

Colchester Borough Council

Equality Impact Assessment Form - An Analysis of the Effects on Equality

Section 1: Initial Equality Impact Assessment

Name of policy to be assessed:

- Budget Strategy – Efficiency Theme
- [Link](#)

1. What is the main purpose of the policy?

The Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown has had a significant impact on council finances. We also have an ongoing need to reduce The costs of council services and to be more efficient and modern in line with other government and local government services which are increasingly moving to online.

To address the budget gap a new budget strategy has been formulated under 5 key themes - Priorities, Commercial, Efficiency, Service Provision and Community.

The Budget Strategy – Efficiency Theme, with supporting business case, describes how the council will drive efficiency through:

- Innovation and modern thinking
- Accelerating the shift to digital
- Seeking simplicity in every process
- Reducing time and effort required by customers to report, apply and pay for services
- Reducing time and effort required by officers to process, update and complete tasks

2. What main areas or activities does it cover?

The following are the key activities and is not exhaustive
For customers

- Accessing CBC services online
- Using the online channel to find information and to contact us

For officers

- Receiving requests
- Inputting and verifying data
- Allocating tasks
- Plan, process and update
- Deciding criteria
- Liaison, visits and checking
- Notification to customers
- Document management

3. Are there changes to an existing policy being considered in this assessment? If so, what are they?

- Minor changes to policies may be required as we refine and change service processes.

4. Who are the main audience, users or customers who will be affected by the policy?

- Customers
- Officers of the council
- Members

5. What outcomes do you want to achieve from the policy?

- The efficiency theme describes the opportunities to further optimise the efficiency of council services, tasks and processes. This can be achieved by accelerating our shift to digital and implementing innovative and modern solutions to how we manage, organise and process work within the organisation.

6. Are other service areas or partner agencies involved in delivery? If so, please give details below.

- This is cross council theme and will affect all service areas

7. Are you aware of any relevant information, data, surveys or consultations¹ which help us to assess the likely or actual impact of the policy upon customers or staff? If so, provide details and include a link to the document or source where available.

These proposals will be subject to a comprehensive consultation and governance regime – key stages below:

Commence informal staff/Unison consultation/communication on business cases and alternative staff/union suggestions on budget savings.	September 20
Update to Cabinet	2 September 20
Budget Group Consideration of business cases.	29 September 20
Initial Consideration by Scrutiny of business cases	13 October 20
Initial approval by Cabinet of Business Cases	14 October 20
Formal consultation with Staff	21 October - 27 November
Full Council – update	3 December 20
Consideration by SMT of feedback from formal consultation and any changes to business case	7 December 20
Feedback to Leadership results of formal consultation	10 December 20
Feedback to staff results of formal consultation	11-14 December 20
Update to Scrutiny Panel on results of formal consultation and any resulting changes	15 December 20
Final approval by Cabinet	27 January 21

In addition, Colchester Borough Council launched to a survey during September 2020 to gather feedback on the provision of in-person going forward. The survey aims to be a mechanism for consulting with the public on their preferences for where in-person services need to be in the future, who we should operate with, and how we should provide this service. It can be completed in-person at Colchester Library or online by visiting www.colchester.gov.uk/customersurvey

8. The ‘general duty’ states that we must have “due regard” to the need to:

¹Click on [Customer Insight](#) for more information. The Council’s surveys and consultations include ‘equality monitoring information’ to help us identify any particular concerns or views expressed by any particular group or ‘protected characteristic’. It can also help us to assess how representative of our customers the respondent group is. Local data on the ‘protected characteristics’ is available [on this page](#) of Sharepoint.

- (a) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a 'protected characteristic'² and those who do not³
- (c) foster good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not⁴

Not all policies help us to meet the 'general duty', but most do. The policy helps us to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation' in the following way(s):

- The proposal within the efficiency theme have been devised to support residents in Colchester whilst balancing the available funding and assumed fiscal pressures in future years. Consideration has been given to ensure that the proposals do not unlawfully discriminate. The proposals are fundamentally reliant on using digital solutions to improve the way we process and manage task and accounts. This will allow us to modernise and become more in line with other government and local government ways of processing customer requests which are increasingly moving to online. These developments will allow us to provide a more convenient and easier service to many residents whilst allowing us to efficiently administer task, accounts and enquiries.

The policy helps us to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation' in the following way(s):

- Standardisation and automation of process is based on set criteria, workflow and conditionality all of which will ensure that all customers are considered in a fair and consistent way.

The policy helps us to 'advance equality of opportunity...' in the following way(s):

- Modernisation of processes will allow for greater access to services which is not limited to traditional working patterns, will remove reliance on visits to public offices, travel costs and offer greater confidentiality in contact.

The policy helps us to 'foster good relations in the following way(s):

² The Equality Act's 'protected characteristics' include age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sex and sexual orientation. It also covers marriage and civil partnerships, but not for all aspects of the duty.

³ This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to: (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a 'protected characteristic' that are connected to that characteristic; (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant 'protected characteristic' that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it, and (c) encourage persons who share a relevant 'protected characteristic' to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

⁴ This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to (a) tackle prejudice, and (b) promote understanding.

- The proposals intended to be tested, refined and adapted through a comprehensive consultation and governance regime. Furthermore, the council has fostered a high degree of community resilience and has helped to develop a wider network of advice and support for residents.

9. The Council has an important role in improving residents' health under the Health and Social Care Act 2012. This relates to both its 'core functions' (such as housing, leisure, green spaces and environmental health) and to its 'enabling roles' (such as economic development, planning and engaging with communities)⁵. The Council recognises that its Public Sector Equality Duty and its role in improving health are interrelated and mutually supportive. This is especially true across the 'protected characteristics' of age and disability.

"Health inequalities are the unjust and avoidable differences in people's health across the population. They come from the unequal distribution of income, wealth and power and influence the wider determinants of health such as work, education, social support and housing. Currently, in England people living in the least deprived areas will live around 20 years longer in good health than those in the most deprived areas. Reducing health inequalities means giving everyone the same opportunities to lead a healthy life, no matter where they live or who they are."

Where applicable, explain how this policy helps us to improve health/reduce health inequalities for residents:

- Proposals will remove the need for unnecessary visits to public offices, reduce travel costs and create an equality of access to services.

10. This section helps us to identify any disproportionate equality impacts. Please indicate in the table below whether the policy is likely to particularly benefit or disadvantage any of the 'protected characteristics'.

⁵ The King's Fund: [The district council contribution to public health: a time of challenge and opportunity, 2015](#)

'Protected characteristic' group		Positive Impact	Explain how it could particularly benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could particularly disadvantage the group
Age	Older people (60+)	Y	<p>Convenience of accessing information and services 24/7 and at a time that suits the customer, in addition to the popular and well used telephony channels</p> <p>Reduced in person appointments, burdensome verification and necessity to travel to a public office</p> <p>Removal of reliance on paper applications</p> <p>The council offers alternative way of contact and additional support for those that need it.</p>	Y	Transformational change can sometimes cause the need for temporary additional support
	Younger people (17-25) and children (0-16)	Y	As above	N	
Disability	Physical	Y	As above	N	
	Sensory	Y	As above	N	
	Learning		As above	Y	Additional support maybe needed accessing certain services
	Mental health issues	Y	As above	N	
	Other – <i>specify</i>				
Ethnicity ⁶	White	Y	As above	N	
	Black	Y	As above	N	
	Chinese	Y	As above	N	
	Mixed Ethnic Origin	Y	As above	N	
	Gypsies/ Travellers	Y	As above	N	
	Other – <i>specify</i>				

⁶ National Census 2011 categories are: Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Other Asian (Asian or Asian British), African, Caribbean, Other Black (Black or Black British), White and Black African, White and Asian, White and Black Caribbean (Mixed), British, Irish, Other White (White), Chinese, Other (Other Ethnic Group).

'Protected characteristic' group		Positive Impact	Explain how it could particularly benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could particularly disadvantage the group
Language	English not first language	Y	As above	Y	Where English is not the first language a translation service may be required
Pregnancy and Maternity	Women who are pregnant or have given birth in last 26 weeks	Y	As above	N	
Religion or Belief	People with a religious belief (or none)	Y	As above	N	
Sex	Men	Y	As above	N	
	Women	Y	As above	N	
Gender Reassignment ⁷	Transgender/ Transsexual	Y	As above	N	
Sexual Orientation	Bisexual, Heterosexual, Gay or Lesbian	Y	As above	N	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	People who are married or in a civil partnership	Y	As above	N	

11. If you have identified any negative impacts (above), how can they be minimised or removed?

- Transformational change can sometimes cause the need for temporary additional support – telephony and Digital Access Support Team offer a free digital support service that helps residents gain skills and confidence using today's technology. Furthermore, the council works with a wide range of community partners which can also help and support our residents within their own communities.
- Instant telephone translation services may be accessed for customers via language line. Customers who wish to use on online services can use free online translation tools, such as google translate.

⁷ The 'protected characteristic' of gender reassignment is defined by the Equality Act 2010 as "a person proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex." This is a personal process that may involve medical interventions such as counselling, psychotherapy, hormone therapy or surgery, but does not have to.

12. Could the policy discriminate⁸ against any 'protected characteristic', either directly or indirectly⁹?

No – It is held that identified negative impacts have been mitigated as detailed above.

Summary and findings of Initial Equality Impact Assessment

13. Please put a tick in the relevant box to confirm your findings, and what the next step is:

Findings	Action required
Negative impacts have been identified but have been minimised or removed ✓	Sign off screening and finish.

14. Name and job title of person completing this form:

- Leonie Rathbone – Assistant Director Customer

15. Date of completion:

- 21 September 2020

16. Date for update or review of this screening¹⁰:

- 7 December 2020

⁸ The Council has a general duty to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation'. Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another in a comparable situation because of their 'protected characteristic' whether on grounds of age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, ethnicity; religion or belief; sex (gender), sexual orientation, or marriage and civil partnership. Indirect discrimination occurs when an apparently neutral provision or practice would nevertheless disadvantage people on the grounds of their 'protected characteristic'.

⁹ If you answer 'yes' to question 11 (above) you will need to complete the following section *and* go on to complete Section 2 in order to conduct a full Equality Impact Assessment.

¹⁰ This is normally three years, but not always: You may know that the policy itself will be reviewed earlier in which case the EqIA should be reviewed at that time. Or, in the case of a five year strategy, you may want to have a review date of five years. In the case of a "one off" decision, such as closing a service, a review date may not be needed - in which case you should indicate 'N/A'. In any event, the review date should be brought forward if you receive information or feedback which raises new concerns, or if the public policy context changes. You can speak to the [Equality and Safeguarding Co-ordinator](#) for more advice.