

Oxford City Council HRA Rent Setting for 2024-25 and for inclusion in the Budget Consultation (Equality Assessment)

The following assessment gives more details from an equality and diversity perspective on the Council’s rent setting proposal. It provides an initial commentary to indicate the potential risks before the wider public consultation period from December 2023 to January 2024.

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Budget Proposal	Rent setting: Increase in council house rents by 7.7% per annum for 2024/25.
Is this proposal new or subject to an annual review?	From 1 st April 2020 under the 2020 rent standard, the Government have determined that rent will be increased by CPI +1% for a period of 5 years for local authority and housing association social rents. For 2023/24 the relevant CPI rate at September 2023 is 6.7% and hence council house rents under this formula would be estimated to increase by 7.7% from 2023-24 levels. With inflation running at 8.9% the Council would need to make reductions on service should the rent rise not be at least 7.7% which is recommended within this Budget paper.
What are the likely risks?	The increase for 2024-25 at 7.7% represents an average of £9.27 per week. There is a risk of increased rents arrears which could rise as a result of the increase. Issues may arise from the implementation of universal credit which is being monitored by the Council
What public consultation has been planned/ taken place?	The proposed increases will be published in “Tenants in Touch”, both hard copy and digital editions during the consultation period. Once the charges have been approved by Council, Tenants will be notified in writing giving the statutory one months’ notice (Social Tenants) and two months’ notice (Shared Ownership tenants) before implementation on the 1 st April.
What mitigating actions will the Council implement to offset any negative impacts?	The Social Housing Act and enhanced Regulatory Standards has an expectation that landlords will know their tenants as individuals, understand their views, know their protected characteristics, know reasonable adjustments that need to be made and work with an ever-increasing number of vulnerable tenants in our housing stock, delivering high quality, efficient services. As a result, Housing Officers will need to be able to case manage, key work and co-ordinate a range of services to support tenants going forward. Additional staffing has been proposed in response to the new standards and should assist in providing an early warning mechanism of arrears increasing and a resource to help tackle the potential increased rent arrears. As at the end of July 2022 there were a total of 3,559 HRA tenants (45.6%) claiming Housing Benefit or the Housing Cost element of Universal Credit, made up of 2,318 Housing Benefit claimants and 1,241 Universal Credit claimants. The amount claimed by each tenant will vary depending on their individual circumstances.

Overall assessment of the equality risks

Race
Neutral

Disability
Neutral

Age
Neutral

Gender reassignment
Neutral

Religion or Belief
Neutral

Sexual Orientation
Neutral

Sex
Neutral

Pregnancy and Maternity
Neutral

Marriage & Civil Partnership
Neutral