

Initial Screening Equality Impact Analysis Tool

Section 01	Details of Initial Equality Impact Screening Analysis
Financial Year and Quarter	2012/13 1 st Quarter
Name of policy, strategy, function, project, activity, or programme	New contract and framework agreement for The Provision of Service for Face to Face Customer Transactions – due to commence mid May 2012.
Q1 What are you looking to achieve?	<p>The Contract for the Provision of Service for Face to Face Customer Transactions represents an essential component of the Council's ongoing customer access strategy and an important way to deliver significant future savings by reducing cost per transaction charges. The contract incorporates the Council's in house face to face transactional activities in addition to high volume payment services for council tax and housing rents, processed via intermediaries, and currently managed through two separate contracts.</p> <p>The majority of the Council's in house face to face transactional services are carried out through one delivery point by the Pay and Park section, H&F Direct. These include cashiering services via a payment kiosk and the boroughs parking permit services.</p> <p>Further, the Council offers a number of payment options to customers to ensure optimum collection rates. Payments for council tax and housing rent can be made through third party outlets, via intermediaries, and the Council has been managing this provision by means of two separate contracts.</p> <p>During recent years, face to face provision via Pay and Park has reduced dramatically and now only accounts for 8% of transactions processed however, the Council recognises that it will continue to be a preferred channel for some of our customer groups and transactions. In addition, as current contracted rates are driven by volume, it is suggested that there is a need to optimise our position in the market by eliminating charges to intermediaries and moving transactional services under one umbrella.</p>

Following a full and open tender process, the Council is now seeking approval to award the contract and framework agreement to Post Office Ltd who will supply a face to face offering for a range of transactional activities. The contract will encompass a range of payment and check and send facilities currently carried out by Pay and Park and other Council services. It will also eliminate the existing contractual arrangements in respect of housing rents and council tax by placing face to face transactional services under one contract. It is intended that inbound payment transactions will be the first group to transfer to the new contract with additional services phased in as supported by an appropriate business case.

As part of the development of the contract, prospective tenders were scored on their ability to deliver services in such a way that takes into account the diversity of the borough. The Public Sector Equality Duty ('PSED') is a non-delegable duty, and the Council retains ultimate responsibility for the accessibility of services. The successful tenderer, Post Office Ltd, is committed to complying with the Council's requirements to promote a borough of opportunity and will be required to maintain this compliancy as required by the Council throughout the 4 year term of the contract.

In addition, it was also considered that service users would benefit from having more than one service delivery point to carry out their transactions. In view of this it was a requirement for the tenderer to have the ability to provide face to face transactional services from six or more establishments located across the borough.

The decision to withdraw inbound face to face payments for all services, with the exception of parking permits and penalty charge notices via Pay and Park, may be unpopular but this action should be mitigated by the introduction of multiple service delivery points located across the borough.

**Q2
Who in the main will benefit?**

The award of the Contract for the Provision of Service for Face to Face Customer Transactions will positively benefit all groups and is anticipated to have no impact at all on the majority of current face to face service users. The new contract will allow service users to access the Councils face to face transactional services via 17 Post Offices across the borough, resulting in improved services and greater accessibility across all groups. At the same time it will offer the opportunity to combine H&F transactions with other services provided by the Post Office.

Post Office Ltd is a very well established and trusted organisation that the public already associate with Central and Local Government Services. This should give reassurance to our customers that their transactions will be dealt with by a very experienced and approachable service provider and the largest, most accessible retail network in the UK. In addition, although residual payment transactions will cease to be processed via Pay and Park upon implementation of the new contract, our customers will no longer have to use a self service payment kiosk to carry out their transaction and will have the opportunity to enjoy a more localised face to face service at any one of 17 Post Office branches across the borough.

Residents making payments through third party outlets via the Councils current contractual arrangements will, in the main, see little difference with the new contract. In 2010/11, of the 256,000 payments processed via this route, 94% of the transactions were carried out in a Post Office branch. In view of this, the transfer to a Post office operated contract should be a seamless process with minimal impact.

An accessibility matrix was supplied by the Post Office with tender paper work covering all 17 branches (appendix A). In addition, further information is available from the Post Office website and Post Office Ltd has confirmed that they are happy to work with the Council and any interested groups.

All protected groups

Because the new contract does not make any change to policy, and because it provides greater accessibility to face to face transactional services by offering 17 service delivery points across the borough, making it more localised and convenient, there are positive impacts for all groups. However, the fact that the service will be available from more locations, will be of more relevance to some groups than to others e.g. older and disabled people who find moving about the borough less easy than other people, and who will find the increase in local services to be more beneficial.

























The successful tenderer, Post Office Ltd, is committed to complying with the Council’s requirements to promote a borough of opportunity and will be required to maintain this compliancy as required by the Council throughout the 4 year term of the contract.

The Post Office Ltd is a well established and trusted organisation that most people recognise and this should offer reassurance to all service users.

Age	As given above, this will have more relevance to older people who may have mobility difficulties and as such will experience more of a benefit than others by having more local options to access our services. This will also be true for younger adults with children, who will have more local options and therefore not have to travel as far with children, which will free up time for them.	MEDIUM	Positive
Disability	As given above, this will have more relevance to disabled people who may have mobility difficulties and as such will experience more of a benefit than non-disabled people by having more local options to access our services. The accessibility matrix helped to inform the evaluation of the contract and provides assurance and information on accessibility for disabled people.	MEDIUM	Positive

	Gender reassignment	The new contract provides greater accessibility to face to face transactional services by offering 17 service delivery points across the borough, making it more localised and convenient. It is not of particular relevance to this protected characteristic but will have a small positive impact.	LOW	Positive
	Marriage and Civil Partnership	The new contract provides greater accessibility to face to face transactional services by offering 17 service delivery points across the borough, making it more localised and convenient. It is not of particular relevance to this protected characteristic because the services are not provided in a different way to married people than they are to civil partners but it will have a small positive impact.	LOW	Positive
	Pregnancy and maternity	As given under Age, this will have more relevance to people who may have limited mobility and as such will experience more of a benefit than others by having more local options to access our services. This can include pregnant women and those with small infants, who will now have more local options and therefore not have to travel as far with children, which will free up time for them.	MEDIUM	Positive
	Race	The new contract provides greater accessibility to face to face transactional services by offering 17 service delivery points across the borough, making it more localised and convenient. It is not of particular relevance to this protected characteristic but will have a small positive impact.	LOW	Positive
	Religion/belief (including non-belief)	The new contract provides greater accessibility to face to face transactional services by offering 17 service delivery points across the borough, making it more localised and convenient. It is not of particular relevance to this protected characteristic but will have a small positive impact.	LOW	Positive
	Sex	As given above under Age, this will have more relevance to men and women with children, who will have more local options and therefore not have to travel as far with children, which will free up time for them.	MEDIUM	Positive

	Sexual Orientation	The new contract provides greater accessibility to face to face transactional services by offering 17 service delivery points across the borough, making it more localised and convenient. It is not of particular relevance to this protected characteristic but will have a small positive impact.	LOW	Positive
<p>Human Rights and Children's Rights</p> <p>Will it affect Human Rights, as defined by the Human Rights Act 1998? No</p> <p>Will it affect Children's Rights, as defined by the UNCRC (1992)? No</p>				
<p>Q3 Does the policy, strategy, function, project, activity, or programme make a positive contribution to equalities?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>The new contract increases accessibility to the Council's face to face transactional services. This in turn assists some of our more vulnerable and disabled service users by localising services and introducing multiple access points. In addition, as face to face payment services can be accessed by everyone, it is likely to have a positive effect on all groups.</p>			
<p>Q4 Does the policy, strategy, function, project, activity, or programme actually or potentially contribute to or hinder equality of opportunity, and/or adversely impact human rights?</p>	<p>No</p>			

	Facilities for Visually Impaired or Blind
	Assistance Dogs Welcome
	Assisted Wheel Chair Access
	No Assisted Wheel Chair Access
	Facilities for the Mobility Impaired
	Customer Toilet Facilities
	Accessible Toilets
	Sign Language for Deaf People
	Facilities for Hard of Hearing People
	Induction Loops Available
	Customer Parking Facilities
	Accessible Parking Facilities
	Staff Assistance
	Low Payment Counters including clip boards, drop down counters, lap trays and portable chip and pin readers
	Parent with Pushchair Access
	Baby Changing Facilities
	Accessible Baby Changing Facilities
	Alternative Language Available
	Intercom Outside of the Premises
	Temporary Ramp Available
	Low Reception, Information Counters Available
	Automatic Doors Present
	Customer Lift Provided
	Accessible Lift Provided