

# Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 7

<b>Directorate:</b> Finance and <b>Resources</b>	
<b>Service:</b> <b>Democratic Services</b>	
<b>Name of Officer/s completing assessment:</b> <b>Head of Democratic Services</b>	
<b>Date of Assessment:</b> <b>June 2018 updated November 2018 (shown red)</b>	
<b>Name of service/function or policy being assessed:</b> <b>Carrying out a Community Governance Review for the Council</b>	
1.	<p>What are the aims, objectives, outcomes, purpose of the policy, service change, function that you are assessing?</p> <p>Slough Borough Council is carrying out a review of community governance arrangements within the Borough area including the parishes and their electoral arrangements, and also other forms of governance not involving parishes. The aim of the review is to consider and bring about improved community engagement, better local democracy and more effective and convenient delivery of local services, and to ensure that electors across the whole Borough are treated equitably and fairly. The review will follow terms of reference to be agreed by the Council at its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2018.</p> <p>The review will be conducted in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Council will have regard to the <u>Guidance</u> on community governance reviews issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. The guidance suggests that it is good practice for councils to consider conducting a review every 10-15 years. The Council conducted a Community Governance Review in 2013 and undertook to carry out a further review in four years time.</p> <p>The Council is required by the Act to ensure that community governance within the Borough area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reflects the identities and interests of the local community; and</li> <li>• is effective and convenient.</li> </ul> <p>The review will also take into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion; and</li> <li>• the size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish.</li> </ul>
2.	Who implements or delivers the policy, service or function? State if this is undertaken by more than one team, service, and department including any external partners.

	The Head of Democratic Services is the Review Manager
3.	<p>Who will be affected by this proposal?</p> <p>All local government electors in the Borough area, together with parish councils, local public and voluntary organisations such as health bodies, residents' and tenants' associations, community forums, neighbourhood action groups, Borough and parish councillors and those employed by the Parish Councils.</p> <p>Consultees will include a variety of different communities of interest representing age, gender, ethnicity, faith or life-style groups. The consultation strategy for this review (See paragraph 8) is intended to have due regard to the protected characteristics of people ie., age, disability:, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation:</p>
4.	<p>What are any likely positive impacts for the group/s identified in (3) above?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slough is a dynamic and diverse place to live and work. Its economic, social and cultural wellbeing relies upon contributions from the various communities that make up the town. It is also one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse towns in the UK. The 2011 Census is particularly relevant to the review in terms of ethnicity, religion and national identity, but Slough also has a much younger than average population - and this age group is traditionally 'disengaged' from the democratic process.</li> <li>• A key part of the review is giving local people, businesses and interested organisations an opportunity to have a say in improving local governance and services. Some people may even want to get more directly involved in representing their neighbourhoods through parish councils and community organisations. The review could promote citizenship and public engagement.</li> <li>• It could also actively seek to advance equality of opportunity and participation by engaging people from a broader age range, a more representative ethnic and religious mix and gender balance, and by encouraging greater participation of under-represented groups which in Slough include young people, women, and people with disabilities.</li> <li>• Depending on proposals received in response to the public consultation there could be a potential for improving community cohesion by getting more people working together in their local area. The statutory guidance at page 20 notes "Building a sense of local identity may make an important contribution to cohesion where a local area is facing challenges arising from rapid demographic change. In considering the criteria, community governance reviews need to home in on communities as offering a sense of place and local</li> </ul>

	<p>identity for all residents.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The statutory guidance also says “Local communities should have access to good quality local services... easy to reach and accessible to local people”. It suggests that parish councils could be a way to do this. If proposals are received we will take into account the implications for disability, access and equality.</li> <li>• If proposals are received for the creation of one or more parish councils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the opportunity for people to stand for election as parish councillors could help people to gain confidence and skills which might encourage more people to get involved in local democracy at parish and borough levels. This could advance equality of opportunity and participation, including people from a broader age range, a more representative ethnic mix and gender balance, and participation of under-represented faith and belief groups.</li> <li>(b) the opportunity for people to attend meetings more locally to where they live may enable more people with disability and/or their carers to become involved in local democracy, promoting participation and advancing equality of opportunity. This could help for example, in identifying local access needs and getting local solutions to them.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
5.	<p>What are the likely negative impacts for the group/s identified in (3) above? If so then are any particular groups affected more than others and why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The review is aimed at responding to the views of local people and local organisations. However, the Council will need as far as possible to have regard to their protected characteristics e.g. disability access needs, language needs, ability to access meetings (e.g.some of the people the review aims to reach may not be able to travel to day time or evening meetings due to age, disability or carer roles) etc and has taken steps to ensure so far as possible, that consultation documents will be available in English, in a range of formats and locations including online and in paper copy. Assistance will be available for disabled or non-English speaking persons.</li> <li>• Following the completion of the consultation the Council’s proposals involve the abolition of both Britwell and Wexham Court Parish Councils with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.</li> <li>• Any decision to abolish a parish council may have an impact on the future of the existing Parish hall which is accessed by some residents in the area. Any closure of a community venue such as a parish hall could impact those residents who access activities at the centre for example social events. For example it is understood that the following groups use the halls: Over 50’s arts and crafts, Britwell Drama Group, Britwell come dancing, Glad Tidings Church, Age Concern, Tuition, Boxing, Bollywood Group, Sai Baba, Muslim Prayers, Wesleyan Church.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Therefore there is information which means that if these groups were no longer able to use the halls then the following protected characteristics would be impacted Age, religion or belief, disability.</li> <li>• Any subsidised bookings are funded through the existing precept. Other fee paying bookings are also available to residents such as slimming club. If these had to be relocated it may impact upon accessibility to these sessions, particularly those groups of the population with limited mobility should they be relocated further away.</li> <li>• Any decision to maintain the existing arrangements, whilst potentially ensuring the future of the parish hall may not consider the wider needs of the community and may serve to negatively impact on socio economic status within the area. In particular the affordability of the Parish Council (on the part of local residents).</li> <li>• Information from the Parish Councils as well as awareness of the area does not indicate that the implications of the Review will have a specific impact on particular groups or individuals other than the potential impact detailed already. There is no evidence from the consultation of a disproportionate adverse or positive impact on any groups.</li> </ul>
6.	<p>Have the impacts identified in (4) and (5) above been assessed using up to date and reliable evidence and data? Please state evidence sources and conclusions drawn (e.g. survey results, customer complaints, monitoring data etc).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council must have regard to all those with an interest in the review. There is a risk of young people being under-represented in the process as they may be under-represented in many of the local community organisations and parish councils who are consulted directly during the course of the review. This could be mitigated to some extent this by using any local youth fora in the Borough and by using the Council's Facebook presence to raise awareness amongst young people.</li> <li>• Some older people may not be able to attend drop in sessions in the evening and may not have internet access. There is a risk that people who require information in particular formats might be excluded from the consultation process. This could be mitigated to some extent by using any local fora for older people and also by providing information in a range of formats including online and in paper copy.</li> <li>• Information on Parish Hall useage was provided by Parish councils and has been taken into account by the Council in terms of supporting the ongoing use of and availability of facilities.</li> </ul>
7.	<p>Have you engaged or consulted with any identified groups or individuals if necessary and what were the results</p>

	<p>A key part of the review is giving local people, businesses and interested organisations an opportunity to submit their views on how they want to represent their neighbourhoods, and potentially get involved in the delivery of services through parish councils and community organisations. As part of the review the Council will consult widely and take into account any representations made in connection with the review.</p> <p>An initial round of consultation is planned to start on 11 June 2018. The closing date for the receipt of submissions is 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2018.</p> <p>When we have had an opportunity to consider all the responses we receive in response to this consultation, the Council will publish its draft recommendations. A more detailed round of consultation will follow during the period from October through to early November 2018. The Council will then consider any further submissions received before considering final recommendations at its meeting in November 2018. Any approved changes will take effect from the local elections in May 2019.</p>
8.	<p>What plans do you have in place, or are developing, that will <u>mitigate</u> any likely identified negative impacts?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The statutory guidance requires the Council to 'consult both those local government electors in the area under review and others which appear... to have an interest in the review.' The consultation strategy for the review will aim to ensure that local electors and stakeholders are aware of the review, its terms of reference, the timetable, and how to engage in it and have their say. This will generally be achieved by direct approach, public notice, press releases, publicity materials, meetings and drop-in sessions and also via the Council's website. The strategy falls into two parts, shifting from the general to the specific as the review progresses :</li> <li>• <u>Part 1</u> will be broad in its approach, ranging over the purpose of the review, the process to be followed and how local communities and stakeholders can have their say. The review will be launched on 11 June 2018 and the initial round of consultations will call for initial proposals closing on 3 August 2018. The public response will define the scope, scale and character of the review and therefore the detailed strategy to be followed in Part 2.</li> <li>• <u>Part 2</u> will follow after the Council has considered the submissions received in the first round of consultations and approved draft recommendations for further consultation. It will necessarily have a more specific focus, depending upon the Council's response to the submissions received, and will invite comments/views on one or more specific proposals affecting particular parts of the parished or unparished areas of the Borough. It may also seek to win support for the proposals.</li> </ul> <p>The Council's consultation strategy will include:</p>

- A formal public notice..
  - A press release supporting the Council's launch of the review and inviting initial comments and submissions.
  - An Information leaflet covering questions such as: What is a CGR? Why is the Council undertaking a review? When will final decisions be taken? How do I have my say etc
  - A more formal guidance note on how to comment and make representations.
  - An article in 'Citizen.'
  - A public notice and an information leaflet in 'My Council' and public libraries, community centres, and shopping centres.
  - A dedicated webpage on the Council's website which would include:
    - an e form which can be used to make representations either on-line to a web box or by downloading and sending a copy in by email or post;
    - links to other useful documents including the statutory guidance, the Council report, the timetable etc;
    - one or more maps as appropriate
  - A direct mail shot to local organisations and stakeholders.
  - Offers to arrange public meetings or drop-in sessions.
- The consultation and review process is being planned proportionately and with regard to equalities, taking into account the legal duties and powers of the Council, the statutory guidance, equality duties, time constraints and resources for delivery of this work.
  - The initial consultation process seeks to reach people through Borough-wide communication channels and the media. In addition regard will be to the needs to reach people in equality groups.
  - If the community governance review process proceeds to the creation of, or change to, a parish council, specific communication plans and their equality impacts would be considered.
  - The consultation focussed on key stakeholders including all electors in Britwell and Wexham Court Parishes as well as interested parties operating within the area and this included schools, churches, voluntary and community organisations. To support the decision making process a drop in session was held in each parish area. These drop ins were publicised on the Council's web site and by way of posters in the local area. Accessibility to venues for the drop ins was also taken into account to ensure that any residents with mobility concerns were able to attend. The drop in sessions also served to support residents in understanding the information sent to them.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An information leaflet was sent with ballot paper was sent to every elector on the electoral register for each parish. A letter advising of the Council's proposals sent to all key stakeholders in the area. Ballot papers asked respondents to mark their preferences against an option. ERS administered the postal poll and residents had to complete a declaration with their ballot paper.</li> <li>• Following the completion of the consultation, the Council's proposals involve the abolition of both Britwell and Wexham Court Parish Councils with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.</li> <li>• The borough Council is committed to honouring existing bookings at the Parish Halls to allow full consideration to be given to the effective provision of services to residents within the Borough Council's overall vision in the 5 year plan of building on the strengths of communities and supporting local community groups. The EIA will be updated so that the impact will be known before further decisions are made.</li> <li>• The borough council currently offers concessionary rates to voluntary and charitable organisations at all its community centres and these charges are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they adequately support local groups. The borough council's 'Five Year Plan' makes it clear that it will work to build on the strengths of communities, including supporting local community groups and seeks a flexible approach to achieve the widest benefit to the local community.</li> </ul>
9.	<p>What plans do you have in place to monitor the impact of the proposals once they have been implemented? (The full impact of the decision may only be known after the proposals have been implemented).</p> <p>Officers will work to ensure that the transition from current arrangements is smooth and that any emerging trends as a result of the review decision are monitored and responded to accordingly in particular with reference to access to community facilities  Appropriate services will review existing community facilities servicing the area to determine whether these are fit for purpose and how they can be improved going forward.  Should a decision be made to retain either or both Parish Councils consideration may need to be given as to whether it is appropriate to review the existing precept to ensure the level of precept is appropriate for the services provided by the Parish Council and the demographic in the area.</p>
10.	<p>Further consultation?</p> <p>Additional consultation is not required as the recommendations resulting from the Review take into account extensive consultation conducted as required throughout the review process.</p>

<b>What course of action does this EIA suggest you take? More than one of the following may apply</b>	
<b>Outcome 1: No major change required.</b> The EIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken	<b>x</b>
<b>Outcome 2: Adjust the policy</b> to remove barriers identified by the EIA or better promote equality. Are you satisfied that the proposed adjustments will remove the barriers identified? (Complete action plan).	
<b>Outcome 3: Continue the policy</b> despite potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality identified. You will need to ensure that the EIA clearly sets out the justifications for continuing with it. You should consider whether there are sufficient plans to reduce the negative impact and/or plans to monitor the actual impact (see questions below). (Complete action plan).	
<b>Outcome 4: Stop and rethink</b> the policy when the EIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination. (Complete action plan).	

### Action Plan and Timetable for Implementation

At this stage a timetabled Action Plan should be developed to address any concerns/issues related to equality in the existing or proposed policy/service or function. This plan will need to be integrated into the appropriate Service/Business Plan.

Action	Target Groups	Lead Responsibility	Outcomes/Success Criteria	Monitoring & Evaluation	Target Date	Progress to Date

**Name:**  
**Signed:** .....Catherine meek.....(Person completing the EIA)

**Name:** .....  
**Signed:** .....( Policy Lead if not same as above)

**Date:**