



# Equality Impact Assessment

Working *Together*

<b>Date of initial assessment</b>	20/08/2021 – Initial EIA screening
<b>Service</b>	Stratford-on-Avon District Council Warwick District Council
<b>Proposal to be assessed</b>	Proposal to merge Stratford on Avon District Council and Warwick District Council
<b>New or existing policy or function?</b>	New
<b>External (i.e. public-facing) or internal?</b>	External
<b>Lead officers</b>	David Buckland, Chief Executive, Stratford-on-Avon District Council Chris Elliott, Chief Executive, Warwick District Council

<p><b>Please outline your proposal, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aims and objectives</li> <li>• Key actions</li> <li>• Expected outcomes</li> <li>• Who will be affected and how</li> <li>• How many people will be affected</li> </ul>	<p><b>Summary:</b> The aim is to create a new local authority by the merging of Stratford on Avon District Council (SDC) and Warwick District Council (WDC) to create South Warwickshire Council. The main objective of this merger is to make reductions in cost which will be used to protect service provision.</p> <p><b>How it Fits with Wider Council Objectives:</b> Both Councils have agreed and ambitious strategies – the Council Plan in SDC’s case and Business Plan in WDC’s case and both feature partnership working to help achieve those ambitions. Both Councils also deliver a wide range of discretionary services including Leisure and CCTV which would be under threat unless savings can be delivered, due in the main to forecast reductions in government grant (SDC) and increase in waste management costs in WDC’s.</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b> The expected outcome would be a new local authority serving the residents and businesses of South Warwickshire. Currently combined savings of around £3.8m have been included within the Medium-Term Financial Plans from both Stratford and Warwick in relation to the proposed merger.</p> <p><b>How many people will be affected?</b> The total population of the Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick districts (two councils) is currently estimated at 274,000. The impacts could possibly be further reaching than this.</p>
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**Who will be affected and how?**

At this stage very high level information is known, for example:

- All residents living in the two districts
- All staff employed by the two councils
- All staff employed by organisations commissioned to carry out services/functions on their behalf by one (or more) of the two councils.
- All Elected Members in the two districts

Impacts against the relevant protected characteristics cannot be known at this stage but as each service integration proposal comes forward those impacts, if any, will be made clear and mitigated. It is important to be conscious that both Councils have significant financial pressures which cannot be ignored and if not addressed would have significant implications for service users across all protected characteristics.

**Groups with protected characteristics that this intends to benefit:**

As outlined above it is expected that the main benefit arising from the proposed merger would be reduced cost which would enable the Councils to protect as far as possible valuable discretionary functions. Both Councils make contributions to the Voluntary & Community Sector, these are examples of discretionary functions which would be at greater risk if the Councils were forced to make reductions in isolation.

**What relevant data or information is currently available about the customers who may use this service or could be affected?**

**Population Data for Both Districts**

<b><i>Protected Characteristic</i></b>	<b>Stratford-on-Avon District Council Area 132,402 (2020)</b>		<b>Warwick District Council Area 144,909 (2020)</b>	
<b><i>Age (2020)</i></b>	0-15 16.7%	65+ 25.4%	0-15 17.2%	65+ 18.8%
<b><i>Disability (day-to-day activities limited a lot or a little) (2011)</i></b>	16.9%		14.9%	
<b><i>Gender reassignment</i></b>	Data not available		Data not available	
<b><i>Marriage and Civil Partnership (2011)</i></b>	Married 54.9%	Civil Partnership 0.1%	Married 46.6%	Civil Partnership 0.2%

	<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Data not available		Data not available	
	<b>Ethnicity (2011)</b>	Asian/Asian British 1.2% Black/African/Caribbean/Black British 0.2% Mixed/multiple ethnic groups 1.0% Other ethnic group 0.2% White 97.4%		Asian/Asian British 7.2% Black/African/Caribbean/Black British 0.7% Mixed/multiple ethnic groups 2.0% Other ethnic group 0.9% White 89.2%	
	<b>Religion or Belief (2011)</b>	Has a religion 71.8% Christian 70.3% Buddhist 0.3% Hindu 0.2% Jewish 0.1% Muslim 0.2% Sikh 0.2% Other religion 0.3% No religion 21.2%		Has a religion 64.3% Christian 58.3% Buddhist 0.4% Hindu 1.2% Jewish 0.2% Muslim 0.9% Sikh 3.9% Other religion 0.4% No religion 27.5%	
	<b>Sex (2020)</b>	Male 48.6%	Female 51.4%	Male 50.1%	Female 49.9%
	<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Data not available		Data not available	

**Is the decision relevant to the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty, which are listed below?**

Aim	Yes/No	Explanation
<p><b>Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation</b></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Should the single district go ahead there could be opportunities to achieve this aim that should not be missed. This would be achieved by the identification of best practice in the current individual Council areas to be deployed across the whole area. An example of this relates to the work of the RESPECT network at Stratford-on-Avon District Council.</p> <p>The areas occupied by both Councils will include individuals who are covered by one or more of the full range of protected characteristics, as defined within the Equalities Act 2010. There is currently a South Warwickshire Crime Reduction Partnership which covers the Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council area. A single Council will ensure a more consistent approach across the South Warwickshire area.</p> <p>Currently no significant detrimental impacts have been identified which cannot be readily mitigated through existing policies, enhancements to existing policies and protocols. The consultation will help identify these. If the decision outcome is to proceed with the creation of a new single South Warwickshire District Council, there could be some potential inequalities which may stem from the proposals if not proactively addressed. It will be necessary to complete individual service EIAs when the specific teams are merged. It simply is not possible to undertake this at a macro level.</p>
<p><b>Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it</b></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Should the single district go ahead the potential for consistency across the district and therefore advancement of equality of opportunity should be enhanced.</p> <p>Both Council's currently promote and raise awareness of the role of elected members. The new authority will have proportionately fewer Councillors, it will be therefore necessary to promote a Council which is representative of its communities.</p>

Aim	Yes/No	Explanation
		<p>We do not envisage that there will be any negative impact on the accessibility of meetings for any the protected characteristics. Indeed, both Councils have lobbied government to allow for the ongoing holding of virtual meetings.</p>
<p><b>Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it</b></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Should the single district go ahead the potential for consistency across the district and therefore there could be opportunities to foster good relations which should not be missed.</p> <p>In this particular area existing networks exist across both council areas. In future if the merger is successful then it is expected that these will be reviewed.</p>

Information Gathering	
<p>(1) What type and range of evidence or information have you used to help you make a judgement about the plan/ strategy/ service/ policy?</p>	<p>At this stage the proposed merger does not propose any specific reductions in the services which are provided. Should this be the case post-merger then individual EIAs would be completed for each of these specific issues.</p> <p>What the proposed merger does provide is an opportunity for the Councils to make cost reductions through economies of scale and removal of duplication across the two authorities, with the view of preserving as many services as possible.</p> <p>The Councils are undertaking a comprehensive consultation exercise which is launched on 6 September to fully understand the views of residents. In addition, the Council has commissioned reports from the Local Government Association, Deloitte, Bevan Brittan and others to help inform the Council's decision.</p>

<p>(2) Have you consulted on the plan/ strategy/ service/policy and if so with whom?</p>	<p>The proposal is being subject to full consultation. The Councils are engaging with Opinion Research Services (Swansea University) to undertake the consultation on our behalf, this will ensure that the process is completely independent from both Councils. The proposal is being consulted via a questionnaire open to all. It is designed to be completed by residents, businesses, voluntary and community groups, town and parish councils, councillors and staff of the two councils. In addition, a targeted telephone survey is being undertaken to 600 residents which match the profile of the area, which also includes matching to some of the protected characteristic types. Furthermore separate focus groups for residents, businesses, town/parish councils and the community/voluntary sector (will include those who represent those with protected characteristics) are taking place.</p> <p>The consultation is being fully promoted via the usual council outlets/ways, plus direct communication with the town/parish councils to encourage them to promote on their websites and notice boards. We will be promoting the consultation via stakeholders from the community sector.</p> <p>The questionnaire is available in other languages and large print. It is also using immersive reader technology for people with visual impairments.</p> <p>We will monitor the diversity data of the respondents. The results of the consultation will be published by the end of November.</p>
<p>(3) Which of the groups with protected characteristics have you consulted with?</p>	<p>Please see box above. It is not envisaged that the impact on any of these groups will be higher than the impact on all residents.</p> <p>The consultation will include the results by different demographic data to help inform the Council's view. As mentioned above, the consultation at this stage relates to the principle of merging the two councils. There will be the requirement for detailed EIAs to be undertaken for each service area as the Service Integration Programme progresses.</p>

**Assess the relevance of the proposal to people with different protected characteristics, and assess the impact of the proposal on people with different protected characteristics.**

<b>Protected characteristic</b>	<b>Relevance to proposal High/Medium/Low/None</b>	<b>Impact of proposal Positive/Neutral/Negative</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Age</b>	Medium	Neutral	Unknown at this stage
<b>Disability</b>	Medium	Neutral	Unknown at this stage
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	Medium	Neutral	Unknown at this stage
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	Medium	Neutral	Unknown at this stage
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Medium	Neutral	Unknown at this stage
<b>Race</b>	Medium	Neutral	Unknown at this stage
<b>Religion or belief</b>	Medium	Neutral	Unknown at this stage
<b>Sex</b>	Medium	Neutral	Unknown at this stage
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Medium	Neutral	Unknown at this stage
<b>Other groups:</b> for example – low income/ people living in rural areas/ single parents/ carers and the cared for/ past offenders/ long-term unemployed/ housebound/ history of domestic abuse/ people who don't speak English as a first language/ People without computer access etc.	Medium	Neutral	Unknown at this stage

<b>Are you going to make any changes to your proposal as a result of these findings, in order to mitigate any potential negative impacts identified?</b>	Following a period of public engagement more information about how a potential single South Warwickshire District Council will affect people with or without a protected characteristic will be collected and the Equality Impact Assessment will be updated with new information.
<b>Is there any potential negative impact which cannot be minimised or removed? If so, can it be justified?</b>	None identified at this stage. This will be reviewed following a period of public engagement.
<b>What additional information would increase your understanding about the potential impact of this proposal?</b>	The assessment will be reviewed, if there are any changes to the service or when the merger is progressed or if there is subsequently a proposed change in service which would have a negative impact.

**Next stage:**

<b>Date of revised assessment</b>	<a href="#">Click here to enter a date.</a>
<b>Have you made any changes to your initial assessment?</b>	
<b>Did you undertake consultation? – if yes, give date and the consultation results:</b>	
<b>Do you have new information which reveals any difference in views across the protected characteristics?</b>	
<b>Can any new conclusions be drawn as to how the proposal will affect people with different protected characteristics?</b>	
<b>Are you going to make any changes to your proposal as a result of these findings, in order to mitigate any potential negative impacts identified?</b>	
<b>Is there any potential negative impact which cannot be minimised or removed? If so, can it be justified?</b>	