

Equality Impact Assessment - head of service review

Reference: EQIA213571826

Submitted: 03 June 2020 17:37 PM

Executive summary

Title of policy or decision: Minor amendment to the Statement of Community Involvement document

Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy (or decision): The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a statutory document (under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004), which sets out this authority's commitments to the level of community involvement in the County Council's preparation of Local Plan Documents and planning applications.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, updates to government guidance in relation to planning procedures have made it necessary to update the document to ensure it complies with planning law for future consultations on policy plans and planning applications.

An additional paragraph needs adding to the document's Introduction to explain that no policy shall apply if and to the extent that, as the result of an epidemic/pandemic, advice from the government or the Director of Public Health is issued which makes it impossible or inadvisable to comply with any policy in the document.

Due to lock-down and social distancing measures, paper copies of planning applications and policy plans are not currently available to view at the locations specified within the SCI. Though this is a temporary situation, the new paragraph would remain within the document after specified locations are open / the Covid-19 pandemic no longer effects planning processes so to cover the service in case of future pandemics/epidemics/changes to government guidance.

What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve?: Transform the council to achieve more with less

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Transform the council to achieve more with less: Re-imagine how residents' needs can be met in a digital world

Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project?: a change to an existing policy, practice or project

Please provide a link to the document / website / resource to which this EqIA relates:

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/minerals-waste-planning-policy/statement-community-involvement>

Please upload any documents which relate to this EqIA, for example decision documents:

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/minerals-waste-planning-policy/statement-community-involvement>

Assessing the equality impact

Use this section to record how you have assessed any potential impact on the communities likely to be affected by the policy (or decision): This amendment to the SCI is driven purely by government advice during the Covid 19 pandemic. Not placing paper copies of policy planning documents at specified locations is temporary and cannot be mitigated against as these locations are currently closed to the public. The planning documents in question will, as always, be available to view on the ECC website. From previous amendments to the SCI and planning consultations, it is known that the elderly (age) are the one group that could be disadvantaged, as viewing documents electronically is not always possible.

However, from previous surveys on libraries / local council offices it is known that the numbers of people viewing paper copies of the planning documents has greatly decreased and it has been a number of years since a member of the public has contacted the planning team asking to view copies.

Does or will the policy or decision affect:

Service users: Yes

Employees: No

The wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities: Yes

Which geographical areas of Essex does or will the policy or decision affect?: All Essex

Will the policy or decision influence how organisations operate?: No

Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources?: No

Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council's other policies?: No

Is the new or revised policy linked to a digital service (website, system or application)?: No

Please describe the steps you have taken to meet the digital accessibility requirements:

Please describe the steps you have taken to test the accessibility of the website, system or application:

Please describe the steps you have taken to maintain accessibility once it has gone live:

Description of impact

Description of Impact. If there is an impact on a specific protected group tick box, otherwise leave blank. You will be given the opportunity to rate identified impacts as positive, negative or neutral on the next page: Age

I confirm that I have considered the potential impact on all of the protected characteristics: I confirm that I have considered the potential impact on all of the protected characteristics

Describe any actions that have already been taken to mitigate negative impacts on any of the protected characteristics: This amendment to the SCI is driven purely by government advice during the Covid 19 pandemic. Not placing paper copies of policy planning documents at specified locations is temporary and cannot be mitigated against as these locations are currently closed to the public. The planning documents in question will, as always, be available to view on the ECC website.

Age

Nature of impact: Adverse

Please provide more details about the nature of impact: The elderly could be impacted if they do not have access to or the ability to use the internet.

Extent of impact: Medium

Please provide more details about the extent of impact: Elderly people in the community that do not have access to the internet at home will not be able to access paper copies of planning documents which would normally be available to view at Essex libraries, local council offices and County Hall.

Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

Does your EqIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one

or more equality groups?: Yes

What are the mitigating actions?: The actions to be taken (no paper copy documents in specified locations) is a temporary measure and will cease once these locations (libraries/local council offices/County Hall) are open to the public once again.

Should a member of the public request to be sent a paper copy of a planning document during the Covid-19 lock-down situation then due consideration would be given.

Date they will be achieved: 01/09/2020

Which characteristics do these mitigating actions apply to?: Age

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 EqIA completed: 03/06/2020

Name of person completing the EqIA: Rebecca Rushmer

Email address of person completing the EqIA: Rebecca.Rushmer@essex.gov.uk

Your function: Economy, Localities & Public Health

Your service area: Planning Service

Your team: County Planning

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

Email address of Head of Service: graham.thomas@essex.gov.uk