How were equalities issues taken into consideration in allocating budgets in 2012-13? (Please describe the process undertaken).

A staged process was followed. Initially Comhairle members individually identified service areas that on a priority basis could be subject to reductions.

A summarised version of the choices Members considered formed the basis of the process for the public consultation meetings which were conducted in addition to the consultation with Community Planning Partners and Trade Unions.

Each service area considered whether there were any equality impacts if there was to be a change in service provision and an Initial EQIA was completed.

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).

Yes, the process was more refined and there were more opportunities for the public to be involved in the process and make their views known.

There were two sets of public consultation meetings, 6 meetings took place in November 2011 at various locations across the authority area. A further 10 meetings took place in January 2012 at various locations across the authority area.

A survey was also distributed at the consultation meetings for the public to complete to obtain their views. The survey was also accessible on the Comhairle website as a further opportunity to gain feedback on the proposals set out.

Can you provide any examples of how equalities considerations influenced agreed budgets? (please provide up to 3 examples).

Mainland Placements:
As a small local authority the Comhairle relies on the availability of Mainland Placements to provide specialist services in addition to holiday/respite care. The nature of mainland placements in a small authority is unpredictable and the budget for the service has increased consistently over the last three years. Following the integration between Education and Children’s Services the Comhairle was better equipped to use this joint working to address challenges and review service delivery. Following the development of a recruitment strategy for foster carers, which commenced in 2010 and is being developed further, the Comhairle now has an enhanced local provision which is better equipped to accommodate more children with specialist learning, emotional and behavioural needs. Whilst it is acknowledged that there will always be a need for ‘mainland placements’ there is now evidence that some vulnerable young people have been accommodated locally within the authority area.
(which is less disruptive for the young person) rather than have to be sent to a mainland placement.

The ongoing development of this service will benefit the young people involved who will still receive the specialist care and education to meet their needs within the authority area (and maintain access to their family and friends), whilst it also develops locals skills within the authority and has a positive impact on the local economy. Whilst there are positive impacts for the person this local provision demonstrates a more economic, efficient and effective service and will significantly reduce the Comhairle’s operational budget.

Severe and Complex Provision:
Following an extensive review of the Education provision across the authority area and number of school closures were agreed as part of the rationalisation process. For the 2012/13 session there will be 5 fewer primary schools in the authority area, this allowed existing employees to be transferred from the Additional Support Needs service to the Severe and Complex service provision. This centralised operation enabled staffing costs to be reduced without reducing the level of service delivered. Further enhancements of the service have been agreed which involve adapting a former Primary School as a Learning Centre which provided the children with better facilities within a secure setting. This centralised service will have the flexibility and the capacity to respond to the changing needs and circumstances of the service users. These changes, while creating savings in staff resources (which were allocated in multiple locations) there will be positive, long term impact on young people, particularly those with a disability as the new service enables individual needs to be identified and resources matched as appropriate rather than trying to categorise children by their disability and match them to separate and specific resources in different locations.

For the three most significant mainstream services (in terms of cost), please provide details of –

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education – Schools and Resources</td>
<td>£38,512,437</td>
<td>£39,587,797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Care</td>
<td>£19,882,010</td>
<td>£19,327,934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads</td>
<td>£7,612,285</td>
<td>£7,429,264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The impact (positive or negative) that this service has had on equality groups
All of the service areas noted above have been able to maintain service delivery with no evidence of negative impacts on equality groups identified or reported to date. The service areas of Education and Community care deliver services which cover a number of protected characteristics and although changes have been made to service delivery in some areas they have been managed in such a way to improve the long term delivery of the service and provide positive impacts for all service users.
The impact (if any) that budget changes have had on equality groups
To date, the Comhairle has not identified any negative impacts in relation to equality groups concerned with these service areas as a result of any budget changes.

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

The total budget for this service in 2011-12 and 2012-13
The impact that this service has on equality groups
The impact (if any) that any budget changes have had on equality groups

**Homeless Services**

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

2011/12: £371,581  
2012/13: £463,720

The annual budget for the service was increased by just over £90,000 between 11/12 and 12/13, primarily to address the increased demand for temporary accommodation. As there is a serious shortage of ‘move-on’, permanent accommodation (for example social rented accommodation), clients have to remain in temporary accommodation for longer periods of time. The additional £90k was found through reprioritising other Housing Service budgets.

b) The impact that this service has on equality groups

The Homeless Service has very few applications from Ethnic Minority Groups. Out of 175 Homeless presentations made to the Comhairle in 11/12, 0% was recorded as Black, Black Scottish or Black British, 0% was recorded as Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British, and 0.5% was recorded as mixed.

However, applications from other Equalities Groups makes up around 20% of all applications received. During 11/12 the Comhairle dealt with homeless clients requiring support for;

- Mental Health issues: 11
- Learning Disabilities: 4
- Physical Disabilities: 4
- Drug/Alcohol issues: 17

The Homeless Service works in partnership with other agencies (for example Social Services, Health Board etc) to provide specialist support to these clients. The Homeless Services Team is also able to provide low level support in-house through two Homeless Support Officers.
c) The impact (if any) that any budget changes have had on equality groups

The increase in the budget has hopefully has a positive impact on Equalities Groups, although overall pressure on the Service through the lack of housing options available for clients, makes it challenging for the Comhairle to discharge its Statutory Homeless Duties.

What specialist service or programmes have been, or are being altered, in the interests of mainstreaming?

As part of the budget setting process all service areas gave consideration as to what changes could be made to service delivery which would have a minimal impact on service users and where possible would provide longer terms benefits for service users. Example of services which have been altered or mainstreamed to create efficiencies whilst minimising any impact on services users are evident within the Education and Children’s Services Department. The decision was taken to remove the ‘Study Support’ budget of £25k. The Dept worked with presenting centres to develop and encourage the use of private study as a focused period for study where support was available and also to remove ‘study leave’ so that pupils are expected to come into school for revision/study support. No negative impacts were identified for young people and there is evidence that this will have a positive impact on pupil attainment. One of the authority schools which had already implemented this approach have seem improved examination results year by year.

The Dept also made the decision to redesign the Parenting Support service (formerly Surestart) and created the capacity to bring in-house the formerly out-sourced aspects of the service. This enabled the Comhairle to retain the service and support for parents and young people at a reduced cost. The savings identified through mainstreaming the service were estimated at £30k with no impact identified on any equality group.

What monitoring is in place to ensure that the relevant equality groups continue to access an appropriate service?

On going evaluation and monitoring of services will be conducted by the responsible officers for the service area and feedback from service users. The Comhairle has now adopted a culture of Performance Monitoring and regular reports are submitted to the Council for consideration.

Malcolm Burr
Chief Executive
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
31 July 2012