

## Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Before completing this EqIA please ensure you have read the guidance on the intranet.

### Initial Information

Name:	Jessica Maskrey
Job Title:	Strategic Estates Manager
Email address:	<a href="mailto:Jessica.maskrey@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk">Jessica.maskrey@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</a>
Members of the assessment team:	Jessica Maskrey, Ben Lancaster, Dave Thompson, Susan Ward-Rice
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Date of completion:	
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### Part 1: Background Information

Is this (please tick or expand the box to explain)

Existing	
Changing, updating or revision	
New or proposed	✓
Other	

Is this (please tick or expand the box to explain)

Internal (employees only)	✓
External (residents, communities, partners)	
Both of the above	

What is the name of your policy, strategy, project or service being assessed?

Dorchester Office Estate Rationalisation and other associated office relocations as part of the Property Strategy & Asset Management Plan.

What is the policy, strategy, project or service designed to do? (include the aims, purpose and intended outcomes of the policy)

The Council Plan identifies that the effective utilisation of the Council's property assets forms one of the five transformation themes in the Council transformation plan (Transformation theme 3: Be smart in its use of assets, estate and capital).

The Council's primary aims are to:

- Rationalise the property estate, reduce costs and identify assets that are suitable for disposal or redevelopment
- To improve the condition of the estate and reduce its environmental impact
- Adapt the council's office accommodation in order to alter its estate and modernise its workspace to meet the needs of future agile working and the aims of the Dorset Workplace

- To seek to maximise the value of the estate by creating income generation opportunities, disposing of or repurposing poor performing assets in order to create greater social, commercial and economic returns

Within Dorchester (postcodes DT1 & DT2) there are twelve assets owned and occupied by the Council that are categorised within its Asset register as 'offices'. The Dorchester Office Strategy paper recommends to Cabinet to consolidate all of the Council's office activities within Dorchester at County Hall/Colliton Park and to rationalise and repurpose its office estate as a result. The initial focus will centre on the relocation of Services from Princes House & South Walks House with separate reviews being undertaken of the History Centre, Monkton Park and the Dorchester Area office at a later date or as when required.

Rationalisation and reorganisation of the office estate within Dorchester requires relocation of teams within County Hall, to achieve best use of office space available; as well as relocation of teams and services currently based in other office locations.

What is the background or context to the proposal?

Local government reorganisation and the creation of Dorset Council has presented opportunities to consolidate office accommodation provision and rationalise the office estate of the predecessor councils.

The effective management of the asset base will help enable the council to meet its social and financial challenges through asset disposals, generation of capital receipts, savings in costs through the reduction, rationalisation and improved efficiency of the estate, and generation of value through income generation and the repurposing, redirecting and reuse of land and buildings for housing, schools and other essential service needs.

Changes to technology and access to information, particularly, in recent years has allowed for work to be done differently and more flexibly. Whilst the Council has been actively reviewing its estate, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated and accentuated this and presented the need to work remotely in different ways which has brought about a dramatic change in working practices and office requirements that previously could not have been imagined. As a result the Council like a number of other public and private sector organisations will require less office space in future.

Reorganisation and rationalisation of the office estate in Dorchester will enable the council to respond to changes in technology and the acceleration in agile working brought about by the COVID pandemic. The office reorganisation and rationalisation work is closely interrelated to the Dorset Workplace programme, the objective of which is to establish a set of principles that will allow employees to work from the place or more likely the places where they can best serve residents, customers and clients in the most effective way.

The council is developing its Customer Services offer. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, much of the front facing customer services offer was delivered in office

locations. The Customer Services Workstream within the Transformation Programme consists of four strands of work:

- customer contact points and Dorset Direct
- community and information services set around libraries
- culture and change both for the council and its customers
- digital

The workstream is aligning customer management activities across the organisation, ensuring the council delivers services to those that need them, how they need them and when they need them, which in turn will maximise the benefits. This work is closely interrelated to asset management and office rationalisation and the workstreams will continue to work in tandem to ensure proposed changes are assessed for equalities impact.

## **Part 2: Gathering information**

What sources of data, information, evidence and research was used to inform you about the people your proposal will have an impact on?

In conjunction with the Dorset Workplace engagement has been undertaken on future working arrangements and associated office accommodation needs, providing significant data on future workspace requirements:

- Hive Pulse Survey on Future Working arrangements
- Employee Forum Workshop Analysis
- Structured Conversations with senior managers (Corporate Directors, Heads of Service and Service Managers)
- Engagement with Trade Unions

[\(link to Dorset Workplace cabinet report containing EQIA\)](#)

Extensive research on new ways of working undertaken by the Dorset Workplace programme and detailed in the [Dorset Workplace EQIA](#).

Analysis of pre-COVID desk audit data (desk audits undertaken at Allenview House in July 2017, County Hall in November 2018, and at Ferndown Area Office, Hanham Centre and Cedar House in March 2019).

Analysis of property data held in the Corporate Property Database and asset register, including size of assets, number of desks, title.

Analysis of HR and Payroll data on work locations has been undertaken to ascertain desk ratio requirements.

What did this data, information, evidence and research tell you?

Data from engagement and research undertaken alongside the Dorset Workplace programme indicated a desire amongst managers and colleagues to adopt a more

flexible and agile way of working post COVID, with some time spent in office locations and some time spent at home or in other locations. The engagement and research indicated that for some colleagues access to an office for the majority of their working time was important, but for the majority a hybrid approach was seen as beneficial. The vast majority of managers were comfortable with reduced desk ratios, and a focus on collaboration spaces. (more detail included in the [Dorset Workplace EQIA](#)).

Analysis of pre-COVID desk audit data indicated an average occupancy of 52%, thus demonstrating the potential to reduce desk ratios, before the acceleration of agile ways of working as an outcome of the pandemic is taken into account.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Date of audit</b>	<b>Average occupancy</b>
Allenview House	July 2017	44%
County Hall	Nov 2018	64%
East offices (Ferndown Area Office, Hanham Centre, Cedar House)	Mar 2019	48%

Analysis of property data and HR & payroll data identified the Council's requirement going forward is for between 800-1000 desks in Dorchester. This revealed that the consolidation of the office estate into South Walks House would require a desk ratio of less than 2:10.

All council staff located within the Dorchester estate can therefore be accommodated within County Hall (main building and East Annexe). The application of new ways of working also provides opportunities for the provision of office space for partner organisations such as other public bodies and/or voluntary and community sector organisations.

**Is further information needed to help inform this proposal?**

The development of the customer services offer, which will be subject to a separate EqIA.

An extensive programme of surveying and work was carried out by predecessor Councils following the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 which has now been superseded and incorporated within the Equality Act 2010. The Council has continued to make 'reasonable adjustments' since that date based on representations made and any complaints received in accordance with the legislation.

As part of the office rationalisation and consolidation exercise being undertaken the Council has commissioned DOTS Disability & Community Interest Company to undertake a further programme of Access Audits and Reviews of its proposed primary office locations some of which are also accessible by the public to ensure that all barriers to access have been recognised and an action plan be established, where necessary, in order for them to be reduced and removed.

Any actions arising will be recorded and remedied as part of a planned programme of repair and maintenance works.

### Part 3: Engagement and Consultation

What engagement or consultation has taken place as part of this proposal?

See part 2 above for a description of engagement undertaken in the development of proposals for the office estate in Dorchester.

As part of the office relocations process engagement is undertaken with each impacted team, comprising an initial engagement session with team managers, followed by an engagement session with all team members. Sessions are recorded for those unable to make the event. A Teams site has been established with a dedicated channel for each service area, where information is shared and colleagues are able to pose questions.

Managers are encouraged to have conversations with colleagues and highlight specific needs to the Relocations Implementation team. The proposals to rationalise the estate and relocate teams will not impact on provision of necessary adaptations for colleagues with requirements related to protected characteristics.

Discussions have been initiated with a number of partner organisations occupying Dorset Council owned office accommodation, with a view to reviewing future requirements.

How will the outcome of consultation be fed back to those who you consulted with?

In conjunction with the Dorset Workplace programme, regular communications have been, and will continue to be, issued to colleagues updating on proposals and progress.

### Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment Guidance before completing this section.

Not every proposal will require an EqlA. If you decide that your proposal does **not** require an EqlA, it is important to show that you have given this adequate consideration. The data and research that you have used to inform you about the people who will be affected by the policy should enable you to make this decision and whether you need to continue with the EqlA.

### Please tick the appropriate option:

An EqlA is required (please continue to Part 4 of this document)	<b>Y</b>
An EqlA is <b>not</b> required (please complete the box below)	

This policy, strategy, project or service does not require an EqlA because:

Name:

Job Title:

Date:

Please send a copy of this document to [Diversity & Inclusion Officer](#)

**Next Steps:**

- The EqIA will be reviewed by Business Intelligence & Communications and if in agreement, your EqIA will be signed off.
- If not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqIA, to get a better understanding.

**Part 4: Analysing the impact**

Who does the service, strategy, policy, project or change impact?

- If your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option. Please cut and paste the template accordingly.

For each protected characteristic please choose from the following options:

- Please note in some cases more than one impact may apply – in this case please state all relevant options and explain in the ‘Please provide details’ box.

Positive Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.</li> </ul>
Negative Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against</li> </ul>
Neutral Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups</li> </ul>
Unclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.</li> </ul>

Age:	<i>Positive impact</i>
What age bracket does this affect?	All
Please provide details:	Office relocations implemented alongside the Dorset Workplace will give colleagues greater flexibility to determine how they work to best meet their own personal circumstances and workplace needs, thus encouraging inclusivity for colleagues who wish to be home based, office based or a hybrid of the two.

Disability: (including physical, mental, sensory and progressive conditions)	<i>Positive impact</i>
Does this affect a specific disability group?	No

Please provide details:	<p>Office relocations implemented alongside the Dorset Workplace will give colleagues greater flexibility to determine how they work to best meet their own personal circumstances and workplace needs.</p> <p>Workstation and workplace requirements relating to disability will not be impacted by the proposals. The council will continue to make necessary adaptations within office spaces and provide specialist equipment where required for colleagues with a disability.</p>
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Gender Reassignment & Gender Identity:	<i>Positive impact</i>
Please provide details:	Office relocations implemented alongside the Dorset Workplace will give colleagues greater flexibility to determine how they work to best meet their own personal circumstances and workplace needs.

Pregnancy and maternity:	<i>Positive impact</i>
Please provide details:	Office relocations implemented alongside the Dorset Workplace will give colleagues greater flexibility to determine how they work to best meet their own personal circumstances and workplace needs.

Race and Ethnicity:	<i>Positive impact</i>
Please provide details:	Office relocations implemented alongside the Dorset Workplace will give colleagues greater flexibility to determine how they work to best meet their own personal circumstances and workplace needs.

Religion or belief:	<i>Positive impact</i>
Please provide details:	Office relocations implemented alongside the Dorset Workplace will give colleagues greater flexibility to determine how they work to best meet their own personal circumstances and workplace needs.

Sexual orientation:	<i>Positive impact</i>
Please provide details:	Office relocations implemented alongside the Dorset Workplace will give colleagues greater flexibility to determine how they work to best meet their own personal circumstances and workplace needs.

Sex (consider both men and women):	<i>Positive impact</i>
Please provide details:	Office relocations implemented alongside the Dorset Workplace will give colleagues greater flexibility to determine how they work to best meet their own personal circumstances and workplace needs.
Marriage or civil partnership:	<i>Positive impact</i>
Please provide details:	Office relocations implemented alongside the Dorset Workplace will give colleagues greater flexibility to determine how they work to best meet their own personal circumstances and workplace needs.
Carers:	<i>Positive impact</i>
Please provide details:	Office relocations implemented alongside the Dorset Workplace will give colleagues greater flexibility to determine how they work to best meet their own personal circumstances and workplace needs.
Rural isolation:	<i>Positive impact</i>
Please provide details:	Office relocations implemented alongside the Dorset Workplace will give colleagues greater flexibility to determine how they work to best meet their own personal circumstances and workplace needs.
Single parent families:	<i>Positive impact</i>
Please provide details:	Office relocations implemented alongside the Dorset Workplace will give colleagues greater flexibility to determine how they work to best meet their own personal circumstances and workplace needs.
Social & economic deprivation:	Positive impact
Please provide details:	Office relocations implemented alongside the Dorset Workplace will give colleagues greater flexibility to determine how they work to best meet their own personal circumstances and workplace needs.
Armed Forces communities	<i>Positive impact</i>

Please provide details:

Office relocations implemented alongside the Dorset Workplace will give colleagues greater flexibility to determine how they work to best meet their own personal circumstances and workplace needs.

**Part 5: Action Plan**

Provide actions for **positive**, **negative** and **unclear** impacts.

If you have identified any **negative** or **unclear** impacts, describe what adjustments will be made to remove or reduce the impacts, or if this is not possible provide justification for continuing with the proposal.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by

**EqIA Sign Off**

Officer completing this EqIA:		Date:	
Equality Lead:		Date:	
Equality & Diversity Action Group Chair:		Date:	

**Next Steps:**

- Please send this draft EqIA to: [Diversity & inclusion Officer](#)
- The report author will be invited to an Equality & Diversity Action Group (these are held monthly - dates are available on the intranet)
- The Equality & Diversity Action Group will review the EqIA and you may be asked to make some alterations
- EqIAs are signed off and published
- The report author is responsible for ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.