

Chesterfield Borough Council Equality Impact Assessment - Preliminary Assessment Form

<i>Title of the policy, project, service, function or strategy:</i>		Introduction of Standing Orders to enable remote meetings
<i>Service Area:</i>	Policy and Communications	
<i>Section:</i>	Democratic Services	
<i>Lead Officer:</i>	Gerard Rogers	
<i>Date of assessment:</i>	April 2020	
<i>Is the policy, project, service, function or strategy:</i>		
<i>Existing</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Changed</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>New / Proposed</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Section 1 – Clear aims and objectives

1. What is the aim of the policy, project, service, function or strategy?
Under the Covid-19 restrictions, all non-essential travel has been restricted and social distancing measures are in force. In addition a large proportion of the Council's elected members and some employees have been advised to self-isolate for a period of 12 weeks due to underlying health conditions, age or pregnancy. This has impacted on the Council's existing governance arrangements and as many of the Council's committee meetings would be inquorate and most Council premises are closed to the public. Emergency delegations were approved by the Standards and Audit Committee on 19 March, 2020 which allowed essential decision making to continue using delegated powers until further guidance and legislation was issued by the Government. New legislation has now been introduced (Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020) and came into force on 4 April 2020 to enable the Council to hold meetings without all, or any, of the members being physically present in a room. The Legal and Democratic Services team have been working with the ICT service to prepare a virtual meeting system that will enable decision making bodies to meet remotely; the new standing orders provide the procedural rules for the remote meetings.
2. Who is intended to benefit from the policy and how?

All members and employees have been directed to travel to work only if it is absolutely necessary and many have been advised to self-isolate for 12 weeks. The introduction of remote meetings will enable members and officers to work from home and still take part in committee meetings. It will also ensure robust decision making by providing for decisions to be reached through committee discussion and a majority vote.

Residents of the borough will also benefit from the new procedures. The remote meetings will be live streamed on the internet which will provide openness, transparency and accountability in decision making. The virtual meeting system will also enable the public to be involved in decision making either through viewing the meetings or taking part when required.

Training on taking part in remote meetings will be provided to elected members. A couple of members do not have Council ICT equipment which will need addressing as a matter of urgency. In addition, support will be offered to ensure members, officers and members of the public who are required to take part in a meeting and have a disability are able to access meetings. These reasonable adjustments will need to be provided remotely and on an individual basis.

3. What outcomes do you want to achieve?

- Allowing business to be transacted remotely and re-instating committee meetings.
- Complying with legislation by enabling remote working and providing access to meetings for members, officers and the public.
- Allowing members to attend meetings without being physically present which will support members in satisfying the 6-month rule for attendance at meetings.
- Enabling elected members, officers and members of the public to contribute to meetings and decision-making processes.
- Ensuring that there is an appropriate procedure in place for conducting remote meetings which ensures all parties can be heard (and seen where possible) and are provided with opportunities to speak.
- A clear and transparent process for recording the views of committee members.

Section 2 – What is the impact?

4. Summary of anticipated impacts

	Potentially positive impact	Potentially negative impact	No disproportionate impact
Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability and long term conditions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender and gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Marriage and civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pregnant women and people on parental leave	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ethnicity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Religion and belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Section 3 – Recommendations and monitoring

If you have answered that the policy, project, service, function or strategy could potentially have a negative impact on any of the above characteristics then a full EIA will be required.

5. Should a full EIA be completed for this policy, project, service, function or strategy?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
<p><i>Please explain the reasons for this decision:</i></p> <p>The new procedures will enable members, officers and the public to have an active role in meetings which they are currently unable to take part in due to the Covid-19 restrictions. It also paves the way for decision-making meetings to be more accessible to the public in the longer term by introducing the facility to live stream on the Council’s website. The procedural rules ensure that the meetings are conducted appropriately and provide instructions that seek to mitigate the risks posed by hosting online meetings such as limits on bandwidths or interruptions.</p> <p>There is a need for training to be provided to ensure members, officers and the public can access the virtual meeting system. It will be challenging to deliver this training and provide support to members to access the system as this will also need to be provided remotely.</p> <p>There are no decision-making bodies able to take place under the current restrictions therefore the benefits of the procedures to allow remote meetings are greater than the disadvantages, many of which can be addressed over time as members and officers become more familiar with the system and further training can be provided.</p>		

Section 6 – Knowledge management and publication

Please note the draft EIA should be reviewed by the appropriate Service Manager and the Policy Service **before** WBR, Lead Member, Cabinet, Council reports are produced.

Reviewed by Head of Service/Service Manager	Name:	Donna Reddish
	Date:	14.04.20
Reviewed by Policy Service	Name:	Donna Reddish
	Date:	14.04.20
Final version of the EIA sent to Policy Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Decision information sent to Policy Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	