



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Template reviewed June 2023

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) was introduced as part of the Equality Act 2010, which protects people from discrimination in the workplace, in the provision of services and in wider society.

The duty requires all public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people

Public bodies demonstrate this due regard in different ways, including producing robust equality impact assessments when considering changes to policies and services.

An EqIA enables us to check the potential impacts on residents and employees of our policies, services, and projects. It's an opportunity to challenge how we currently do things.

Carrying out an EqIA should not create extra work; it should be part of your normal service planning process. Most of the information required should already be available to you through other work already undertaken e.g. service user monitoring, analysis of complaints and national research.

The purpose of an EqIA is to *take account* of equality as plans develop, to promote and assist the consideration of equalities issues arising in plans and proposals and to ensure that where possible adverse or disproportionate impacts are minimised and positive impacts are maximised. As such where possible an EqIA should be started at the outset of a project/proposal and continually be developed and reviewed until a final proposal is adopted. An EqIA should be used to ensure decision makers have all the information they need regarding potential impacts to ensure they have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty when making judgements.

Carrying out EqIAs should be an integral part of policy or service development/change and larger projects may need more than one EqIA if different areas are impacted by the change.

Any project that requires consultation will automatically require an EqIA.

All approved and signed EqIAs are recorded in a central register. Please email your completed draft EqIA to equalities@buckinghamshire.gov.uk. Previous EqIAs can be made available for information upon request. For any questions or if you require support in completing your EqIA please contact Maria Damigos and Natalie Donhou Morley directly.



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Part A (Initial assessment) - Section 1 - Background

Proposal/Brief Title: Consideration of closure of Council office at King George V House Amersham

OneDrive link to report/policy:

Related policies:

Date: August 2023

Type of strategy, policy, project or service: Closure of offices

Please tick one of the following:

- Existing
- New or proposed

xChanging, update or revision

- Other (please explain)

This assessment was created by:

Name: Gill Smith

Job Title: Head of Facilities Management

Email address: gill.smith@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Briefly describe the aims and objectives of the proposal below:

The Council set out in its MTFP (Medium Term Financial Plan) a requirement to make £2.4m pa revenue savings from efficiencies in its operational estate as well as a £64m capital receipt. In addition, at the 11th July 2023 Cabinet meeting it was agreed that in light of the worsening financial position that savings should be accelerated and that there should be a strategic property and finance review brought forward to manage in year budget pressures and to examine opportunities for additional savings, income or capital receipt.

As part of the estates strategy CMT have agreed to bring forward proposals to close KGVH to provide in year savings due to under occupation of offices. The Customer Access Point, CAP+, will also be closed.

What outcomes do we want to achieve?

The accelerated closure of King George V House forms part of those savings, which if approved would contribute to the overall savings target, generating a revenue saving and a capital receipt and by completely exiting the site will provide additional revenue savings and capital receipt



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The proposal is based upon the underutilisation of the office space and low CAP+ usage.

Does this proposal plan to withdraw a service, activity or presence? Yes/~~No~~

Please explain your answer:

Closure of office space. Proposal for staff presence to be relocated to Queen Victoria Road building in High Wycombe. There is a linked proposal for a new small touchdown space being available at Chesham Library for social services teams and Child Protection Conferencing where services are required to remain local as well as storage space for Environmental Health.

Member meetings/democratic events will be relocated to QVR Wycombe Offices.

There may be an impact on car parking availability (service users/residents/staff) at the point of moving to new locations if agreed.

It is proposed that the CAP+ will not be replaced, but there will be a new CAP in Amersham Library and the Chesham CAP as part of the library refurbishment will be relaunched. There will be a County wide communications campaign about the services which can be accessed at Library CAPs – unfortunately this was never progressed at Vesting Day due to Covid.

Does this proposal plan to reduce a service, activity or presence? Yes/~~No~~

Please explain your answer:

Please see above

Does this proposal plan to introduce, review or change a policy, strategy or procedure? Yes/~~No~~

Please explain your answer:

Relates to office building/facilities. The strategy and potential closure of the Amersham office was considered in the Councils Cabinet report on 5th January Cabinet 2023 and 11th July 2023.



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Does this proposal affect service users and/or customers, or the wider community? Yes/~~No~~

Please explain your answer:

It will affect service users, customers and the wider community as the proposals include replacing the existing CAP+ at KGVH with CAP provision in Amersham Library (within the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre across the road from KGV) with face-to-face support for more complex needs provided at the CAP+ offices in High Wycombe and Aylesbury

KGV CAP+ received 2501 recorded visits over the last 12 months (June 22-June 23). KGV is the least visited CAP+ with High Wycombe and Aylesbury CAP+ receiving more visits in that time, along with Aylesbury and High Wycombe library CAPs (High Wycombe being the most visited Library CAP, with 5048 recorded visits). From July to September 2023, there were 26 enquiries classified as homelessness presentations at KGV CAP+, 89 at Walton St and 166 in QVR

Relocation of the face-to-face service in Amersham from the KGV office to the library will ensure a continued presence to assist vulnerable or digitally unable in Amersham with general and signposting services. The new Amersham Library CAP will have an enclosed phone booth to enable customers to access specialist support from Customer Service Agents from a private space.

Customers will also be made aware through education before closure and a comms campaign that Chesham Library CAP will be able to assist with general and signposting services, the same as Amersham Library CAP.

In addition, it is proposed some services will utilise touchdown working spaces which may include meetings with partners and customers.

Does this proposal affect employees? Yes/~~No~~

Please explain your answer:

If agreed, the proposed closure will impact on all staff who are contractually located at KGVH and those whose contractual base states Capswood but currently work out of KGVH. Those employees contractually located at KGVH may currently use this office as a touch down space or place to meet with partners or customers. Employees will be relocated as appropriate following consultation. Relocation policies will be followed, including additional travel mileage. Reasonable adjustments will be considered on an individual basis.

Anticipated travel options and costs for public transport links from Amersham to Aylesbury, Wycombe and Chesham have been identified as below:



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Amersham to Aylesbury travel options

Bus: no routes

Train: one way ticket £10.70 (0 changes, 45mins) Few mins walk each way to the Council buildings.

Taxi: 30mins £40-£45

Amersham to Wycombe Travel options:

Bus: 40 mins, £2

available from outside Chiltern Ave (opposite Lifestyle Centre) to Wycombe hospital (few mins walk from QVR) Other routes and bus stops available too. Bus no. 1 & 1A, Carousel Buses. Approx 3 per hour.

Train: one way ticket £16.50 (1 change, 1hr50mins) Few mins walk each way to the Council buildings.

Taxi: 20mins £20-25

Amersham to Chesham travel options:

Bus: 15 mins, £2 (Train station to Broadway 1 min walk from library))

Train: 30 mins £3-4 (1 change, 3 mins walk each side to Council office/Chesham Library)

Taxi :15 mins £10-15

Will employees require training to deliver this proposal? ~~Yes~~/No

Please explain your answer: N/A

Has any engagement /consultation been carried out, or is planned in the future? ~~Yes~~/No

Please explain your answer:

A staff consultation is planned to start on 25th September 2023 and will close on 31st October 2023, with briefing sessions planned to be held with staff affected by these proposed changes. Agency workers affected by the proposal will also be briefed appropriately. Public consultation is not currently being considered, however, members have been consulted as representatives of their constituents.

Section 2 - Impacts

Please highlight potential impacts (including unintended impacts or consequences) for each protected characteristic*. Where there are negative or positive impacts please give more details of the impact. Where the impacts are unclear please explain why.

The project involves the proposed relocation of various teams. These may be teams who liaise directly with service users or are back office. Relocation options are being considered but where there is no requirement for a presence within Amersham itself the proposal is to



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relocate to High Wycombe, with touchdown areas for Social Services teams and Child Protection Conferencing proposed to move to Chesham Library.

It is proposed that the CAP+ will not be replaced, but there will be a CAP in Amersham Library, and there is already a CAP in Chesham library.

The main issues relating to closure of office and relocation are changes to travel for staff and access to CAP+ facility for residents within Amersham.

This is likely to have both positive and negative effects depending on exact travel requirements of individuals, road network and public transport facilities. As KGVH is currently under occupied as a result of changed work patterns since Covid, relocation is expected to affect up to 450 staff.

Relocation will offer better building accessibility than currently available at KGVH.

Unless otherwise set out below, the following has been completed in relation to both CAP+ closure and staff relocation. Staff/ individual consultation will be carried out as per council policies.

Age*

Positive	Negative	<u>Unclear</u>	None
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Details:

Elderly residents may prefer to visit offices rather than use internet. New Amersham Library CAP will mitigate issues for access to Council Services. Younger residents potentially more likely to use internet, however where work/ enquiry relates to social care still proposing to have access to touch down space for teams at Chesham.

Disability*

Positive	Negative	<u>Unclear</u>	None
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Details:

Resident/ Staff linked to disability and mobility – where location is further from home and therefore there is additional travel. Potential for impact on persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities may find it difficult to travel on public transport. New Amersham Library CAP will mitigate issues for access to Council Services. For staff they may also incur a change associated with access to proposed workspace /office may be more difficult. Where possible, previously agreed reasonable adjustments will be followed, or reassessed with the staff member and HR if needed. Therefore, main issues still relate to travel to offices.

Pregnancy & maternity*

Positive	Negative	<u>Unclear</u>	None
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Details:

Pregnancy likely to affect ease of travel for staff and residents where longer journey times result from relocation. In case of staff, this can be dealt with under council policies. For residents, CAP services can still be accessed at New Amersham library CAP.

Race & Ethnicity*

Positive Negative **Unclear** None

Details:

Where English is not the first language of residents in the community, traditional communications regarding changes may be less affective resulting in residents not being as aware of changes to CAP location. This will be considered within comms to public. All Library CAPs have access to full translation services.

Marriage & Civil Partnership*

Positive Negative Unclear **None**

Details: None identified

Religion & Belief*

Positive Negative Unclear **None**

Details: None identified

Sex*

Positive Negative **Unclear** None

Details:

The proportion of female/male staff impacted is anticipated to be similar to that of the organisational make up of BC (70%/30%).

Sexual Orientation*

Positive Negative Unclear **None**

Details:

Gender Reassignment*

Positive Negative Unclear **None**

Do you anticipate any impacts on military families/veterans in relation to the Armed Forces Act 2021 requirements on local authorities to have due regard to the Armed forces Covenant? **No**



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Please explain your answer: N/A

Are there any other additional groups/impacts that the EqIA should evaluate in relation to the proposal? **Unclear**

Details:

Employees who will relocate may have carer's and/or childcare responsibilities that would be negatively impacted if their travel time is increased. They may need to be close to the person for whom they provide care in case of emergencies. These would need to be considered on an individual basis during consultation. More information is required with regards to the business needs of teams and potential relocation proposals. The impacts are to be regularly reviewed as proposals are considered and any matters that are identified will be included.

Section 3 – Is a full assessment required?

If you have answered yes to any of the initial assessment questions in section 1 of this EqIA, or have indicated a negative or unclear impact in section 2, it is likely you will need to complete part B of the EqIA form. Should you need guidance as to whether a full EqIA is needed at this time please contact Maria Damigos or Natalie Donhou Morley before continuing.

Following completion of part A, is part B completion required?

Not required at this time

Explain your answer:

The proposals will have an impact on both staff and residents.

With regards to staff, it is not appropriate to indicate individual issues affecting staff and any negative issues that are identified will be part of ongoing consultation. It is also possible that some staff will find relocation is of benefit to their personal circumstances. The Council has various policies including relating to relocation, reasonable adjustments, homeworking, carers etc which will be relevant and will be taken into account. As there will be further consultation with both unions and staff we will ensure that equalities issues are incorporated to allow full consideration as the project progresses and impacts updated and escalated as required.

It is also recognised that the proposed reduction of office space within Amersham will have an effect on committee meetings and member meetings. This is expected to affect planning and licensing matters the most which are location specific. Further consideration will be given to this area although the use of virtual meetings, virtual access and webcasts is expected to minimise issues in this regard.



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It is anticipated that the proposed closing of the CAP+ at the KGVH building and opening a CAP at Amersham library, as well as the touchdown provisions for other services will mitigate any loss of service to members of the public/partners. Appropriate communications will be provided to ensure that the public are aware of where and how they can access council services.

Have you completed an DPIA for this project/change? Yes/No

(As you are completing an EqIA, you may also require a DPIA - for more information please contact dataprotection@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

Section 4 – Sign off

Officer completing this assessment: Gill Smith Date: 25/08/2023

Equality advice sought from: Natalie Donhou Morley / Maria Damigos) Date: 25/08/2023

HR advice sought from: Rachel Monastyrskij Date: 14/09/2023

Service Director sign off: John Reed Date: 15/09/2023

CMT sign off: sign off: Sarah Murphy-Brookman Date: 18/09/2023

Next review Date: 9 October 2023 (mid-consultation)