

**Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form: Initial impact assessment**

If an officer is undertaking a project, policy change or service change, then an initial impact assessment must be completed and attached alongside the Project initiation document.

**EqIA Titular information:**

Date:	23 June 2020
Service:	Democratic Services
Project, policy or service EQIA relates to:	<b>Addendum to the Constitution: Protocol for Holding Virtual Meetings</b>
Completed by:	Madeleine Shopland
Has the EQIA been discussed at services team meeting:	No
Signed off by:	
Sign off date:	

65

**1. Policy, Project or service information:**

This section should be used to identify the main purpose of the project, policy or service change, the method of delivery, including who key stakeholders are, main beneficiaries and any associated aims.

**What is the purpose of the project, policy change or service change , its expected outcomes and how does it relate to your services corporate plan:**

Prior to the pandemic, decision making committee meetings could only be held in person. This has not been possible since the implementation of lockdown and social distancing measures.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 and accompanying regulations have been passed to allow for virtual meetings, to ensure that essential decision making can continue during the current restrictions.

Undertaking committee meetings virtually will enable continued public engagement and participation in the decision making process, and the viewing of public meetings.

**Outline how you are delivering your project, policy change or service change. What governance arrangements are in place, which internal stakeholders (Service managers, Assistant Directors, Members ect) have/will be consulted and informed about the project or changes:**

Members, officers and those asking questions at a committee meeting will be invited to participate via Microsoft Teams. For those who may have poor internet access they will be invited to dial into the meeting via phone.

Public committee meetings will be livestreamed to the Council's YouTube channel. A link to the meeting will be included on the relevant agenda page on the Council's website and on the front of the agenda for the meeting, when published. This will enable people to view the meeting either live or later at their own convenience.

Those wishing to submit statements to Planning Committee meetings regarding a particular application will be advised by Democratic Services to pre submit a written statement (maximum of 390 words – they will be advised if they need to share the word count with others wishing to put their views forward in the same speaker category). These will be circulated to the committee members prior to the meeting and published on the Council's website. This will facilitate the running of the meeting. Members of the public will still be able to view the meeting via the livestream link.

The Group Leaders, relevant Chairmen and the Assistant Director Governance have been consulted on proposals.

**Outline who are the main beneficiaries of the Project, policy change or service change?**

Public, Members and officers wishing to participate in or view public committee meetings during the current restrictions relating to COVID 19.

<b>Outline any associated aims attached to the project, policy change or service change:</b>
--

To enable continued public engagement in the decision making process during the restricted period relating to COVID 19.
---

## 2. Protected characteristics:

There are 9 protected characteristics as defined by the legislation:

- Race
- Gender
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Age
- Religious belief
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy/Maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership:

*To find out more about the protected groups, please consult the EQIA guidance.*

## 3. Initial Impact review:

In the table below, please indicate whether your project, Policy change or service change will have a positive or negative impact on one of the protected characteristics. To assess the level of impact, please assign each group a Positive, No, Low or High impact score:

*For information on how to define No, low or high impact, please consult the EQIA guidance document.*

If your project is to have a positive impact on one of the protected groups, please outline this in the table below.

*For details on what constitutes a positive impact, please consult the EQIA guidance.*

Protected characteristics	Impact score	Please detail what impact will be felt by the protected group:
Race:	No/Neutral	No ethnic group will be particularly disadvantaged by the decision to proceed with virtual meetings.
Gender:	Low	<p>There is a risk that those who do not have access to the internet are disadvantaged. Although the vast majority of the population have access to the internet, statistics from the Office for National Statistics suggests that there are certain groups that tend to have a lower level of internet access. These include older people, women and people with disabilities. Those who do have access to the internet and who wish to view the committee meeting will be positively impacted by the holding of virtual meetings.</p> <p>The option of dialling into a meeting is available for those who do not have internet access but wish to participate in a particular meeting i.e. submitting a question to Council, Executive etc.</p>
Disabilities:	Low	<p>Those with some underlying health conditions have been advised to shield themselves and therefore would be unable to attend a committee meeting if it were held in person. Therefore being able to view the meeting virtually would have a positive impact. Nevertheless, there is a risk that those who do not have access to the internet may be disadvantaged. Although the vast majority of the population have access to the internet, statistics from the Office for National Statistics</p>

		<p>suggests that there are certain groups that tend to have a lower level of internet access. These include older people, women and people with disabilities.</p> <p>Those who do have access to the internet and who wish to view the committee meeting will be positively impacted by the holding of virtual meetings.</p> <p>The option of dialling into a meeting is available for those who do not have internet access but wish to participate in a particular meeting i.e. submitting a question to Council, Executive etc.</p>
Age:	Low	<p>Those who are over 70 have been advised to shield themselves or take extra precautions and therefore would be less able to attend a committee meeting if it were held in person. Therefore being able to view the meeting virtually would have a positive impact.</p> <p>Nevertheless, there is a risk that those who do not have access to the internet are disadvantaged. Although the vast majority of the population have access to the internet, statistics from the Office for National Statistics suggests that there are certain groups that tend to have a lower level of internet access. These include older people, women and people with disabilities.</p> <p>Those who do have access to the internet and who wish to view the committee meeting will be positively impacted by the holding of virtual meetings.</p>

		The option of dialling into a meeting is available for those who do not have internet access but wish to participate in a particular meeting i.e. submitting a question to Council, Executive etc.
Sexual orientation:	No/Neutral	Statistics are not available on the relationship between sexual orientation and internet access, so it is not possible to assess the impact of this decision on this protected characteristic.
Religion/belief:	No/Neutral	Statistics are not available on the relationship between religion and belief and internet access so it is difficult to ascertain whether there is an impact on this protected characteristic.
Gender re-assignment:	No/Neutral	Statistics are not available on the relationship between gender reassignment status and internet access so it is difficult to ascertain whether there is an impact on this protected characteristic.
Pregnancy and Maternity:	No/Neutral	Statistics are not available on the relationship between pregnancy and maternity and internet usage, so it is not possible to assess the impact on this protected characteristic. However, it is known that some pregnant women have greater mobility challenges, so removing the requirement for them to travel to a fixed physical location in order to attend a meeting is likely to be of benefit.
Marriage and civil partnership:	No/Neutral	Statistics are not available on the relationship between marriage and civil partnership and internet access, so it is not possible to assess the impact of this decision on this protected characteristic.

Based on your findings from your initial impact assessment, you must complete a full impact assessment for any groups you have identified as having a low of high negative impact. If No impact, or a positive impact has been identified, you do not need to complete a full assessment. However, you must report on this initial assessment and it must receive formal approval from the Assistant Director responsible for the project, policy or service change.

Initial impact assessment approved by....

Date:....

This page is intentionally left blank