1. **Equalities in the budgeting process**

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

Budget allocations for 2011/12 and 2012/13 were carried out in the period between Autumn 2010 and Spring 2011. With regard to equalities considerations, Council Services were asked to carry out a screening of each budget savings proposal and to identify if any had a relevance to equalities, and whether a fuller assessment would be required. Services were asked to provide copies of screenings and assessments to the Equal Opportunities Officer. Each savings measure statement included a section asking services to confirm that a screening has been carried out; whether a full EQIA is needed; and summarise any mitigating action. Each savings measure statement was included in the Service Savings Proposals that were presented to Council.

A key part of the Council’s budget considerations for this period was an extensive budget consultation exercise using ward forums for engaging with members of the public, professional and stakeholder forums, including hearing and visual impairment groups, a budget blog and through a Citizens’ Panel survey. These assisted in generating over 8,000 separate points on the budget questions. The stakeholder forums included focus groups with “hard to reach” groups including those with sight loss, the Deaf community, people with learning disabilities and affected by mental health problems.


b) 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).

*See above*

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

*Examples from “Budget Consultation Report “*

**Example 1: Education, Culture and Sport Service**

**ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS**

*What we asked:*
We asked for views on whether we could reduce our Education Psychologist service by 20% and other areas of Additional Support Needs (ASN) by 50%. We wanted to save £1m. 55 separate comments were received on this proposal.

*What we were told:*
From the consultation, we were told that respondents were not in favour of reducing the ASN budget. People were concerned that provision is already limited and under pressure, with waiting lists for services. They reported that any reduction in classroom provision would not only have a negative impact upon the
child receiving the service but would impact upon the whole class. Some were in favour of a reduction in service but you felt that a smaller reduction would be more appropriate.

**What the Council decided:**
The Council decided to significantly reduce the impact of the savings measures on additional support for learning, and have fully protected educational psychology and other specialist support to schools and pupils. We will carry out a review of classroom support in the primary sector.

**Example 2: Social Work Service (From April 2012, Health and Social Care Service)**

**CARE AT HOME**
**What we asked:**
We asked for views on whether we can change how we provide care at home, moving to all services being provided by external organisations. We wanted to save £1.04m. 170 comments were received on this issue and questions were answered by the Citizens’ Panel.

**What we were told:**
From the consultation, people told us there was strong support for changing the way that care at home is provided, as in many areas it is already provided in this manner. On the whole respondents felt that it was not important who provided the service, as long as the quality and the standard of service was maintained but that it was important that it was cost effective. People reported that staff continuity was important to those receiving care and that the Council may need to continue to provide services in remote and rural areas where there is no alternative provision. Some did express concern at the proposal to change service provision, noting that satisfaction with the way services are currently provided and concern at the standard of service provided by external providers.

**What the Council decided:**
The Council is investing more money in care at home services, both through in-house provision and by extending existing contracts with independent sector partners. By also changing the balance of in-house and independent sector provision, we will make savings of around £0.650m, which is less than the original savings proposed of £1.04m, while increasing capacity.

**Example 3: Chief Executive’s Service**

**FACE TO FACE CONTACT POINTS**
**What we asked:**
We asked for views on whether we can change the way we deal with customer enquiries by reducing the number of face to face contact points and increasing the use of telephone and web contacts. We wanted to save £1m. 200 separate comments were received on this proposal and questions were answered by the Citizens’ Panel. We received 1 petition.

**What we were told:**
From the consultation, views on this issue were divided. The Panel reported that around two thirds would be happy to utilise the telephone or the internet, however respondents over 65 and those with a disability were less likely to indicate they would use the internet. This was also reflected in the general comments received. Many people were supportive of moving to telephony and web services but there was concern for the elderly and vulnerable who would be more likely to use face
to face services. People suggested that ways to make contact points more affordable could be to combine them with existing services such as libraries or to consider mobile provision alongside the mobile library service. Other alternatives suggested were to reduce the opening hours or number of staff.

**What the Council decided:**
We decided to close 2 of the 37 service points and extend the mobile service for 2 communities, to have 3 new partnerships with libraries and 5 with the police and to merge the service point and registration services in 5 communities. Opening hours in certain offices will also be reduced. This will save us £1m.

2. **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

**Mainstream services 1 and 2 : Secondary & Primary DSM**

a) Total budget:

The 2 largest Education Culture and Sport “service” budgets by value:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary DSM</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>67.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary DSM</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>54.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* DSM – devolved school management

b) The above ECS budget headings do not have any direct impact on equality groups. The budget heading with the greatest potential impact on equality groups is Additional Support Needs. (Refer to Q3, example 2.)

c) Changes in the above headings have had no impact on equality groups.

**Mainstream service 3 : Waste Management (including Refuse Collection, Waste Disposal & Recycling)**

a) Total budget

2011/12 budget £27.6m
2012/13 budget £27.5m

b) This service does not have any direct impact on equality groups. A free Assisted Uplift service is available for people who are physically unable to wheel their bin to the collection point.
c) Alternate weekly collections of recyclable and non-recyclable waste were introduced over 2011/12-12/13, following a positive response from the budget consultation to this proposal. Households with more than 6 permanent residents or households that create medical waste are entitled to an additional refuse bin. Increased recycling has a positive impact on social enterprise and community groups which deliver recycling services.

3. 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

Example 1: Interpretation Services (Chief Executive’s Service) (not covering British Sign Language)

a) Total budget £35,000 for 2011/12 and 2012/13.

b) Positive impact on members of the community whose first language is not English in order to access Council services.

c) No change to budget, impact remains positive (recent evidence from survey in preparation for re-tendering).

Example 2: Additional Support Needs (Education, Culture and Sport Service)

a) The budget for ASN in 2011/12 was £17.1m and the corresponding figure for 2012/13 is £18.25m.

b) & c) The budget for ASN has increased by £1.1m year-on-year. This will enable additional funding to be provided to areas of greatest need, including:
   • Support staff in the classroom
   • Specialist teaching input
   • Specialist services purchased from out-with
   • Aids and adaptations
   • Staff training
   • Ensuring compliance with relevant legislation
   • Increased resources for language tuition and interpretation
**Example 3: Site provision for Gypsies/Travellers (Housing and Property Service)**

a) Gypsy/Traveller Sites. Total budget for budget 2011/12 : £69,000. Total budget for 2012/13 : £100,000. This is specifically for improvements to Gypsy/Traveller sites.

b) As the budget has increased the group will be provided with enhanced services so a positive impact.

c) May result in the group staying longer at one site and therefore benefiting from access to education and health services.

Gypsy/traveller budgets are no longer ring fenced and subject to same pressures as all other budgets.

**4. Mainstreaming equalities**

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

- Budget setting and Council performance: Budget consultation and Public Performance survey (analysis by protected characteristics and focus groups with hard to reach groups). Requirement to assess for equality impact of budget proposals.
- Council commitment to equality in each of the themes of its new five year Programme which sets objectives for the Council.
- All committee reports ask for information on equality implications
- Language and interpretation services – encouraging uptake of ESOL provision to move reliance on interpretation services
- Communication Support for Deaf and hard of hearing – moving budget from Health & Social Care to Chief Executive’s Office so emphasis is on equal access rather than Social Work provision.

**Education, Culture and Sport Service:**

- The annual audit of pupils with identified needs takes place in the summer term to inform the allocation of staffing resource for the academic session immediately following
- On-going programme of investment in schools to meet the needs of pupils with significant identified needs to ensure that they can attend school
- Targeted investment programme that enables pupils with significant needs to be educated locally as opposed to being transported to specialist centres on a daily basis
- Concentration of specialist provision for pupils who are hard of hearing, autistic, etc
• Provision of specialist school transport – wheel chair adapted vehicles and dedicated escorts

There is a strong commitment to meeting the needs of all learners within the Education, Culture and Sport Service Plan which in turn informs operational plans at a local level.

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

• Equalities monitoring and analysis of the Council’s Public Performance Survey to gauge customer satisfaction

• Some equalities monitoring is carried out by services, however a mapping exercise is planned to assess which services are monitoring, what they are monitoring and what they are doing with the information gathered. This will inform recommendations to improve monitoring.

• Monitoring of relevant service delivery contracts, eg interpretation and communication support.

**Education, Culture and Sport Service**

• In relation to monitoring, equality impact framework is in situ during budget setting discussions
• In addition, each report to Committee has an embedded section that addresses, inter alia, equality implications

Alistair Dodds
Chief Executive
The Highland Council
9 August 2012