

Equality Impact Assessment – Removal of provision of support for sports and arts and the associated grants

Officer responsible for completing EIA: Head of Leisure and Communities	Manager responsible for EIA: Steve May
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](#).

2. Impact on services

Woking Borough Council employs both sports and arts development functions. These functions support sports, arts, and community groups across the borough in developing their services and accessing advice and funding. As well as this, both functions run some specific activities which include, the Youth Games, Sports Awards, Celebrations, such as Diwali and Chinese New Year, Summer Sounds, Dance Woking's programme and support the running of the Woking Drama Association with their delivery of the Woking Drama Festival and Sport Woking. In many instances the Borough has been offering grants or paying for these activities to take place.

The impact of not supporting these groups, and not running the specific activities that each department runs will reduce the community activity across the borough. It is hoped that in some instances the community may be able to continue running activities, but this will not be in all instances.

It is proposed that these functions cease, they are not deemed as statutory and a saving of £60,000 can be achieved by not offering them. This EqIA does not include the funding for Lightbox.

3. Engagement and consultation

The Council has conducted 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. [View the consultation feedback](#).

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 collaborate 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. [Read the full consultation report](#).

In this consultation 63% of respondents had concerns about The Lightbox closing due to potential loss of funding from the Council. Pool in the Park was also a major concern at 51%, as was the impact on sports facilities at 42%. 38% of respondents were concerned about the impact on vulnerable groups, the potential closure of public toilets and the effect proposals would have on the elderly and young people and children.

		Positive impact?			Negative impact?	No specific impact	<p>What will the impact be? If the impact is negative, how can it be mitigated? (action)</p> <p>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.</p>
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations			
Gender	Men				x		<p>There are over 100 different sporting groups across the borough offering both male and female activity. It is not anticipated that many of these would cease activity but may not be able to develop in the way they have been able to historically without council support or grant funding.</p> <p>Mitigations: Woking has a strong sports and arts offer not supported by the Council. These will continue to provide activities.</p> <p>Information and preparations being put in place to try and safeguard what the organisations currently do and empower them to be able to develop where possible. The success of this will vary significantly from group to group. This will include links to other organisations that can provide support, eg. Active Surrey.</p>

	Women				x		<p>Women will be more adversely affected than men in this service reduction as much of the work done by each function was to address the hard-to-reach groups and it is known that women in sport are harder to engage with than men, eg. only 15% of the teams across the Borough are female, and the Council has been integral in the creation of many of them. Woking Ladies FC and the work Dance Woking are examples of two organisations working to engage harder to reach groups. WBC do not directly do this work but assists the groups in reaching these goals. Without the Borough support it is known that at least some of the work being done will not be able to continue.</p> <p>Mitigations as above.</p>
Gender reassignment						x	<p>Statistics are not collected on the number of people who have reassigned their gender. However, it is assumed there is no specific impact on this group as they will be affected as above.</p>
Race	White				x		<p>All groups in this section will be affected, however the population make-up suggest that white people will be more greatly affected just in the fact that they make up a greater proportion of the attendance. Usage data is not collected.</p> <p>Mitigations as above.</p>
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups				x		<p>All groups in this section will be affected – this group have historically had more direct support as a hard-to-reach group and one with greater health inequality.</p>

	Asian/Asian British				x		<p>All groups in this section will be affected – this group have historically had more direct support as a hard-to-reach group and one with health inequalities. Specific usage data is not collected borough wide but is for specific projects focusing on engagement, eg. Woking Tigers have 40-50 people a week on average, and this continues to grow. Sheerwater Together have 20-30 of the most isolated people locally participate every week. Active Surrey will continue to offer what support they can.</p> <p>Mitigations as above, including signposting to funding specific to hard to reach groups.</p>
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British				x		As above.
	Gypsies / travellers				x		As above.
	Other ethnic group				x		As above.
Disability	Physical				x		<p>Both Sports and Arts have always focused on the harder to reach groups of which those with disabilities is one. Many of the grants have gone on improving access or providing equipment to make the activity more accessible eg. Work with Woking Tennis Club to secure suitable wheelchairs and access. New initiatives will not be able to be supported by WBC so alternative support will need to be identified.</p> <p>Mitigations as above, including signposting organisations to funding for disability sports.</p>
	Sensory				x		As above.
	Learning difficulties				x		As above.

	Mental health				x		<p>Both sports and arts play a part in mental wellbeing. Most recently the engagement with Sport in Mind created a range of new accessible services to people with mental health issues. This was being directly run by the sports development team but has already ceased activity due to staffing levels.</p> <p>Mitigation – Identify other groups that provide activities locally, eg. Catalyst.</p> <p>Signpost to funding/support for mental wellbeing.</p>
Sexual orientation	Lesbian, gay men, bisexual				x		<p>Statistics on participation are not specifically captured for this group. However, it is assumed there is no specific impact as they will be affected as above.</p>
Age	Older people (50+)				x		<p>Many Arts partnership projects are targeted towards keeping older adults active and taking part in physical activities such as dance, seated dance, and choirs, eg. Woking Community Choir (20-25 people per week), Dance for Parkinson (20 people per week). Notification of suitable funds and support for application has historically been done by WBC, moving forward this will need to be found directly by the groups / volunteers and applied for without WBC assistance.</p> <p>Mitigations:</p> <p>Woking continues to have a vibrant culture and arts offering.</p> <p>As above.</p>

	Younger people (16 – 25, Children (0-15)				x		<p>Both young people and children will be affected without support. Woking Drama Association have several well attended Youth Theatre member societies. As with above other organisation do occasionally offer funding. However historically WBC have monitored this and informed and assisted in the application for funding.</p> <p>Information and preparations being put in place to try and safeguard what the organisations currently do and empower them to be able to develop where possible. The success of this will vary significantly from group to group.</p>
Religion or belief	Faith groups				x		<p>Annual events such as the Diwali and Chinese New Year have been supported this year to make the transition to organising the events without WBC support.</p>
Pregnancy and maternity					x		<p>Some of work being facilitated by these teams incorporated bringing services specifically for this group to the Borough. Sessions such as the 0-19 service at Eastwood and provision of specific maternity care out of the leisure centre was part of the development teams objectives linked to the health and wellbeing strategy and known health outcome. Whilst the 0-19 service is now embedded not having this resource does not allow future development of these or similar services. The current services cater for on average 40-50 families a month.</p>
Marriage and civil partnership						x	<p>Impacted in the same way as other users, with no specific impact on this group.</p>

Socio-economic background			x		<p>There is an adverse impact on those on lower income as much of the work done by these teams was to encourage those most in need to participate in activity. The Surrey Youth Games for example focused on children not participating in physical activity with a 12-week free to access programme of activity with strategic routes for them to continue this if they wished. This would cater for around 80-100 people each year with a good % (50-60%) staying physically active following the games. Sponsorship for this event is possible, however without the sports development team to go and seek this and then manage the programme of events it is unlikely to be able to continue.</p> <p>Information and preparations being put in place to try and safeguard what the organisations currently do and empower them to be able to develop where possible. The success of this will vary significantly from group to group.</p>
Carers			x		<p>Carers, as with above are a target group that the development teams work to engage with. The loss of the teams will not direct impact the care services but will remove some respite opportunities.</p>
Other identified groups	Local residence/visitors to the Borough			x	<p>Signpost to local arts/sports/cultural activities.</p>

Action plan

Actions identified from EIA	Target completion date	Responsible officer	Comments
Work is being done before the removal of the teams to try and prepare the groups for a future without the council support. Operational tasks such as how to book space, write risk assessments and safely operate an event have been passed over during 2023. Eg. this process has been implemented with Diwali 2023; in the hope this sets them up for 2024 celebrations.	31 March 2024	Arts Development Officer	
Signposting to where future funds can be gained from has been given to the relevant groups where applicable	31 March 2024	Arts Development Officer and Marcoms Team	
Signpost information about similar activities elsewhere in the borough	31 March 2024	Arts Development Officer and Marcoms Team	
Review EIA and progress of and impact of mitigations outlined in action plan.	6 months	Head of Leisure and Communities	
Monitor impact on town centre footfall as events do not take place (as they encourage visitors to the town)	Report back when required.	Head of Leisure and Communities	This information is collected by Woking Shopping monthly. So this information can be shared with WBC if needed.

Sign off

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