

**Impact and Needs/Requirements Assessment (INRA)**

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

**‘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

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

Age  
Religion and Belief  
Sexual Orientation

<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 Team Leader.

\* 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 Principal HR Officer.

**(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 feedback from the Access Group: I write on behalf of Cambridge Access Group. We would like to make the following comments:

Having spoken to contacts and members who vote in a selection of polling places throughout the district we have had no reports of access problems.

I made a site visit to Mepal Village Hall to view the car park surface and was pleased to see re-surfacing taking place.

A member made a site visit to Fassage Hall Lode. She spoke to voters there and agrees that parking for those with restricted mobility is not ideal; however as there are no alternative venues, having a polling station within the village for the convenience of the majority of voters made sense, bearing in mind other methods of voting are available.

We agree the gravel car park surface at Coveney Village Hall is also not ideal but as above, there are no alternative sites in the village.

Installing a temporary WC at the Chettisham Polling Station is a sensible solution.

We would further like to make comment on the provision made to assist voters:

There is well advertised opportunity to vote by post or proxy.

Step free access is ensured at all polling stations

Aids are provided to assist voters in accessible polling stations.

Staff training is carried out to ensure they can assist voters when needed.

Seating is provided in case of queuing.

Taking into account the above comments, we consider the Electoral Services Department of ECDC have made reasonable adjustments and provision to accommodate those with disabilities, enabling them to have access to the democratic process. Thank you for your hard work ensuring access to this service.

We have also received the following comments:

- I would like to support the Returning Officer's proposals on PDR as these appear logical, reasonable and practicable. I believe these meet the requirements and needs of the electors, particularly in view of the availability of a well organised postal voting option.
- Please can you inform me as to why my polling station is, and has been for many previous elections, a church? Would it not be more considerate and inclusive to source a secular and neutral venue for a polling station? **We responded:** Other areas have been considered in the past but at present there is not a suitable alternative venue to use.

**(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.**

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:** \_\_\_\_\_