



Equality impact of 2025/26 draft budget proposals: summary

November 2024

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Overview

This document provides an assessment of the equality implications of the Council's draft budget proposals for 2025/26.

For those proposals where it has been identified that there may be an impact on those with protected characteristics, a draft Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared. These assessments are provided at Annex 1. They will be finalised following the draft budget consultation, updated as required and provided to assist members in taking a decision on the final budget proposals in early 2025.

List of draft budget proposals and summary of equality impact

Council Tax

Service or function	Description	Initial impact assessment
Revenues, Benefits & Fraud / Finance	To increase Council Tax by the referendum limit (which the Government has confirmed to be up to a 2.99% increase which equates to £7.69 per year for a Band D property)	May impact on those with protected characteristics, a full Equality Impact Assessment will need to be undertaken.

Services: Pay

Service or function	Description	Initial impact assessment
Procurement	Growth for Procurement support	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided
Economic Prosperity	Saving due to post deletion	None – while management arrangements this will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service
Joint Enforcement Team	Saving due to deletion of posts	None – while staff structures are changing this will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service.
Place Delivery	Growth to contribute to partially funded post	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided
Revenues, Benefits & Fraud	Growth for additional staff offset by additional income	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided

Community Development	Growth to fund existing staff from base budget if further external funding is not available	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided
Emergency Planning	Saving associated with moving to outsourced service	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided

Services: Non-Pay

Service or function	Description	Initial impact assessment
Property & Facilities	Growth due to increased business rates at council buildings	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided
Property & Facilities	Additional income due to increased rental income at The Rise	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided
Property & Facilities	Additional income due to increased rental income at other Commercial properties	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided
ICT	Growth due to increased cost of software maintenance contracts	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided
Communications	Growth due to increased cost of software maintenance contract	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided
Projects & Performance	Growth to implement new project management software	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided
Greenspaces	Growth due to reduction in income (cessation of SCC verge maintenance contract)	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided

Economic Prosperity	Growth due to reduction in income assumptions (markets)	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided
Neighbourhood Services	Growth due to increased cost of oil	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided
Neighbourhood Services	Growth due to reduction in income (loss of resident parking income)	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided
Environmental Health	Growth due to reduction in income (budget review)	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided
Planning & Development	Saving due to cessation of some neighbour notifications	Change will be implemented through the Council’s Statement of Community Involvement at which stage equality impact will be assessed
Revenues, Benefits & Fraud	Income from additional external contracts	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided
Revenues, Benefits & Fraud	Income due to increase in Council Tax and NNDR summons	None – pursuit of non-payment is a legitimate and important council activity, the only negative impact will be on those who fail to pay amounts due
Community Centres	Income due to increased use of centres	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided
Community Partnerships	Growth to fund ongoing CCTV costs	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided
Community Partnerships	Growth to fund increased contribution to SCC community safety service	Positive impact from additional support for community safety

Treasury Management	Savings due to improved investment conditions	None – will not negatively impact on individuals or the overall service provided
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Changes to fees and charges

The majority of fees and charges are proposed to be increased by an amount up to / including 2.3% reflecting the adopted Fees & Charges Policy. Given the low percentage increase, and the fact that this is reflective of general inflation, increases of 2.3% or less are not determined to have an impact in terms of equality. The table below considers where increases above 2.3% are proposed.

Service	Description	Initial impact assessment
Community Centres	Fee increases – 3 tariffs at Banstead over 2.3%. Max 3.8% / 50p per hour increase.	None, small scale increases only to address cost inflation
Environmental Health & Licencing	Fee increase – hackney carriage and private hire replacement plates and badges, test fees and vehicle transfer – max 4.3% / £2 increase	None, changes proposed to ensure cost recovery and to address inflationary costs
Greenspaces	Introduction of new charges – Park hire and fitness licence	None, new charges are aimed at commercial providers of leisure and fitness activity
Parking	Fee increase – car parking charges and permits – average 3% increase, some charges increasing by more due to rounding	May impact on those with protected characteristics, a full Equality Impact Assessment will need to be undertaken
Waste & Recycling	Fee increase – recycling containers for residential customers – max 5.3% / £2.50 increase	None, changes proposed to ensure cost recovery and to address inflationary costs
Waste & Recycling	Fee increase – recycling /refuse containers for	None, optional service for commercial businesses, changes

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	commercial customers – max 5.3% / £10 increase	proposed to ensure cost recovery and to address inflationary costs
Waste & Recycling	Fee increase – commercial waste collection – max 12.5% increase	None, optional service for commercial businesses, changes proposed to ensure cost recovery and to address inflationary costs



Annex 1: Equality Impact Assessments

Proposal: To increase Council Tax by the referendum limit (up to a 2.99% increase which equates to £7.69 per year per Band D property in 2025/26)

Introduction

This document summarises – in an accessible format – the outcomes of the Council’s draft Equality Impact Assessment for the proposal to increase Council Tax by the referendum limit (up to a 2.99% increase which equates to £7.69 per year per Band D property) for 2025/26, including the outcome of the Stage 1 Relevance Screening Assessment and the Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment.

Summary of the proposal

To increase the Reigate & Banstead Borough Council element of Council Tax by the Government-set referendum limit from 1 April 2025. This is anticipated to be £7.69 for the average Band D property.

Council Tax is reviewed annually as part of the Service & Financial Planning exercise. The increase for the financial year 2025/26 is being proposed due to the financial challenges being faced by the Council due to the withdrawal of government revenue support grant and the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on Council income streams and inflationary increases on costs. Further explanation of the funding pressures faced by the Council is included in the draft budget report provided to the Executive in November 2024.

Assessment of Relevance

The Stage 1 Relevance Assessment has concluded the following:

- The proposal will not introduce a change which will affect how services or functions are delivered
- The proposals will affect people – for example service users, employees or the wider community

The group of people which will be affected by the proposal has been identified as all residents.

This proposal affects all persons who are liable to pay Council Tax in respect of their home (residential address), including those properties which are currently empty. The list of liable parties is maintained in the Council Tax system. The Borough Equality Profile on the Council

website provides information about the protected characteristics of all residents within the borough.

The proposal will affect any resident who pays Council tax, including any residents with one or more of the protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act.

The following Equality Duty aims have been identified as being relevant for this assessment:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.

Overall, the relevance assessment has concluded that this proposal has a relevance to equality of Moderate. The outcome of the relevance assessment is therefore that a Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Equality Impact Assessment

It has been identified that:

- The proposal in question does not intentionally target one or more protected characteristic groups.
- The proposal does not intentionally exclude one or more protected characteristic groups.
- The proposal does not have the potential to reduce inequality or improve outcomes for protected characteristic groups (although note that support is available for some residents in respect of Council Tax payments).

Information about the protected characteristics of the intended audience and/or people who might be affected

In summary, the following information is available about the protected characteristic groups of the intended audience and / or people who might be affected by the proposal

Age

General information about the age profile of borough residents who are owner occupiers is available from the Census and ONS mid-year estimates and reported in the Council's annual Borough Equality Information report, which is available on the Council's website at www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/equality.

Disability

General information about the disability characteristics is available from the Census and reported in the Council's annual Borough Equality Information report.

Gender reassignment

General information about the representation of trans-people in the population generally is available from national and regional annual population survey data from the ONS, however is not currently available at a borough level. National and regional data is reported in the Council's annual Borough Equality Information report.

Marriage and civil partnership

General information about borough residents' partnership arrangements is available from the Census and reported in the Council's annual Borough Equality Information report.

Pregnancy and maternity

General information about live births and lone parents in the borough is available from the Census and other ONS data sources and reported in the Council's annual Borough Equality Information report.

Race or ethnicity

General information about the ethnicity of the borough's residents is available from the Census and the ONS Annual Population Survey and reported in the Council's annual Borough Equality Information report.

Religion or belief (or lack of)

General information about the religion and/or beliefs of borough residents is available from the Census and the ONS Annual Population Survey and reported in the Council's annual Borough Equality Information report.

Sex

General information about the gender profile of borough residents is available from the Census and ONS mid-year estimates and reported in the Council's annual Borough Equality Information report.

Sexual orientation

General information about the representation of trans-people in the population generally is available from national and regional annual population survey data from the ONS, however is not currently available at a borough level. National and regional data is reported in the Council's annual Borough Equality Information report.

Other vulnerabilities

Information about the geographic spread of deprivation across the borough is available from the Index of Multiple Deprivation, which is reported in the Council's annual Borough Equality Information report. Specific information about those receiving Council Tax support is also held by the Council.

Consultation

In preparing the proposal, consultation is planned to take place via the annual draft budget public consultation exercise undertaken by the Council.

Action to increase positive equality impacts or reduce negative equality impacts

The proposed Council Tax increase will affect all residents who have a liability for Council Tax. For those residents on low income, the Local Council Tax Support scheme is in place to provide support in the form of reductions in the liable amount, and further reductions can also be applied under discretionary powers contained in Section 13(1)(C) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. Children and persons under the age of 18 are not legally liable for Council Tax and therefore not affected by this proposal. It is proposed to remove some restriction from the scheme to offer additional support to our most vulnerable residents.

Assessment of potential impact

This section summarises our assessment of the potential impact of the proposal on protected characteristic groups.

Age

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate negative impact in relation to age, and no positive impact in relation to age. Elderly residents facing financial hardship may be supported by the Local Council Tax support scheme or other discretionary powers.

Disability

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate negative impact in relation to disability, and no positive impact in relation to disability. Disabled residents facing financial hardship may be supported by the Local Council Tax support scheme or other discretionary powers.

Gender reassignment

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate negative impact in relation to gender reassignment, and no positive impact in relation to gender reassignment. Trans residents facing financial hardship may be supported by the Local Council Tax support scheme or other discretionary powers.

Marriage and civil partnership

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate negative impact in relation to marriage and civil partnership, and no positive impact in relation to marriage and civil partnership. Regardless of their partnership status, residents facing financial hardship may be supported by the Local Council Tax support scheme or other discretionary powers.

Pregnancy and maternity

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate negative impact in relation to pregnancy and maternity, and no positive impact in relation to pregnancy and maternity. Pregnant women and mothers facing financial hardship may be supported by the Local Council Tax support scheme or other discretionary powers.

Race or ethnicity

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate negative impact in relation to race or ethnicity, and no positive impact in relation to race or ethnicity. Residents from ethnic minority groups facing financial hardship may be supported by the Local Council Tax support scheme or other discretionary powers.

Religion or belief (or lack of)

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate negative impact in relation to religion or belief, and no positive impact in relation to religion or belief. Residents with religious beliefs or none facing financial hardship may be supported by the Local Council Tax support scheme or other discretionary powers.

Sexual orientation

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate negative impact in relation to sexual orientation, and no positive impact in relation to sexual orientation. Residents of any sexual orientation facing financial hardship may be supported by the Local Council Tax support scheme or other discretionary powers.

Other vulnerabilities

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate negative impact in relation to other vulnerabilities, and no positive impact in relation to other vulnerabilities. Vulnerable residents facing financial hardship may be supported by the Local Council Tax support scheme or other discretionary powers.

Monitoring and review

The Local Council Tax Support scheme is in place to support all residents who are on a low income and experiencing financial hardship. Residents that already receive support through this scheme will see their support increased in line with the increase. It is proposed to remove some restriction from the scheme to offer additional support to our most vulnerable residents. Additionally, reductions of Council Tax liability can also be made at the discretion of the Council under relevant legislation.

The Council will monitor numbers of residents in receipt of Council Tax support to ensure their continued effectiveness. Council tax rates are reviewed annually.

Proposal: Increase in car park charges and parking permit charges

Introduction

This document summarises – in an accessible format – the outcomes of the Council’s draft Equality Impact Assessment for changes to car park charges, including the outcome of the Stage 1 Relevance Screening Assessment and the Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment.

Summary of the proposal

The proposal is to increase the fees and charges in the off-street car parks owned and managed by the Council as well as parking season tickets. This relates to the amounts charged for pay and display tickets and the amount charged for season tickets. On average prices are proposed to increase by 3%. However due to rounding and the low per hour charge, percentage increase vary with a maximum percentage increase of 10% (5p on a 50p charge). Monthly season tickets are proposed to increase between 3.8% and 7.1% (7.1% being an increase of £5 on a £70 season ticket).

Assessment of Relevance

The Stage 1 Relevance Assessment has concluded the following:

- The proposal will not introduce a change which will affect how services or functions are delivered
- The proposals will affect people who normally use council car parks for their parking.

The group(s) of people which might be affected by the proposal includes residents and businesses that may use the Council’s pay and display car parks either for one-off ticket purchases or via the purchase of season tickets. Additionally local businesses near the car parks may be affected.

Information is not held about the demographic or equality characteristics of pay and display car park users. However it is possible that those with limited mobility or with childcare responsibilities are more reliant on private car and therefore our car parks. Blue badge holders are not required to pay for any parking in the RBBC car parks. Those on lower or no incomes may have a reduced ability to pay additional costs.

A detailed breakdown of the real cost of the % increase has been undertaken to determine the cost implication for different stay lengths at different car parks.

The protected characteristic groups that could be affected by the proposal have been identified as older people, those with disabilities, pregnant women or parents/carers with small children, along with residents with other vulnerabilities.

The following Equality Duty aims have been identified as being relevant:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

Overall, the relevance assessment has concluded that this proposal has a relevance to equality of Low however a stage 2 equality impact assessment has been undertaken to consider any potential issues or mitigation arising.

The reason for a conclusion of low is:

- Those who hold a blue badge and who would therefore fall within the protected characteristics of age and/or disability are not required to pay for any parking.
- It remains the case that other parking and transport opportunities are also available for those who do not wish to pay increased charges in council car parks.

Equality Impact Assessment

The proposal in question does not intentionally target one or more protected characteristic groups.

The proposal does intentionally exclude one or more protected characteristic groups, specifically the changes will not impact those with Blue Badges who are exempt from paying charges in the Council's off street car parks.

Information about the protected characteristics of the intended audience and/or people who might be affected

In summary, the following information is available about the protected characteristic groups of the intended audience and / or people who might be affected by the proposal

Age

ONS mid year estimates suggest that there are 26,721 RBBC residents aged 65 or over (17.1% of the total population). More information about ward level distribution is provided in the Borough Equality report available at www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/equality.

Disability

1.6% of the population of the South East hold blue badges, so based on population of RBBC (149,243) there are approx 2,400 blue badge holders eligible for free parking in RBBC car parks.

Gender reassignment

General information about the representation of trans-people in the population generally is available from national and regional annual population survey data from the ONS, however is not currently available at a borough level. National and regional data is reported in the Council's annual Borough Equality Information report.

Marriage and civil partnership

General information about borough residents' partnership arrangements is available from the Census and reported in the Council's annual Borough Equality Information report.

Pregnancy and maternity

General information about live births and lone parents in the borough is available from the Census and other ONS data sources and reported in the Council's annual Borough Equality Information report.

Race or ethnicity

General information about the ethnicity of the borough's residents is available from the Census and the ONS Annual Population Survey and reported in the Council's annual Borough Equality Information report.

Religion or belief (or lack of)

General information about the religion and/or beliefs of borough residents is available from the Census and the ONS Annual Population Survey and reported in the Council's annual Borough Equality Information report.

Sex

General information about the gender profile of borough residents is available from the Census and ONS mid year estimates and reported in the Council's annual Borough Equality Information report.

Sexual orientation

General information about the representation of trans-people in the population generally is available from national and regional annual population survey data from the ONS, however is not currently available at a borough level. National and regional data is reported in the Council's annual Borough Equality Information report.

Other vulnerabilities

The Index of Multiple Deprivation - in 2019, Reigate & Banstead borough was ranked 276 out of 317 local authorities (where 1 = the most deprived). There are areas of RBBC where deprivation appears in the top 20% nationally.

Consultation

In preparing the proposal, consultation is planned as part of the public consultation on the draft 2025/26 budget. The process of raising fees and charges for off street parking also includes a four week consultation period published in the local press (Surrey Mirror), online and notices placed at the car parks. Comments raised as a result are considered prior to implementation of any rise.

Action to increase positive equality impacts or reduce negative equality impacts

In preparing the proposal, the following actions have been taken to reduce potential negative impacts on people with protected characteristics:

Any rise in price is carefully considered so that as few people as possible are excluded from the car parks, this does however affect those with the least disposable income, a group not included within protected characteristics.

The Council will continue to enable those with Blue Badges to park for free, meaning that less mobile older people or those with disabilities will be unaffected by the price rises.

More generally, the Council is continuing to work with Surrey County Council to encourage walking and cycling as an alternative means of travel to reduce reliance on the private car, and to promote and support public transport usage. This includes through the provision of new walking/cycling infrastructure in town centres. Reigate & Banstead also currently funds an active travel officer working in identified community development areas and with target schools to encourage walking and cycling and build confidence for daily trips. Together this will provide more viable alternatives for those on lower incomes to avoid or minimise fuel and/or parking costs.

Assessment of potential impact

This section summarises our assessment of the potential impact of the proposal on protected characteristic groups.

Age

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate negative impact in relation to age. Disproportionate negative impact is avoided by the continuation of free Blue Badge parking for older residents with mobility issues as well as continued work with SCC to encourage active travel as an alternative to the private car. It remains the case that other parking and transport opportunities are also available for those who do not wish to pay this increased charge

Disability

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate negative impact in relation to disability. Disproportionate negative impact is avoided by the continuation of fee Blue Badge parking for residents with disabilities.

Gender reassignment

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate impact in relation to gender reassignment.

Marriage and civil partnership

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate impact in relation to marriage and civil partnership.

Pregnancy and maternity

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate impact in relation to pregnancy and maternity. It remains the case that other parking and transport opportunities are available for those who do not wish or are not able to pay the increased charge. In real terms the price increase for essential short (1hr) stays is small (5p per hour). Continued work is ongoing with SCC to encourage active travel as an alternative to the private car.

Race or ethnicity

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate impact in relation to race or ethnicity.

Religion or belief (or lack of)

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate impact in relation to religion or belief.

Sex

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate impact in relation to sex.

Sexual orientation

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate impact in relation to sexual orientation.

Other vulnerabilities

The assessment has indicated no disproportionate impact in relation to other vulnerabilities, specifically those facing financial hardship. It remains the case that other parking and transport opportunities are available for those who do not wish or are not able to pay the increased charge. In real terms the price increase for essential short (1hr) stays is small (5p per hour). Work is ongoing with SCC to encourage active travel as an alternative to the private car.

Monitoring and review

The parking team will continue to monitor levels of car parking usage / ticket sales to understand the overall impact of the proposals.

Consultation provides the opportunity for all car park users, businesses and residents to comment on the proposed rises.

Consideration will be given to whether a survey of car park users would be beneficial to allow better understanding of the demographics and protected characteristics of those who use our car parks and further consideration within a new EIA carried out soon after. This could also inform any future proposals with respect of our car parks including impact mitigation measures.

