

Buckinghamshire County Council
 Equalities Impact Assessment Proforma

<p>Title of strategy / policy / service being assessed:</p>	<p>Modernising Local Government Business Case for a single unitary council for Buckinghamshire</p>
<p>Good impact assessment can help us manage demand and be a more successful, efficient organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the impact of our actions will help us to deliver services fairly, target resources where they are most needed and avoid unintended negative impacts for residents, other parts of the council or other service providers. • Communities with wide inequalities are less likely to self-help and more likely to be higher users of public sector services. • Cohesive, resilient and integrated communities are able to cope better with economic and environmental crisis and more likely to be able to provide services, take over community assets or volunteer. <p>Impact assessment also helps us meet our legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Act says people should not be discriminated against because of one or more relevant protected characteristic(s), when using, or seeking to use, any service provided publicly or privately, whether that service is paid for or not. Neither should they be discriminated against in employment, when seeking employment, or when engaged in occupations or activities related to work because of the relevant protected characteristic(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age (18+) • Pregnancy & maternity status • Sex • Marriage and civil partnership (employment related only) • Disability • Race • Sexual orientation • Gender Reassignment • Religion or belief 	
<p>More detailed guidance has been produced to accompany this proforma see intranet under A to Z>Community Cohesion and Equalities.</p>	

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Section A. To Assess or Not to Assess				
To determine whether an EIA is required, please read the questions below and indicate your answer by putting an X in the box to the right of the “Yes” or “No” at the end of each question.				
Does the service affect the public or staff directly?	Yes	✓	No	
Does it affect how other services are provided?	Yes	✓	No	
Is there information e.g. survey data or complaints that suggests that it is affecting particular groups of people?	Yes		No	✓
Does it have employment implications?	Yes	✓	No	
<p>If you have answered “Yes” to one or more of the questions listed above, you will need to continue with a full equalities impact assessment (EIA).</p> <p>However, if you have carried out an assessment of this strategy/policy or service in the past two years, for example, as part of the transformation programme, or there has been an external audit of the service, which has resulted in explicitly stated equalities outcomes, you will not need to continue with an in depth EIA. You will, instead, need to consider any gaps in relation to the groups identified under “Purpose” and agree actions/targets.</p> <p>If you have answered “No” to all of the above the statements, you will not need to continue with a full EIA because it is not relevant to the strategy/policy or service.</p>				

Section B. Reviewing the design	
Questions to consider	The Findings
<p>1. Why is the strategy/policy or service necessary? What are the key aims and objectives? What outcomes is it designed to achieve and for whom?</p>	<p>The proposal is to replace the county council and four district councils with a new single unitary council for Buckinghamshire which builds on the track record of the predecessor councils and provides a sustainable model to meet the challenges facing Buckinghamshire for 2020 and beyond.</p> <p>These challenges include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the financial challenges facing county and district councils; the county council has delivered annual savings totalling £145m since April 2010 and the county and district councils face further savings in excess of £30m between 2017-2020. - the major growth agenda; emerging local plans are currently planning for 50,000 new houses across the county - the demographic changes; by 2033, natural population changes will result in an additional 60,000 residents (even without housing growth); the population over the age of 65 is increasing significantly as are levels of disability, all of which increase the pressures on public services <p>Key aims of the proposal are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Leadership - Strong, visible and accountable leadership, speaking up with a single voice for Buckinghamshire on behalf of residents, businesses and partners • Local Empowerment - Local communities empowered to shape their own future, with improved involvement of local people in the choices that affect them • Service quality - Services that are simple to access, efficiently delivered and meet the needs of residents, communities and businesses, with faster, leaner decision making • Efficiency - Significant cost savings delivered and invested in priority outcomes adding value for both council and business rate tax payers; appropriate commercial activities developed to reduce the need for grant and taxpayer funding

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2. Consider your answers at question 1. **How have the needs of different groups of people, where relevant/appropriate, been taken into account?** What does needs assessment data tell you about who should be benefitting from the strategy/policy or using the service? What else do you know about people's needs or views? What information do you have from consultations/focus groups, national or local published research reports, satisfaction surveys, service monitoring data, benchmarking with other providers, demographic data or other information that has been used to formulate the design and delivery of the strategy/policy/ or service.

If you identify a gap in information, for example, about the needs of a particular group of people, include this as an action point in the equalities improvement plan.

Attached at Appendix 1 is an overview of the population of the proposed single unitary. Data relating to deprivation and known inequalities such as health are published on the county council's website www.buckscc.gov.uk along with existing strategies to address the issues.

In developing the business case, a significant range of engagement activity has taken place to seek views of different groups of residents and stakeholders including through public roadshows, workshops with residents, parish councils, voluntary sector and businesses, focus groups with young people and with users of children and adult services. In addition, Ipsos MORI were commissioned to carry out a representative household telephone survey and run 3 workshops with residents. The conclusions of this work were that any new model of local government for Buckinghamshire needs to address the following priorities:

- Retaining the quality of services
- Making sure services are easy to access
- Giving residents a say about services and acting on their concerns
- Ensuring transparency and accountability

These have been reflected in the business case as follows:

- Savings proposals will help protect investment in front line services and meet the needs of a growing population of social care users
- Access to service will be significantly improved for all groups, including those with protected characteristics, through the development of community hubs, improved digital service delivery, joined up services and a single point of contact for all customers
- Community board model will help residents engage with the unitary council and have their say

A larger organisation will have the capacity to invest in increased staffing capacity and expertise in relation to equalities and community development which will help improve the responsiveness and accountability of all services to residents, including those with protected characteristics.

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Questions to consider	The Findings
<p>3. Are other organisations responsible for delivering the strategy/policy or service? If yes, how have you incorporated the council's cohesion and equalities priorities into the procurement process or contractual arrangements? How is compliance monitored? What steps have you taken to reduce the council's legal liability where services are being delivered on our behalf? If not relevant, go on to question 4.</p>	<p>A range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations currently deliver services on behalf of both the County Council and the District Councils. The proposals will have implications for these providers in the longer term.</p> <p>A comprehensive register of contracts would be compiled during the transitional period. In the short term, existing contracts and liabilities would be transferred to the 'continuing authority' on Vesting Day and would be monitored through the contract management arrangements. In the longer term, a new unitary council would establish arrangements for reviewing and recommissioning all contracts. Such reviews will include an assessment of the cohesion and equalities impact of existing and future arrangements and possibly additional training where necessary.</p>
<p>Section C. Reviewing the implementation/delivery</p>	
<p>4. Does the strategy/policy need to be communicated to the public/our employees or does accessing the service depend on information being communicated to the public? If yes, how will this be achieved? Consider the information we already have about how our residents prefer us to communicate with them and consider the ways that different groups of people generally find out information. How do you or how will you ensure that communication is appropriate to meet the different communication needs of different groups of people? If not</p>	<p>Communication with employees, residents, businesses and partners will all be critical throughout the implementation of the proposal.</p> <p>Evidence about preferred communication styles indicates that successful communication needs to deploy a wide range of different channels and styles to reach different audiences, and also that messages need to be re-emphasised on a regular basis.</p> <p>A detailed communication strategy will be developed, with separate plans tailored to meet the needs of different audience groups including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees of county and district councils • Council Tax Payers • Families with Children • Young People (aged 13-24) • Vulnerable Adults • Businesses • Employees of the County and District Councils

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<p>relevant, go to question 5.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service providers • Partner agencies • Parish Councils • Voluntary and community sector organisations <p>Key channels will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print and digital media • Face to face briefings and roadshows • Hard copy literature in public venues –libraries, GP surgeries • Use of key communicators <p>The business case assumes £500k investment in external communication during the transitional period.</p>
<p>5. Is delivery of the strategy/policy or service dependent upon particular buildings, open space or mode of transport being used by the public? If yes, what facilities and transport access arrangements have been put in place to ensure that the needs of different groups of people have been addressed?</p>	<p>The business case identifies an ambition to establish a network of multi-agency community hubs to enable communities to access services from a place local to them, ensuring vulnerable residents are safeguarded as well as improving access for rural communities.</p> <p>The detailed design for each of the community hubs, including their locations, facilities and service offer, will be subject to EIAs to ensure that the needs of different groups of people in different localities are addressed. The design work will include consideration of the local transport links and accessibility of available buildings to operate from.</p>

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Questions to consider	The Findings
<p>6. Review any processes people need to go through to be able to use the service or to benefit from the strategy/policy. For example criteria that are applied to determine eligibility for receiving the service and the completion of forms. Do these processes/criteria effectively prevent groups of people from using the service or benefiting from the strategy/policy?</p>	<p>If the proposal for a single unitary council is implemented, the policies and processes of the existing five councils will be reviewed during the transition period, and will in due course be replaced with policies and processes of the new Council. Each of these will be subject to EIA screening to assess the impact of changes on service users and those with protected characteristics.</p> <p>The business case is clear that a new unitary council would design digital processes to achieve 24/7 access to services, including through a single website and customer account. The business case also states that no individual, group or community will be disadvantaged through a lack of digital access. A new unitary council would design services around the needs of users, for example providing a telephony service for complex enquiries and face to face support in the network of community hubs.</p>
<p>7. What particular skills and knowledge will relevant staff need to ensure that the strategy/policy is properly implemented or that the service is delivered appropriately to meet people’s individual needs?</p>	<p>The skills and knowledge needed by staff will vary according to their particular roles. Common across the new council will be a strong understanding of the organisation’s equalities and diversity policy. We know that the diversity of communities is varied across the county and it will be necessary to bring all employees up to a good standard of diversity and Prevent awareness so that they can discharge their responsibilities effectively.</p>
<p>Section D. Assessing for differential impact and discrimination</p>	
<p>Consider the answers given in questions 1 through to 7 and assess whether the strategy/policy or service results, or could result, in differential impacts on particular groups of people. Essentially you are looking to identify and deal with any actual or potential unfairness, disadvantage or discrimination. (See the</p>	<p>No issues have been identified that constitute unlawful disadvantage or discrimination.</p> <p>The business case sets out a high level ambition for the establishment of a new council. Many of the underpinning principles of the business case are supportive of our general equality duty – an outcome focussed approach and improved access to services for all residents, and particularly vulnerable individuals.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the proposal will deliver minimum annual cost savings of £18.2m compared with the current two tier system. These savings are primarily based on back office</p>

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<p>guidance notes for a more detailed explanation.)</p> <p>If you consider that there is a differential impact, or the potential for a differential impact, you will need to assess whether this constitutes discrimination (i.e. detrimental to a group or particular groups of people) and whether the impact is justifiable as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate business aim. You are required to give your reasons for this.</p>	<p>savings, property rationalisation, consolidation of systems, contract efficiencies and streamlined senior management and democratic structures.</p> <p>By joining together county and district functions, there will be opportunities for efficiencies through service transformation in due course. It is difficult to assess the impact of such changes at this stage. Those in receipt of social care services include a high proportion of groups with protected characteristics and so any changes to the delivery of these services would be likely to have an impact on these groups. As detailed proposals are developed for individual services, specific EIAs will need to be developed in each case.</p> <p>In terms of the impact on employees, it is anticipated that there will be some reductions of staffing numbers over time. As part of the transitional arrangements, it is envisaged that the county and district HR teams will need to share information to understand the potential impact on different staff groups and HR policies and processes will need to be developed and agreed that seek to mitigate any risks.</p>
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If you have identified a differential impact that constitutes illegal discrimination, you are required to take action to remedy this immediately.

If you have identified a differential impact that is justifiable or legitimate, you may need to consider what actions are necessary to mitigate its affect on particular groups of people. This arises out of the duty to promote good relations between people of different groups and is in keeping with the Council’s approach to “Strong & Cohesive Communities in Bucks”.

Ensure that these actions are listed in the attached equalities improvement plan.

If you do not have the authority to take the action required, you will need to alert the relevant service manager to your findings.

Section E. Ensuring continuous improvement

Questions to consider	The Findings
<p>9. What measures will you be using to monitor the impact of the</p>	<p>The new unitary council will need to establish its own equalities framework that ensures that the authority is fulfilling its responsibilities under the public sector equality duty.</p>

<p>strategy/policy or service over the next three years?</p> <p>The council is committed to mainstreaming equalities, ensuring that it is integrated into our performance management frameworks and subject to continuous improvement through performance monitoring. We also have legal duties to ensure we are not discriminating against groups of people in the provision of goods, services and facilities or in our role as an employer.</p> <p>Please refer to the council’s equalities monitoring guidance (see intranet) or contact the Research Team to decide what type of monitoring is appropriate and what information you will need to gather.</p> <p>Also consider whether you need have some targeted actions with particular groups of people to address the issues identified above. Please ensure that these are listed in the attached equalities improvement plan.</p>	<p>A joined up business intelligence function will provide the information systems and expertise to analyse, interpret and report on the impact of any changes to services on equalities groups.</p>
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Section F. Opportunities for community cohesion or promoting good relations between different groups of people

Community cohesion and equalities are priorities for Buckinghamshire County Council.

Community cohesion is the outcome of understanding and respect between different communities and a sense of identification with a wider community. In essence it’s about promoting a sense of connection, trust and belonging both within geographical communities and across groups of people. It is at risk where illegal discrimination exists, or is perceived to exist, when stereotypes and disinformation go

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unchallenged and where lack of knowledge about, or experience of, different groups of people leads to fearfulness and segregation.

Equalities in Buckinghamshire are at risk when we fail in our duty to provide an appropriate and professional service that takes account of the different needs of groups of people as a consequence of their colour, culture and ethnic origin, gender, disability, age, religion/belief or sexual orientation or as a result of living in a rural community, lower socio economic group or being a new group to this country and/or county (migrant worker, refugee or asylum seeker).

Questions to consider	The Findings
<p>10. Consider what opportunities and risks to the Council’s community cohesion and equalities priorities could arise, for example:</p> <p>(a) Are there ways in which your service could bring different groups of people together, for example to develop future provision through consultation exercises?</p> <p>(b) Are there ways in which existing groups could interact with the service, for example, as part of ongoing monitoring of service provision?</p> <p>(c) Could the way you provide the service bring different groups of people together to use the service?</p> <p>(d) Does the way in which your service is provided have the potential to lead to resentment between different groups of people? How can you compensate for perceptions of</p>	<p>As a county, Buckinghamshire has generally good levels of community cohesion as measured previously through successive residents’ surveys and responses to questions around residents’ sense of belonging, satisfaction with the local area as a place to live, whether residents from different backgrounds get on well together, ability to influence local decisions and perceptions of community safety locally. We also have high levels of volunteering</p> <p>However, there are a number of cohesion and equalities challenges that will need to continue to be addressed under the modernising local government agenda. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less affluent and elderly people in isolated rural settings; • An increase in our 65+ population with increasing disability • Disadvantaged White and Black African Caribbean and Pakistani children from poorer backgrounds who significantly underperform educationally in national as well as county terms; • Those living in small but significant pockets of relative deprivation – life expectancy varies by 11 years across the most and least deprived wards; • Although Buckinghamshire’s black and minority ethnic population is lower than the national average, issues of residential concentration, inequality and disadvantage, are in most respects similar to that found in most of England’s larger cities. • The major housing growth projected for the county will bring in many new people

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<p>preferential or differential treatment? Consider the role, or potential role, of the media and extremist groups when formulating your communication actions.</p> <p>(e) If the improvement plan identifies addressing a gap in the service for a particular group of people, have you also addressed the potential for perceptions of preferential treatment for the group? How will you ensure that people will understand the need for the actions proposed as a result of this impact assessment?</p> <p>Ensure that the actions you identify are put into the attached equalities improvement plan.</p>	<p>about whom little is known and for which there will need to be significant engagement work to enable new and existing communities to gel. Current estimates suggest that this could include a 62% increase in black and minority ethnic communities by 2031 in predominantly Wycombe and Aylesbury, already our 2 most ethnically diverse areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities appearing strong but who are insular with high levels of ‘bonding capital’ but lower levels of ‘bridging capital’ which can make engagement and two way information sharing and trust building challenging, for example the Gypsy Roma Traveller communities dotted in small sites around the county and some of our BAME communities. • Bucks has a moderately high profile in terms of Prevent, including with historical links to 7th July London bombings. Our largest faith minority is Muslim and largely of Pakistani origin and our own research (2010) identified there is resentment amongst this community that they were put under the spotlight because of the activities of a few. <p>Community cohesion is the outcome of effective and meaningful local engagement and decision making that ensures that any local authority provides services in the best interests of residents and that residents are empowered to shape what goes on locally and feel part of their local community.</p> <p>This is a significant consideration for any reorganisation of local government in Buckinghamshire and of substantial importance to the county’s residents and businesses. Through interviews and surveys we have been told that there is a real appetite for local people to be involved in local decisions and influence the wider county agenda. (44% of residents in Buckinghamshire surveyed by Ipsos MORI think that ‘giving people a say in the decisions that affect local services’ is the most important thing for local councils to consider).</p> <p>Residents and businesses have told us that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • want to be able to influence decision-making and get involved; • want understand how decision-making works and want be informed
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- want to have a clear line of sight
- Want to be able to hold decision-makers to public account;
- have trust in the fairness of the decision-making process;
- value clear and strong political leadership;

The locality working model proposed in the business case will go a long way to helping to meet these various challenges and strengthen further the levels of community cohesion across the county.

19 new 'Local' Community Boards would be formally constituted with powers to make decisions on local issue. They would have access to a combined total of £2m devolved funding and be supported by local engagement officers who would build networks across communities and third sector organisations encouraging collaboration and identifying those strengths and assets which can be built upon to tackle the evidence based issues most important to these communities.

A network of 19 community hubs in each Community Board area would enable residents to access a range of public services from a place local to them. It means residents, particularly vulnerable people who might be unable to travel very far, will be able to access a wide range of services, including third sector provision where appropriate, from a place that is local to them – all under one roof. Bringing all third sector organisations together will help to share best practice and build collaborative practices to support future sustainability.

And integral to the business case is a new Partnership Agreement with town and parish councils, who have a critical role to play in strengthening community spirit and supporting local communities to thrive. The new Partnership agreement would offer them choice about which services they take on together with the resources to carry them out to a high standard.

Working inclusively and transparently through this model will encourage greater integration and enable communities to work together on their common issues and challenges.

EQUALITIES IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Please list all the equalities actions and targets that result from the Equalities Impact Assessment (continue on separate sheets as necessary). These also need to be integrated into the relevant service plan for mainstreaming and performance management purposes.

Equalities Targets/Actions	Officer responsible	By when
Establish Equalities framework to be followed during the transition	Joint Implementation Team	April 2018
Pool HR data and establish joint HR processes	Joint Implementation Team	April 2018
Agree communication strategy, with detailed plans tailored to meet the needs of different audience groups	Joint Implementation Team	June 2017
Undertake EIAs on specific changes to service delivery, policy and processes	Lead officers, with oversight by PMO	According to the timescale for each change
Publish equalities objectives for the new council	Joint Implementation Team	April 2019

