

## Summary and Actions from Equality Impact Assessments June 2007 – October 2008

Equality Impact Assessment	Summary and Actions	Responsible Officer	Target date	Completion Date
<b>Community Services</b>				
Homelessness Prevention Service, Housing, Community Services	<p>The Council is required to have a housing advice function available for local residents, and to provide services to those at risk of homelessness or who are homeless.</p> <p>This includes general advice work and signposting, through to detailed case work to prevent homelessness and the assessment and determination of the duty owed to those households who become homeless.</p> <p><b>Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write to B&amp;B providers regarding equality and diversity work.</li> <li>• Send impact assessment (IA) to the main stakeholders for comments. Ask for comments/supporting information/evidence and ideas and include a request for information regarding Home Choice. This went to Accent Peerless, the Bengali Welfare Society and Citizen's Advice Bureau in August 2007.</li> <li>• Customer feedback is needed to review this assessment. A questionnaire has been devised and will be sent to housing customers, the results of feedback will be reported to the Equality Action Group for consideration and will be used in reviewing the Council's Homelessness Strategy and service development.</li> <li>• Collated equalities data collected by the housing service will be regularly reported through the Bulletin</li> <li>• An impact assessment will be carried out on the Homelessness</li> </ul>	Housing Manager	<p>August 2007</p> <p>August 2007</p> <p>April 2009</p> <p>Summer 2009</p> <p>May 2009</p> <p>Summer 2008</p>	<p>August 2007</p> <p>August 2007</p> <p>April 2009 (ongoing)</p> <p>Summer 2009</p> <p>Summer 2009</p>

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	<p>Prevention Strategy 2008-13 in June 2008</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The housing team will actively challenge stereotypes and publish information to counteract incorrect customer perceptions by publishing equality monitoring statistics on customers in the Bulletin.</li> <li>• The Impact Assessment for homelessness services will be reviewed in January 2010 following a year of customer feedback.</li> </ul>		January 2010	July 2008
Homelessness Strategy, Housing, Community Services	<p>The Homelessness Strategy is a requirement of the Homelessness Act 2002. It details the Council's response to a review of homelessness in the Borough in terms of preventing homelessness, supporting homeless households and ensuring that sufficient accommodation is or will be available to those who may become homeless.</p> <p>The Homelessness Strategy 2008 -13 recognises a number of customer groups with specific needs and puts in place an action plan to meet these needs, jointly working with a number of agencies.</p> <p>Race – no negative impacts identified but new data collection and reporting recommended as part of Homelessness Service Impact Assessment.</p> <p>Disability – specific actions in Strategy relating to customer groups with special needs, including learning disability, mental health and physical disability as well as more complex needs such a drug and alcohol abuse</p>	Housing Manager		

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	<p>Age – Young people, often with high needs, are over represented in homelessness approaches and a number of actions are proposed to deliver services to this group.</p> <p>No issues identified around gender (although specific actions round domestic abuse including lack of provision for male victims)</p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <p>Monitoring of issues relating to race/gender/disability/age/sexual orientation/religion to be included in monitoring and the annual review of the Strategy.</p>		July 2009	
<b>Legal and Corporate Services</b>				
Recruitment process, Human Resources, Legal and Corporate Services	<p>Recruitment (the placing of the right candidate in a vacant post) – to reach all walks of the community without discrimination.</p> <p>The recruitment service supports the aim in the Equality Scheme to ensure that all our employees and potential employees are treated equally and fairly, to ensure a continuing commitment to a fair recruitment and equal pay policy and to introduce action to encourage individuals and groups in the community to apply for employment at the Council.</p> <p>The percentage of people with disabilities applying for jobs at Surrey Heath is low – 1.93% in 2007/2008, however, the percentage of employees declaring they have a disability was significantly higher at 12.7% in 2007/2008, following a staff survey. Some applicants do not wish to disclose a disability at this stage.</p> <p>The percentage of employees from ethnic minorities at the Council has increased to 4.5% in 2007/2008; we are still striving towards a</p>	HR officer		

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	<p>target of 6% (which would be representative of the ethnic minority population in Surrey Heath).</p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <p>The Equality Action Group raised a concern that it is intended that HR will not be present at interviews to provide support on equality and diversity issues. This could have a negative impact on equality groups and further consideration will be given to this proposal before discontinuing with the service. However, the Head of Legal and Corporate Services stated that all Managers who interview will be trained in all aspects including equalities. This practice is common in most other authorities.</p>		October 2008	October 2008
Bullying and Harassment Policy, HR, Legal and Corporate Services	<p>To ensure the Council has a robust policy and procedures to identify and manage any potential allegations of bullying and harassment in a timely and effective manner.</p> <p>It is hoped the policy will help the organisation identify and manage all allegations of bullying and harassment, including those from equality groups, in a more timely manner. The policy helps demonstrate that the Organisation takes these issues seriously and has correct procedures in place to deal with any potential allegations.</p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <p>HR to brief HoST on line management responsibilities and to raise awareness. HoST will then roll this out to line managers via team meetings and one to ones. Line managers are being trained through the Middle Managers training programme.</p>	HR Manager	September 2008	September 2008

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Disciplinary Policy and Procedures HR, Legal and Corporate Services	<p><b>Actions:</b> HR to implement awareness sessions for line managers and to generally promote to all employees the revised Policy and supporting documentation.</p> <p>HR to also strongly relay the message to line managers that the welfare of affected employees during the disciplinary process is to be paramount (for example: regular contact by an appropriate officer, generic news of Council activities). – (HR is working closely with any officers involved in disciplinary actions, ensuring that relevant correspondence and procedures are adhered to. HR are emphasising directly to those managers the importance of maintaining contact with any individual under scrutiny).</p>	Senior HR Adviser	December 2009 (will be started later in the year).  April 2009	February 2009, on-going
Probationary Policy and Procedures HR, Legal and Corporate Services	<p>The Probationary period within the conditions of service to provide a trial period for new employees was being reviewed.</p> <p><b>Actions:</b> the following wording be added to para 3.2 of the Probationary Procedures within the Conditions of service on 'the HR team will provide guidance for line managers to ensure that the correct training and support is provided to staff'.</p>	HR Manager	October 2009	(Policy has not been taken forward)
<b>Built Environment</b>				
Local Development Framework – Housing Needs Development Plan, Planning Policy. Built Environment	<p>The aim of the activity is to ensure that new housing provided within the Borough up to 2026 addresses the needs of all of the community.</p> <p>The current Local Plan policy addresses housing needs but the needs of the equality groups were not addressed as part of policy formulation for the document. That said the Local Plan does</p>	Planning Policy Manager		

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	<p>identify Housing for Special Needs, specifically the elderly and disabled, as an issue. Reference is also made to sites for Gypsies and Travellers. The purpose of the policies is to provide opportunity for take up. Monitoring can only identify the types of provision coming forward and assess against the identified need. It will be difficult in practice to monitor take up by the equality groups as provision is made by external organisations. The one exception to this will be Gypsy and Traveller sites.</p> <p>The only possible barrier to accessing the document might be due to language or sight difficulties. However, these can be overcome if the need arises.</p> <p>A preliminary assessment suggests that the Development Plan policy has no negative impacts and if implemented properly should have positive impacts.</p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further action is needed to address the unmet needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show people. The level of need and the requirement to be met is being established through work with the South East of England Regional Assembly.</li> </ul> <p>An internal officer group has been formed to look at the issues around the travelling community within the Borough and to discuss how their housing needs can be met.</p>		<p>March 2009</p> <p>N/A (Working group set up to deal with specific issues only)</p>	<p>On-going. (SEERA are currently working on revised options for pitch distribution).</p>
<b>Arts and Leisure</b>				
Action Holiday Scheme, Leisure	To introduce young people to a variety of activities they would not normally have access to.	Senior Leisure and		

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Management, Arts and Leisure	<p>Participation is encouraged by all social groups. The Council work with Accent Peerless to encourage housing association residents to use the programme. This year (2008) a 25% discount will be offered to all Accent Peerless residents. Residents will be directly targeted through mail shots to ensure they are aware of this offer.</p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The categories of Disability and Ethnicity to be added to the Equality Monitoring section of the Action Holiday Satisfaction Survey.</li> <li>• All participants are asked to complete a feedback form.</li> <li>• The feedback form needs to be analysed carefully and used to inform the following years programme content.</li> <li>• There are potentially monetary barriers to participation in place however; these are being addressed through partnership working with Accent Peerless. The possibility of offering a discount to other low income families is also being considered. However, more thought is needed in relation to the application of such a scheme. (this could be considered)</li> <li>• Consultation could be extended to a wider audience before the action holiday programme content is confirmed to reduce the risk of certain groups being excluded by the programme offer. (The resources are not available to achieve this).</li> <li>• Ensure that promotional material is sent to local schools which cater for children with a disability. (This will be undertaken</li> </ul>	Recreation Officer	<p>August 2008</p> <p>August 2008</p> <p>October 2008</p> <p>February 2009</p> <p>Feb 2009</p> <p>April 2009</p>	<p>August 2008</p> <p>August 2008</p> <p>October 2008</p> <p>Not to be carried forward.</p>

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	<p>where appropriate).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action Holiday brochure could be sent to different ethnic minority and religious groups in SH to reach a wider audience of children and parents/guardians. (This will be undertaken).</li> </ul>		April 2009	
<b>Environmental Services</b>				
Disabled Facility Grants, Private Sector Housing, Environmental Services	<p>The aim of the activity is to provide adaptations to a disabled person's home that have been deemed necessary and appropriate to meet their particular needs by a qualified Occupational Therapist, that can restore or enable independent living with confidence and dignity for individuals and their families. An applicant does <b>NOT</b> have to be registered disabled to qualify.</p> <p>All strands are covered by an Act of Parliament and it's supporting Regulations. There are no obvious barriers preventing access to the service. Applicants are visited in their own homes and unless otherwise requested every step of the process is undertaken either by the Council's own in house Home Improvement Agency or "Homelink" (An independent external Agency).</p> <p>One obvious barrier however, would be the lack of funding. A higher concentration in Surrey Heath's population of those aged between 35 and 59 suggests that during the next couple of decades this may change to a concentration of over 65's above the national average and those over the age of 80 doubling. This may create a greater strain on current resources both in funding and staffing levels. Further information also suggests that more people from ethnic minority groups are migrating into the area, which may call for additional resources to be allocated towards information in foreign languages and interpreters.</p>	Environmental Health Officer		

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	<p>Information on the service is readily accessible through the Primary Care Trust (PCT) (GP's, Community Nurses and Social Services). Leaflets are available at venues where the elderly are likely to visit and further information is on the Council website. The overarching objective of the service is to provide improved living conditions for the disabled of Surrey Heath.</p> <p><b>No actions resulted from the assessment.</b></p>			
<b>Customer Relations Development</b>				
<p>Concessionary Bus fares, face to face activity in the Contact Centre, Customer Relations</p>	<p>The aim of the activity is to provide bus permits enabling free travel within England on local bus services, for eligible residents over 60 years of age or people with a disability aged 5 years or above, residing in the Borough of Surrey Heath or Companion permits for either citizen groups. The provision of such permits by the Local Authority is a statutory requirement, as laid out in the Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007.</p> <p>Surrey Heath has made the decision to offer the benefit to our disabled citizens to be able to travel at any time.</p> <p>The initial registration for a bus permit is a statutory requirement and the customer has to come into Surrey Heath to make their application with the necessary documents. For some of our customers particularly those not living in Camberley this can be a problem and maybe alternative arrangements could be considered.</p> <p>Novacraft (company providing bus fare statistics) are able to issue reports with the information collated from our residents which maybe useful in the future to other services within the Council. To date Novacraft can confirm that since April 2008 they have issued a total of 9,332 permits.</p>	<p>Contact Centre Manager/ Home Support Manager</p>		

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	<p>With increasing levels of life expectancy, it is recognised that these demographic changes are resulting in a continuous increase in the ageing population and therefore an increasing number of people with disabilities this will affect the service in the longer term.</p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular advertising in Heathscene - consider the question of accessibility.</li> <li>• Community Services will ensure that regular advertisements are included in Heathscene bringing to the attention of any potential new customers who's own change in circumstances, may now leave them eligible for free travel. (Home Support Manager/Contact Centre Manager will include regular advert in Heathscene, following the usual reminder that is e-mailed round).</li> <li>• Concessionary Fares leaflets to be available in the Contact Centre and arrange distribution of leaflets to Libraries and Surgeries.</li> <li>• Novacroft will be able to supply statistics for the tax year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009. (Home Support Manager will provide statistics on no. passes issued to older people and people with disabilities at the end of the financial year).</li> <li>• Continue to issue customer satisfaction surveys and look to add further questions if considered appropriate. The Contact Centre Manager will review this. (The surveys are to be reviewed in April 2009).</li> </ul>		<p>April 2009</p> <p>April 2009</p> <p>April 2009</p> <p>April 2009</p> <p>April 2009</p>	<p>2010</p> <p>2010</p> <p>February 2009, on-going</p> <p>April 2009</p>

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<p>Website, Joint assessment between Communications, Customer Relations Development and ICT</p>	<p>The mission is to have an accessible, dynamic, top quality website that meets the needs of Surrey Heath residents, surrounding boroughs and people finding out information when they are moving into the Borough. We will develop one source of accurate, up-to-date service information that can be easily accessed by the public whether self-serving, via the Contact Centre, telephone or face to face at an office. We are currently carrying out usability testing by consulting the community to test the effectiveness of the website for finding information and using the site to carry out transactions.</p> <p>The Council is required to cover all services and links to any useful non Council websites which it deems to be of use to residents. We provide online services for payments, planning applications, online reporting and much more. We have invested in Browse Aloud and Large Text options for sight impaired residents (so that residents and businesses are able to self serve without the need to telephone or visit the Council Offices).</p> <p>In order to meet all equality strands, the Web team has consulted with residents who do own a computer and those who do not own a computer through both an online survey and postal Equalities and Diversity consultation.</p> <p>The website's online services were promoted through a Borough wide Web Road show during July and August 2008.</p> <p><b>Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvements need to be made on the website for ethnic minority groups. Although it was noted from the survey that there was approximately 6.1% of the group we consulted with</li> </ul>	<p>ICT officer and Web Managers</p>	<p>November/ December 2008</p>	<p>December 2008</p>

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	<p>who fitted into this category. We are currently working on a new area for the local community to include a variety of religions and nationalities linking to associations and events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The feedback from the survey has now been analysed and we will be working on the various outcomes to improve the website including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disabled Information</li> <li>Older Persons' Information</li> <li>Youth Information</li> <li>Reaching different faiths/religions</li> <li>Translation service</li> </ul> </li> <li>We have identified the need to introduce more ethnic minority associations including their activities, events and celebrations.</li> </ul>		<p>November/December 2008</p> <p>November/December 2008</p>	<p>December 2008</p> <p>December 2008</p>
<b>ICT</b>				
Website, Joint assessment between Communications, Customer Relations Development and ICT	Please see information above.	ICT officer and Web Managers	See above	
<b>Strategy and Policy</b>				
Corporate Plan, Strategy and Policy, Chief Executive	<p>The Corporate Plan provides a focus for the Council's key priorities and objectives, informs residents of these objectives and priorities and monitors progress against them.</p> <p><b>Actions</b></p>	Policy officer		

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the Corporate Plan review in 2008/09 further consideration should be given to ensuring that the document is accessible and easy to read e.g. for those with a sight impairment. The colours of the pages, the text and the size of the font in the document should be considered, a large print version should also be available. The document should also state that it is available in other languages.</li> <li>• Consideration should be given to fully impact assessing the Corporate Plan 2008/09.</li> <li>• Representatives from ethnic minority, disability, age, religious, sexual orientation and gender groups to be included in the Corporate Plan consultation.</li> <li>• Consideration should be given to the distribution of the document to ensure that 'hard to reach' groups are able to access the document.</li> </ul>		<p>June – September 2009</p> <p>June - September 2009</p> <p>December 2008</p> <p>June - September 2009</p>	<p>December 2008</p>
<b>Finance</b>				
Activity of Bailiffs, Council Tax, Finance	<p>The Council has a duty to collect the Council Tax due from each taxpayer and the procedures to do this are set out within legislation. The Council complies fully with the legislation. In a small number of cases the Council's bailiffs are instructed to collect unpaid Council Tax.</p> <p>The Council has a code of conduct that lays down the criteria of expected conduct for the bailiffs who act as agents representing the Council. The code of conduct includes the 'National Standards for Enforcement Agents' (NSEA).</p> <p>The lack of complaints in this area would indicate that the NSEA document and our code of conduct is being adhered to and we are</p>	Council Tax Manager		

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	<p>effective in filtering out cases of vulnerability before they reach the bailiffs. Our continued close liaison with the Citizens Advice Bureau continues to provide an effective bridge between debtors and the Council. It is appreciated that any adverse cases could have a serious impact on the Council's reputation so close monitoring of the bailiffs work needs to continue.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Review the code of conduct with the bailiffs on an annual basis commencing 2010. At the next review incorporate the Council's Equality Policy within the document. Await the substantial new legislation from Government (not yet law - Feb 2010) on Enforcement Agents and incorporate this within the code of conduct.</p>		Oct 2010	
<b>Audit and Partnerships</b>				
Interview Under Caution, Fraud Investigation, Audit and Partnerships	<p>The Council has a statutory duty to investigate Housing and Council Tax Benefit fraud in line with legislation. Surrey Heath Borough Council is committed to ensuring that it gives the right amount of benefit only to those people genuinely entitled to it. In doing so, the Council is also committed to protecting public funds through its action on fraud.</p> <p>The Investigation Section's Policy and Procedure documents promote a consistent and transparent culture resulting in a balanced, uniform and impartial conclusion being drawn and ensuring that discrimination due to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or age does not occur.</p> <p>The initial process begins with a standard model letter, the recommended wording as being supplied by the Department of Work and Pensions. The letter contains instruction regarding the</p>	Fraud Investigations Manager		

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	<p>use of interpreters, which the Council has a duty to provide. It also confirms that they may be accompanied by legal representation or friend/relative. The Investigation Section's interpreting needs are met by Woking Interpretation Services (WITS) which is a registered charity run by Woking Borough Council. A leaflet entitled 'Request to attend an Interview Under Caution – what it Means' is also included with this letter.</p> <p>In certain circumstances, for example when the interviewee is a juvenile under 18 years or someone mentally disordered, they will be accompanied by an appropriate adult. This is usually a parent/guardian or social/project worker. When required, Surrey Interpreting Agency is used for someone who has speech/hearing impairments.</p> <p>On occasions, at the customer's request, the Investigation Team have carried out formal interviews (IUC's) at the customer's home address. This has usually been when the interviewee has been housebound.</p> <p><b>No actions resulted from the assessment.</b></p>			