EQUALITIES IN BUDGET PROCESSES RESPONSE

Background

Dumfries and Galloway Council is committed to equality impact assessing positive and negative impacts on existing policies and procedures, and all relevant new policies and procedures presented to committee. From 2009 all proposed budget savings have also been equality impact assessed by departments prior to submission to elected members on an annual basis. The IA includes all the protected characteristics, fulfilling the council’s commitment to equality impact assess across all equality strands. In addition the overall budget has also been impact assessed.

Training is provided to staff in respect of our template and guidance toolkit, introduced for equality, health environment and climate impact assessing.

Our equality impact assessment processes have evolved over a number of years and are becoming embedded into service planning and budget decision-making.

Annexe Questions

Equalities in the budgeting process

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

A procedure for equality impact assessing all budget savings proposals was established in 2009. There has been a long established guidance document, toolkit and half day training course on the IA process for policies and this has been used for the budget process.

Each council department is responsible for ensuring that a pro forma has been completed for each budget saving being proposed, either a short screening equality impact assessment (EIA), where the proposed cut is not relevant to people (e.g. reducing the number of floral hanging baskets), or a full EIA where it does have, or can have, an impact on people (e.g. increasing the charge for the provision of Blue Badges). These IAs include gathering evidence and participation from stakeholders and equality groups and representatives.

A series of roadshows with the general public on the proposed budget was also carried out and the public priorities from this fed into the decision making process.

This approach was applied for the allocation of budgets in 2012-13.

(ii) 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)

No

(iii) Can you provide any examples of how equalities considerations influenced agreed budgets? (Please provide up to THREE examples)

Equalities’ aspects are highlighted through the EIA process which has enabled council officers and elected members to consider mitigating any negative effects of savings proposed on any one group of particular protected characteristics.
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>139,646</td>
<td>148,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work &amp; Health</td>
<td>80,270</td>
<td>79,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning &amp; Environment</td>
<td>38,137</td>
<td>40,210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b)  The impact (positive or negative) that this service has on equality groups

The developments/improvements achieved by departments in respect of equalities are not reported as such but are within the core work and values of each department.

We are not aware of any negative impacts in respect of service delivery on equality groups being reported.

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

We are not aware of any impact on equality groups being raised as a result of the council’s budget savings.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional Support Needs</td>
<td>£m</td>
<td>£m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b)  The impact that this service has on equality groups

This service specifically works to support children and their families who face barriers to learning and success. This includes physical and learning disabilities, and also children with social and emotional challenges. These resources are also used for any child who needs support for example Looked After Children, Young Carers, Children Educated at Home, Chronically Ill children.

The above services work with schools to assess/identify the needs of learners and provide support. GIRFEC processes apply (Integrated Assessment Child’s Plan).

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

Although a recent review helped bring about efficiencies, direct services to children were protected.
Mainstreaming equalities

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

We are perhaps at the first stage in mainstreaming and guarding against mainstreaming being used as an excuse for not doing anything. Using the EIA process within budget setting is helping to establish it within services who are required to consider equalities in all aspects of their work.

Council officers in general are aware of their responsibilities under the general equality duty in respect of disability, race and gender, but further training/ awareness briefings will be delivered over 2012/13 to ensure that the additional protected characteristics are considered in our day to day service delivery. This is with a view to eliminating unlawful/discriminatory treatment and promoting equalities between people of differing protected characteristics.

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

We have developed a standardised monitoring form which is being rolled out across Community Planning Partners in respect of service users. Work is underway to collect all PC info from employees. This will help to identify where gaps exist in order to extend the monitoring we undertake.

Chief Executive
Dumfries and Galloway Council
5 October 2012