Initial Equality Impact Assessment – New Policy.

Department	Corporate Policy
Policy	Channel Shift Strategy
People involved	Alison Martins, Kristina Watson, Clare O'Connor

1. What are the aims of the policy?

The Channel Shift Strategy is a plan for the channels the Council will use to deliver services to, and interact with, its customers. It explains how the Council proposes to meet the contact demands of its residents using the resources available bearing in mind the varying needs of its customers from routine to highly sensitive. It is not just a plan to move service provision to online channels. It aims to target resources where they are needed most, and provide face to face service where this is most needed.

The overarching principles which run through the strategy are the need to:

- Minimise avoidable contact;
- Increase digital inclusion;
- Ensure accessibility of contact

The aims of the Strategy are:

- Maximise first time resolution of issues ('one and done');
- Increase volume of queries that can be dealt with at first point of contact;
- Retain physical access where necessary;
- Encourage staff and residents to see the website as first port of call;
- Migrate customers to the web where cost effective;
- Simplify internal ways of working to enable departmental sharing of data and minimise double entry;
- Maximise automation and integration with the back office;
- Establish key set of performance indicators that will be regularly monitored.

2. What is the rationale behind the policy?

The Council has a responsibility to provide good quality and cost effective services to the public and value for money to the taxpayer. There are many ways that public services can be delivered and various methods by which the public has contact with the authority. This contact can be via a variety of channels, i.e. on-line, via telephone, face to face or in writing but whichever way this contact takes place it forms a critical part of public service provision. It is, therefore, important for these channels to be managed effectively and efficiently for everyone.

3. What information do you have on the policy and the potential impact of your policy in relation to the following?

	List information you have.
Overall	The Wandsworth Residents Survey 2011 revealed

	that 15% of our residents aged over 16 years do not currently have access to the Internet. Amongst social housing tenants this is known to be approximately 40%. Exclusion from access to digital channels matters, especially as the digitally excluded group includes socially excluded and hard to reach groups who are likely to have the greatest needs from public services. As part of The Wandsworth Residents Survey residents were presented with the cost of the each method of contact. When asked whether they would contact the Council in the future via the website, 54% said yes either definitely or probably and a further 17% said possibly, depending on the nature of the contact.
Race	No usage data available. Mainly open access services where focus is on responding to resident's needs quickly and efficiently.
Gender	As above
Disability	As above
Age	As above
Faith	As above
Sexual Orientation	As above

4. Thinking about each group below please list the impact that the policy will have.

	Positive impacts of policy	Possible negative impacts of policy and mitigating action identified.
Race	The aim of the policy is to maximise first time resolution of issues. This means residents should receive prompt responses to their queries, not have to call more than once or speak to multiple members of staff and not have to repeat information. This will improve their experience of contacting the Council. The Strategy also seeks to extend	Building upon the channels available to residents and delivering more services online could disadvantage residents where English isn't their first language or who do not have access to the web or feel less confident in using online services. The Strategy recognises this possible negative impact and sets out a set of actions to mitigate against this. These include: • engaging with groups representing those with specific requirements and ensuring that an appropriate choice of channels is available to those individuals; • focusing existing resources on those who require additional help due to their needs; • advertising the choice of contact channels appropriately for these groups;

	and introduce performance monitoring to ensure that resident enquiries are dealt with promptly and that satisfaction levels are high. It also seeks to balance using new technologies with existing channels to ensure that residents can access services via the channel they choose.	• considering emerging technologies to support access channels for hard to reach groups. • Exploring the use of automatic translation software on the website • Analysing customer access information to identify and locate hard to reach groups who are not accessing services through existing means • Continuing to provide public internet access at key locations e.g. libraries; • encouraging use of our internet services in the One Stop Reception in the Town Hall in order to transact with us; • advertising our variety of contact channels, particularly to hard to reach groups. • Providing training to the public in the One Stop Reception to access and use our website; • Carefully evaluating the needs of service users when recommending any channel shift; • Exploring viability of using interactive digital television.
Gender	As above	As above
Disability	As above	As above
Age	As above	As above
Faith	As above	As above
Sexual orientation	As above	As above

5. Is a full EIA required? No.

- Does the policy support a frontline service? Yes
- Is it clear what impact the policy will have on all the equality groups? Yes and will be on-going monitoring.
- Overall will the change have a negative impact on any of the equality groups? No.

Comments - Please give the rationale here for not undertaking a full EIA
The Strategy recognises that building upon the channels available to residents and delivering more services online could disadvantage residents where

English isn't their first language or who do not have access to the web or feel less confident in using online services. The Strategy recognises this possible negative impact and sets out a set of actions to mitigate against this, including a digital inclusion strategy which aims to "ensure that residents who do not have access to digital channels are not disadvantaged when communicating with us". Further analysis is therefore not required at this stage. The Strategy aims to extend and introduce performance monitoring. This will be used to identify any impacts not highlighted above and to ensure that the mitigating actions are implemented.

6. Through the initial EIA have you identified any actions that needed to be implemented to improve access or monitoring of the policy? (please list)
See actions highlighted as bullet points above.

Signed

Date: 27.03.12

Approved by: Clare O'Connor