

Equality Impact Assessment: Civic Centre Relocation – Senate Court Feasibility and Cost Assessment

The Equality Act 2010 includes a general duty which requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- **Eliminate discrimination**, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- **Foster good relations** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

Authorities which fail to carry out equality impact assessments risk making poor and unfair decisions which may discriminate against particular groups and worsen inequality.

Committee name and date:	Report Title	Decisions being recommended:	People with protected characteristics potentially impacted by the decisions to be made:
Council 10 February 2026	Use of City Council Assets to Drive Regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That Council approves a decision to seek to purchase a new Materials Reclamation Facility (MRF) across the Road from the existing MRF and transfer Environment and 	Race and Ethnicity Disability Sex Gender Reassignment Religion and Belief Sexual Orientation Age Pregnancy and Maternity

Committee name and date:	Report Title	Decisions being recommended:	People with protected characteristics potentially impacted by the decisions to be made:
		<p>Waste Service to the new facility;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That Council approves the move of the Operations Service from Belle Isle to Oakwood House and the Weighbridge depot sites with existing buildings utilised by the service for a workshop and storage of handheld equipment and the erection of storage facilities to house plant and other machinery • That Council approves the transfer of the budget of £2.5 million approved for new premises for the Parks & Green Spaces team to the approved MRF budget. • That Council approves an additional £2.6m to complete the purchase of the new MRF facility, fit out of the new MRF facility together with the move from Belle Isle of which £2 	

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		<p>million will be financed from CIL.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That the Council approves a capital budget of up to £3 million pounds to enable the implementation of an upgrade package to Senate Court to replace the Civic Centre. That the Council approves a phased vacation of the existing Civic Centre and a target occupation of Senate Court by 31st March 2027. 	

Factors to consider in the assessment: For each of the groups below, an assessment has been made on whether the proposed decision will have a **positive, negative or neutral impact**. This is must be noted in the table below alongside brief details of why this conclusion has been reached and notes of any mitigation proposed. Where the impact is negative, a **high, medium or low assessment** is given. The assessment rates the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

High impact – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.

Medium impact –some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence

Low impact – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive or Negative Impact	High, Medium or Low Impact	Reason
Race and ethnicity (including Gypsies and Travellers; migrant workers; asylum seekers).	Negative	High	<p>Approximately 9% of staff at all sites declare an ethnic minority background on iTrent. More detailed analysis could be undertaken to look at figures for staff and elected members working at the Civic Centre however this number would need to be uplifted anyway to include visitors to the offices.</p> <p>Data on number of ethnic minority customers potentially visiting the customer service centre will be requested from the Customer Experience team.</p> <p>The entrance to the new location is within a courtyard and is accessed from a quiet side road. It is possible that people from minority ethnic backgrounds (who disproportionately experience hate crime) may not feel safe entering and exiting the building after dark.</p> <p>Research with staff will be needed to look at this issue and whether there are any physical changes are needed to the entrance way (e.g. lighting, planting, CCTV) to make the area feel safer.</p> <p>The improved facilities and increased space at the proposed MRF will allow for more open staffing areas.</p>
Disability: as defined by the Equality Act – a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse impact on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.			<p>Only 4.8% of staff working at all sites have declared a disability on iTrent. However, 51% of staff have yet to provide any information about whether they have a disability or not.</p> <p>Data on number of disabled customers potentially visiting the customer service centre and their needs will be requested from the Customer Experience team.</p>

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive or Negative Impact	High, Medium or Low Impact	Reason
	Negative	High	<p>Data on elected members with disabilities and a discussion about their needs will be carried out with Democratic Services.</p> <p>Staff with mental health conditions such as anxiety and neurodiverse staff may find the move to a new location particularly challenging. Consideration of how to address this should be included in the role of the disabled staff group as outlined below.</p> <p>Disabled customers may also find visiting the new centre more difficult as it is further away from the bus station and centre of town. Although less than a mile away, this seemingly short distance for able bodied people could present challenges for those with physical health or mobility issues and it may take longer to reach appointments and they may be more physically and mentally exhausted when they arrive. Factoring this into the timing of appointments, information given out about how to find the building, providing refreshments, staff understanding and patience and a suitable waiting area will all help to mitigate this issue.</p> <p>The new MRF facility will have a ground floor reception area and whilst this building is not public facing, it will improve access for staff, Members and contractors visiting the facility.</p> <p>The feasibility study assumes that people will access Senate Court from Southernhay Gardens and Western Way however there is no pavement on Southernhay Gardens which may present a risk to all staff and visitors but could be particularly challenging to any disabled people with mobility or sensory impairments. An alternative access if not using a car would be through the estate via the footpath from Southernhay. However, this largely includes flights of steps and it is not clear whether there are access ramps through this route. The proposed MRF will</p>

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	Negative	High	<p>include more parking both within the Envirohub curtilage, but also on the weighbridge site.</p> <p>Additionally, the route to Senate Court is not easy to navigate, has many hidden side lanes and dark corners so may not feel (or be) entirely safe particularly after dark. The intersectionality of disability, age, race, sex and sexual orientation is important to consider (see relevant entries above and below).</p> <p>Positive</p> <p>High</p> <p>A positive impact has been identified on disabled staff, visitors and customers due to Senate Court and proposals within the feasibility study meeting the expected base DDA requirements in terms of accessibility and the provision of appropriate welfare facilities ensuring an inclusive environment. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the property is served by two 13-person passenger lifts, one of which connects directly to the basement parking level. Secure car parking is provided including four disabled bays. Removing the showers from the current accessible toilets will make them easier to access for larger wheelchairs. The main entrance access is on the level and work will be done to widen the doors to improve access. <p>However, the experts in whether the design of the building is inclusive are disabled people themselves so it is essential that they are involved as early as possible in the process to ensure the building and layout of workspaces is as fully accessible within the confines of the current option and available budget. To that end the project team will engage Living Options Devon to conduct an access audit and evaluation.</p> <p>In addition, a staff group will be set up to include staff who identify as having a disability to also evaluate the premises and proposals</p>

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive or Negative Impact	High, Medium or Low Impact	Reason
			throughout the project. Both these actions will need to be progressed in early January 2026.
Sex			<p>The number of men and women working at all office sites is fairly evenly split with 49% being female 49% and 51% male. More detailed analysis could be undertaken to look at figures for staff and elected members working at the Civic Centre however either figure could be uplifted to include visitors to the offices.</p> <p>There is a clear predominance of men working in the Waste and P&GS operational teams albeit proactive recruitment campaigns to redress this. The move of MRF and refurbishment of Oakwood House will incorporate improved facilities for all genders.</p>
	Negative	High	<p>Data on the sex of customers potentially visiting the customer service centre will be requested from the Customer Experience team. This team deals with the Council's most vulnerable customers. Female customers within this cohort may experience greater safety fears than male customers.</p> <p>The entrance to the new office location at Senate Court is within a courtyard and is accessed from a quiet side road. It is possible that women who disproportionately experience fear of crime may not feel safe entering and exiting the building after dark. The intersectionality between sex and race means that ethnic minority women are even more likely to experience hate crime and fear of crime.</p> <p>Research with staff will be needed to look at this issue and whether there are any physical changes are needed to the entrance way (eg lighting, planting, CCTV) to make the area feel safer. This same review and consideration will occur at both the new MRF and Oakwood House.</p>

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive or Negative Impact	High, Medium or Low Impact	Reason
	Negative	High	<p>Female staff may also feel unsafe within the building later in the day if there are not many other staff around. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest this is the case with the current building so it should be explored as a potential issue with the new building. Flexible working does allow staff to choose to some extent, when they work at the building but this is not always possible. Adaptations such as more open aspect offices, lighting that does not dim when there is no movement may help to mitigate this impact.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to potential adjustments that may be needed to accommodate people experiencing menopausal symptoms. The staff Menopause Support Group should be engaged in the project to discuss potential issues and solutions.</p>
Gender reassignment	Positive	High	<p>Data on the number of staff who have undergone gender reassignment or who identify as non-binary is not available as the numbers are too small. However, the impact on each individual may be very high if they are unable to access the same facilities as other staff. For example, there is anecdotal evidence of increased urinary tract infections among trans women because of issues accessing suitable toilet facilities.</p> <p>The feasibility study for the new office building proposes the inclusion of gender-neutral toilets and changing facilities on the ground floor. This will have a positive impact on anyone who is trans or gender non-conforming allowing them to use facilities without question or challenge. This provision will also form part of the works to both the new MRF and to Oakwood House.</p> <p>If further facilities can be made available on other floors of Senate Court this will increase the positive impact as staff and visitors will not have to</p>

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	Positive	High	<p>make a choice between staying on the floor they are working on but using a toilet that may not match how they present, or going to the ground floor to use the gender-neutral facilities.</p> <p>Facilities on other floors which are set up for disabled staff and visitors could be labelled and promoted as Accessible thereby making them available for all. Again, this model will be adopted for the MRF and Oakwood House.</p>
Religion and belief (includes no belief, some philosophical beliefs such as Buddhism and sects within religions).	Positive	Medium	<p>The feasibility study for the new building proposes the inclusion of a Prayer and Quiet Contemplation Room in the same way as for the current building. This room can be used by anyone including those with no belief but who wish to meditate, practice yoga or simply take some quiet time away from work therefore ITrent data on declared religion and belief will not be relevant. The improved facilities and increased space at the proposed MRF will allow for more open staffing areas and dedicated areas for belief-based activity.</p> <p>A survey of usage of the current room could be undertaken to get a better understanding of how it is being used and what staff would like for the new room.</p>
Sexual orientation (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual).	Negative	High	<p>Approximately 3% of staff at all sites declare they are either gay, lesbian or bisexual on ITrent. More detailed analysis could be undertaken to look at figures for staff working at the Civic Centre however this number would need to be uplifted anyway to include visitors to the offices.</p> <p>The entrance to the new office location is within a courtyard and is accessed from a quiet side road. It is possible that lesbian, gay and bisexual people (who disproportionately experience hate crime) may not feel safe entering and exiting the building after dark.</p>

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive or Negative Impact	High, Medium or Low Impact	Reason
			Research with staff will be needed to look at this issue and whether there are any physical changes are needed to the entrance way (eg lighting, planting, CCTV) to make the area feel safer. The new MRF is open and has secure entrance facilities.
Age (children and young people aged 0-24; adults aged 25-50; younger older people aged 51-75/80; older people 81+; frail older people; people living with age related conditions. The age categories are for illustration only as overriding consideration should be given to needs).	Negative	High	<p>Data on the age of customers potentially visiting the customer service centre will be requested from the Customer Experience team. This team deals with the Council's most vulnerable customers including older people who more likely to find digital access more challenging. The new MRF and Oakwood House are not customer facing premises.</p> <p>Elderly people may also find visiting the new office more difficult as it is further away from the bus station and centre of town. Although less than a mile away, this seemingly short distance could present challenges for those with physical health or mobility issues and it may take longer to reach appointments and they may be more physically and mentally exhausted when they arrive. Factoring this into the timing of appointments, information given out about how to find the building and providing refreshments, staff understand and patience and a suitable waiting area will all help to mitigate this issue. The Council will also engage with Age UK Exeter to understand these issues and explore solutions.</p> <p>11.8% of staff are aged over 60 and with the age of retirement now more flexible there is increased likelihood of employees staying on into their late 60's and beyond. With older age comes an increased risk of developing multiple health conditions even within the working population such as diabetes, dementia, musculoskeletal conditions, hearing loss and heart disease. Ageing and health.</p>

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive or Negative Impact	High, Medium or Low Impact	Reason
			<p>The MRF will incorporate much improved welfare facilities for all staff and this, it is hoped, will positively impact on staff wellbeing.</p> <p>Further impacts set out above under Disability will apply.</p>
Pregnancy and maternity including new and breast feeding mothers	Positive	High	<p>The new office building has the potential to accommodate staff breast feeding and who need to express milk. They will require a clean, warm, private room (not the toilet) for expressing and a secure, clean fridge to store expressed milk. The MRF will incorporate much improved welfare facilities for all staff and this, it is hoped, will positively impact on staff wellbeing.</p> <p>This space is not provided at the current location so will have a positive impact on this group. According to the NHS this has other benefits for the organisation including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduced absence due to child sickness (breastfed babies are generally healthier) • increased staff morale and loyalty, and a subsequently higher rate of return to work and therefore lower recruitment and training costs • an extra incentive to offer potential employees <p>Data will be sought from HR and Customer Experience on the likely number of breast-feeding mothers working at or visiting the Civic Centre at any one time.</p>
Marriage and civil partnership status	n/a	n/a	There is no anticipated impact on this characteristic.

Actions identified that will mitigate any negative impacts and/or promote inclusion

- Further data to be gathered on demographic of staff working at the Civic Centre

- Data on elected members with disabilities and a discussion about their needs will be carried out with Democratic Services.
- Research with staff group about safety and feelings of safety with regard to the entrance to the building, particularly after dark, and the inside of the building at times of day when there are fewer staff around. To include the views of female, ethnic minority and LGBT staff where possible.
- Data and input will be sought from the Customer Experience team about the demographic of customers likely to be using the Customer Service Centre, their needs and the potential for that female customers may experience a greater fears for their safety.
- The project team will engage Living Options Devon to conduct an access audit and evaluation (to commence January 2026).
- The project team will engage Age UK Exeter to look at potential access issues and solutions for elderly customers.
- A staff group will be set up to include of staff who identify as having a disability to evaluate the premises and proposals throughout the project (to commence January 2026).
- The staff Menopause Support Group should be engaged in the project to discuss potential issues and adjustments.
- A survey of staff using the Prayer and Quite Contemplation Room may be undertaken to better understand its current use and how the new room could be improved.
- Data will be sought from HR and Customer Experience on the likely number of breast feeding mothers working at or visiting the Civic Centre at any one time.
- Research the implications of the lack of pavement on the Southernhay Gardens/Western Way approach.
- Further iterations of this Equality Impact Assessment will be developed as more data and feedback from stakeholders becomes available.

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Date: 19 November 2025