

Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix D to Rural Cabinet report for May 2021

1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a document that summarises how the council has had due regard to the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) in its decision-making. Although there is no legal duty to produce an EIA, the Council must have **due regard** to the equality duty and an EIA is recognised as the best method of fulfilling that duty. It can assist the Council in making a judgment as to whether a policy or other decision will have unintended negative consequences for certain people and help maximise the positive impacts of policy change. An EIA can lead to one of four consequences:

- (a) No major change – the policy or other decision is robust with no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. Opportunities to promote equality have been taken;
- (b) Adjust the policy or decision to remove barriers or better promote equality as identified in the EIA;
- (c) Continue the policy – if the EIA identifies potential for adverse impact, set out compelling justification for continuing;
- (d) Stop and remove the policy where actual or potential unlawful discrimination is identified.

Public sector equality duty

2. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council, when exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (ie tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups).

3. These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Protected characteristics

4. The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine protected characteristics for the purpose of the equality duty:
- Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership*
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation

*For marriage and civil partnership, only the first aim of the duty applies in relation to employment.

Due regard

5. Having 'due regard' is about using good equality information and analysis at the right time as part of decision-making procedures.
6. To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This can involve:
- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics when these are different from the needs of other people.
 - encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate

in public life or in other activities where it is disproportionately low.

7. How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances. The greater the potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. Examples of functions and decisions likely to engage the duty include: policy decisions, budget decisions, public appointments, service provision, statutory discretion, decisions on individuals, employing staff and procurement of goods and services.
8. In terms of timing:
 - Having 'due regard' should be considered at the inception of any decision or proposed policy or service development or change.
 - Due regard should be considered throughout development of a decision. Notes shall be taken and kept on file as to how due regard has been had to the equality duty in research, meetings, project teams, consultations etc.
 - The completion of the EIA is a way of effectively summarising this and it should inform final decision-making.

Case law principles

9. A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:
 - Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty and so EIA's must be attached to any relevant committee reports.
 - Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.
- A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
- The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.

- The duty is a non-delegable one. The duty will always remain the responsibility of the public authority.
- The duty is a continuing one so that it needs to be considered not only when a policy, for example, is being developed and agreed but also when it is implemented.
- It is good practice for those exercising public functions to keep an accurate record showing that they have actually considered the general duty and pondered relevant questions. Proper record keeping encourages transparency and will discipline those carrying out the relevant function to undertake the duty conscientiously.
- A public authority will need to consider whether it has sufficient information to assess the effects of the policy, or the way a function is being carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.
- A public authority cannot avoid complying with the duty by claiming that it does not have enough resources to do so.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced helpful guidance on "Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision-Making" (October 2014). It is available on the following link and report authors should read and follow this when developing or reporting on proposals for policy or service development or change and other decisions likely to engage the equality duty. [Equality Duty in decision-making](#)

Lead officer:	Mark James
Decision maker:	Cabinet
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop 	The Cabinet is recommended to:- <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Note the content of the report and endorse the work of the rural group II. Agree to increase the number of rural local needs surveys – aiming for six per annum for three years, returning to four per annum after that III. A commitment to fund the rural housing surveys until at least 2025-26 IV. Agree that communications to parishes will be prepared and that delegate authority will sit with the Head of Housing to agree this in consultation with the housing portfolio holder
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	27 th May 2021
Summary of the proposed decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims and objectives • Key actions • Expected outcomes • Who will be affected and how? • How many people will be affected? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the content of the report and endorse the work of the rural group • Agree to increase the number of rural local needs surveys – aiming for six per annum for three years, returning to four per annum after that • A commitment to fund the rural housing surveys until at least 2025-26 • Agree that communications to parishes will be prepared and that delegate authority will sit with the Head of Housing to agree this in consultation with the housing portfolio holder
Information and research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. • Include sources and key findings. 	Building on solid foundations: delivering affordable homes in Ashford – our delivery plan for 2019-2023 Housing Strategy Framework Priority 1 – Improve the supply of affordable housing to meet local housing needs in urban and rural areas, and Housing Statement 2018-2023 Reform of HRA – Cabinet endorsed five key priorities for further spend, as a result of greater freedom within the HRA. National Housing Strategy 2011 – delivering new homes under the affordable rent model. A Charter For Social Housing Residents – Social Housing White Paper 2020. A Guide to Developing Affordable Homes in Rural Communities (Kent Housing Group) – February 2021
Consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific consultation has occurred on this decision? 	Consultation has taken place with colleagues in Finance, the Housing Development Team, Housing Options and Corporate Property Services. Consultation in some instances has taken place with rural ward members, members on the working group itself, and

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the results of the consultation? • Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics? • What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics? 	<p>with some parish councils. Of course, the report seeks to consult further with those parish councils and ward members not yet approached about having local needs surveys in their wards. Residents within those wards would receive a local needs survey and be able to contribute to the survey at that point to express their own views.</p> <p>Consultation will take place with residents, parish councils and ward members for those wards where development may be forthcoming as a result.</p> <p>These consultations will be taken forward before any proposed scheme is submitted to the planning department.</p>
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Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.

When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.

Protected characteristic	Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of Decision Positive (Major/Minor) Negative (Major/Minor) Neutral
<u>AGE</u> Elderly	High	Positive (major)
Middle age	Medium	Positive (minor)
Young adult	High	Positive (major)
Children	Medium	Positive (minor)
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	None	Neutral
Mental	None	Neutral
Sensory	None	Neutral
<u>GENDER RE-ASSIGNMENT</u>	None	Neutral
<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	None	Neutral
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	None	Neutral
<u>RACE</u>	None	Neutral
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	None	Neutral
<u>SEX</u> Men	None	Neutral

Women	None	Neutral
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	None	Neutral

<p>Mitigating negative impact:</p> <p>Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.</p>	<p>Where the assessment has been carried out above it is on the basis of the new developments planned and new acquisitions in the pipeline. It also works on the report's premise, also outlined in the Kent Housing Group Rural Housing Protocol that affordable housing in rural communities truly helps those who wish to stay in their locality where their support networks are.</p>
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<p>Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?</p> <p>Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's Essential Guide, alongside fuller PSED Technical Guidance.</p>	
Aim	Yes / No / N/A
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	N/A
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	N/A
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	N/A

<p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. • There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above). • Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of the equality duty or whether adjustments have been made or need to be made or whether any residual impacts are justified. • How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its 	<p>Due regard has been considered throughout this proposal to each protected group.</p> <p>No unlawful discrimination has arisen from the decision.</p> <p>The effect on the community will be positive due to the aims of the programme delivery. No adjustments required.</p> <p>A programme of delivery in rural areas will be monitored by the Rural housing Working Group and any Housing Project group for</p>
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implementation be undertaken and reported?	specific projects with regular updates given to the Portfolio Holder and Cabinet.
EIA completion date:	16 th April 2021