

APPENDIX D

Introduction

The Council is obliged to set a balanced budget and commensurate Council Tax level in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

The Council must also, in the exercise of its functions, comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and in particular section 149 (the Public Sector Equality Duty). The purpose of this assessment is to look at possible equalities implications of the overall budget and significant specific proposals included within it.

For 2017/18, the key features of the proposed budget are:

- a 3.99% increase in the Richmond element of the Council Tax which comprises:
- a 1.99% increase in the Richmond element of the Council Tax,
- a 2% precept (as allowed by Government) in support of Adult Social Care services,
- a 1.46% increase in the GLA element of the Council Tax,
- leading to an overall increase of 3.55%.
- The budget also includes a range of efficiency measures required to offset reductions in Government Support.

Methodology

The analysis is split into 2 parts:

- the impact of increasing the Council Tax,
- the impact of significant specific proposals which are included in the overall budget.

Increasing the Council Tax

In terms of Council Tax liability, residents fall into one of the following 4 categories:

1. those liable to pay full Council Tax,
2. those eligible for some form of discount or exemption (other than Council Tax Support),
3. those eligible for Council Tax Support,
4. those with no Council Tax liability.

A 3.55% increase in the Band D Council Tax would result in a cash increase of £56.15 per year (£1.08 per week) for those required to pay the full charge. Nearly half, (50p per week), of the increase in the Richmond element of the Council Tax stems from the Government's offer to allow Councils to increase Council Tax,

provided that the additional amount is used in support of Adult Social Care i.e. some of its most vulnerable residents.

Group 1 - Those liable to pay full Council Tax

For the majority of Richmond residents, the Council believes that the proposed increase will not have a significant impact. Richmond is known as an affluent borough with high levels of employment (84.6% economically active households, 1,420 out of work benefit claimants)¹. There will be an impact for those Council Tax payers whose income is just above the threshold for Council Tax Reduction who will suffer the full increase. The Council has no specific equalities monitoring data on this group of residents.

Group 2 - Those eligible for some form of discount or exemption (other than Council Tax Support)

As per Group 1 but for those in receipt of a discount or exemption the effect of the increase would be proportionately less. For example, a Band D taxpayer who is eligible for a single person discount would be subject to an increase of £42.12 (£0.81 per week) rather than £56.15 (£1.08 per week).

Group 3 – Those eligible for Council Tax Support

A separate consultation process including an EINA was undertaken on the proposal to ask all working age, non-vulnerable (as defined by the Council Tax Reduction Scheme) residents to pay 15% of their Council Tax. This is available at: <https://cabnet.richmond.gov.uk/documents/s65680/3%20APP%20B%20CTR%20EINA%20Final.pdf>

Group 4 – Those with no Council Tax liability

The effect on this group is neutral.

Specific Service Budget Proposals

The table below sets out the key service related proposals which are included in the proposed budget, together with comments and references where EINAs have already been undertaken.

Service	£000	Comment
Adult Social Services		
Sexual Health Services Re-commissioning	100	Sexual Health Commissioning Strategy – Joint strategy with NHS Richmond CCG to support improvements in services as they are re-commissioned. The strategy aims to increase emphasis on prevention, sexual health promotion, strengthen community-based services and commission high quality services.

¹ Source: NOMIS Official Labour Market Statistics
<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157276/report.aspx#tabrespop>

Adult Social Care Commissioning Programmes	1,040	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning Disability Commissioning Strategy Final Phase. - Egerton Road Respite Service. - Mental Health Accommodation Pathway. - Day Services Review (EINA being undertaken as part of the review).
Achieving for Children (AfC)	-2,116	AfC is a social enterprise company created by Richmond and Kingston councils to provide their children's services since April 2014. AfC's Equality Assessments are published annually on their website at the following link: http://www.achievingforchildren.org.uk/equality-diversity-documents/ .
Environment and Community Services		
Total Facilities Management contract	-236	EINA published in July 2015.
On & off street parking (including parking permits admin fee)	-350 (parking) -50 (permits)	EINA published in August 2016 – increased charges applied to all service users so no negative impact identified for any protected group.
Pools on the Park	-250	EINA was scheduled to look at harmonisation of staff terms and conditions – however following initial analysis, no EINA was required.
Chief Executive's Group		
Regulatory Services	-200	As the lead authority for the Regulatory Services Partnership, Merton Council has full responsibility to complete EINAs, such as for staffing reviews.
Resources		
Serco IT Contract	-1,000	Serco staff TUPE to the SSA in November 2016 with full year contract savings from 2017/18 onwards. EINA was undertaken on proposed restructure.
Corporate		
SSA Efficiencies – shared staffing	-5,350	As part of the SSA implementation, a number of EINAs covering the impact on staff of the reorganisations have been undertaken.

Conclusion

The increase in Council Tax will not have a significant impact on the majority of Council Tax payers in the borough. A detailed review of the impact of changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme was undertaken and presented to Council.

For the individual service proposals, they are in, general, re-provision of existing services where different delivery models have been introduced as part of the Council's drive to maintain service quality whilst reducing costs.