fixed incomes may be disproportionately impacted by the proposed increase in Council Tax. Residents continue to be supported through the existing Council Tax Reduction and Hardship schemes.
Gender Reassignment (include gender identity, and consider privacy of data and harassment)	☐	☒	☐	Council Tax increase The proposed increase in Council Tax is unlikely to disproportionately impact individuals within this protected characteristic group.
Marriage & Civil Partnerships	☐	☒	☐	Council Tax increase The proposed increase in Council Tax is unlikely to disproportionately impact individuals within this protected characteristic group.
Pregnancy & Maternity (consider working arrangements, part-time working, infant caring responsibilities)	☐	☒	☐	Council Tax increase The proposed increase in Council Tax is unlikely to disproportionately impact individuals within this protected characteristic group.
Race (including Travelling Communities and people of other nationalities)	☒	☐	☒	Council Tax increase – Positive impact The proposed increase in Council Tax income will fund higher spend on services, including services for Gypsy/Traveller sites. The increased maintenance

Equality Group	Potential positive impact	Potential neutral impact	Potential negative impact	Rationale
				budget for these services will support sustainability of these sites and will benefit this group in the longer term. Council Tax increase – Negative impact The proposal to increase Council Tax by 4.99% has the potential to negatively impact all residents of the county, including those with protected characteristics. Council Tax increase – Mitigations Residents on low or fixed incomes may be disproportionately impacted by the proposed increase in Council Tax. Residents continue to be supported through the existing Council Tax Reduction and Hardship schemes.
Religion & Belief	☐	☒	☐	Council Tax increase The proposed increase in Council Tax is unlikely to disproportionately impact individuals within this protected characteristic group.
Sex (consider issues of safety and sexual violence, part-time work)	☐	☒	☐	Council Tax increase The proposed increase in Council Tax is unlikely to disproportionately impact individuals within this protected characteristic group.
Sexual Orientation	☐	☒	☐	Council Tax increase The proposed increase in Council Tax is unlikely to disproportionately impact individuals within this protected characteristic group.
Others: carers, care leavers, homeless, social/ economic deprivation (consider shift-patterns, caring responsibilities)	☐	☐	☒	Council Tax increase – Negative impact The proposal to increase Council Tax by 4.99% has the potential to negatively impact all residents of the county, including those with protected characteristics. Council Tax increase – Mitigations Residents on low or fixed incomes may be disproportionately impacted by the proposed increase in Council Tax. Residents continue to be supported through the existing Council Tax Reduction and Hardship schemes.
Health Inequalities (any preventable, unfair & unjust differences in health status between groups, populations or individuals that arise from unequal distribution of social, environmental & economic conditions)	☐	☒	☐	Council Tax increase The proposed increase in Council Tax is unlikely to disproportionately impact individuals within this protected characteristic group.

Where a negative impact on any of the equality groups is realised after the implementation of the activity, the activity lead will seek to minimise the impact and carry out a full review of this EIA.

5. Action planning

What actions will you take as a result of this impact assessment? (you will need to include actions to mitigate any potential negative impacts)

Potential negative impact	What action will be taken	Who will lead	Timeframe
The proposal to increase Council Tax by 4.99% has the potential to negatively impact all residents of the county, including those with protected characteristics.	Mitigations are already in place through the existing Council Tax Reduction and Hardship schemes. This support will continue in 2025/26.	n/a	n/a

6. Monitoring and review

How will you monitor these actions?

The Council Tax Reduction scheme is considered for renewal each year by Cabinet in line with the budget setting reporting.

When will you review this EIA?

Annually through the budget setting process.

7. Equality Statement

- All public bodies have a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 to give due regard to how they can improve society and promote equality in every aspect of their day-to-day business. This means that they must consider, and keep reviewing, how they are promoting equality in decision-making, policies, services, procurement, staff recruitment and management.
- Herefordshire Council will challenge discrimination, promote equality, respect human rights, and design and implement services, policies and measures that meet the diverse needs of our population, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others.

Signature of person completing EIA

Rachael Sanders

Date signed

20 January 2025