

Colchester Borough Council

Equality Impact Assessment Form - An Analysis of the Effects on Equality

Section 1: Initial Equality Impact Assessment

Name of policy to be assessed:

- Colchester's Strategic Plan 2018-21.

1. What is the main purpose of the policy?

- This plan sets out the direction and future potential for our borough. As a Council we have an ambitious range of goals to achieve that build on the successes of the Strategic Plan 2015-18, working with a large number of partners to get the best for our residents, businesses and visitors.
- The Strategic Plan 2018-21 sets the framework for the Council's three-year Medium Term Financial Forecast and its Capital Programme.

2. What main areas or activities does it cover?

- All Council areas and activities.

3. Are there changes to an existing policy being considered in this assessment? If so what are they?

- This is an update of the Strategic Plan 2015-18.

4. Who are the main audience, users or customers who will be affected by the policy?

- All residents, customers, businesses and partners.

5. *What outcomes do you want to achieve from the policy?*

- Colchester has a rich heritage and an ambitious future. The Strategic Plan 2018-21 sets out four key themes to build on this, and the outcomes will be based on achieving these themes, which are supported by 20 priorities. The four themes are:
 - Growth
 - Responsibility
 - Opportunity
 - Wellbeing.

- The Strategic Plan will have an Action Plan which will set out the specific objectives and actions needed to achieve this.

6. *Are other service areas or partner agencies involved in delivery? If so, please give details below:*

- All Council services – Customers, Communities, Environment, Policy and Corporate
- Town and Parish Councils
- Partners in the public, private, community, voluntary and education sectors
- Businesses
- Employers
- Essex County Council
- Essex Libraries – extending self-service access across the borough
- Essex Police
- Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
- NHS
- Government Departments.

7. Are you aware of any relevant information, data, surveys or consultations which help us to assess the likely or actual impact of the policy upon customers or staff?

To help us decide on the priorities for the next three years we held a number of focus groups with the public, independently selected to make sure we included all sections of our communities. The consultation consisted of qualitative focus groups conducted across at different locations across the borough – two urban, two rural - in autumn 2017, and aimed to ‘*investigate the needs and aspirations of residents for Colchester to become a better place to live in the long term*’.

Residents told us:

- Colchester is a welcoming place and should continue to be so
- They are positive about Colchester and see it a good place to live
- They are proud of the long and prominent history of the town
- They like the countryside surrounding Colchester, and the borough’s open spaces such as Castle Park
- They understand the importance of growth for the town and borough, but want infrastructure to keep pace
- They want the Council to play its part to maximise the availability of affordable housing and encourage inward investment to maximise job opportunities
- They want the Council to support the most vulnerable in society, and to help reduce homelessness.

There was also an electronic survey open to all residents and businesses, which asked respondents to rank the three most important and the three least important services that we commission or provide, as well as to express their views.

We have also used the wide range of research and statistics which are shown on the Council’s website [here](#) (or follow the pathway Your Council>Local Research and Statistics>Colchester Statistics or >Census) which include [key statistics for Colchester](#). This longer term view is important in ensuring that the Strategic Plan takes due account of future needs such as population growth and diversity. We also referred to the results of consultations which we have held on various subjects [here](#).

8. The 'general duty' states that we must have "due regard" to the need to:

- (a) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a 'protected characteristic'¹ and those who do not²
- (c) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.³

Where applicable, explain how this policy helps us to meet the 'general duty':

The Plan's broad themes, objectives and actions will all play their part in helping to further or facilitate our 'general duty'.

The Plan helps us to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation' in the following ways:

- The Strategic Plan's four themes of "Grow, Responsibility, Opportunity and Wellbeing" are a key part of setting the direction and future potential for our borough, with each of these themes providing support in achieving this aim. Living in welcoming, tolerant and diverse communities helps to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- A key theme introduced in the previous Plan was "Welcoming – a place where people can grow and be proud to live"; backed by a clear objective to "ensure that Colchester is a welcoming and safe place for residents, visitors and businesses, with a friendly feel that embraces tolerance and diversity". This positive encouragement towards helping individuals, families and communities to flourish in the borough whatever their circumstances is being carried forward into the new Plan in the priorities to "Help make sure Colchester is a welcoming place for all residents and visitors"; "Promote responsible citizenship by encouraging residents to get involved in their communities and to identify solutions to local issues"; "Target support to the most disadvantaged residents and communities", and "Encourage belonging, involvement and responsibility in all the borough's communities".
- Strategic Plan priorities around anti-social behaviour include "Promote responsible citizenship by encouraging residents to get involved in their communities and to identify local solutions to anti-social behaviour"; "Work with Essex Police and partners in the Safer Colchester Partnership to make Colchester an even safer place" and "Educate those residents who behave anti-socially about the impact of their behaviour".

¹ The Equality Act's 'protected characteristics' include age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sex and sexual orientation. It also covers marriage and civil partnerships, but not for all aspects of the duty.

² This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to: (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic; (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it, and (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

³ This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to (a) tackle prejudice, and (b) promote understanding.

The Plan helps us to 'advance equality of opportunity...' in the following ways:

- The Strategic Plan's four themes of "Grow, Responsibility, Opportunity and Wellbeing" are a key part of setting the direction and future potential for our borough, with each of these themes providing support in achieving this aim. Living in a thriving and prosperous place helps to advance equality of opportunity for everyone in fulfilling their potential.
- Strategic Plan priorities around equality of opportunity include "Ensure residents benefit from Colchester's economic growth with skills, jobs and improving infrastructure"; "Increase the supply of good quality homes by using legal powers to reduce the number of empty homes and improve standards in the private rented sector"; and "Target support to the most disadvantaged residents and communities".

The Plan helps us to 'foster good relations...' in the following ways:

- The Strategic Plan's four themes of "Grow, Responsibility, Opportunity and Wellbeing" are a key part of setting the direction and future potential for our borough, with each of these themes providing support in achieving this aim. Encouraging communities to meet and interact helps people to know and understand each other better, and can support joint working on practical solutions.
- Strategic Plan priorities around fostering good relations include "Promote responsible citizenship by encouraging residents to get involved in their communities and to identify solutions to local issues"; "Educate residents about the impact of anti-social behaviour"; "Enable residents to adopt healthier lifestyles by providing excellent leisure facilities and beautiful green spaces".

9. This section helps us to identify any disproportionate impacts. Please indicate in the table below whether the policy is likely to particularly benefit or disadvantage any of the 'protected characteristics'.

'Protected characteristic' group		Positive Impact	Explain how it could particularly benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could particularly disadvantage the group
Age	Older people (60+)	√	<p>The Strategic Plan is designed to work with and influence people in showing tolerance and in changing behaviours, to enable and create better local communities and better understanding.</p> <p>A welcoming and supportive borough will benefit all residents, whatever their personal circumstances or protected characteristics.</p>	None identified	See 10. below
	Younger people (17-25) and children (0-16)				
Disability	Physical		<p>As "Age" above. It aims to create opportunities for all residents in fulfilling their potential. It helps ensure Colchester is a welcoming and safe place with a friendly feel that embraces tolerance and diversity. This includes tackling anti-social behaviour such as disability harassment.</p>		
	Sensory				
	Learning				
	Mental health issues				
	Other – <i>specify</i>				
Ethnicity ⁴	White		<p>As "Age" above. It helps ensure Colchester is a welcoming and safe place with a friendly feel that embraces tolerance and diversity. This includes tackling anti-social behaviour such as racial harassment.</p>		
	Black				
	Chinese				
	Mixed Ethnic Origin				
	Gypsies/ Travellers				
	Other – <i>please state</i>				
Language	English not first language		<p>As "Age" above.</p>		

⁴ National Census 2011 categories are: Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Other Asian (Asian or Asian British), African, Caribbean, Other Black (Black or Black British), White and Black African, White and Asian, White and Black Caribbean (Mixed), British, Irish, Other White (White), Chinese, Other (Other Ethnic Group).

'Protected characteristic' group		Positive Impact	Explain how it could particularly benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could particularly disadvantage the group
Pregnancy and Maternity	Women who are pregnant or have given birth in last 26 weeks		It aims to address the increasing population – the borough's growth must be matched with opportunities for jobs, homes, infrastructure and community life, now and in the future.		
Religion or Belief	People with a religious belief (or none)	√	The Strategic Plan is designed to work with and influence people in showing tolerance and in changing behaviours, to enable and create better local communities and better understanding. This includes tackling anti-social behaviour such as sexual harassment.	√	
Sex	Men				
	Women				
Gender Reassignment ⁵	Transgender/ Transsexual				
Sexual Orientation	Bisexual, Heterosexual, Gay or Lesbian				
Marriage and Civil Partnership	People who are married or in a civil partnership				

10. If you have identified any negative impacts (above) how can they be minimised or removed?

- Not applicable. The Strategic Plan is an “overarching vision” for the borough. Individual policies and practices will support its implementation, and equality impact assessments will be part of this process. Negative impacts are more likely to be identified at that point – when the detail of implementation is being assessed. Any such negative impacts can then considered to see how they can be minimised or removed.

⁵ The protected characteristic of gender reassignment is defined by the Equality Act 2010 as “a person proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.” This is a personal process that may involve medical interventions such as counselling, psychotherapy, hormone therapy or surgery, but does not have to. NB: It is generally held that transgender people disguise their features or clothing to resemble their preferred sex, whereas transsexual people wish to change their body to completely resemble their preferred sex.

11. Could the policy discriminate⁶ against any 'protected characteristic', either directly or indirectly⁷?

- No.

Summary and findings of Initial Equality Impact Assessment

12. Please put a tick in the relevant box to confirm your findings, and what the next step is:

Findings	Action required
No negative impacts have been identified <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sign off screening and finish.
Negative impacts have been identified but have been minimised or removed <input type="checkbox"/>	Sign off screening and finish.
Negative impacts could not be minimised or removed <input type="checkbox"/>	Sign off screening and complete a full impact assessment – Section 2.
There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement. <input type="checkbox"/>	Sign off screening and complete a full impact assessment – Section 2.

13. Name and job title of person completing this form:

- Chris Reed, People and Performance Specialist.

14. Date of completion:

- December 2017.

15. Date for update or review of this screening:

- Not applicable – EQIAs are undertaken on a three-year basis, and that matches the 'life' of this Strategic Plan 2018-21. It will however be reviewed if circumstances demand.

⁶ The Council has a general duty to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation'. Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another in a comparable situation because of their 'protected characteristic' whether on grounds of age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, ethnicity; religion or belief; sex (gender), sexual orientation, or marriage and civil partnership. Indirect discrimination occurs when an apparently neutral provision or practice would nevertheless disadvantage people on the grounds of their 'protected characteristic'.