

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provides a record of both the **process** and **decision**. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions. Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.
- whether or not equality, diversity, cohesion and integration is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an impact assessment.

Directorate: Environment and Housing	Service area: Information Management and Technology (IM&T)
Lead person: Steve Blighton	Contact number: 0113 395 2741

1. Title: Review of Housing ICT Solutions

Is this a delegated decision notice for Environment and Housing

Strategy / Policy
 Service / Function
 Other

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

Housing uses a number of software systems from a range of providers to meet their ICT needs. Many of these contracts are due for renewal during 2016, offering an opportunity to review and test whether the council is achieving best value from its current arrangements, test whether there are better systems available within the market place, and whether there are opportunities to better integrate the systems.

Housing are looking to procure a new single contract (Strategic Lead Supplier) that will replace all of the current contracts.

The project aims to improve the ease with which staff can use the ICT systems that support Housing, improve system integration, reduce on-going support and maintenance costs, and provide more accessible management information – which will in turn promote improved efficiency and effectiveness within the service.

This assessment is not about provision of ICT hardware. It is about the ICT systems that support the Housing Service in Leeds.

3. Relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

All the council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – city wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, carers, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Also those areas that impact on or relate to equality: tackling poverty and improving health and well-being.

Questions	Yes	No
Is there an existing or likely differential impact for the different equality characteristics?	✓	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns about the policy or proposal?	✓	
Could the proposal affect how our services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?	✓	
Could the proposal affect our workforce or employment practices?		x
Does the proposal involve or will it have an impact on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment • Advancing equality of opportunity • Fostering good relations 	✓	

If you have answered **no** to the questions above please complete **sections 6 and 7**

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above and;

- Believe you have already considered the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 4**.
- Are not already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 5**.

4. Considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

If you can demonstrate you have considered how your proposals impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you have carried out an impact assessment.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below (use the prompts for guidance).

- **How have you considered equality, diversity, cohesion and integration?**

(think about the scope of the proposal, who is likely to be affected, equality related information, gaps in information and plans to address, consultation and engagement activities (taken place or planned) with those likely to be affected)

This procurement is seeking to appoint a single strategic lead supplier to provide the most effective and value for money ICT solution to best meet the future business vision for housing in Leeds. The council wishes to adopt standard proven software packages and adapt business process (not tailor, bespoke or develop systems), that integrates with its other corporate ICT systems. Service areas of the new housing solution will adapt their operating procedures and ways of working, where required, to adopt new system(s) functionality. We don't yet know the capabilities of the new proposed solution or the level of business change required to adopt it, but understand that this may affect some groups of people in different ways.

It is important to ensure that the new suite of systems provided by one strategic lead supplier brings about positive change in terms of technological provision, is customer friendly and accessible to all.

We have looked at our current ICT provision for housing and in the main it meets our needs. However, we know through recent consultation and engagement with the Housing Leeds Tenants Forum that whilst some people are still wanting a face to face service, more younger people want an online facility.

We know from the census data that the demographics of Leeds tenants covers all equality characteristics. We also know from general studies and research that there are different levels of competency and knowledge of ICT across different equality characteristics. For example younger people want information and services to be more readily available online and through social networking sites such as Facebook.

We are aware of the accessibility audit undertaken of the council's website and the accessibility accreditation the council is aiming to achieve. We need to ensure that the final product / solutions procured is compliant with this.

- **Key findings**

(think about any potential positive and negative impact on different equality characteristics, potential to promote strong and positive relationships between groups, potential to bring groups/communities into increased contact with each other, perception that the proposal could benefit one group at the expense of another)

The future direction of housing is that they want to move towards more web-based transactional services and mobile working for staff.

We know from analysing general studies and research that some people are not able to use the internet or other digital technologies at the same rate as others due to variation of skill, confidence or learning in using digital technologies. Recent studies in the digital divide has evidence of inequalities amongst people with lower incomes, in rural areas, and those less

educated (impacting on people differently depending on their socio-economic status, social class, income, education or skills level).

In addition, there is a requirement to ensure any change in systems does not have a negative impact on older and / or disabled users by ensuring the new solution is accessible, is simplistic to use and meets the needs of disabled users in the provision, configuration and compatibility with specialist software.

This exercise will look to procure a suite of systems that are web enabled and provide the functionality for customers to access the service online to access information and process transactions, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We know through the accessibility audit report what is required to ensure our web enabled systems are fully accessible, in particular for disabled users, and we are only willing to award a contract to a supplier who can meet these standards.

Having more web-based transactional services will improve access to housing services for some customers, who have online access, but struggle to make contact with the council either face to face or on the telephone. It is hoped this would be a positive impact for some users for example, where customers are working traditional working hours, which mirror the hours our offices and contact centre, it will mean that they are able to access systems outside these hours and provide them with a better more accessible service. This will also provide a more accessible service for some disabled users as they will be able to process transactions and make enquiries from the comfort of their home and without having to travel to one of our housing offices.

However, it is recognised that this could have a negative impact on other service users, such as older residents who are not able to use the internet or other digital technologies and residents who live in poor access areas (e.g. rural residents). Housing will need to continue to provide a face to face service through the council one-stop centres and over the telephone via the councils contact centre to ensure the service remains accessible for users who are not able to use the internet or other digital technologies

We also recognise that if the new solution forces a change in policy, such as the billing cycle for example, this could cause public concerns from Members and residents.

- **Actions**

(think about how you will promote positive impact and remove/ reduce negative impact)

To ensure we are giving due regard to equality within this procurement we need to ensure our equality and diversity requirements are clearly stated within the pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) and tender documents.

The following equality and diversity requirements will be written within the specification:

- The supplier will comply with legislation, guidance and good industry practice in line with LCC's equality and diversity policy and practice, both in regard to its own employment and contracting processes and also with respect to the services and the ICT solution(s) provided under this contract.
- The supplier will consider and ensure good practice in meeting the needs of all users, but in particular disabled users, (including both staff and tenants) to ensure their needs are considered and built into the proposed solution.
- The supplier will consider and ensure good practice in meeting the needs of all users, but in particular disabled users, in the provision and configuration of software. This includes accessibility standards relevant to users with visual, hearing, and motor impairment, for example RNIB Guidelines; Text Only Version including font and colour adjustment; Compatibility with Audio Browsers and Braille readers for the blind; Compatibility with

adaptive software e.g. Zoomtext, Dragon Naturally Speaking).

A pilot of the new housing self-service portal, which is aiming to provide more web-based transactional facilities to Leeds tenants, is planned in January with a group of tenants. We have requested that this pilot includes a range of tenants from across all equality characteristics so we can use their feedback to identify any equality and diversity issues that we may need to take account of during this procurement process.

What we don't yet know is the impact from the business change elements, so we will incorporate further equality and diversity considerations further along in the procurement process, as the capabilities of the new solution become more well-known. This is a complex area within delivery of this project and will therefore be broken down into the following stages:

Stage 0 – Identify need

Stage 1 – Consider options

Stage 2 – Detailed planning,

Stage 3 – Designing the change

Stage 4 – Business Change

Stage 5 – Implementation

To address this, a meeting is scheduled with the Equality team in mid-January 2016 to discuss and develop a plan for ensuring that equality, diversity, cohesion and integration is fully considered for each of the above stages and consideration given as to whether a detailed impact assessment should be undertaken.

The action plan will include:

- Widening Housing's scope and future vision within the specification to ensure we are addressing younger people needs in making the service more accessible through online provision.
- Building in known requirements of disabled users (for both staff and tenants) within the specification, as detailed above.
- Involving LCC's web-designer in the supplier demonstrations, to ensure the proposed solutions explicitly meets the website accessibility standards (as set out in the accessibility audit report) and Housing's web-based transactional services are accessible for all users.
- Consultation with key stakeholders, including Members, throughout the procurement process to keep them informed of progress and any potential changes in future policies and operating procedures.
- Engagement with and involvement of key users, disabled staff and Housing Leeds Tenants Forum during the supplier demonstrations, to obtain their feedback on the proposed new solution(s) and consideration of any equality and diversity issues that may arise from their feedback. This feedback will be used to inform the evaluation of the tender submissions and as we design the business change and implementation plan during further stages of the overall project.
- Involvement of key users, including staff, tenants and disabled users, during user acceptance testing during implementation.
- Tenant group training sessions, run by the new provider, to support users in learning how to use the new system and undertaking transactions online and address inequalities in digital skills and access (contributing to our social value).

5. If you are **not already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you **will need to carry out an impact assessment**.**

Date to scope and plan your impact assessment:	
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Date to complete your impact assessment	
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Lead person for your impact assessment (Include name and job title)	
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6. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening

Name	Job title	Date
Steve Blighton	Project Manager	23/11/2015
Date screening completed		23/11/2015

7. Publishing

Though **all** key decisions are required to give due regard to equality the council **only** publishes those related to **Executive Board, Full Council, Key Delegated Decisions** or a **Significant Operational Decision**.

A copy of this equality screening should be attached as an appendix to the decision making report:

- Governance Services will publish those relating to Executive Board and Full Council.
- The appropriate directorate will publish those relating to Delegated Decisions and Significant Operational Decisions.
- A copy of all other equality screenings that are not to be published should be sent to equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk for record.

Complete the appropriate section below with the date the report and attached screening was sent:

For Executive Board or Full Council – sent to Governance Services	Date sent: 12th Janaury 2016
For Delegated Decisions or Significant Operational Decisions – sent to appropriate Directorate	Date sent:
All other decisions – sent to equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk	Date sent: 12 th Janaury 2016