

Integrated Impact Assessment

The purpose of Aberdeen City Council is to protect the people and the place of Aberdeen from harm, enabling them to prosper and supporting them in the event of harm happening.

The purpose of an Integrated Impact Assessment is to evidence that Aberdeen City Council are making decisions in an informed way, and that the impact of decisions made is understood and accepted. The legislation that is considered within this assessment are:

- Section 2 [Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics](#)
- Section 3 [Socio-Economic](#)
- Section 4 [Human Rights](#)
- Section 5 [Children and Young People’s Rights](#)

The term ‘policy’ is used throughout this document and applies to policies, proposals, strategies, provision, criteria, functions, practice, budget savings and activities that includes delivery of our services.

1. About the Policy

1.1 Title

Removal of Town House Reception Service.

1.2 What does this policy seek to achieve?

The proposal will see the removal of the Town House reception service which provides a frontline service to visitors to the building including staff, constituents and citizens accessing services delivered from the Town House e.g. Archives.

The proposal is that visitors requiring access to the building will use a self-service facility to alert the relevant Councillor or staff member that they have arrived, and they will require to be met at reception and escorted through the building. They will also need escorted back out of the building.

There is an alternative option, for a staff member located within the Town House to work from the reception desk to assist individuals that need support with the self-service facility to mitigate the impact. This will mean that the staff located at reception will be interrupted from undertaking their normal duties when a visitor arrives.

1.3 Is this a new or existing policy?

New

1.4 Is this report going to a committee?

Yes

1.5 Committee name and date:

Budget Meeting, Council, 6 March 2024

1.6 Report no and / or Budget proposal number and / or Business Case reference number:

CE12

Impacts

This section demonstrates the considerations that have been made in relation to the policy - and that the impact of proposals made is understood and accepted.

2: Equality Act 2010 - Protected Characteristics

Aberdeen City Council wants to ensure everyone is treated fairly. This section identifies the [protected characteristics](#) that the policy potentially affects and records the impact and mitigating steps.

2.1 What impact could this policy have on any of the below groups?

Protected Characteristic	What is the impact?				
	Negative			Neutral	Positive
	High	Medium	Low		
Age			X		
Disability	X				
Gender Reassignment				X	
Marriage and Civil Partnership				X	
Pregnancy and Maternity				X	
Race		X			
Religion or Belief				X	
Sex				X	
Sexual Orientation				X	

2.2 In what way will the policy impact people with these protected characteristics?

A range of meetings are regularly held in the Town House including the Disability Equity Partnership meetings, Tenant Participation meetings and Committees.

Disability has been rated as having a high impact because the introduction of a self-serve check in station could have negative implications for visitors with disabilities, particularly visitors with visual impairments as they would not be able to see the information on the screen and therefore would not be able to access the building. Some neurodivergent visitors may prefer not to use online systems and would prefer the support of a person. Not everyone is accompanied by a carer / friend / family member.

Race has been identified as having a medium impact as it is anticipated that the self-service check in will only be available in the English language. If the visitor is unable to communicate in English or English is not their first language, then this may be a barrier to using the service. This may also affect people who use British Sign Language.

Closure of the Town House Reception service may:

- result in less favourable treatment for particular groups

- give rise to indirect discrimination
- lead to discrimination arising from disability
- pose risk of impact on public sector equality act which requires how the services we deliver serve people with different levels of access.

Older people may also be impacted as they may be less digitally literate or confident. This could cause unnecessary confusion and/or stress.

For all of the reasons listed above it could reduce opportunities for people with protected characteristics to be involved and engage with the Council if they cannot access Committees/meetings/appointments in the Town House.

2.3 What considerations have been made in reaching the above assessment?

What internal or external data has been considered? What does this data tell us?

Feedback gathered from phase 3 of the budget consultation - online and face to face responses were received from 126 people with protected characteristics. This data has shown there will be a negative impact on some visitors to the Council who share protected characteristics.

[Research conducted by GREC in 2011](#) suggested that 2% of people living in Aberdeen did not speak English well and 0.4% did not speak English at all. Whilst this data is over 10 years old, it does suggest that only a small proportion of people within the city would not be able to understand a self-serve system written in English. This research also showed that older people arriving in the city are more likely to be unable to speak English.

The 42nd City Voice questionnaire undertaken in 2018 included questions on the use of technology. It was reported that 90.2% of respondents living in Aberdeen owned or had access to a laptop, PC or smart phone. This data states that a large proportion of people in Aberdeen have access to a computer or mobile phone, which suggests these respondents will be somewhat comfortable accessing and using online services.

Respondents were also questioned on their basic digital skills, the tasks specified are taken from the Basic Digital Skills [100] measure. This is a tool developed specifically to measure the level of digital skills of adults across the UK. Based on this tool, those who could do one task in each of the five skills categories are classified as having "Basic Digital Skills". 70.6% of respondents were identified as having Basic Digital Skills. Whilst there was no significant difference in the proportion of those with Basic Digital Skills was found between males and females, there was a significant difference by age group. The proportion of those with Basic Digital Skills was highest in those aged 35-54 years (85.8%) and lowest in those aged 65+ years (57.9%). This suggests that older people may need more assistance using a computerised self-serve programme.

What consultation and engagement and has been undertaken with officers and partner organisations?

Feedback gathered from elected members and staff.

The proposal was described in Phase 2 of the Budget Consultation, with links to the consultation shared directly with many partner organisations.

What consultation and engagement has been undertaken with people who may be impacted by this policy (e.g. citizens, community groups, or other people/groups)?

Aberdeen City Council launched a three-part public consultation around the 2024/25 Budget and future spending plans from July 2023 to January 2024. In part 1, which ran throughout July 2023, people were asked to award points across different service areas to indicate where they thought the council's spending priorities should be. In part 2, the public could either increase, decrease or not change the level of expenditure in areas listed.

There were 3,192 responses to phase 1 and 2,654 responses to phase 2. Phase 3 was undertaken online and two face-to-face sessions were held in January 2024, where 126 people with protected characteristics took part and 377 comments were received.

In phase 3 of the consultation there were seven comments related to the removal of the Town House reception. From the online part of the consultation these were:

"Do not reduce customer enquiries or remove in person council reception or security guard."

"It'll impact on lower paid council workers by taking away their jobs and thus increases the need to access crisis services which will also be cut increasing poverty in the city."

"Many of the suggestions in this section damage the access people have to the inner workings of their Council and the ramifications decisions taken behind closed doors will have on the services they rely on. Anything that reduces the transparency of how the Council is making decisions, how effective their local elected member is performing in looking after their interests, where public money is being spent and how public property is to be treated or disposed of is unhealthy and undemocratic. Because elderly and disabled people use Council services more than most of the general public the decision to exclude them from being able to scrutinise the internal workings of Council disproportionately affects them."

"Reception at Marischal College can be difficult for people to navigate, particularly people with a sensory impairment. the sign in screen is inaccessible, and people with a sensory impairment will feel much safer and more confident if there is person there who is able to direct them to their meeting and support them to navigate the space."

During our in-person sessions three people said the following:

"Self service check in is completely inaccessible for visual impairment. No staff to help. Automatically sends a signal to the visitor that don't want to help/you aren't welcome here. People need reassurance and it feels alien. By replacing people with technology that is not completely accessible creates a barrier. Not everyone is the same and ACC must recognise accessibility needs differently."

"Some people struggle digitally - ACC needs a face as not everybody can read and write. Not confident. Some people may be put off and never come again and lose out on other help."

"Some people can't use digital self service check in systems and face to face interaction is necessary. Race may also be impacted in terms of language. This proposal would make services inaccessible for some people - online access requires a certain level of literacy. People in the disability (autism) couldn't use it due to mental capacity and anxiety. They would need an advocate or a power of attorney which not everyone has. This proposal would also mean that the system would have to be completely reliable or else it causes increased confusion and anxiety. Sometimes human contact is essential especially for people that do not have much human contact - need to look at the bigger picture and wider impact. The existing accessibility tool is not enough. Not everyone understands how to use it. Also - need to

consider visual support. Sight is essential to use the self service check in. Elderly also want to engage with a person."

2.4 What mitigations can be put in place?

What mitigations are there against any negative impacts (if applicable)?

A possible mitigation is for staff located elsewhere within the Town House to operate from the desk and provide support when required. This is as capacity allows which may be limited

We could send an appointment email/text (or phone call) to people before they visit. Within this email we could provide information about the check-in experience and ask for any accessibility needs which can be booked in advance of their visit. This email/text/phone call would help to prepare people for their visit and also provide ACC with information about the visitor and aid in making their visit as positive and successful as possible. For example if we were aware that someone with visual impairments was due to visit, the person arranging the appointment could be present to meet the person at their designated arrival time and input their details in the self-serve. Or if they are provided with contact details for the person they are meeting, they could call when they arrive at the building and then be checked-in. However, this does not provide support for those who do not have prearranged appointments.

The Council could investigate whether language software is available which would help translate the information on the self-service screen. This would help those where English is not their first language use the self-serve system more easily and access the building. The ReciteMe function that is currently used on the ACC website could possibly be extended to a self-service programme.

There is also the possibility that some meetings that currently take place in the Town House could be moved to Marischal College or another council building such as a Community Hub.

Meetings could be held over Teams or Zoom which would decrease the number of visitors to the building.

With mitigations in place, what is the new overall rating of the negative impact(s)?	High	
	Medium	
	Low	X
	Negative Impact Removed	

3: Socio-Economic Impacts

This section is used to consider the impact of the policy on people who might be **unemployed, single parents, people with lower education or literacy, looked after children, those with protected characteristics** as examples.

Use this guide to understand more on socio-economic inequalities: [The Fairer Scotland Duty: Guidance for Public Bodies \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-duty/guidance-for-public-bodies/)

3.1 What impact could this policy have on any of the below groups?

Group	Negative			Neutral	Positive
	High	Medium	Low		
Low income / income poverty – those who cannot afford regular bills, food, clothing payments.				X	

Low and/or no wealth – those who can meet basic living costs but have no savings for unexpected spend or provision for the future			X		
Material deprivation – those who cannot access basic goods and services, unable to repair/replace broken electrical goods, heat their homes or access to leisure or hobbies				X	
Area deprivation – consider where people live and where they work (accessibility and cost of transport)				X	
Socio-economic background – social class, parents' education, employment, income.			X		

3.2 In what way will the policy impact people in these groups?

Low and or no wealth has been identified as low impact as changes to employment may impact lower paid council workers and therefore increase the need to access crisis services.

Socio-economic background has been identified as low impact because people who grew up in disadvantage backgrounds may have poorer literacy skills than others which may mean they could have difficulties understanding and using a self-serve check in.

3.3 What considerations have been made in reaching the above assessment?

What internal or external data has been considered? What does this data tell us?

A [document produced by Save the Children](#) states that **1 in 5 children from poor families in Scotland leaves primary school unable to read well, a level four times as high as that of pupils from better off households.**

'[The International Adult Literacy Survey](#)' (IALS) concluded that 23% of adults in Scotland may have low skills and another 30% may find their skills inadequate to meet the demands of the 'knowledge society' and the 'information age'.

These statistics back up the assumption that socio-economic background impacts literacy and potentially the ability to understand a self-serve digital system.

What consultation and engagement and has been undertaken with officers and partner organisations?

None

What consultation and engagement and has been undertaken with people who may be impacted by this policy? citizens, community groups, or other people/groups impacted by this policy?

Aberdeen City Council launched a three-part public consultation around the 2024/25 Budget and future spending plans from July 2023 to January 2024. In part 1, which ran throughout July 2023, people were asked to award points across different service areas to indicate where they thought the council's spending priorities should be. In part 2, the public could either increase, decrease or not change the level of expenditure in areas listed.

There were 3,192 responses to part 1 and 2,654 responses to part 2. Part 3 was undertaken online and two face-to-face sessions were held in January 2024, where 126 people with protected characteristics took part and 377 comments were received. These comments have been included within Section 3.2 of this document.

3.4 What mitigations can be put in place?

What mitigations are there against any negative impacts (if applicable)?

Option to provide a phone call to confirm appointments if citizen does not have access to digital.

With mitigations in place, what is the new overall rating of the negative impact(s)?

High	
Medium	
Low	x
Negative Impact Removed	

4: Human Rights Impacts

The Human Rights Act 1998 sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to. It incorporates the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into domestic British law. The Human Rights Act came into force in the UK in October 2000

The Act sets out our human rights in a series of 'Articles'. Each Article deals with a different right.

Use this guide to understand more about [Human Rights](#).

4.1 What impact could this policy have on Human Rights?

Human Rights Article	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Article 6: Right to a fair trial		X	
Article 7: No punishment without law		X	
Article 8: Right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence		X	
Article 9: Freedom of thought, belief and religion		X	
Article 10: Freedom of expression		X	
Article 11: Freedom of assembly and association		X	
Article 12: Right to marry and start a family		X	
Article 14: Protection from discrimination in respect of these rights and freedoms		X	
Article 1 of Protocol 1: Right to peaceful enjoyment of your property		X	
Article 2 of Protocol 1: Right to education		X	
Article 3 of Protocol 1: Right to participate in free elections		X	

4.2 In what way will the policy impact Human Rights?

No impact

4.3 What mitigations can be put in place?

What mitigations are there against any negative impacts (if applicable)?

N/A

If mitigations are in place, does this remove the negative impact?

No – negative impact remains

Yes – negative impact reduced

Yes - negative impact removed

5: Children and Young People’s Rights Impacts

The United Nations Convention has 54 articles that cover all aspects of a child’s life and set out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to. It also explains how adults and governments must work together to make sure all children can enjoy all their rights.

Children’s rights apply to every child/young person under the age of 18 and to adults still eligible to receive a “children’s service” (e.g. care leavers aged 18 – 25 years old).

The Conventions are also known as the “General Principles” and they help to interpret all the other articles and play a fundamental role in realising all the rights in the Convention for all children. They are:

1. Non-discrimination (Article 2)
2. Best interest of the child (Article 3)
3. Right to life survival and development (Article 6)
4. Right to be heard (Article 12)

You can [read the full UN Convention \(pdf\)](#), or [just a summary \(pdf\)](#), to find out more about the rights that are included.

5.1 What impact could this policy have on the rights of Children and Young People?

UNCRC and Optional Protocols	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Article 1: definition of the child		X	
Article 2: non-discrimination		X	
Article 3: best interests of the child		X	
Article 4: implementation of the convention		X	
Article 5: parental guidance and a child's evolving capacities		X	
Article 6: life, survival and development		X	
Article 7: birth registration, name, nationality, care		X	
Article 8: protection and preservation of identity		X	
Article 9: separation from parents		X	
Article 10: family reunification		X	
Article 11: abduction and non-return of children		X	
Article 12: respect for the views of the child		X	
Article 13: freedom of expression		X	
Article 14: freedom of thought, belief and religion		X	
Article 15: freedom of association		X	
Article 16: right to privacy		X	
Article 17: access to information from the media		X	
Article 18: parental responsibilities and state assistance		X	
Article 19: protection from violence, abuse and neglect		X	
Article 20: children unable to live with their family		X	
Article 21: adoption		X	
Article 22: refugee children		X	
Article 23: children with a disability		X	
Article 24: health and health services		X	
Article 25: review of treatment in care		X	
Article 26: social security		X	
Article 27: adequate standard of living		X	
Article 28: right to education		X	
Article 29: goals of education		X	
Article 30: children from minority or indigenous groups		X	

Article 31: leisure, play and culture		X	
Article 32: child labour		X	
Article 33: drug abuse		X	
Article 34: sexual exploitation		X	
Article 35: abduction, sale and trafficking		X	
Article 36: other forms of exploitation		X	
Article 37: inhumane treatment and detention		X	
Article 38: war and armed conflicts		X	
Article 39: recovery from trauma and reintegration		X	
Article 40: juvenile justice		X	
Article 41: respect for higher national standards		X	
Article 42: knowledge of rights		X	
Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure			

5.2 In what way will the policy impact the rights of Children and Young People?

No impact

5.3 What mitigations can be put in place?

What mitigations are there against any negative impacts (if applicable)?

N/A

If mitigations are in place, does this remove the negative impact?

No – negative impact remains X

Yes – negative impact reduced

Yes - negative impact removed

6: Sign Off

Any further positive or negative impacts on individuals or groups that have been considered?

Approximately 70% of the Council Workforce is female whereas the profile of the team that operate from the Town House is 100% female. Therefore, the impact of this proposal is therefore higher on this group. The [Workforce Reduction, Restructure and Redesign IIA](#) provides information around the potential impact on the workforce and the mitigations in place.

Overall summary of changes made as a result of impact assessment.

Personal provision for visitors with disabilities such as visual impairments is needed. Contact Scotland BSL can also help staff engage with sign language users where required.

Outline of how impact of policy will be monitored.

Visitor feedback will be monitored to ensure a positive citizen experience for those visiting the Town House.

If there are any remaining negative impacts after mitigation, what is the justification for why this policy should proceed.

The Council has a legal obligation to deliver a balanced budget and this proposal assists with this requirement.

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Date	21/02/24