

Equality Impact Assessment - Removal of funding and support for Woking Asian Business Forum

| | |
|--|---|
| Officer responsible for completing EIA: Funding Officer | Manager responsible for EIA: Head of Leisure and Communities |
| Strategic Director responsible for EIA: Louise Strongitharm | Date last updated: 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](#).

In May 2023 the Council signed a new Service Level Agreement with Woking Asian Business Forum (WABF) to fund specific services for three years with a termination clause allowing either party to terminate at any time not less than three month's written notice. Should the agreement be terminated, it will result in a saving of £18,500 in the next two years which is the length of the current agreement.

The Service Level Agreement (SLA) requires the Woking Asian Business Forum (WABF) to:

- Deliver a schedule of networking and development events in Woking to support the aims of the Forum and the wider Woking Asian Community;
- Manage the Alpha Road Community Hall (ARCH) and develop community activities through the local partnerships to enhance the wellbeing of the local community; and
- Engage regularly with the Woking Borough Council Business Liaison Team to ensure opportunities for local Asian businesses are enhanced.

In order for performance to be monitored and measured it requires WABF to submit to the Authority quarterly after April 2023 a statement showing:

- a) Schedule of activities planned and delivered by the WABF;
- b) Outcomes of Community Outreach including the use of the Alpha Road Community Hall;
- c) Outcomes of activities including numbers attended and identified impact;
- d) Detailed financial accounts (if requested).

2. Impact on service

Networking and development events in Woking to support the aims of the Forum and the wider Woking Asian Community will stop due to removal of funding, or could be funded by the Asian Business Forum via other income streams.

The management and maintenance of the Alpha Road Community Hall (ARCH) is at risk.

The risk of community activities through the local partnerships to enhance the wellbeing of the local community will end.

3. Engagement and Consultation

The Council has carried out public 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. This is what they had to say about the economic impact. [Help shape the future of discretionary council services | Woking Community Forum](#)

The **second phase of the public engagement** took place between **2 October and 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, such as increasing Council tax and making changes to the way services are delivered, which may mean reducing or withdrawing services, or indeed making revised charges or working with partner organisations.

The outcome of this consultation will be reported to Council in January 2024, with a full Council decision on 8 February 2024. The report can be found [here](#).

The Asian Business Forum was approached for comment directly as part of the second phase of the consultation, but no response was received.

| | | Positive impact? | | | Negative impact? | No specific impact | What will the impact be? If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? (action) |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|---|
| | | Eliminate discrimination | Advance equality | Good relations | | | 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 |
| Gender | Men | | | | | x | WABF have circa 300 member users who are male. Prayer groups will continue as well as business support to local Asian business owners. |
| | Women | | | | | x | WABF have circa 200 member users who are female. A Ladies Yoga session takes place every week with around 50 ladies attending it. This will be continued to be delivered. |
| Gender Reassignment | | | | | | x | Statistics are not collected on the number of people who have reassigned their gender. Although there is no specific impact on this group. |
| Race | White | | | | | x | Woking is a very multi-cultural borough and Woking Asian Business forum connect with all ethnicities, although predominantly with those with an Asian heritage or an Asian business owner. |
| | Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups | | | | | x | |
| | Asian/Asian British | | | | x | | |
| | Black/African/Caribbean/Black British | | | | | x | Mitigations will include working with Asian Business Forum to help them identify alternative funding sources such as the Surrey Community Fund and examine the pricing model to become self-funding. |
| | Gypsies / travellers | | | | | x | |
| | Other ethnic group | | | | | x | The Council will also continue to work in partnership with the Asian Business Forum to understand how they can collectively support the local Asian business community. Surrey County Council is launching a regional business support brand from 1 April 2024 so this will be available to the Asian Business Forum too and to raise awareness about this support. |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|---|
| Disability | Physical | | | | | x | This data is not recorded, but there will be no specific impact. |
| | Sensory | | | | | x | This data is not recorded, but there will be no specific impact. |
| | Learning Difficulties | | | | | x | This data is not recorded, but there will be no specific impact. |
| | Mental Health | | | | | x | This data is not recorded, but there will be no specific impact. |
| Sexual Orientation | Lesbian, gay men, bisexual | | | | | x | This data is not recorded, but there will be no specific impact. |
| Age | Older people (50+) | | | | | x | This data is not recorded, but there will be no specific impact. |
| | Younger people (16 - 25) | | | | | x | This data is not recorded, but there will be no specific impact. |
| | Children (0-15) | | | | | x | There are Arabic classes run Mon-Thurs every week for children. This will continue to be delivered. |
| Religion or Belief | Faith Groups | | | | | x | Asian Business Forum delivered an interfaith event run by the Surrey minority Ethnic Forum which was attended by a 100 people. |
| Pregnancy & maternity | | | | | | x | This data is not recorded, but there will be no specific impact. |
| Marriage & Civil Partnership | | | | | | x | This data is not recorded, but there will be no specific impact. |
| Socio-economic Background | | | | | | x | This data is not recorded, but there will be no specific impact. |
| Carers | | | | | | x | This data is not recorded, but there will be no specific impact. |
| Other identified groups | | | | | | | Local Asian Business owners who will continue to be supported by the Asian Business Forum and the new regional business support from Surrey County Council. |

Action Plan:

| Actions identified from EIA | Target completion date | Responsible Officer | Comments |
|---|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Volunteer Woking Funding Officer to contact WABF to offer a 1-2-1 meeting with the local National Lottery funding officer | 31 March 2024 | Funding Officer | |
| Volunteer Woking Funding Officer to contact WABF to offer support to secure funding from alternative sources. | 31 March 2024 | Funding Officer | |
| The Arch to consider a new business model without the funding from WBC. This may include a new pricing structure. | 1 April 2024 | Strategic Director - Communities | Strategic Director to support the Woking Asian Business Forum in the transition. |
| Continue to work in partnership with Woking Asian Business Forum | Ongoing | Strategic Director -Communities | |

SIGNOFF:

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