

Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment v2 - Head of service review

Reference: ECIA542617665

Submitted: 21 September 2023 23:09 PM

Executive summary

Title of policy / decision: Harlow Gilston Garden Town Joint Committee

Policy / decision type: Cabinet Decision

Overview of policy / decision: The Decision is for ECC enter to a new Joint Committee, alongside four other partner local authorities. The new 'Harlow Gilston Garden Town Joint Committee' (HGGT JC) will be an equal partnership of the five authorities, led by nominated members including an elected ECC member. The HGGT JC will take decisions and commission initiatives that impact the Harlow sub-region, which includes all of Harlow district and parts to the north of Epping Forest District. The JC will create a robust governance framework, with democratic accountability, to plan and support future growth – with implications across district and county borders.

What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve?: The JC will become a relevant policy making body for the Harlow sub-region, focusing on garden communities to build sustainable, healthy neighbourhoods for the future that are climate resilient and contribute to net zero. The opportunity for the Harlow sub-region to attract high levels of new investment and new jobs, to enhance the quality of the built environment, and to deliver a step change in passenger transport and active travel provides will benefits to existing as well as future residents. The impact will be indirect – the JC will coordinate activity to achieve a greater positive impact than would be possible if the five member authorities did not collaborate formally.

Executive Director responsible for policy / decision: Tom Walker (Economy, Investment and Public Health)

Cabinet Member responsible for policy / decision: Lesley Wagland (Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning)

Is this a new policy / decision or a change to an existing one?: New policy / decision

How will the impact of the policy / decision be monitored and evaluated?: A senior officer group within ECC, with membership across several relevant disciplines and functions, will monitor progress regularly (monthly). The JC will be serviced by a staff team who will maintain a three-year business plan for activity. The JC plans to continue the commissioning of several quantitative and qualitative studies to understand specific issues (such as usage of different transport modes) and monitor quality of life indicators for residents.

Will this policy / decision impact on:

Service users: No

Employees: No

Wider community or groups of people: Yes

What strategic priorities will this policy / decision support?: Strong, Inclusive and Sustainable Economy, High Quality Environment, Health, Independence and Wellbeing for All Ages, A good place for Children and Families to Grow

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Economy?: Good jobs, Infrastructure, Future growth and investment, Green growth, Levelling up the economy

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Environment: Net zero, Transport and built environment, Green communities, Levelling up the environment

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Health: Healthy lifestyles

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Families: Levelling up outcomes for families

What geographical areas of Essex will the policy / decision affect?: Epping Forest, Harlow

Digital accessibility

Is the new or revised policy linked to a digital service (website, system or application)?: Yes

What steps you have taken to meet the digital accessibility: Accessibility has been reviewed by HGGT (in its existing form as a voluntary partnership): <https://hggd.co.uk/accessibility-statement>

How have you tested accessibility?: The HGGT website was tested by Shaw Trust Accessibility Services in October 2019

How will you monitor and maintain accessibility once it has gone live?: Upon formation of the JC, staff and leadership of HGGT will be tasked to assure accessibility is enhanced as the website is refreshed to reflect the change in governance. ECC staff will hold HGGT to account to assure a high overall standard of accessibility of information that is open, transparent and compliant, through use of digital and alternative media, and accessibility considerations for public meetings and public events.

Equalities - Groups with protected characteristics

Age

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Disability - learning disability

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Disability - mental health issues

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Disability - physical impairment

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Disability - sensory impairment

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Sex

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Gender reassignment

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Marriage / civil partnership

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Pregnancy / maternity

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Race

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Religion / belief

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Sexual orientation

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: The creation of Joint Committee for decision-making for the Harlow sub-region will ultimately result in new policies and initiatives in a range of areas, affecting residents and other stakeholders, but it is too early to define the content and therefore the impact of these. The decisions of the Joint Committee will themselves be subject to future equalities impact assessment, as the JC will need to fulfil the Public Sector Equality Duty as a public sector body itself.

Where ECC policies and strategies have been designed and adopted to create positive impacts on groups with protected characteristics, ECC officers and members of the Joint Committee will be able to advocate for wider adoption and adaptation across the areas of JC activity.

Levelling up - Priority areas & cohorts

Children and adults with SEND, learning disabilities or mental health conditions (taking an all-age approach)

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Children on Free School Meals

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Working families

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Young adults (16-25 who have not been in education, training or employment for around 6-12 months)

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Residents of Harlow

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Residents of Jaywick and Clacton

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Harwich

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Basildon (Town) housing estates

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Canvey Island

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Colchester (Town) - Housing Estates

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Rural North of the Braintree District

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: The Decision to enter a Joint Committee is clearly focused on Harlow, with the entirety of Harlow district falling under the proposed JC jurisdiction. The JC will coordinate and influence significant investment activity in Harlow including new public transport initiatives, new active travel infrastructure and sustainable travel initiatives. The JC will potentially have a strong influence on changes to the built environment through development and regeneration in Harlow, including in the town centre and at strategic growth sites on the edge of Harlow (including in Epping Forest district). The town centre and strategic sites present opportunities for enhanced public realm, open space, parks, leisure and cultural amenities, including the provision of services.

The impact on mobility is potentially highly significant: creating enhanced mobility and accessibility around neighbourhoods and wider places where people live is a factor in improving opportunities for education, employment and access to wider opportunities. 22% of households in Harlow do not have access to a car, and this proportion is higher for low-income families (i.e. Children on FSM), young adults, and adults with disabilities. The infrastructure for effective public transport services, and networks for safe walking and cycling, are particularly relevant. However, it is through subsequent decisions of the Joint Committee, which itself will be subject equalities impact assessments, that the scale and nature of potential impacts on different groups and cohorts will become apparent (for example in relation to public transport initiatives, active travel infrastructure and sustainable travel initiatives).

The Joint Committee will be a formal body for ECC Levelling Up governance to engage with, seeking coordination of activity.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: N/A

How could you strengthen any positive impact(s)?: Where ECC policies and strategies have been designed and adopted to create positive impacts for Levelling Up cohorts, ECC officers and members of the Joint Committee will be able to advocate for wider adoption and adaptation across the areas of JC activity.

Equalities - Inclusion health groups and other priority groups

Refugees / asylum seekers

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Homeless / rough sleepers

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

People who experience drug and alcohol dependence

Nature of impact: None

Offenders / ex-offenders

Nature of impact: None

Victims of modern slavery

Nature of impact: None

Carers

Nature of impact: None

Looked after children / care leavers

Nature of impact: None

The armed forces community (serving personnel and their families, veterans, reservists and cadets)

Nature of impact: None

People who are unemployed / economically inactive

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

People on low income

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Sex workers

Nature of impact: None

Ethnic minorities

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

People with multiple complex needs or multi-morbidities

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: A number of groups are subject to particular challenges in accessing a sufficient supply of affordable housing. This is generally a challenge for households and people on low income, but particularly affects those who are or have experience of being homeless or rough sleeping, refugees and asylum seekers, and those from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds. The Joint Committee is focused on coordinating activity to deliver a high level of sustainable growth, including 23,000 new homes across the Harlow sub-region by 2040. This housing will include a proportion of affordable housing, and a likely small amount of supported and specialist housing including new pitches and sites for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. The impact overall in each instance is considered low; the affordability of housing is strongly influenced by wider market forces (such as interest rates and the structure of pay in the labour market), alongside policy decisions which are made in central government (such as the amount of various housing-related benefits).

For people who are unemployed or economically inactive, the JC will coordinate policies and initiatives to attract additional investment and economic activity, likely to result in additional employment opportunities. The impact overall is considered low, as there are number of other factors which mean the impact of vacancies in a growing labour market does not necessarily translate to benefits for local unemployed or economically inactive residents (such as a match in skills and hours required/available, and the accessibility and commuting opportunities for workplaces).

For ethnic minorities, and people with multiple complex needs or multi-morbidities, it is too early for impact to be known. However, given that within these groups a higher proportion of people have no access to a car, more commonly face unemployment and under-employment, and more frequently experience housing deprivation, the initiatives of sustainable growth coordinated through the Joint Committee may (depending on their content and success) manifest positive impacts for people in these demographic groups.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: N/A

How could you strengthen any positive impact(s)?: Where ECC policies and strategies have been designed and adopted to create positive impacts on groups with health vulnerabilities, ECC officers and members of the Joint Committee will be able to advocate for wider adoption and adaptation across the areas of JC activity.

Equalities - Geographical Groups

People living in areas of high deprivation

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

People living in rural or isolated areas

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

People living in coastal areas

Nature of impact: None

People living in urban or over-populated areas

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: The Joint Committee will be

influencing the growth and regeneration of Harlow, which includes neighbourhoods which are classified as being highly deprived (through the Indices of Multiple Deprivation). The benefits to these neighbourhoods, alongside all neighbourhoods in Harlow, is in the form better coordinated initiatives to bring new housing, new sustainable travel infrastructure, new community infrastructure such as schools, and improvements to the wider built environment and accessible natural environment. Beyond the urban district of Harlow, benefits will also be felt by residents of small towns and villages in Epping Forest, near Harlow, where residents access important services in Harlow (such as schools, libraries, leisure, retail and transport interchange).

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: N/A

How could you strengthen any positive impact(s)?: The Joint Committee staff and members could benefit from analysis highlighting the geographic and demographic patterns of deprivation within Harlow. This would help assure that policies and interventions can be designed to maximise benefits to residents of areas of high deprivation, including Harlow town centre.

Families

Family formation (e.g. to become or live as a couple, the ability to live with or apart from children)

Nature of impact: None

Families going through key transitions e.g. becoming parents, getting married, fostering or adopting, bereavement, redundancy, new caring responsibilities, onset of a long-term health condition

Nature of impact: None

Family members' ability to play a full role in family life, including with respect to parenting and other caring responsibilities

Nature of impact: None

Families before, during and after couple separation

Nature of impact: None

Families most at risk of deterioration of relationship quality and breakdown

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: The impact on family life will be negligible. Indirectly, there is a possibility that where a lack of housing choice, or poor accessibility, are relevant factors in family formation or maintaining healthy family relationships, the Joint Committee's policies and initiatives have the potential to be a positive influence. However, because this impact is mediated through a number of other factors, the overall impact is considered to be negligible.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: N/A

Climate

Does your decision / policy involve development or re-development of buildings or infrastructure?: No

Does your decision / policy take place in, or make use of, existing buildings or infrastructure?: Yes

The use of existing buildings will always have a climate impact because it requires energy consumption. Please outline how you will mitigate against this impact: The Joint Committee will need to decide upon

formation on office premises to accommodate staff, and locations for publicly accessible meetings and events. Under voluntary arrangements this has been at Harlow District Council offices.

Does your decision / policy involve elements connected to transport, travel or vehicles? This includes travel needs / requirements of both service users and staff (including staff you're planning to recruit): Yes

Where are staff or service users coming from and how are they travelling?: The Joint Committee will need to decide upon formation on office premises to accommodate staff, and locations for publicly accessible meetings and events. Under voluntary arrangements this has been at Harlow District Council offices. This is in a sustainable location, accessible by a range of public transport and active travel. The voluntary HGGT partnership has championed the use of sustainable travel modes, including providing cargo bicycles available for loan to local businesses. Monitoring and evaluation of travel modes would aid in the overall effort to seek to minimise the environmental impact of JC activity.

If car travel is unavoidable, are you specifying electric cars and vehicles?: No

What is your transition plan to introduce electric vehicles?: Car travel is not specified

Are you undertaking a procurement exercise?: No

Does your decision / policy involve the purchase of goods or materials?: No

Will any waste be generated by this decision? This includes waste from construction, waste generated by service users / staff, and waste generated by replacing existing products / materials with new: No

Nature of impact

Built Environment / Energy: Positive

Sustainable Transport / Travel: Positive

Waste: None

Extent of impact

Built Environment / Energy: Medium

Sustainable Transport / Travel: Medium

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: The Joint Committee is focused on coordinating activity to deliver a high level of sustainable growth, including 23,000 new homes across the Harlow sub-region by 2040. This scale of growth is already planned for in adopted Local Plans among district authorities. The Joint Committee represents a key initiative to identify and realise opportunities for strong cross-border coordination, including with East Hertfordshire District Council and Hertfordshire County Council, which lie to the north of Harlow.

The carbon, energy, waste and climate-related policies governing new development already have a statutory basis set by central government and local planning authorities (district councils). The JC is likely to define, support and be a vehicle to bring scrutiny to uphold high standards of sustainability in the design of new development in the built environment.

The shift of travel patterns from private car use to a higher proportion of trips being made by sustainable travel modes is a founding principle of the Harlow Gilston Garden Town initiative. The long-term target is for 60% of travel in new garden communities to be by sustainable modes (walking, cycling and public transport); and for 50% of trips in the existing Harlow urban area to be made by sustainable modes. The Joint Committee will support mode shift by creating a strategy for the reinvestment of over £100m of government infrastructure funding, alongside additional contributions from developers of new homes and communities. This 'Rolling Infrastructure Fund' will create new and improved infrastructure for walking, cycling and passenger transport, enabling and encouraging greater low carbon and zero carbon mobility.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: N/A

Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

Does your ECIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more of the groups / areas identified?: No

Details of person completing the form

I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance: I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance

Date ECIA completed: 29/08/2023

Name of person completing the ECIA: Jonathan Schifferes

Email address of person completing the ECIA: jonathan.schifferes@essex.gov.uk

Your function: Economy, Investment and Public Health

Your service area: Sustainable Growth

Your team: Housing Growth and Garden Communities

Are you submitting this ECIA on behalf of another function, service area or team?: No

Email address of Head of Service: steve.evison@essex.gov.uk