Equality Impact Assessment

Name of project/proposal

Winchester Register Office re-location to Castle Hill, Winchester

Contact name

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Department

Culture, Communities and Business Services

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Purpose for project/proposal

The Winchester Register Office is re-locating from 6 Station Hill, Winchester SO23 8TJ to Hampshire County Council premises in Castle Hill Offices, Castel Hill, Winchester SO23 8TH (near to the Great Hall). The re-location is required as the current building occupied by the Register Office is being sold.

Consultation

Has a consultation been carried out? Planned

The Registration Service is a Satutory Service and therefore most people will, potentially be required to attend to register a birth, death or possibly give a notice of marriage or civil partnership, or to attend a citizenship, marriage or civil partnership ceremony at some point in their lives. However the requirement for an individual to attend is limited to very few occasions in a lifetime (possibly 2/3). While the service holds the statutory responsibility to provide facilities to register, births, deaths and give notice for marriage or civil partnership there are some services offered such as Nationality Checking Service and Tell Us Once, that customers choose to use.

Hampshire Registration currently operates from 15 offices across Hampshire. Customers can book appointments to register births, deaths, give notice of marriage or civil partnership for any of these offices. In addition to these appointments the the service provides 10 'in-house' ceremony rooms. Hampshire Registration Service is also responsible for licensing over 150 venues for marriage and civil partnership in Hampshire and providing resource for the delivery of statutory ceremonies at these venues. The service provided the statutory requirement for over 3000 British citizenship ceremonies last year, some of which were group ceremonies and are held a 4 different locations across the County. There is also a facility for customers to request a private citizenship ceremony if the group ceremony date/time allocated to them is not convenient.

The project to re-locate Winchester Register Office is a result of the need to maximise the use of existing County Council buildings and part of the workstyles strategy currently being progressed through Hampshire County Council. Investiagtions were carried out into the suitability of other buildings, and views from HCC's Access Team have also been taken into consideration when planning how the new space can be accessed and used effectively within the re-located office. The requirements for a suitable building within central Winchester have been challenging and the project was progressed after consideration that the space and location provided by the building in Castle Hill would achieve the key project objectives.

Statutory considerations

Impact

Age Low
Disability Medium
Sexual orientation None
Race None
Religion and belief None
Gender reassignment None
Sex None
Marriage and civil partnership None
Pregnancy and maternity None

Other policy considerations

Poverty None
Rurality Low
Other factors None
If other please describe

Geographical impact

Winchester Non-specific

Have you identified any medium or high impact?* Yes No
Equality statement

The project to re-locate Winchester Register Office is a result of the continued need to make better and more use of existing County Council buildings and therefore is part of the workplace strategy currently being progressed throughout Hampshire County Council. Investigations were carried out into the suitability of other buildings, however the requirements for a suitable building within central Winchester was challenging and the project was progressed after consideration and discussion with the access team that the space and location provided by the building in Castle Hill would achieve the project objectives.

The new location is in the centre of Winchester, there are excellent public transport links in and out of Winchester and the location of the office is within a 10 minute walk from the main line rail station. There are also numerous bus routes coming into the City and bus stops are located within a few minutes walk of the main entrance. There is a large public car park with designated disabled parking within a few minutes (level) walk to the main entrance door. There will be a facility for customers with accessibility issues to park in the avenue leading to the Great Hall, however this area is cobbled and therefore may not be suitable for those mobility challenges or using walking aids or wheelchairs.

The new location will also provide potential to expand the capacity of the services currently offered by providing drop in facilities for some types of appointment (NCS) and centralise some aspects of work currently being carried out across a number of other offices across Hampshire. The facility to provide a Designated Register Office for Foreign Nationals who are required to give Notice of Marriage or Civil Partnership at specified offices across the country, will remain, this facility is also offered within the Eastleigh and Aldershot offices.

The re-located office will also provide a high quality ceremony room as well as providing the statutory requirement for a low cost basic facility for Marriage and Civil Partnership.

Potential Mitigating Actions

Information about how to travel to the Winchester Register Office both by car and using public transport links and Park and Ride will be made available via our website and included in any customer communications that are sent out. We will also include maps of local public car parks with google map links.

Advice is being taken from the HCC Access Team in regard to the way customers will move around the inside of the building. The access to all public areas on the ground floor is level and advice will be taken in respect of which doors may need to be power assisted and where possible, which doors can be widened to accommodate wheelchairs and pushchairs etc. Working within a listed building in regard to consent to change the fabric of the building is challenging and due consideration will be given to the customer journey throughout the public areas of the building.

The Registration Service has always offered and will continue to offer domicilliary visits to customers if circumstances require it.

The re-location will provide the potential to expand the capacity of the services offered by providing drop-in appointments in some areas. There will also be the potential to achieve efficiencies around working practices by centralising some of the functions currently carried out by 3 ceremony co-ordination teams across offices in Hampshire.

The required facility to provide a Designated Register Office (DRO) for Foreign Nationals who are required to give Notice of Marriage/Civil Partnership at a specified office will remain. DRO appointments are also offered in Eastleigh and Aldershot.

The main ceremony room (Basing Room) will be the floor above the main Register Office. This part of the building does pose some challenges in regard to customers or staff who have accessibility problems. There is a lift to this level from the ground floor, however this lift is currently not fire rated and cannot be upgraded due to the layout of the building. The building is listed and as such there are limitations as to what can be achieved within the current planning rules. The fact that the lift is not fire rated is not a problem as long as there is no fire alarm raised. Once a fire alarm has been raised the lift cannot be used. In order to mitigate any risk for users of the building, an electric stair climber is available at all times and is located outside the Basing Room adjacent to the Council Chamber. There will be a member of HCC Event Team on duty when a ceremony is taking place to assist persons confined to a wheelchair. If there is someone in the building who cannot easily and safely navigate the short flight of steps from the building, an evac chair will be available.

Customers are able to choose from 10 HCC Registration Service ceremony rooms across the County and there are also over 150 approved venues currently licensed to perform marriage and civil partnerships across Hampshire.

Date to review actions 01 Nov 2014
Final decision date

Final decision date due: 01 Sep 2014
Decision to be made by: DMT