Equalities in Budget Processes

East Ayrshire Council welcomes the opportunity to assist the Equal Opportunities Committee in gaining a better understanding of the role of equalities in the budget setting process across public sector organisations.

The Community Plan is the sovereign planning document for East Ayrshire, providing the overarching strategic policy framework for the delivery of services by all Partner agencies. The Plan acts as East Ayrshire Council’s Corporate Plan and the Council takes its responsibilities under the equality and diversity agenda seriously.

We recognise that there are substantial differences between communities, groups and individuals and the opportunities they enjoy in respect of health, employment, education, learning, safety and quality of their local environment. Our Best Value 2 Audit recognised that we have good awareness of equalities issues and have made progress in developing processes and structures to promote equality and tackle inequality.

EQUALITIES IN THE BUDGETING PROCESS

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

Our budget processes are designed to recognise the collective impacts on communities and individuals and equality impact and risk assessments are carried out routinely on all budget decisions. In setting the 2012/13 Revenue Budget 52 management actions totalling approximately £5.5 million were proposed. All actions were subject to an equality impact screening assessment and no negative impacts were reported.

The Committee may be interested to know about our proposals for identifying savings in future years. Elected Members approved the Council’s Transformation Strategy 2012-2017 on 28 June 2012. The Strategy sets out the Councils three strategic priorities, which are as follows:

- raise educational attainment and equip our young people for the world of work;
- support older people live independently in the community; and
- promote town centre living.

Milestones will be developed against each of these and progress will be reported to our Governance and Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis.

The Strategic Imperatives are a set of criteria which define the principles of our Transformation approach; they will govern our actions and proposals for budget savings will be prepared, and assessed, against these imperatives. Included within the ten imperatives are Equality and Outcomes Based requirements; In relation to equality, the strategy states that proposed changes should take account of current and forecast equality gaps and must ensure that we mitigate the negative impact on equality groups.
In addition, our approach sets out to ensure that our services, and proposals for change, are outcomes based to ensure resources are directed towards key outcomes contained within the Community Plan and our Single Outcome Agreement.

The Community Plan Guiding Principles, reviewed and amended as part of our four yearly review in 2010/11, underpin all of our activity and ensure that we work in a way which:

- promotes equality of opportunity, social justice and social inclusion;
- ensures effective community engagement in the planning and development of local services;
- ensures quality and accessibility;
- builds sustainability into what we do;
- delivers continuous improvement and best value while improving efficiency and productivity; and
- promotes early intervention in the delivery of services.

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)

In terms of how equalities issues were taken into consideration, the approach taken in 2012/13 was no different from that taken in 2011/12. However, due to the nature of the proposals put forward in 2011/12, many more detailed impact assessments were required to be carried out following the initial screening stage. All impact assessments were made available on the Council’s website.

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

As noted above, equality impact assessments are conducted in respect of all budget decisions. In 2012/13, following an initial screening of all proposals it was reported that the efficiency actions proposed would not have any impact in terms of equalities.

The same process was undertaken in 2011/12, with detailed assessments carried out in respect of a number of proposals; at that time it was reported that all savings proposals considered by Cabinet had been subject to Equality Impact Assessment in accordance with the Council’s set arrangements. No proposals were identified as being discriminatory in terms of the relevant legislative provisions.

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.

a) Three of the most significant mainstream services, and the total budget for 2011-12 and 2012-13, are shown in the table below:
b) Detailed below is the positive impact that each of these services has on equality groups.

Primary and Secondary Education

Primary and Secondary Education aims to have a positive impact on all young people. One of the Council’s strategic priorities is to raise educational attainment and equip our young people for the world of work. The following key actions have been identified to support this priority:

- Raise educational and skills attainment;
- Foster and grow the partnership between local schools and businesses to ensure our young people are “work ready”;
- Support 100 young people into apprenticeships with the Council and pioneer a new Apprenticeship scheme to support local businesses.

In East Ayrshire, we have made significant progress over the last five years in reducing the number of young people who do not have a positive destination, from 22 per cent in 2006 to 11 per cent in 2011.

Community Care

East Ayrshire’s population is ageing significantly; it is estimated that the proportion of those of pensionable age will increase to around 27% of the population by 2033, compared to 17% in 2008. This will increase the pressure on Council and partner budgets, particularly in relation to health and social care.

In East Ayrshire we have for a number of years recognised the challenges of demographic change and have implemented a strategic direction to develop a health and social care infrastructure to support the growing number of older people in our communities and ensure positive outcomes for all.

Another of the Council’s Strategic Priorities is to support older people live independently in the community. This will be supported by the following key actions:

- Encourage older people to participate in community life;
- Promote intergenerational work;
- Support more older people live independently in their own homes and ensure that they are well cared for within the community.

We are committed to supporting people to live for as long and as independently as possible in their own homes in the community. This has meant that the focus of service delivery has been on shifting the balance of care away from institutional settings to delivering services to people in their own homes. This shift has been achieved through partnership working and the delivery of integrated services.
c) As outlined earlier in the response, equality impact assessments are conducted in respect of all budget decisions. All actions in the 2011/12 and 2012/13 revenue budgets were subject to an equality impact screening assessment and no impacts were reported.

**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.

In 2010, East Ayrshire Community Planning Partners produced a booklet entitled ‘Equalities – The Work That We Do’. The booklet set out a range of case studies highlighting a number of services and initiatives which could be demonstrated to show some or all of the following characteristics: elimination of discrimination and harassment, equality of opportunity, promotion of good relations and positive attitudes and encouragement of participation.

a) In relation to the services identified, it is not possible to identify a total budget which applies to each service area; this is because the examples provided are only part of the overall services provided in the service areas identified. In addition, activities contributing to these services will not be limited to one area of the Council; work will overlap and be taken forward by officers from different areas of the Council.

b) Provided below are three examples of the positive impact that services can have on equality groups.

**Domestic Abuse (Social Work – Children and Families)**

East Ayrshire Violence Against Women Partnership (EAVAWP) was formed in 2010 to bring together individuals and organisations who can provide a comprehensive partnership response to violence against women.

The partnership representatives comprises of a wide range of public and independent organisations including; East Ayrshire Council (Housing, Social Work, Education and Early Years) NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Strathclyde Police, Scottish Reporters, Procurator Fiscal Office, Kilmarnock Prison, Kilmarnock College, South West Scotland Criminal Justice Authority, Victim Support, East Ayrshire Women’s Aid, East Ayrshire Rape Counselling and Resource Centre and Break the Silence.

The partnership organised a White Ribbon Conference in March 2012 to raise awareness of violence against women issues and identify a legacy of practical steps that can be taken forward. Further, elected members agreed a motion at Council on 28 June 2012 to sign up to the White Ribbon Campaign Pledge. In addition, the partnership has endorsed the development of a pilot e-learning course aimed at raising awareness of violence against women among all employees within the Council.
Older people (Social Work Community Care)

East Ayrshire Older People’s Conference has been held on an annual basis since 2002, instigated through ‘Better Government for Older People’. It is an important mechanism for Community Planning Partners, particularly East Ayrshire Council and NHS Ayrshire and Arran, to effectively engage with older people. Over the years, the purpose of the annual Conference has developed from being mainly informative to engaging and consulting older people, and is more directed by older people. In 2009, for the first time, the event was hosted by a member of the East Ayrshire Elderly Forum.

The conference is one of many examples of the Community Planning Partners placing critical importance on the involvement of the community. It is a targeted approach for a specific demographic group and issues raised through the conference will feed into the planning process of the Community Planning Partnership and Individual partners, and inform the development and delivery of services.

Youth Work LGBT (Community Learning and Development)

In 2011 the Corporate Equalities Strategy Group agreed to contribute funding to a pan Ayrshire ‘Speakout’ Leadership Programme to increase engagement between the Council and LGBT communities.

There has been a visible increase in the work with LGBT communities within East Ayrshire since 2009 and the support from LGBT Youth Scotland has ensured this work is being sustained. Although the development of a pan Ayrshire LGBT group managed and facilitated by LGBT Youth Scotland has been one of the main drivers for this increase in activity, the Council’s Community Learning and Development Service (CLD) has been at the forefront of developing capacity building for LGBT communities in East Ayrshire, and the Service was awarded LGBT Youth Charter Mark status in September 2009. In November 2011, the service was accredited for a further year and was awarded ‘excellence’ reflecting the mentoring role that the service is taking in supporting other establishments and services to develop LGBT support within East Ayrshire and more widely.

Over the past year the service has been involved in a range of working groups, workshops and events to promote and develop LGBT support within East Ayrshire and further a field. More recently the CLD service has undertaken research within the authority looking into the attitudes of young people in relation to LGBT. An attitudinal survey was promoted through schools, children’s houses, youth work groups and clubs, libraries, sports centres and community facilities. The survey was undertaken by 130 young people and the findings will be published in the coming months.

c) As outlined earlier in the response, equality impact assessments are conducted in respect of all budget decisions. All actions in the 2011/12 and 2012/13 revenue budgets were subject to an equality impact screening assessment and no impacts were reported.
MAINSTREAMING EQUALITIES

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

Through the Community Planning Partnership our work is underpinned by a commitment to equality of opportunity, social justice and social inclusion. We continue to pursue an ‘equalities’ agenda which ensures that the needs of all residents are taken into account and are committed to promoting equality duties within our partnership working and improving the position of everyone who is currently disadvantaged or excluded from opportunities. Target groups include older people, carers, ethnic minorities, people with a disability and women, particularly with regard to domestic abuse.

All Ability

A range of community based disability sports clubs and activity clubs for children, young people and adults continue to be delivered across East Ayrshire on a weekly basis. The clubs have recently been rebranded to be called ‘All Ability’ to reflect a positive approach to the development of disability clubs.

A wide range of ‘All Ability’ activities are being delivered as part of the Summer ‘bE Active Programme and have been well attended to date.

Ethnic Minority Inclusion Project

The Ethnic Minority Inclusion Project was established with funding from regeneration funds and subsequently the Fairer Scotland Fund. The initiative is now part of the wider Bilingual Support Service, promoting positive attitudes across the whole school population, including teaching and other support staff, with activity ranging from raising awareness of cultural or religious factors, to suggesting methods through which a positive ethos can be created. Examples of the activity provided through the initiative have included:

- Support in placing the children of Gypsies/Travellers in school, including the provision of ongoing support;
- Support to KULOC, the local Chinese community group, to set up a homework class at the KULOC centre;
- Support to the Polish Parents’ Group at Grange Academy, Kilmarnock attended by families from across East Ayrshire;
- A Parents’ workshop to assist parents to support literacy and numeracy skills in their children; and
- Weekly supported study ‘English as an Additional Language’ classes for Polish pupils.

Community Health Improvement Partnership

The Community Health Improvement Partnership Initiative (CHIP) has been providing a range of services to support healthy lifestyle choices across East Ayrshire since January 2001. Responding to a need to provide locally accessible health services, the initiative began with the CHIP van, a mobile healthy living centre targeting local communities across East Ayrshire and providing local access to information, advice and support in relation to health. A number of activities are aimed at tackling inequalities in health.
East Ayrshire reflects the national trends in terms of lower uptake of health services by men. In order to redress this imbalance, the Lifestyle Development Officer (Men’s Health) is working within the community to promote services to men and encourage their participation in new and existing initiatives. Men are specifically targeted to encourage earlier uptake of services and a more open attitude to discussing health concerns. Other targeted groups include:

- Older people – community based exercise classes encourage regular physical activity, promote falls prevention and increase social contact;
- Rural communities – through the provision of mobile and local services;
- Prison population – through participation in regular health awareness days held for both staff and prisoners;
- Homeless people – through provision of a health stand on a regular basis within hostels offering information on healthy lifestyle choices and health checks;
- International Women’s Day – through supporting the programme of activities organised during the annual national campaign.

All three initiatives identified above are excellent examples of our approach to addressing the equalities agenda through the provision of targeted activity within mainstream service provision.

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

An integrated profile of the social, economic and environmental conditions in East Ayrshire forms the basis of our Single Outcome Agreement. It provides an evidence base for identifying past trends and future challenges and opportunities, and subsequently the strategic local priorities expressed as local outcomes.

The area profile takes into account the information contained in the Community Plan and the corporate and service plans for the local Partners; draws on a range of indicators which are relevant, robust and measurable, including locally relevant National Indicators; and evidences the views of communities via the Community Planning Residents’ Survey.

Equality Week 2012 took place from 3 March to 10 March; the week set out to challenge misconceptions, promote community relations and develop innovative ideas to achieve equality and promote diversity. It was also a vehicle to learn more about our communities, and the opportunity for debate, learning and challenge increased the capacity of the stakeholders to understand the different needs of particular groups within our community.

Through the evaluation process, colleagues within the Council and across our Community Planning Partners highlighted that they had learned practical methods to foster good relations, eliminate unlawful discrimination and advance equality of opportunity, which they would take back to their workplace.

There are a range of local monitoring arrangements in place throughout Council services such as Community Learning and Development, Education, Social Services and Leisure Services. This gives information on who is accessing these services and ensures that services are tailored to local needs.
Proposals are currently being developed in respect of the development of equality outcomes and indicators which will be aligned with the Single Outcome Agreement and which will be routinely monitored and reported. Associated engagement will take place with persons who share a protected characteristic in the setting of outcomes.

We would, of course, be happy to provide any additional information which would assist the work of the Committee; however, we trust that the information provided will be helpful in the meantime.

Alex McPhee
Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Support
East Ayrshire Council
3 August 2012