

# Equality Impact Assessment

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|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Title:                            | <b>Communications Strategy</b> |  |
| Version:                          | <b>1.1</b>                     |  |
| Date of draft:                    | <b>August 2016</b>             |  |
| Date approved by Equalities Group | <b>September 2016</b>          |  |

## Section 1A: Overview

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| <b>Name of Policy, Procedure, Practice, Strategy or Service:</b> | Communications Strategy |
| <b>Service, Group, Team:</b>                                     | Community Services      |
| <b>Equality Assessment Lead Officer:</b>                         | Stewart Millar          |
| <b>Head of Service</b>   | Lorraine Poyser         |

**1B: Please state the intended outcomes of the policy**

**How will you know these have been achieved? *What performance monitoring is in place?***

It is important that the council ensures ease of access to information and services for its residents, businesses and visitors to the borough – the council’s aim is to facilitate communications that take place at a person’s convenience and through preferred channel and device.

Consultation will direct the council’s communications strategy and help understanding of the preferred methods to engage different communities, to increase awareness and access to council services as well as encouraging people to take part in the council’s decision making process:

- Improve access to council services and benefits
- Inform and engage citizens to help shape council services
- Provide ‘value for money’, efficient and effective council services
- Improve the council’s reputation with the borough’s citizens

More services will be able to provide information online, allowing citizens greater access. Fewer queries will be made via the contact centre and traditional face to face methods.

Regular consultation with our residents to monitor performance. (Communications Tracker Survey)

Implementation of actions identified from consultation in August/September 2016.

**Section 2A: The policy. How will the policy/plan/strategy impact on residents, visitors, businesses or other agencies that we work with? *What work has been undertaken to advise these groups about the changes planned in the policy/plan/strategy?***

The balance of power has shifted to the consumer – the council needs to ensure that the right action is taken at the right time in the preferred communications channel. This is much more effective, efficient and a much better experience. People expect easy access to information and services allowing them to be more connected, share content more easily and find relevant information quicker.

The council will look to develop and introduce new methods of communication and will continue to adopt a multi-channel approach including print media, such as EBC today to help reach vulnerable people and those without access to the intranet.

**2B: What needs is the policy/service designed to meet?** *You could also refer to your current Service Plans and how the policy/service fits into EBC's Corporate Plan Priorities. How does the policy, procedure, practice, strategy or service align with Corporate Priorities*

This strategy will help the council communicate its Corporate Plan's vision and priorities to people in the borough, in particular it will support the following priorities by helping to shape and improve services:

Improved access to services:

- support the use of technology;
- keep our residents well informed;
- communicate with residents in a range of formats relevant to their choice;
- provide services that are responsive and easy to access

Delivering efficient and effective services that residents need:

- Undertake consultation in ways that you find out what residents need
- Continue to seek views and involvement of our residents when reviewing and designing services

**2C: Is the service provided subject to any element of outsourcing?** *Is the service delivered in part, or in its entirety by an outside company or organisation? If challenged about a service delivered on our behalf you must show that the organisation meets the expectations with regard to equalities in its customer service and recruitment and retention of staff.*

Not applicable

## **Section 3A: Gathering Information**

**What equality monitoring information do you gather and how is this information used to develop services, functions and policies at the current time.** *You could look at the take up of services, customer satisfaction (complaints and compliments) and enforcement action.*

The council's communications consultation carried out in August/September will collect equality monitoring information as part of the process to identify issues that are pertinent to citizens from protected characteristics groups. The council will also regularly monitor satisfaction outcomes in order to review the council's communications performance. The council's community profile has also been used to help shape the

communications strategy and methods of communication with citizens.

The Equality Objectives for 2016-2020 have also identified actions that will lead to a review of accessibility:

- Provide a welcoming and safe place for our communities, visitors and businesses which embrace equality and is free from discrimination.
- Provide relevant services that are free from discrimination and delivered in a way that is responsive and accessible.
- Understand and value the diversity of our communities through community engagement.
- Foster an accessible and inclusive working environment for all our staff and strive to achieve a workforce that is representative and diverse.

During the four- year action plan, access and engagement are to be reviewed with the aim of preparing and developing an Access Strategy, this will include routine testing of access channels to ensure that new methods are adopted, whilst evaluating existing methods to ensure that all residents and customers have at least one method of communication/access that they are able to use.

Whilst the council will look to develop and introduce new methods of communication it is important that a multi-channel approach is adopted to help reach vulnerable people and those without access to the intranet.

**3B: What does available data and the results of any consultations show about the take up of services? What is the impact on different groups? (qualitative and quantitative).** *You could look at previous community consultation exercises, customer reviews, census data, staff feedback etc.*

**Remember:** by law you are required to be able to demonstrate, through data analysis and evidence, that you have considered the impact of your service on **ALL** of the relevant protected groups. This document is just a short summary of this process and a tool to help you to check that you have taken the Equality Act 2010 and the Council's equality objectives into consideration.

The extension of communications capability through digital media has significantly increased the council's reach, particularly to younger age groups 16 to 24 and 25 to 34 through Facebook (10,000 plus likes) and twitter (3,000 plus followers). Consultation has also confirmed a high readership rate in older age groups for EBC today, the council's community magazine which has been extended by increasing the number of issues from previous three to four per year.

The council will monitor public access to council information, establish usage/preference and adopt new communication methods to reach Erewash's diverse communities.

Further work in this area will be undertaken with specific groups as part of the Equality Objectives Action Plan 2016-20

**Section 4: Impact Assessment** *Here you need to analyse the needs of different groups and the possible impacts the service may have on them. How is the policy or decision likely to affect the **promotion of equality** and the **elimination of discrimination** in each of the groups?*

| <b>Stake Holder Group</b>        | <b>Is this group likely to be affected in a positive way?</b> | <b>In what way will they be affected?</b>   | <b>Is this group likely to be affected in a negative way?</b> | <b>In what way will they be affected?</b>  |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| Age (older people, young people) | <b>Yes</b>  | <p>By adopting a multi-channel approach to communications, the council will ensure that residents have a suitable method of access to information and services.</p> <p>Advancement in technology will allow greater opportunities to reach different groups, however we will need to consider people without access to the internet.</p> <p>EBC today is the most popular method of receiving council information in older age-groups with facebook and twitter most used by younger age-groups.</p> <p>71% of all adults in Erewash access the internet every day with a further 22% almost every day.</p> <p>Extension of EBC today from three to four issues per year has helped to improve access to council information for older age-groups - most people read more than half of the community magazine with a total EBC today readership of 65,000.</p> <p>The council has well-established 50+ forums taking part in shaping council services and also has an</p> | <b>Yes</b>  | <p>There may be a number of older residents who are not IT literate or have access to the internet via any method. Whilst advancement in technology will allow greater opportunities to reach different groups it may by it's very nature further isolate a proportion of the community.</p> <p>The use of social media has improved access for younger age-groups', however this may impact on the number of people seeking traditional methods of contact.</p> |

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|  |            | active Youth forum represented by secondary and specialist schools in Erewash, 11 to 16 year-olds.  |  |  |
| People with Disabilities (Both physical and mental impairments)        | <b>Yes</b> | <p>Extending the council's communication platforms through digital media will help to increase access to council information and services – we need to consider requirement of people with disabilities to ensure access.</p> <p>Access to digital information will be welcomed by visually impaired people who have grown up with emerging technology. Website accessibility provides simple 'How to guides' (BBC) to improve communication for people with disabilities. The council's website meets the government's W3C guidelines on accessibility.</p> <p>The council has put into practice lessons learned from partners including Sight Support Derbyshire and CamTAD, supporting people with hearing loss to help improve communications.</p> <p>Before launching any new communications channels the council will consult service users with different needs.</p> |  |  |
| Gender (Women, Men, Transgender, Transsexuals)                         | <b>No</b>  | Communication and access will have a <b>neutral</b> impact on this group  |  |  |
| Race (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic groups. Include people whose first | <b>Yes</b> | By adopting a multi-channel approach to communications, the council will ensure that residents have a suitable method of access to information and services. The council's website provides information in alternative languages as well as free translation service.   |  |  |

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| language is not English)                              |            | Ensure that the Erewash community is represented through positive images in council publications and digital media.   |  |  |
| Sexual Orientation                                    | <b>No</b>  | Communication and access will have a <b>neutral</b> impact on this group  |  |  |
| Religion and belief                                   | <b>Yes</b> | By improving digital access to information and services this will allow residents and customers to communicate with the council at a time that is suitable. |  |  |
| Dignity, Human Rights and Socio-economic disadvantage | <b>Yes</b> | Some of our residents live in areas of deprivation and as a result the use of free PCs in Town Hall receptions allows them to access the internet for free. |  |  |
| Marriage and Civil partnerships                       | <b>No</b>  | Communication and access will have a <b>neutral</b> impact on this group  |  |  |
| Pregnancy and maternity/paternity                     | <b>No</b>  | Communication and access will have a <b>neutral</b> impact on this group  |  |  |

| <b>Section 5A: Actions How will you monitor the ongoing effect of the policy/strategy/plan?</b> | <b>When will this be undertaken?</b> | <b>Expected outcomes / performance measures</b> | <b>Which Corporate Plan aim will this action meet?</b>   |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Communications Tracker Survey   | Quarterly 2016/17                    | Resident Satisfaction                           | Improved access to services and Delivering efficient and effective services that residents need. |

| <b>5B: If you have identified any negative impacts on any of the groups in section 4 how will you mitigate the effect?</b>   |   |  |  |  |   |
|--|---|--|--|--|---|
| <b>Negative impact</b>   | <b>Action required to mitigate any potential negative impact</b>  | <b>Outcome / performance measure</b>   | <b>Lead Officer – who will the monitoring of this action be reported to?</b> | <b>Date that the monitoring will be undertaken, how often will it be done?</b> | <b>Which of the current Equality Objectives does this action meet? (State number *)</b> |
| The increased use of digital media, particularly social media platforms may reduce the number of customers accessing the council through more traditional contact methods. | Continued monitoring of access issues via the Equality Objectives Action plan will link to the Accessibility Strategy that is due to be prepared during 2016/17 | Sustainable front line and traditional contact methods to allow all residents to engage with the council and its services. | Performance and Community Manager  | A minimum quarterly collection of tracker survey data will be used.            | Objective 2   |
|  |   |  |  |  |   |

\*The objectives are:

1. **Provide a welcoming and safe place for our communities, visitors and businesses which embraces equality and is free from discrimination.**
2. **Provide relevant services that are free from discrimination and delivered in a way that is responsive and accessible.**
3. **Understand and value the diversity of our communities through community engagement**
4. **Foster an accessible and inclusive working environment for all our staff and strive to achieve a workforce that is representative and diverse.**