

EQUALITY SCREENING

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

POLICY/FUNCTION/ACTIVITY	LEAD OFFICER
Runnymede Statement of Community Involvement	Paul Wade (Planning Policy Officer)

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?

Regulation 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires all Local Authorities to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI is a document that explains the process by which a local authority involves the community and other stakeholders in the key processes that affect the spatial development of an area: the formulation of Local Development Documents and the consideration of planning applications / enforcement processes.

The proposed amendments to the Council's Statement of Community Involvement [SCI], if agreed, would change the way in which the Council receives and publishes comments associated with consultations on planning applications and planning policy documents. Representors could continue to submit representations in hard copy form, but comments via email would no longer be accepted, with the proposal to instead move to a standardised webform where a person's personal details and substance of their representation could be easily separated. This change in approach is intended to minimise the potential risks of publishing unredacted personal details which could amount to a breach of the GDPR legislation.

This proposed amendments to the SCI will, subject to committee approval, be subject to public consultation for a period of 4 weeks. Any comments made on the proposed change in approach will be considered by the Planning Committee and Full Council before it is decided whether to adopt an amended version of the SCI and make the subsequent amendments to the Council's processes.

The amendments to the SCI are not anticipated to affect any employees or service users on the basis of a protected characteristic(s) they have. Any effects the changes have on the wider Borough community, including those groups with protected characteristics are likely to be negligible as the proposed change in approach represents only a minor modification in terms of how a representation can be submitted digitally.

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 based on 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.

How the Council consults the public is relevant to equality. However, in this case, there are not assessed to be any potential negative impacts on any protected characteristics if the proposed amendments to the SCI are adopted. Instead it is anticipated that there would be positive impacts for all parts of the community as a result of the decreased likelihood of a data breach occurring which could release sensitive personal information, potentially related to protected characteristics being released into the public domain. Allowing stakeholders to still respond to planning consultations by written letter will continue to ensure that those who are unable to respond digitally, which could include older people, are not excluded from the planning process.

If the policy, function or activity is 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 it is considered that there is an impact on any Protected Characteristics but 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.

A four week public consultation on the SCI will provide the opportunity for relevant consultees to provide comments. This could include comments related to any protected characteristics.

A review of the comments received following the public consultation will be undertaken and any implications in terms of equalities will be discussed with the Equality Group. Continued monitoring of the SCI will take place after it is adopted which may reveal any positive or negative impacts that exist and will assist officers in providing measures that seek to mitigate any negative impacts on any of the protected characteristics.

It is not considered therefore that a full EqIA is required.

Date completed: 24/11/2023

Sign-off by senior manager: Georgina Pacey