

Harborough District Council Equality Analysis

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 2025/26 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) (2026/27 to 2029/30)

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 Cabinet approves the Final Budget 2025/26 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) (2026/27 to 2029/30) prior to approval by Council.

Date assessment completed for sign off: 4 February 2024 (for Cabinet on 10 February 2025)

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?

Each February the Council has to approve the Council Tax for the forthcoming year, a part of this process is the production of a new budget for the forthcoming year along with a medium-term financial strategy (MTFS, effectively a medium-term financial horizon). The budget and MTFS preparation process starts in the summer before the Council Tax is set, and over the following months involves considerable liaison between service teams, the corporate centre, corporate management team and councillors to establish a budget and MTFS that meets immediate and corporate priorities.

As at now, the Council has considered its budget priorities for 2025/26 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 2025¹. For the final 2025/26 budget, to be presented to Cabinet in February 2025, there is an increase in net expenditure of £3.3 compared to the 2024/25 approved budget; this is split as follows within each service portfolio:

- **Strategy**, a minor increase of £20k. This is primarily a further £15k to support the delivery of a resident's newsletter.
- **Finance**; an increase of £438k. The significant items include increases in personnel resources within the Accountancy Team (£150k) and the Assets Team, (including an allowance for property maintenance costs, £135k), additional partnership fees for the Leicestershire Revenues & Benefits Partnership (£67k), Utility costs (£40k) and increases in income from the Market Hall, Business Centres and £92k approved in previous years budgets.
- **Corporate**, an increase of £320k. This is due to increases in personnel resources within the ICT and Transformation Team (as well as additional system licensing and ICT System Health Check costs), Human Resources (including Safeguarding and Training £50k), Democratic Services (£53k) and savings of £116k approved in previous years budgets.
- **Culture, Leisure, Economy & Tourism**, an increase of £101k. This is due to £20k for support of a physical energy programme within the leisure services and £86k approved in previous years budgets.
- **Environmental & Climate Change**, an increase of £324k, This is due to increases in personnel within the Waste and Open Spaces Teams (£165k), licensing teams (£20k), a post to support emergency planning (£59k), additional contract costs for the pest control service (£26k) with savings of £365k due to clarification on future costs for the future environment contrast, along with £406k approved in previous years budgets.
- **Planning**, a net decrease of £747k. Additional personnel resources to support growth (£168k) but along with increase in planning income budget (£243k), along with approved previous year's budget of additional funding for £652k which is to support the development of the new local plan.
- **Wellbeing**, a net decrease of £38k. Additional personnel resources to support additional statutory housing responsibilities along with the empty property programme (£117k), community development support (£54k) and additional income from housing rental incomes (£70k).
- **Special Expenses Areas**, in previous years this budget has been included within other service budget. This year, this has been broken out to show the direct cost to provide services in special expense areas (£456k).
- **Special Projects, this is a new budget for 2025/26. It shows items that are being treated as not typical service expenditure**
- **Non-Service & Strategic**, an increase of £1.2m contrast, a mix of permanent reversals of previous savings programmes (£394k), salary increases (including National Insurance increase, £210k) and waste/open space and streets contract inflationary increase (£199k), along with £430k approved in previous years budgets.

¹ [Cabinet, January 202, see Agenda Item 6](#)

In summary the Council has a surplus service revenue budget for the first two years of the MTFs (£956k) and a deficit budget for the last three years (£9.6m). Once these deficits have passed through the General Fund (Unallocated) Reserve (*) the cumulative deficit budget that is funded from a mix of General Fund (Unallocated) Reserve and Earmarked Reserve contributions is £811k.

The Cabinet is recommending an increase in Council Tax for 2025/26, along with a notional increase for each year of the MTFs. The 2025/26 surplus budget £253k is significantly less than what was estimated when the 2024/25 final budget was approved (£4m). Further, if the Council was not increasing Council Tax, it would be forecasting a deficit budget of £42k.

It should be noted that:

- there is an expectation from Government that local authorities should increase their Council Tax to the maximum allowable.
- it is illegal for the Council to set a deficit budget; therefore, this gap would have to be met from reserves.
- the Council remains 'committed to financial sustainability and resilience'. The Final 2025/26 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2026/27 to 2029/30) 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). 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. An increase to £183.29 (2025/26) compared to £177.97 (2024/25) is £5.32 (2.99%) for a Band D equivalent property. It should be noted that the government expects in their annual local government financial settlement² that each council will increase their Council Tax by the maximum permitted – for a District Council this is 2.99%.

² [MHCLG, CSP Information Table, see worksheet 2025-26](#): Council tax projections for 2025-26 assume local authorities increase their Band D council tax in line with the maximum allowable level set out by the council tax referendum principles for 2025-26. That is: a 3% core principle; a 2% adult social care precept; the greater of 3% or £5 cash principle for shire districts; 3% for the Greater London Authority; and a cash principle of £14 on Band D bills for the police element of the Greater London Authority.

However, it is important to understand the demographics of our community. It is also important to acknowledge that an increase in Council Tax will impact all residents but also there are Council Tax reductions/exemptions available which will reduce the impact further for those more financially challenged.

Community demographics for Harborough district (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		
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 Harborough 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 Harborough 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 Harborough 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** (156), student nurses **0** (0), apprentices and youth training trainees **3** (7) and foreign language assistants **0** (0)
- 18/19 year olds who are at or have just left school or college **16** (16)
- Patients resident in hospital or being looked after in care homes **83** (20)
- People with severe mental impairments **145** (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 **38** (47)

- Members of religious communities such as monks or nuns **0** (0)
- People in detention (except for non-payment of council tax or a fine) **1** (1)
- Members of visiting forces, certain international and defence organisations. **1** (0)
- Temporary absences owing to holiday or work will not normally result in discount entitlement (not known).

As at 3 February 2025, there are **1,927** (2,079) customers (**4.3%** / 4.6%) who have been summonsed and are behind with their council tax bills, of those 1% (1.5%) have a payment arrangement in place.

Information shown in:

- bold is from the Leicestershire Revenue & Benefits Partnership, from data extracted on the 3 February 2025.
- italics is from the Leicestershire Revenue & Benefits Partnership reported to Cabinet in February 2024 for the 2024/25 Budget and MTFS.

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 20 January 2025, 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 22 January 2025.

Public consultation regarding the draft budget has been published online. The consultation launched on 21 January 2025 and will close at 9am on 10 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 10 February when they consider the Final budget.

Full Council will consider the Final Budget on the 20 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. It is recognised that any increase in Council Tax will impact those most in need across the district. However, the Council must remain financially sustainable over the medium-term and consequently this year it has to address these costs directly as their compounding impact is now significant; it must be noted that through the worst of the cost-of-living crisis the Council has not increased Council Tax.

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 2025/26 Final Budget and MTFS (2026/27 to 2029/30) 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).

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: 10 February 2025 in time for consideration by Cabinet
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Equality Objective :

Action: Officer Responsible: By when:
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Signed off by: Clive Mason

Date: 4 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.