

Equality Impact Assessment
Corporate Assessment Template



Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is available in Welsh

Strategy Title: Core Office Strategy
New/Existing/Updating/Amending: New

Who is responsible for developing and implementing the Strategy?	
Name: Chris Barnett	Job Title: Operational Manager
Service Team: Major Projects	Service Area: Economic Development
Assessment Date: 23 rd May 2023	

1. What are the objectives of the Strategy?

The Council acknowledges a need to address the suitability of its core office estate for continued long term use. This is driven by the need to reduce costs, to provide accommodation that meets the needs of modern working practices, and to reduce the Council's carbon footprint. The continued pressure on budgets means the options available for the Council to consider need to be delivered within existing budget allocations.

This constrains the range of choice and forces a need for early intervention. Addressing the maintenance backlog and meeting the challenge of carbon reduction on the existing core buildings would not be affordable.

The Council's aim in bringing forward the Core Office Strategy is to deliver a new long-term solution in line with the One Planet Commitment and in doing so eliminate any long-term financial pressures associated with the growing maintenance backlog associated with the existing core office estate.

The scale of the challenge to modernise and deliver the decarbonisation of the existing City Hall and County Hall is significant, therefore a strategy is required to avoid the need for a significant additional budget allocation to address a growing list of priority works.

The strategy is based on delivering a modern fit for purpose solution set against the current budget of £5.1m for 2023/24.

2. Please provide background information on the Strategy and any research done [e.g. service users data against demographic statistics, similar EIAs done etc.]

The buildings:

The Council's property estate represents the second largest call on the Council's revenue budget at around £38m per annum. This includes the cost of managing and maintaining property, National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR), rents and other property related costs such as insurances etc. Since 2015, the Council has worked to reduce the size of its estate to manage operational costs

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and to mitigate the growing maintenance backlog. To that end the Council's core office estate will shortly consist of only City Hall and County Hall with both Global Link and the Friary Centre already relinquished and Willcox House scheduled to be released in March 2024.

Detailed conditions surveys were carried out on both City Hall and County Hall in 2021, both highlighting a considerable amount of work required to remedy maintenance issues and also to address the improvement works required for decarbonisation, which would all cost a significant amount and require allocated budgets to be increased threefold.

In December 2021, the Council adopted a new Property Strategy 2021-26 which set out the requirement to review the core office estate. The Council's Corporate Plan 2023-26 commits to a '*critical review of the core office estate*' to deliver leaner and greener Council buildings, and to protect the Council's historic buildings. The Corporate Plan also commits to reducing the carbon footprint in the built environment by 30% by 2025/26 and to implementing the Hybrid Working Model to reduce revenue costs. The One Planet Cardiff Strategy (OPC) published in 2021 sets out the Council's objective to achieve a net carbon zero estate by 2030.

Working Practices

The Council's Core Office estate is comprised of three buildings – County Hall, City Hall & Willcox House. Up until early 2020, most employees committed to a traditional working model, working in a fixed desk office environment most of the week, with only some roles adopting flexibility that was determined by the peripatetic nature of their role.

The pandemic significantly changed the way the office environment is utilised. During lockdown, many core office workers were issued with laptops to enable remote working and post pandemic, a more flexible and hybrid approach to working has remained resulting in occupancy of the core office estate remaining at approximately a third of pre-pandemic levels. Thus, signalling a significant reduction in office space requirements going forward.

Post-pandemic, the Council recognises the significant benefits that remote and flexible working can bring to the organisation and the workforce, including:

- increased flexibility
- improved work-life balance
- greater productivity
- reduced sickness
- reduced building usage and therefore reduced running costs for the building(s)

In terms of requirements gathering for future ways of working and environment, a number of engagement exercises have been undertaken to date, these include:

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- Employee Survey
- Service Area Change Management Exercise
- Targeted Focus Groups
- Utilisation and occupancy data analysis

Further detailed analysis and extensive service engagement will be required to validate assumptions made to date.

What is very clear from the work completed to date is that the Core Office Strategy will need to fully consider:

The Buildings:

How does the Council provide the appropriate building(s) for the workforce. This includes consideration of existing buildings, potential for new buildings, size and location required for the needs of the business.

The Workforce:

Making changes to the way people work will require new policies on Hybrid Working, consideration of contractual obligations, rights and responsibilities.

Resources:

For hybrid and flexible working to be successful, there needs to be fit for purpose resources and technology. The strategy will need to consider how the Council can empower its workforce to work well flexibly with the right equipment and resources.

This impact assessment can only initiate discussions and actions based on the pre strategy position. It can make some assumptions of the potential impact and differential impacts, both positive and negative on the broad scope of this work, but in order for the strategy to be truly effective, there is a need for further investigation of workforce data, HR policies and procedures and other corporate obligations such as Health and Safety, Legal, Finance, Property and Information and Architecture Technology.

These investigations should then inform separate, but co-considered, impact assessments that will be conducted by the relevant Council department, which can then inform the implementation of the Core Office Strategy.

3 Assess Impact on the Protected Characteristics

3.1 Age

Will this Strategy have a **differential impact [positive/negative/]** on younger/older people?

	Yes	No	N/A
Up to 18 years	X		
18 - 65 years	X		
Over 65 years	X		

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Please give details/consequences of the differential impact, and provide supporting evidence, if any.

It is anticipated that introducing policies to support modern working practices, and also providing the appropriate environment and resources to enable people to work in a flexible way to suit their circumstances will have a positive impact on everyone. However, there may be some additional positive impacts for younger people who are generally more exposed to modern technologies and if we assume that as they are younger, their work within the Council will be one of their first working roles. To be able to work flexibly and have appropriate technology could encourage a positive commitment to the Council as an employer.

In addition, employees aged between 18 and 65 are more likely to have dependents. Introducing modern working practices will assist in work life balance and allow employees to work around the needs of their dependents without compromise to their work commitments.

Equally for older employees, the ability to work more flexibly could assist some in remaining at work for longer if they wish to. However, it could also be assumed that some older people may find it more difficult to adapt to significant work changes, especially if they have been used to working in the same role and in the same way for many years.

Consideration should also be given to the location of the premises and the travel required- this may have a differential impact on employees too young to drive, or who may have dependent responsibilities and who need to accommodate the school run etc before travelling into the building.

What action(s) can you take to address the differential impact?

A full review of the workforce data will help to understand the age range of the workforce and therefore help to understand any specific differential impacts on those attending core offices, and all employees in relation to the introduction of hybrid working practices.

3.2 Disability

Will this Strategy have a **differential impact [positive]** on disabled people?

	Yes	No	N/A
Hearing Impairment	x		
Physical Impairment	x		
Visual Impairment	x		
Learning Disability	x		
Long-Standing Illness or Health Condition	x		
Mental Health	x		
Substance Misuse	x		
Other	x		

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Please give details/consequences of the differential impact, and provide supporting evidence, if any.

It is anticipated that introducing policies to support modern working practices, and providing the appropriate environment and resources to enable people to work in a flexible way to suit their circumstances will have a positive impact on everyone.

However, the proposed Strategy could facilitate a positive differential impact on disabled people, for example:

Refurbishment of City Hall would address current accessibility constraints with access into and within the building.

Should a new Core office be constructed this would include the most recent legislation and create a suitable environment which is fit for purpose for both employees and members of the public accessing the building.

A review of technology could ensure provision of modern, fit for purpose resources for those requiring adapted equipment.

Hybrid working policies could ensure flexibility in working arrangements to support employees with long standing health conditions to be able to remain working effectively. It is also recognised that accommodating flexible working has a positive impact on people's mental health.

What action(s) can you take to address the differential impact?

A full review of employee data to establish the representation of disability will assist in the determination of needs to be addressed across all 3 components of the strategy. Also, when progressing with any refurbishment or design and construction, consideration must be given to Equality legislation and requirement for accessibility.

Consideration should be given to the design and development of any workstations, including hybrid/flexible workstations to ensure they are fully accessible for those who use wheelchairs and have other mobility difficulties.

Consideration must also be given to those suffering with mental health- it may be that they will need to be accommodated to work in the core office environment on a full-time basis, but engagement and consultation will assist in confirming all requirements.

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3.3 Gender Reassignment

Will this Strategy have a **differential impact on** transgender people?

	Yes	No	N/A
Transgender People (People who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone a process [or part of a process] to reassign their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex)		x	

Please give details/consequences of the differential impact, and provide supporting evidence, if any.

It is anticipated that introducing policies to support modern working practices, and providing the appropriate environment and resources to enable people to work in a flexible way to suit their circumstances will have a positive impact on everyone. It is not expected to have a differential impact on Transgender people.

In line with the Council's Stonewall submission, welfare facilities at Core office buildings would be reviewed and consideration given to ensure gender neutral provision.

What action(s) can you take to address the differential impact?

Ensure that any development or refurbishment considers the Stonewall submission and provides gender neutral welfare facilities.

3.4. Marriage and Civil Partnership

Will this Strategy have a **differential impact [positive/negative]** on marriage and civil partnership?

	Yes	No	N/A
Marriage		x	
Civil Partnership		x	

Please give details/consequences of the differential impact, and provide supporting evidence, if any.

It is anticipated that introducing policies to support modern working practices, and also providing the appropriate environment and resources to enable people to work in a flexible way to suit their circumstances will have a positive impact on everyone. It is not expected to have a differential impact on anyone because of their marital or civil partnership status.

What action(s) can you take to address the differential impact?

No action anticipated.

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3.5 Pregnancy and Maternity

Will this Strategy have a **differential impact [positive]** on pregnancy and maternity?

	Yes	No	N/A
Pregnancy		x	
Maternity		x	

Please give details/consequences of the differential impact, and provide supporting evidence, if any.

It is anticipated that introducing policies to support modern working practices, and also providing the appropriate environment and resources to enable people to work in a flexible way to suit their circumstances will have a positive impact on everyone. It is not expected to have a differential impact on people because of pregnancy or maternity. Although it could be expected that a flexible working arrangement will be beneficial from pregnant employees suffering morning sickness and other associated pre- and post-natal health conditions. It is a possibility that the new Hybrid Working Policy may have a positive impact for those who are pregnant or on maternity if flexible working allows a better work/life balance with a new baby, and it may facilitate an easier return to work post maternity leave, but this would depend in the development of the Hybrid Working Policy and its relationship with all other HR policies and procedures.

What action(s) can you take to address the differential impact?

HR to consider the development of the new Hybrid Working Policy in line with all of its HR policies and procedures and contractual obligations.

3.6 Race

Will this Strategy have a **differential impact** on the following groups?

	Yes	No	N/A
White		x	
Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Groups		x	
Asian / Asian British		x	
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British		x	
Other Ethnic Groups		x	

Please give details/consequences of the differential impact, and provide supporting evidence, if any.

It is anticipated that introducing policies to support modern working practices, and providing the appropriate environment and resources to enable people to work in a flexible way to suit their circumstances will have a positive impact on everyone. It is not expected to have a differential impact on people because of their race.

What action(s) can you take to address the differential impact?

No action anticipated.

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3.7 Religion, Belief or Non-Belief

Will this Strategy have a **differential impact [positive/negative]** on people with different religions, beliefs or non-beliefs?

	Yes	No	N/A
Buddhist		X	
Christian		X	
Hindu		X	
Humanist		X	
Jewish		X	
Muslim		X	
Sikh		X	
Other		X	

Please give details/consequences of the differential impact, and provide supporting evidence, if any.

It is anticipated that introducing policies to support modern working practices, and also providing the appropriate environment and resources to enable people to work in a flexible way to suit their circumstances will have a positive impact on everyone. It is not expected to have a differential impact on people because of their religion. Any refurbishment, design or construction will continue to allow for the provision of multi faith prayer rooms and the development of any HR policies will need to consider current policies around time off for religious occasions etc.

What action(s) can you take to address the differential impact?

No action anticipated.

3.8 Sex

Will this Strategy have a **differential impact [positive/negative]** on men and/or women?

	Yes	No	N/A
Men		X	
Women		X	

Please give details/consequences of the differential impact, and provide supporting evidence, if any.

It is anticipated that introducing policies to support modern working practices, and providing the appropriate environment and resources to enable people to work in a flexible way to suit their circumstances will have a positive impact on everyone. It is not expected to have a differential impact on people because of their sex.

However, the travel and parking arrangements may have a differential impact on women, who statistically are primary care givers and so may require access to their cars before, during and after work.

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What action(s) can you take to address the differential impact?

No action anticipated.

3.9 Sexual Orientation

Will this Strategy have a **differential impact [positive/negative]** on the following groups?

	Yes	No	N/A
Bisexual		X	
Gay Men		X	
Gay Women/Lesbians		X	
Heterosexual/Straight		X	

Please give details/consequences of the differential impact, and provide supporting evidence, if any.

It is anticipated that introducing policies to support modern working practices, and also providing the appropriate environment and resources to enable people to work in a flexible way to suit their circumstances will have a positive impact on everyone. It is not expected to have a differential impact on people because of their sexual orientation.

Any policy development will consider current equality policies and procedures

What action(s) can you take to address the differential impact?

No action anticipated

3.10 Socio-economic Duty

Will this Strategy have a **differential impact [positive/negative]** on the Socio-economic Duty?

	Yes	No	N/A
Socio-Economic Groups	X		

Please give details/consequences of the differential impact, and provide supporting evidence, if any.

Socio economic duty requires public bodies to adopt transparent and effective measures to address the inequalities that result from differences in occupation, education, place of residence or social class.

The development of the Core Office Strategy aims to deliver an accessible and inclusive Core Office that provides an enriched environment for everyone to be able to access and work effectively, irrespective of their social class, education, role within the Council or where they live.

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Travel and Transport

With any destination across the City, there will be travel costs associated with getting to work and these costs may vary depending on the starting point of the journey, how far and the mode of transport being used. Those local to any core office building will always benefit from lower transport costs. The project cannot control the cost of using buses and trains, nor can it manage the cost of fuel and using the road. However, the Core Office Strategy must consider the Council's commitment to Active Travel and the One Planet Strategies when determining car parking facilities and other resources that will facilitate everybody's choice about getting to work, including the provision of secure bicycle parking, showers and changing facilities.

A full review of employee data and further engagement regarding travel to and from work will help inform this as options regarding the locations and scope of the buildings are considered.

Cost of Living

It is also important to acknowledge that hybrid working practices will increase the time that some employees spend working from home. Consideration must be given to the additional requirements for people working at home, including:

- Ergonomic workstations
- Adequate technology and other related resources like broadband packages, telephone connections etc
- Potential increase in heating and lighting costs

The cost of living situation requires careful consideration and where the council can work to develop more cost effective core office facilities, it also needs to consider its policies in supporting the potential increasing costs for staff working at home.

What action(s) can you take to address the differential impact?

Further engagement with employees as the locations of the core offices are determined to ensure that any plans do not have a detrimental impact on any specific group of employees.

3.11 Welsh Language

Will this Strategy have a **differential impact (positive/negative)** on the Welsh Language?

	Yes	No	N/A
		X	

Please give details/ consequences of the differential impact, and provide supporting evidence, if any.

It is anticipated that introducing policies to support modern working practices, and also providing the appropriate environment and resources to enable people to work in a flexible way to suit their circumstances will have a positive impact on everyone. It is not expected to have a differential impact on people because

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of their use of the Welsh Language. Any work to the delivery of new premises or development of any policies will not alter the Council's commitment or obligations under the Welsh Language Act.

What action(s) can you take to address the differential impact?

No action anticipated

4. Consultation and Engagement

What arrangements have been made to consult/engage with the various Equalities Groups?

To date, there has been some preliminary engagement with the workforce in relation to interim changes to working practices, predominantly brought on through the Pandemic. In terms of the development of a Hybrid Working Policy, this must continue and there must be a full review of employee data, current HR policies and procedures, health and safety, legal and technology requirements. This is in addition to the need to undertake further consultation regarding the core office physical environment and travel impacts.

It is acknowledged that to date, consultation has been informative, but it has also been based on incremental workstreams of a much bigger project that can be scoped properly once a Cabinet decision has been made.

Full consultation will be undertaken with service areas, employees, and Equalities groups once decision at Cabinet on future core office strategy has been made.

Where the consultation for all components of this work should impact the same stakeholder groups, it is recommended that separate impact assessments are carried out by the relevant directorates responsible for delivering each component and that each of these directorates work closely with each other throughout, given the interdependent nature of the project workstreams.

5. Summary of Actions [Listed in the Sections above]

Groups	Actions
Age	A full review of the workforce data will help to understand the age range of the workforce and therefore help to understand any specific differential impacts on those attending core offices, and all employees in relation to the introduction of hybrid working practices.
Disability	A full review of employee data to establish the representation of disability will assist in the determination of needs to be addressed across all 3 components of the strategy. Also, when progressing with any refurbishment or design and construction, consideration must be given to Equality legislation and requirement for accessibility, including the hybrid workstations. Also consider requirements for

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	accommodating those suffering with mental health
Gender Reassignment	Ensure alignment to the Council's Stonewall Submission
Marriage & Civil Partnership	No action anticipated
Pregnancy & Maternity	No action anticipated
Race	No action anticipated
Religion/Belief	No action anticipated
Sex	No action anticipated
Sexual Orientation	No action anticipated
Socio-economic Duty	Ensure full and comprehensive review of employee data and further consultation and engagement re active travel
Welsh Language	No action anticipated
Generic Over-Arching [applicable to all the above groups]	<p>Once a Cabinet decision is made regarding the implementation of the Strategy, the Council can move forward on the 3 components:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1: the building works 2: the hybrid working policy 3: the review of technology and enterprise architecture <p>These 3 components should probably have their own EIA carried out by the relevant department to ensure there are no gaps in the strategy implementation. Although there must be a collaboration and robust communication between all 3.</p> <p>All 3 will benefit from a uniform review of employee data and representation of staff across the Council in addition to the full consultation that is planned to better inform requirements going forward.</p>

6. Further Action

Any recommendations for action that you plan to take as a result of this Equality Impact Assessment (listed in Summary of Actions) should be included as part of your Service Area's Business Plan to be monitored on a regular basis.

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7. Authorisation

The Template should be completed by the Lead Officer of the identified Strategy and approved by the appropriate Manager in each Service Area.

Completed By :	Date:
Designation:	
Approved By-Estates:	
Approved By- HR:	
Approved By-ICT:	
Designation:	
Service Area:	

- 7.1 On completion of this Assessment, please ensure that the form is submitted to the Equality Team mailbox so that there is a record of all assessments undertaken in the Council- equalityteam@cardiff.gov.uk.

For further information or assistance, please contact the Equality Team- equalityteam@cardiff.gov.uk