

Equality Impact Assessment: Stage 1 Summary
Hastings Borough Council Participation and Communications Strategy
& Action Plan 2011/12 - 2013/14

Equality Impact Assessments (EIA)

1. Before adopting any new policy or making key decisions about Council services we consider how the decision will impact or affect different communities, especially those groups or communities who experience inequality, discrimination, social exclusion or disadvantage. We assess this impact by doing an Equality Impact Assessment.
2. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a way of helping us to identify the likely or actual effects of decisions on people in respect of their age, race, disability, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religion or belief or their economic status. The aim of the assessment is to make sure that as far as possible, any negative consequences for minority groups are eliminated or minimised and opportunities for promoting equality are maximised.
3. The EIA assessment is done in two parts - Stage 1 is an initial screening assessment. Stage 2 is a more detailed assessment carried out when Stage 1 identifies that the risk of negative impact is medium or high. Stage 2 identifies further information, barriers and possible solutions and involves consultation with representatives of equality groups. Each EIA undertaken is proportionate to the issue under consideration and the likelihood of impact.

Assessing the Equality Impacts of our Participation and Communication Intentions

4. In developing our Participation and Communications Strategy and Action Plan (PCSAP) to be agreed at the 9th May 2011 Cabinet, the Council has critically reflected on associated activities to date (in the strategy) and set our (in the action plan) intentions in the context of unprecedented financial pressures.
5. The PCSAP sets out how the Council intends to involve, collaborate and communicate with staff and local people during this difficult financial period where the challenge of spending cuts means the Council must be increasingly effective with fewer resources - doing more with less.
6. There are three cross cutting areas of activity that underpin how the Council will deliver the actions set out below against those objectives in the strategy. These are: (1). 'Channel Shift' – including the launch of the Council's new website and Contact Centre arrangements; (2). Pooling Customer Insight – Drawing together what staff, the public and Members tell us to inform and enhance service delivery; (3). Internal Communications.
7. These areas imply that with fewer resources the nature of engagement with staff and local people will change. Specifically, the shift to doing more 'on line' will have a disproportionate impact on those unable to access or operate those technologies that enable on line web based communications.
8. Despite fewer resources, the Council remains committed to supporting communities of geography and identity (as per the action plan) and the development of the Council's Contact Centre as a one stop shop for Council services will complement the Council's plan to improve its website and web based 'on line' engagement, whilst mitigating the impact and keeping open face to face channels for those unable or uncomfortable with on line communications.

9. Better anticipating service need through smarter use of the information local people already give us and tailoring increasingly finite services accordingly, will enhance the Council's service offer for those with whom the Council interacts, either on line or via Contact Centre arrangements.¹ The transition to improving these communications will require the buy in of staff and local people alike.
10. As those cross cutting activities outlined in paragraph 6 enable the Council to better understand and respond to the needs of our staff and local people with whom the Council engages, the associated compilation of information concerning these transactions will subsequently shed light on those with whom the Council is not reaching. We acknowledge the importance of engaging those individuals and groups with whom we have yet to successfully interact.
11. The Council plans to commit the Leader, Chief Executive, Corporate Directors and Head of Policy to scrutinise and monitor implementation of the PCSAP.
12. Each of the items set out in the Action Plan below have been the subject of a Stage 1 Initial Screening Assessment. Also included are a number of areas where potential impacts have been highlighted, or where the full details of activity have not yet been developed. In both of these cases a Stage 2 Impact Assessment will be undertaken prior to implementation of the decision to clarify the potential impacts and to identify any possible mitigation.
13. **Where the likelihood of an impact has been assessed as Low in the initial assessment, should evidence arise (e.g. from complaints/consultation/feedback) that the service action is having a disproportionate impact on any equality group – the Council will review it's EIA and consider what, if any mitigations may be appropriate.**

EIA Sign off: 27th April 2011

Lead assessor: Mark Horan

Head of Service: Jane Hartnell

Lead Member: Cllr Jay Kramer

¹For example, the Council intends that improvements to the website (better information and increased functionality) may prevent the need to contact the Council in the first place. Or, when local people contact the Council via the Contact Centre, the call handlers have records of previous correspondence and communications to hand.

OBJECTIVE 1. INFORM OUR DECISION-MAKING WITH IMPROVED KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT LOCAL PEOPLE THINK AND WANT THROUGH AN ON-GOING DIALOGUE

a) Building on the Big Conversation offer a range of ways for local people to input to debates

b) Capturing people’s views when/wherever they give them to us and feedback how we’ve used them to improve service delivery and inform priorities

Actions	Likelihood of negative impact on equalities groups Low/Medium/High	Further Action Required
<p>1. Planning Consultation Establish the Council’s new Pre –Application Planning Consultative Forum bringing together developers, councillors and the community to consider significant planning developments in advance of planning applications being submitted.</p>	<p>Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.</p>	<p>Steps underway to ensure that scope to get involved is clear to the breadth of the local community.</p>
<p>2. Place Survey Undertake a local Place Survey with Local Strategic Partners</p>	<p>Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.</p>	<p>The methodological implications of the approach taken will be considered prior to undertaking the research.</p>
<p>3. Area Structures Develop Neighbourhood Plans within each Area – to be confirmed with Area Management Boards</p>	<p>Low – Neighbourhood Plans to be drafted drawing on the input of a range of local stakeholders.</p>	
<p>4. Communities of Identity Support groups such as Youth Council, Hastings Intercultural Organisation, Senior’s Forum etc. to feed into local decision making</p>	<p>Medium – While Council officers work to build the capacity of a range of equalities groups it is acknowledged that that this work is not/cannot always be consistent across all equalities strands identified in the Council’s Single Equalities Strategy.</p>	
<p>5. Planning Policy Refresh the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (Part of the Local Development Framework) which sets out how local people are involved in planning policy development and decisions.</p>	<p>Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.</p>	

<p>6. Reflecting views in decision-making Include details of how public views, consultation and engagement has informed recommendations in reports (already highlighted in Forward Plan)</p>	<p>Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.</p>	
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OBJECTIVE 2. MAXIMISE THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY TO TRANSFORM OUR COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND MAKE THEM MORE COST EFFECTIVE

Action required	Likelihood of negative impact on equalities groups Low/Medium/High	Further Action Required
<p>7. Launch new HBC website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit for purpose website with good accessibility and easy to use • Encourage greater use of web-based services assisting with Channel Shift and 24/7 • Enable live surveys and polls to gather live intelligence • Refreshed content developed 	<p>Low – in terms of web content/presentation/accessibility...unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.</p> <p>Medium – As HBC services move increasingly online, those not online may struggle to gain the depth of information available as quickly...Nevertheless Contact Centre developments will work to complement web based access for those on and off line.</p>	
<p>8. Social Media Evaluate and expand use of social media Facebook and Twitter as means of debate and encouragement of ideas (Used successfully by Leader in Big Conversation)</p>	<p>See previous.</p>	
<p>9. Explore potential and undertake a cost-benefit analysis of new planning software Software provides for a clickable map on website enabling users to find relevant planning applications. Also enables individuals to set up an account to be notified about new applications by areas (e.g. my street) or by type e.g. new pubs</p>	<p>Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.</p>	

OBJECTIVE 3: INCREASE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR FORMAL CONSULTATIONS

Action required	Likelihood of negative impact on equalities groups Low/Medium/High	Further Action Required
a) Involving local people in debating options and new ideas before coming forward with firm proposals		
10. Consultation Documentation Ensure Council consultation documentation contains full and clear details of options, including costings where appropriate, and ways to input views/have you say that are accessible to all	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	
11. Collating Ideas Pick up on and respond to issues as they arise from Area Management Boards, Councillor surgeries and other local fora.	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups. However it is acknowledged that the bulk of these meetings are place specific and may not all be easily accessible in terms of event timing and venue.	
12. Overview and Scrutiny Reviews Continue to involve local people in Overview and Scrutiny Review of Council functions	Low – Involvement of appropriate local people will be largely dependent on the nature of the reviews. It will be important that the timing of reviews is sufficient to cater for as representative a view as possible of local people involved, in line with the focus of the review.	
b) Adhering to our Consultation Charter		
13. A Responsive Council All correspondence from the public is recognised and acknowledged (including complaints) and an appropriate timely response given.	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	
14. A Committed Council Raise awareness of our commitments outlined in the Charter across HBC.	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	
c) Finish implementing the recommendations from the O&S Review of Consultation		
15. Implementing Recommendations Continue to implement the remaining recommendations made by the O & S review	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	

OBJECTIVE 4: IMPROVE OUR INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Actions required	Likelihood of negative impact on equalities groups Low/Medium/High	Further Action Required
a) Implementing an Internal Communications Action Plan based on the learning from the Big Conversation staff engagement pilots and other feedback from staff		
16. Listening to Views & Testing Ideas Continue to support the Staff Focus group to seek views and test new ideas	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	Work continues to ensure the make up of the group reflects current staff demographics and includes a cross section of officers from across the organisation.
17. Building on Ideas Publicise the recently re-launched Big & Small Ideas process (previously the Innovations Group) as a mechanism to capture and progress staff ideas	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	
18. Plan together Continue to involve all staff in service planning, target setting and monitoring progress.	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	
19. Meet the Leaders All staff Meeting/Meet the Leader Event to convey next steps for organisational change	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	
20. Blogging Continue to use the Chief Executive Blog to deliver key updates – ensure all staff can access the Leader’s Blog either live or via Intranet page	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	
21. Talk with the Chief Executive Continued availability of Chief Executive to all staff	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	
22. Online Dialogue Assess the scope for further use of the Yammer internal networking tool.	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	
23. Capturing Staff Views Staff survey to enable staff to contribute to the	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	

direction of the organisation and assess their support through employee engagement initiatives.		
24. Investors in People Achieve Investors in People re-accreditation, signifying ongoing commitment to our staff.	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	
25. Testing Staff views as residents Continue to capture the views of our staff in their capacity as residents and stakeholders in the town as began in the Big Conversation	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	

OBJECTIVE 5: COMMUNICATE IN WAYS THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

Actions required	Likelihood of negative impact on equalities groups Low/Medium/High	Further Action Required
a) Provide a single point of contact for all initial contacts (one phone number for calls and text messages and one E-mail address) by implementing our new Contact Centre		
26. One Stop Contact Centre Expand and develop the Contact Centre to include the majority of Council Services	Medium – there is a separate EIA for Contact Centre Development and Implementation	Contact Centre Project Group is managing the issues from the EIA
27. Being Clear Reviews the standard of plain English used in public documents.	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	
28. Getting to the Point Consultation documentation and other detailed information destined for public consumption to include an Executive Summary	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	
29. One Place One Plan? Consider how the Council's strategies and commitments can be further aligned or joined up so these are clearer to the public.	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	

c) Give clear information about what the Council does and how to access its services		
30. What the Council does and does not do Enhance the Council's website to clearly convey services the Council provides and signpost where HBC is not the provider	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	NB this work will be a staged process and will largely coincide with the refreshing of service sections of the new Council website commencing in Spring 2011.
31. Using Images Further develop the Council's You Tube Channel and Flickr pages to convey key messages that reduce dependence on written literacy.	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	Given that content on these channels is externally hosted it will be important that HBC content is vetted, monitored and responded to in order to make sure that content and associated comments are appropriate.

6. Objective 6: Better join up our consultation and communication activity both internally and with our partners

Actions required	Likelihood of negative impact on equalities groups	Further Action
a) Pooling what people tell us in one place so we can use these views and ideas to inform decisions, our policy and our priorities		
32. Working in Partnership Use the Local Place Survey research as an opportunity to test and pool consultation resources and associated communications	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	
33. Pooling what you tell us Pooling information at the Contact centre to inform Corporate priorities and service planning.	Low – unlikely to impact adversely/disproportionately on any equality groups.	