



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Partial Assessment Form

Policy, practice, function or project assessed	The removal of discretionary discounts on long-term empty domestic properties
Lead Officer	Phil Bird
Team	Revenues
Start date of assessment	09/11/10
Completion of assessment	09/11/10

Please use this form to record your findings in relation to the assessment of an existing policy, function, service or practice.

A. POLICY, PRACTICE, FUNCTION OR PROJECT TO BE ASSESSED

A1. Please describe what are the main aims, objectives, purpose and intended outcomes of the policy or function?

To remove the discount given to Council Tax properties that remain empty longer than six months. The discount is currently 50%. Removing the discount for long-term empty properties will reduce the volume of houses remaining empty for long periods.

The Local Government Act 2003 gives billing authorities the power to implement their own schemes for discounting Council Tax bills or varying some of the hitherto existing statutory discounts. The Government envisaged that billing authorities might use this power to vary discounts on second homes and on long-term empty properties.

A2. Is this policy or function associated with any other Council policy or priority?

1. The Local Government Act 2003
2. Legislation: Local Government Finance Acts 1988 & 1992
3. Collection & Enforcement regulations 1992
4. Corporate service plan
5. Service Targets

A3. Who are the intended beneficiaries/stakeholders of the policy or function? How many people are affected and from what sections of the community?

Currently there are 584 properties classed as long-term empty. All households could possibly be affected by the change but only if they become empty and do not fall into any existing exemption category. Currently there are 61,090 households

The revenue collected is a tax that pays for the services that are to benefit all sectors of the community and contributes to some services provided at National level (County Council, Police, Fire, Parishes, Central Government)

A4. Is the policy/function corporate and far-reaching?

Yes – see above

A5. Are you expecting to make any significant change to the policy or service in the near future? If so, please give details.

The way we collect Local Taxation is defined and determined by legislation. This legislation is subject to changes that may impact on the criteria for writing off irrecoverable debt and the way it is administered.

A6. Is this a new or existing policy or function?

An existing function and procedure but the first time it has changed

B. EVIDENCE/ DATA and CONSULTATION

It is important to consider all information that is available in determining whether the policy or function could have a differential impact. Please attach examples of monitoring information, research or consultation reports.

B1. What monitoring or other information do you have about relevant target groups, which will show the impact of the policy or function?

None. The legislation covers all aspects of Billing and Collection of Council Tax. There are other existing exemptions for Council Tax which cover homes left empty in the short term or undergoing renovation or where the owner is in hospital, a care home, caring for another, in prison, serving abroad, a student, deceased, prohibited from occupying by law and where the property has been repossessed.

B2. Have you compared the data you have with the equality profile of the local population? What does it show?

No local information. The Council Tax is levied on all residents unless otherwise exempt or in receipt of discounts.

B3. Have you identified any improvements or other changes that could be made from monitoring the data?

None. See B2

B4. Have you consulted or involved external stakeholders about the policy or function? If so, what were their views?

No. See B2

B5. Have you undertaken any consultation with staff to assess their perception of any impacts of the policy or function? If so, what has been learnt from them?

Staff have input into the writing of all policies and decisions. Their experience of the “day job” enables us to adapt our processes accordingly but remaining within the legislation

B6. Please provide information about any other consultation, research, or involvement undertaken in relation to this impact assessment.

None

C1. IMPACT OF THE POLICY OR FUNCTION

Assess the potential impact on each of the equality strands/groups. The impact could be negative, positive or neutral. If you assess a negative impact for any of the groups then you will need to assess whether that impact is low, medium or high. Refer to the evidence you use.

DESCRIPTION OF IMPACT	Nature of Impact (Positive, Neutral, Adverse)	Extent of Impact (Low, Medium, High)
GENDER: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on men and women		
No evidence available to assess if revenues are collected equally from men or women, or if more owners of empty properties are male or female or if liability orders are filed against more women than men or more men than women. Or if more irrecoverable debt belongs to either gender	Neutral	
RACE: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on different race/ethnic groups		
No up to date info on the demographic of the community in relation to Black & Ethnic Minority Residents.	Neutral	
DISABILITY: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on disabled people		
Data on some disabled service users exists as council tax legislation allows for a reduction in band for properties adapted for disabled occupiers and also an exemption for the Severely Mentally Impaired. But these are for occupied premises. There is no discretion in awarding reductions. We do not assess data to determine the rate of collection from disabled customers. No data exists regarding whether disabled customers own empty properties. No data available to determine number of complaints from disabled customers. We supply large print and Braille on request.	Neutral	
AGE: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on different age groups		
Do not collect data on age of customers. No analysis available against complaints made. Council Tax is not payable if you are under 18, Revenues endeavours to collect data relating to those who are 17 years old. Also Committal proceedings are more stringent for those under 21, Revenues will collect this data during the process and inform the Magistrate	Neutral	
SEXUAL ORIENTATION: potential impact of the policy on lesbian, gay men, bisexual or heterosexual people		

No data exists. None collected.	Neutral	
RELIGION/FAITH: Identify the potential impact the policy on different religious/faith groups		
No data exists. Not collected locally.	Neutral	
OTHER		
In practice the feasibility of debt collection and amounts to be written off will be influenced by a great many factors such as the amount that is owed, type of debt, the whereabouts of the debtors, the cost of enforcement action and the likelihood of successful collection.	Neutral	

PLEASE NOTE: Following completion of the section above, if the nature of the impact is adverse then you may need to proceed to a full equality impact assessment.

C2. Could you minimise or remove any adverse or potential impact that is high, medium or low significance, in advance of a full impact assessment? Explain how.

No

C3. Does the policy or function actively promote equal opportunities and good community relations? Or could changes be made so that it does so?

The policy is for a function that continually has to find a balance between the legislative requirements of the Council and the need of the charge payer.

C4. Please provide any further information, qualitative or quantitative that does not fit into the questions but you feel has a likely impact on this assessment.

Lack of available data in order to provide benchmark.

D. CONCLUSIONS			
D1. Was there sufficient data to complete the partial assessment?	Yes?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	If “NO”, what arrangements are in place for evidence gathering and continuing with the assessment?
	No?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
D2. Is the outcome of the partial assessment that the policy or function would have an adverse impact (medium or high impact) on one or more target group?	Yes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	If “YES”, will you proceed to a full assessment? If so, what arrangements are in place to carry out the full assessment?
	No?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
D3. Is the outcome of the partial assessment that the policy or function would have a neutral or positive impact on equalities?	Yes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	If “YES”, have you included proposals in the Action Plan to further improve the impact of the policy or function on equalities?
	No?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Do you plan to review the service or policy again in future to assess whether there has been any change? If so, when? No, unless legislation dictates Has the Equalities Steering Group and the Consultative Forum reviewed the assessment? If so what were their comments? No
D4. Do you have any other conclusions/outcomes from the partial assessment? No			

ACTION PLAN for enhancing existing practice

Recommendation/ issue to be addressed	Planned Milestone	Planned completion of milestone (date)	Officer Responsible	Progress

RESOURCES

Does the above action plan require any additional resources?

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MONITORING

Please give your plans for monitoring the achievement of the above actions.

SIGN OFF: The officers below confirm that this partial assessment has been completed in accordance with the Council's guidance

Signature of Lead Officer



Date: 09/11/10

Signature of Corporate Manager or Chief Officer:

Date:

Please retain the original form on your service area and return a copy of the completed form to the Equality & Diversity Officer.