Part 1: Equalities in the budgeting process

- How were equalities issues taken into consideration in allocating budgets in 2012-13? (Please describe the process undertaken)
- Was the approach taken for the 2012-13 budget any different from that taken in 2011-12? (If YES, please describe what changed in your approach)
- Can you provide any examples of how equalities considerations influenced agreed budgets? (Please provide up to THREE examples)

Response

Due regard was taken during the process, where appropriate, to eliminate prohibited conduct, minimise disadvantage and promote inclusion.

The Council as a whole does not adopt a zero-based budget approach so (except for specific time-bound projects) what we receive one year is a fair indication of what we will get next year. Service accountants apply an inflationary uplift for following years and any adjustments for anticipated workload changes and as we have an agreed five year budget, we have a fairly good idea of the resources available for future years. Although there is growth to maintain increased areas such as additional lengths of road, additional bin collection points due to new housing developments, or increased services to a growing elderly population, there is an expectation that this is managed within existing resources so there are not any base budget increases to reflect this.

The situation changed for 2011/12 because the Council was required to make significant savings. This affected most of our services and was managed through a range of efficiencies, reductions and income generation. Most budgets, particularly those for front facing services, were subjected to equality impact screening and impact assessments carried out as appropriate. This process involved senior officers working with heads of service/establishments and other relevant officers to evaluate the impact of each budget change on service users. For example, an equality impact assessment was carried out on the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2011-2014, and all budget change proposals in Education, Learning and Leisure Service were subjected to equality impact screening/assessment.

Most of our budget changes took place in 2011/12 but there are some in the current and future years where we will have to consider impact assessments prior to implementing the changes.

The budget process in 2012/13 was similar to that undertaken in 2011/12.

Specific examples:

a) Aberdeenshire Community Transport Initiative (ACTI) – the proposal was to reduce the budget by 10% for 2012/13. Screening and a partial equality impact assessment were carried out at that time (early 2011) and the matter was discussed with the seven grant-funded community transport groups. The groups were supported and advice offered to help them work out the best
ways of coping with the reductions in a way that minimised impact on users. Although the initiative does not specifically target the equalities strands, the aim is to tackle cross-cutting issues such as rural isolation which tends to have a disproportionate effect on groups such as the elderly and disabled.

b) Additional funding for Older People’s Home Care - In 2012, Housing & Social Work Service responded to the Administration’s 100 day pledge to allocate additional funding to support council-wide priorities. The needs of older people as a specific group were identified as one of the priorities. Funding was obtained to increase the capacity of the home care service, which is one of the mainstays of our strategy to increase the numbers of older people and people with disabilities that are supported to live at home for as long as they wish. Additional funding for the service will ensure that training for carers with regard to disability and age-related issues can be provided more quickly, thus providing assurance regarding equalities.

New money was also allocated to introduce full time pre-school education and childcare provision across Aberdeenshire to help give vulnerable children the best possible start to life. This money will be used to improve a range of early years’ services across Aberdeenshire by expanding provision to ensure that the most vulnerable children and families receive targeted early intervention support.

c) Waste disposal – a reduction of £500K is to be made from the waste disposal budget for 2012/13. This will be achieved through better promotion of recycling, a revised contract for disposal and reduced levels of Landfill Tax. The disposal side of refuse relates to the activities taking place once the waste reaches the depot so this is not a public-facing service and the proposed reductions in budget will not have equality implications.

**Part 2: Equalities in mainstream services**

* For your three most significant mainstream services (in terms of cost), please provide details of—
  a) The total budget for this service in 2011-12 and 2012-13
  b) The impact (positive or negative) that this service has on equality groups
  c) The impact (if any) that any budget changes have had on equality groups

**Response**

In this response, “mainstream services” are defined as generic services not targeted specifically at any protected characteristic (e.g. age, gender, disability etc.) but accessible by all, for example, street lighting, roads maintenance, etc. We have also categorised primary and secondary education and many of the frontline services provided by the Social Work Service as services for equalities groups because they are either targeted at particular age groups (as in primary education and older people day care) or at a particular disadvantaged group (as in physical disabilities).
In view of the above definitions, the three most significant mainstream services in terms of cost in Aberdeenshire Council’s budget for 2011/12 and 2012/13 are:
- Road Maintenance expenditure
- Waste disposal, and
- Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

Further details are provided Table1 below.
Please note that Refuse Collection is used instead of Waste Disposal because collection is a public-facing service whereas disposal is what happens when the waste gets to the depot.

Table1: Equalities in mainstream services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of mainstream service</th>
<th>Impacts (positive &amp; negative) the service has on equality groups</th>
<th>2011/2012 £(000) net</th>
<th>2012/2013 £(000) net</th>
<th>Budget change</th>
<th>Impacts of budget change, if any, on equality groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roads Maintenance Fund</td>
<td>This includes responsive, cyclical and planned maintenance. The main equality strand affected is disability because of access issues</td>
<td>17,132</td>
<td>16,444</td>
<td>Reduction in some budget lines</td>
<td>Neutral impact because main changes relate to expenditure on verge maintenance and private roads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and Communications Technology (ICT)</td>
<td>Provision of the Infrastructure and support that allow the council to deliver services to the groups that would be disadvantaged in some way: Responding to Service requirements and identified needs. Helping to make services available on-line for example to meet specific Web Accessibility Standards.</td>
<td>9,929</td>
<td>9,825</td>
<td>Small reduction</td>
<td>The reduction has not affected the delivery of service in terms of equalities. In real terms the ICT budget has been well protected in terms of supporting the Council’s priority and desire to transform services. No savings measures taken that would have had a direct effect on the service currently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping internal Services</td>
<td>Find technology and solutions for employees who need support. Provision of hardware support for aspects which is an Education service to help children with various difficulties and challenges. Technology and support to Library Service for public access. General support to front end services to deliver the Customer Service and experience for example, in the classroom, the web site and Customer Contact Centre.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provided. Savings were all taken from efficiency gains and renegotiation of contracts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refuse Collection</td>
<td>Mostly neutral but some residents have problems in putting their bin out to the agreed collection point (due to age and disability) so we arrange an assisted bin collection.</td>
<td>4,027</td>
<td>4,094. Normal inflationary uplift. Neutral.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 3: Service provision for equalities groups

For up to THREE services with a specific focus or provision for equalities groups, please provide details of—

a) The total budget for this service in 2011-12 and 2012-13

b) The impact that this service has on equality groups

c) The impact (if any) that any budget changes have had on equality groups

Response

Services for equalities groups are services targeting individuals or groups who share one or more protected characteristics eg age, gender, race, sexual orientation, etc. Examples of such services would be Muslim women’s swimming sessions, older people’s day care, etc.

For the purpose of this response, Nursery, Primary and Secondary Education, and many services provided by our Social Work Service are considered as services for equalities groups, and the examples chosen for further details for Aberdeenshire are:

- Special Education (1)
- Sensory Support Services (or 4 below)
- Employment support services for adults with disabilities
- Strategic planning for children and young people accessing through-care and aftercare support

Table 2: Service provision for equalities groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of targeted service</th>
<th>Impacts (positive &amp; negative) the service has on equality groups</th>
<th>2011/2012 £'000</th>
<th>2012/2013 £'000</th>
<th>Budget change</th>
<th>Impact of budget change, if any, on equality groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Special Education</td>
<td>Addresses barriers to participation</td>
<td>32,058</td>
<td>32,131</td>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>Neutral impact, service levels maintained or further developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promotes equality and implements inclusive practices.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensures positive impact on ability to address individual needs in terms of attainment and achievement.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Employment support services for adults with disabilities</td>
<td>Service is provided for adults with disabilities who are seeking employment.</td>
<td>622 600</td>
<td>Reduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Service has been re-provisioned to ensure equality of access to employment support across Aberdeenshire for all disabilities. Additional training to ensure that staff is multi-skilled and re-design of job roles has mitigated the negative impact of overall reduction in posts.

Increased capacity to engage directly with employers will promote equality of opportunity and promote positive attitudes towards disabled people. Practical advice for employers increases the likelihood that they will adapt jobs and working practices so that disabled people may be treated more favourably than other persons.

Service is now delivered as an integral part of social work fieldwork which removes previous connection with day services and therefore encourages greater expectations that people with disabilities will participate fully in public
| 3. Strategic planning for children and young people accessing through-care and aftercare support | Service is provided for young people between the ages of 16 to 21 years old who have previously been looked after by the council. The service aims to promote equality of opportunity for young people who meet the identified criteria. | Reduction | The service has been re-designed following an in depth options appraisal. Consultation with service users identified that transitions between care and independent living are very difficult, and that the people with whom they have formed significant relationships are the most helpful in assisting them to manage these and participate fully in public life. The service now offers different levels of support that are more closely aligned to the needs of the young person. Aberdeenshire is one of the few Scottish Local Authorities who provide a full service to young people who have been looked after at home; many of these young people remain with their families and do not require intervention. While this group of young people is still eligible for a service, it is provided on a needs basis rather than a universal service, thereby helping to reduce stigma. |
Part 4: Mainstreaming equalities

- What specialist services or programmes have been, or are being altered, in the interests of mainstreaming?
- What monitoring is in place to ensure that the relevant equality groups continue to access an appropriate service?

Response
This section highlights what the Council is doing to ensure that equalities considerations are mainstreamed into everyday thinking and activities across the organisation. It also highlights specific examples of specialist services or programmes which are being altered in the interest of mainstreaming and monitoring arrangements or actions taken to ensure that equality groups continue to access appropriate services.

Special approaches to ensure mainstreaming

Corporate agenda
The Equality Act 2010 and the Specific Duties (Scotland) 2012 have provided us with an opportunity to take a refreshed approach to how we ensure equality sits at the heart of everything we do. An extensive internal and external mapping exercise is being undertaken to provide an accurate evidence database to ensure that the equality outcomes are linked to real needs.

Senior Management and Member support has been gained and Committee Reports will reflect equality considerations. A Project Officer has been appointed to liaise with Services providing direction and engagement opportunity in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

A comprehensive revision of our website is being undertaken to allow staff and residents to have the information they need as easily and simply as possible, e-learning is being developed for all staff and this learning will be supported by members of our Corporate Equality Group acting as champions in each of their respective services.

Revisions to our equality impact assessment (EIA) process are being undertaken, again to ensure fitness for purpose and ease of use. All of these actions form part of a comprehensive programme and are managed under project management principles with regular feedback and appraisal from the Corporate Equality Group with links back to our Strategic Management Team.

Close working with our strategic equality partner, Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC), assists the Council in ensuring all relevant groups are involved in decision making, direction and outcome setting. This is monitored on a quarterly basis and representatives from GREC sit on our Corporate Equalities group. This group provides a challenge role in relation to our approaches and gives value by maintaining close links with the other Grampian Public Sector bodies.
Community engagement:
Community engagement events were organised last year to bring information about budget reductions direct to communities across Aberdeenshire. This was supported by various news releases and updates on the budget process. Feedback from the events was positive and proposals are being considered to repeat the engagement events this year.

Elections:
As part of the Elections Communications Strategy, a pilot transport project for elderly and disabled voters in Portlethen was arranged. This was to make it easier for people with mobility difficulties in the area to be able to cast their votes. There was also a strand of promotion for postal voting, again taking account of those who may not be able to physically attend a polling place.

Internal communications
Many internal projects (such as budget reductions; review of terms and conditions) take account of communications issues and are equality impact assessed. The Corporate Communications team is always supportive and keen to consider how we can reach all staff groups and use Arcadia and Arcadia Lite (Intranet) as an additional way of providing greater access to information.

Work is underway to enhance and equality proof the Council's employee survey and to ensure that there is a variety of ways to fill it in.

Physical disability access
This has been mainstreamed into the Council's Infrastructure Services at the design stage for new-build and refurbishments with staff trained in the requirements of Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and associated codes of practice and in performing access audits. For roads related issues, we have our own internal quality procedure for carrying out access audits and we use the Department of Transport's Inclusive Mobility book as the design standard. All aspects of the service have a focus on mainstreaming equalities. All policies are audited against the criteria to give due regard to equalities generally and to disability in particular.

Education, Learning and Leisure
A formal approach to mainstreaming equalities is included in the Education, Learning & Leisure (EL&L) Service’s inclusion strategy, currently under development. All policy changes are subject to equality impact assessment. All policy papers to the EL&L Committee are subject to equality impact consideration and this is monitored as part of the committee paper circulation process.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of specialist service</th>
<th>Original target group(s) / Criteria</th>
<th>Present target group(s) / Criteria</th>
<th>Monitoring arrangements to ensure that equality group(s) continue to access the services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Day services for older people</td>
<td>Frail older people</td>
<td>Frail older people and older people with learning disabilities</td>
<td>Access to day services is via assessment and person-centred planning. Frail older people and older people with learning disabilities are referred to the service and their specific needs and desired outcomes are agreed and recorded in a care plan. Unmet need and waiting times for services is recorded on Carefirst to ensure that widening access to the service does not reduce availability for original target group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Garden maintenance scheme</td>
<td>Those in receipt of certain benefits</td>
<td>Set criteria (receipt of specific disability benefit/s) will help in assessing a tenant’s eligibility at the outset to qualify for the service, without having to make a referral to NHS Grampian to ascertain if the tenant qualifies on other grounds for assistance with their garden.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Employee led Disability Forum</td>
<td>Disabled employees</td>
<td>We are now in the process of consulting with employees to determine what kind of platform they want and if there should be different platforms for each of the protected characteristics or if they want one platform covering all characteristics.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Colin Mackenzie  
Chief Executive  
Aberdeenshire Council  
17 August 2012