SUBMISSION FROM WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL

Equalities in the budgeting process

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

Equality impact assessment was conducted on all relevant proposals through the budget allocation process, prior to draft budget presentation to council.

- 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)

The 2012-13 approach was a follow-up to a detailed equality assessment and evaluation in preparation for forward budget proposals presented as part of the 2011-12 budget setting process.

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

Council officer proposals to reduce the provision of the winter maintenance service were subject to involvement via our Community Equality Forums as part of the equality impact assessment process. As a result, the feedback received identified potential disproportionate impact on people with physical disabilities, given the timing and level of service reduction proposed. This feedback contributed in part to the subsequent review and removal of the proposals from the revenue budget reduction measures.

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

Education (Schools) – £133.146M (2011/12); £133.499M (2012/13)

Social Policy (Social Work and Social Care) - £77.334M (2011/12); £78.340M (2012/13)

Operational Services (Waste, Environment, Transportation) - £56.039M (2011/12); £56.318M (2012/13)

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

All three of the above mainstream services have significant potential to impact on the promotion of equality, both positively and negatively. It is not possible to provide a general overview of the impact of these particular services on equality groups within the council as the variety of internal and external evidence and information required would be substantial. A significant majority of equality impact assessments
conducted by the Authority to date relate to policies and practices within these three service areas.

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

In general terms, despite the overall reductions within the revenue budget over the two financial years 2011/13 the budget for all three of our most significant mainstream services have increased over the period.

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

West Lothian Access Fund – £10,945 (2011/12); £9,820 (£2012/13)*


Equality Community Forums – £4500 (2011/12); £4500 (2012/13)

*Note: Following a Council Executive decision to increase the funding for those organisations and budgets included within the Voluntary Organisations Budgets Report in June 2012, the revised Access Fund budget for 2012/13 is £10,802.

*Note: Change due to amendment to national insurance contributions.

b) The impact that this service has on equality groups

West Lothian Access Fund – This is a small grants scheme to provide disability accessibility arrangements for voluntary sector organisations and community groups. The service has a significant impact on the practical promotion of equality through improving access support to premises used by people with disabilities in the community.

Advice Shop – BME Services – Provision of benefit and welfare advice as well as tailored support for individuals and families from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. The service assists to improve local support and signposting of mainstream services to a number of hard to reach communities and individuals across West Lothian.

Equality Community Forums – Grant support to enable delivery of community engagement forums for disability, gender and race equality. The Forums work directly within the Community Planning Partnership structure to promote good community relations and improve public sector partner policy and practice related to equality and diversity.

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

None.
Mainstreaming equalities

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

There are no specific plans at present as a direct result of a desire to mainstream equality.

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

N/A

Graham Hope  
Chief Executive  
West Lothian Council  
27 September 2012