

Community and Equality Impact Assessment

As an authority, we have made a commitment to apply a systematic equalities and diversity screening process to both new policy development or changes to services.

This is to determine whether the proposals are likely to have significant positive, negative or adverse impacts on the different groups in our community.

This process has been developed, together with **full guidance** to support officers in meeting our duties under the:

- Equality Act 2010.
- The Best Value Guidance
- The Public Services (Social Value) 2012 Act

About the service or policy development

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| Name of service or policy | Social Infrastructure Contract 2024-28 |
| Lead Officer | Monica Needs |
| Contact Details | Head of Participation and Engagement |

Why is this service or policy development/review needed?

In 2019, the council commissioned a social infrastructure support service contract on a three year plus one basis. The current contract will therefore expire on the 30th of June 2023. To continue to invest in the social infrastructure of Barking and Dagenham and witness the benefits of a stronger and more connected social infrastructure, the council will need to re-commission a new partner to provide a support service to local VCSE groups from July 2024.

Much progress has been made since 2019 when we first commissioned the support service. This includes the development of a local endowment fund, which the council has invested £1.67 million of CIL money into, and its investment policy developed was by a resident panel. In addition, we have witnessed the growth of multiple networks of VCSE groups joined together through shared issues such as mental health, early help, and food. These networks have brought in £2.2 million worth of funding into the borough and have meant that fewer people have gone hungry, more people are connected across diverse backgrounds, and residents are more able to find solutions to problems in their community. This has led to fewer people reaching crisis point and accessing council services, reducing pressure on council resources and funding which has been put under significant financial strain over the last ten years.

While we should celebrate the progress the borough has made, if we wish to see this growth of collaborative working and trust between the council and social infrastructure continue, the council must re-invest in a new social infrastructure contract from 2024 onwards. The social infrastructure contract's specification for 2024 will focus on the key themes outlined below:

1. Leading the sector to stimulate new opportunities in the borough
2. Develop collaboration between civil society groups and between the sector and partners
3. Support local groups to build sustainable organisations
4. Provide representation of the local VCSE sector with the council and other partners

1. Community impact (this can be used to assess impact on staff although a cumulative impact should be considered).

What impacts will this service or policy development have on communities?
Look at what you know. What does your research tell you?

Please state which data sources you have used for your research in your answer below

Consider:

- National & local data sets
- Complaints
- Consultation and service monitoring information
- Voluntary and Community Organisations
- The Equality Act places a specific duty on people with ‘protected characteristics’. The table below details these groups and helps you to consider the impact on these groups.
- It is Council policy to consider the impact services and policy developments could have on residents who are socio-economically disadvantaged. There is space to consider the impact below.

| Potential impacts | Positive | Neutral | Negative | What are the positive and negative impacts? | How will benefits be enhanced and negative impacts minimised or eliminated? |
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| Local communities in general | X | | | <p>The social infrastructure contract will benefit local communities in general by building the relationships between VCSE partners and the council to help more people find solutions to problems in their localities and communities. This will mean that it's easier for local communities to find help nearer to home and from places they know and trust. Not everyone can or wants to use the council to help them; for a lot of people, a local community group, café, or faith space may be much more approachable.</p> <p>Developing spaces where communities can connect and find help will encourage more cohesion between communities where people from different backgrounds can</p> | <p>Benefits to local communities may be enhanced by ensuring that the provider develops a diverse set of relationships so that communities across the borough and from a variety of backgrounds can benefit from support.</p> <p>The benefits to local communities in general can be enhanced further by asking the provider to ensure that smaller civil society groups are included in discussions, workstreams, and have a place at the table in decision making.</p> |

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| | | | interact. The provider will act as a facilitator in connecting these groups in a variety of workstreams focused on the outcomes of the Borough Manifesto. | |
| Age | X | | <p>The provider will work with the council and VCSE sector to support local people of all ages.</p> <p>A strong social infrastructure can provide young people with opportunities to engage with their local communities in meaningful activities, as well as through employment and skills training. Through supporting organisations in developing relationships and resources, the social infrastructure contract will contribute to improved outcomes for young people.</p> <p>VCSE groups are valuable sources of community activity and can help in reducing social isolation and health among older people. By supporting and enhancing social action projects delivered by VCSE groups, the social infrastructure contract will aid the reduction of loneliness and isolation, as well as physical health ailments through activities such as community check-ins.</p> | <p>The council will support VCSE groups in their engagement with young people, to gauge their views on joint projects and issues within the borough.</p> <p>The council will support the provider and VCSE groups in organising community events and ensure council-led events appeal to a range of ages.</p> |
| Disability | X | X | Positive impacts Joint projects, networks, and learning events referenced in the social | Minimising Negative Impacts The provider will provide support and guidance to VCSE groups looking to move premises, |

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| | | | <p>infrastructure contract have the potential to provide opportunities for people with disabilities to engage in the community. Many VCSE groups provide community support for people with disabilities.</p> <p>Negative impacts There is a risk of people with disabilities being excluded from events and discussion forums if they are not sufficiently accessible.</p> <p>Parking at in person workshops and meetings could potentially have an impact on the wider community, especially on people with mobility issues, if parked cars block walkways.</p> | <p>including guidance on accessibility needs for disabled people.</p> <p>The provider will agree to encourage sensible parking at events and meetings which does not impede public walkways.</p> |
| Gender reassignment | X | X | <p>Positive impact Generating more collaboration across the community and with a variety of VCSE groups will mean that people from all backgrounds and perspectives can interact and learn from each other's experiences. These interactions should lead to shared understanding and increased empathy between people with different perspectives and backgrounds.</p> <p>Negative impact There may be tensions among some VCSE groups on the topic of gender reassignment. Some groups, particularly those who</p> | <p>The provider will endeavour to incorporate people from all backgrounds into workstreams and decision-making bodies, helping to mitigate against biases and create spaces where everyone is free to share their experiences.</p> <p>If issues relating to gender reassignment arise, the provider, with support from the council, can provide guidance and signposting to relevant organisations.</p> |

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| | | | are founded on religious schools of thought, may be reluctant to change traditional views on the topic and could promote discrimination. | |
| Marriage and civil partnership | | X | The Public Sector Equality Duty only applies to marriage and civil partnership in the context of preventing discrimination. | |
| Pregnancy and maternity | X | | <p>The social infrastructure contract will contribute to thriving, connected communities which may provide support for women during pregnancy and maternity.</p> <p>VCSE groups who focus predominantly on women's issues will have access to extra support and resources because of the social infrastructure support service. This support may be used to further their projects and provide additional help and guidance to their client base during pregnancy and maternity.</p> | The social infrastructure support service will involve supporting groups of varying aims across the borough, including those who help women and their partners or carers in pregnancy and maternity. This support will encompass sharing resources and knowledge through networks, training opportunities, and access to consortium bids for funding. All of this can help develop those groups which specifically help women to become stronger and more sustainable. |
| Race (including Gypsies, Roma and Travellers) | X | | X <p>A strong social infrastructure plays a key role in connecting communities and encouraging people from different backgrounds to interact and work together.</p> <p>Black and minority ethnic communities are statistically more likely to face socio-economic deprivation and therefore experience more issues that might</p> | <p>Enhancing positive impact The provider will be required to ensure that Black and minority ethnic led VCSE groups are included in networks and collaborative working, which will help to bring people from diverse communities together and allow people from all races to make decisions about issues that affect them most in their communities.</p> <p>Minimising negative impact The provider will be expected to ensure that networks, decision making representation and</p> |

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| | | | <p>require external support beyond that of friends and family. These communities will therefore benefit from a stronger social infrastructure which is equipped with the knowledge, skills, and relationships to help those in need find the right route to support.</p> <p>The number of Black and minority ethnic led VCSE groups has declined over the last ten years in the UK (source: 360 Giving). The social infrastructure contract will support all VCSE groups in the borough, regardless of racial background, to ensure that they can continue to function and help fulfil their objectives.</p> <p>Negative impact There is a risk that Black, and minority ethnic-led groups do not share the same decision making powers as other groups, or are less likely to access funding opportunities due to structural inequalities.</p> | <p>access to funding is reflective of the borough's demographics. The provider will also be expected to help organisations that are struggling to sustain themselves with signposting to relevant support or training.</p> |
| Religion or belief | X | X | <p>Positive impact The social infrastructure support service will facilitate more collaboration between groups based around different faiths. There exist some community tensions between faith organisations, therefore, more work to connect these groups through</p> | <p>Enhancing positive impact The provider will encourage interfaith work and activities to encourage groups of different backgrounds and beliefs to interact and share decisions.</p> <p>Mitigating negative impact Work over the past four years has demonstrated that, for the most part, faith groups are willing to share spaces with groups of</p> |

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| | | | <p>joint workstreams and collaboration will encourage individuals to put their differences aside and work for the good of the borough.</p> <p>When planning events, the provider will need to consider faith-based access needs. This will enable better inclusion of a variety of faith groups and improve cohesion between them.</p> <p>Negative impact Some organisations do not wish to work together or share spaces with organisations outside their own faith.</p> <p>There is a risk that the views of certain faith groups are incorporated more strongly into workstreams while other faiths are ignored. This could alienate some faith groups or leave some views underrepresented.</p> | <p>other faiths. The provider will be expected to use a variety of channels to engage VCSE groups to ensure that more faith groups are invited to get involved in joint working arrangements and can benefit from the sharing of spaces and resources.</p> <p>The Public Sector Equality Duty is inclusive of those with no faith or religion. Non-Faith groups, as such secular and humanist societies, will have access to the same opportunities as Faith-based organisations, such as support in accessing funding or securing new assets</p> |
| Sex | X | X | <p>Positive Impact A more vibrant social infrastructure will provide more opportunities for all genders to become involved in their communities.</p> <p>Groups with a focus on supporting a particular gender will benefit from the support service in accessing help, training, and increased access to funding pots through being part of a more connected social</p> | <p>Enhancing Positive Impact The specification of the support service contract will require the provider to ensure that there is a balance of genders at decision making forums and in accessing funding.</p> <p>Mitigating Negative Impact The social infrastructure support service contract informs the provider of their equalities obligations. The provider will be expected to step in where collaborative working is biased towards a certain gender, which</p> |

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| | | | <p>infrastructure. By being part of a larger network, smaller organisations will benefit from the experience and expertise of more established groups.</p> <p>Negative Impact Some VCSE groups, particularly those of a faith-based nature, may have conflicting ideas about the roles of different genders. These ideas may conflict with the understandings set out in the council's Equality and Diversity Strategy.</p> | <p>may exclude certain views and experiences.</p> |
| Sexual orientation | X | X | <p>Positive Impact A more connected social infrastructure will allow people from all backgrounds to connect and contribute to work in the borough. Joint projects and events will allow the views of people from differing sexual orientations to be heard, shared, and implemented.</p> <p>Negative Impact There may be some tensions among some members of VCSE groups, particularly those of a faith-based nature, around the topic of sexual orientation. There is a risk that some individuals could use their organisation as a platform to promote discrimination.</p> | <p>Enhancing positive impact The provider will ensure that there is diversity of VCSE group representation at forums, consortium approaches to work, and at decision making boards.</p> <p>Mitigating negative impact If the provider or another VCSE group wants to engage with issues relating to sexual orientation, the council will provide support, guidance and signposting to relevant organisations.</p> |

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| Socio-economic Disadvantage | X | | <p>A strong social infrastructure encourages more VCSE groups to share resources and knowledge, adopting a values-driven approach to work rather than approach led by organisation first. This means that more people in need will access the help they need through a joined up social infrastructure where groups are equipped with the tools and knowledge required to signpost people to the right route of support.</p> <p>VCSE groups are already connected on topics such as food scarcity and social isolation, both most often affecting those from socio-economic deprived backgrounds. As the social infrastructure contract is re-commissioned, this work will be further supported to ensure that residents in need of financial guidance and support can access it more readily in their communities.</p> | <p>The provider will support VCSE groups to work collaboratively to join up skills and resources of groups across the borough. This collaboration will ensure that more people in need of support can access it.</p> |
| Any community issues identified for this location? | | | N/A | |

2. Consultation.

Two workshops, online and in person, with representatives from the VCSE sector were held in November 2023. These workshops were combined with an online survey which ran for four weeks through the council's One Borough Voice platform. A total of 12 representatives from the VCSE offered feedback at the workshops or through the survey. The questions and feedback discussed in these workshops and the survey can be found in Appendix 1 of the Procurement report.

A consultation workshop with senior council officers was also held in December 2023, including officers from Public Health, Culture and Heritage, Strategy, Education, and Commissioning. A summary of the questions and feedback gathered through this workshop can be found in Appendix 2 of the Procurement report.

There were no issues raised by VCSE representatives or the consulted council officers with the procurement of the contract, only suggestions were made as to how we can improve our relationship between sectors.

3. Monitoring and Review

How will you review community and equality impact once the service or policy has been implemented?

*These actions should be developed using the information gathered in **Section 1 and 2** and should be picked up in your departmental/service business plans.*

| Action | By when? | By who? |
|--|-------------------------------|--|
| Review of the social infrastructure support service contract deliverables and outcomes | Quarterly, starting July 2024 | Participation and Engagement Team and the provider |
| Review the contract progress and decide on one year extension | October 2026 | Participation and Engagement Team and the provider |
| Final review and evaluation | June 2028 | Participation and Engagement Team and the provider |

4. Next steps

It is important the information gathered is used to inform any Council reports that are presented to Cabinet or appropriate committees. This will allow Members to be furnished with all the facts in relation to the impact their decisions will have on different equality groups and the wider community.

Take some time to summarise your findings below. This can then be added to your report template for sign off by the Strategy Team at the consultation stage of the report cycle.

| Implications/ Customer Impact |
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| <p>The social infrastructure support service contract sets out a four-year vision for the the social infrastructure in Barking and Dagenham from 2024-2028.</p> <p>The main aims of the contract will be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead the sector to stimulate new opportunities in the borough• Develop collaboration between civil society groups and between the sector and partners• Support local groups to build sustainable organisations• Provide representation of the local VCSE sector with the council and partners <p>The adoption of the contract will impact all VCSE groups in the borough from all backgrounds and topics of interest. The specification has been collaboratively designed with jointly agreed outcomes that will have an impact on the social infrastructure of the borough as well as the council for years to come.</p> |

5. Sign off

The information contained in this template should be authorised by the relevant project sponsor or Divisional Director who will be responsible for the accuracy of the information now provided and delivery of actions detailed.

| Name | Role (e.g. project sponsor, head of service) | Date |
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| Rhodri Rowlands | Director of Community Participation and Prevention | 10/01/2024 |
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