



# EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

## Assessment Form

### **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Assessment Form**

Please use this form to record your findings in relation to the assessment of an existing policy, function, service and practice.

## **A. POLICY, PRACTICE, FUNCTION OR PROJECT TO BE ASSESSED**

### **A1. Please describe what are the main aims, objectives, purpose and intended outcomes of the policy or function?**

To collect all revenue owed to the council by the public.  
To ensure residents receive the correct Bill promptly.  
To ensure residents receive all discounts and Benefits that they are entitled to

### **A2. Is this policy or function associated with any other Council policy or priority?**

1. Legislation: Local Government Finance Acts 1988 & 1992
2. Collection & Enforcement regs 1992
3. Legislation: Social Security Contributions and Benefits 1992
4. Legislation: Social Security Administration Act 1992
5. Legislation: Welfare Reform Act 2007
6. Legislation: Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2002 - communications data and directed surveillance
7. Legislation: Fraud Act 2006
8. Legislation: Criminal Procedures and Investigations Act 1996
9. Legislation See attached Document
10. Corporate service plan
11. Customer Service Priorities
12. Efficiency Savings
13. Discretionary Part Occupied Relief (S44A) – in conjunction with the Valuation Office
14. Discretionary Charitable Relief
15. Discretionary Hardship Relief
16. Fraud and Sanctions Policy
17. Discretionary Housing Payments Policy

Further Legislation attached at Appendix 1

**A3. Who are the intended beneficiaries/stakeholders of the policy or function? How many people are affected and from what sections of the community?**

All households and businesses. Currently 60,185 households and 4,241 businesses

The revenue collected is a tax that pays for the services that are to benefit all sectors of the community and contributes to some services provided at National level (County Council, Police, Fire, Parishes, central Government)

Currently we have 6200 benefit claimants, which are a mix of people within the community who claim benefit due to their financial circumstances.

Housing and Council Tax Benefit a national scheme means tested benefit governed by large amounts of legislation and helps those in the community who need help with payment of Rent and or Council Tax.

**A4. Is the policy/function corporate and far-reaching?**

Yes – see above & Refer to the Corporate Service Plan. The Council sets it's own level of increase, but is somewhat bound by the prospect of Council Tax capping.

**A5. Are you expecting to make any significant change to the policy or service in the near future? If so, please give details.**

The way we collect is defined and determined by legislation. Changes to the service are thus:

- 1) We aim to increase collection by direct debit.
- 2) We are considering phasing out payment by cheque & cash
- 3) We are considering phasing out Giro Transcash accounts
- 4) We have closed the cash office to the public but we still have a cashier
- 5) The Council has made savings to benefit and support other services to the community
- 6) New Bailiff contracts
- 7) Housing Futures – effect on Rent Collection within Revenues
- 8) Housing Futures – effect on Benefits; relevant changes to customer circumstances are passed on from Housing to Benefits
- 9) Growth Agenda – demographic changes
- 10) Credit crunch – Increased Defaulting?
- 11) Launch of Redesigned Benefit forms for Working Age and Pension Age Customers
- 12) Improving take-up of Benefits in Growth areas by developing a Strategy.
- 13) Improving engagement with landlords with tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit by creating a Landlords Forum
- 14) Analysing Revenue and Benefits Customer Survey and take appropriate action to improve Service Satisfaction.
- 15) Review Service provision utilising Audit Commission published Key Lines of Enquiry
- 16) Complete take up campaign of Benefits by BACS with aim to end Cheque payments as method of payment
- 17) Provide training to Registered Social landlords (RSL's) to allow them to complete Benefits forms and verify evidence.

<b>Is this a new or existing policy or function?</b>	Existing
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Phil Bird, Dawn Graham
<b>Service</b>	Revenues & Benefits
<b>Date of Assessment</b>	26/03/09
<b>Equality Impact Assessment Team</b>	Phil Bird/ Dawn Graham

<b>B.</b>	<b>EVIDENCE/ DATA</b> It is important to consider all information that is available in determining whether the policy or function could have a differential impact. Please attach examples of monitoring information, research or consultation reports.
<b>B1. What monitoring or other information do you have about relevant target groups, which will show the impact of the policy or function?</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No equalities data collected from the service users.</li> <li>2. Housing Benefits form has monitoring form to collect data; although collected it has not been analysed.</li> <li>3. The benefits team have engaged consultants to improve benefit take up, this will provide some valuable information about the population in growth areas.</li> <li>4. Revenues have identified that due to the itinerant nature Gypsies and Travellers that group may not have access to the Service and uncollected Tax will impact on our Collection Figures.</li> <li>5. There is no Gypsies &amp; Traveller Liaison Officer within the Revenues department</li> <li>6. Census data</li> <li>7. Population projections</li> <li>8. Benefit case load</li> <li>9. Areas of multiple deprivation</li> </ol>	
<b>B2. Have you compared the data you have with the equality profile of the local population? What does it show?</b>	
No local information. Some Census 2001 Info exists	
<b>B3. If monitoring has not been undertaken, will it be done in the future or do you have access to relevant monitoring data for this area? If not please specify what arrangements you have in place to undertake this?</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The Equality &amp; Diversity Officer has advised that he will engage groups in external scrutiny. We do not currently have access to monitoring data. E&amp;D Officer has accepted responsibility for doing this.</li> <li>2) Data being collected on Benefit claimants &amp; housing tenants could be linked to Council Tax &amp; Rent payers.</li> <li>3) Equality Monitoring data from Business Users will shortly be sought.</li> </ol>	
<b>B4. Please list any consultations that you may have undertaken or supporting consultation, research or other information that will assist you in carrying out this impact assessment.</b>	
A briefing was received by from the E&D Officer. No other consultations, training, research or other information has been made available to assist with this impact assessment.	
<b>B5. Have you undertaken any consultation with staff to assess their perception of any impacts on the policy or function?</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Internal Workshops were held and facilitated by an external consultant at a Corporate level and not specific to Revenues.</li> <li>2. Briefing from E&amp;D Officer – feedback on Pilot EQIA on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2009</li> </ol>	

<b>C1.</b>	<b>IMPACT OF THE POLICY OR FUNCTION</b> - Assess the potential impact on each of the equality strands/groups. The impact could be negative, positive or neutral. If you assess a negative impact for any of the groups then you will need to assess whether that impact is low, medium or high. Refer to the evidence you use.		
	<b>DESCRIPTION OF IMPACT</b>	<b>Nature of Impact</b> (Positive/ Neutral/ Adverse)	<b>Extent of Impact</b> (Low, Medium, High)
<b>GENDER</b>	<p>No evidence available to assess if revenues are collected equally from men or women and if liability orders are filed against more women than men or more men than women. Research. No evidence available assessing level of complaints by gender. Not aware of a South Cambs DC Citizen’s Panel to consult with</p> <p>No evidence available to assess if more men or woman claim Housing or Council Tax Benefit.</p>	<b>Neutral</b>	
<b>RACE</b>	<p>No translation or interpretation service provided by Revenues but is available (no demand). Benefits team use translation and interpretation service on demand, this can be 3 way telephone call or by appointment with appropriate translator.</p> <p>No up to date info on the demographic of the community in relation to Black &amp; Ethnic Minority Residents. No published evidence of the cultural competencies of the Council. Gypsies &amp; Travellers are identified as the group where collection is low. Known to be low on specific sites (Why? Are there more issues on Illegal sites? Is this down to the accessibility of Service(s)?)</p> <p>No data available from complaints received to determine race/ethnicity of complainant held in Revenues – Is this data held elsewhere?. Not aware of a South Cambs DC Citizen’s Panel to consult with. No publications available in ethnic minority languages. No Roma symbol evident on publications to identify the information to gypsies and travellers &amp; Asylum Seekers and Refugees. Is there sufficient demand? Is it a requirement?</p>	<b>Neutral</b>	

<p><b>DISABILITY</b></p>	<p>Data on some disabled service users exists as council tax legislation allows for a reduction in band for properties adapted for disabled occupiers and also an exemption for the Severely Mentally Impaired. There is no discretion in awarding reductions. We do not assess data to determine the rate of collection from disabled customers. No data available to determine number of complaints from disabled customers. Not aware of a South Cambs DC Citizen's Panel to consult with. We supply large print and Braille on request.</p> <p>There is some limited information with regard to benefits customers who have income, which relates to their disability.</p> <p>The Discretionary Housing Payment policy considers disability and health issues when looking at each application.</p> <p>The council provide an on demand visiting service for Benefits customers who find it difficult to complete Benefit and Discretionary Housing Payment application forms.</p> <p>The. Benefits service provides customers who are hard of hearing on demand the typetalk service and by appointment a suitable interpreter.</p>	<p><b>Neutral</b></p>	

<b>AGE</b>	<p>Do not collect data on age of customers. If we had an age profile of the community we would be able to identify none-collection. 60% of housing rent tenants are aged 65+. This data was only available as a result of forthcoming stock transfer and NOT from specific Revenues research. No analysis available against complaints made. Not aware of a South Cambs DC Citizen's Panel to consult with.</p> <p>Council Tax is not payable if you are under 18, Revenues endeavours to collect data relating to those who are 17 years old. Also Committal proceedings are more stringent for those under 21, Revenues will collect this data during the process and inform the Magistrate</p> <p>There are separate Benefit regulations, which are split, based on working age and pension age Benefit claims are assessed based on the claimant or claimants partner. Benefits hold data on date of birth of all occupiers of a benefits claimants except sub or joint tenants, landlord.</p> <p>Benefit regulations with regard to privately rented accommodation restrict the amount of Housing Benefit to most under 25 year old's.</p>	<b>Neutral</b>	
<b>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</b>	<p>No data exists. None collected. No Census Data available. Cannot therefore assess if impact is adverse, Positive or neutral. Not aware of a South Cambs DC Citizen's Panel to consult with.</p>	<b>Neutral</b>	
<b>RELIGION/FAITH</b>	<p>No data exists. Not collected locally. Census data only. Not aware of a South Cambs DC Citizen's Panel to consult with.</p>	<b>Neutral</b>	
<b>OTHER</b>	<p>Social Class, Areas of multiple Deprivation, Learning difficulties, Vulnerable Adults and Income Bracket?</p>	<b>Neutral</b>	

Generally, proceed to a full assessment if the Nature of the Impact is Adverse on equalities.



**C2. Could you minimise or remove any negative or potential impact that is high, medium or low significance? Explain how.**

Yes. Carry out full consultation, impact assessments in full and not partial. Carry out consultations with staff also and the Equality Steering Group. Need external members on Equality Steering Group.

**C3. Does the policy actively promote equal opportunities and good community relations?**

I am impact assessing the service and not the policy. The function operates in accordance with legislation not Council decisions.

**C4. Please provide any further information, qualitative or quantitative that does not fit into the questions but you feel has a likely impact on this assessment.**

1. Lack of available data in order to provide benchmark.
2. Lack of stakeholder groups for external consultation and scrutiny.
3. Lack of training in order to increase awareness and understand impact assessments.
4. Lack of data available to assess impact of the information provided to the public.

**D COMMUNITY/VOLUNTARY SECTOR INVOLVEMENT**

**D1. Please give details of any community engagement in connection with this impact assessment. Do you feel that external involvement in this assessment is adequate?**

1. No external engagement in this impact assessment.
2. I feel that it is crucial for external assessment. As a frontline service we are required to consult on our service. No Citizen's Panel available for consultation.

**E ACTION PLANNING AND MONITORING**

**E1. Have you drawn up an action Plan to implement changes?**

No meaningful Action Plan can be devised BEFORE consultation that provides me with the data from external groups, staff and stakeholders. Training needs to be provided.

**E2. How will you monitor the achievement of your action plan and its impact?**

1. Through the links that the E&D Officer has agreed to provide.
2. By engaging the Equal Opps Steering Group.
3. By external scrutiny.

F	CONCLUSION		
<b>F1. Did you conclude that the policy or function would have an adverse impact (medium or high impact) on equalities? (Partial Assessment)</b>	Yes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	GO TO F2
	No?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	GO TO F4
	Insufficient Evidence?	<input type="checkbox"/>	GO TO F5
<b>F2. Did you complete a full assessment and Action Plan?</b>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	GO TO F3
<b>F3 What are your plans (if any) for completing the full assessment?</b>	Determined by Equal Opps Steering group? E&D Officer?		
<b>F4. Do you plan to review the service/policy in future to assess whether there has been any change? If so, when?</b>	If an appropriate Action Plan has been devised and consulted upon.		
<b>F5 Please give your plans for evidence gathering and continuing with the assessment</b>	This Section requires further input via equalities monitoring. Therefore we will need to work with internal stakeholders to identify required data for effective monitoring against the 6 equality strands. Establishment of a Citizen's Panel		

<b>Signature of Lead Officer</b>	<b>Lee Phanco</b>
<b>Signature of Corporate Manager:</b>	
<b>Date completed:</b>	<b>26<sup>th</sup> March 2009</b>
<b>Please return completed forms to .....</b>	

**ACTION PLAN**

Recommendation	Key Activity	Progress/Milestone	Officer Responsible	Progress
<p><b>CONSULTATION AND SPECIFIC DATA REQUIRED TO INFORM THIS ACTION PLAN.</b></p> <p><b>1. Gather required data on Community Profile and Demographics of South Cambs. (B1 to B5)</b></p> <p><b>2. Gather data of customers of revenue department (B1 to B5)</b></p> <p><b>3. Gather and assess</b></p>				<p><b>Practicalities with over 59 thousand customers</b></p> <p><b>More feasible</b></p>

<p><b>data relating to defaulters (B1 to B5)</b></p> <p><b>4. Map the data of expenditure v income from different groups</b></p> <p><b>5. Collate information with regard to age profile of Benefit claimants</b></p> <p><b>6. Use Demographic information provide by consultants with regard to profile of customers</b></p>				
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**As a general point most customers pay the Council Tax & Business Rates on time. A report of the type of data collected for Portfolio Holder is attached. It may be worth flagging up that only 1.3% (816) people owe Council Tax from previous years & 0.7% (30) business owe Rates from previous years. Also that 10.3% of households receive Council Tax Benefit and/or Housing Benefit, this is a 1.2% rise from last year possibly due to the rise in Housing Costs and income not keeping pace.**