

Impact and Needs/Requirements Assessment (INRA)

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| Name of Policy: | Polling Districts, Polling Stations and Polling Places Review |
| Lead Officer (responsible for assessment): | John Hill Returning Officer/Joan Cox Electoral Services Officer |
| Department: | Democratic Services |
| Others Involved in the Assessment (i.e. peer review, external challenge): | |
| Date INRA Completed: | 15 December 2016 |

'Policy' needs to be understood broadly to include all Council policies, strategies, services, functions, activities and decisions.

(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?

To ensure that people have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and to ensure reasonable and practicable accessibility for people with disabilities.

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

The electorate of the District.

(c) **Is the INRA 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.

Consultations with all District and County Councillors for East Cambridgeshire; Parish Councils; local MPs; Political Parties; the local Access Group; the County Council; relevant consultees on the Consultation Register. Public notified via public notices, information on the Council's website. In addition feedback on the suitability of Polling Stations was requested as part of the post - Police and Crime Commissioner Elections and the EU Referendum review process.

(d) **Does this policy have the potential to cause an impact (positive, negative or neutral) on different groups in the community, on the grounds of (please tick all that apply):**

Ethnicity
Gender
Disability

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|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Age
Religion and Belief
Sexual Orientation

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|-------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please explain any impact identified (positive, negative or neutral): 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?

Proposed changes to polling stations regarded as positive to improve facilities provided and facilitate better access for particular groups in the community such as mothers with young children, elderly and people with disabilities.

Any changes may impact on a small number of local residents in terms of a longer travelling distance to proposed new polling station and limitations of public transport to achieve this, thereby more likely to affect the elderly or disabled. But balance has to be struck to ensure that the majority of the electorate use facilities that are of a reasonable and convenient nature in both location and distribution throughout the Polling District. Also because largely dependent on hire of community facilities, can be limited choice in particular areas.

However, this can be mitigated by the offer of a postal vote to any person not wishing to travel to a new or existing Polling Station.

(e) Does the policy have a differential impact on different groups?

YES

(f) Is the impact *adverse* (i.e. less favourable) on one or more groups?

Sometimes

(g) Does it have the potential to disadvantage or discriminate unfairly against any of the groups in a way that is unlawful?

NO

(h) What additional information is needed to provide a clear picture of how the activity is impacting on different communities and how will you collect this information, i.e. expert groups, further research, consultation* etc? Where there are major gaps in information that cannot be addressed immediately, these should be highlighted in your recommendations and objectives at the end of the INRA.

Additional Information already gathered as part of the consultation process on Polling Places review (see (c) above) and from Election data held by Electoral Services Officer.

* The Consultation Register is available to assist staff in consulting with the Council's stakeholders. If you are consulting on a new or revised policy contact the HR Manager.

(i) Do you envisage any problems with these methods of information collection? i.e. not accessible to all, timescale not long enough to obtain all of the necessary information, translation facilities not available, insufficient resources etc.

No problems

(j) If it has been possible to collect this additional information, summarise the findings of your research and/or consultation (please use a separate sheet if necessary).

Results of Consultation exercise are summarised in report to Council on Polling Places Review.

We have received the following feedback from the Access Group:

'We are grateful that Democratic Services have made considerable effort in the last few years to make polling stations and voting procedure, on election day, accessible to all as far as is reasonably practical: Could you tell us the following:

1. Are there any new polling stations or changes to current polling stations? If so, do they meet the standard you require, - eg parking, level access, signage, unobstructed entrance etc?
2. Were there any complaints about access after previous elections? If so have they been addressed?

We have received no complaints.

We are assuming that there are always at least 2 clerks at the polling station so someone is available to offer help if necessary.'

Our response was:

There have been a couple of changes to polling stations recently, we no longer use the Cherry Tree Public House and these electors go to The Walter Gidney Pavilion but in a separate room, and Walter Gidney are currently doing some improvements to the access. We also moved the polling station in Burwell from the parish reading rooms to the Baptist Church which seems to work better, as there is more space available for the growing electorate.

We now use the larger room at the Methodist Church in Ely, and Soham Town Rangers Football Club both for better access and for the growing electorate. We feel that they meet the standards but we do send out polling station inspectors for each election to address and report back any issues.

We did not receive any complaints about access after the elections but have already received one comment for the review regarding access at Ely Methodist Church, we can address their concerns regarding signage but have forwarded the comments regarding street lighting on to the County Council.

Some of the smaller polling stations only have one clerk and the presiding officer but they are all trained to offer assistance if necessary.

We have also received the following comments:

- We have received feedback for HI1 from a resident regarding the external doors being heavy to open, clearer signage to identify which table to go to, particularly at busy periods, the street lighting is poor (which has been referred to the County Council) and the car park in St Marys Street is often full.
- We have received feedback from a resident regarding the need to use threshold ramps at Bottisham, and also commenting on crowding during busy periods (4.30 to 8.30) and also commented on the use of the two schools if the RBL closed.

(k) 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.

Could be an impact in terms of people without access to a vehicle or dependent on public transport, e.g. elderly, people with disabilities, but can be mitigated by the offer of a postal vote to any person not wishing to travel to a new or existing Polling Station.

(l) Use the information gathered in the earlier stages of your INRA 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.

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| Option 1: | No major changes, the evidence shows 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. | |
| Option 4: | Stop and remove the policy – if the policy shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination it must be stopped and removed or changed. | |

(m) 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.

Could be an impact in terms of people without access to a vehicle or dependent on public transport, e.g. elderly, people with disabilities, but can be mitigated by the offer of a postal vote to any person not wishing to travel to a new or existing Polling Station.

This completed INRA will need to be countersigned by your Head of Service. **Please forward completed and signed forms to Nicole Pema, Principal HR Officer.**

All completed INRAs 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 you will be asked to attend a half-an-hour session to summarise the findings of the INRA to the EOWG Verification panel.

Signatures:

Completing Officer: _____ **Date:** _____

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