

Service being assessed	Business Rates
Who will be involved in completing this assessment?	Stuart Brabben, Service Manager Enforcement (Revenues)
Date of Review	9 June 2011
Date of Next Review	9 June 2011
What is the purpose of the service?	To bill Business Rates (NNDR) payers accurately and promptly and to recover unpaid Business Rates.
Is this assessment being undertaken because of changes to the service? If so what are they?	Assessment being undertaken as part of Council's annual review of equalities information, not because of change to service/policy.
<p>The purpose of this review is to understand how services can help the Council to meet its duties under Equalities legislation. The duties can be summarised as</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Eliminate discrimination</li> <li>2. Advance equality of opportunity</li> <li>3. Foster good relations between different parts of the community</li> </ol>	<p>Hard copy bills issued to all businesses in the Borough once a year with information on what to do if you are unable to pay / who to contact. There is a policy in place around recovering money and non-payment problems.</p> <p>Requests for alternative formats / languages are dealt with on an "as requested" basis.</p> <p>Most of the procedures within the service are shaped by legislation and central government policies.</p>

<p>How does this service help the Council to do this, in particular in relation to the categories specifically mentioned in legislation - Race, Gender/Sex, Disability, Age, Religion/Belief, Gender Reassignment, Sexual Orientation, Pregnancy &amp; Maternity and in respect of Duty 1 only – Marriage and Civil Partnerships?</p>	<p>Regular meetings take place with colleagues from other authorities to help spot trends and potential issues – this information is then used to change working practices to help stop issues becoming major problems. This improves the service to customers who then don't experience “blips” in the service they receive. Regular reviews of cases sent to the Ombudsmen are also used to change the way the service operates.</p> <p>Customers can apply for Discretionary Rate Relief or Hardship Relief if they are having problems paying their bill. Who is eligible to apply is set out in national legislation but then each application is treated individually and is considered by the Head of Department and/or the senior councillor for Revenues. Information on these benefits is published with the annual bills. Small businesses were canvassed in the past year to raise awareness of both these benefits.</p> <p>The recovery team also work with any business who is struggling to pay to work out payment schedules.</p>
<p>How will you know that service is working as it should?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of money collected against the amount outstanding for collection</li> <li>• The rates of collection</li> <li>• Customer complaints</li> <li>• Feedback from businesses</li> </ul>
<p>What data have you used to help you make this assessment?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies and procedures</li> <li>• Legislation</li> <li>• Performance information – targets and indicators including collection rates</li> <li>• Customer feedback / analysis</li> <li>• Reports gained from interrogating the Business Rates processing system – IBS. For example, payment schedules</li> </ul>

<p>How have you ensured that this service has been designed from a customer's perspective and how have you involved customers in that process?</p>	<p>The Business Rates service follows an annual cycle of billing and collection – information is sent out with every bill about the service on offer with an invitation to send in comments.</p> <p>Any customer who visits the Council is invited to submit anonymous or named comments on the service they received during their visit.</p>
<p>Has any other consultation been carried out, including to ensure that we have taken into consideration the needs of those not currently using the service?</p>	<p>No.</p>
<p>What is, or what do you expect to be the impact of the way you work on different parts of the community, including those covered by equality legislation?</p>	<p><b>Who benefits?</b> Business rates are collected on behalf of central government who then redistribute the monies to Council based on their population.</p> <p><b>Who should be expected to benefit but don't – Why not?</b> Not applicable</p>
<p>On the basis of what you have found out, which of these options will you now follow</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No major changes</b></li> <li>• Adjust the policy</li> <li>• Continue the policy</li> <li>• Stop and remove the policy</li> </ul> <p>This is a review – not a new policy or service. As and when it is proposed to change the service or policies, new assessments will be completed.</p>
<p>Signed off by</p>	<p>Stuart Brabben, Service Manager Enforcement (Revenues)</p>