EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) FORM

Name of Policy: Community Engagement Strategy

Lead Officer (responsible for assessment): Lewis Bage (Communities and Partnerships Manager)

Department: Communities and Partnerships

Others Involved in the Assessment (i.e. peer review, external challenge): Stephanie Jones (Communities and Partnerships Support Officer)

Date EIA Completed:

19th February 2024

What is an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)?

As part of any effective policy development process, it is important to consider any potential risks to those who will be affected by the policy's aims or by its implementation. The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process helps us to assess the implications of our decisions on the whole community, to eliminate discrimination, tackle inequality, develop a better understanding of the community we serve, target resources efficiently, and adhere to the transparency and accountability element of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The word 'policy', in this context, includes the different things that the Council does. It includes any policy, procedure or practice - both in employment and service delivery. It also includes proposals for restructuring, redundancies and changes to service provision.

(a) **What is the policy trying to achieve?** i.e. What is the aim/purpose of the policy? Is it affected by external drivers for change? What outcomes do we want to achieve from the policy? How will the policy be put into practice?

The Community Engagement Strategy aims to ensure that the council is providing local people with appropriate and accessible opportunities to get involved, influence local decision making and have their say on the place they call home, so that they are informed about local matters and can provide feedback to the council on what they need and their views on council services.

(b) Who are its main beneficiaries? i.e. who will be affected by the policy?

The entire community of East Cambridgeshire and groups have traditionally been harder to reach and/or underrepresented. This may include, but not limited to, non-English speakers, ethnic minority groups, travelling community, homeless people, people with disabilities, elderly and younger people, people in areas of deprivation and people that are digitally isolated.

(c) Is the EIA informed by any information or background data (quantitative or qualitative)? i.e. consultations, complaints, applications received, allocations/take-up, satisfaction rates, performance indicators, access audits, census data, benchmarking, workforce profile etc.

Website analytics, feedback from service leads, data relating to how people engage with the Council, demographics.

(d) Does this policy have the potential to cause a positive or negative impact on different groups in the community, on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics? (please tick all that apply)

> **Ethnicity: YES**
> **Gender: YES**
> **Disability: YES**
> **Gender Reassignment: YES**
> **Pregnancy & Maternity: YES**
> **Age: YES**
> **Religion and Belief**
> **Marriage & Civil Partnership: YES**
> **Sexual Orientation: YES**
> **Caring Responsibilities: YES**

Please explain any impact identified: i.e. What do you already know about equality impact or need? Is there any evidence that there is a higher or lower take-up by particular groups? Have there been any demographic changes or trends locally? Are there any barriers to accessing the policy or service?

Demographic information set out on page 10 of the strategy. Barriers to effective engagement set out on pages 16 and 17 of the strategy.

(e) Does the policy have a differential impact on different groups? YES

(f) Is the impact *adverse* (i.e. less favourable)? NO

(g) Does it have the potential to disadvantage or discriminate unfairly against any of the groups in a way that is unlawful? NO

(h) How have you engaged stakeholders in gathering evidence or testing the policy proposals? Who was involved, how and when where they engaged? Does the evidence show potential for differential impact? How will you mitigate any negative impacts? Where there is the potential for an adverse impact that cannot be addressed immediately, these should be highlighted in your recommendations and objectives at the end of the EIA.

Council departments constantly engage with communities as well as working alongside partner agencies who do too. As part of the development of this strategy, all council teams were consulted and asked to provide details of the barriers that they face when carrying out community engagement, whether directly or via a multi-agency partnership. Specific council and partnership projects and programmes such as the Youth Strategy and the Care Together programme have been informed by direct engagement, which has also helped the council identify and understand barriers that it must overcome to ensure that it is engaging with communities as effectively as possible.

An action in the Action Plan is to engage with residents, including communities that have traditionally been harder to reach to ensure that the Council's Community Engagement Toolkit is still fit for purpose.

* The Consultation Register is available to assist staff in consulting with the Council's stakeholders.

(i)   Summarise the findings of your research and/or consultation (please use a separate sheet if necessary).

Barriers to effective engagement are set out on pages 16 and 17 of the strategy. Details of how the Council will overcome barriers and deliver effective community engagement on pages 18 to 20.

(j)   What are the risks associated with the policy in relation to differential impact and unmet needs/requirements? i.e. reputation, financial, breach of legislation, service exclusion, lack of resources, lack of cooperation, insufficient budget etc.

If the commitments set out in the strategy are not delivered, then the barriers listed on pages 16 and 17 may worsen and the statutory duties set out on page 8 and 9 may not be adhered to.

(k)   Use the information gathered in the earlier stages of your EIA to make a judgement on whether there is the potential for the policy to result in unlawful discrimination or a less favourable impact on any group in the community, and what changes (if any) need to be made to the policy.

Option1: **No major change -** the evidence shows that the policy is robust and no potential for discrimination YES

Option 2: **Adjust the policy -** to remove barriers or to better promote equality. NO

Option 3: **Continue the policy -** despite potential for adverse impact or missed opportunity to promote equality, provided you have satisfied yourself that it does not unlawfully discriminate.NO

Option 4: **Stop and remove the policy** – if the policy shows adverse effects that cannot be justified. NO

(l)   Where you have identified the potential for adverse impact, what action can be taken to remove or mitigate against the potential for the policy to unlawfully discriminate or impact less favourably on one or more communities in a way that cannot be justified? Include key activities that are likely to have the greatest impact (max. 6). Identified actions should be specified in detail for the first year but there may be further longer term actions which need to be considered. To ensure that your actions are more than just a list of good intentions, include for each: the person responsible for its completion, a timescale for completion, any cost implications and how these will be addressed. It is essential that you incorporate these actions into your service plans.

No adverse impacts have been identified.

This completed EIA will need to be countersigned by your Head of Service.   **Please forward completed and signed forms to the HR Manager.**

All completed EIAs will need to scrutinised and verified by the Council's Equal Opportunities Working Group (EOWG) and published on the Council's Intranet to demonstrate to local people that the Council is actively engaged in tackling potential discrimination and improving its practices in relation to equalities. Please be aware that may be asked to attend a half-an-hour session to summarise the findings of the EIA to the Scrutiny and Verification panel.

Signatures:

Completing Officer: **Lewis Bage** _____   **Date:**   19.02.2024 _____

Head of Service: _____   **Date:**   _____