

Equality Impact Assessment: Removal of funding and support for Woking People of Faith

Officer responsible for completing EIA: : Funding and Arts Officers	Manager responsible for EIA: Julie Meme
Strategic Director responsible for EIA: Louise Strongitharm	Date completed: 6 December 2023

1. Introduction

This Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) seeks to identify impacts and effect of this proposal with the aim of assessing whether it would have a disparate impact on persons with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. As part of this assessment, consideration will be given to ways in which any such impact can be avoided or mitigated, any negative impacts arising from this proposal will be assessed and where this could be reduced in their impact this will be noted in the attached action plan. The Council also recognises that it may not completely remove all negative impacts.

The purpose is to provide impartial information to assist in the decision-making process and inform rather than determine policy. The objective is not to make the decision but to assist decision makers through the provision of relevant information.

The Council faces a critical financial shortfall owing to its historic investment strategy which has resulted in unaffordable borrowing, inadequate steps to repay that borrowing and high values of irrecoverable loans.

To address these severe financial challenges the Council must make significant saving alongside taking steps to 'live within its means' in the future.

Widespread reductions and changes to public-facing services, alongside reducing management and internal costs, have been set out in the [Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy](#).

The Council is no longer able to offer support for the discretionary funding given to Woking People of Faith. This will result in a £16,650 saving year on year.

This Equality Impact Assessment seeks to identify impacts and effects to local communities affected by this proposal.

2. Impact on services

If WPOF lose their funding, fewer resources will be available to raise awareness about their community work and deliver public meetings, develop programmes such as educational visits, sport events and community service.

The purpose of Woking People of Faith is to promote community and religious harmony for the benefit of the public in Woking. This includes:

- Celebrating the important contribution that religious faith makes to the lives of the local community;
- seeking to secure a more prominent role for faith organisations in their communities.
- promoting good relations between people of different faiths;

- advancing the education and understanding of different beliefs including an awareness of their distinctive features and their common ground; promote knowledge, mutual understanding and respect of the beliefs and practices of different faiths. Main activities include delivering of public meetings, develop programmes such as educational visits, sport events and community service.

3. Engagement and Consultation

The Council has carried out engagement on all proposed savings to ensure a balanced budget for the 2024/25 financial year.

The first phase of the engagement took place in summer 2023. Residents and businesses had the opportunity to have their say on how to tackle the budget shortfall.

In response to Phase 1 of the Public Consultation [Help shape the future of discretionary council services | Woking Community Forum](#) supporting communities and voluntary groups through subsidies was only selected by 8% of respondents.

32% of the sample mentioned that the Council should find another organisation to deliver discretionary services. Awarding grants to support charitable organistaions such as Woking People of Faith is discretionary and therefore the Council does not legally have to deliver this service.

Phase Two consultation started on 2 October until 12 November.

Residents and businesses had another opportunity to scrutinise the proposed savings and have their say.

This included a range of options for finding further budget savings, including increasing council tax, making changes to the way services are delivered, which may mean reducing or withdrawing services, or indeed making revised charges or work with partner organisations. The outcome of this consultation will be reported to Council in January 2024 with full Council decision on the 8 February 2024. The report can be found [here](#).

Woking People of Faith were approached for comment directly as part of the second phase of the consultation, but no response was received. We understand that the administrator was on holiday and that there was a communication breakdown. By the time she returned from holiday the deadline had passed.

		Positive impact?			Negative impact?	No specific impact	What will the impact be? If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? (action) This section needs to be completed as evidence of what the positive impact is or what actions are being taken to mitigate any negative impacts
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations			
Gender	Men					x	<p>Those attending events may be affected if these are not continued. Management Trustees and Events committee are made up of 50% men.</p> <p>Event attendees are invited to complete a sign in sheet upon attending, but this is not mandatory. There is no information on number of attendees or breakdown of gender.</p> <p>Mitigations: There are free resources and advice available on the internet and from sources like Charity Excellence, The Community Foundation for Surrey, Surrey Community Action and The Surrey County Council Community Link Officers.</p> <p>NCVO membership is free to small charities and non-profits and chargeable to those with income in excess of £30,000. Advice is available for a fee from professional fundraisers and funding search tools such as Grant Finder and Grants Online.</p> <p>It may be possible to partner on some events with other Faith groups in Surrey, but there are very few who operate as multi faith, they are more focussed on a single faith helping another single faith.</p> <p>Working with senior officers to discuss a different operating model.</p>

	Women					x	<p>Those attending events may be affected if these are not continued. Management Trustees and Events committee are made up of 50% women, although certain projects delivered are targeted for women only.</p> <p>Events are wide and varied, some can attract 85-100. 46 ladies attended the coffee mornings this year across 2 coffee sessions.</p> <p>Mitigations as above.</p>
Gender Reassignment						x	<p>Statistics are not collected on the number of people who have reassigned their gender, therefore it is assumed there is no specific impact on this group.</p>
Race	White				x		<p>Woking is a very multi-cultural Borough and Woking People of Faith connect with all ethnicities. Their projects include marking International Peace Day, Last Post Interfaith Service, Horsell Common Working Party, Ladies' Coffee Morning, and a Joint Interfaith Week Event. Some projects specifically target those from communities who are in particular need of support, for example refugees. Information was not provided on breakdown of service users.</p> <p>Mitigations: As above</p>
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups				x		
	Asian/Asian British				x		
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British				x		
	Gypsies / travellers				x		
	Other ethnic group				x		<p>It may be possible to partner on some events with other Faith groups and organisations in Surrey, eg. Refugee Week.</p>
Disability	Physical					x	<p>No date is recorded about disability therefore it is assumed there is no specific impact on this group.</p>
	Sensory					x	As above
	Learning Difficulties					x	As above
	Mental Health					x	As above

		Positive impact?			Negative impact?	No specific impact	What will the impact be? If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? (action) This section needs to be completed as evidence of what the positive impact is or what actions are being taken to mitigate any negative impacts
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations			
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian, gay men, bisexual					x	No date is collected on attendees, therefore it is assumed there is no specific impact on this group.
Age	Older people (50+)					x	No information is collected on attendees, therefore it is assumed there is no specific impact on this group.
	Younger people (16 - 25)				x		Involvement and participation in events, eg. youth cricket which was attended by 22 young players. 4 x 6 a side teams took part in the football tournaments. Supporters were also in attendance, but numbers not recorded. Mitigations as above, including partnering with other organisations for team events.
	Children (0-15)				x		As above
Religion or Belief	Faith Groups				x		One of WPoF's core objectives is encouraging interfaith dialogue and discussion, welcoming invitations to local churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, gurdwaras and other places of worship. Alongside this, they developed the 'Education Project' where speakers from different faiths and beliefs visit both Primary and Secondary schools to enrich their students. Mitigations as above and events such as International Day of Peace could potentially be done in partnership with other community organisations.
Pregnancy & maternity						x	No information is collected on attendees, therefore it is assumed there is no specific impact on this group.

Marriage & Civil Partnership				x	No information is collected on attendees, therefore it is assumed there is no specific impact on this group.
Socio-economic Background				x	No information is collected on attendees, therefore it is assumed there is no specific impact on this group.
Carers				x	No information is collected on attendees, therefore it is assumed there is no specific impact on this group.
Other identified groups	(Please specify)				None identified

Generalised negative impacts.

Local charities and non-profit organisations which only provide services to Woking residents may struggle to secure funding for their core costs from alternative sources. Most philanthropists and funders avoid supporting faith projects because of the sensitivity. Some organisations are unlikely to survive due to the lack of alternative funding sources, stiff competition and already stretched resources.

ACTION PLAN:

Actions identified from EqIA	Target completion date	Responsible Officer	Comments
Formal notification that funding is likely to be withdrawn to be sent to WPoF	31/01/2024	Strategic Director - Communities	Formal letter to be drafted by legal.
Volunteer Woking Funding Officer to contact WPoF to offer support to secure funding from alternative sources.	31/03/2024	Fundraising Officer	WPoF have set up a Fundraising Committee in order to look at sourcing funding elsewhere. Their first application was rejected. Funding Officer to contact the administrator to arrange to attend the Fundraising Committee meeting in January.
Working with senior officer to discuss a different operating model.	31/03/2024	Corporate	

SIGNOFF:

LEGAL SERVICES: Completed	DATE: 8 January 2024
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR: Completed	DATE: 22 January 2024
REVIEW PANEL MEMBER: Completed	DATE: 4 January 2024