



# EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

## Partial Assessment Form

<b>Policy, practice, function or project assessed</b>	<b>Democratic Services</b>
<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Holly Adams</b>
<b>Team</b>	<b>Patrick Adams, Maggie Jennings, Ian Senior</b>
<b>Start date of assessment</b>	<b>3 March 2010</b>
<b>Completion of assessment</b>	<b>20 April 2010</b>

Please use this form to record your findings in relation to the assessment of an existing policy, function, service or 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 promote participation in, and awareness of, council meetings by the community
- To promote greater involvement and participation by the public in the decision making process
- To allow a better understanding of council procedures and protocols
- To promote the role of council as a democratic body and a transparent decision maker
- To provide better customer-focussed services

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

#### Aims, Approaches and Actions

- Being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all
- Providing a voice for rural life.

#### Service Plan

- (A1b) Improve access to, and quality of, Council information in pursuance of the Council's commitment to equalities
- (C1) Improve flow of information to raise awareness and understanding of the decision-making process and ways residents can get involved. (3a)
- (C2) Maintain and enhance opportunities for public involvement (3a, 3f)

#### Performance Indicators

- (i) Keep planning committee speaking scheme under annual review, taking account of feedback received to bring forward proposals for improvement as required.
- (ii) Average number of non-SCDC Members and officers attending scrutiny and overview committee meetings at venues around the district (subject to outside meetings continuing)

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

- To ensure participation, involvement and open communication with as wide and inclusive a spectrum of the community as possible. The South Cambridgeshire Area Profile (April 2010) refers to the ONS Mid-Year Population Estimate 2008 setting the District's population at 139,300 individuals (49% male, 51% female; 2.92% BME population non-white British according to the ONS 2001 Census data), forecast to rise to 143,700 by 2011 (County Council Population Estimates and Forecasts).
- Beneficiaries / stakeholders include residents of South Cambridgeshire and neighbouring areas, particularly those where we work in partnership with their local authority; 57 District Councillors; 105 South Cambridgeshire settlements represented by 90 Parish Councils, 1

Community Council and 10 Parish Meetings, with 5-15 Parish Councillors per authority; partners such as Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils (CPALC), Cambridgeshire County Council and other Cambridgeshire District Councils, and the partners on the South Cambridgeshire Local Strategic Partnership and South Cambridgeshire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

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

Yes. Decisions made at meetings cover all service areas and, other than Senior / Executive Management Team, are all held in public, occasionally with press in attendance. The outcomes of meetings can affect all residents, e.g., setting of Council Tax levels, planning policies, refuse and recycling collection arrangements; or all staff, e.g., flexible working policies, pay and grading reviews.

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

No/ The previously vacant post of Democratic Services Team Leader was filled on 1 April 2010, and the vacant Democratic Services Officer post should be filled, as a part-time, fixed-term position, in the very near future.

**A6. Is this a new or existing policy or function?**

Existing function.

**B. EVIDENCE / DATA and CONSULTATION**

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.

**B1. What monitoring or other information do you have about relevant target groups, which will show the impact of the policy or function?**

- 2001 Census data
- Annual Councillor Census (LGA) profiles age, race, education and gender of councillors, and special responsibilities held
- 2011 Census data to be incorporated once available from Office of National Statistics (population estimates projected to be available from mid-2012; further demographic indicators to be released in regular updates from the ONS)

**B2. Have you compared the data you have with the equality profile of the local population? What does it show?**

Results of LGA Annual Councillor Census contrasted against South Cambridgeshire 2001 census profiles for age, race, education and gender – results show that:

- the average age of councillors (57.2 males / 55.3 females / 56.3 for both) is 18 years above the district mean of 38.9 years
- the Council *appears to be* 96.5% white compared to 97.1% of the district
- 26.3% of councillors are retired or have no stated occupation (23.7% of males / 31.6% of females) compared to 10.1% of the district
- 82.5% of councillors have the equivalent to an NVQ Level 4 or above (92.1% of males / 63.2% of females) compared to 21.7% of the district

**B3. Have you identified any improvements or other changes that could be made from monitoring the data?**

We have compiled more specific questions for profiling the councillors to enable more informed conclusions. The existing personal information for

which they were asked originally did not ask questions of race, and education levels were assumed based upon the qualifications members have stated on their personal information forms. We have now asked members specifically about other forms of employment such as voluntary work or full-time / part-time caring responsibilities, education levels, self-identification as a member of an ethnic or national group as defined by the Office of National Statistics for the 2001 Census, and data on their employment, but many have refused to respond and data must be compiled only from the basic personal information they have provided and details of employment declared in their register of interests. The Council has no power to force any of its councillors to reveal this information beyond what they are legally obliged to provide for purposes of elections, payroll and registration of interests. The LGA 2010 Councillor Census will be run during late autumn, having been delayed by several weeks due to organisational changes at the LGA, and will give Councillors the opportunity to respond anonymously to questions about employment, ethnicity, education and voluntary work, and we should receive the findings from this in mid-2011, including the percentage response rate to enable us to determine whether or not the responses received by the LGA represent a statistically valid summary.

**B4. Have you consulted or involved external stakeholders about the policy or function? If so, what were their views?**

No consultation / involvement.

**B5. Have you undertaken any consultation with staff to assess their perception of any impacts of the policy or function? If so, what has been learnt from them?**

All Democratic Services team members were involved, as was the Legal and Democratic Services Manager in completing the EQIA.

**B6. Please provide information about any other consultation, research, or involvement undertaken in relation to this impact assessment.**

None.

**C1. IMPACT OF THE POLICY OR FUNCTION**

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.

DESCRIPTION OF IMPACT	Nature of Impact (Positive, Neutral, Adverse)	Extent of Impact (Low, Medium, High)
<b>GENDER:</b> Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on men and women		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Times and venues of meetings in relation to school attendance, domestic responsibilities, lateness and safety may discriminate; however, meetings have been scheduled out-of-hours to encourage greater public attendance</li> <li>• Lack of facilities at external meeting venues for private breastfeeding and baby changing may discriminate; however, baby change facilities available at South Cambs Hall and arrangements</li> </ul>	Neutral  Neutral	

<p>have been made previously for use of interview rooms for private breastfeeding (window blinds suitable, but the window in the door needs a separate cover)</p>		
<p><b>RACE:</b> Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on different race/ethnic groups</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High expense of translation services could result in different ethnic groups not being engaged with. Non-English speakers could therefore have limited access to the democratic process. English speakers with low literacy levels could also have limited access to the democratic process. Translation services could be appointed if required (Communications Team has full contact details). All our public documents written in plain English and active language ("The Council considered" rather than "It was considered by the Council"... Acronyms always defined when first used (in a lengthy document, they should be defined in a Glossary for easy reference). We use jargon busters to explain local government speak.</li> <li>• Locality and publicity of meetings may discriminate against Gypsies and Travellers, although external venues have been booked and Traveller Liaison Officer informed of any meetings with Gypsy and Traveller-specific items for decision to ensure that meeting dates / venues are communicated.</li> <li>• Currently all meeting documents (agendas, decisions, minutes, forward plans) are placed on the web and publicised through South Cambs magazine, which is delivered to all households in the district. The media are informed of all forthcoming meetings and receive links to all agendas, but whether or not they publish details or attend are matters for their editorial team. Whilst this goes some way to attracting members of the public it fails to provide a widespread and more targeted form of publicity, although the amount of publicity given to Council meetings is more widespread than that done by neighbouring authorities, which is limited to their websites and occasional press releases when relating to a specific issue where there is already significant public interest.</li> <li>• Choice of meeting days/dates and times may not fit with religious programs and therefore may discriminate</li> </ul>	<p>Neutral</p> <p>Neutral</p> <p>Neutral</p> <p>Neutral</p>	
<p><b>DISABILITY:</b> Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on disabled people</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of information in a variety of accessible formats may discriminate, although large-print agendas can be made available. Alternative formats, such as audio versions of agendas, would be prohibitively expensive and it is unlikely that there would be any public demand.</li> <li>• Suitability of external venues could discriminate. Are they DDA compliant or easily reached by public transport? No written protocol is in place to guide officers. An external venues checklist is being produced by the Partnership Team.</li> <li>• Danger of over-reliance upon website – need to ensure that all material published on-line is</li> </ul>	<p>Neutral</p> <p>Neutral</p> <p>Neutral</p>	

<p>suitable for website readers used by the visually impaired. Over-reliance on printed material (some people welcome the customisable functions available in Internet Explorer (other browsers are available). Details of new items sent to Cambridgeshire Libraries service by e-mail, with paper copies of agendas for Council meetings for onwards distribution to local libraries. Libraries also offer access to websites and new publications are added to Cambridgeshire.net service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty in wheelchair users gaining unassisted access to meeting rooms, including the Council Chamber. The Jeavons Room is used for public meetings as infrequently as possible due to the limited public accessibility and the requirement for attendees to pass through areas where officers are working to reach the room, raising the potential for disruption.</li> <li>• Robustness of the audio loop and meeting room acoustics in relation to members, officers and public with impaired hearing, and the importance that those at meetings should speak as clearly as they can, and project their voices adequately. Chairmen regularly brief meeting attendees to ensure that they are using the system properly and the system is thoroughly tested before each meeting.</li> </ul>	<p>Neutral</p> <p>Neutral</p>	
<b>AGE:</b> Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on different age groups		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Times and venues of meetings in relation to lateness and safety may discriminate.</li> <li>• Suitability of external venues could discriminate. Are they DDA compliant or easily reached by public transport? No written protocol is in place to guide officers.</li> <li>• Danger of over-reliance upon website – although many options for greater public engagement exist through more interactive features on the website to invite public comments, those with limited access to, or understanding of, IT could struggle to participate equally. Details of new items sent to Cambridgeshire Libraries service by e-mail, with paper copies of agendas for Council meetings for onwards distribution to local libraries. Libraries also offer access to websites and new publications are added to Cambridgeshire.net service.</li> </ul>	<p>Neutral</p> <p>Neutral</p> <p>Neutral</p>	
<b>SEXUAL ORIENTATION:</b> potential impact of the policy on lesbian, gay men, bisexual or heterosexual people		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention paid to ensure that language used in agenda and minutes does not portray heterosexism and could discriminate</li> </ul>	<p>Neutral</p>	
<b>RELIGION/FAITH:</b> Identify the potential impact the policy on different religious/faith groups		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choice of venue (i.e. Church Halls) may deter members of certain communities from attending meetings</li> </ul>	<p>Neutral</p> <p>Neutral</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choice of meeting days/dates and times may not fit with religious programs and therefore may discriminate</li> </ul>		
<b>OTHER</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional council practices around publicity, engagement and public involvement are under regular review in order to meet current demands and new ways of working, e.g., webcasting of meetings so members of the public can view the proceedings from home or from a public internet access point like a library, with previous webcasts archived for viewing at an individual's convenience.</li> </ul>	Positive	

**PLEASE NOTE: Following completion of the section above, if the nature of the impact is adverse then you may need to proceed to a full equality impact assessment.**

<p><b>C2. Could you minimise or remove any adverse or potential impact that is high, medium or low significance, in advance of a full impact assessment? Explain how.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No adverse impacts identified.</li> </ul>
<p><b>C3. Does the policy or function actively promote equal opportunities and good community relations? Or could changes be made so that it does so?</b></p> <p>All agenda covers state in 14pt Arial Bold (as compared to the agreed corporate format of 11pt Arial), "The Council is committed to improving, for all members of the community, access to its agendas and minutes. We try to take all circumstances into account but, if you have any specific needs, please let us know, and we will do what we can to help you". The wording was agreed with a former Equalities Officer.</p>
<p><b>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.</b></p> <p>The Shaw Trust, a national charity which supports disabled and disadvantaged people to prepare for work, find jobs and live more independently, recognised the Council's website for its accessibility, but websites for several third-party suppliers providing information linked from the Council's website did not meet the standard for the Shaw Trust's accreditation, therefore the Council is not currently able to display the Shaw Trust logo until these issues are resolved. It has been clarified, though, that the modern.gov pages which display the information maintained by Democratic Services, do meet this standard.</p> <p>All councillors were sent a revised questionnaire in May 2010 to enable a more comprehensive profile to be produced, now including questions about their voluntary work and caring responsibilities, in line with the questions asked by the LGA for its biennial Councillor Census. A further survey of members' communication preferences will be undertaken in summer 2010 once the new member e-mail and access to intranet system has been embedded and training has been completed.</p>

<b>D. CONCLUSIONS</b>			
<b>D1. Was there sufficient data to complete the partial assessment?</b>	Yes?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>If “NO”, what arrangements are in place for evidence gathering and continuing with the assessment?</b>
	No?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>D2. Is the outcome of the partial assessment that the policy or function would have an adverse impact (medium or high impact) on one or more target group?</b>	Yes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>If “YES”, will you proceed to a full assessment? If so, what arrangements are in place to carry out the full assessment?</b>
	No?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>D3. Is the outcome of the partial assessment that the policy or function would have a neutral or positive impact on equalities?</b>	Yes?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>If “YES”, have you included proposals in the Action Plan to further improve the impact of the policy or function on equalities?</b></p> <p><b>Do you plan to review the service or policy again in future to assess whether there has been any change? If so, when?</b></p> <p>Further review of members’ communication needs in Autumn 2010. Public attendance at meetings and public perceptions of meeting venues and access to meetings under monthly review via comment forms distributed at meetings.</p>
	No?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Has the Equalities Steering Group and the Consultative Forum reviewed the assessment? If so what were their comments?</b>
<b>D4. Do you have any other conclusions/outcomes from the partial assessment?</b>			



## **ACTION PLAN for enhancing existing practice**

<b>Recommendation/ issue to be addressed</b>	<b>Planned Milestone</b>	<b>Planned completion of milestone (date)</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Members' communication preferences to ensure that all members have timely access to information	Member communication preference survey Summer / Autumn 2010 (depending upon finalisation of member e-mail / intranet access arrangements and any consequent training)	Winter 2010	Holly Adams, Democratic Services Team Leader	Awaiting outcome of member e-mail / intranet access and training, and appointment of Member Services Officer in late 2010, who will be the lead officer for this project
Launch of e-Petition system, with feature for electronic signature addition to petitions submitted in hard copy, and hard copies of petitions submitted electronically	Upgrade of server and modern.gov software, installation of e-Petition service for intranet trial during summer 2010	End September 2010	Holly Adams, Democratic Services Team Leader / Dave Boldra, Principal Applications Support Officer	On course

## **RESOURCES**

### **Does the above action plan require any additional resources?**

None additional to those already identified in the e-Petition Project Initiation Document

## **ARRANGEMENTS FOR MONITORING**

### **Please give your plans for monitoring the achievement of the above actions.**

Internal monitoring through fortnightly team meetings

Reports to Policy and Performance Portfolio Holder and Council as required

**SIGN OFF: The officers below confirm that this partial assessment has been completed in accordance with the Council's guidance**

**Signature of Lead Officer**

**Date:**

**Signature of Corporate Manager or Chief Officer:**

**Date:**

**Please retain the original form on your service area and return a copy of the completed form to the Equality & Diversity Officer.**