

Equality Impact Assessment [version 2.12]



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| Title: Hybrid Meeting and Council Chamber Technology | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Policy <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Function <input type="checkbox"/> Service <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other [please state] Project | <input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Already exists / review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Changing |
| Directorate: Resources | Lead Officer name: Tim Borrett |
| Service Area: Digital Strategy and Transformation | Lead Officer role: Director, Policy, Strategy and Digital |

Step 1: What do we want to do?

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment is to assist decision makers in understanding the impact of proposals as part of their duties under the Equality Act 2010. Detailed guidance to support completion can be found here [Equality Impact Assessments \(EqIA\) \(sharepoint.com\)](https://sharepoint.com).

This assessment should be started at the beginning of the process by someone with a good knowledge of the proposal and service area, and sufficient influence over the proposal. It is good practice to take a team approach to completing the equality impact assessment. Please contact the Equality and Inclusion Team early for advice and feedback.

1.1 What are the aims and objectives/purpose of this proposal?

Briefly explain the purpose of the proposal and why it is needed. Describe who it is aimed at and the intended aims / outcomes. Where known also summarise the key actions you plan to undertake. Please use plain English, avoiding jargon and acronyms. Equality Impact Assessments are viewed by a wide range of people including decision-makers and the wider public.

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| <p>We plan to buy new hybrid and audio-visual technology in City Hall (and in 100 Temple Street), to make it easier for people to attend meetings virtually, and to view or attend events in the Council Chamber and Conference Hall virtually.</p> <p>This project includes replacing the current camera, audio and voting system in the Council Chamber; improving the acoustics in the Conference Hall; replacing or upgrading existing temporary hybrid solutions in specific meeting rooms; and providing new hybrid technology solutions for a wider set of committee and meeting rooms. It also aims to install improved hybrid technology available in the council’s incident management suite; and to improve the accessibility of hybrid working / attendance for employees.</p> |
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1.2 Who will the proposal have the potential to affect?

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bristol City Council workforce | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service users | <input type="checkbox"/> The wider community |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commissioned services | <input type="checkbox"/> City partners / Stakeholder organisations | |
| Additional comments: | | |

1.3 Will the proposal have an equality impact?

Could the proposal affect access levels of representation or participation in a service, or does it have the potential to change e.g. quality of life: health, education, or standard of living etc.?

If ‘No’ explain why you are sure there will be no equality impact, then skip steps 2-4 and request review by Equality and Inclusion Team.

If ‘Yes’ complete the rest of this assessment, or if you plan to complete the assessment at a later stage please state this clearly here and request review by the Equality and Inclusion Team.

Yes No

[please select]

Step 2: What information do we have?

2.1 What data or evidence is there which tells us who is, or could be affected?

Please use this section to demonstrate an understanding of who could be affected by the proposal. Include general population data where appropriate, and information about people who will be affected with particular reference to protected and other relevant characteristics: [How we measure equality and diversity \(bristol.gov.uk\)](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/equality-diversity)

Use one row for each evidence source and say which characteristic(s) it relates to. You can include a mix of qualitative and quantitative data e.g. from national or local research, available data or previous consultations and engagement activities.

Outline whether there is any over or under representation of equality groups within relevant services - don't forget to benchmark to the local population where appropriate. Links to available data and reports are here [Data, statistics and intelligence \(sharepoint.com\)](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/data-statistics-intelligence). See also: [Bristol Open Data \(Quality of Life, Census etc.\)](#); [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\)](#); [Ward Statistical Profiles](#).

For workforce / management of change proposals you will need to look at the diversity of the affected teams using available evidence such as [HR Analytics: Power BI Reports \(sharepoint.com\)](#) which shows the diversity profile of council teams and service areas. Identify any over or under-representation compared with Bristol economically active citizens for different characteristics. Additional sources of useful workforce evidence include the [Employee Staff Survey Report](#) and [Stress Risk Assessment](#)

| Data / Evidence Source [Include a reference where known] | Summary of what this tells us |
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| HR Diversity Dashboard | <p>As of June 2023, the council has 533 employees who consider themselves to be Disabled, 172 who prefer not to state a disability and 1,355 where this data is unknown.</p> <p>There are limits to the usefulness of this data in terms of understanding how many people have an impairment or difference which would be benefitted from stronger hybrid technology, but from anecdotal feedback from the Disabled Colleagues Network we know several staff members who use lip-reading have complained about static room-wide cameras preventing this and leading to real-terms exclusion or a reduced ability to take part in hybrid meetings.</p> |
| Staff Survey 2022 (incl. Equalities Dashboard) | <p>Whilst not specifically about hybrid technology and AV, the survey asks colleagues if they agree with the statement "I have the equipment I need to work effectively."</p> <p>Across the organisation circa 17% of employees disagreed or strongly disagreed, and for Disabled employees this rises to 24.4%.</p> <p>Although this does not give us specific insight into hybrid technology and remote working, it does highlight disproportionality in Disabled employees experience with accessing the right equipment to do</p> |

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| | their work, a principle which this project should keep in mind. |
| Hybrid Meeting Room survey | <p>This small-scale survey captured views of around 15 individuals who have used hybrid-capable pilot rooms in City Hall. Whilst only a small sample, accessibility is raised by a couple of respondents, referring to poor sound quality, cameras not showing people's faces clearly and a need to move microphones and other equipment around during meetings.</p> <p>Other themes raised include a need for stronger in-house technical support and training.</p> |
| Public Engagement of Remote Meetings Survey 2020 | <p>In 2020 the Democratic Engagement Team completed an analysis of public engagement in meetings before and during the pandemic. Feedback showed positive remote viewing figures for committees not previously webcast such Development Control and Bristol Schools Forum.</p> <p>A small survey of members of the public after they engaged in virtual public meetings, demonstrated that people valued the opportunity to engage remotely, however some found the process difficult, and improvements need to be made.</p> |
| Quality of Life 2022/23 Survey (this citizen survey is most relevant to help us understand how comfortable people may be to engage with or attend virtual Council meetings rather than attending in person. It is not useful in providing insight about internal staff meetings.) | <p>% Comfortable using digital services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bristol average is 80.5% and there is a deprivation gap of 9.9% • Below average are 41.9% Older adults 65 years and older and 55.9% of Disabled people • Slightly below average are 70.0% of Black/Black British • Below average are 52.3% of those in Council rented accommodation, 31.1% those with no qualifications and 60.4% full time carers <p>% Lack the skills or confidence to use the internet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bristol average is 4.4% • Above average are 17.5% of adults 65 years and older and 12.5% Disabled • 5.6% black/black British and 4.8% white British |
| Additional comments: | |

2.2 Do you currently monitor relevant activity by the following protected characteristics?

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Age | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disability | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender Reassignment |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Marriage and Civil Partnership | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy/Maternity | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Race |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion or Belief | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sex | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sexual Orientation |

2.3 Are there any gaps in the evidence base?

Where there are gaps in the evidence, or you don't have enough information about some equality groups, include an equality action to find out in section 4.2 below. This doesn't mean that you can't complete the assessment without the information, but you need to follow up the action and if necessary, review the assessment later. If you are unable to fill in the gaps, then state this clearly with a justification.

For workforce related proposals all relevant characteristics may not be included in HR diversity reporting (e.g. pregnancy/maternity). For smaller teams diversity data may be redacted. A high proportion of not known/not disclosed may require an action to address under-reporting.

We do not have data on how many staff have specific impairments or differences which would be assisted by specific types of hybrid meeting technology (or the specific features required).

In terms of the Council Chamber, the council does not routinely capture equalities information from members of the public who engage with democratic decision-making meetings, unless they are subscribers to our YouTube Channel where the subscription records their age and sex. However, the results of the technology upgrade will benefit all citizens who wish to participate in public meetings remotely.

2.4 How have you involved communities and groups that could be affected?

You will nearly always need to involve and consult with internal and external stakeholders during your assessment. The extent of the engagement will depend on the nature of the proposal or change. This should usually include individuals and groups representing different relevant protected characteristics. Please include details of any completed engagement and consultation and how representative this had been of Bristol's diverse communities.

Include the main findings of any engagement and consultation in Section 2.1 above.

If you are managing a workforce change process or restructure please refer to [Managing a change process or restructure \(sharepoint.com\)](#) for advice on consulting with employees etc. Relevant stakeholders for engagement about workforce changes may include e.g. staff-led groups and trades unions as well as affected staff.

We have drawn on past surveys of staff, and a specific survey to staff about hybrid meetings.

We have engaged with Legal and Democratic Services as key users of technology in the Council Chamber and benefitted from their past work on specifying technology requirements and considering accessibility needs.

2.5 How will engagement with stakeholders continue?

Explain how you will continue to engage with stakeholders throughout the course of planning and delivery. Please describe where more engagement and consultation is required and set out how you intend to undertake it. Include any targeted work to seek the views of under-represented groups. If you do not intend to undertake it, please set out your justification. You can ask the Equality and Inclusion Team for help in targeting particular groups.

The project is at its earliest stage of inception and we have contacted the Disabled Colleagues Network to offer ongoing engagement and/or co-design or testing of solutions.

During the Project we would form a focus group of colleagues from many services and backgrounds to test our understanding of their needs and try out various options for hybrid technology.

There is a commitment from colleagues in Legal and Democratic Services to regularly survey democratic meeting attendees requesting ongoing feedback on their experience of attending remote or hybrid meetings. We will be able to monitor the number of people engaging with meetings to ascertain whether access has been improved and continue to assess and mitigate the impact on those from protected groups.

Step 3: Who might the proposal impact?

Analysis of impacts must be rigorous. Please demonstrate your analysis of any impacts of the proposal in this section, referring to evidence you have gathered above and the characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010. Also include details of existing issues for particular groups that you are aware of and are seeking to address or mitigate through this proposal. See detailed guidance documents for advice on identifying potential impacts etc. [Equality Impact Assessments \(EqIA\) \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

3.1 Does the proposal have any potentially adverse impacts on people based on their protected or other relevant characteristics?

Consider sub-categories and how people with combined characteristics (e.g. young women) might have particular needs or experience particular kinds of disadvantage.

Where mitigations indicate a follow-on action, include this in the 'Action Plan' Section 4.2 below.

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| GENERAL COMMENTS (highlight any potential issues that might impact all or many groups) | |
| This project intends to improve our existing offer through new and upgraded technology and does not remove or reduce the ability for people to participate in meetings. | |
| We are aware of some existing issues for potential participants in democratic meetings on the basis of their protected characteristics which we will aim to address and mitigate wherever possible through inclusive practices. | |
| Whilst the intention of the project is to make improvements, we have noted a risk of disproportionate impacts on people based on their protected or other relevant characteristics have been identified, based on the risk of selecting the wrong solution and impact this would have. In practice the project will be designed to mitigate this risk and carefully plan to meet people's needs; whilst also taking account of Best Value duties and proportionality of approach. | |
| Technological solutions can remove barriers and make life easier for many people, including carers. The project is planned to have the impact of increasing access to and participation in workplace and/or public meetings. We will ensure appropriate learning, development and support for launching and embedding the use of new technology is in place. | |
| PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS | |
| Age: Young People | Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Potential impacts: | |
| Mitigations: | |
| Age: Older People | Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Potential impacts: | Older people are less likely to say they are comfortable using digital services (based on Quality of Life survey evidence). We must factor in the needs of older people who may lack access to and/or find the hybrid technology difficult to use and may prefer to attend in person instead. |
| Mitigations: | We will seek the support of our older persons networks to test the technology for public meetings and design detailed guidance and multiple options for joining a meeting virtually, including using a laptop or other suitable device, as well as phoning in. We will be clear that members of the public can join meetings in person, and always provide advice on getting to City Hall and what they should be prepared for. |
| Disability | Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Potential impacts: | Potential for poor technology choices to hinder some Disabled colleagues in taking part in hybrid meetings effectively. We also need to ensure communications around any changes to public meetings are clear for Disabled people and made available in appropriate formats. |
| Mitigations: | Engagement, co-design of specification and user testing with Disabled colleagues and appropriate equalities networks. This will test the technology and ensure that it does not create additional unexpected barriers to participation. It may be possible to produce guidance, communications, messaging in a variety of accessible formats signposting people to more detailed support. |
| Sex | Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Potential impacts: | |
| Mitigations: | |
| Sexual orientation | Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Potential impacts: | |

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| Mitigations: | |
| Pregnancy / Maternity | Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Potential impacts: | |
| Mitigations: | |
| Gender reassignment | Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Potential impacts: | |
| Mitigations: | |
| Race | Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Potential impacts: | Evidence from Quality of Life suggests lower levels of comfort using digital technology and/or having appropriate access for some Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups, though the reasons for this are not explored in this survey. More analysis to understand the reasons for this and potential impacts would be beneficial. This aside, we need to ensure communications around any changes to public meetings are clear for people who do not have English as first language. |
| Mitigations: | It may be possible to produce guidance, communications, messaging in a variety of languages signposting people to more detailed support. |
| Religion or Belief | Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Potential impacts: | |
| Mitigations: | |
| Marriage & civil partnership | Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Potential impacts: | |
| Mitigations: | |
| OTHER RELEVANT CHARACTERISTICS | |
| Socio-Economic (deprivation) | Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Potential impacts: | Poor quality technology and/or poor hybrid meeting experience may mean more colleagues feel compelled to attend the office, incurring avoidable travel costs. If this were the case, there may be a small but disproportionate impact on those from deprived backgrounds and/or in lower paid roles. Introducing the use of hybrid technology for joining democratic meetings remotely, assumes that the user will have a suitable device and internet connection. This may not always be the case for members of the public. |
| Mitigations: | Staff engagement and user testing of proposed technology. Ensuring options can be scaled to further BCC workplaces other than City Hall. We will promote other ways of engaging including attending meetings in person, using libraries, sending in questions or statements via post etc. |
| Carers | Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Potential impacts: | Poor quality technology and/or poor hybrid meeting experience may mean more colleagues feel compelled to attend the office, and this can be a particular barrier/challenge for colleagues with caring responsibilities. If this were the case, there may be a disproportionate impact in terms of ability to take part in work meetings whilst balancing care duties. |
| Mitigations: | Staff engagement and user testing of proposed technology. Ensuring options can be scaled to further BCC workplaces other than City Hall. |
| Other groups [Please add additional rows below to detail the impact for any other relevant groups as appropriate e.g. asylum seekers and refugees; care experienced; homelessness; armed forces personnel and veterans] | |
| Digital Literacy | Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Potential impacts: | Increasing the use of hybrid technology for joining democratic meetings remotely, assumes that the user will have the digital literacy to engage in this way. This may not be the case for all members of the public or staff. |
| Mitigations: | We will promote other ways of engaging including attending meetings in person, using libraries, sending in questions or statements via post etc. |

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| | We will ensure appropriate learning, development and support for launching and embedding the use of new technology is in place. |
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3.2 Does the proposal create any benefits for people based on their protected or other relevant characteristics?

Outline any potential benefits of the proposal and how they can be maximised. Identify how the proposal will support our [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) to:

- ✓ Eliminate unlawful discrimination for a protected group
- ✓ Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't
- ✓ Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't

The inverse of the risks identified in 3.1 is that the selection and implementation of good quality hybrid technologies would represent a significant improvement in our ability to include members of the public and colleagues from all backgrounds, and those who are Disabled, in hybrid meetings and avoid the need for anyone to attend the office who otherwise would not need to.

The Council Chamber system will allow for more meetings to be broadcast as less resource will be required for delivering public participation processes and webcasting in person. Presenting officers, partners and other stakeholders may not need to attend the full meeting in person, but will have the option to attend for their item only as appropriate. This will allow a large variety of people to be more flexible and attend more meetings to engage in democratic decision making.

Some Disabled people will benefit from the improved technology as they will be able to join meetings from any location, as well as the added benefits of speaker-view (for lip-reading), automatic live subtitles and transcripts.

Step 4: Impact

4.1 How has the equality impact assessment informed or changed the proposal?

What are the main conclusions of this assessment? Use this section to provide an overview of your findings. This summary can be included in decision pathway reports etc.

If you have identified any significant negative impacts which cannot be mitigated, provide a justification showing how the proposal is proportionate, necessary, and appropriate despite this.

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| Summary of significant negative impacts and how they can be mitigated or justified: |
| Risk of introducing new barriers for some groups or failing to remove existing barriers. To be mitigated through engagement in scoping requirements for new technology and test options. |
| Summary of positive impacts / opportunities to promote the Public Sector Equality Duty: |
| Potential to remove existing barriers to participation in hybrid meetings for some colleagues through purchasing of solution with appropriate accessibility and inclusion features, plus the overall work of the project to roll-out hybrid meeting options more widely in the organisation and for public meetings. |

4.2 Action Plan

Use this section to set out any actions you have identified to improve data, mitigate issues, or maximise opportunities etc. If an action is to meet the needs of a particular protected group please specify this.

| Improvement / action required | Responsible Officer | Timescale |
|---|---------------------|------------------------|
| Engagement with DCN during project, with initial emphasis on requirements and solutions testing. | Project Manager | March 2024 – July 2024 |
| Engagement with equalities networks and/or experts as required for requirement gathering and solutions testing. | Project Manager | April 2024 – June 2024 |

| Improvement / action required | Responsible Officer | Timescale |
|--|---------------------|------------------------|
| Arrange staff focus groups and potential product testing. | Project Manager | April 2024 – June 2024 |
| Update EQIA with learning from engagement and FBC development. | Project Manager | July 2024 |

4.3 How will the impact of your proposal and actions be measured?

How will you know if you have been successful? Once the activity has been implemented this equality impact assessment should be periodically reviewed to make sure your changes have been effective your approach is still appropriate.

We will compare staff survey results including re-running a recent hybrid tech survey.
 The EQIA will be iterated throughout the project at Outline Business Case and Full Business Case stages, with learning taken in to the next gateway stage.
 Regular monitoring of attendees at public meetings to evaluate the impact of the new Council Chamber technology.

Step 5: Review

The Equality and Inclusion Team need at least five working days to comment and feedback on your EqIA. EqIAs should only be marked as reviewed when they provide sufficient information for decision-makers on the equalities impact of the proposal. Please seek feedback and review from the [Equality and Inclusion Team](#) before requesting sign off from your Director¹.

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| Equality and Inclusion Team Review: <i>Reviewed by Equality and Inclusion Team</i> | Director Sign-Off: Tim Borrett, Director: Policy, Strategy and Digital |
| Date: 27/07/2023 | Date: 13/02/2023 |

¹ Review by the Equality and Inclusion Team confirms there is sufficient analysis for decision makers to consider the likely equality impacts at this stage. This is not an endorsement or approval of the proposal.