

Equality Analysis Form / EqIA

By completing this form you will provide evidence of how your service is meeting Stroud District Council's General Equality duty:

The Equality Act 2010 states that:

*A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have **due regard** to the need to –*

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;

(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics are listed in Question 9

Stroud District Equality data can be found at:

<https://inform.gloucestershire.gov.uk/equality-and-diversity/>

Please see Appendix 1 for a good example of a completed EIA.

[Guidance available on the HUB](#)

1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

Name(s): Rebecca Poole	Telephone:01453 754382
	E-Mail: Rebecca.poole@stroud.gov.uk
Service: Corporate Policy & Governance	Date of Assessment: 21/11/2023

2. Name of the policy, service, strategy, procedure or function:

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2023

Is this new or an existing one? New

3. Briefly describe its aims and objectives

Local Authorities are required to review their polling districts and places every 5 years. The aim and objectives of the review are to ensure that the polling arrangements and polling district boundaries reflect effective local government arrangements, ensure each polling district (unless special circumstances apply) has an allocated polling station and place for residents to cast their vote in, that accessibility of polling stations have been given due regard and to ensure boundaries are aligned following any previous reviews that have taken place (in Stroud's case, the Community Governance Review (CGR) completed in 2023).

4. Are there external considerations? (Legislation / government directive, etc)

The review is governed by the statutes that are listed and required under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 which require Acting Returning Officers whose constituency is wholly or partly in their electoral area they are responsible for to conduct a review every 5 years. The next statutory review must be undertaken between the 1 October 2023 and 1 January 2025.

There is a statutory requirement to undertake a consultation period to seek the review of residents of the district, community groups and any other person or body which appears to have an interest in the review.

Local authorities must comply with specific legislative requirements relating to the designation of polling districts and places which are listed out under the Representation of the People Act Section 18A. Additionally local authorities must have due regard and follow any guidance from the Electoral Commission in relation to the conducting of polling district and place reviews.

Additionally, there are the new requirements under the Elections Act 2022 which require (Acting) Returning Officers to consider the accessibility requirements for voters.

5. Who is intended to benefit from it and in what way?

The review of polling district and places is intended to benefit registered electors of the district by ensuring that the polling district boundaries are coterminous following the CGR and that new suitable polling places are appointed for areas where a previous venue can no longer be used or is not suitable..

6. What outcomes are expected?

If the recommendations are accepted by Council there will be a number of changes to where electors cast their vote at subsequent elections. Electors will be informed of any changes when poll cards for the next elections are distributed. We also intend to send a Household Notification Letter to every household in the Stroud District in early 2024 to confirm voting arrangements and polling stations.

7. What evidence has been used for this assessment?: (eg Research, previous consultations, Inform (MAIDEN); Google assessments carried out by other Authorities)

Desk based research was carried out, looking at how Polling District and Place Reviews are carried out by other local authorities. We looked at the style and tone used in their promotional material and the number of responses each consultation received, we also looked at their . consultation documents, fact sheets, website content and communications in detail. All guidance from the Electoral Commission and Association of Electoral Administrators was reviewed and we took on recommendations in relation to accessibility. We collect feedback from polling station staff after every election, comments from the May 2021 elections were also factored into the considerations of this review.

8. Has any consultation been carried out? See list of possible consultees

The (Acting) Returning Officer is required to undertake a consultation and seek representation from any other (Acting) Returning Officer whose constituencies are wholly or partly in their electoral areas, the residents of those constituencies and any group or individual who is identified as having a potential interest in the review. The (Acting) Returning Officer produced a consultation document as part of the review which outlined the proposals for the polling districts, places and stations along with any issues and considerations relating to those polling

stations.

The first consultation took place between Tuesday 25 July 2023 and Sunday 17 September 2023 and the second consultation took place between Tuesday 17 October and Wednesday 22 November 2023. Both consultations were published on the Councils website and consultations page, press releases and direct contact was made with community groups, disability groups, local political parties, polling station premises, MPs, Elected members and Parish/Town Councils to promote the consultation. Information was also included on the Member and Parish/Town Council Hub webpages and press releases and social media posts were published

9. Could a particular group be affected differently in either a negative or positive way?

(Negative – it could disadvantage and therefore potentially not meet the General Equality duty;

Positive – it could benefit and help meet the General Equality duty;

Neutral – neither positive nor negative impact / Not sure)

Protected Group	Type of impact, reason and any evidence (from Q7 & 8)
Age	<p>Positive.</p> <p>Older voters/voters with a disability – these groups are more likely to have issues relating to mobility, sight and potential disabilities than younger voters, therefore the accessibility requirements of the polling stations are a fundamental consideration when considering any new polling station in terms of its access, location and parking. Additionally polling stations where possible should be situated in accessible and central locations (e.g. avoiding steep hills and narrow doorways) and ideally have either fitted ramp access or access to a ramp for polling day. We have a number of polling stations that we provide a ramp for to ensure access to the polling stations do not disenfranchise any elector.</p>
Disability	<p>Positive.</p> <p>Local authorities have a duty to review the polling districts and places and ensure that they are accessible to all electors and in particular those who have a disability. They also have a requirement under the Elections Act 2022 to take ‘reasonable steps’ to improve the accessibility requirements within a polling station and place to ensure electors are not disenfranchised from voting. The requirement under this act puts responsibility on the local authority and (Acting) Returning Officer to ensure they put reasonable facilities, equipment and steps in place to ensure accessibility has been given due regard for voting.</p> <p>All new polling places and stations have been evaluated regarding accessibility using the Electoral Commissions checklist which include considerations such as level access within and entering/existing the premises, doorway width, parking facilities, suitable lighting within and outside of the premises, locality of the venue in terms of topography of the local area and surroundings and facilities such as chairs being available for seating area for any elector who may require to be seated within the premises. Additionally, each polling station is given at least one disabled polling booth, a device to aid with being able to cast their vote, large print ballot papers, pencil grips and magnifying glasses. All polling station staff will be provided with accessibility training as part of their duties to work at a polling station,</p> <p>As part of the consultation, we consulted with a range of disability and support groups to seek the views and feedback from them in terms of the accessibility arrangements for the polling station across the district.</p>

Gender Re-assignment	Neutral. The Polling District Review and Place will have no specific impact.
Pregnancy & Maternity	Neutral. The Polling District Review and Place will have no specific impact.
Race	Neutral. The Polling District Review and Place will have no specific impact.
Religion – Belief	Positive. Under the requirements under the Elections Act relating to Voter Identification. Each polling station must provide a ‘private area’ for an identity check if an elector requests for their documentation to be checked in private. Additionally this private space can also be used for the purposes of removing religious head dresses, hijabs and burkas for the identity check. This identity heck can only be undertaken by a female polling station staff member, therefore gender balance polling station staff has already been considered for the May 2024 elections.
Sex	Neutral. The Polling District Review and Place will have no specific impact.
Sexual Orientation	Neutral. The Polling District Review and Place will have no specific impact.
Marriage & Civil Partnerships (part (a) of duty only)	Neutral. The Polling District Review and Place will have no specific impact.
Rural considerations: ie Access to services; transport; education; employment; broadband;	Neutral. Stroud district is rural based as a district which means there are some remote areas of the district in which there is no access to services and transport compared to many urban towns and cities. There are different voting options available to electors which comprise of polling station, postal and proxy voting. All voting methods are promoted through our website, social media, Household Notification Letters, poll cards and annual canvass communications to ensure electors are aware of the different voting options available to them. There are 5 primary schools within the district in which are used as polling stations due to limited or no other venues available to be used as a polling station within the allocated polling districts. All schools are able to remain open during polling day through experienced polling station staff, clear signage and usually use a main hall or side classroom where electors and students are kept completely separate. (Acting) Returning Officers are able to use any publicly funded building as a polling station. Consideration is given on the locality of polling stations as part of the accessibility requirements and therefore polling places are identified and selected based on these considerations to ensure the venues are located either centrally where possible in the polling district or as close to as many amenities and public access routes as possible.

10. If you have identified a negative impact in question 9, what actions have you undertaken or do you plan to undertake to lessen or negate this impact?


Please transfer any actions to your Service Action plan on Excelsis.

Action(s):	Lead officer	Resource	Timescale

Declaration

I/We are satisfied that an Impact Assessment has been carried out on this policy, service, strategy, procedure or function * (delete those which do not apply) and where a negative impact has been identified, actions have been developed to lessen or negate this impact.

We understand that the Equality Impact Assessment is required by the District Council and that we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this assessment

Completed by: Rebecca Poole	Date: 23 November 2023
Role: Democracy & Information Governance Officer	
Countersigned by Head of Service/Director: Hannah Emery, Corporate Policy & Governance Manager	Date: 27 November 2023
	

Date for Review: Please forward an electronic copy to policy@stroud.gov.uk