SUBMISSION FROM FALKIRK COUNCIL

Equalities in the budgeting process

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

Individual equality impact assessments were undertaken by Services in relation to relevant proposals within the budget. Where these identified the potential for differential impact further consideration was given to the proposals.

Any individual assessments as well as the overall budget EQIA was submitted with the budget proposals, as part of the scrutiny and approval process.

Q. 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, Falkirk Council’s budget process incorporates the requirement to carry out EQIAs in relation to any potential funding or budget decisions which are being considered. This was the same approach as taken within previous budgets.

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

**Education Services** – the budget proposals included a reduction in the residential schools budget. Residential School places are provided for children, including those with disabilities. The reduction in the Residential Schools budget reflected a reduction in demand and there was no direct impact on the service being provided.

**Social Work** – the proposed budget reflected a saving arising from a review of procurement arrangements for care services. There was no change proposed to the level of service provided to any group of service users and in fact more service users would benefit from this service being delivered through current providers. No adverse or differential impact arose in relation to any of the equality groups.

**External Specialist Funding** - decisions to remove or reduce funding for external organisations or specialist projects can impact on some equality groups particularly where the organisation or project provides a service to a particular group. The decisions in relation to external funding were carefully considered.
The result of these considerations has either been that the impact of the proposal would not significantly alter service provision, or that alternative service provision is available to mitigate the impact.

**Equalities in mainstream services**

**Q.** 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.

- Education £168m (12/13), £168m (11/12)
- Social Work £86m (12/13), £85m (11/12)
- Housing £53m (12/13), £51m (11/12)

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.

Equalities are mainstreamed into all Council Services and as such, all Services delivery functions which impact on equality groups. The main changes in terms of the budget are in relation to the delivery of services for young people as well as elderly and disabled, which will have a positive impact (some examples of changes noted below).

**Service provision for equalities groups**

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

Equalities are mainstreamed into all Council Services and the services provided are for the community as a whole and not for specific groups.

Through the budget process, however, it was recognised that additional resources were needed to ensure continued service provision within priority areas, which included:

- tackling the unacceptable level of unemployment amongst young people
- introducing a Falkirk Employability Award for young people
- employing an additional three Welfare advice staff to support individuals claiming benefits, particularly raised as a concern for individuals claiming disability benefits.
- introducing Nuture groups in Primary Schools

**Mainstreaming equalities**

**Q.** What specialist services or programmes have been, or are being altered, in the interests of mainstreaming?
The majority of Council services are already mainstreamed.

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

Each Service will carry out monitoring in respect of services provided and amend their services accordingly to any changes required. Monitoring may take the form of surveys, focus groups, feedback for example from tenant

Mary Pitcaithly
Chief Executive
Falkirk Council
27 July 2012