

Budget Screening Equality Impact Assessment Template 2014/15 – Service-Users

1. Service Area	Housing (Council Housing: Housing Revenue Account)	2. Budget Proposal Ref. <i>(to be completed by Finance)</i>
3. Head of Service	Geoff Raw	
4. Budget Proposal	<p>Briefly and simply explain what budget changes are proposed.</p> <hr/> <p>Approach: The Housing Revenue Account is ring fenced for the management and maintenance of council owned housing stock. Our aim is to reduce our management and preventable maintenance costs to free up money to tackle inequality and improve homes and neighbourhoods</p> <p>Budget Proposal 1. Annual Rent Increase Increases in rent charges are calculated in accordance with the Governments rent restructuring guidelines. Local authorities use the September 2013 Retail Price Index of 3.2% plus 0.5% for setting rent inflationary increases plus £2 where rents are below target rents. The government has yet to confirm when setting the rents for 2014/15 whether local authorities should treat 2014/15 or 2015/16 as the final year of convergence for limiting rent increases. This will be announced in January. Therefore, the rent calculation and budgets proposed in this report are based on two assumptions, one with the final rent convergence year of 2014/15 and the other based on the final year being 2015/16. Confirmation will be received from the government in time for the final recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee on 13th February 2014.</p> <p>For the rent convergence year 2015/16, this results in an average rent increase of 5.43% for Brighton & Hove which is equivalent to an average increase of £4.31 per week, increasing the average rent to £83.72. For the rent convergence year 2014/15, this results in an average rent increase of 4.81% for Brighton & Hove which is equivalent to an average increase of £3.82 per week, increasing the average rent to £83.23.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 2. Service Charges To increase six of our service charges in line with contractual inflationary increases. Four other service charges will remain at 2013/14 levels.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 3. Savings - Estate Regeneration (£32,000) Salaries of staff working on regeneration projects can be charged to the relevant capital projects to reduce</p>	

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		<p>revenue costs.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 4. Savings - Reduction in Housing Management costs (£316,000) Decrease in staffing costs arising from service redesign such as reduced number of housing offices and cash desks.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 5. Savings - Charge common way service charges to those tenants benefiting (£435,000) - (Common way electricity - £276,000; lift maintenance £108,000 and TV aerial maintenance £51,000) Leaseholders pay their share of the costs for their building for common way electricity, lift maintenance and TV aerial maintenance but the tenants' share of the costs are currently being covered by all tenants' rental income rather than being directly paid by those tenants living in the blocks that benefit. The proposal is to charge these services directly to the tenants that receive the services.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 6. Savings - Remodel sheltered housing and charges (£260,000) Sheltered Housing services are currently partially funded through housing related support funding (formerly Supporting People). This funding has been reducing year on year and is coming to an end which risks the viability of the service. The proposal is to redesign the sheltered service with costs covered by service charges eligible for Housing Benefit (HB) making the service more financially secure. The remodelled service will be more aligned to health and social care outcomes and designed to respond to the changing demographics of the older population. Through the review of Sheltered Housing we are also seeking to enhance the service based on feedback from consultation with residents, staff and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 7. Savings - Redesign of service delivery in the Estates service (£140,000) Review service to match resources with demand with some posts being deleted. Service charging realigned and opportunities for more value for money work explored - subject to consultation.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 8. Savings - Efficiencies in Repairs & Maintenance Partnership Contract (£70,000) To reduce costs of empty property repairs through the use of agreed target pricing with contractor.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 9. Savings - Increase charges within HRA commercial property portfolio (£50,000) Review management arrangements of the commercial property portfolio and ensure property rents are in line</p>	

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	with the market.		
5. Summary of impacts		<p>Highlight the main / most significant potential impacts which will need to be mitigated or avoided</p> <hr/> <p>Budget Proposal 1. Annual Rent Increase This generates income to invest in homes and services for council housing residents. An increase in rents in conjunction with the Government's Welfare Reform Act, changes to housing benefit entitlement from April 2013, such as the under occupancy rules, could lead to financial difficulty for those households affected and those households on a fixed/low income. This may result in loss of income to the Council through rent arrears, and costs associated with the recovery of rent arrears and supporting tenants to downsize to smaller accommodation.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 2. Service Charges Service charges fund services that benefit council housing residents. An increase in service charges will affect those tenants living in specific types of properties i.e. flats and sheltered housing schemes and those households on fixed/low incomes.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 3. Estate Regeneration No impact from these proposals.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 4. Reduction in Housing Management costs Reducing the number of service access points and closing all cash offices may initially make accessing the service more difficult for a small number of tenants, particularly older tenants</p> <p>Budget Proposal 5. Charge common way service charges to those tenants benefiting It is proposed that these services will be charged directly to the tenants that benefit from them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electricity for common way lighting and lifts. This will affect an estimated 5,410 tenants and is eligible for Housing Benefit (HB). Current data suggests 1,467 (28%) tenants who are not eligible for HB will have to pay an average charge of £1.00 per week ranging from £0.09 to £2.75, although 878 tenants will pay less than £1 	

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		<p>per week;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifts maintenance - to pay for the cost of lift servicing, maintenance and insurance. It will affect 2,452 tenants. The charge is £0.85 per week and will be eligible for HB, so it is estimated that 571 tenants currently not on HB will have to pay this charge; • TV aerial maintenance – for those blocks that had new digital aerials fitted last year. This charge is an additional element that is being added to the TV aerial service charge for aerial service/maintenance. The charge will be eligible for HB and is 20p per tenant per week. Of the 4,942 tenants affected, 3,645 are eligible for HB, so it is estimated that 1,297 will have to pay this charge. <p>Budget Proposal 6. Remodel sheltered housing and charges Potential for increased service charges with an impact on self-funders and those currently receiving transitional protection. The charge is estimated at £19.92 but is being phased-in over a three year period so that the proposed charge for 2014/15 is £15.06. Current figures suggest that 73 self payers, currently paying £12.85, will need to pay the new charge, an increase of £2.21 per week. It is also proposed to phase out transitional protection for approximately 33 tenants who are self funders but currently do not pay this charge at all. The proposal is that these tenants would pay £6.64 per week in 2014/15. Because of the nature of sheltered housing, impacts will be experienced by older and disabled people.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 7. Redesign of service delivery in the Estates service No significant impact for any particular group however changes will be reviewed after 3 months</p> <p>Budget Proposal 8. Efficiencies in Repairs & Maintenance Partnership Contract It is not anticipated that the efficiency savings indentified will affect our residents.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 9. Increase charges within HRA commercial property portfolio No specific impact on any particular group but will affect all HRA commercial tenants in general where their agreement allows for rent increases. The Council must give proper advance written notice of the rent increase however increased rents risk increased arrears which could result in some tenants losing their commercial lease affecting employment opportunities.</p>	

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<p>6. Key actions to reduce negative impacts</p>	<p>What actions are proposed to reduce or avoid potential negative impacts and increase positive impacts?</p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/>		
	<p>Budget Proposal 1. Annual Rent Increase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in providing specialist support services for vulnerable residents including the development of services promoting financial inclusion, and piloting the Community Banking Partnership Model. This investment will help to sustain income collection to the HRA. (NB: ‘vulnerability’ in this context may be as a result of a ‘protected characteristics’ under the Equality Act 2010, or may relate to substance misuse, domestic/sexual violence, literacy or finance, for example. It may also change over the period of the tenancy.) • Communication with residents about the forthcoming changes to Housing Benefit (HB) through our website, City Assembly, Homing in, Tenant Associations, Tenant Disability Network and mail shots to affected tenants. • Financial Inclusion Co-ordinators in post to provide targeted case by case support to those households experiencing financial difficulties. • Discretionary Housing Payments fund and other discretionary support options through the Local Authority <p>Budget Proposal 2. Service Charges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four service charges will remain at 2013/14 levels. 6 service charges will be increased by contractual inflationary increases with charges for heating and water also being adjusted for consumption. • Financial Inclusion Co-ordinators in post to provide targeted case by case support to those households experiencing financial difficulties. <p>Budget Proposal 3. Estate Regeneration No impact from these proposals</p> <p>Budget Proposal 4. Reduction in Housing Management costs An EIA will be completed. All customers who use cash desks and Selsfield Drive will be advised of alternative service access points/methods and assisted in setting up new payments.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 5. Charge common way service charges to those tenants benefiting</p>		

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future increases will be restricted to contractual obligations • Targeted case by case support to those households experiencing financial difficulties using the Community Banking Partnership model, providing specialist independent money and debt advice, financial literacy training, access to affordable banking products and a possible hardship fund <p>Budget Proposal 6. Remodel sheltered housing and charges An EIA will be completed on the service remodel. The new service charge will be eligible for Housing Benefit (HB) so that anyone receiving HB will not have to pay the charge. Almost 90% of residents in sheltered housing are on HB and so will not experience a financial impact but 73 residents who currently pay £12.85 will experience an increased charge. The newly calculated service charge of £19.92 will be phased-in over a three-year period to avoid large increases. In 2014/15 the proposed charge is £15.06, an increase of £2.21. It should be noted that the current service charge has not increased with inflation since its introduction in 2003. The new charge includes the proposal for additional staffing to enhance the service as part of the service review in line with feedback from residents and other stakeholders. A further 33 tenants who are self funders are currently protected from paying the existing support charge under the Transitional Protection scheme which has been the case since 2003. Transitional Protection will also be phased out to bring parity with other self funding sheltered housing residents. Again this will be phased in over a three-year period. The charge for these tenants in 2014/15 will be £6.64 per week. Meetings will be offered to all sheltered residents impacted by the introduction of the new service charges to offer 1:1 financial and benefits advice.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 7. Redesign of service delivery in the Estates service No significant impact for any particular group however changes will be reviewed after 3 months</p> <p>Budget Proposal 8. Efficiencies in Repairs & Maintenance Partnership Contract</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not anticipated that the efficiency savings identified will affect our residents. <p>Budget Proposal 9. Increase charges within HRA commercial property portfolio Commercial property tenants will be advised to read their lease and seek legal advice. A guide to common commercial lease terms will be developed to support tenants.</p>

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7. Complete all three columns for each group			
Age (people of all ages)	Yes	<p>Budget Proposal 1. Annual Rent Increase Reduction in housing benefit (HB) through the Government's welfare reform could potentially affect 804 working age households (7% of all properties). This alongside rent increases could cause financial difficulty. 71% of our tenants are aged between 16 - 64.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 2. Service Charges An increase in service charges could impact upon older residents in sheltered housing (850 tenants) who receive charges for heating, water and common ways.</p>	<p>Budget Proposal 1. Annual Rent Increase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Payments for the most vulnerable tenants/those facing exceptional hardship • £0.150m will be maintained into the budget for measures to promote financial inclusion . • Targeted casework for those households affected by the HB changes including promoting the Tenant Incentive Scheme to downsize. • Financial Inclusion Co-ordinators in post to provide targeted case by case support to those households experiencing financial difficulties. • 70% of tenants are on housing benefit <p>Budget Proposal 2. Service Charges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Inclusion Co-ordinators in post to provide targeted case by case support to those households experiencing financial difficulties. • Housing Benefit payable on all service charges apart from heating and water charges and nearly 90% of tenants in sheltered accommodation are in

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		<p>Budget Proposal 4. Reduction in Housing Management costs Older people are over-represented in the declining numbers who visit offices and cash desks to pay rent</p> <p>Budget Proposal 5. Charge common way service charges to those tenants benefiting An increase in service charges could impact upon older residents in sheltered housing (850 tenants) with lifts. Sheltered tenants have already being paying for common ways through existing service charges.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 6. Remodel sheltered housing and charges Service redesign aimed to make the service more sustainable and better able to meet the needs of older people, particularly an increasing very old age group. Current projections mean that 73 sheltered tenants will need to pay the new charge after HB</p>	<p>receipt of HB</p> <p>Budget Proposal 4. Reduction in Housing Management costs Targeted work with people who use the facilities, to identify alternative service access and payment methods</p> <p>Budget Proposal 5. Charge common way service charges to those tenants benefiting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Inclusion Co-ordinators in post to provide targeted case by case support to those households experiencing financial difficulties. • Housing Benefit payable on all service charges apart from heating and water charges and nearly 90% of tenants in sheltered accommodation are in receipt of HB <p>Budget Proposal 6. Remodel sheltered housing and charges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An EIA will be completed on the service remodel • Housing Benefit payable on all service charges apart from heating and water charges and nearly 90% of tenants in sheltered accommodation are in receipt of HB

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new service charge is being phased-in over 3 years. Current payers (73 tenants) will see an increase of £2.21 from 1/3/2014. • One to one financial and benefit advice meetings will be offered to all affected sheltered tenants
<p>Disability (a person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities)</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Budget Proposal 1. Annual Rent Increase Rent increases will affect those on a fixed or low income who are not in receipt of full HB. Tenants may also be affected by changes in the Government's welfare reform and changes to DLA and ESA which may cause financial difficulty</p>	<p>Budget Proposal 1. Annual Rent Increase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £0.070m continues to be included in the budget to ensure access to Discretionary housing payments for the most vulnerable tenants/those facing exceptional hardship • £0.150m will be maintained into the budget for measures to promote financial inclusion • Targeted casework for those households affected by the HB changes including promoting the Tenant Incentive Scheme to downsize.

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		<p>Budget Proposal 4. Reduction in Housing Management costs People with a mobility or learning disability may find it more difficult to change service access and payment methods.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 5. Charge common way service charges to those tenants benefiting Increased service charges will affect those on a fixed or low income who are not in receipt of HB. Tenants with disabilities may also be affected by Welfare Reform changes to DLA and ESA which may cause them financial difficulty.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Inclusion Co-ordinators in post to provide targeted case by case support to those households experiencing financial difficulties. • Full EIA on rents and service charges increases due to be completed • 71% of tenants are on housing benefit <p>Budget Proposal 4. Reduction in Housing Management costs An EIA will be completed. Targeted work with people to help access services differently, setting up payments by, for example, direct debit.</p> <p>Budget Proposal 5. Charge common way service charges to those tenants benefiting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefit payable on all service charges apart from heating and water charges (70% of all tenants are on Housing Benefit) • To provide information on the changes to the Fed and Tenant Disability Network how tenants can access support and advice. <p>Budget Proposal 6. Remodel sheltered</p>

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		<p>Budget Proposal 6. Remodel sheltered housing and charges Service redesign aimed to make the service more sustainable and better able to support older and disabled people with higher support needs. Current projections mean that 73 sheltered tenants will need to pay the new charge after HB</p>	<p>housing and charges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An EIA will be completed on the service remodel • Housing Benefit payable on all service charges apart from heating and water charges and nearly 90% of tenants in sheltered accommodation are in receipt of HB • The new service charge is being phased-in over 3 years. Current payers (73 tenants) will see an increase of £2.21 from 1st April 2014. • One to one financial and benefit advice meetings will be offered to all affected sheltered tenants

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Ethnicity/Race (this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality, including refugees and migrants; and Gypsies and Travellers)	Yes	<p>Budget Proposal 1 & 5. Rent increases and Charge common way service charges to those tenants benefiting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for those for whom English isn't a first language not to understand information on changes to their service charges • Isolated members of ethnic groups may be less easily able to learn about changes and may find it more difficult to access support • For some tenants where English is not their first language completing forms/applications can be a barrier <p>Budget Proposal 4. Reduction in Housing Management costs Budget Proposal 6. Remodel sheltered housing and charges No disproportionate impact on this group</p>	<p>Budget Proposal 1 & 5. Rent increases and Charge common way service charges to those tenants benefiting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefit payable on all service charges apart from heating and water charges (70% of tenants are on Housing Benefit) • Translation and interpreting services are available for all tenants • Communicating these changes as early as possible will allow households time to prepare. <p>Budget Proposal 4. Reduction in Housing Management costs Budget Proposal 6. Remodel sheltered housing and charges No specific action</p>

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Gender (both men and women are covered under the Act)	No	Budget Proposal 1. Annual rent increase Increased rents and/or reduction in housing benefit through the Government's welfare reform changes can affect those on fixed/low incomes. 804 households have been identified as potentially affected by the under occupancy rules. Of these a higher number (59%) of female sole tenants are affected compared to 25% male and 16% joint tenants.	Budget proposal 1. Annual rent increase Ensure support is provided to under-occupying households to downsize, apply for Discretionary Housing Payment, or increase incomes through for example employment of money advice.
Gender reassignment (a transsexual person is someone who proposes to, starts or has completed a process to change his or her gender. A person does <u>not</u> need to be under medical supervision to be protected)	Yes	Budget Proposal 1 & 5. Rent increases and Charge common way service charges to those tenants benefiting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disproportionate impact on this group, however transgender people may experience poverty due to discrimination in employment or lack of economic support from family and friends and may face financial difficulties through increased rents and service charges • Our data indicates that we have 21 transgender tenants of which 90% of them are in receipt of housing benefit 	Budget Proposal 1 & 5. Rent increases and Charge common way service charges to those tenants benefiting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefit payable on all service charges apart from heating and water charges (70% of tenants are on Housing Benefit) • Trans Equality Scrutiny Panel may make specific suggestions for how to improve housing services to transgender residents

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Religion or Belief (any religion with a clear structure and belief system. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief. The Act also covers lack of religion or belief)	No	No disproportionate impact on this group	No specific actions
Sexual Orientation (the Act protects bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian people)	No	No disproportionate impact on this group	No specific actions
Child Poverty (Children and young people in families living on less than 60% of national median income before housing costs. In B&H around 22% of all children.)	Yes	Budget Proposal 1 & 5. Rent increases and Charge common way service charges to those tenants benefiting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those households on fixed/low incomes may be affected by rent/service charge increases • Two thirds of households in social housing experience multiple disadvantage • In Brighton & Hove 10,235 children are living in poverty or 20% of all children (2010 figures, Brighton & Hove Local Information Service) • The Brighton and Hove Child Poverty Commissioning Strategy identifies welfare reform as a key imminent pressure on 	Budget Proposal 1 & 5. Rent increases and Charge common way service charges to those tenants benefiting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefit payable on all service charges apart from heating and water charges (70% of tenants are on Housing Benefit) Work is being done to identify households affected by Welfare Reform changes to determine if there is a disproportionate impact on any group or geographical area and target support accordingly.

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		family income and health	
Other groups relevant to this proposal (These groups will be specific and relevant to the service, including but not only: Carers, people experiencing domestic or sexual violence, looked after children, homeless people)	Yes	Budget Proposal 1 & 5. Rent increases and Charge common way service charges to those tenants benefiting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families experiencing domestic/financial abuse from partners may be more negatively impacted by increases in service charges and reduction in income due to the pressure on the household • Issues such as caring responsibilities, families experiencing divorce/separation, substance misuse, being ex armed forces or an ex offender can also have a significant impact on income and other aspects of financial exclusion 	Budget Proposal 1 & 5. Rent increases and Charge common way service charges to those tenants benefiting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefit payable on all service charges apart from heating and water charges (70% of tenants are on Housing Benefit) • Work is being done to identify households affected by Welfare Reform changes to determine if there is a disproportionate impact on any group or geographical area and target support accordingly.

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8. Cumulative impacts (proposed changes elsewhere which might worsen impacts identified above)	<p>Are any cumulative impacts identified across your service area from proposals in other departments OR from other service areas? Please explain what these might be</p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> <p>We have not been advised of any impacts arising from proposals from other departments or services areas except for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing (Strategic General Fund Functions) EIA - identified £472k of savings from Homemove and Housing Related Support costs being recharged. The proposals in this EIA address the savings required. 		