Equalities in budget processes

Introduction

North Ayrshire Council has made clear its commitment to equality impact assessment in its Equality Policy and its Single Equality Scheme. Within the North Ayrshire Council Plan 2010/13 there is an explicit commitment to assess the impact of the Council’s policies and practices on equality groups. There is a similar commitment in the North Ayrshire Single Outcome Agreement.

The Council’s equality impact assessment process has evolved over recent years and has been integrated into its service planning and budgeting processes. Training was provided for senior managers on the use of the equality impact assessment toolkit generally. Workshops were also held for each Council service on the equality impact assessment of budget proposals in August 2011.

The Council therefore has processes in place to ensure that equality considerations are taken into account fully throughout the budget process.

Scottish Parliament Equal Opportunities Committee:

Annexe Questions

1. Equalities in the budgeting process

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

The Council’s Corporate Management Team (CMT) considered a report last year on the equality impact assessment (EIA) of budget proposals during the previous financial year. The CMT agreed that:

- Workshops be held for managers to provide further advice on what is required when carrying out an EIA during the budget process;
- One person be identified in each of the four service equality sub groups to co-ordinate EIA programmes and the assessment of financial decisions;
- The Corporate Equality Group meet during the budget process to take an overview of the initial EIA comments and feedback to services; and
- That a report on the EIAs completed during the budget exercise should be produced.

The requirement to produce EIAs on budget savings was incorporated into the Service Planning and Budgeting Guidance 2012/13. The budget template required services to assess the impact on equality of the option. Services were asked to submit EIAs along with their service plans.
Five half day workshops were delivered to individual service groups and a Sub Group of the Corporate Equality Group met to review the EIAs completed prior to their submission to the CMT. There were 50 EIAs completed in total. The Sub Group provided feedback on the assessments completed.

The CMT received a report on the EIAs carried out. There was a briefing to Elected Members at one of the Council’s Budget Seminars in November 2011 to ensure that Elected Members understood the equalities impact of budget decisions and that the possible equality impact of proposals were considered during the budget process. It was stressed that the Council should be able to demonstrate that the equality impact of its decisions, particularly those affecting the workforce or the community, have been considered when deciding on its budget.

A further report on the equality impact assessments carried out on budget proposals was submitted to the CMT. A report was then submitted to Elected Members at the final Budget Seminar to ensure that they were made aware of the findings of the EIAs carried out.

1.2 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 approach adopted for the EIA of the 2012-13 budget was more robust than in previous years. The previous process had been improved and tightened to ensure more rigorous examination of equality impacts and this was supported with training.

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

The equality impact assessment process assisted mostly in allowing services to consider mitigating action which may be appropriate as a result of budget efficiencies.

2. Equalities in mainstream services

2.1 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

The Council’s three most significant mainstream services in terms of revenue expenditure and their budgets are detailed below:
b) The impact (positive or negative) that this service has on equality groups

The impact that the Council’s services have on equality groups is summarised each year in its Annual Equality Report which is available on the Council’s website.

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

There has been no impact highlighted to date by equality groups as a result of the Council’s budget changes.

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>Education &amp; Skills</td>
<td>£153,954</td>
<td>£151,184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Services &amp; Health</td>
<td>£90,746</td>
<td>£92,339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance &amp; Infrastructure</td>
<td>£41,748</td>
<td>£40,927</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b) The impact that this service has on equality groups

The Community Development service works closely with equality groups and during 201/12 it has assisted in the following:

1. Ayrshire Minority Ethnic Communities Association (AMECA)

The service has supported the Ayrshire Minority Ethnic Communities Association (AMECA) to establish a drop in centre for members of local ethnic minority communities. The Centre is also used by different community groups as a meeting place. The Sikh community group uses the centre on a weekly basis and the Polish community group is planning to run Polish language classes in the centre. It has secured lottery funding to recruit a sessional worker to support development for 12 months.

The Association receives support from Community Development to develop partnership working with mainstream service providers to deliver accessible services within the centre. The use of the centre as a third party reporting centre for hate crime incidents is under discussion with Strathclyde Police. A
programme of cultural diversity events and equality awareness workshops is being organised by the Association to promote cross cultural understanding and community cohesion.

2. **Polish community**

   A DVD presentation event targeting the local Polish community was held in Irvine to raise awareness of community safety, third party reporting, discrimination and harassment. Local services were invited to attend to promote engagement with the community and inform service provision.

3. **Chinese community**

   The Chinese information and advice centre worked in partnership with Glebe primary school to hold a week of Chinese cultural activities within the school in January 2012. Pupils were taught by members of the Chinese community on Chinese calligraphy, traditional dragon dance, Chinese cooking, Tai Chi, storytelling and singing. Pupils showcased their learning and performed to staff, parents and the Provost at an event which was a great success.

4. **Older people activities event**

   An older people activities event was held in February 2012 to celebrate the achievement of older learners in the community and highlighted intergenerational work to address gender issues.

5. **Redburn Travellers site**

   A Multi-agency working group meets regularly to assess Travellers needs on the Redburn Travellers site and to develop an action plan to improve services to the community.

6. **International Women’s Day**

   A community event was held on 10 March 2012 to celebrate International Women’s Day. It provided an opportunity to highlight gender equality, foster good relations and to promote awareness raising. Ethnic women’s groups from the Chinese, Muslim, Filipino and Thai communities participated and performed at the event.

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

   There has been no impact reported by these groups as a result of budget changes.
4. **Mainstreaming equalities**

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

The Council has been working to mainstream equality into its day to day activities so that it is integrated and is a component of everything it does.

An example of a specialist service which has become mainstreamed is the Bilingual Support Unit for school pupils whose first language is not English. This Unit provided specialist support in the past from one base in North Ayrshire. This meant that pupils requiring language support had to travel to the unit and their education was inevitably slightly disrupted. The service has now been mainstreamed with Language Support now being provided directly to pupils within their own schools.

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

The educational attainment of all pupils is regularly monitored. The evidence indicates that children and young people from ethnic minority communities (who would receive language support) have higher than average attainment levels.

Chief Executive
North Ayrshire Council
8 August 2012