

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) FORM

Name of Policy:	Grants to Voluntary Organisations
Lead Officer (responsible for assessment):	Lewis Bage, Community Project & Engagement Officer
Department:	Community & Leisure Services
Others Involved in the Assessment (i.e. peer review, external challenge):	
Date EIA Completed:	14/02/2016

What is an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)?

As part of any effective policy development process, it is important to consider any potential risks to those who will be affected by the policy's aims or by its implementation. The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process helps us to assess the implications of our decisions on the whole community, to eliminate discrimination, tackle inequality, develop a better understanding of the community we serve, target resources efficiently, and adhere to the transparency and accountability element of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The word 'policy', in this context, includes the different things that the Council does. It includes any policy, procedure or practice - both in employment and service delivery. It also includes proposals for restructuring, redundancies and changes to service provision.

(a) **What is the policy trying to achieve?** i.e. What is the aim/purpose of the policy? Is it affected by external drivers for change? What outcomes do we want to achieve from the policy? How will the policy be put into practice?

The paper seeks approval for an annual grant contribution as part of the 2016-17 Service Level Agreements with the Citizens Advice Rural Cambs, Rural Cambs Newmarket Advice and Voluntary and Community Action East Cambs (VCAEC).

The District Council recognises that the voluntary and community sector (VCS) plays a crucial role in meeting a wide variety of community needs, including supporting the vulnerable and improving community cohesion. The Council has historically supported the VCS through the provision of funding linked to service level agreements with Voluntary and Community Action East Cambs, and to the Citizens Advice Bureaus that support clients living within East Cambridgeshire.

(b) **Who are its main beneficiaries?** i.e. who will be affected by the policy?

The main beneficiaries are the residents, community and voluntary groups who access the services provided by the three organisations. Typically those accessing the Citizens Advice service are some of the most vulnerable in the community – those in debt, often with mental health issues.

VCAEC provides support to 145 voluntary groups and also runs two of its own discrete projects which support older people, those without their own transport, people with disabilities and with mental health issues.

(c) Is the EIA informed by any information or background data (quantitative or qualitative)? i.e. consultations, complaints, applications received, allocations/take-up, satisfaction rates, performance indicators, access audits, census data, benchmarking, workforce profile etc.

The demand on the Citizens Advice service has increased in recent years and is continuing to rise as the impact of welfare reform becomes evident. The District Council financial contribution to these community support organisations is essential to their sustainability and ability to deliver the services that support the most vulnerable.

The core funding provided to VCAEC is critical in helping to build capacity in communities. As public services retreat, communities are under increasing pressure to meet their own needs. The focus of this work is likely to be on supporting an aging population and reducing rural isolation through initiatives such as the Helping Hands and Social Car Schemes.

(d) Does this policy have the potential to cause a positive or negative impact on different groups in the community, on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics? (please tick all that apply)

Ethnicity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religion and Belief	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender Reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Caring Responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please explain any impact identified: i.e. What do you already know about equality impact or need? Is there any evidence that there is a higher or lower take-up by particular groups? Have there been any demographic changes or trends locally? Are there any barriers to accessing the policy or service?

The Citizens Advice services and VCAEC rely on core funding from the District Council (and other local authority partners) to continue to operate. If the grant was not awarded there is a high probability that some - if not all - of the services would cease to exist in East Cambs.

(e) Does the policy have a differential impact on different groups?	YES/NO/Na
(f) Is the impact adverse (i.e. less favourable)?	YES/NO/Na
(g) Does it have the potential to disadvantage or discriminate unfairly against any of the groups in a way that is unlawful?	YES/NO/Na

(h) How have you engaged stakeholders in gathering evidence or testing the policy proposals? Who was involved, how and when where they engaged? Does the evidence show potential for differential impact? How will you mitigate any negative impacts? Where there is the potential for an adverse impact that cannot be addressed immediately, these should be highlighted in your recommendations and objectives at the end of the EIA.

As part of the Service Level Agreements, the Citizens Advice services and VCAEC are required to provide 6 monthly 'State of the Community' reports, highlighting emerging areas of concern. In addition to providing a feel for the direction of travel for the organisation, the reports identify community issues that the Council could help address through partnership working or by changing the way we deliver council services.

The performance monitoring data supplied by the three organisations also provides evidence of the high level of demand for the services they provide.

* The Consultation Register is available to assist staff in consulting with the Council's stakeholders.

(i) Summarise the findings of your research and/or consultation (please use a separate sheet if necessary).

If the SLAs are renewed for a further year with the associated grant funding, there will be no negative impact on the three organisations, and thus no negative impact on the communities or individuals that would be affected if their services were withdrawn.

(j) What are the risks associated with the policy in relation to differential impact and unmet needs/requirements? i.e. reputation, financial, breach of legislation, service exclusion, lack of resources, lack of cooperation, insufficient budget etc.

If the SLAs were not renewed and support was no longer provided by the Citizens Advice service and VCAEC to residents and communities in East Cambs, there would be a significant impact on community resilience and an increased reliance on the public sector to provide solutions (and funding) to address a wide variety of social issues. The District Council does not have the resource to meet this potential gap.

(k) Use the information gathered in the earlier stages of your EIA to make a judgement on whether there is the potential for the policy to result in unlawful discrimination or a less favourable impact on any group in the community, and what changes (if any) need to be made to the policy.

Option 1:	No major change - the evidence shows that the policy is robust and no potential for discrimination.	
Option 2:	Adjust the policy - to remove barriers or to better promote equality.	
Option 3:	Continue the policy - despite potential for adverse impact or missed opportunity to promote equality, provided you have satisfied yourself that it does not unlawfully discriminate.	
Option 4:	Stop and remove the policy – if the policy shows adverse effects that cannot be justified.	

(l) Where you have identified the potential for adverse impact, what action can be taken to remove or mitigate against the potential for the policy to unlawfully discriminate or impact less favourably on one or more communities in a way that cannot be justified? Include key activities that are likely to have the greatest impact (max. 6). Identified actions should be specified in detail for the first year but there may be further longer term actions which need to be considered. To ensure that your actions are more than just a list of good intentions, include for each: the person responsible for its completion, a timescale for completion, any cost implications and how these will be addressed. It is essential that you incorporate these actions into your service plans.

If the SLAs are renewed for a further year with the associated grant funding, there will be no negative impact on the three organisations, and thus no negative impact on the communities or individuals that would be affected if their services were withdrawn.

If the recommendation is approved, new SLAs will be drawn up by the Community Project & Engagement Officer ready to take effect from 1st April 2016.

This completed EIA will need to be countersigned by your Head of Service. **Please forward completed and signed forms to the Principal HR Officer.**

All completed EIAs will need to be scrutinised and verified by the Council's Equal Opportunities Working Group (EOWG) and published on the Council's Intranet to demonstrate to local people that the

Council is actively engaged in tackling potential discrimination and improving its practices in relation to equalities. Please be aware that may be asked to attend a half-an-hour session to summarise the findings of the EIA to the Scrutiny and Verification panel.

Signatures:

Completing Officer: _____ **Date:** _____

Head of Service: _____ **Date:** _____