EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Name of policy or function being assessed: Access to Council Services

Names and roles of the people carrying out the Impact Assessment:
Peter Gardner, Director of Resources
Karen Edwards, Head of Strategy and Communications

Sign Off:

Service Head	**Signature**	**Date**
Diversity Group	**Signature**	
Review Date:		

SECTION ONE – The main aims of the policy

Description of the Service

- ❑ To provide access to Council services by any channel selected by a customer or resident.
- ❑ To deal with citizens and customers fairly and with equity.
- ❑ To provide reliable and good quality information in an appropriate form.
- ❑ To receive complaints and direct them to appropriate services.
- ❑ To provide service delivery that has quality and accessibility.

Who is the Service provided for and how do they benefit?

Local residents / local businesses / visitors to the Borough / internal clients / potential residents / potential investors in the Borough / statutory and voluntary sector.

Gives customers access to a diverse range of Council services by whatever channel they choose.

Give fair and consistent treatment to all our customers, treating them as individuals to ensure they have access to our services

Key benefit is that we aim to deal with customers at the first point of contact.

SECTION TWO – Consider the evidence and collect information

What measures does the service have to monitor equality and diversity issues?

The measures vary from service to service, with some systems recording data regarding the background of the citizen or customer.

Surveys are carried out to collect data by the service and corporately.

Census information is available to describe information about the population within the Borough.

What measures are in place to monitor the equalities profile of service users?

Anecdotal evidence suggests we have customers from a number of diverse ethnic groups and from those with disabilities.

Data collection takes place in a number of services.

It is recognised that there is a need for more robust processes that provide more objective information

The new CRM and other service based systems enable us to gather data on all areas of equalities monitoring. Reports will be provided enabling us to analyse this data and establish a robust user profile

An action point from this assessment will be to produce a profile of service users which will inform future initiatives and policy to ensure no unequal/adverse impact on relevant target groups

What is the equalities profile of the service providers?

This information is not assessed – there is a need to identify those staff who deal with customers and their profile.

The profile of the Council workforce as a whole is available and monitored.

Evidence of complaints against the service on grounds of discrimination

Currently written complaints are recorded whilst any informal complaints are not always recorded. Link to CPA rec. to record & monitor complaints

Anecdotal evidence from conversations with customers – no formal system for complaints on grounds of discrimination, but this is planned – although not aware that any written complaints have been received about discrimination

Need to make improve complaints policy including advertising accessibility to form

Complaints may come from mystery shopper exercises and customer surveys

Procedure needed to record & monitor complaints on grounds of discrimination added to action plan

An Audit of complaints is due in 2007/08

Identify the barriers to the access or use of the service provided

The potential barriers to access to services are:

- ❑ Availability of documents and leaflets in other languages or Braille (this is arranged when requested)
- ❑ Availability of transport
- ❑ Cost of phone calls
- ❑ Limited language/translation services
- ❑ Opening times

What consultation exercises have you carried out to identify good practice or areas of improvement relevant to equality:

Consultation with groups and individuals representing disabled customers

Senior Citizens Forums

Survey of ethnic minority groups

SECTION THREE :- Assess Likely Impact

How have you responded to the equailty data that you have available

Identify the effect of the service on different equality groups from information available above.

There is variable information between services on the qualitative and quantative data recording.

There is currently no structured assessment of that impact.

How do you ensure that everybody has equal access to the service?

Difficult to be sure at this stage – the following may address equal access:

- ❑ Hearing loops
- ❑ Staff qualified in British Sign Language
- ❑ Language line
- ❑ Wheelchair access
- ❑ Seating areas
- ❑ Documents can be provided in other languages/large font/Braille (not immediately available)
- ❑ Aldershot area office
- ❑ Private interview rooms
- ❑ Home visits
- ❑ 24 hour internet access for information and some services
- ❑ Telephone service

We consult the Access Group on changes to Council property.

Training for staff on equality and diversity issues.

Personnel policies based on equality.

Does the service work differently for different equality groups?

The above actions enable equal and fair access for all minority groups but recognise there is a potential for improvement and no identification of different treatment.

Can you justify any adverse impact identified?

SECTION FOUR - Consider alternatives and measures to mitigate the adverse impact

Is there evidence of disproportionate or adverse impact on any equality group?
Is there any evidence or view that suggests that different equality, or other target groups in the community have either a disproportionately high or low take up/impact of/from this service/function?

Yes	No	If yes, what and why ….
	✓	There is a need to look at the impact of issues such as translation, availability of forms in different formats and physical access.

How are you addressing disproportionate or adverse impact? How will you ensure that disproportionate or adverse impact will not occur in future?

SECTION FIVE – Consult Formally

Have you identified all the groups likely to be affected by the proposed policy?

All customer groups are:
- Ethnic minorities
- People with a disability
- Age/sex

What methods of consultation are likely to succeed?

- ❑ Focus groups, particularly using the disability consultation planned with partners. (Possibly surveys including a survey of visitors to the offices).
- ❑ Citizens Panel
- ❑ Surveys - established consultation arrangements

Is there information from previous consultations which can be utilised?

- ❑ Ethnic minority survey
- ❑ An exit survey carried out by project staff as part of the Customer First Project
- ❑ Senior Citizens Forum
- ❑ Disability consultation

Have you arranged translation for the material to be used in the consultation?

Yes

Suggested consultation for the future

- ❑ Focus groups and feedback from the disability consultation process. (see above)
- ❑ Use of specialist consultants

SECTION SIX – Decide whether to adopt the policy

Does the service comply with equalities legislation, including the duty to promote race equality?

Our approach is to provide equal and fair access to all customers and citizens.

What are the main areas requiring further attention?

- ❑ Record data on customers to identify any inequality
- ❑ Corporate approach to consultation to pick up, particularly the equality and diversity issues.
- ❑ Development of consultation with minority ethnic groups
- ❑ Monitoring of changes in the population and responding appropriately to ensure fair and equal access to services
- ❑ Use of feedback from the disability consultation to develop services and correct delivery
- ❑ Use of feedback to develop a process to ensure reasonable adjustments to enable access
- ❑ Programme of work on Council buildings to facilitate access
- ❑ Induction training on diversity and equality for all new staff
- ❑ Refresher training for existing staff

SECTION SEVEN – Monitoring arrangement and action plans

How and when will the policy be monitored?

Who will be responsible for the monitoring?

Diversity Group

Identify the actions required and complete the action plans

SECTION EIGHT – Publish assessment results

Where should this be published?

Internet

SECTION SIX – ACTION PLAN

RECOMMENDATIONS	KEY ACTIVITY	PROGRESS MILESTONES	OFFICER RESPONSIBLE	PROGRESS
Identify the groups we wish to identify as potentially hard to reach.				
Corporate approach to consultation to pick up, particularly the equality and diversity issues.				
Development of consultation with minority ethnic groups				
Monitoring of changes in the population and responding appropriately to ensure fair and equal access to services				
Use of feedback from the disability consultation to develop services and correct delivery				
Use of feedback to develop a process to ensure reasonable adjustments to enable access				

Audit of Council buildings to identify improvements to facilitate access				
Induction training on diversity and equality for all new staff				
Refresher training for existing staff				
Record data on customer to identify inequality				
Develop facility to provide information in appropriate format				