

EQUALITY SCREENING

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

POLICY/FUNCTION/ACTIVITY	LEAD OFFICER
RBC Citizens' Engagement Panel	Darren Williams/Phil Turner

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?
<p>The Council has a duty to ensure it communicates effectively with residents and communities and the development of a Citizens panel reflects the Council's commitment to meaningfully engage residents on key issues. The feedback received may be used in conjunction with other evidence and processes to make decisions that will, over time, shape communities, towns and Runcyeme as a borough.</p> <p>The delivery of the Citizens Panel meets one of the key objectives within the Corporate plan and helps to deliver objectives within the Empowering Communities strategy. It is anticipated that residents feedback will be considered in the preparation of the Corporate Business plan.</p> <p>It is intended, initially, as a one-year pilot to assess resource requirements and review success and value at the end of the first year. It is anticipated that in the first year there will be 2 main topics for engagement, these will look at how communities want us to engage with them and what residents' priorities are.</p> <p>The RBC Citizens' Panel has a target to recruit at least 880 adult residents (this represents approximately 1% of the population as recommended in a report by RHUL) from across the borough who will be invited to give their views on various council themes. It is hoped that this will help to improve our understanding of our residents and communities and therefore contributing to more informed decision making and council strategy.</p> <p>It is the intention that panel membership is proportionally representative of the demographic characterises of the boroughs adult population to ensure that Runcyeme's diverse range of voices are heard and represented by the initiative.</p> <p>Through this project, we envision the council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving opinions and identifying resident priorities from reflections of the experiences and needs of different communities in the borough • Becoming more equipped to reliably inform decisions to maintain and improve the standards of council communications and services

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 on the basis of 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.

Yes, this initiative is relevant to equality.

Recruitment of the RBC Citizens' Panel will be carried out with the aim of onboarding a pool of around 1% of the borough population and one which is demographically representative of the makeup of the borough.

The demographics used to establish baseline representation are based on the census information currently available.

Therefore, to establish if the Panel is proportionally representative of the Runnymede population questions based on the census information have been included on the sign-up form. Some of these questions reveal the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Sex
- Disability
- Race
- Religion and Beliefs
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Reassignment

It is explained to individuals completing the sign-up form that they are invited to answer these questions to help us to achieve a panel that is proportionally representative of the Runnymede population, therefore achieving positive representation across these characteristics.

With the exception of 'Age' these questions are not mandatory and participants signing up to the panel can choose not to answer any or all of the questions asked. With regards to 'Age' this is established by asking for date of birth. This question is mandatory as participation in the panel is limited to those who are at least 18 years of age.

This pilot does not currently have the capacity to support the membership of residents under the age of 18, as this demographic would require more in terms of infrastructure and support than we have the resource to provide for the pilot. This is something to consider when reviewing data from the pilot. There may be future scope to widen the initiative and form a "Youth Citizens' Panel" should the value and resourcing of the project support this.

This proportionate representation is important in terms of ensuring the diversity of perspectives heard by the Council and that residents with protected characteristics are being represented equally in Runnymede by the Panel.

Furthermore, should the collection of data around protected characteristics show that any is underrepresented by the Panel it is the intention to use this data to drive specific comms aiming to recruit more members with these characteristics so that representation is diverse and equitable. This provides us with an opportunity as a Council to promote greater representation of groups who might otherwise not have a platform through which to share their views with us.

It is planned that there will be a 2-stage recruitment drive to allow for a mid-point review of the number and demographics of residents who have already signed up (for comparison against proportions indicated by the Census data) and to identify where gaps in representation remain as the panel grows, allowing us to release more targeted communications and marketing as

required.

Accessibility will be addressed at this stage, by providing the ability to sign up over telephone, in person or via post as well as online to avoid digital exclusion.

Through these considerations we hope to build a panel which represents the same diversity as we see across the residents of Runnymede, one which engages with characteristics that might otherwise be underrepresented in feedback that we receive as a local authority asking for the views of our residents.

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 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.

Although relevant to equality we have considered the following in the recruitment of the Citizens Engagement Panel:

- Accessibility – a variety of ways to sign up to avoid exclusion
- Disclosure of special category personal data – Residents are given the choice to withhold this data (except for date of birth) and can still participate in the Panel if they choose not to disclose any or all of this information.
- Demographic representation – by using current census information, we hope to be able to recruit a panel that is broadly representative of the borough's population.
- Underrepresented characteristics – the collection of data will allow us to target comms to recruit specific groups who are under represented on the panel.

Current limitations include:

- The scope of questions/answers and data released by the Census for comparability
- Budgetary constraints to hire an expert body to conduct demographic data analysis in more detail.

The methodology used is based on:

- Recommendations from the Royal Holloway University London paper (Deepening public participation in local policy making: a review of deliberative democratic governance for Runnymede Borough Council David Simon, James Sloam, Karia Hartung and Scott Downham Royal Holloway, University of London June 2023).
- Officers research into Citizens panels set up by other councils and how they conduct recruitment and consultations.

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

Date completed:

Sign-off by senior manager: