

Equality Impact Assessment

Title	Weymouth Ceremony Room EQIA		
Release	03/03/20	Version No.	1.2
Revision History	<i>Initial draft V1.1 Amended following comments from E&DAG on 20/02/2020 V1.2</i>		
Type of strategy, policy, project or service			
Existing	Proposed		
New or proposed			
Changing, update or revision			
Other			
Is this an internal or external Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)	Internal and external		
Officers involved in the screening	Kirsty Riglar Vivienne Robson		

This report was created by

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Directorate or Service	Registration Services - Place
Version No	V1.2

Aims

What are the aims of your strategy, policy, project or service?

Dorset Council's Registration Services is proposing to offer the Council Chamber of Weymouth Town Council's offices in Commercial Road, Weymouth as a ceremony room for marriages and civil partnership ceremonies on Fridays and Saturdays. This will provide couples from both the local area and further afield with a ceremony-only option venue in Weymouth following the cessation of the use of the accommodation previously used at 45 Dorchester Road as of 31 January 2020.

What is the background or context to the proposal?

The Registration Service Weymouth office and ceremony room (known as the Greenhill Room) was located at 45 Dorchester Road, Weymouth.

The Weymouth Library Integrated Offer involved the co-location and integration of the services offered by those services based at 45 Dorchester Road - Adult Skills and Learning (who provide a range of courses, opportunities and advice), the Community Resource Team (mental health) (who work with individuals recovering from mental ill health to assess need and facilitate attendance at a range of social vocational or educational activities) and the Registration Service (registration office, not ceremony room) - with Weymouth Library in the library building.

As a result of this, the registration office was relocated to Weymouth Library in August 2019 (albeit on a temporary basis) and this is incorporated in the draft EQiA for the Weymouth Library Integrated

Offer. Feedback received to date is that this is working well and the opening hours have now been aligned with those of the Library.

The second strand to the cessation of use of the accommodation at 45 Dorchester Road was to find a suitable alternative to be offered as a ceremony room. In agreement with Property and Assets, ceremonies were offered in the Greenhill Room until the end of 2019.

For operational reasons, the office and the ceremony room must be located together or in very close proximity. It was therefore proposed that that ceremonies could be offered in the Council Chamber of Weymouth Town Council's offices in Commercial Road, Weymouth which is in close proximity to Weymouth Library.

There is no statutory requirement for the provision of ceremony rooms. However, an elected member review of the location of registration offices and ceremony rooms conducted during 2017 resolved that the Registration Service should provide seven ceremony rooms across Dorset in specific locations, including Weymouth. Engagement with local elected members was undertaken throughout the Weymouth Library Integrated Offer project, which commenced in March 2017. Views from members reiterated the desire to continue to provide a ceremony room in Weymouth and not remove the choice of a ceremony-only option for local residents.

A thorough review of all potential locations for both the registration office and ceremony room in Weymouth was undertaken as part of the Weymouth Library Integrated Offer project but only the relocation of the office into the Library and provision of the ceremony room at the Weymouth Town Council's offices was a viable option. The Library was considered as a location for both the office and ceremony room but was not a suitable space for the latter due to space constraints. Other Council-owned buildings in Weymouth were considered but no other building was able to facilitate the service and therefore a full investigation was carried out to explore other non-DC public sector options. None could meet the requirements.

Intelligence and Communications

What data, information, evidence and research was used in this EqlA and how has it been used to inform the decision making process?

Dorset Council's research team has provided headline issues and a data profile for Weymouth. This data, along with the service user data included below, and the feedback gathered throughout a public consultation exercise and the stakeholder engagement and options appraisal phases of the Weymouth Library integrated Offer, has informed the development of the proposal.

Weymouth Headline Issues

- **Markedly different characteristics to most other towns in Dorset**
- **Deprivation** – Contains the most deprived areas in the County
 - **Multiple Deprivation** – Seven nationally significant areas of deprivation
 - **Income Deprivation** – Six nationally significant areas of deprivation
 - **Employment Deprivation** – Eight nationally significant areas of deprivation
 - **Health Deprivation** – Ten nationally significant areas of deprivation
 - **Crime Deprivation** – Four nationally significant areas of deprivation
- **Crime** – Town Centre in particular high levels of crime
- **45% of households 'low income'**

- **Social Isolation** – 8,000 residents (one in six) vulnerable to loneliness
- **Social Isolation** - 4,500 residents highly vulnerable to loneliness
- **Education and Skills** – **One in ten**¹ sixteen to eighteen year olds NEETs
- **Education and Skills** – In Littlemoor two out of three pupils achieved less than one GCSE (Grade A* to C) in last recorded year.
- **Education and Skills** – In Littlemoor 98% pupils achieved less than two GCSEs (Grade A* to C) in last recorded year.
- **Health** - one in four residents (people) are highly vulnerable to poor mental health across the area
- **Housing HMOs** – 1,000 properties classified as Houses in Multiple Occupation
- **Housing** - First time buyers wage are **nine times** lower than first time buyer household
- **Housing** – 4,600 residents on the Housing Register in Weymouth

Weymouth Data Profile

Demography

Weymouth has **52,670** residents². The age profile of Weymouth is relatively similar to Dorset as a whole. The median age is 45 in Weymouth town which is just slightly lower than the average for the county as a whole. The median age is 45³ (Dorset 47⁴).

Table 1⁵

	Weymouth Numbers	Weymouth Percentage	Dorset Numbers	Dorset Percentage
Age 0-15	8482	16%	67192	16%
Age 16-24	4902	9%	37421	9%
Age 25-34	5458	10%	36482	9%
Age 35-49	9528	18%	73572	18%
Age 50-64	11120	21%	88516	21%
Age 65-79	9552	18%	81370	19%
Age 80+	4558	9%	33716	8%

Population Projections

As well as the current population it is important to understand how changes in population over the next twenty years are likely to affect the future demand on services. The projections undertaken (Table 2) suggest that the number of children (0 to 19) currently estimated to be resident in Weymouth in 2016 is approximately 10,842 and that the number estimated to be living there in 2037 will be in the region of 10,928 a very small increase of 1%. However, the number of those aged 65 and over will increase by a much higher proportion 51% from 12,863 to 19,395. And those aged 80 and over will increase by even more 96% from 3,555 to 6,984. This will of course have a significant impact on service provision for older people across the town.

Table 2

¹ Weymouth and Portland

² ONS Mid Year Estimates 2015, DCC

³ ONS Census 2011

⁴ ONS Census 2011

⁵ Dorset County Council

	Age	2014	2016	2037	% Increase
Weymouth	0-19	10,801	10,842	10,928	1%
Weymouth	65+	12,863	13,378	19,395	51%
Weymouth	80+	3,555	3,657	6,984	96%

Economy

Economic Activity

In Weymouth 25,765 residents are economically active (employed or actively seeking employment) which represents 67% of the working age population which is the same figure for the whole of Dorset (68%) and for England and Wales as a whole (69%).

Table 3⁶

Economic Activity								
Geography	Area	All usual residents aged 16-64	All economically active	% part time	% Full time	% Self Employed	% unemployed	All economically inactive
Town	Weymouth	38,211	27,765	25.1	51.3	14.1	5.7	12,446
District	Weymouth & Portland	47,871	32,103	25.5	51.3	13.8	5.8	15,768
County	Dorset	293,441	199,943	23.1	51.0	18.4	4.0	93,498
County	Dorset, Bournemouth & Poole	537,406	371,680	21.7	52.5	16.6	4.5	165,726
National	National (England & Wales)	41,126,540	28,659,869	19.7	55.2	13.9	6.3	12,466,671

Car Ownership

Across Weymouth Car Ownership levels are lower than Dorset as a whole. One in four households (25%) have no car. In the more deprived area of the town and in and around the centre this figure rises to 45% of the population without a car (29%).

Geography	Area	All Households	% No Cars or Vans or Household	% 2 or more Cars or Vans in Household
Town	Weymouth	23,360	24.8	29.9
District	Weymouth & Portland	28,535	24.7	29.6
County	Dorset	180,213	15.5	41.0
County	Dorset, Bournemouth & Poole	326,117	18.6	37.5
National	National (England & Wales)	23,366,044	25.6	32.2

Transport/Access

⁶ ONS Census 2011

Weymouth is supported with a regular rail and bus network. The rail network connects Weymouth to the north and east with Poole and Bournemouth and on to London and to the north and west with Dorchester and on to Bristol. The bus network connects Weymouth to Portland, Dorchester and on to the rest of the County.

Carers

The percentage of the population in Weymouth who reported in the 2011 census that they provide some sort of unpaid care was 11%.

What data do you already have about your service users, or the people your proposal will have an impact on?

Registration Service User Data

An average of 97 ceremonies per annum are conducted in the Weymouth ceremony room.

Data on whether couples come from the Weymouth area, wider Dorset or out of the area is not available.

Data on protected characteristics is not collected.

Staff

Registration Service	1 full-time office registrar 9 x zero hours ceremony officers
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Data on protected characteristics is not available; however no member of staff has indicated that they would be unable to carry out their role in the proposed venue.

What engagement or consultation has taken place as part of this EqlA?

The start-up and stakeholder engagement phases completed for the wider project were detailed in the draft EqlA for the Weymouth Library Integrated Offer.

A public consultation exercise specific to the relocation of the Weymouth registration office to Weymouth Library and the ceremony room to Weymouth Town Council’s offices ran for four weeks, ending on 25 September 2019. The consultation was available both electronically and in paper form from the local library. The consultation was promoted widely through both the local press and social media. The consultation had both a consultation plan and a separate communications plan prepared beforehand.

The consultation response report states that 272 overall responses were received. 87% of responses were from people living in Weymouth. A further 11% came from people from Dorset but living outside Weymouth. The response size is reasonable for a consultation of this type. The response was slightly dominated by those aged 65 and over with 43% of the responses from this age band. This is not unusual for a consultation held in Dorset. Also, more responses (61%) were from females than from males (34%).

The vast majority of the concerns were about the relocation of the ceremony room rather than the registration office. Several people specifically mentioned they were happy with the relocation of the registration office but opposed the ceremony room.

In response to the question “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal?”:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Number	51	116	31	49	29
% of all who responded	18.5%	42.0%	11.2%	17.8%	10.5%

As the table above shows, overall there was more support for the proposal than opposition. 60.5% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed. On the other side 28.3% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. This gives a net agreement figure of plus 32.2. 11.2% neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal.

However, Q3 “Do you have any comments about the proposal or alternative suggestions?” demonstrated, despite significant support for the proposals there were many caveats on people’s support. The vast majority of those who strongly agreed saw it as a good idea, with a good prospect of making sensible savings on the disposal of the old premises. There were only a few concerns over the availability of parking and cost of the ceremony room hire.

The largest individual group (116) was those who agreed with the overall proposals. This made up 42% of the respondents. Whilst being in overall support often this was subject to significant caveats. (See table below).

- The biggest concerns were that parking provision for the use of the ceremony room. This was raised 24 times with solutions suggested including discounted parking fees for the ceremony room users, to setting aside spaces for the users.
- The second biggest concern was over the increase in fees. This was raised 15 times. Many questioned as to why the fee should go up so much and whether it was good value.
- The next significant concern was over the number of days the Ceremony room was available. This was mentioned 11 times. Whilst most weddings had previously taken place on Fridays and Saturdays people pointed out 25% of weddings were on other days which were often cheaper for the reception.
- Further concerns were over the possible lack of ambience in the ceremony room. Some felt this may be compounded by other council activities taking place at the same time.

Issues (raised by those <u>agreeing</u> with the proposals)	Mentions
Parking provision	24
Concerns over increase in cost and affordability	15

Concern over number of days the ceremony room is available	11
Concern over the lack of ambience	5
Concerns over the opening hours of the registration office	4

Issues raised (by those disagreeing/strongly disagreeing with the proposals)	Mentions
Parking provision	40
Concerns over increase in cost and affordability	14
Traffic and travel	14
Lack of ambience	7
Concern over number of days the ceremony room is available	5
Concerns over the opening hours of the registration office	2

The full consultation response report prepared in October 2019 can be made available upon request.

Engagement with the staff group affected by the changes to the relocation of the registration office and ceremony room was undertaken through team meetings. Concerns were raised in relation to the loss of parking provision (for both staff and those attending ceremonies), traffic and travel implications, increase in cost and affordability.

Whilst no objections have been raised to the proposal to use the Weymouth Town Council's Council Chamber as a ceremony room, the team have requested that orientation of the building to understand the 'flow' for ceremonies be arranged in advance of any bookings being taken.

Is further information needed to help inform this proposal?

No.

How will the outcome of consultation be fed back to those who you consulted with?

Results have been published on Dorset Council's website. The outcomes will also be included in the communications plan for the final decision to offer the availability of a ceremony room at Weymouth Town Council's offices.

Assessment

Who does the service, strategy, policy, project or change impact?

If your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option. Please cut and paste the template accordingly.

For each protected characteristic please choose from the following options:
Positive Impact
Negative Impact
Neutral Impact
Unclear

Please note in some cases more than one impact may apply – in this case please state all relevant options and explain in the ‘Please provide details’ box.

Age	Positive Impact
What age bracket does this affect?	16+
Please provide details	The provision of a ceremony room in Weymouth enables the continuation of a ceremony-only choice to be made available to all people of marriageable age.

Disability	Physical disability – Negative impact																		
Does this affect a specific disability group?	35 respondents to the public consultation specifically identified as being disabled. The most common impairment was a physical disability, followed by a long-standing illness or health condition and then sensory impairment.																		
Please provide details	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Responses from disabled people</th> <th>Strongly agree</th> <th>Agree</th> <th>Neither agree nor disagree</th> <th>Disagree</th> <th>Strongly disagree</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Number</td> <td>10</td> <td>11</td> <td>4</td> <td>6</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>% of all who responded</td> <td>28.6%</td> <td>31.4%</td> <td>11.4%</td> <td>17.1%</td> <td>11.4%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>60% of disabled respondents agreed/strongly agreed with the proposal and 28.5% disagreed/strongly disagreed. This gives a net agreement figure of plus 31.5%. The response from disabled people very closely matched the overall response.</p> <p>The main concerns from disabled people revolved around getting vehicular access and parking close to the new proposed location in Commercial Road. Several other comments mentioned specifically the availability of the lift at Commercial Road being an important factor.</p>	Responses from disabled people	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Number	10	11	4	6	4	% of all who responded	28.6%	31.4%	11.4%	17.1%	11.4%
Responses from disabled people	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree														
Number	10	11	4	6	4														
% of all who responded	28.6%	31.4%	11.4%	17.1%	11.4%														

	<p>The previous ceremony room at 45 Dorchester Road was situated on the ground floor and disabled spaces were allocated in the free parking on site. There will be no disabled parking available at the Weymouth Town Council offices. However, there is public parking available close by (e.g. Harbourside car park has disabled spaces and is 0.2miles from the offices).</p> <p>The Weymouth Town Council building is Equality Act 2010 compliant and the Council Chamber is situated on the first floor. This is accessed via both stairs and an accessible lift.</p> <p>The ceremony room can be laid out in any configuration to accommodate any specific requirements of a couple.</p> <p>There will be a requirement for an ‘usher’ to be available during ceremonies to assist with any accessibility issues and contribute towards the safety of staff, couples and their guests.</p> <p>In common with all services provided by Registration Services, signing facilities for people with hearing impairment will be made available upon request.</p>
Gender Identity	Neutral impact
Please provide details	Gender neutral facilities are available on both the ground and first floors.
Pregnancy and maternity	Positive / neutral impact
Please provide details	<p>Baby change facilities are available in the accessible public toilet in the reception area in the building.</p> <p>Prams and buggies will be able to access the first floor ceremony room via the lift.</p> <p>As stated above, there is public parking available close by (e.g. Harbourside car park has disabled spaces and is 0.2miles from the offices).</p>
Race and Ethnicity	Neutral impact
Please provide details	At this stage no potential positive or negative impacts have been identified.
Religion or belief	Neutral / positive impact
Please provide details	This proposal will allow the continuation of provision of a ceremony-only option for couples wanting a non-religious marriage or civil partnership in the Weymouth area.

Sexual orientation	Neutral / positive impact
Please provide details	This proposal will allow the continuation of provision of a ceremony-only option for both opposite sex and same sex couples wanting to marry or form a civil partnership in the Weymouth area.
Marriage and civil partnership	Positive impact
Please provide details	Couples wishing to marry or form a civil partnership in Weymouth will continue to have a ceremony-only choice in the area. If the Council were not to continue to provide a ceremony room in Weymouth, this would reduce choices available locally.
Other Socially Excluded Groups For example: Carers, rurally isolated, low income, economically disadvantaged, single parents, armed forces.	Deprivation and economically disadvantaged – Negative impact Weymouth is the most deprived town in Dorset and 18% of the working age population in the town claim benefits. The fee for a ceremony in the proposed ceremony room will be greater than that for the Greenhill Room at 45 Dorchester Road due to the inclusion of the additional hire charge of the Council Chamber. This increased fee could result in economically disadvantaged local people being unable to afford to get married in the ceremony room.
Please provide details	It should be noted that following a Policy Development Panel review of the Registration Service in 2017 is required to set its fees to recover all costs and in the public consultation the increase arising from the room hire was anticipated to be £140 per ceremony. This would result in the fees increasing from £445 (weekdays) and £485 (weekends) to £585 (Friday) and £625 (Saturday). However, recent discussions with Weymouth Town Council indicate that this would be reduced to £70 per ceremony. The projected fees would therefore be less than stated in the consultation: £515 (Friday) and £555 (Saturday).
Employees	Unclear / negative impact
Please provide details	Whilst 'employees' as a group are not considered a socially excluded group, the proposal will impact upon the team of ceremony officers based in Weymouth, as their working environment will change for conducting ceremony room ceremonies. As the team is currently based at 45 Dorchester Road, they benefit from free parking, and this will not be available at Weymouth Town Council's offices. Ceremony Officers will be paid for 2 hours for the first ceremony and 1 hour for any subsequent ceremonies on the same day in the proposed ceremony room. Ceremony Officers are paid on Grade 8 (£11.19 - £13.11 per hour). The high car parking charges in the

	<p>local area are therefore likely to have a disproportionate impact on these employees.</p> <p>The location of the proposed ceremony room on the first floor of the building will require the presence of an ‘usher’ to ensure that the Service is providing someone to specifically assist guests in being aware of access / exit points and the location of toilet and baby change facilities, etc. On a Friday it is anticipated that this will be undertaken by the Dorset Direct staff covering the DC front of house desk at the offices. On a Saturday, an additional ceremony officer will be allocated to ceremonies in this location to act in the capacity.</p> <p>Ceremony officers will also be responsible for unlocking / unalarming the building on a Saturday and will require specific training on this from Weymouth Town Council.</p>
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Action Plan			
What plans do you have in place, or are developing, that will mitigate the likely identified negative impacts?			
Objective/Outcome	Action to be taken	Lead Officer	Deadline
Provide ceremony-specific signage to access for disabled service users (internal to building)	Whilst there is sufficient Equality Act 2010 compliant signage placed within the building to direct service users to the relevant area, it would be an advantage to additionally provide specific to the ceremony room for those only in the building to attend a ceremony.	Registration Services	Mar 20
Pro-actively promote awareness of parking options in the vicinity	Provide information about location of car parks, including disabled parking spaces, in public-facing information (website, promotional material) and highlight this in booking information sent to couples.	Registration Services	Mar 20
Training for employees	Delivery of briefing for front of house staff (Dorset Direct) and WTC staff	Registration Services	Mar 20
	Delivery of training on access / alarm and orientation of building to ceremony officers	Weymouth Town Council	Mar 20
Feedback on consultation outcomes	Include specific message around fees being lower than anticipated in the public consultation exercise in communications around the availability of the new ceremony room	Registration Services / Communications	Mar 20

EqlA Sign Off

Lead Manager / Project Sponsor:	Kirsty Riglar	Date:	20/02/2020
Equality Lead:	Susan Ward-Rice	Date:	03/03/20
Equality & Diversity Action Group Chair:	p.p. Susan Ward-Rice	Date:	03/03/20