

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

TITLE: Statement of Community Involvement

VERSION CONTROL

Date	Version	Author	Description of Changes
21/12/2021	0.1	Tom Evans	1 st Draft
12/01/2022	0.2	Phil Christian	Revisions
12/01/2022	0.3	Tom Evans	2 nd Draft

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL - EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage 1 Description: Fact finding (about your policy / service / service)

Department	<i>Place</i>		Lead officer responsible for assessment		<i>Tom Evans (Neighbourhood Planning Manager)</i>	
Service	<i>Strategic Planning</i>		Other members of team undertaking assessment		<i>n/a</i>	
Date	December 2022		Version			
Type of document (mark as appropriate)	Strategy	Plan	Function	Policy	Procedure	Service
Is this a new/ existing/ revision of an existing document (please mark as appropriate)	New		Existing		Revision	
Title and subject of the impact assessment (include a brief description of the aims, outcomes , operational issues as appropriate and how it fits in with the wider aims of the organisation) Please attach a copy of the strategy/ plan/ function/ policy/ procedure/ service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Statement of Community Involvement</i> • <i>Existing policy which is being revised</i> <p>The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a statutory document that sets out how the council will engage with stakeholders in regard to the development of planning policy documents and development management decisions.</p> <p>In response to COVID-19, government had issued temporary regulations that removed the need to provide hard copies of planning documents in libraries and offices, whilst emphasizing digital engagement. These regulations necessitated the updating of the SCI in 2020 and had the potential to reduce access to planning documents for some groups with protected characteristics and therefore mitigation measures were introduced; specifically, the ability to access a covid secure office, by appointment to view a screen or hard copy of a document and the additional promotion of access to officers via telephone in order to explain a particular consultation being carried out.</p> <p>The relevant regulations which required these changes have now either expired or been withdrawn. Therefore, the restrictions on how the council undertakes consultation in regard to its planning function have also been withdrawn. Consequently, the council is now able to return to a full range of consultation methods including digital and in-person approaches that allow access to hard copies of documents or digital copies of documents within its libraries and offices. The Council will continue to promote planning consultations through press releases, formal notices, social</p>					

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

	<p>media and direct contact with residents directly affected by a proposal (i.e. adjoining a development site), and emails and letters to those registered on the Council's planning policy database.</p> <p>This EIA is intended to accompany the SCI to demonstrate that the SCI has taken into account the needs to those with protected characteristics.</p>
<p>Who are the main stakeholders and have they been engaged with? (e.g. general public, employees, Councillors, partners, specific audiences, residents)</p>	<p><i>The main stakeholders are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The general public</i> • <i>The development industry</i> • <i>CEC staff</i> <p>The protected characteristics affected by the implementation of the original Coronavirus Regulations were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age: adverse impacts on older people. • Sex: adverse impacts on males. • Race: adverse impacts on people from a Black and Minority Ethnic background (BAME) • Co-morbidity: adversely impacting those with existing health conditions. <p>The expiration / removal of coronavirus regulations, and corresponding updates to the Council's SCI mean that the impact of relying on a digital approach to engagement and consultation alone is no longer relevant as the Council can now employ a full suite of consultation methods including providing hard copies of documents in offices and libraries, in-person meetings and consultation events alongside digital methods.</p> <p>No direct engagement has been carried out, however the changes to the SCI are for the most part limited to removing reference to the expired Coronavirus regulations and the limitations they placed on the Council's planning function. The removal of those limitations enables the Council to expand its ability to consult and engage residents and stakeholders.</p>
<p>What consultation method(s) did you use?</p>	<p>n/a</p>

Stage 2 Initial Screening

<p>Who is affected and what evidence have you considered to</p>	<p>The expiration of Coronavirus regulations means that the council can now use face to face engagement and produce hard copies of documents to access in council buildings. However, it is important to recognise that a reliance on</p>
--	---

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

<p>arrive at this analysis? (This may or may not include the stakeholders listed above)</p>	<p>a digital approach alone had the potential to affect certain groups and therefore the 2022 SCI retained a balance of options for consultation, enabling the council to pursue both digital and in-person methods, albeit with a stronger emphasis on digital methods.</p> <p>Reliance on digital engagement alone could affect a range of protected characteristics based on their ability access digital services. The most likely characteristics affected are age and disability. Exploring the UK's Digital Divide, (Office for National Statistics, 2019) identified that over half on non-internet users were over 75 and over half were disabled. The percentage of non-internet users in both groups has been declining in recent years.</p> <p>The Cheshire East 2017 Communications Survey (full report is available online at our results webpages) shows a decrease in internet usage by age, with 33% of the over 75s asked never having used the internet at all. Further questions were asked about socio-demographics; however the report and analysis did not include this specifically on internet use.</p> <p>The ONS Internet use survey (2019) estimated 11% of residents in Cheshire East either used the internet more than 3 months ago or had never used it, this would equate to around 34,000 residents. There are no further Cheshire East specific breakdowns – the number of responses by local authority is too low – however, more generally the survey finds (NOTE these are national findings):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-users were typically more likely to be female • Older residents were more likely not to be users – 13% of males and 14% of females aged 65-74 had never used the internet or used it more than 3 months ago, 40% of men and 52% of females aged 75+ • Conversely younger respondents were much less likely to have never used, less than 1% for both males and females for those aged 16 to 44 • Respondents who were defined as per the Equality Act as disabled were more likely to have never used the internet or used it more than 3 months ago (18%) vs those who were not defined as disabled (4%) • Unemployed residents were more likely not have not used the internet in the last 3 months or never (2.3%) compared to those who were either employed (1.2%) or self employed (2.1%). Those who were economically active – people looking after family or not actively seeking work perhaps due to a disability or some other reason – were more likely not have not used the internet in the last 3 months or never (11.0%) <p>Therefore, whilst digital consultation methods will continue to form an important part of the councils engagement with stakeholders, the resumption of in person meetings and consultation events, alongside the ability to access copies of documents either on screen or as a hard copy (within the councils offices and libraries) will improve the ability of those who may struggle to access digital services, to participate in planning consultations.</p>
<p>Who is intended to benefit and how?</p>	<p>The revised policy could have a positive impact on any of the protected characteristics identified by enabling residents and stakeholders to access documents through a range of consultation and engagement methods that are no longer</p>

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

	limited to digital services.							
Could there be a different impact or outcome for some groups?	<p>Following the expiration of Coronavirus regulations, the Council's ability to provide hard copies of documents in Council buildings and to hold face to face consultation events increase the variety of means through which residents and stakeholders can engage with the Council's planning function.</p> <p>The revised SCI no longer restricts the methods the Council may employ in consultation and therefore increases the Council's ability to engage with its residents through both digital and more traditional means.</p>							
Does it include making decisions based on individual characteristics, needs or circumstances?	No.							
Are relations between different groups or communities likely to be affected? (eg will it favour one particular group or deny opportunities for others?)	No.							
Is there any specific targeted action to promote equality? Is there a history of unequal outcomes (do you have enough evidence to prove otherwise)?	Consultation on planning documents is open to all and widely promoted through a variety of means including press releases, social media, letters and emails to contacts held on the Council's databases, publication of copies of public notices across CEC libraries and offices and notification to all MPs, Councillors and town and parish councils.							
Is there an actual or potential negative impact on these specific characteristics? (Please tick)								
Age		N	Marriage & civil partnership		N	Religion & belief		N
Disability		N	Pregnancy & maternity		N	Sex		N
Gender reassignment		N	Race		N	Sexual orientation		N
What evidence do you have to support your findings? (quantitative and qualitative) Please provide additional information that you wish to include as appendices to this document, i.e., graphs, tables, charts							Consultation/ involvement carried out	
							Yes	No

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Age	<p><i>Does this service provide any impact for different age groups? If so what is this?</i></p> <p>No – whilst existing information does indicate that some groups are disadvantaged in terms of access to digital services/the internet this is mitigate by the reintroduction of the ability access hard copies of documents in libraries and councils offices and the resumption of face to face engagement events.</p>		No
Disability	<p><i>Does this service provide any impact for disabilities? If so what is this?</i></p> <p>No – existing information does not indicate that this group are significantly disadvantaged in terms of access to digital services/the internet or council offices to access hard copies of documents.</p>		No
Gender reassignment	<p><i>Does this service provide any impact for those who have undergone gender reassignment? If so what is this?</i></p> <p>No – existing information does not indicate that this group are significantly disadvantaged in terms of access to digital services/the internet or council offices to access hard copies of documents</p>		No
Marriage & civil partnership	<p><i>Does this service provide any impact for people who are married or have a civil partner?</i></p> <p>No – existing information does not indicate that this group are significantly disadvantaged in terms of access to digital services/the internet or council offices to access hard copies of documents.</p>		No
Pregnancy & maternity	<p><i>Does this service provide any impact for women who are pregnant or on maternity leave?</i></p> <p>No – existing information does not indicate that this group are significantly disadvantaged in terms of access to digital services/the internet</p>		No
Race	<p><i>Does this service provide any impact for people from a particular race? If so what is this?</i></p> <p>No – existing information does not indicate that this group are significantly disadvantaged in terms of access to digital services/the internet or council offices to access hard copies of documents.</p>		No
Religion & belief	<p><i>Does this service provide any impact for people from different faith groups? If so what is this?</i></p> <p>No – existing information does not indicate that this group are significantly disadvantaged in terms of access to digital services/the internet or council offices to access hard copies of documents.</p>		No
Sex	<p><i>Does this service provide any impact for men or women? If so what is this?</i></p> <p>No – existing information does not indicate that this group are significantly disadvantaged in terms of access to digital services/the internet or council offices to access hard copies of documents.</p>		No
Sexual orientation	<p><i>Does this service provide any impact for people who are gay, lesbian etc.? If so what is this?</i></p>		No

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

No – existing information does not indicate that this group are significantly disadvantaged in terms of access to digital services/the internet or council offices to access hard copies of documents.

**Proceed to full impact assessment?
(Please tick)**

No

**Date
January 2022**

Lead officer sign off

Date

Head of service sign off

Date

If yes, please proceed to Stage 3. If no, please publish the initial screening as part of the suite of documents relating to this issue

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage 3 Identifying impacts and evidence

This section identifies if there are impacts on equality, diversity and cohesion, what evidence there is to support the conclusion and what further action is needed

Protected characteristics	<p>Is the policy (function etc....) likely to have an adverse impact on any of the groups?</p> <p>Please include evidence (qualitative & quantitative) and consultations</p> <p>List what negative impacts were recorded in Stage 1 (Initial Assessment).</p>	<p>Are there any positive impacts of the policy (function etc....) on any of the groups?</p> <p>Please include evidence (qualitative & quantitative) and consultations</p> <p>List what positive impacts were recorded in Stage 1 (Initial Assessment).</p>	<p>Please rate the impact taking into account any measures already in place to reduce the impacts identified</p> <p>High: Significant potential impact; history of complaints; no mitigating measures in place; need for consultation</p> <p>Medium: Some potential impact; some mitigating measures in place, lack of evidence to show effectiveness of measures</p> <p>Low: Little/no identified impacts; heavily legislation-led; limited public facing aspect</p>	<p>Further action (only an outline needs to be included here. A full action plan can be included at Section 4)</p> <p>Once you have assessed the impact of a policy/service, it is important to identify options and alternatives to reduce or eliminate any negative impact. Options considered could be adapting the policy or service, changing the way in which it is implemented or introducing balancing measures to reduce any negative impact. When considering each option you should think about how it will reduce any negative impact, how it might impact on other groups and how it might impact on relationships between groups and overall issues around community cohesion. You should clearly demonstrate how you have considered various options and the impact of these. You must have a detailed rationale behind decisions and a justification for those alternatives that have not been accepted.</p>
Age				
Disability				
Gender reassignment				
Marriage & civil partnership				
Pregnancy and				

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

maternity				
Race				
Religion & belief				
Sex				
Sexual orientation				
<p>Is this change due to be carried out wholly or partly by other providers? If yes, please indicate how you have ensured that the partner organisation complies with equality legislation (e.g. tendering, awards process, contract, monitoring and performance measures)</p> <p>The change is not to be carried out by other providers.</p>				

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage 4 Review and Conclusion

Summary: provide a brief overview including impact, changes, improvement, any gaps in evidence and additional data that is needed			
Specific actions to be taken to reduce, justify or remove any adverse impacts	How will this be monitored?	Officer responsible	Target date
The expiration of Coronavirus regulations means a full range of consultation and engagement methods can be employed that will reduce or remove any impact on specific groups.	Planning consultations require the production of a 'report of consultation', that sets out who participated, provides a summary of the feedback received and how the council intends to respond to that feedback. The report includes a summary of the consultees that responded, with data including age, sex etc., and therefore enable the council to monitor participation.	Tom Evans	Variable and to be collected at the close of all consultations.
Please provide details and link to full action plan for actions	The changes proposed will improve the availability of hard copies of planning documents or access to digital copies of planning documents in a Cheshire East Council library or customer service centre. This is most likely to improve access for women, older residents or disabled people more than other groups. The ability to speak to officers about such documents over the phone remains in place and organisations that represent the potentially affected groups can be consulted directly during planning consultations, where the matter is relevant to that organisation/group.		
When will this assessment be reviewed?	When the SCI is altered or updated.		
Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken in relation to this assessment?	No		
Lead officer sign off	Tom Evans	Date	11/01/2022
Head of service sign off	David Malcom	Date	11/01/2022

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT



Please publish this completed EIA form on the relevant section of the Cheshire East website