

# Equality Impact Assessment

## Part 1: Screening

When reviewing, planning or providing Services Northampton Borough Council needs to assess the impacts on people. Both residents and staff, of how it works - or is planning to – work (in relation to things like disability). It has to take steps to remove/minimise any harm it identifies. It has to help people to participate in its Services and public life. “**Equality Impact Assessments**” (EIAs) prompt people to think things through, considering people’s different needs in relation to the law on equalities. The first stage of the process is known as ‘screening’ and is used to come to a decision about whether and why further analysis is – or is not – required. EIAs are published in line with transparency requirements.

A helpful guide to equalities law is available at: [www.northampton.gov.uk/equality](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/equality). A few notes about the laws that need to be considered are included at the end of this document. Helpful questions are provided as prompts throughout the form.

<p><b>1 Name of policy/activity/project/practice</b></p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny Review: To recommend a suitable scheme for a Northampton Councillor Empowerment Fund that enables Councillors to efficiently and effectively allocate money within their ward to make a positive impact on the areas they represent and to empower local residents to be active in their communities.</p>	<p>This is:</p> <p><b>New Activity:</b> which will be investigated by Scrutiny Panel 3</p>
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<p><b>2. Screening undertaken (please complete as appropriate)</b></p>	
<p>Director or Head of Service</p>	<p>Cara Boden, Assistant Chief Executive</p>
<p>Lead Officer for developing the policy/activity/practice</p>	<p>Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer</p>
<p>Other people involved in the screening (this may be people who work for NBC or a related Service or people outside NBC)</p>	<p>Cassie Triggs, Democratic and Chief Executive Services Manager</p> <p>Councillor Matt Lynch, Chair, Scrutiny Panel 3</p>

**3. Brief description of policy/activity/project/practice: including its main purpose, aims, objectives and projected outcomes, and how these fit in with the wider aims of the organisation.**

Is it linked to NBC's Corporate Plan? Service Plan? Other?

**Please explain:**

Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) is a means of providing non-Executive Councillors the opportunity to inform policy development and critical friend challenge to the Council's Executive policy makers and decision makers (Cabinet). It also has a strong role in promoting the engagement of non-Executive Councillors in a diverse range of policy development activities, including performance improvement at the Council. Scrutiny aims to engage the community in its work either by attendance at meetings, public addresses to meetings, witness evidence or co-optees to Scrutiny Reviews.

The purpose of this Scrutiny activity is to provide scrutiny input into the development of a Councillor Empowerment Fund for Northampton Borough Council.

The projected outcome of this Scrutiny Review is to recommend how the Northampton Councillor Empowerment Fund will work, including consideration of the following areas:

- *Purpose and criteria of the scheme, including any prohibitions*
  - *Monetary sums and allocation*
  - *Application process*
  - *Administrative support and approval process*
- To develop budget projections and identify any additional staff resource in order that these can be considered as part of the 2011/12 budget development.
  - To monitor the success and measure the impact of the Councillor Empowerment Fund in twelve months.

All Scrutiny Reviews link to the Council's Corporate Plan, details of which are evidenced within the final report. This Scrutiny Review links to corporate priority *CP1 – Supporting you when you need it* (support community involvement and give you opportunities to take part).

**4 Relevance to Equality and Diversity Duties**

Is it linked to NBC's Single Equality Scheme? NBC's Public Sector Duties? Equality Framework Criteria? Service or departmental equality priorities?

**Please explain:**

Overview and Scrutiny ensures that it adheres to the Council's statutory duty to provide the public with access to Scrutiny Reports/agendas/minutes and other such documents. Meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny/Scrutiny Panels are widely publicised, i.e.: on the Council's website, copies issues to the local media and paper copies available in the Council's One Stop Shop and local libraries.

The Scrutiny Panel is mindful of the eight protected characteristics when undertaking this scrutiny activity so that any recommendations that it makes can identify potential positive and negative impacts on any particular sector of the community. This will be taken into consideration as the Scrutiny Review progresses and evidence is gathered.

Details of the development of a Councillor Empowerment Fund could affect all residents of Northampton in some way.

Any possible recommended changes may have perceived adverse and beneficial effects for all diversity groups.

How will the aims affect our duty to:

Promote equality of opportunity?

Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation?

Promote good community relations?

Promote positive attitudes towards people with protected characteristics?

Encourage participation of people with protected characteristics?

Protect and promote Human Rights?

For example, think about it from the perspectives of different groups in society. Does it cause harm or a benefit to any group(s) differently to others? Will it differentially affect:

Black, Asian or other ethnic minority and/or cultural groups?

Disabled people? And their carers?

Transgender people?

Men and women?

Lesbians, gay men and/or bisexual people?

Different religious communities/groups?

People of a particular age e.g. older people or children and young people?

Any other groups?

People with flexible or agreed working patterns?

Are there any aspects, including how it is delivered, or accessed, that could contribute to inequalities? (This should relate to all areas including Human Rights.)

**Please explain:**

The public's lack of understanding of the Overview and Scrutiny function could lead to poorly attended and little public participation in the process.

A comprehensive Overview and Scrutiny webpage has been developed and a leaflet promoting the work of Overview and Scrutiny and detailing how members of the public can become involved in the process has been issued to the Council's One Stop Shop and the town's main libraries. This leaflet is also distributed to attendees at all Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Panel meetings.

So that the Scrutiny Panel obtains a variety of views, the Chair of Scrutiny Panel 2 has contacted a number of the key witnesses:

- Portfolio Holder (Finance), NBC
- Portfolio Holder (Community Engagement), NBC
- Various Voluntary and Community Organisations
- Local Authorities who have implemented a Community Empowerment Scheme:-
  - Northamptonshire County Council
  - Staffordshire County Council
  - Mansfield District Council
  - Wycombe District Council
  - East Lindsey District Council

asking them to answer the Scrutiny Panel's core questions at scheduled meetings. The comments of the key witnesses will be minuted and published publicly within the Council's meeting management system.

Evidence gathered from all sources will be analysed and contained within the Scrutiny Panel's final report.

Details of any recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel will be analysed and the expected impact of these changes will be detailed within the Scrutiny Panel's final report.

The Scrutiny Panel's report, after it has been endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, will be forwarded to the Council's Cabinet for consideration; Cabinet will then become responsible for delivering the recommendations that it accepts.

Meetings of this Scrutiny Panel are held in easily access locations (wheel chair accessible), with the provision of a hearing loop and start at 6pm; so aiming to enable those with working commitments to attend. It could be found that the timing of Overview and meetings (evenings) may not be suitable to all, for example those who are required to work during the evenings.

There is a standing agenda item on all Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Panel meetings enabling members of the public to address the Committee/Panel. The public does not have to register their intention to speak in advance but is advised to arrive a few minutes prior to the start of the meeting and notify the Scrutiny Officer of their intention to speak. A Scrutiny Public Speaking Protocol has been produced and advice and assistance is offered and available to members of the public wishing to attend and address an Overview and Scrutiny Committee/Panel meeting. In addition to requested witness evidence, two members of the public have addressed this Scrutiny Panel.

The Council has access to an interpretative Service and therefore such documents can be supplied in formats other than English if required.

In terms of the working of this Scrutiny Panel and the impact on the protected characteristics, paper copies of the agenda for the meetings are issued to Members of the Committee and Scrutiny Panels, Leaders of the Political Groups relevant officers and anyone else who is on the distribution list who had previously requested paper copies. Electronic versions of the agenda are issued to a wider circulation of Officers, the local press and radio, and also groups and individuals who have requested to be kept informed of the work of Overview and Scrutiny.

Provision has been made for members of public who have a disability, e.g. the documents are written in 12scale font with a yellow front cover for those who may suffer from a visual impairment, the blind have access to 'talking' documents, those whose first language is not English have access to translation Services and the building in which the meetings will occur contain hearing loops and are accessible by those with severe mobility issues, such as wheel chair users.

If you have indicated there is a negative impact on any group, is that impact:

**Legal?**

N/A

**Please explain:**

A Councillor Empowerment Fund would be a new Policy, therefore upon introduction; an Equality Impact Assessment would need to be undertaken.

**Intended?**

No

**Please explain:**

The development of a Councillor Empowerment Fund could have adverse and positive impact on the eight protected characteristics. However, as no Equality Impact Assessment can be completed yet for the development of such a Fund, its impact on these groups has not been subject to a detailed level of scrutiny.

The Scrutiny Panel will be mindful of the eight protected characteristics when undertaking its Scrutiny Review so that any recommendations that it makes can identify potential positive and negative impacts on any particular sector of the community. The Scrutiny Panel can at the very least highlight in its report the need for an Equality Impact Assessment to be carried out at the appropriate time.

**5 Evidence Base for Screening**

List the evidence sources you have used to make this assessment (i.e. the *known evidence*) (E.g. Index of Multiple Deprivation, workforce data, population statistics, any relevant reports, customer surveys, equality monitoring data for the Service area.)

Baseline data provided to the Scrutiny Panel:-

- Evidence from Local Authorities who have implemented a Community Empowerment Scheme
- A synopsis of the relevant section of the Localism Bill

Are there any significant gaps in the known evidence base? If so what are your recommendations for how and by when those gaps will be filled?

Equalities profiles of public attendees/witnesses/co-optees to the Scrutiny Panel are not currently recorded.

## 6 Requirements of the equality duties:

(remember there's a note to remind you what they are at the end of this form and more detailed information at [www.northampton.gov.uk/equality](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/equality))

Will there be/has there been consultation with all interested parties?

Yes

**Please explain:**

The Scrutiny Panel will be consulted upon this EIA (Screening) document.

Are proposed actions necessary and proportionate to the desired outcomes?

Yes

**Please explain:**

The Scrutiny Panel will, after completion of its evidence gathering, formulate conclusions and recommendations as appropriate, which will have the intended purpose of recommending how the Northampton Councillor Empowerment Fund will work, including consideration of the following areas:

- *Purpose and criteria of the scheme, including any prohibitions*
- *Monetary sums and allocation*
- *Application process*
- *Administrative support and approval process*
- Recommendations regarding budget projections and identification of any additional staff resource in order that these can be considered as part of the 2011/12 budget development.
- A potential recommendation that the success and measurement of the impact of the Councillor Empowerment Fund be monitored in twelve months.

Recommendations will link to SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time) Objectives. Should the recommendations be accepted by the Council's Cabinet, they will then be implemented and necessary actions drawn up.

Where appropriate, will there be scope for prompt, independent reviews and appeals against decisions arising from the proposed policy/practice/activity?

N/A

**Please explain:**

Does the proposed policy/practice/activity have the ability to be tailored to fit different individual circumstances?

Yes

**Please explain:**

The development of a suitable scheme for a Northampton Councillor Empowerment Fund that enables Councillors to efficiently and effectively allocate money within their ward to make a positive impact on the areas they represent and to empower local residents to be active in their communities.

Where appropriate, can the policy/practice/activity exceed the minimum legal equality and human rights requirements, rather than merely complying with them?

No

**Please explain:**

Overview and Scrutiny will continue to offer facilities, such as language translation, large print of reports, agendas and minutes, to race and disability groups.

**From the evidence you have and strategic thinking**, what are the **key risks** (the harm or 'adverse impacts') **and opportunities** (benefits and opportunities to promote equality) this policy/practice/activity might present?

	Risks (Negative)	Opportunities (Positive)
Race	No impact anticipated but there is the need to ensure appropriate access to interpreting Services as necessary	
Disability	No impact anticipated for meetings of the Scrutiny Panel – However there are no arrangements in place such as sign language interpreters at meetings	Meetings of this Scrutiny Panel are held in accessible meeting rooms, normally with the provision of a hearing loop
Gender or Gender Identity/Gender Assignment		No impact anticipated. Meetings and paperwork of this Scrutiny Panel are available to all genders  Staff training addresses Equality and Diversity.  Meetings of the Scrutiny Panel are attended by all genders.
Pregnancy and Maternity (including breastfeeding)	Initially no impact anticipated but there is the need to ensure equitable access for all attendees and Councillors at meetings of this Scrutiny Panel	

Sexual Orientation		No impact anticipated
Age (including children, youth, midlife and older people)		Meetings of this Scrutiny Panel are normally held during the evening with the aim that they are accessible to all.
Religion, Faith and Belief	Individuals have the opportunity to contribute anonymously, recognising that people want to bring a certain perspective o the Review	
Human Rights	No impact anticipated	

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## 8 Decision

Set out the rationale for deciding whether or not to proceed to full impact assessment

**Date of Decision:** 9<sup>th</sup> August 2011

**EITHER: We judge that a full impact assessment is not necessary since:** A Scrutiny Review is currently underway to investigate the development of a Councillor Empowerment Fund, and as part of the evidence gathering process will receive comments from a wide range of stakeholders as detailed in earlier sections of this EIA (Screening). Any changes proposed as a result of the Review will be impact assessed before implementation.

It is intended that, as evidence is received, the Scrutiny Panel will produce a draft EIA for its recommended Councillor Empowerment Fund Scheme.

**OR: We judge that a full impact assessment is necessary since:**





## **Equality Duties to be taken into account in this screening include:**

### **Prohibited Conduct under The Equality Act 2010 including:**

Direct discrimination (including by association and perception e.g. carers); Indirect discrimination; Pregnancy and maternity discrimination; Harassment; third party harassment; discrimination arising from disability.

### **Public Sector Duties (Section 149) of the Equality Act 2010 for NBC and Services provided on its behalf: (due to be effective from 4 April 2011)**

NBC and Services providing public functions must in providing Services have due regard to the need to: **eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups.** 'Positive action' permits proportionate action to overcome disadvantage, meet needs and tackle under-representation.

### **Rights apply to people in terms of their "Protected Characteristics":**

Age; Gender; Gender Assignment; Sexual Orientation; Disability; Race; Religion and Belief; Pregnancy; Maternity. But Marriage and Civil Partnership do not apply to the public sector duties.

### **Duty to "advance equality of opportunity":**

The need, when reviewing, planning or providing Services/policies/practices to assess the impacts of Services on people in relation to their 'protected characteristics', take steps to remove/minimise any negative impacts identified and help everyone to participate in our Services and public life. **Equality Impact Assessments** remain best practice to be used. Sometimes **people have particular needs** e.g. due to gender, race, faith or disability that need to be addressed, not ignored. NBC must have due regard to the **duty to make reasonable adjustments** for people with disabilities. NBC must **encourage people who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life** or any other activity in which their participation is too low.

### **Duty to 'foster good relations between people'**

This means having due regard to the need to **tackle prejudice** (e.g. where people are picked on or stereotyped by customers or colleagues because of their ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, etc) and **promote understanding**.

**Lawful Exceptions to general rules:** can happen where action is proportionate to achieve a legitimate aim and not otherwise prohibited by anything under the Equality Act 2010. There are some special situations (see Ch 12 and 13 of the Equality Act 2010 Statutory Code of Practice – Services, Public Functions and Associations).

### **National Adult Autism Strategy (Autism Act 2009; statutory guidelines) including:**

to improve how Services identify and meet needs of adults with autism and their families.

### **Human Rights include:**

Rights under the European Convention include not to be subjected to degrading **treatment**; **right to a fair trial** (civil and criminal issues); **right to privacy** (subject to certain exceptions e.g. national security/public safety, or certain other specific situations); **freedom of conscience** (including religion and belief and rights to manifest these limited only by law and as necessary for public safety, public order, protection of rights of others and other specified situations); **freedom of expression** (subject to certain exceptions); **freedom of peaceful assembly and to join trade unions** (subject to certain exceptions); **right not to be subject to unlawful discrimination** (e.g. sex, race, colour, language, religion, political opinion, national or social origin); **right to peaceful enjoyment of own possessions** (subject to certain exceptions e.g. to secure payment of taxes or other contributions or penalties); **right to an education**; **right to hold free elections by secret ballot**. The European Convention is given effect in UK law by the Human Rights Act 1998.