



Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

1. Service Area/Directorate

Name of Head of Service for activity being assessed: Rachael Sanders

Directorate: Corporate Services

Name of lead person for this activity: Rachael Sanders

Individual(s) completing this assessment:

Date assessment completed: 12 December 2025

2. What is being assessed

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

Council Tax increase in 2026/27 budget setting.

The proposed draft revenue budget for 2026/27 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.

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?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service users | <input type="checkbox"/> Visitors to the county |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communities | <input type="checkbox"/> Carers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children | <input type="checkbox"/> Patients |
| <input type="checkbox"/> All staff | <input type="checkbox"/> All part-time staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staff at a particular location | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

Is this:

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

3. 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 (November 2025).

Office for National Statistics, Disability pay gaps in the UK (October 2024).

Office for National Statistics, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (November 2025).

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) – Council Tax support claimants (September 2025).

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – Children in Low income families (March 2025).

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 will be undertaken as part of the budget setting process. For 2026/27, this will involve an online survey to gather feedback from residents and 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. The Office for National Statistics data for disability pay gap shows median hourly pay for those limited a little at 12.7% and for those limited a lot at 17.1%. This indicates that those with a disability are likely to be disproportionately impacted by an increase in Council Tax.

Sex

The Office for National Statistics data on the gender pay gap indicates that women in Herefordshire are paid 9.9% less than men. This indicates that women are likely to be disproportionately impacted by an increase in Council Tax.

The 2021 Census population data shows that the gender split of older adults aged 65 and over in Herefordshire 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 2.7%.

The DWP data for children in low income families shows that 5,272 children in Herefordshire are living in families classed as in relative absolute poverty.

4. 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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advance equality of opportunity between different groups?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foster good relations between different groups?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

5. 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)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><u>Positive impact</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p><u>Negative impact</u></p> <p>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. This is more likely for older adults with lower incomes and for children in low income families.</p> <p><u>Mitigations</u></p> <p>Residents on low or fixed incomes may be disproportionately impacted by the proposed increase in Council Tax. Residents in Herefordshire with lower income continue to be supported through the existing Council Tax Reduction and Hardship schemes.</p>
Disability (consider attitudinal, physical, financial and social barriers, neuro-diversity, learning disability, physical and sensory impairment)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><u>Positive impact</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p><u>Negative impact</u></p> <p>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. This is more likely for people with disabilities due to the pay gap evidence.</p> <p><u>Mitigations</u></p> <p>Residents on low or fixed incomes may be disproportionately impacted by the proposed increase in Council Tax. Residents in Herefordshire with lower income continue to be supported through the existing Council Tax Reduction and Hardship schemes. It is proposed that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme is maintained at the maximum level as in previous years.</p>

Equality Group	Potential positive impact	Potential neutral impact	Potential negative impact	Rationale
Gender Reassignment (include gender identity, and consider privacy of data and harassment)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposed increase in Council Tax is unlikely to disproportionately impact individuals within this protected characteristic group. There is no evidence to suggest this group have lower income.
Marriage & Civil Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposed increase in Council Tax is unlikely to disproportionately impact individuals within this protected characteristic group. There is no evidence to suggest this group have lower income.
Pregnancy & Maternity (consider working arrangements, part-time working, infant caring responsibilities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><u>Negative impact</u> 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. This is more likely for those in the pregnancy/maternity group due to the potential for lower income during this period (maternity leave, part time working, etc.) NB. Data source outstanding.</p> <p><u>Mitigations</u> Residents on low or fixed incomes may be disproportionately impacted by the proposed increase in Council Tax. Residents in Herefordshire with lower income continue to be supported through the existing Council Tax Reduction and Hardship schemes.</p>
Race (including Travelling Communities and people of other nationalities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposed increase in Council Tax is unlikely to disproportionately impact individuals within this protected characteristic group. There is no evidence to suggest this group have lower income.
Religion & Belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposed increase in Council Tax is unlikely to disproportionately impact individuals within this protected characteristic group. There is no evidence to suggest this group have lower income.
Sex (consider issues of safety and sexual violence, part-time work)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><u>Negative impact</u> 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. This is more likely for females due to the gender pay gap.</p> <p><u>Mitigations</u> Residents on low or fixed incomes may be disproportionately impacted by the proposed increase in Council Tax. Residents in Herefordshire with lower income continue to be supported through the existing Council Tax Reduction and Hardship schemes. It is proposed that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme is maintained at the maximum level as in previous years.</p>
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposed increase in Council Tax is unlikely to disproportionately impact individuals within this protected characteristic group. There is no evidence to suggest this group have lower income.

Equality Group	Potential positive impact	Potential neutral impact	Potential negative impact	Rationale
Others: carers, care leavers, homeless, social/economic deprivation (consider shift-patterns, caring responsibilities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><u>Negative impact</u> 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. This is more likely for those groups with low or fixed incomes, including carers, care leavers, homeless, social/economic deprivation. NB. Data source outstanding.</p> <p><u>Mitigations</u> Residents on low or fixed incomes may be disproportionately impacted by the proposed increase in Council Tax. Residents in Herefordshire with lower income continue to be supported through the existing Council Tax Reduction and Hardship schemes. It is proposed that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme is maintained at the maximum level as in previous years. There are also specific Local Council Tax discounts available for foster carers and care leavers to support these groups.</p>
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)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposed increase in Council Tax is unlikely to disproportionately impact individuals within this protected characteristic group. There is no evidence to suggest this group have lower income.

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.

6. 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 2026/27 at the maximum level as in previous years.	n/a	n/a
Groups within this EIA with potentially lower income and therefore higher impact of this policy are pregnancy/maternity, those in the other category (carers, care leavers, homeless, social/ economic deprivation) and veterans.	The council is reviewing data sources to provide information to evidence the potential for lower income in these groups.	Intelligence Unit Team	February 2026

7. 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.

8. 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

16 January 2026

9. Make this EIA available (and delete this section)

- Attach your EIA as an appendix to any decision reports so that decision-makers have all the equality data they need in order to make robust and fair decisions.
- Staff, trade unions, service users or members of the public may want to see this EIA, so it must be published on our website along with the decision report.