

## Equality Impact Assessment Template – Stage Two

Please complete this template if completion of the Stage 1 template has identified that a full Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Before proceeding with the Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment, you should discuss the scope of the analysis with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the equality impact assessment guidance.

<b>Name of item being assessed:</b>	The closure of the Cash Office
<b>Version and release date of item (if applicable):</b>	Version One 29 December 2015
<b>Owner of item being assessed:</b>	Sean Anderson Head of Customer Services
<b>Name of assessor:</b>	Sean Anderson
<b>Date of assessment:</b>	29 December 2015
<b>Date Stage 1 EIA completed:</b>	8 October 2015

### STEP 1 – Scoping the Equality Impact Assessment

<b>1. What data, research and other evidence or information is available which will be relevant to this Equality Analysis? Please tick all that apply.</b>			
Service Targets	<input type="checkbox"/>	Performance Targets	<input type="checkbox"/>
User Satisfaction	<input type="checkbox"/>	Service Take-up	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workforce Monitoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	Press Coverage	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complaints & Comments	<input type="checkbox"/>	Census Data	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information from Trade Union	<input type="checkbox"/>	Community Intelligence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Previous Equality Impact Analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) The matter was an element of the wider public consultation undertaken to gather information in respect of proposed Council service reductions.			X

<b>2. Please provide details on how you have used the available evidence, information you have selected as part of your Impact Assessment?</b>
<p>The information gathered from the consultation process has helped to inform the impact of this proposal on specific groups either previously known or identified during the consultation process.</p> <p>There were 21 responses to this consultation. In the main responses focussed on the value provided by personal cash office service, the confidence that this engendered, and an unwillingness to use the alternative ways of paying accounts. Respondents were generally at the older range of the age spectrum.</p>

In considering these responses it would be useful to understand what other ways are provided for residents paying their accounts. Residents will be able to pay by cheque, direct debit, standing order, via the internet or by telephone, by cash, or card at Paypoints ( available at over 70 retail outlets within the district) , in cash, card or cheque at their bank or at a Post Office. All of the above are frequently used by our residents who have found them to reliable, secure and easily accessible for many years.

**3. If you have identified any gaps in relation to the above question, please detail what additional research or data is required to fill these gaps? Have you considered commissioning new data or research? If 'No' please proceed to Step 2.**

No

## STEP 2 – Involvement and Consultation

**1. Please use the table below to outline any previous involvement or consultation with the appropriate target groups of people who are most likely to be affected or interested in this policy, strategy, function or service**

Target Groups	Describe what you did, with a brief summary of the responses gained and links to relevant documents, as well as any actions
<b>Age</b> – relates to all ages	<p>The consultation process did not specifically include or exclude any age group because the consultation was open to all respondents.</p> <p>The number of responses was not high – 23 in all (one supported the proposal). Overall those responding were at the older age of the age spectrum which is where a reluctance to change is entirely understandable.</p>
<b>Disability</b> - applies to a range of people that have a condition (physical or mental) which has a significant and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out 'normal' day-to-day activities. This protection also applies to people that have been diagnosed with a progressive illness such as HIV or cancer.	<p>If the proposal is approved some respondents felt that there may be a potential negative impact on disabled users of the Cash Office due to access arrangements provided at alternative payment locations. This should not be an issue as all premises taking payments should be compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act.</p>
<b>Gender reassignment</b> - definition has been expanded to include people who chose to live in the opposite gender to the gender assigned to them at birth by removing the previously legal requirement for them to undergo medical supervision.	<p>Gender reassignment is not a factor of this proposal and for that reason they will not be adversely affected.</p>

<b>Marriage and Civil partnership</b> –.protects employees who are married or in a civil partnership against discrimination. Single people are not protected.	Marriage and Civil Partnership are not a factor of this proposal and for that reason they will not be adversely affected.
<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b> - protects against discrimination. With regard to employment, the woman is protected during the period of her pregnancy and any statutory maternity leave to which she is entitled. It is also unlawful to discriminate against women breastfeeding in a public place	Pregnancy and Maternity are not a factor of this proposal and for that reason they will not be adversely affected.
<b>Race</b> - includes colour, caste, ethnic / national origin or nationality.	Race is not a factor of this proposal. For this reason it is perceived that this does not adversely affect people based on their race.
<b>Religion and Belief</b> - covers any religion, religious or non-religious beliefs. Also includes philosophical belief or non-belief. To be protected, a belief must satisfy various criteria, including that it is a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour.	Religion or personal beliefs are not a factor of this proposal. For this reason the proposal will not adversely affect religious or personal beliefs.
<b>Sex</b> - applies to male or female.	Gender is not a factor in any part of this proposal. For this reason the proposal will not adversely affect anyone as a result of their gender.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b> - protects lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and heterosexual people.	Sexual orientation is not a factor in any part of this proposal. For this reason the proposal will not adversely affect anyone based upon their sexual orientation.

## 2. Who are the main stakeholders and what are their requirements?

The main stakeholders are those who currently use the Cash Office to pay their West Berkshire Council accounts in person – which in the main is Council Tax and Sundry Debtor Accounts.

## 3. Amongst the identified groups in the previous question, what does your information tell you about the potential take-up of resulting services?

The Cash Office was originally open 5 days a week – reduced to 2.5 days a week some 4 years ago. Those using the cash office are generally representative of our community with a slight bias to those above normal working age. Visitors to the Cash Office are in the main regular service users who value a personal service which engenders a confidence that payments will be processed securely and properly.

## STEP 3 – Assessing Impact and Strengthening the Policy

**What will be done to improve access to and take-up of, or understanding of the policy,**

**strategy, function or service?** (these are the measures you will take to mitigate against adverse impact)

Signposting current service users to the alternative ways of paying their accounts by way of information provided alongside the bills issued.

Monthly management information reports will identify any increase in arrears resulting from this proposal.

#### **STEP 4 – Procurement and Partnerships**

**Is this project due to be carried out wholly or partly by contractors?**

**If 'yes', have you done any work to include equality considerations into the contract already? Specifically you should set out how you will make sure that any partner you work with complies with equality legislation.**

No

#### **STEP 5 – Making a Decision**

**Summarise your findings and give an overview of whether the policy, strategy, function or service will meet the authority's responsibilities in relation to equality and support the Council's strategic outcomes?**

The consultation responses made it clear that value was attributed to having a 'Council Cashier' in person – primarily due to custom and practice by those using the service. They also valued the personal interaction, and a few also expressed a distrust of the suggested alternative ways of paying their accounts.

The number of responses was not high – 23 in all (one supported the proposal). Overall those responding were at the older age of the age spectrum which is where a reluctance to change is entirely understandable.

Nonetheless having consideration of the wide range of payment methods available (other than paying in person at Market St) it is recommended that the proposal to close the Cash Office should be approved as it would not cause undue hardship.

#### **STEP 6 – Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing**

**Before finalising your action plan, you must identify how you will monitor the policy/function or the proposals following the Equality Impact Assessment and include any changes of proposals you are making.**

**What structures are in place to monitor and review the impact and effectiveness of the new policy, strategy, function or service?**

Monthly management reports on how payments are received – trend analysis.

Resident and staff feedback.

Member feedback (following resident comment)

#### **STEP 7 – Action Plan**

Any actions identified as an outcome of going through Steps 1-6 should be mapped against the headings within the Action Plan. You should also summarise actions taken to mitigate against adverse impact.

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Responsible post holder &amp; directorate</b>
<b>Involvement &amp; consultation</b>	No further consultations are planned		
<b>Data collection</b>	Information will be provided by way of monthly management reports	In place	Exchequer Manager
<b>Assessing impact</b>	This is an ongoing process as part of the service administration and the provision of management information.	In place	Exchequer Manager
<b>Procurement &amp; partnership</b>	Not applicable		
<b>Monitoring, evaluation and reviewing</b>	This is an ongoing process as part of the service administration and the provision of management information.	In place	Exchequer Manager

#### **STEP 8 – Sign Off**

The policy, strategy or function has been fully assessed in relation to its potential effects on equality and all relevant concerns have been addressed.

<b>Assessor</b>		
<b>Name:</b> Sean Anderson	<b>Job Title:</b> Head of Customer Services	<b>Date:</b> 4 January 2016

<b>Service Director or Senior Officer (sign off)</b>		
<b>Name:</b>	<b>Job Title:</b>	<b>Date:</b>

Please email a copy of the EIA to Rachel Craggs, Principal Policy Officer (Equality & Diversity): [Rachel.craggs@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:Rachel.craggs@westberks.gov.uk)