# Stage 6 – Validation Decision Notice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of policy/proposal etc. and EIA number</th>
<th>Telephone IVR - EIA17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of assessment</td>
<td>3 July 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job titles of assessors</td>
<td>Policy Officer, Assistant Manager (customer), Customer Services Manager</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consider:

- Was discrimination or disadvantage identified?  
  - Yes
  - No

- If so, was this overcome/can this be overcome?  
  - Yes

- Is the service promoting equality?  
  - Yes

- Could the service be improved in promoting equality?  
  - No

- Were the Initial Assessment / Screening and Scoping exercises satisfactory?  
  - No

- Is there good evidence/reasoning to support the decisions made?  
  - Yes

- Are the customers' needs understood and met?  
  - Yes

- If actions have been identified, do they address the main issues raised?  
  - Yes

- Does the summary report properly reflect the key findings of the assessment?  
  - Yes

If you have and comments, please note them here:

Text number retained in addition to single contact number is beneficial.

The decision is to: Validate [ ]  Not validate [ ]

If not validated, please explain:

Signed

Designation

Name

Date 30/7/14
Equality Impact Assessment

Stage 1

STAGE 1 – Initial Assessment

| Title of policy/proposal etc. and EIA number | Telephone IVR  
| EIA17                                    |
| Date of assessment                        | 3 July 2014 |
| Job Titles of assessors                   | Policy Officer, Assistant Manager (Customer), Customer Services Manager |

The Assessment

This Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) considers the impact of reducing the main service areas contact numbers from nine to one by implementing an Integrated Voice Response (IVR) system on the protected characteristics and other groups, in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and the Equality Act 2010. Where any adverse impact is identified, mitigating actions will be considered.

The council receives hundreds of thousands of calls each year. There are five services which receive the majority of these calls; Council Tax, Planning, Housing, Benefits and the Customer Service Centre.

If a customer wishes to call one of these teams there are nine advertised telephone numbers to choose from. A significant proportion of calls intended for Council Tax, Planning, Housing and Benefits are received by the Customer Service Centre. These calls then need to be transferred to the correct service area, which creates a delay for the customer and is not the best use of the council’s resources.

Assessment Findings

The provision of an IVR and moving towards a single number was seen as having a positive impact for both customers and the council. It will mean customer calls are correctly routed and council resources are managed better.

It was noted that, although some customers may initially have issues with getting used to the new system, once the changes have been implemented there should be no negative impacts for the majority of groups. However, concern was raised around a potential issue for customers that use the Text Relay service.

Based on this, and the fact that the change affects customers calling the council to access services, it was considered appropriate to move to Stage 2 – Scoping and Screening in order that full consideration could be given for each protected characteristic.
Stage 5 – Summary Report

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Assessment Summary

This Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) considered the impact of changing from nine main telephone numbers to one by implementing an IVR system on the protected characteristics and other groups, in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and the Equality Act 2010. Where any adverse impact has been identified, mitigating actions have been considered.

This assessment did not highlight any medium to long term issues for any protected characteristic groups and found that having one main number would reduce confusion for all customers and be a positive change for all.

Whilst the range of menus customers will hear when dialling the existing range of numbers will be different, the structure of the menus have been created in line with best practice for implementing IVR technology to minimise any impact for customers. All menus have been subject to plain English review and are conversational in style.

Menus are short and include prominent key words with consistent terminology throughout in order to minimise any confusion. Menu options are based on why customers call not organisational structure. Aside from one menu which has five choices all other menus do not exceed four choices and no menu has more than three levels of options, there is also a repeat facility to hear menu choices again.

The menu prompts are being recorded in a quiet environment to enhance clarity. Customers are given two chances to select an option, however if an option is not chosen the call will be automatically transferred to the Customer Service Centre team. No caller will be disconnected if an option is not chosen.

If a customer finds themselves in a queue the system will update them at reasonable intervals and either information or music will be played whilst customers queue so that it is clear that their call remains connected.

User responses to menus are minimal, entering one digit at each stage of the menu to select service, no personal data such as telephone number, account number or post codes is requested in order to route a call.
Equality Impact Assessment

The assessment highlighted a possible differentially negative impact for some people with certain sensory impairments who use text relay technology. To mitigate this impact, a dedicated text relay number will be implemented, which will bypass the IVR system.

Recommendations

- Monitor the implementation of the system and, where necessary, make changes to further enhance customer experience
- Provide FAQ for any staff answering calls on the IVR system
- Carry out checks on terminology and structure of IVR with customers
- Contact representative groups - Access Forum and Over 55 forum to explain change
- Ensure staff answering calls within the IVR are fully trained