

EQUALITY SCREENING

Equality Impact Assessment guidance should be considered when completing this form.

POLICY/FUNCTION/ACTIVITY	LEAD OFFICER
Digital Transformation Strategy	Linda Norman

A. What is the aim of this policy, function or activity? Why is it needed? What is it hoped to achieve and how will it be ensured it works as intended? Does it affect service users, employees or the wider community?

The Digital Transformation Strategy sets out an action plan of improvements which aligns to the Council's Corporate Business Plans and underlying strategies ensuring a cohesive and impactful approach to local service delivery benefiting service users, employees and the wider community.

B. Is this policy, function or activity relevant to equality? Does the policy, function or activity relate to an area in which there are known inequalities, or where different groups have different needs or experience? Remember, it may be relevant because there are opportunities to promote equality and greater access, not just potential for adverse impacts or unlawful discrimination. The Protected Characteristics are; Sex, Age, Disability, Race, Religion and Beliefs, Sexual Orientation, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity.

A well-crafted digital transformation strategy can be a powerful tool to promote equality and inclusion for all areas of the community:

Improved Access to Services:

- Online Services: Providing services online, such as license renewals and benefit applications, enables councils to offer more accessible options for residents who may have mobility challenges or hectic schedules, ensuring easier access for all.
- Multilingual Support: Websites and online forms with translation options can remove language barriers for non-native English speakers.
- Accessibility Features: Ensuring websites and applications comply with accessibility standards (screen reader compatibility, clear design) allows people with disabilities to use them effectively.

Enhanced Citizen Engagement:

- Digital Communication Channels: Leveraging social media, online forums (such as Citizen Panels), and surveys opens up innovative avenues for residents to express their views and participate in council decisions, especially for those unable to attend in-person meetings.
- Transparency and Open Data: Publishing council data (budgets, spending reports) online in an open and accessible format fosters transparency and empowers residents to hold the council accountable.

Bridging the Digital Divide:

- Digital Skills Training: By providing digital skills training programs, councils can empower their staff to enhance their proficiency with digital tools, leading to more efficient and effective work practices within the organisation.
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Things to Consider:

- Data Privacy: The council's digital strategy should prioritize data security and resident privacy, especially when collecting sensitive information online.
- Digital Exclusion: Be mindful that not everyone has access to the internet or digital devices. Maintain alternative channels (phone lines, physical offices) for those who cannot access services digitally.

By following these principles, Runnymede can leverage digital transformation to create a more inclusive and equitable environment for residents, staff and the community.

In reviewing the strategy, there appears to be:

- No negative impact on an individual's age
- No negative impact on a person's disability
- No negative impact on gender
- No negative impact on households where a family member may be pregnant
- No negative impact on an individual's transgender
- No impact as all couples are treated the same
- No negative impact on race or ethnicity
- No impact on an individual's religion or belief
- No negative impact on an individual's sexual orientation

If the policy, function or activity is considered to be relevant to equality then a full Equality Impact Assessment may need to be carried out. If the policy function or activity does not engage any protected characteristics then you should complete Part C below. Where Protected Characteristics are engaged, but Full Impact Assessment is not required because measures are in place or are proposed to be implemented that would mitigate the impact on those affected or would provide an opportunity to promote equalities please complete Part C.

C. If the policy, function or activity is not considered to be relevant to equality, what are the reasons for this conclusion? Alternatively, if there it is considered that there is an impact on any Protected of Characteristics but that measures are in place or are proposed to be implemented please state those measures and how it/they are expected to have the desired result. What evidence has been used to make this decision? A simple statement of 'no relevance' or 'no data' is not sufficient.

This policy is anticipated to positively affect residents, staff, and the broader community by enhancing the Council's accessibility through digital means, while preserving traditional communication methods. Although no immediate impact on any of the nine protected characteristics has been identified, the policy's implementation will be monitored throughout the strategy's duration. Any impacts detected will be addressed accordingly.

This screening assessment will need to be referred to the Equality Group for challenge before sign-off.

Date completed: 15.03.24

Sign-off by senior manager: Linda Norman

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

SCOPING

1. What aspects of the policy function or activity are particularly relevant to equality? Other aspects should not necessarily be excluded from the assessment, but attention should be focused on the most important areas and include which of the equality strands the policy function or activity is relevant to. Diversity within the strands should also be considered. Please consider whether any comments made in Part B of the Screening form are relevant here.

A well-crafted digital transformation strategy can be a powerful tool to promote equality and inclusion for all areas of the community:

Access and Inclusion:

- **Digital Literacy:** The policy should acknowledge the digital divide and outline strategies to bridge it. This might involve digital skills training programs, particularly for residents in disadvantaged communities or older age groups.
- **Accessibility Standards:** The policy should mandate that all council-developed digital tools (websites, apps, online forms) comply with accessibility standards. This ensures people with disabilities can use them effectively (e.g., screen reader compatibility, clear design).
- **Multilingual Support:** Consider offering multilingual options on council websites and online forms to remove language barriers for non-native English speakers.

Data and Privacy:

- **Data Collection:** The policy should clearly define what data the council collects digitally, how it's used, and how resident privacy is protected. Transparency builds trust and ensures residents feel their information is handled responsibly.
- **Data Security:** Robust digital security measures are crucial. The policy should outline safeguards against data breaches and unauthorized access to sensitive information.

Workforce Considerations:

- **Upskilling Staff:** The digital transformation may require new skills from staff. The policy should address staff training and development to ensure everyone can adapt and thrive in the new digital environment.
- **Remote Work Options:** A digital strategy might open doors for flexible work arrangements. The policy should consider how to ensure equal opportunities for promotion and career progression regardless of location.

Community Engagement:

- **Alternative Channels:** While digital tools are valuable, the policy should acknowledge that not everyone has internet access or digital devices. Maintain alternative channels like phone lines and physical offices for those who can't access services digitally.
- **Digital Inclusion Programs:** The policy could explore initiatives like providing support for residents who are digitally excluded including access or public Wi-Fi hotspots in community centres and remote Council owned sites to promote broader internet adoption.
- **Accessibility of Online Communication:** Moving to more for video content, captions for audio recordings, and plain language summaries of complex documents to ensure everyone can access council information online.

The Digital Transformation strategy covers many of these themes this creating a more equitable and inclusive environment for both staff and the community they serve.

2. Set out the available evidence that will help you assess the impact of this policy function or activity on equality. This could include service-level monitoring data, analysis of complaints/enquiry records, existing user feedback, data obtained from external sources and information about the local community. You may find it useful to compare your service-user statistics against the [Runnymede population profile](#).

Data Analysis:

- Website Usage Statistics: Analyse website data to see if there are disparities in usage by different demographics (age, location, disability). This can indicate potential barriers for certain groups.
- Service Access Data: Track how residents access council services (online, phone, in-person).
- Surveys and Focus Groups: Implement surveys, feedback questionnaires and focus groups with residents from diverse backgrounds to understand their experiences with the council's digital services.

User Feedback Mechanisms:

- Implement mechanisms for residents to provide feedback on the council's digital services. This is through online surveys, comment boxes, or dedicated helplines.

Changes in Service Usage:

- Monitor how different groups use council services after the digital transformation. Has online service usage increased for everyone equally?
- Are there particular services experiencing a decline in usage from certain demographics? This might indicate a need for alternative access methods.
- By analysing this data, we will identify areas where the Digital Transformation strategy might be unintentionally creating barriers for certain groups. This evidence can then be used to refine the strategy, improve accessibility, and ensure a more equitable experience for all.

3. What consultation and involvement has been undertaken in relation to this (or a similar) policy, function or activity and what are the results? If none have been carried out, what consultation will be needed? Data may be available from recent consultation activities on a related policy or Equality impact assessment.

Following on from the previous Digital Services Strategy, data has been analysed on take up of on-line services, review of complaints and compliments and service requests. There will be consultation with Corporate Leadership Team, Senior Leadership and councillors before the Strategy is adopted and then a communication and staff training plan will be devised to ensure a smooth transition to new technologies outlined in the strategy. A Digital Skills survey has already been conducted where the results have been reflected in the strategy and accessibility standards for the website is a key theme to be delivered to address any barriers for people with disabilities or other learning difficulties

4. Are there any gaps in the information established from the consultation and involvement undertaken and referred to in Part 3? If so, set out how these gaps will be filled?

Whilst there is no identified gaps in the Strategy, the implementation of the policy will be reviewed throughout the lifetime of the strategy and any identified impact will be addressed at that point.

There it is not possible to fill information/data gaps in time to inform this assessment, specific action points will need to be included in the action plan section Part 10 below, with a focus on monitoring the actual impact of the policy function or activity.

ASSESSING IMPACT

It is essential to consider not just the intended consequences of the policy but also any unintended consequences and barriers that might prevent it being effective for people within any of the Protected Characteristic groups.

Please use the Grid included below to assess the impact of the Policy/function/action on each of the Protected Characteristics. When completing the assessment, please bear in mind the following questions;

- 1. What are the main findings of your consultation and involvement activities, and do they demonstrate problems that need to be addressed? For example, could the policy, function or activity outcomes differ according to people’s ethnic group, disability, gender, religion/belief, sexual orientation, or age?** For instance, there might be evidence of higher or lower participation/uptake by different groups.
- 2. If there is a disproportionate impact on one group, is it appropriate and consistent with the objective?** For instance the policy may include lawful positive action or other methods to address particular needs or may be considered to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim

Protected Characteristic	Positive		Neutral	Negative		Comments
	High	Low		High	Low	

Age	X				Improvements to online services including meeting accessibility standards and 24/7 accessibility will have a positive impact on all age groups. By maintaining and improving more traditional communication methods will ensure those who are not digital agile can still contact the Council in their preferred choice of contact
Disability	x				This digital strategy will significantly improve the lives of people with disability promoting accessibility, independence and participation. For example Improvements in car parks with the introduction of blue badge scanners will improve the visitor experience of disabled visitors to Council car parks. The planned improvements to the Council's website including accessibility standards and assisted technologies like screen readers, translation tools and magnification tools all support disabled users
Gender Reassignment	x				The use of gender-neutral language in online forms, applications, and communication channels to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment. Robust data security measures to protect the privacy of sensitive information related to gender identity.
Marriage / Civil Partnership			X		The Digital strategy focuses on service delivery and communication so is unlikely to have any major impact specifically for married or civil partnerships.
Pregnancy / Maternity		X			As the Council does not offer health information, the new Digital Strategy is unlikely to have any major impact on this category. For staff on-line tools and hybrid working are continuing to be reviewed and expanded which may support the well-being of pregnant staff and mothers within the community
Race	X				The digital strategy may have a positive impact on race in several ways, promoting inclusivity and reducing racial disparities in access to information and services including translation tools, multi-cultural staff training including unconscious bias and cultural sensitivity
Religion / Belief			X		The Digital strategy focuses on service delivery and communication so is unlikely to have any major impact specifically for religion or beliefs.
Sex			X		The Digital strategy focuses on service delivery and communication so is unlikely to have any major impact specifically for sex
Sexual Orientation	X				The Council websites and online platforms will use inclusive language and imagery that reflects the diversity of sexual orientations within the community

5. Does the policy, function or activity miss potential opportunities to promote equality or positive attitudes to (and between) different Protected Characteristics or communities?

Digital divide: As the strategy does not focus solely on online service delivery but continues to provide alternative access points (phone lines, physical offices), it should not exclude residents without internet access or digital literacy skills. Having a choice of access channels will not disproportionately affect older adults, low-income residents, or people with disabilities.

Language barriers: The strategy includes the support and expansion of multilingual tools so should not exclude residents with limited English proficiency from accessing council services and information online.

Lack of prior consultation: Developing a digital strategy without consulting with diverse community groups can lead to overlooking their specific needs and perspectives. This can result in a strategy that fails to address existing inequalities or promote positive interactions between different communities. However by continually reviewing the strategy over the next three years should mitigate this risk.

ADDRESSING THE IMPACT: ACTION PLANNING, MONITORING AND REVIEW

6. Does the policy, function or activity require reconsideration or amendment? If not, explain the reasons for this conclusion. If an adverse impact has been identified, you will need to set out the justification for continuing the policy, function or activity or outline measures to mitigate the impact.

The Strategy outlines the introduction of a Digital Transformation Steering group comprising of key stakeholders across all departments that will oversee the programme delivery, track progress against goals and make necessary adjustments as needed. This group meets monthly and will feed into the annual report on progress delivery.

7. What actions have you identified as a result of this equality impact assessment? These might include improving data collection in order to give a clearer picture of your service-users, physical adjustments to a building, arranging for information to be sent out to individuals in alternative formats or languages, or consulting with a wider group of people to understand the impact of the policy.

Use third party monitoring software (Silktide) to conduct accessibility audits of the Council's website including compliance with WCAG standards
Provide training and support to all staff on how best to support residents with protected characteristics
Continue to provide a wide range of choice for contacting the council
Continue to provide translation tools on websites, on-line forms and key documents
Deliver content through different methods such as video and voice recordings
Implement a digital skills training programme for staff

8. Action Plan (where applicable): Who will be responsible for completing these actions and in what timescale? How will you review the actual impact of this policy function or activity?

Provide details of timescale and actions for review, and details of how the actions will be evaluated to measure if expected outcomes are achieved in practice. You may have identified 'triggers' that would indicate a problem with the policy, function or activity and suggest a revision is needed.

The Digital Transformation Strategy has a clear three year action plan as to how the improvements will be delivered and will feed into Service Action Plans and individual performance development plans to ensure the golden thread is maintained.

This assessment will need to be referred to the Equality Group for challenge.

Date completed: 15.03.24

Sign-off by an authorised Officer/Manager: Linda Norman