

## Customer Services 2022/23 Budget EIA – Cease mediation of routine highways reports by the contact centre

Did you use the EIA Screening Tool? (Delete as applicable)

No

### 1. Explaining the matter being assessed

Is this a:

- Change to an existing strategy or policy

**Summarise the strategy, policy, service(s), or function(s) being assessed. Describe current status followed by any changes that stakeholders would experience.**

We want to make people's experience of dealing with the council quicker, easier and better, by managing their enquiries in a more efficient, proactive and connected way and increasing our use of digital self-service technologies. This ambition will enable us to add more value and support the Council's Organisation Strategy 2021 - 2026 and its commitment to tackling inequality to ensure no-one is left behind.

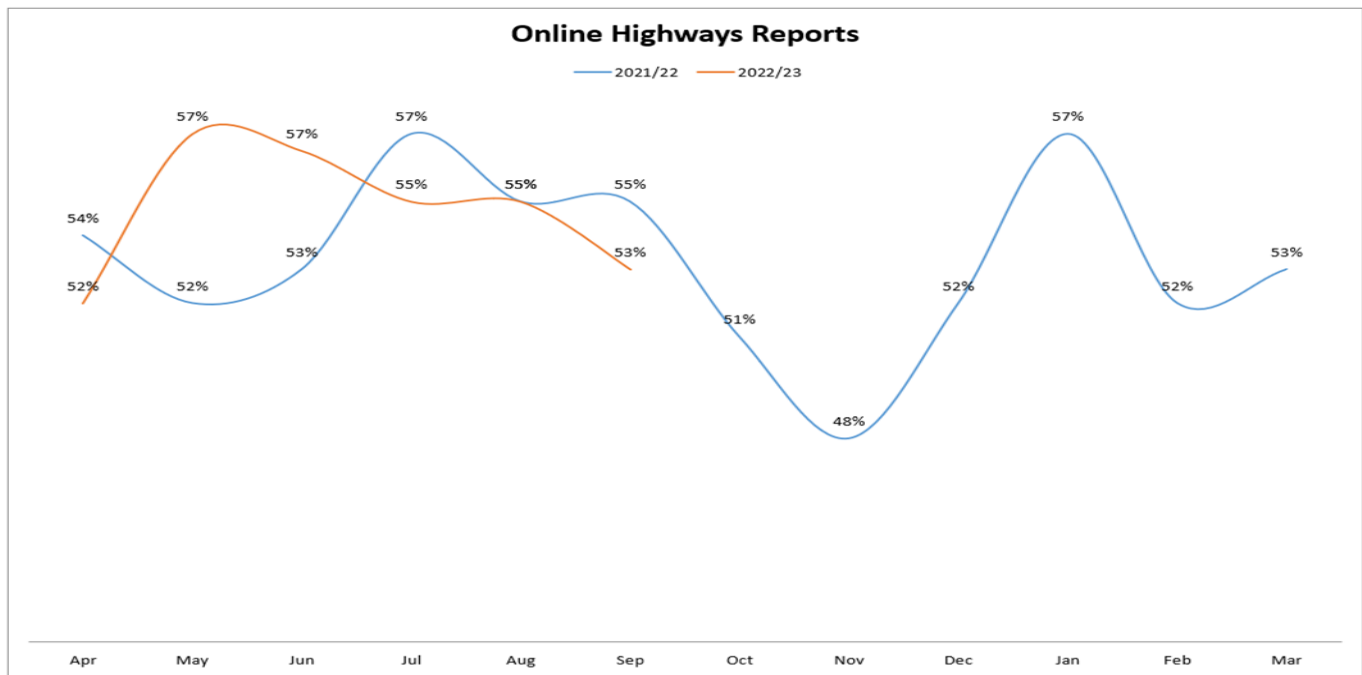
The council offers a range of easy-to-use, self-serve options via its website. These are well used by customers and currently around 75% of routine transactions take place through digital channels. This includes library book renewals, birth and marriage registrations appointments, blue badge applications and highways reports.

We are proposing to cease offering the option to call the contact centre to report routine highways defects. This approach echoes the route taken by several other similar local authorities, including Essex and Hampshire County Councils.

By encouraging residents that can, to self-serve for routine reports, it will reduce costs, free up valuable time to focus on complex issues, and provide assistance to people who are vulnerable, digitally excluded or have additional needs. It will also put residents in touch with tools and information that will save time and keep them informed.

Through our IVR messaging we encourage callers to make non-emergency highways reports online. This is a quicker and easier option for many people as the service can be accessed at times and places that suit them, is available 24/7, ensures that reports go to the right place first time, speeds up processes and enables accuracy in reporting. Currently over 50% of highways reports are logged online.

# Equality Impact Assessment



The number of adults who have either never used the internet or have not used it in the last three months, has been declining over recent years. Since 2011, this number has almost halved, but in 2019 there were still 4.8 million adults in the UK, or 9.1% of the adult UK population, in this situation. An estimated 200,000 people suffer from digital exclusion in Surrey. (Source Surrey-i).

Digital exclusion is inextricably linked to wider inequalities in society and is more likely to be faced by those on low incomes. (Source Local Government Association). With the current cost of living crisis there are likely to be more people who cannot afford to replace old or broken devices and/or remain connected to internet services.

Although, in general, internet use continues to increase, we are aware that some people will not be able to access digital reporting systems. We will therefore continue to offer a discrete mediated services for customers who are digitally excluded or unable to use the online reporting system. This will ensure that people with protected characteristics are not disadvantaged or excluded from making highways reports and enquiries.

We will also continue to work collaboratively with the library service so that customers visiting local libraries can get the help and support they need to access digital channels. This will assist in driving forward early engagement and help in communities, provide a more joined up customer experience and achieve better outcomes for residents.

We anticipate that the reduction in calls will mean that our establishment can be reduced by 1FTE resulting in savings of £30K. This will be achieved by natural wastage and will not have an impact on staff, including those with protected characteristics.

# Equality Impact Assessment

This document sets out the potential equality impacts on individuals who live, work and/or travel through Surrey arising from this proposed change.

## How does your service proposal support the outcomes in [the Community Vision for Surrey 2030](#)?

The proposed change supports the following aspirations in the Community Vision:

- Journeys across the county are easier, more predictable and safer.
- Businesses in Surrey thrive.
- Well connected communities, with effective infrastructure, that grow sustainably.

## Are there any specific geographies in Surrey where this will make an impact?

- County-wide

**Assessment team** – A key principle for completing impact assessments is that they should not be done in isolation. Consultation with affected groups and stakeholders needs to be built in from the start, to enrich the assessment and develop relevant mitigation.

## Detail here who you have involved with completing this EIA. For each include:

- Susan Grizzelle – Head of Customer Services, Surrey County Council, Service manager
- Rachel Bearman – Customer Contact & Systems Manager, Customer Services, Surrey County Council, Systems specialist
- Carole Comfort, Customer Services Project Lead, Surrey County Council, EIA author

## 2. Service Users / Residents

### Who may be affected by this activity?

There are 9 protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010) to consider in your proposal. These are:

1. Age including younger and older people
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Pregnancy and maternity
5. Race including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
6. Religion or belief including lack of belief
7. Sex
8. Sexual orientation
9. Marriage/civil partnerships

Though not included in the Equality Act 2010, Surrey County Council recognises that there are other vulnerable groups which significantly contribute to inequality across the county and therefore they should also be considered within EIAs. If relevant, you will need to include information on the following vulnerable groups (Please **refer to the EIA guidance** if you are unclear as to what this is).

- Members/Ex members of armed forces
- Adult and young carers\*
- Those experiencing digital exclusion\*
- Those experiencing domestic abuse\*
- Those with education/training (literacy) needs
- Those experiencing homelessness\*
- Looked after children/Care leavers\*
- Those living in rural/urban areas
- Those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage\*
- Out of work young people)\*
- Adults with learning disabilities and/or autism\*
- People with drug or alcohol use issues\*
- People on probation
- People in prison
- Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers
- Sex workers
- Children with Special educational needs and disabilities\*
- Adults with long term health conditions, disabilities (including SMI) and/or sensory impairment(s)\*
- Older People in care homes\*
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities\*
- Other (describe below)

(\*as identified in the Surrey COVID Community Impact Assessment and the Surrey Health and Well-being Strategy)

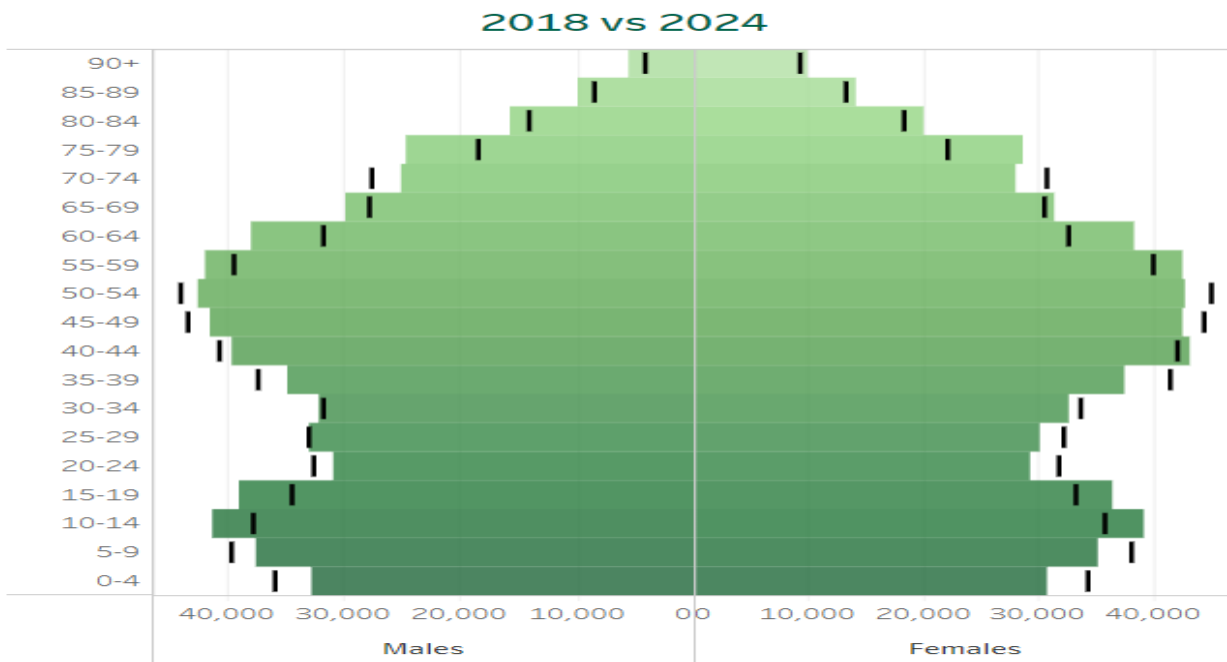
# Equality Impact Assessment

## AGE

Describe here the considerations and concerns in relation to the programme/policy for the selected group.

Surrey has an aging population and there is an ongoing predicted growth in the number of older residents. By 2030 the proportion of working age residents (16-64) and of younger people is expected to decrease while there are expected to be more residents aged over 65, and a 29% increase the number of over 85s.

### The population projections for Surrey



The solid coloured bars represent the population in the projected year (selected on the right). The estimates were made by the [ONS](#) and were based on 2018 data (the dark lines are the 2018 figures).

Digital exclusion is inextricably linked to wider inequalities in society and is more likely to be faced by people over 65, those on low incomes, and disabled people.

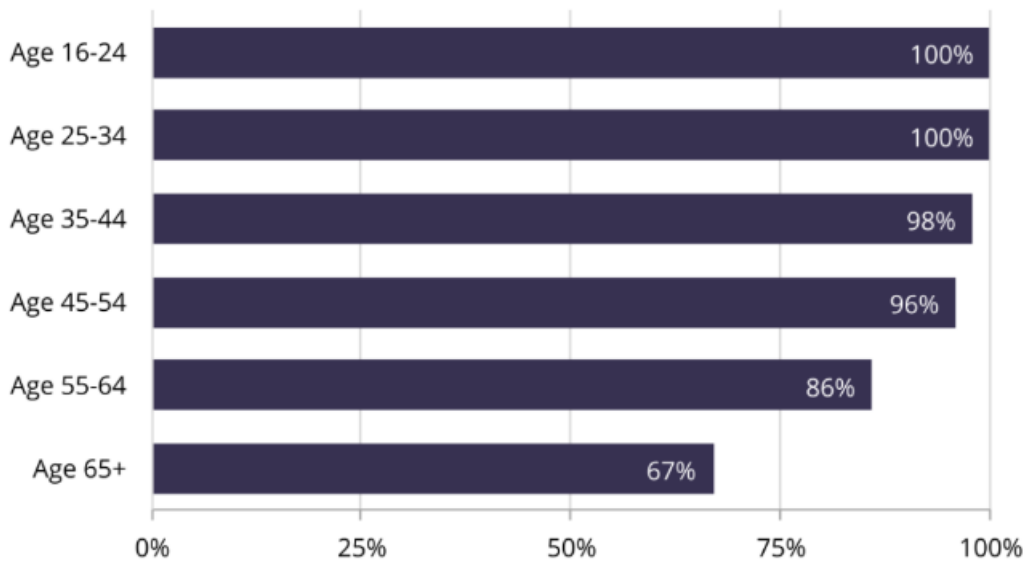
In 2017, 65.1% of nonusers of the internet were retired, despite making up just 28.3% of the general population (Source Good Things Foundation, 2017). More recently in 2020, the elderly continue to be overrepresented in the digitally excluded, accounting for 77% of those with very low digital engagement (Source Lloyds Banking Group, 2020).

Internet use is higher among younger age groups. For those who are digitally enabled, online reporting is often a preferred option. Currently 75% of routine transactions take place through digital channels. Customers who self-serve are not limited to making reports during office hours and can choose times and places that suit them.

# Equality Impact Assessment

## Frequency of internet use by age group

Percentage saying that they use the internet "daily or almost daily", 2020



Source: ONS, Internet access - households and individuals 2020

### **Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.**

The contact centre will continue to offer a discrete mediated service for those who are unable to use digital channels. Our IVR messaging will advise customers who telephone and are unable to access the website that their call will be answered.

### **What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?**

As part of Customer Experience transformation programme, we will continue to look for opportunities to manage customer enquiries in a more efficient, proactive and connected way and increase our use of digital self-service technologies.

The impact of any future changes on those with protected characteristics will be considered along with mitigating actions in order to limit the cumulative effects of these changes.

### **Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?**

None

# Equality Impact Assessment

## DISABILITY

**Describe here the considerations and concerns in relation to the programme/policy for the selected group.**

In 2020, only 84% of those with a disability were recent internet users, compared to 91% of non-disabled people, and twice as many disabled people reported to have not used the internet in the last 3 months (8%) (ONS, 2020b). Once again, this disparity is greater in the elderly, as although there is little difference between disabled and non-disabled adults aged 16-24, only 41% of disabled adults over 75 were recent users compared with 54% of non-disabled adults (ONS, 2019d).

Some people with disabilities such as speech and hearing impairments may find it easier to make reports through digital channels and at times and places that suit them. For others self-serving may be more of a challenge.

**Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.**

The contact centre will continue to offer a discrete mediated service for those who are unable to use digital channels or need additional support to do so. Our IVR messaging will advise customers who telephone and are unable to access the website that their call will be answered.

**What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?**

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The impact of any future changes on those with protected characteristics will be considered along with mitigating actions in order to limit the cumulative effects of these changes.

**Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?**

None.

# Equality Impact Assessment

## GENDER REASSIGNMENT

**Describe here the considerations and concerns in relation to the programme/policy for the selected group.**

None identified

**Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.**

N/A

**What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?**

N/A

**Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?**

N/A

## PREGNANCY & MATERNITY

**Describe here the considerations and concerns in relation to the programme/policy for the selected group.**

None identified.

**Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.**

N/A

**What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?**

N/A

**Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?**

N/A



# Equality Impact Assessment

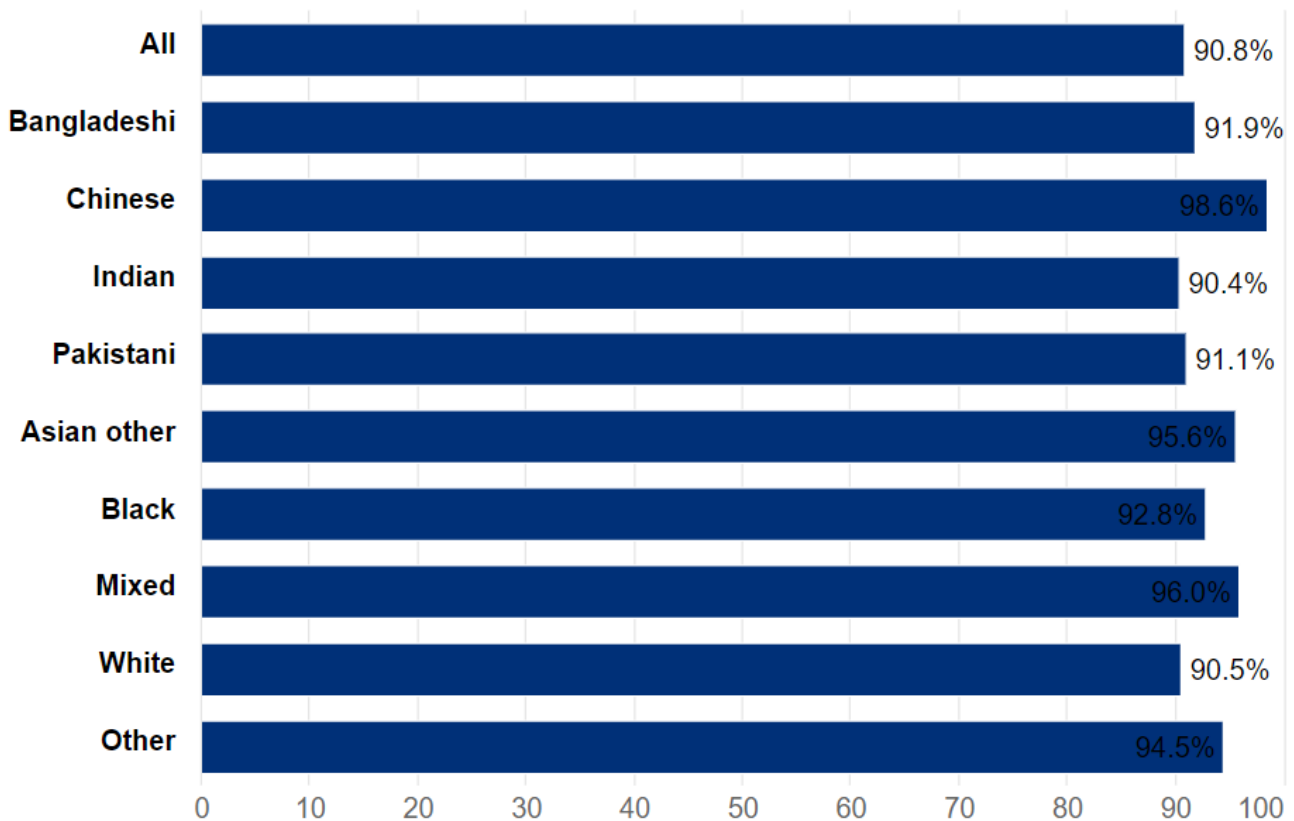
## RACE

Describe here the considerations and concerns in relation to the programme/policy for the selected group.

In 2019, 90.8% of people aged 16 and over had used the internet in the 3 months prior to being surveyed (making them 'recent internet users'). Indian and White ethnic groups had the lowest percentages of recent internet users (at 90.4% and 90.5%) and the Chinese ethnic group had the highest (98.6%).

In London, recent internet use was broadly similar for Asian, White and Other ethnic groups, ranging from 93.3% to 94.7%, with a lower percentage of users in Black ethnic groups (88.9%). Asian people in the South East were more likely than Asian people in West Midlands to have used the internet recently (97.4% compared to 86.8%)

**Percentage of people aged 16 and over who had used the internet in the past 3 months, by ethnicity**



(Source Gov.UK)

# Equality Impact Assessment

In 2018, it was estimated that 20% of the gypsy and traveller population had never used the internet, which was twice the national average and only 42% used it daily (approximately 50% less than the national average). Those who had never accessed the internet were all over 40.

**Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.**

The contact centre will continue to offer a discrete mediated service for those who are unable to use digital channels or need additional support to do so. Our IVR messaging will advise customers who telephone and are unable to access the website that their call will be answered.

**What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?**

As part of Customer Experience transformation programme, we will continue to look for opportunities to manage customer enquiries in a more efficient, proactive and connected way and increase our use of digital self-service technologies.

The impact of any future changes on those with protected characteristics will be considered along with mitigating actions in order to limit the cumulative effects of these changes.

**Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?**

None.

## SEX

**Describe here the considerations and concerns in relation to the programme/policy for the selected group.**

In the UK, the digital gender divide is not as significant and has improved over the years. In 2011, 82% of men were online, and just 77% of women, but in 2019, this had risen to 92% of men and 90% of women recently using the internet (ONS, 2019d). This not only shows an overall increase in internet use but also a narrowing of the gender divide.

**Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.**

No impact identified

**What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?**

N/A

**Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?**

N/A

# Equality Impact Assessment

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION

**Describe here the considerations and concerns in relation to the programme/policy for the selected group.**

None identified.

**Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.**

N/A

**What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?**

N/A

**Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?**

N/A

## MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

**Describe here the considerations and concerns in relation to the programme/policy for the selected group.**

None identified

**Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.**

N/A

**What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?**

N/A

**Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?**

N/A

# Equality Impact Assessment

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC

**Describe here the considerations and concerns in relation to the programme/policy for the selected group.**

Due to the current cost of living crisis some people may not be able to engage digitally due to the affordability of devices, broadband, data etc. Those with a sensory impairment may be unable to afford enabling aids such as magnification or voice activated software.

(Source Data Digital Inclusion in Surrey Heartlands Strategy 2021/22)

**Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.**

The contact centre will continue to offer a discrete mediated service for those who are unable to use digital channels or need additional support to do so. Our IVR messaging will advise customers who telephone and are unable to access the website that their call will be answered.

**What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?**

As part of Customer Experience transformation programme, we will continue to look for opportunities to manage customer enquiries in a more efficient, proactive and connected way and increase our use of digital self-service technologies.

The impact of any future changes on those with protected characteristics will be considered along with mitigating actions in order to limit the cumulative effects of these changes.

**Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?**

None.

# Equality Impact Assessment

## 3. Staff

**Describe here the considerations and concerns in relation to the programme/policy for the selected group.**

None identified

**Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.**

N/A

**What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?**

N/A

**Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?**

N/A

## 4. Recommendation

Based your assessment, please indicate which course of action you are recommending to decision makers. You should explain your recommendation below.

- **Outcome One: No major change to the policy/service/function required.** This EIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or negative impact, and all opportunities to promote equality have been undertaken
- **Outcome Two: Adjust the policy/service/function** to remove barriers identified by the EIA or better advance equality. Are you satisfied that the proposed adjustments will remove the barriers you identified?
- **Outcome Three: Continue the policy/service/function** despite potential for negative impact or missed opportunities to advance equality identified. You will need to make sure the EIA clearly sets out the justifications for continuing with it. You need to consider whether there are:
  - Sufficient plans to stop or minimise the negative impact
  - Mitigating actions for any remaining negative impacts plans to monitor the actual impact.
- **Outcome Four: Stop and rethink the policy** when the EIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination. (For guidance on what is unlawful discrimination, refer to the [Equality and Human Rights Commission's guidance and Codes of Practice on the Equality Act](#) concerning employment, goods and services and equal pay).

# Equality Impact Assessment

## Recommended outcome:

Two

## Explanation:

While this impact assessment has identified the potential for negative impacts on certain protected groups, established mitigations are in place to minimise these impacts. Some groups will benefit from the offer of improved digital reporting tools. It will also reduce costs and free up capacity to support those who need us the most.

# Equality Impact Assessment

## 5. Action plan and monitoring arrangements

The contact centre will continue to offer a discrete mediated service for those who are unable to use digital channels or need additional support to do so. Our IVR messaging will advise customers who telephone and are unable to access the website that their call will be answered.

Item	Initiation Date	Action/Item	Person Actioning	Target Completion Date	Update/Notes	Open/ Closed
1	02/01/2023	Staff awareness and training on call appropriate call handling techniques for customers unable to access the website.	Rachel Bearman	31/03/2023		
2	02/01/2023	Ensure IVR wording informs customers, who are unable to access the website or need support to do so, that their call will be answered	Rachel Bearman	31/03/2023		
3	Ongoing	Continue to track online uptake for non-urgent highways reports and enquiries	Rachel Bearman	Ongoing		

# Equality Impact Assessment

Item	Initiation Date	Action/Item	Person Actioning	Target Completion Date	Update/Notes	Open/ Closed
4	Ongoing	Continue to work in collaboration with the library service so that customers can obtain assistance and support from local libraries in accessing digital channels, including the reporting of non-urgent highways issues	Rachel Bearman	Ongoing		

## 6a. Version control

Version Number	Purpose/Change	Author	Date
1.1	Initial EIA completed	Carole Comfort	16/11/2022
1.2	Update of content following feedback	Carole Comfort	22/11/2022

The above provides historical data about each update made to the Equality Impact Assessment.

Please include the name of the author, date and notes about changes made – so that you can refer to what changes have been made throughout this iterative process.



# Equality Impact Assessment

For further information, please see the EIA Guidance document on version control.

# Equality Impact Assessment

## 6b. Approval

Secure approval from the appropriate level of management based on nature of issue and scale of change being assessed.

Approved by	Date approved
Head of Service – Susan Grizzelle	16/11/2022
Executive Director	29/11/2022
Cabinet Member	01/12/2022
Directorate Equality Group	

### Publish:

It is recommended that all EIAs are published on Surrey County Council's website.

Please send approved EIAs to: **INSERT SHARED EMAIL ACCOUNT ADDRESS**

### EIA author:

## 6c. EIA Team

Name	Job Title	Organisation	Team Role
Susan Grizzelle	Head of Customer Services	Surrey County Council	EIA co-author
Rachel Bearman	Customer Contact & Systems Manager	Surrey County Council	EIA co-author
Carole Comfort	Customer Services Project Lead	Surrey County Council	EIA author

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