

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	13 MARCH 2017	AGENDA ITEM:	11
TITLE:	ACCOMMODATION RATIONALISATION REVIEW - THAMESBRIDGE HOUSE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR LOVELOCK	PORTFOLIO:	LEADERSHIP
SERVICE:	PLANNING DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATORY SERVICES	WARDS:	CAVERSHAM, WHITLEY
LEAD OFFICER:	JAN SAGOO	TEL:	0118 937 2304
JOB TITLE:	HEAD OF CIVIC SERVICES	E-MAIL:	jan.sagoo@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out a proposal to carry out improvements to Thamesbridge House at an estimated cost of £240,000 - £260,000 and appoint Morgan Sindall to carry out the works under their existing agreement with the Council, which will allow for the relocation of New Directions provision and future release of the Caversham Centre for disposal (subject to Policy Committee approval). In addition to a Capital receipt (to be determined), the disposal of the Caversham Centre would achieve an annual revenue saving of circa £68k plus £50k of condition related Capital costs.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That improvement works up to the value of £260,000 be carried out at Thamesbridge House, 330 Northumberland Avenue;
- 2.2 That, in accordance with Contract Procedure Rule 4(2)(h) and (i), the existing agreement with Morgan Sindall be extended to include the additional works described in section 4.2 of the report;
- 2.3 That the Capital programme be amended to include this approved works in 2.1 above.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1

- The Council is in the process of rationalising its principal operational premises in order to improve the quality of customer facing services by ensuring that buildings are fit for purpose, generating capital receipts, increasing revenue streams and making on-going revenue savings. This is in line with the actions set out in the Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan.
- At its meeting held on 18 July 2016, the Policy Committee agreed the recommendations set out in the Operational Accommodation Review and Asset Management Report, which included the principle of disposing of The Caversham

Centre by re-providing the New Directions services currently operating from the Centre to other existing Council premises.

#### **4. THE PROPOSAL**

##### **4.1 Current Position:**

Thamesbridge House currently provides mixed classroom and office space for New Directions and children's services teams including South Children's Action Team, Family Workers, Multi-systemic Therapy and the Portage teams. As part of the office rationalisation programme and detailed surveys, Thamesbridge House presented itself as a favourable site for improvement works as it required minimum investment to increase capacity for New Directions Services and office space. A location plan showing Thamesbridge House is appended to this report.

##### **4.2 Options Proposed**

These works have become a priority for Reading Borough Council (RBC) in order to facilitate the expedient disposal of the Caversham Centre, approved in principle by the Policy Committee at its meeting held on 18 July 2016. With intelligent use of space Thamesbridge House has the potential to accommodate the New Directions Services currently located in Caversham, as well as providing office accommodation for the RBC staff in both buildings.

Works are being proposed at Thamesbridge House for a number of factors:

- Geographically, the building is within the south of Reading which is the area where service delivery is most needed.
- Improved utilisation of the building through undertaking of these works, namely using the building to maximum capacity. This makes best use of property assets and releases the Caversham site for disposal.
- Children's Services and New Directions will both be able to operate effectively and collaboratively from Thamesbridge House.
- RBC will only be required to run one building (Thamesbridge House) instead of the current two buildings.

A high level feasibility study has been undertaken on the Thamesbridge House proposals based on a set of user requirements developed through service consultations, at an estimated cost of £240,000 - £260,000. The scope of works is outlined below:

###### **Ground Floor:**

- Large team office with 20 desks
- Small team office with 8 desks
- Pottery/Art space with Kiln room
- Café/Drop-in for mixed staff and student use
- Replace flooring for change of use where required

###### **First Floor:**

- Large team office with 16 desks
- Removal of partition wall to create one larger training room
- Digipad added to staff-only kitchen
- Replace flooring as required

The Council already has an existing contract with Morgan Sindall, and the addition of these works to that contract would provide demonstrable benefits in terms of

timescale, value for money and contractor continuity. Without the need to go through the 42-day tender process, Morgan Sindall would be able to carry out the required work by September 2017 in time for the start of the new term.

#### **4.3 Other Options Considered**

An outline appraisal has been undertaken on the two procurement options available, namely seeking an extension of the existing contract with Morgan Sindall or re-procuring with a new contractor.

### **5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

5.1 The decision contributes to the following corporate aims:

- Providing the best life through education, early help and healthy living.
- Remaining financially sustainable to deliver these service priorities.

### **6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

In terms of communicating the new venue for courses, New Directions will be able to include relevant information about the whole curriculum in the prospectus.

### **7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2 A detailed Equality Impact Assessment in respect of the Operational Accommodation review was attached at Appendix B of the Policy Committee Report 18 July 2016. The relocation of the New Directions service to South Reading, which would be facilitated by this decision has been assessed and an EIA is attached. There are no adverse impacts identified regarding protected groups.

### **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 As the value of the contract is below the OJEU threshold, the Council's Legal Services have confirmed that the recommended procurement route is justified based on a business case approved by the Director. The business case demonstrates benefits to the Council in seeking to use an exemption from the overarching requirement to tender.

8.2 The Council's Contract Procedure Rules (4(2)(h)&(i)) allows this contract to be let without seeking tenders on the grounds that the contractor is already providing works and there is a financial benefit in extending this contract. The Council will achieve best value by direct negotiation with the current contractor.

### **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

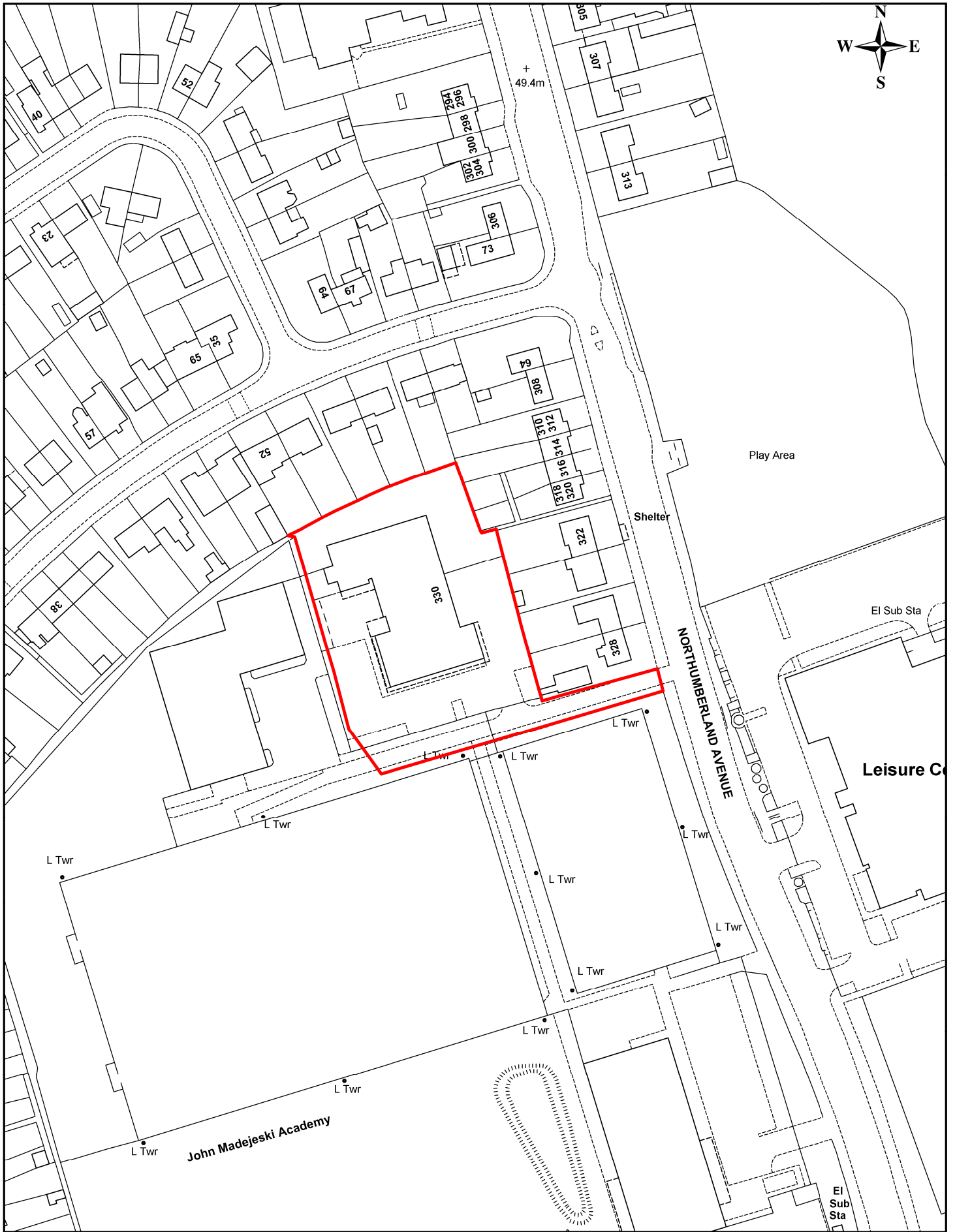
9.1 Extending the existing agreement with Morgan Sindall provides demonstrable benefits to the Council in terms of value for money, time and contractor continuity at a total

procurement cost of £16.7k compared to £43.5k if a full tender process were to be followed. The estimated cost of the building works is £240,000 - £260,000. The costs of the works would be funded by the Council's Capital Programme (£140k will be carried forward from the 2016/17 allocation and an additional borrowing of up to £120k is required).

- 9.2 The Council will achieve a revenue saving of circa £68k for Caversham (£22k for maintenance liability and £46k for annual running costs), plus £50k of condition related capital costs.
- 9.3 A capital receipt for the Caversham Centre will be realised once it had been released for disposal via a future Policy Committee report.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 10.1 Report to Policy Committee, 18 July 2016.



Title: 330 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, RG2 8DH

File:  
Produced by Valuation Section

Date: 01/03/2017      Scale at A4: 1:1250  
Ref: 54008\S:\JeanJea\Mapinfo2\655a1.wor



Provide basic details

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed: Relocation of new Directions North from Caversham Centre to join with New Directions South at Thamesbridge, 330 Northumberland Avenue

Directorate: DENS

Service: Planning Development and Regulatory Services

Name and job title of person doing the assessment

Name: Jan Sagoo

Job Title: Head of Civic Services

Date of assessment: March 2017

Scope your proposal

**What is the aim of policy or new service/ Changes are you proposing**

The Council continues to face significant budget pressures following reduced Government funding, with the need to make further savings and generate additional income.

The Council's approved Corporate Plan for 2016 - 2019 'Building a Better Borough' sets out the priorities for the Council which include remaining financially sustainable to deliver service priorities. Within this theme the plan refers to the need to identify further assets for disposal and secure significant capital receipts from property assets. Section 7 of the Corporate Plan refers to property and to the Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan.

The Corporate Asset Management Plan (CAMP) set outs the need to:

- Rationalise assets taking into account the compliance and condition matters and service delivery
- Co-locate services
- Optimise income opportunities
- Provide better service offer to our customers
- Reduce revenue costs
- Deliver Capital receipts
- Increase income targets

The proposal sets out a number of strategic themes and projects which include the need to: maintain and improve customer services; deliver an overall improvement in the condition of buildings and property; and maximise the opportunity to deliver energy efficiency and reduce energy costs and carbon emissions.

The property asset listed below has been identified for disposal:

1. Caversham Centre
  - Relocation of New Directions North to join with New Directions South at Thamesbridge, 330 Northumberland Ave.

A full Equality Impact Assessment is undertaken for only those projects assessed to have an impact on any of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. The protected characteristics are (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation)

Proposed Changes	
Closure of New Directions North building and Relocation to New	The New Directions service is part of Reading Borough Council's (RBC) Directorate of Environment & Neighbourhood Services (DENS) and is externally grant funded by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). The service currently provides adult education in five RBC owned centres (two designated learning centres in Caversham & Whitley and three shared premises) plus a number of outreach locations in the borough for example Children's Centres.

<p>Directions South, 330 Northumberland Avenue</p>	<p>New Directions vision is ‘To support individuals to achieve their personal aims and aspirations whether they are to gain employment, improve their skills or to help them be part of their community’.</p> <p>They provide best value, high quality adult and family learning, which meets the needs and aspirations of each individual in the local community’. The service will achieve these by working with a range of organisations to provide high quality learning opportunities to those most in need.</p> <p>The service has established the Reading Community Learning Network (RCLN) members are providing targeted and specialist provision in Reading. The designated learning centre in Caversham is located in the Caversham Centre building which has been identified by the Council’s asset review to be in poor condition and in need of major refurbishment.</p> <p>The service currently has 471 learners enrolled from Caversham and surrounding wards who are studying qualifications. A further 157 non-qualification bearing courses ran from the centre in 2015-16. Classes include supported learning classes for adults with additional needs in subjects such as art, craft and pottery.</p> <p>The service currently has 327 learners enrolled who have declared additional needs. Around 40% of learners are BME, around 25% of learners are male, around 10% are aged 65+, around 60% of learners are from the most deprived areas of Reading.</p> <p>As part of the Council’s strategy to manage budgetary pressures, a proposal is being considered to close Caversham Centre due to its poor condition, dispose of this property and relocate the New Direction North service to another building. This proposal is being discussed with service managers.</p> <p><b>Proposed Relocation</b></p> <p>The proposal is to relocate the service to Thamesbridge, 330 Northumberland Ave, which would provide an accessible and functional building which already accommodates New Directions South. Thamesbridge is a modern, accessible building with lift access to the first floor. It is already configured to provide adult education services in one of the most deprived areas of Reading. It has two disabled car parking spaces and is on a regular bus route.</p> <p>The service also intends to run some courses from other sites eg the Avenue Centre in Tilehurst and Emmer Green Youth &amp; Community Centre in Caversham.</p>
----------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------



Who will benefit from this proposal and how?	
Proposed Changes	Who Benefits and How?
Closure of New Directions North building and relocation to New Directions South, 330 Northumberland Ave	RBC New Directions Service - Relocation provides an opportunity to consolidate to a single site which is already used to deliver the service and reduce facilities costs, with the flexibility to hire other premises on an ad-hoc basis to meet demand.  Service Users (Students) - Provides training facilities that is fit for purpose.

What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?	
Proposed Changes	Expected Outcomes and for Whom?
Closure of New Directions North building and relocation to New Directions South, 330 Northumberland Ave	RBC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of a capital receipt from the disposal of Caversham Centre.</li> <li>• Utilise spare capacity within Thamesbridge, which is already set up to provide a learning environment.</li> </ul>

Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?	
Proposed Changes	Stakeholders and what they want
Closure of New Directions North building and relocation to New Directions South, 330 Northumberland Ave	Service Users (Students) - Continuity of provision and retaining good accessibility to public transport and provision of car parking spaces.

Assess whether an EqIA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; promoting equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others? Think about your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.

Proposed Changes	Yes or No
Closure of New Directions North building and relocation to New Directions South, 330 Northumberland Ave	Yes.

Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Think about your complaints, consultation, and feedback.

Proposed Changes	Yes or No
Closure of New Directions North building and relocation to New Directions South, 330 Northumberland Ave	No.

If the answer is Yes to any of the above you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If No you **MUST** complete this statement:

An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because:

Proposed Changes	
Closure of New Directions North building and Relocation to Emmer Green Children Centre an alternative RBC site	

Signed (completing officer) Jan Sagoo

Date:

Signed (Lead Officer) Giorgio Framalicco

Date:

### Collect and Assess your Data

Using information from Census, residents survey data, service monitoring data, satisfaction or complaints, feedback, consultation, research, your knowledge and the knowledge of people in your team, staff groups etc. describe how the proposal could impact on each group. Include both positive and negative impacts.

#### **Describe how this proposal could impact on Racial groups**

There are no specific impacts anticipated for this category.

Is there a negative impact? No

#### **Describe how this proposal could impact on Gender/transgender (cover pregnancy and maternity, marriage)**

There are no specific impacts anticipated for this category.

Is there a negative impact? No

#### **Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability**

Some of the service users with a disability may have further to travel to the new location.

Thamesbridge is on a major bus route, and all Reading buses are wheelchair accessible. There are two disabled car parking spaces available.

The service also intends to run some courses from other sites eg the Avenue Centre in Tilehurst and Emmer Green Youth & Community Centre in Caversham.

Is there a negative impact? No

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)**

There are no specific impacts anticipated for this category.

Is there a negative impact? No

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Age**

Some of the service users may have further to travel to the new location.

Thamesbridge is on a major bus route along Northumberland Avenue, and concessionary passes are available. Courses do not start so early in the day that passes are invalid. Car parking is available.

The service also intends to run some courses from other sites eg the Avenue Centre in Tilehurst and Emmer Green Youth & Community Centre in Caversham.

Is there a negative impact? No

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief?**

There are no specific impacts anticipated for this category.

Is there a negative impact? No

### Make a Decision

If the impact is negative then you must consider whether you can legally justify it. If not you must set out how you will reduce or eliminate the impact. If you are not sure what the impact will be you MUST assume that there could be a negative impact. You may have to do further consultation or test out your proposal and monitor the impact before full implementation.

Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason

How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?

The service will continue to record and monitor the needs and requirements of the protected and target groups as they do at present.

Signed (completing officer) Jan Sagoo

Date:

Signed (Lead Officer) Giorgio Framalicco

Date: