

Equalities Panel
17 June 2013

Equality Impact Assessments

1.0 Purpose of this item

- 1.1 Members of the Panel are asked to review the EqlA for the Cambridge Local Plan 2014. In particular they are asked to consider whether:
- a) there are any additional impacts on any of the nine equalities groups under the Equality Act 2010 which have not been identified in the assessment; and
 - b) whether any action needs to be taken by the City Council to mitigate any impacts on the nine equalities groups, beyond those already identified in the action plan included in the EqlA.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Part of the role of the Equalities Panel is to provide quality assurance for Equality Impact Assessments (EqlAs) carried out by the City Council. For example, in the past year the Panel has considered a number of EqlAs of key policies and programmes, including the Olympic Torch Relay, the new Leisure Management contract, the development of a new local Council Tax Support Scheme and the Affordable Housing Development Programme
- 2.2 The City Council, as a public sector organisation, has a duty under section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 to have due regard to equalities issues and impacts in policy and decision-making. The Act does not state that EQIAs must be used to achieve proper consideration of equalities issues. Nevertheless the Council has chosen to continue to use EQIAs for this purpose, because they provide a well-established and structured approach for assessing the impacts of policies, projects and decisions on people with protected characteristics. Guidance from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission stresses that assessing the impact on equality is an ongoing process, to be reviewed in the light of experience gained through implementing policy.

- 2.3 Following a meeting of the City Council's Community Services Scrutiny Committee meeting in October 2012, where the Executive Councillor for Housing agreed to progress two sites for redevelopment as part of the Council's Affordable Housing Development Programme (AHDP), concerns were raised about the equalities impact of the proposals. The affordable housing development programme began in 2008 and four separate EqlAs were carried out as the programme progressed to implementation and understanding of the equality issues has evolved. The concerns raised prompted two further reports to the Committee In January 2012. The first brought together a consolidated, updated and more comprehensive EqlA for the AHDP. It also made recommendations to clarify or amend aspects of the approach for assessing the equality impacts of the Programme in future. The Equalities Panel discussed this revised EqlA at a special meeting on 12 December 2012 and its comments were reflected in the final EqlA. The second report reviewed the decisions relating to the two developments to consider whether they remained sound.
- 2.4 During 2012/13, the Council implemented a number of actions included in the first year of the Single Equality Scheme that are intended to improve its corporate processes for assessing the equality impacts of its decisions. We have developed a more user-friendly corporate EqlA template, which allows officers to think about decisions in a more structured and evidenced manner. The template also provides an opportunity to highlight positive impacts as well as negative ones. The template has been promoted widely to officers across the Council via a range of internal communications channels.
- 2.5 During May and June 2013, a series of four half-day training sessions have been delivered to help Council officers carry out effective impact assessments. The training has focussed on:
- Ensuring that staff have an understanding of the legal obligations placed on the City Council by the Equality Act 2010, including having due regard for equalities issues when making decisions.
 - Raising awareness of the value of conducting effective EqlAs, both in terms of ensuring that the City Council meets its legal obligations, but more importantly, in terms of making more

informed decisions and ensuring that services meet the needs of all residents.

- Understanding how to carry out an effective EqlA looks like, through working through the revised template and discussing examples of good and bad practice.

2.6 A total of 65 staff who are involved in carrying out EqlAs have attended the sessions to date, with 16 out of 19 City Council services represented at the sessions. The training has received very favourable feedback from participants and a further training session has been arranged in September 2013 to meet demand. Following this initial round, the intention is to incorporate EqlA training in the Council's corporate Learning and Development programme, with sessions being delivered at least once a year.

2.7 The current Cambridge Local Plan was adopted in July 2006 and runs to 2016 and beyond. There is an urgent need to replace this plan with a new one that makes provision for development over a longer time period (to 2031); addresses all of the challenges currently facing Cambridge; and responds to the new national policy context established by the National Planning Policy Framework (published in 2012), the Localism Act and other national policy changes.

2.8 The City Council is currently in the process of developing the Cambridge Local Plan 2014, which will set out the vision, objectives and plan for the development of Cambridge between 2011 and 2031. It will also set out the planning framework to guide the future development of Cambridge. As part of the process for developing the Local Plan, a range of options for planning policies were developed and presented in an Issues and Options report, which was the subject of two public consultations in June-July 2012 and January-February 2013. 18,000 representations were made to the two consultation stages. All of the comments made during the two periods of consultation have been taken into account and summaries of the main issues raised have been presented to the City Council's Development Plan Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

2.9 The draft Local Plan was scrutinised at Development Plan Scrutiny Sub-Committee on 29 May 2013 and at Environment Scrutiny Committee on 11 June 2013. It will be considered at Full Council

on 27 June 2013. If Full Council approves the draft Plan, it will be published for a form of public consultation in which anybody may lodge formal representations between 19 July and 30 September 2013.