

EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Old Rectory Business Centre

Responsible Officer

Mark Reeves - GT GC

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

Project/Programme

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

Responsible Service

Mark Reeves/Growth, Environment and Transport

Responsible Head of Service

David Smith - GT GC

Responsible Director

Stephanie Holt-Castle - GT GC

Aims and Objectives

The Old Rectory, Northfleet is a KCC owned, Grade II* listed property with a 20th Century annexe, providing high quality business space and incubator services to SME's. Currently the business centre offers 27 furnished offices. In September 2015 the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee approved the procurement of management services at the Centre. Following a full OJEU procurement process a seven-year contract was awarded to "Basepoint Centres Ltd" in December 2015. The contract commenced on 1 December 2015 and had a termination date of 30 November 2022 with an option to extend for up to 48 further months. An extension by the Director for Growth and Communities was granted in October 2022 for a further one year which will end on 30 November 2023. As of April 2023 the county council is seeking cabinet decision to continue management services at the centre.

KCC Growth and Communities is responsible for both the contract management and approving maintenance/improvement works at the centre, as well the financial monitoring of the Old Rectory which includes invoicing for the reimbursement of profit. KCC Property maintains responsibility for property level compliance, including asbestos management, water hygiene, electrical certificates, fire risk assessment, gas safety and lift policies. The contracted provider (Basepoint) is responsible for range of services including:

- The licensee agreements
- Procuring and managing the core property management services, providing centre staff, and delivery of all services to the building and its occupiers
- Providing a range of support and development measures for the new businesses
- Managing the reception area providing welcome services, visitor management, information and ensure

legislative requirements such as those for health and safety, DDA and equalities issues are properly addressed

As part of the procurement process in 2015, Basepoint was required to complete a diversity questionnaire as part of the tender process, where the potential supplier is assessed on equalities issues. In addition, Basepoint by contract is required to provide services consistent with the Kent County Council's Equality and Diversity Statement.

The businesses centre is marketed using a variety of media through relevant support organisations to ensure information about the centre and the service it provides reaches the widest variety of people. Access to physical space at the centre is offered on "first come, first served" basis. When the centre is 100% occupied, the business centre operates a waiting list, and space is offered to the business placed first on the list. The decision to issue a licence to a business is based on financial and business information submitted by the applicant to the business centre. The centre does not discriminate against any Protected Group, and is actively providing a safe and secure, managed environment to all Licensees.

The centre maintains a strict policy for Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviour (including discrimination or harassment when related to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010). This policy forms part of the licensee handbook and all licensees are required to comply with the Act.

The aims and objectives of this EQIA are:

- To determine if people experience direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of their Protected Characteristics because of The Old Rectory Project
- To identify any impacts (negative and positive) the service/facility may have on Protected Groups
- To identify actions to address any potential negative impacts and to advance and to foster good relationships between people with and without protected characteristics

Summary of equality impact - This Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on The Old Rectory Business Centre to consider any impact that the project/service may have on Protected Groups. It is deemed that The Old Rectory has low or no negative impact. However, some internal actions could be taken, such as collecting and monitoring equalities data from Licensees to ensure that there is no significant impact on any Protected Group and to inform The Old Rectory's marketing strategy.

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

Yes

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

Yes

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Yes

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

Basepoint Centres PLC

Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?

No

Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?

Yes

Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?

Service Users/clients

Service users/clients

Staff

Staff/Volunteers

Residents/Communities/Citizens

No

Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?

Yes

Details of Positive Impacts

The Old Rectory Business Centre has a positive impact on the local community, increasing access to affordable office space and good quality business support for small and new businesses in the Gravesham area. The centre provides support for businesses to grow and expand, creating opportunities for job creation in the local area. The service/facility offers equal opportunities for all licensees.

The property is compliant with the Equalities ACT 2010 and provides a safe and secure environment for all licensees.

The centre is marketed using a variety of media and relevant support organisations to ensure information about the centre and the service it provides reaches the widest variety of people. Basepoint/Old Rectory involves a wide range of partners in providing a business service that benefits all. The Centre also offers “virtual office” facilities, allowing licensees (particularly those with disabilities) to work from home (or at an alternative work space) and benefit from the wide range of business services that the Old Rectory provides without having to travel/and or visit the centre.

Age - The service/facility offers equal opportunities for all. For older people, according to the ONS, nationwide there has been an increase in first-time entrepreneurs over the age of 50, and the availability of flexible business units/business services, such as is provided by The Old Rectory, is beneficial to this group.

Disability - The service/facility offers equal opportunities for all. The property is DDA compliant, and most of the centre is accessible to wheelchair users. Units are flexible spaces and can be adapted to benefit the user. Licensees provide their own furniture/equipment including any specialised ICT equipment and adapted furniture if required. The Centre offers “virtual office” facilities, allowing licensees (including those with disabilities) to work from home (or an alternative work space) and benefit from the wide range of business services that the Old Rectory provides (including a business address and telephone number, mailbox packages, telephone answering service, access to meeting rooms and drop in lounges, etc).

Gender - The service/facility offers equal opportunities for all. Basepoint organises events that are free and open to all kinds of business, offering them the opportunity to meet new people, to build on existing business relationships and to generate new leads. Professional Women in Business Networking is one such event that provides an effective platform for both women in business and professions within Gravesham and wider Kent, to meet, share ideas and experiences and to learn, as well as the opportunity to do business together.

Race - The service/facility offers equal opportunities for all. In terms of providing business support to people from all backgrounds and communities the centre maintains contacts with translation services and race business support organisations. Basepoint also advises businesses to make checks to ensure that a business name does not have any unfortunate meanings in foreign languages.

Carer’s Responsibilities and Pregnancy and Maternity - The service/facility offers equal opportunities for all. Offering equal opportunities for all. The Centre also offers “virtual office” facilities, allowing licensees (which may include people with carer’s responsibilities) to work from home and benefit from the wide range of business services that the Old Rectory provides (including a business address and telephone

number, mailbox packages, telephone answering service, access to meeting rooms and drop in lounges, etc).

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

Are there negative impacts for age?

Yes

Details of negative impacts for Age

For young people, to start a business legally in the UK you must be at least 16 years of age (and 18 years of age to sign some legal documents).

Mitigating Actions for Age

None

Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age

Mark Reeves

20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability

Are there negative impacts for Disability?

Yes

Details of Negative Impacts for Disability

The Old Rectory, Northfleet is a Grade II* listed property with a 20th Century annex. The building is DDA compliant, with access to all floors via a fully maintained lift, and most of the building is accessible to wheelchair users. Some sections of the Grade II* listed section of the centre are less accessible to wheelchair users and to those with a physical disability which prevents them from using stairs.

Mitigating actions for Disability

KCC and Basepoint have made reasonable adjustments to this section of the property (without breaching the law protecting listed buildings) to minimise any negative impacts for disabled customers or employees.

Responsible Officer for Disability

Mark Reeves

21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex

Are there negative impacts for Sex

No

Details of negative impacts for Sex

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Sex

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for Sex

Not Applicable

22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

Yes

Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

No known negative impact. However, staff training could include awareness-raising regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Provider to consider offering staff training to raise awareness of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Mark Reeves

23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race

Are there negative impacts for Race
Yes
Negative impacts for Race
Northfleet has a significant Asian population - approximately 15% (over 10% for Gravesham). In Northfleet approximately 7% of the language spoken is Asian.
At this stage, it is not known if there are any licensees from this Protected group (and from the local Asian population).
There is no known negative impact relating to this group. However, the Centre is designed for use by all the community - signage at the centre is solely in English, as is the text on the website. This may have a low adverse effect on certain race groups.
Mitigating actions for Race
A review of equality data should tell us if a more targeted approach to promoting the centre/services to particular race groups is required, if it is shown that a particular group is underrepresented at the centre.
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Mark Reeves
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
No
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Not Applicable
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No

Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
No
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable