

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

EqIA : Council meeting arrangements

Essential information

Items to be assessed: (please mark 'x')

| | | | | | | | |
|----------|--|------|--|---------|--|-------------------|---|
| Strategy | | Plan | | Project | | Service procedure | X |
|----------|--|------|--|---------|--|-------------------|---|

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|---------------------|------------------------------------|--------------|------------|-------------|----------------|
| Responsible officer | Karen Shepherd, Head of Governance | Service area | Governance | Directorate | Law & Strategy |
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|--|-----------------------|--|--------------------|
| Stage 1: EqIA Screening (mandatory) | Date created: 13/9/21 | Stage 2 : Full assessment (if applicable) | Date created : N/A |
|--|-----------------------|--|--------------------|

Approved by Head of Service / Overseeing group/body / Project Sponsor:

"I am satisfied that an equality impact has been undertaken adequately."

Signed by (print): *K. Shepherd*

Dated: 13/9/21

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Guidance notes

What is an EqlA and why do we need to do it?

The Equality Act 2010 places a 'General Duty' on all public bodies to have 'due regard' to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between those with 'protected characteristics' and those without them.
- Fostering good relations between those with 'protected characteristics' and those without them.

EqlAs are a systematic way of taking equal opportunities into consideration when making a decision, and should be conducted when there is a new or reviewed strategy, policy, plan, project, service or procedure in order to determine whether there will likely be a detrimental and/or disproportionate impact on particular groups, including those within the workforce and customer/public groups. All completed EqlA Screenings are required to be publicly available on the council's website once they have been signed off by the relevant Head of Service or Strategic/Policy/Operational Group or Project Sponsor.

What are the "protected characteristics" under the law?

The following are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010: age; disability (including physical, learning and mental health conditions); gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

What's the process for conducting an EqlA?

The process for conducting an EqlA is set out at the end of this document. In brief, a Screening Assessment should be conducted for every new or reviewed strategy, policy, plan, project, service or procedure and the outcome of the Screening Assessment will indicate whether a Full Assessment should be undertaken.

Openness and transparency

RBWM has a 'Specific Duty' to publish information about people affected by our policies and practices. Your completed assessment should be sent to the Strategy & Performance Team for publication to the RBWM website once it has been signed off by the relevant manager, and/or Strategic, Policy, or Operational Group. If your proposals are being made to Cabinet or any other Committee, please append a copy of your completed Screening or Full Assessment to your report.

Enforcement

Judicial review of an authority can be taken by any person, including the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) or a group of people, with an interest, in respect of alleged failure to comply with the general equality duty. Only the EHRC can enforce the specific duties. A failure to comply with the specific duties may however be used as evidence of a failure to comply with the general duty.

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Stage 1 : Screening (Mandatory)

1.1 What is the overall aim of your proposed strategy/policy/project etc and what are its key objectives?

The aim of the proposal is to determine which council meetings should be held in-person and which in a virtual format for the remainder of the municipal year.

1.2 What evidence is available to suggest that your proposal could have an impact on people (including staff and customers) with protected characteristics? Consider each of the protected characteristics in turn and identify whether your proposal is Relevant or Not Relevant to that characteristic. If Relevant, please assess the level of impact as either High / Medium / Low and whether the impact is Positive (i.e. contributes to promoting equality or improving relations within an equality group) or Negative (i.e. could disadvantage them). Please document your evidence for each assessment you make, including a justification of why you may have identified the proposal as “Not Relevant”.

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| Protected characteristics | Relevance | Level | Positive/negative | Evidence |
|---------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Age | Relevant | Low – Negative Low - Positive | Negative and Positive | <p>People with this protected characteristic may experience difficulties using technology to access fully virtual meetings, although use of online meetings has increased across all age groups as a result of the pandemic.</p> <p>The ability to attend virtually or watch online both in-person and virtual meetings is a positive impact for those who may experience difficulties travelling to formal meeting venues.</p> <p>The virtual meeting technology used by the council (Zoom) allows individuals to join the meeting via a telephone line rather than requiring a computer. The democratic right of residents to ask any questions/address Councillors is therefore maintained. Ensuring each speaker identifies themselves before speaking will help those joining by audio only.</p> <p>If an individual is not able to access either a computer or telephone they would be permitted to nominate a spokesperson to speak on their behalf or submit a question or statement to Democratic Services in advance to be read out at the meeting.</p> <p>Those unable to access technology to enable them to watch a meeting at home would be able to use borough libraries to view the livestream or video after the meeting date.</p> |

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| | | | <p>Minutes summarising the debate and setting out any decisions will be drafted after the meeting and can be provided, upon request, to anyone without a facility to watch the live broadcast or view the minutes on the council website.</p> <p>There may be some positive impact for younger people or working age people who find it harder to attend committee meetings (particularly those held during the day) due to work, education or caring commitments but they will be able to observe the meetings live or via recordings.</p> <p>Positive for all age groups who would have previously had to travel to council offices in order to attend meetings particularly if they did not drive, have access to a car or had to rely on public transport.</p> |
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|-------------------|----------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Disability | Relevant | Low – Negative Low - Positive | Negative and Positive | <p>People with this protected characteristic may find it more difficult to access fully virtual meetings.</p> <p>The virtual meeting technology used by the council (Zoom) allows individuals to join the meeting via a telephone line rather than requiring a computer. The democratic right of residents to ask any questions/address Councillors is therefore maintained. Ensuring each speaker identifies themselves before speaking will help those with a visual impairment of joining by audio only.</p> <p>If an individual is not able to access either a computer or telephone they would be permitted to nominate a spokesperson to speak on their behalf or submit a question or statement to Democratic Services in advance to be read out at the meeting.</p> <p>Those unable to access technology to enable them to watch a meeting at home would be able to use borough libraries to view the livestream or video after the meeting date.</p> |
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| | | | | <p>Minutes summarising the debate and setting out any decisions will be drafted after the meeting and can be provided, upon request, to anyone without a facility to watch the live broadcast or view the minutes on the council website.</p> <p>However, some users have found that audio and picture quality has improved in fully virtual meetings, having a positive impact.</p> <p>The ability to attend virtually or watch online both in person and virtual meetings is a positive impact for those who may experience difficulties travelling to formal meeting venues.</p> <p>For meetings that are not formal council committees, such as the Disability and Inclusion Forum, the views of non-Councillor Members on the split between virtual and in-person meetings have been taken into consideration.</p> <p>Audio and picture quality for hybrid meetings may have a negative impact this is being considered by officers who are currently looking at options to improve AV equipment used for council meetings.</p> |
| Gender re-assignment | Not relevant | | | |
| Marriage/civil partnership | Not relevant | | | |
| Pregnancy and maternity | Relevant | Low | Positive | <p>People with this protected characteristic may find it more difficult to access in-person meetings.</p> <p>The ability to attend virtually or watch online both in person and virtual meetings is a positive impact for those who may experience difficulties travelling to formal meeting venues.</p> |
| Race | Not relevant | | | |

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|----------------------------|--------------|--|--|--|
| Religion and belief | Not relevant | | | |
| Sex | Not relevant | | | |
| Sexual orientation | Not relevant | | | |

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Outcome, action and public reporting

| Screening Assessment Outcome | Yes / No / Not at this stage | Further Action Required / Action to be taken | Responsible Officer and / or Lead Strategic Group | Timescale for Resolution of negative impact / Delivery of positive impact |
|--|------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Was a significant level of negative impact identified? | No | Officers to consider the needs of users with protected characteristics specified above when looking at options for improving AV equipment used to stream council meetings. | Karen Shepherd | Early 2022 (dependent on procurement process) |
| Does the strategy, policy, plan etc require amendment to have a positive impact? | No | | | |

If you answered **yes** to either / both of the questions above a Full Assessment is advisable and so please proceed to Stage 2. If you answered “No” or “Not at this Stage” to either / both of the questions above please consider any next steps that may be taken (e.g. monitor future impacts as part of implementation, re-screen the project at its next delivery milestone etc).

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Stage 2 : Full assessment

2.1 : Scope and define

2.1.1 Who are the main beneficiaries of the proposed strategy / policy / plan / project / service / procedure? List the groups who the work is targeting/aimed at.

2.1.2 Who has been involved in the creation of the proposed strategy / policy / plan / project / service / procedure? List those groups who the work is targeting/aimed at.

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2.1.2 Who has been involved in the creation of the proposed strategy / policy / plan / project / service / procedure? *List those groups who the work is targeting/aimed at.*

2.2 : Information gathering/evidence

2.2.1 What secondary data have you used in this assessment? *Common sources of secondary data include: censuses, organisational records.*

2.2.2 What primary data have you used to inform this assessment? *Common sources of primary data include: consultation through interviews, focus groups, questionnaires.*

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Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation

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| Protected Characteristic | Advancing the Equality Duty : Does the proposal advance the Equality Duty Statement in relation to the protected characteristic (Yes/No) | If yes, to what level? (High / Medium / Low) | Negative impact : Does the proposal disadvantage them (Yes / No) | If yes, to what level? (High / Medium / Low) | Please provide explanatory detail relating to your assessment and outline any key actions to (a) advance the Equality Duty and (b) reduce negative impact on each protected characteristic. |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|
| Age | | | | | |
| Disability | | | | | |
| Gender reassignment | | | | | |
| Marriage and civil partnership | | | | | |
| Pregnancy and maternity | | | | | |
| Race | | | | | |
| Religion and belief | | | | | |
| Sex | | | | | |
| Sexual orientation | | | | | |

Advance equality of opportunity

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|--------------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|
| Age | | | | | |
| Disability | | | | | |
| Gender reassignment | | | | | |
| Marriage and civil partnership | | | | | |
| Pregnancy and maternity | | | | | |
| Race | | | | | |
| Religion and belief | | | | | |
| Sex | | | | | |
| Sexual orientation | | | | | |

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Foster good relations

| Protected Characteristic | Advancing the Equality Duty : Does the proposal advance the Equality Duty Statement in relation to the protected characteristic (Yes/No) | If yes, to what level? (High / Medium / Low) | Negative impact : Does the proposal disadvantage them (Yes / No) | If yes, to what level? (High / Medium / Low) | Please provide explanatory detail relating to your assessment and outline any key actions to (a) advance the Equality Duty and (b) reduce negative impact on each protected characteristic. |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|
| Age | | | | | |
| Disability | | | | | |
| Gender reassignment | | | | | |
| Marriage and civil partnership | | | | | |
| Pregnancy and maternity | | | | | |
| Race | | | | | |
| Religion and belief | | | | | |
| Sex | | | | | |
| Sexual orientation | | | | | |

2.4 Has your delivery plan been updated to incorporate the activities identified in this assessment to mitigate any identified negative impacts? If so please summarise any updates.

These could be service, equality, project or other delivery plans. If you did not have sufficient data to complete a thorough impact assessment, then an action should be incorporated to collect this information in the future.

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