

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Name of Policy/Service/Function	Catering Service (Closing Chestnuts Canteen, trolley, servery in Waltham Forest Town Hall and functions catering)
Directorate	Corporate Services
Head of Service	Phill Cox
Names and Roles of the people carrying out the EIA	Saddaf Mian, Personnel Officer-Employee Relations Isaiah Ncube, Personnel Officer-Diversity Expert guidance was provided by Jane Brown, Diversity Manager
Why is the Equality Impact Assessment being done?	Management Board Report Cabinet Report ✓ New Policy Change to existing policy ✓ Minor decision with potentially major impact on equality

1. Introduction and Background

1. 1 Summary of proposal and link to six equality groups

The catering function (staff canteen, trolley, servery and functions catering) has been in receipt of a subsidy of £150,000. The subsidy can no longer be justified in the light of significant reductions Council wide over the last five years and continuing over the next three years. In consultation with catering managers it has been agreed that continuing to run these services without this subsidy would lead to prices increase of 60% and is not viable.

From an equality perspective there are two main groups of people for whom the consequence of this decision need to be considered, These are the staff that potentially face redundancy (12) and those staff working in the Waltham Forest Town Hall complex who use the Chestnuts Canteen and servery. Both groups comprise a diversity of people and the impact on each is at looked at in turn in section 2 below.

There may be some positive impact for local businesses many of which are owned by ethnic minority residents.

2. Profile of groups affected

2.1 Staff working in the catering service

There is a total of 12 staff that face potential redundancy.

2.1.1 Age Equality

There are no under 30's.

30-39 years: 2 staff

40-49: 2 staff

50-59: 6 staff

60 and over: 2 staff

The average age of staff potentially facing redundancy is 51 years.

2.1.2 Disability equality

From the information available 1 member of staff from the 12 have declared themselves as a disabled person but the nature of their impairment is not known. Traditionally there is an under-reporting of disability in general so there may be more disabled staff working in this section than we are aware of.

2.1.3 Gender equality

Females: 10

Males: 2

2.1.4 Race equality

Black/Black British: 2 staff

Chinese: 1 member of staff

White British: 8

White Irish: 1

There are 3 employees from ethnic minorities, which represent 25% of this group.

2.1.5 Religion/Beliefs

No data available

2.1.6 Sexual Orientation

No data available

2.2 Customers (staff based in Waltham Forest Town Hall/Councillors) of Chestnuts Canteen/Servery

There is no information available for Councillors, however presented below is the profile for the 533 staff working in the Town Hall Complex.

2.2.1 Age Equality

Under 20 years: 6 staff (1%)

20-29 years: 79 staff (15%)

30-39 years: 106 (20%)

40-49 years: 191 (36%)

50-59 years: 101 (19%)

60 and over: 48 (9%)

Unknown: 2

2.2.2 Disability

21 of the 533 staff (4%) working in the Town Hall complex have declared themselves as disabled.

2.2.3 Gender Equality

Female: 289 (54%)

Male: 244 staff (46%)

2.2.4 Race Equality

Asian/Asian British: 46 staff (9%)

Black/Black British: 60 staff (11%)

Chinese: 4 staff (0.7%)

Dual/Multiple Heritage: 8 staff (1.5%)

White/White British: 242 staff (45%)

Other Ethnic Group: 3 staff (0.5%)

Non-declared: 170 staff (32%)

The total number of ethnic minority members of staff is 363; this amounts to a third of those who have declared their ethnicity.

2.2.5 Religion/Beliefs

There is no data available

2.2.6 Sexual Orientation

There is no data available

3. Questions this assessment addresses

3.1 What kind of equality impact may there be?

These proposals may disproportionately affect staff working in catering. They are mainly older females, with a quarter from ethnic minorities and one member of staff has a disability.

In addition it may potentially have a disproportionate negative impact on customers of the catering function who either have mobility problems or special dietary requirements.

3.2 How significant is it in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?

There is 12 staff that may potentially face redundancy.

There are 21 employees working the Town Hall Complex who have declared themselves as disabled, there is no information available about how many of these may have mobility problems or other dietary requirements. Currently we do not provide any special facilities for these staff. However if there are any problems that are identified as a result of these proposals then reasonable adjustments can be made locally as is normal procedure. There is no information available in relation to Councillors.

3.3 Is the impact positive or negative (or is there a potential for both)?

As above. For staff working in catering, who are predominantly female, older and many of who come from ethnic minorities, there is likely to be a negative impact.

For customers with mobility problems there may potentially be a negative impact. For those with special dietary requirements there may be a negative impact although it should be noted that the canteen does not routinely provide food for specialist dietary requirements therefore the effect is likely to be negligible.

There is likely to be a positive impact for local businesses within the vicinity of the Town Hall many of whom are owned/managed /staffed by ethnic minorities (cafes, shops) as the closure of the canteen services will probably lead to some level of additional business.

3.4 On what aspects of the Equality Duties will this impact be?

Gender equality in employment as found in the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and Gender Equality Duty 2007

Disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1996

Religion/Faith-based belief as found in Employment Equality (Religion/Beliefs Regulations) December 2003

3.5 Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination?

No, the closing of the canteen is based on a value for money case and there are sound business reasons for so doing.

3.6 What further information is required to gauge the probability and extent of the impact?

It will be important to look at the actual impact of any changes. In particular we need to assess how many of the Canteen staff choose to take redundancy/retirement or are redeployed and whether any group is over/under represented.

It would be useful to have information about those customers (staff/Councillors in Waltham Forest Town Hall) who may be affected due to a disability.

3.7 Where and how can that information be obtained?

The implications such as numbers of redundancies, redeployment and how this reflects across the equality duties will be analysed at the end of the process.

Detailed information in terms of specific impairments or types of disability is not currently collected and is therefore not available. However discussion with disabled staff will take place via the Disability Forum.

3.8 What does all the information tell us about the probable impact on equality?

Catering staff are predominantly female, with 25% from ethnic minority backgrounds and at least one member of staff is known to be disabled. The staff are predominantly over 50 therefore there is likely to be a disproportionate impact of any changes on older, female, ethnic

minority staff. However any negative impact will be minimised by looking at redeployment, and reasonable adjustments.

The effects on customers are likely to be minimal. Councillors will continue to have access to a servery. As part of the BIG project four breakout areas for staff will be provided with proper heating and storage facilities for food so that staff choosing to bring in their own food may have their lunch in a comfortable environment. This is a positive step forward for those who have special dietary requirements and currently bring in their own lunches. The Social Club within the Town Hall Complex serves hot lunches (it should be noted that this will be a smoke free environment as per new legislation in July 2007). In addition the option of providing vending machines is being considered as well as a delivery service as currently operated in other Council offices, e.g. Silver Birch House and Juniper House. This initiative has led to a wider variety of food, including ethnic food, and as the service will be available at the front of the Town Hall will be closer to access for those with physical disability than the Chestnuts Restaurant.

The canteen does not provide for specialist or different dietary requirements and therefore it is unlikely that any proposals to shut down the canteen will have major implications for disabled staff with specialist dietary requirements or those that have different dietary requirements as a result of their religion/beliefs.

3.9 What action do we need to take to reduce negative impact?

Ensure that proper HR procedures are followed including exploring redeployment and reasonable adjustments. All of those involved in this process have had diversity training and have access to specialist advice therefore no further action is needed.

Consultation with disabled groups is ongoing through the Disability Forum, it will be important to consider any comments from this group about this change.

3.10 If the action proposed will not fully mitigate adverse consequences for equality, or if the decision is to take no action, why is this, and can we justify it?

The actions proposed should mitigate adverse consequences in the main, however where they do not, staff are able to speak to their managers in order to look at alternatives for their individual needs.

Any adverse consequences can be justified, as a Council we are required to make savings and this has been identified as a potential saving during the process of policy review.

3.11 What consultation has taken place?

This proposal is part of policy review that was agreed by Cabinet. Trade Unions were consulted about policy review matters.

This was an agenda item at a JCC meeting between management and trade unions on 12 December 2006. Due to lack of union

representatives a separate meeting was held between management and UNISON on 3 January 2007.

A meeting will take place with every member of staff that may potentially be made redundant to discuss options available.

Consultation with staff with disabilities about how any changes can be implemented in order to mitigate any negative impact will also take place.

4. Conclusions and Next Steps

4.1 Employment of staff

The proposals to close the canteen will have a disproportionate adverse impact on older females, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds. However the impact will be mitigated as staff that wish to be made redundant or retire will be offered these options, and the intention is to redeploy all other staff by looking at jobs across the entire Council. Reasonable adjustments will be made to facilitate successful redeployment.

The assessment did not identify any potential positive equality impact, other than the potential to continue to employ a number of men (2) in a traditionally female occupation.

4.2 Delivery of service to staff and Town Hall complex users

4.2.1 Equality Duties where there is no negative impact envisaged

It is not envisaged that the closure of the facility will have a disproportionate adverse impact on more women than men, ethnic minority staff, lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans-gendered staff or on staff in different age groups.

However, there may an adverse impact on disability, race and faith-based equality. This is not likely to be significant however as with the new breakout areas, delivery service, local cafes and a Social Club in the vicinity there are a number of suitable alternatives that can meet the needs of staff.

4.2.2 Disability

There is a potential adverse impact on staff/Councillors with mobility related disabilities. However the provision of vending machines is being considered as well as a delivery service as currently operated in other Council offices, e.g. Silver Birch House and Juniper House. This initiative has led to a wider variety of food, including ethnic food, and as the service will be available at the front of the Town Hall will be closer to access for those with physical disability than the Chestnuts Restaurant.

In addition staff with special dietary requirements associated with a medical condition may be adversely affected by the proposals to close the canteen facility.

However this is unlikely to be significant, as the canteen and servery do not provide for specialist dietary requirements. As part of the breakout areas in Waltham Forest Town Hall, proper heating/storage facilities for lunches will be provided which will go a long way to mitigating any adverse impact and is likely to be welcomed by this particular group of staff.

4.2.3 Religion/Beliefs

Staff with different religion or beliefs may have different dietary requirements. Currently the functions catering service (used for mayoral events, special functions) provides for different dietary requirements such as vegetarian, kosher, and halal food. The maintenance of this aspect will be covered by any tendering process.

The staff canteen (Chestnuts) does not cater for specialist dietary requirements therefore it is unlikely that there will be a disproportionate negative impact on a particular group of staff based on a religion/belief they hold.

4.2.4 Positive Impact

A potential positive impact of this proposal is the potential for the economic growth of small businesses in the Borough and those within the vicinity of the town hall, many of these are owned/staffed by people from ethnic minorities.

4.3 Next Steps

As soon as data becomes available about the impact of the changes on the employment of staff this will be collected and analysed. Any negative impact will be identified and reviewed in order to assess whether there are any other reasonable measures that ought to be taken to mitigate these. As it is recognised that these proposals may have a potential adverse impact on disabled staff, there will be consultation with this group about how these changes can be implemented in order to mitigate this and increase positive impact.