

Harborough District Council Equality Analysis

Appendix 13

Equality Analysis is an on-going proactive process which requires us to consider the effect our decisions are likely to have on local communities, service users and employees, particularly those most vulnerable and at risk of disadvantage.

This document has been designed to assist in the collation of information and evidence required to support the 'Due Regard' process when introducing new policies/procedures/functions and services or reviewing existing ones.

Name of policy/procedure/function/service being analysed: Final Budget 2024/25 & the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) (2025/26 to 2028/29)

Department and section: Corporate Management Team

Name of lead officer: Clive Mason – Director of Resources (& s.151 Officer)

Other people involved (assisting or reviewing – including any service users or stakeholder groups etc.): Cabinet, Corporate Management Team, Senior Leadership Team, Finance Team

Date assessment commenced: The analysis has been evolving as the budget setting process moved through the preparation to democratic approval process. This stage is the latest, where Council approves the Final Budget 2024/25 & the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2025/26 to 2028/29) based on recommendations by Cabinet.

Date assessment completed for sign off: 16 February 2024 (for Council on 26 February 2024)

Step 1: Defining the policy/procedure/function/service

Is this a new, amended, or reviewed policy? What are the aims, objectives and purpose and how will they be achieved? What are the main activities and which communities are likely to be affected by these activities? What are the expected outcomes?

Harborough District Council has considered its budget priorities for 2024/25 as it continues to address the major impacts of the cost-of-living crisis.

Over the past few months all services have been reviewing their budgets, and the initial revenue proposals were reported to Cabinet in January 2024: [report](#) / [Apx 3](#). For 2024/25, there is an increase in service expenditure of £2m; this is split as follows within each service:

- **Finance;** a net saving of £232k. This saving is primarily due to additional income from the investment of cash balances (£691k) and increased tenant income from within The Symington Building (£47k). Which is then netted of by increases in expenditure relating to increases in utility costs (£114k), payroll increase (£119k), ICT licences (£70k), increases in insurance and bank charges (£71k).

- **Planning, Environment and Waste;** a net increase in costs of £1.4m. This increase in costs is primarily due to the acceleration of the local plan (£1.1m), procurement costs relating to the waste contract (£88k), net increases in resourcing within the development management (£55k), payroll increases, including two additional apprenticeships roles within the assets and waste teams (£132k), a reduction in income from neighbourhood planning (£30k) and contractor income (£32k).
- **Wellbeing, Communities and Housing;** a net increase in costs of £79k. This increase in costs is primarily due to payroll increases (£79k), a review of housing provision (£50k), additional contributions to the Lightbulb Partnership at Blaby DC (£27k, this service administers the councils' disabled facilities grants). This is negated by potential additional income from the new leisure contract (£80k).
- **Strategy;** a net increase in costs of £30k. This increase in costs is primarily due to payroll increases (£39k) and a one-year allocation of funding to support better communication between local businesses (£15k). This is negated by savings because of being able to use UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) (£29k).
- **Corporate & Regulatory;** a net increase in costs of £674k. This increase in costs is primarily due to payroll increases (£203k), restructures within the legal service (£169k) and the Control Centre (£13k), a review of discretionary fees & charges and support service recharges (£50k), one year deferment of savings relating to enforcement (£75k) and human resources terms & conditions (£22k), new budget relating to developing the arms forces covenant and support of the arms forces community (£21k), additional support to parish and rural engagement (£51k).
- **Contingency & Inflation;** a net increase in costs of £45k. This increase in costs is primarily due to a one-year deferment of savings relating to a review of the target operating model (£288k), employer oncosts (£47k) and contractor inflation (£78k). This is negated by a reduction in National Insurance of £368k)

At Final Budget stage, further budgetary proposals have been included for 2024/25:

- **Within services,** additional growth of £285k in respect of support for council grant bidding processes (£10k), community resilience (£10k), waste management resilience (£34k), planning enforcement & compliance (£68k), administration support for parish and ward funding/grant schemes (£132k) and support for Christmas lighting and parking (£30k).
- **In addition,** allocations have been made to deliver; Grant to Parishes scheme (£1m), Ward Improvement Fund (£170k), Leisure Strategy Action Fund (£100k), Young Persons Initiative (£100k), Place Narrative/Vision for the District and Market Harborough (£100k), Net Zero2030 Initiatives Fund (£400k) and for 2025/26 Asset Facilitation Fund (£500k) and Waste Vehicle Resilience (£470k).

In summary the Council has a surplus service revenue budget for the first two years of the MTFs and a deficit budget for the last three years. Once these deficits have passed through the General Fund (Unallocated) Reserve (*) the cumulative surplus totals £3.4m (after application of earmarked reserves; before earmarked reserves it is £874k before).

For the surplus budgets in 2024/25 and 2025/26, Council intends to:

- a. Share this windfall with its residents, especially considering the cost-of-living crisis and not increase its Council Tax for 2024/25 (i.e. hold it at 0%, which will be the same it has been for the past two years) rather than the full 2.99% permitted by government. This approach enables the council to:
 - support its community by meeting some of the higher, unplanned, inflationary costs itself, but also
 - mitigate the future risks associated with financial sustainability over the medium-term.
- b. Apply the accumulated surplus of £5.4m as follows:
 - £1.8m to meet the forecast net deficits of the last three years of the MTFs.
 - £2.5m to be set-aside to meet the “in addition” items noted above.

However, it should be noted that there is an expectation from Government that local authorities should increase their Council Tax to the maximum allowable.

The Council remains ‘committed to financial sustainability and resilience’. The Final 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2024/25 to 2027/28) (MTFS) has developed a balanced budget for the duration of the MTFs, albeit with the prudent use of reserves. Further it will be able to deliver a significant capital programme that will have a broad reach and benefit across its residential and commercial community.

*The General Fund (Unallocated) Reserve is a reserve held by the Council to meet unforeseen events, such as a disaster (a recent example being the Covid 19 pandemic) or other such disaster. The Council has set a policy of maintaining this reserve at 20% of next expenditure.

Step 2: Data collection & evidence

What relevant evidence, research, data, and other information do you have and is there any further research, data, or evidence you need to fill any gaps in your understanding of the potential or known effects of the policy on different communities? Include quantitative data as well as qualitative intelligence such as community input and advice.

All residents of the district are potentially impacted by the final budget proposals particularly those who pay council tax – although the government expects Council's to increase its tax, the Council has chosen to freeze Council Tax for 2024/25 (the third year it will be at £177.97). However, it is important to understand the demographics of our community. It is also important to acknowledge that a nil increase in Council Tax will benefit all residents but also there are Council Tax reductions/exemptions available which will reduce the impact further for those more financially challenged.

Community demographics (Source ONS Census 2021)

Age		
Census Question: What is your date of birth?	Number of residents	% of Harborough District population
All usual residents:	97,631	100.0%
Aged 16-19 years	4,200	4.3%
Aged 20-24 years	4,344	4.4%
Aged 25-34 years	10,487	10.7%
Aged 35-49 years	18,336	18.8%
Aged 50-64 years	21,570	22.1%
Aged 65-74 years	11,429	11.7%
Aged 75-84 years	7,336	7.5%
Aged 85 years and over	2,733	2.8%

Ethnic Group

Ethnic Group		
Census Question: What is your ethnic group?	Number of residents	% of Harborough District population
All usual residents:	97,623	100.0%
Asian/Asian British:	5,298	5.4%
Black/Black British/Caribbean/African:	699	0.7%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups:	2,003	2.1%
White:	88,851	91.0%
Other ethnic group	205	0.24%

Gender**Census Question: What is your sex?**

	Number of residents	% of Harbourough District population
All usual residents:	97,625	100.0%
Female	49,276	50.5%
Male	48,349	49.5%

Health**Census Question: Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?**

	Number of residents	% of Harbourough District population
Day to day activities limited a lot	5296	5.4%
Day to day activities limited	9413	9.6%
Day to day activities not limited	82917	84.9%

Gender Identity**Census Question: Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?**

	Number of residents	% of Harbourough District population
All usual residents aged 16 and over	80,430	100.0%
Gender identity the same as registered at birth	76,560	95.2%
Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given	69	0.1%
Trans woman	44	0.1%
Trans man	40	0.0%
Non-binary	24	0.0%
All other gender identities	15	0.0%
Not answered	3,678	4.6%

Legal Partnership Status**Census Question: What is your legal marital or same-sex civil partnership status?**

	Number of residents	% of Harbourough District population
All usual residents aged 16 and over:	80,428	100.0%
Never Married or registered a Civil Partnership	23,779	29.6%
Married or in a registered Civil Partnership	42,622	53.0%
Separated/Divorced or formerly in a Civil Partnership	8,889	11.0%
Widowed or surviving Civil Partnership partner	5,138	6.4%

Religious Belief**Census Question: What is your religion?**

	Number of residents	% of Harbourough District population
All usual residents:	97,624	100.0%
Buddhist	256	0.3%
Christian	49,046	50.2%
Hindu	2,477	2.5%
Jewish	118	0.1%
Muslim	1,120	1.1%
Sikh	1,467	1.5%
Other religion	379	0.4%
No religion	37,480	38.4%
Religion not stated	5,281	5.4%

Sexual Orientation**Census Question: Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?**

	Number of residents	% of Harbourough District population
All usual residents aged 16 and over	80,427	100.0%
Heterosexual or Straight	73,899	91.9%
Gay or Lesbian	923	1.1%
Bisexual	620	0.8%
Pansexual	90	0.1%
Asexual	36	0.0%
Queer	8	0.0%
All other sexual orientations	6	0.0%
Not answered	4,845	6.0%

Household composition

All households	40,414	100.0%
One-person household	10,514	26.0%
Single family household	28,119	69.6%
Other household types	1,781	4.4%

Council Tax discount categories

Discounts apply for those who live on their own and may apply if an adult within the household falls into one of the following categories:

- Full time students **156**, student nurses **0**, apprentices and youth training trainees **7** and foreign language assistants **0**
- 18/19 year olds who are at or have just left school or college **16**
- Patients resident in hospital or being looked after in care homes **20**
- People with severe mental impairments **190**
- People in hostels or night shelters (**information not held**)
- Low paid care workers usually employed by charities (**information not held**)
- People caring for a person with a disability who is **not** a partner or child under 18 years old **47**
- Members of religious communities such as monks or nuns **0**
- People in detention (except for non-payment of council tax or a fine) **1**
- Members of visiting forces, certain international and defence organisations. **0**
- Temporary absences owing to holiday or work will not normally result in discount entitlement (**not known**).

As at mid-January, there are **2,079** customers (**4.6%**) behind with their council tax bills, **1.5%** having payment arrangements in place.

*Information shown in **bold** is from the Leicestershire Revenue & Benefits Partnership, received between 22 and 24 January 2024.*

Step 3: Consultation and involvement

Have you consulted and if so, outline what you did and who you consulted with and why.

The draft budget was considered by the Council's Cabinet on 15 January 2024, and it was agreed that it should move to consultation.

The draft budget was also considered at the Council's Joint Budget Scrutiny Panel on 25 January 2024.

Public consultation regarding the draft budget has been published online. The consultation launched on 16 January 2024 and will close at 9am on 12 February 2024. Equality monitoring questions have been included as part of the consultation document so that analysis of the characteristics of respondents can be completed. The results of the public consultation will be considered by Cabinet on the 12 February when they consider the Final budget.

Full Council will consider the Final Budget on the 26 February 2024.

Step 4: Potential impact

Considering the evidence from the data collection and feedback from consultation, which communities will be affected and what barriers may these individuals or groups face in relation to Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Other groups e.g. rural isolation, deprivation, health inequality, carers, asylum seeker and refugee communities, looked after children, current and ex-armed forces personnel (Veterans), deprived or disadvantaged communities and also the potential impact on Community Cohesion. Remember people have multiple characteristics so the impact of a policy on a particular community may impact people within the community differently. Where possible include numbers likely to be affected.

The final budget supports the Council in the delivery of the Corporate Plan and its agreed priorities and so aims to provide support to those most in need of Council Services. The reduced Council Tax for 2024/25 will help the Councils community during this time of high cost-of-living.

Step 5: Mitigating and assessing the impact

If you consider there to be actual or potential adverse impact or discrimination, please outline this below. State whether it is justifiable or legitimate and give reasons. If you have identified adverse impact or discrimination that is illegal, you are required to take action to remedy this immediately. If you have identified adverse impact or discrimination that is justifiable or legitimate, you will need to consider what actions can be taken to mitigate its effect on those groups of people. Consider what barriers you can remove, whether reasonable adjustments may be necessary and how any unmet needs have identified can be addressed.

Equality implications arising from this budget, including savings programmes, have been addressed through each of the individual services reviews.

Step 6: Making a decision

Summarise your findings and give an overview of whether the policy will meet Harborough District Council's responsibilities in relation to equality, diversity, and human rights. Does it contribute to the achievement of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty – eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations?

The 2024/25 Final Budget and MTFs (2025/26 to 2028/29) reflects the corporate plan and the provision of the current portfolio of services as well as meeting the expectations of future service and demand change.

In respect of Equality, Diversity and Human Rights and the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Council has a broad range of services that help the Council to ensure it meets these duties both internally and externally (human resources, legal, revenues and benefits,

community development, housing etc). The reduced Council Tax increase will be a significant help for the Councils residents, especially in the current climate of high inflation.

Step 7: Monitoring, evaluation & review of your policy/procedure/service change

What monitoring systems will you put in place to promote equality of opportunity, monitor impact and effectiveness, and make positive improvements? How frequently will monitoring take place and who will be responsible?

Impacts of budget proposals will be monitored and adjustments considered if negative impacts identified.

Equality Improvement Plan

Equality Objective :

Action: Analyse characteristics of consultation respondents and identify any gaps

Officer Responsible: Clive Mason

By when: 12 February 2024 in time for consideration by Cabinet

Equality Objective :

Action: Report consultation respondents to Council

Officer Responsible: Clive Mason

By when: Report publication deadline for Council

Equality Objective :

Action:

Officer Responsible:

By when:

Equality Objective :

Action:

Officer Responsible:

By when:

Signed off by: Clive Mason

Date: 16 February 2024

Once signed off, please forward a copy for publication to Julie Clarke, Equality and Diversity Officer
e-mail: j.clarke@harborough.gov.uk, telephone: 01858 821070.