

Form A1**INITIAL SCREENING FOR STRATEGIES/POLICIES/FUNCTIONS FOR EQUALITIES RELEVANCE TO ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION, PROMOTE EQUALITY AND FOSTER GOOD RELATIONS**

High relevance/priority



Medium relevance/priority



Low or no relevance/ priority

Note:

1. Tick coloured boxes appropriately, and depending on degree of relevance to each of the equality strands
2. Summaries of the legislation/guidance should be used to assist this screening process

Business Unit/Services:	Relevance/Risk to Equalities																										
State the Function/Policy /Service/Strategy being assessed:	Gender			Race			Disability			Sexual Orientation			Religion/Belief			Age			Gender Reassignment			Pregnancy/ Maternity			Marriage/ Civil Partnership (only for staff)		
Council Tax Reduction Scheme - Replacement of Existing Scheme																											
Are your proposals likely to impact on social inequalities e.g. child poverty for example or our most geographically disadvantaged communities? If yes please explain how.																								NO			
Are your proposals likely to impact on a carer who looks after older people or people with disabilities? If yes please explain how. The new scheme will disregard carer's allowance which may be of advantage to the applicant for Council Tax. The current scheme includes Carer's Allowance as an income																								YES			

Form A2 – Details of Plan/ Strategy/ Service/ Policy**Stage 1 – Scoping and Defining**

(1) What are the aims and objectives of Plan/Strategy/Service/Policy?

The Council Tax Reduction scheme provides support for certain taxpayers who have a low income.

Where entitled, the scheme provides a reduction in liability for Council Tax.

The replacement scheme is designed to overcome the significant administrative complications for applicants who are in receipt of Universal Credit within the area. The main issues are;

- The current scheme is too reactive to the constant changes in Universal Credit. With the frequent changes in liability, taxpayers receive multiple Council Tax demands which in turn has a negative effect on the taxpayer's ability to manage their finances and on collections levels;
- There is a need to make the scheme simpler and for taxpayers to be encouraged to claim a reduction;
- The scheme needs to be future proofed to avoid constant amendments.

The intention is to introduce the scheme for Universal Credit applicants from 1st April 2019 and for all other **working age** applicants from 1st April 2020.

The changes will NOT affect Pension Age applicants

(2) How does it fit with Warwick District Council's wider objectives?

The Council's objectives are to, wherever possible, provide;

- support to those applicants on a low income; and
- a scheme that is administratively straightforward

The Council is looking to maintain the same level of overall support to taxpayers generally

(3) What are the expected outcomes?	<p>Any new scheme must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise any potential loss to existing applicants; • Reduce administration costs which will occur through the roll out of Universal Credit; • Ensure that collection rates are maintained in respect of Council Tax; and • Prevent future changes in schemes
(4) Which of the groups with protected characteristics is this intended to benefit? (see form A1 for list of protected groups)	<p>The following groups will not be affected under the changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pension Age applicants •
<u>Stage 2 - Information Gathering</u>	
(1) What type and range of evidence or information have you used to help you make a judgement about the plan/ strategy/ service/ policy?	Full modelling of the new scheme has been undertaken using the existing Council Tax Reduction caseload.
(2) Have you consulted on the plan/ strategy/ service/policy and if so with whom?	<p>Yes</p> <p>Consultation is to be carried out in accordance with the legislation.</p> <p>Major preceptors will be consulted as well as the public and interested groups.</p> <p>Consultation will be carried out over the Summer Time and the results will be analysed and taken into account when the scheme is decided by full Council.</p>
(3) Which of the groups with protected characteristics have you consulted with?	All Council Taxpayers, including all applicants for Council Tax Reduction have been consulted

<u>Stage 3 – Analysis of impact</u>			
<p>(1) From your data and consultations is there any adverse or negative impact identified for any particular group which could amount to discrimination?</p> <p>If yes, identify the groups and how they are affected.</p>	RACE None	DISABILITY The Scheme continues to disregard all disability related benefits	GENDER Neutral - based on current modelling both male and female applicants can either receive increased or decreased support
	MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP Positive- couples or persons in Civil Partnerships / relationships are able to have a higher level of income than singles to receive the same level of support.	AGE Working Age cases in receipt of Universal Credit are the only applicants affected	GENDER REASSIGNMENT None
<p>(2) If there is an adverse impact, can this be justified?</p>	RELIGION/BELIEF None	PREGNANCY MATERNITY None	SEXUAL ORIENTATION None
<p>(3) What actions are going to be taken to reduce or eliminate negative or adverse impact? (this should form part of your action plan under Stage 4.)</p>	<p>The scheme will include the development of an Exceptional Hardship Scheme which will allow additional support to be provided to any applicant who suffers exceptional hardship through changes in support.</p>		

(4) How does the plan/strategy/service/policy contribute to promotion of equality? If not what can be done?	<p>The new scheme will be implemented in respect of Universal Credit applicants from 1st April 2019 and for all Working Age applicants from 1st April 2020.</p> <p>The new scheme will apply to all working age applicants from 2020</p>
(5) How does the plan/strategy/service/policy promote good relations between groups? If not what can be done?	<p>The scheme will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease the application process for applying for Council Tax Reduction; • Reduce bureaucracy; • Provide a simple to understand approach; and • Protect vulnerable groups either within the scheme itself or by the provision of additional support through an Exceptional Hardship Fund.
(6) Are there any obvious barriers to accessing the service? If yes how can they be overcome?	<p>No – all applicants on Universal Credit will automatically be invited to claim Council Tax Reduction.</p> <p>The authority is looking to significantly reduce administration of the scheme which will enable a 'simpler claiming approach'</p>

<u>Stage 4 – Action Planning, Review & Monitoring</u>					
If No Further Action is required then go to – Review & Monitoring					
(1)Action Planning – Specify any changes or improvements which can be made to the service or policy to mitigate or eradicate negative or adverse impact on specific groups, including resource implications.	EqIA Action Plan				
	Action	Lead Officer	Date for completion	Resource requirements	Comments
(2) Review and Monitoring State how and when you will monitor policy and Action Plan					

Please annotate your policy with the following statement:

'An Equality Impact Assessment/ Analysis on this policy was undertaken on (date of assessment) and will be reviewed on (date three years from the date it was assessed).'

DRAFT