

Equality Impact Assessment

1. Under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010, when making decisions, Epping District Council must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty, ie have due regard to:
 - eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
 - advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
 - fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
2. The characteristics protected by the Equality Act are:
 - age
 - disability
 - gender
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage/civil partnership
 - pregnancy/maternity
 - race
 - religion/belief
 - sexual orientation.
3. In addition to the above protected characteristics you should consider the cross-cutting elements of the proposed policy, namely the social, economic and environmental impact (including rurality) as part of this assessment. These cross-cutting elements are not a characteristic protected by law but are regarded as good practice to include.
4. The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) document should be used as a tool to test and analyse the nature and impact of either what we do or are planning to do in the future. It can be used flexibly for reviewing existing arrangements but in particular should enable identification where further consultation, engagement and data is required.
5. Use the questions in this document to record your findings. This should include the nature and extent of the impact on those likely to be affected by the proposed policy or change.
6. Where this EqIA relates to a continuing project, it must be reviewed and updated at each stage of the decision.
7. All **Cabinet, Council, and Portfolio Holder reports must be accompanied by an EqIA**. An EqIA should also be completed/reviewed at key stages of projects.
8. To assist you in completing this report, please ensure you read the guidance notes in the Equality Analysis Toolkit and refer to the following Factsheets:
 - Factsheet 1: Equality Profile of the Epping Forest District
 - Factsheet 2: Sources of information about equality protected characteristics
 - Factsheet 3: Glossary of equality related terms
 - Factsheet 4: Common misunderstandings about the Equality Duty
 - Factsheet 5: Frequently asked questions
 - Factsheet 6: Reporting equality analysis to a committee or other decision making body

Section 1: Identifying details

Your function, service area and team: Economic Development

If you are submitting this EqlA on behalf of another function, service area or team, specify the originating function, service area or team: N/A

Title of policy or decision: Rural England Prosperity Fund investment plan

Officer completing the EqlA: Tel: ext. 4264 Email: dhaslam@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Date of completing the assessment: 28/11/22

Section 2: Policy to be analysed

2.1	<p>Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project? Yes</p>
2.2	<p>Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy (or decision):</p> <p>The Rural England Prosperity Fund investment plan sets out proposals for spend of the allocated £437,136 to Epping Forest district over the next two financial years (2023-2024 and 2024-25). The REPF is integrated into the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which supports productivity and prosperity in places that need it most. For eligible local authorities, the Rural Fund is a top-up to UKSPF allocations. It supports activities that specifically address the particular challenges rural areas face, but spending can only be capital in nature.</p> <p>What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve (ie decommissioning or commissioning a service)?</p> <p>In order to unlock the allocated funding over the next two financial years the council is required to produce an investment plan in consultation with local stakeholders and local MPs. The investment plan was submitted on the 30th November 2022.</p>
2.3	<p>Does or will the policy or decision affect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• service users• employees• the wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities? <p>Yes. In producing the plan officers have consulted on its contents as the plan was being developed, building on the consultation from round one. Officers have sought wherever possible to partner with external organisations to resource the projects. During this project officers will work to ensure where possible local procurement routes are sourced.</p> <p>In order to achieve the aims of REPF the investment plan involves work to be undertaken internally through council departments but also involves significant work with outside agencies. Linked to the UK Shared Prosperity fund programme, a detailed risk management</p>

	<p>plan will be put in place to manage the external delivery and the council's own risk management system will be deployed to ensure risk is addressed within the council.</p> <p>Will the policy or decision influence how organisations operate?</p> <p>The provision of direct grants to local rural groups is where the majority of funding will be disbursed as part of the REPF. This means that effective collaboration and coordination across neighbouring authorities with REPF funding will be central in creating maximum impact.</p> <p>Significant reporting requirements from government on expenditure will require detailed and coordinated project management throughout the period of the scheme within the economic development team, but also in relation to wherein other internal departments or outside agencies take ownership over REPF programmes.</p>
2.4	<p>Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources?</p> <p>Yes</p>
2.5	<p>Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council's other policies and how, if applicable, does the proposed policy support corporate outcomes?</p> <p>REPF projects are linked to the following corporate plan objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.1 Enabling communities to support themselves • 3.2 Promoting culture and leisure • 4.1 Keeping the district clean and green • 5.2 Ensuring infrastructure supports growth • 6.1 Supporting business enterprise and attracting investment • 6.3 Promoting retail, tourism and the visitor economy. • 10.2 Working with commercial partners to add value for our customers.

Section 3: Evidence/data about the user population and consultation¹

As a minimum you must consider what is known about the population likely to be affected which will support your understanding of the impact of the policy, eg service uptake/usage, customer satisfaction surveys, staffing data, performance data, research information (national, regional and local data sources).

3.1

What does the information tell you about those groups identified?

There are several key challenges facing rural communities in Epping Forest and this was also a focus of our Shared Prosperity Fund bid and is a core priority for the council. Rural hubs are critical to quality of life and the provision of services for our rural communities. There have been many challenges to the retention of these hubs the latest of which is the cost-of-living crisis. The Council is aware that these facilities require support to continue their important work and expand to meet new challenges around economic vitality in rural areas, job creation and retention, and the provision of services to residents.

Another challenge that Epping Forest and its rural areas face like many other parts of the country is threats caused by climate change. Epping Forest District Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and following this published a Climate Change Action Plan in 2021 setting objectives for the area to become a carbon neutral district by 2030. Initiatives such as providing grants to community hubs to enable them to deliver sustainable energy solutions can practically assist the district council and a range of local partners in realizing these goals and ambitions. All this whilst ensuring cost savings and potentially new forms of income are available for local communities and businesses. There are low levels of access to EV charging points across the district, but particularly in rural areas. This is an area which the Council and its partners would like to address promoting sustainable journeys and potentially increasing footfall to local hubs and generating additional income. According to Zapmap and Department of Transport data, Epping Forest has very high electric vehicle adoption, but like the rest of the East of England, has well below average numbers of public charging points per 100k population. <https://maps.dft.gov.uk/ev-charging-map/index.html>

Effective digital connectivity is essential to promote and enhance economic growth in rural areas and to provide a platform for local people to access the wide range of public and private services that are increasingly going online. Epping Forest District has through the work of the Digital leaders 100 award winning Digital Innovation Zone: <https://diz.org.uk/> piloted innovative national programmes to rollout fibre infrastructure to difficult to reach rural areas in the area. The district with partners has already invested £24 million into fibre connectivity locally. However, consultation with partners has identified that there are still rural areas with connectivity issues (particularly mobile connectivity) and that initiatives should be pursued to overcome these challenges, to avoid rural areas falling behind.

Epping Forest generates significant income from the visitor sector, pre pandemic this was approaching £250 million per annum and supporting close to 10% of local employment. With a significant growth in the staycation market and the districts' location between London and Cambridge partners believe much more can be done to ensure this sectors growth in rural areas bringing in much needed investment, jobs and income to rural communities and rural hubs in particular. This sector and the many attractions across the district are still recovering from the pandemic, evidenced in a latest study identifying the

	<p>value of the industry to the district. As of 2021 the value of this sector to the area was £175,977,960 compared to £242,151,200 in 2019. Nonetheless tourism now represents almost 15% of jobs in the district – up from 11% in 2020. It is an important form of job creation in the district, and with numerous tourism assets in the district, there are opportunities to enhance the local staycation market. Many of the attractions in the district are linked to green belt and unique natural areas. Expansion of use and activity on these assets (country walks, nature reserves etc) can create important health and well-being dividends for residents and visitors from more urban neighbouring areas.</p>
<p>3.2</p>	<p>Have you consulted or involved those groups that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision you want to implement? If so, what were their views and how have their views influenced your decision?</p> <p>Epping Forest District Council undertook significant face to face consultation with a wide variety of local groups and stakeholders in order to agree it's UKSPF submission. This submission had significant focus on rural issues and significant funding allocation. Given the timescales involved and the consensus on the interventions that were recommended the REPF seeks to build upon these projects and expand impact with regards to Rural catchment areas. However, in order to ensure that the requirements specific to REPF could be met fully and that the interventions that were being proposed could be delivered efficiently additional consultation was undertaken with the following individuals and organisations:</p> <p>Robert Halfon (MP) Dame Eleanor Laing (MP) Alex Burghart (MP) 2100 businesses contacted through a monthly business e-newsletter 'Business Matters'. Businesses attending a business fair hosted on 26th October 2022 by the Epping Forest Chamber of Commerce in one of our rural villages. Rural Community Council of Essex Country Land and Business Association National Farmers Union Essex County Council Uttlesford District Council East Herts District Council Maldon District Council Chelmsford City Council Corporation of London Commercial EV Charging Point companies. Epping Forest Tourism & Visitor Board</p> <p>The contributions of the consultees have directly influenced the nature and ambition of the projects include within the investment plan. These discussions have helped identify where projects can be delivered within the council's own delivery and staffing resource and where alternative external resources will be required to realise the ambition of the plan.</p>
<p>3.3</p>	<p>If you have not consulted or engaged with communities that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision, give details about when you intend to carry out consultation or provide reasons for why you feel this is not necessary:</p>

Section 4: Impact of policy or decision

Use this section to assess any potential impact on equality groups based on what you now know.

Description of impact	Nature of impact Positive, neutral, adverse (explain why)	Extent of impact Low, medium, high (use L, M or H)
Age (all ages)	Positive – Through the Sustainable Rural Initiatives Grant programme there is the opportunity for community groups to apply for funding to renovate and improve facilities to improve provision of community services for vulnerable elderly residents.	M
Disability	Positive -Through the Sustainable Rural Initiatives Grant programme there is the opportunity for community groups to apply for funding to renovate and improve facilities to improve provision of community services for vulnerable residents.	M
Gender	Neutral – The planned activities do not address features and attributes specifically relevant to this protected category.	
Gender reassignment	Neutral (as above)	
Marriage/civil partnership	Neutral (as above)	
Pregnancy/maternity	Neutral (as above)	
Race	Neutral (as above)	
Religion/belief	Neutral (as above)	
Sexual orientation	Neutral (as above)	

Section 5: Conclusion

		Tick Yes/No as appropriate	
5.1	Does the EqIA in Section 4 indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more equality groups?	No X	
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	If ' YES ', use the action plan at Section 6 to describe the adverse impacts and what mitigating actions you could put in place.

Section 6: Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

What are the potential adverse impacts?	What are the mitigating actions?	Date they will be achieved.
N/A	N/A	N/A

Section 7: Sign off

**I confirm that this initial analysis has been completed appropriately.
(A typed signature is sufficient.)**

Signature of Head of Service: John Houston

Date: 30/11/22

Signature of person completing the EqIA: Duncan Haslam

Date: 30/11/22

Advice

Keep your director informed of all equality & diversity issues. We recommend that you forward a copy of every EqIA you undertake to the director responsible for the service area. Retain a copy of this EqIA for your records. If this EqIA relates to a continuing project, ensure this document is kept under review and updated, eg after a consultation has been undertaken.