Equalities in the budgeting process

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

The Corporate Joint Planning and Budget Guidance is issued to all departments in the middle of the financial year for following year with a clear instruction that all budget savings options should be equality impact assessed. The guidance also contains a timetable for consultation including specific consultation with equality groups.

The Council has trained over 100 officers in carrying out EIA in the last three years and the organisational guidance on carrying out EIA is revised regularly to reflect legislative change e.g., the specific duties 2012 and developments in case law.

Committee reports must contain a section on equality, which must note that a screening and if necessary an EIA has been carried out. Screenings and assessments are required to be attached to reports.

The Corporate Management Team are briefed on equalities issues as required and the Council’s core brief and specific Equalities Briefing keep staff up to date on equalities issues.

The induction pack for elected members includes links to the Equality and Human Rights Commissions and Improvement Service guidance on making fair financial decisions.

Budget Roadshows are conducted prior to each new financial year during which local communities have an opportunity to comment on proposals. As well as the consultations events held in January 2012, the Council’s website could be used to contribute to the consultation.

In setting its overall Financial Strategy, the Council analyses relevant information from a range of demographic, economic, employment, and Scottish Index of Multiply Deprivation data.

The Council works to ensures that the formation of strategies e.g. the Local Housing Strategy and the Local Transport Strategy is informed by equalities considerations through consultation and EIA work. These Strategies will of course in turn inform the Councils overall financial approach.
Service planning is of course not a purely financial matter; the Terms of Reference for all West Dunbartonshire Community Health and Care Partnership Service Planning Groups make it explicitly that they will engage with pertinent equality groups (as per the NHSGGC Equality; and the West Dunbartonshire Council Equality Scheme 2002-2012).

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)**

   The overall approach was similar in both years.

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

   In services aimed at specific equalities groups there is an early focus on equalities issues; please see the response to the question on ‘Service provision for equalities groups’

   In setting its budgets the Council takes into account the social, economic and demographic issues within its area, and how its services are resourced to positively meet needs arising from these. This involved looking at the needs of particular equality groups e.g. disabled people, younger people, older people and women. Past and future EIA have been and will be examined, as will as service monitoring and evaluation which will feedback into future budget proposals.

**Equalities in mainstream services**

4. **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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>£88.6m</td>
<td>£89.4m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHCP</td>
<td>£59.4m</td>
<td>£59.3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Housing</td>
<td>£32.6m</td>
<td>£34.1m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

   The three services noted above have wide ranging elements within them, for instance the biggest element of spend within the education budget was on primary schools with £32.5m in 2011/12 and £32.3m in 2012/2013. It is very difficult to measure differential impacts at this high level; however in setting equality outcomes key data such as education achievement by gender and ethnicity can be interrogated to provide a proxy measure of impact.
Within the CHCP budget a major element was addiction services with £1.34m for 2011/12 and £1.9m for 2012/13 (the increase reflected a combining of budgets with mental health).

The majority of the housing budget is allocated to the repair of stock: this if vital if stock is to be kept at a reasonable standard and improved. Social housing is more likely to be access by some groups than others e.g. women and disabled people.

It is noted later in the questionnaire response that the Council plans broaden and deepen it equalities monitoring on services to provide better baseline and ongoing information.

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

As noted above the Council requires that any savings options are subject to an EIA.

On a wider note savings elsewhere have concentrated on getting better value from contractors for providing the same services, that is service users would see in change in provision, e.g. in supported accommodation.

Service provision for equalities groups

5. 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

Gypsy Travellers
Budget 11/12  £39,630
Budget 12/13  £42,680

Disabled Adaptations
Budget 11/12  £491,250
Budget 12/13  £491,250

b) The impact that this service has on equality groups

Gypsy Travellers
This budget includes site maintenance, support acceptable site provision and other elements such as education and sports aiding to inclusion. It should be noted that the amount quoted is money that is specifically targeted toward on that site and would not include 'mainstream' resources that would be more difficult to quantify.
**Disabled Adaptations**
This budget is for housing adaptations to ensure that properties meet need of tenants and residents through providing reasonable adjustments. Again specific budgets sit in the context of other budgets. Spend of the budget allocation through the financial year is carefully controlled to ensure that resources are always available for adaptations that are required. There is a close working relationship between Housing, Social Work and Occupational Therapy staff to ensure smooth identification and provision of work.

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

**Gypsy Travellers**
There has been a small increase in the budget reflecting upkeep costs for the site; this itself will have a neutral impact. The Council is in frequent contact with site residents, and discussions are underway about improving facilities there, for instance increasing hard standing to accommodate larger caravans. The outcome of these discussions will influence whether increased resources are requested, and in this way the budgeting process is influenced and associated EIA work.

**Disabled Adaptations**
This budget is at standstill and the impact should be neutral on Disabled tenants and residents. It is noted that required adaptations are always provided.

**Mainstreaming equalities**

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

The Council has recently realigned advice, employability and community learning and development services to make sure that they better serve the needs of those most in need of support: this cross cuts across protected groups but is especially important in terms of supporting young people, disabled people and women. The new service is called Working 4U.

To achieve a truly mainstreamed approach to equalities the Council will work to ensure that all services not just more specialised ones have a robust equalities core.

Better services monitoring will improve our ability to measure outcomes for protected groups (please see below).
Specific training on EIA for decision makers (elected members and senior management) is being prepared and this will cover making budget decisions and the centrality of equalities considerations will be key element.

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

Service monitoring on social work services, Community Learning & Development, homelessness applications, and employability support is carried out covering age, disability, sex and ethnicity.

The Council intends to widen service monitoring from these four, to eight characteristics (adding religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation and gender reassignment) and it is planned to extend service monitoring much more widely across different Council services: pilot areas are being identified. Draft organisational guidance to support this initiative has been produced to ensure consistency.

In addition to monitoring the Council engages with equality groups through a number of channels including the Equalities Liaison Group (ELG) which includes community members and Council staff. The Council has also been involved promoting closer relationships between forums and equalities groups.

A final report on the progress on the Councils Equality Scheme 2009-2012 action plan is being prepared: this will form part of the evidence basis, against which future equalities performance will be measured.

The Council has encouraged and supported groups’ involvement in consultations on major issues such as housing, transport and development.

The Council will involve equality groups in the identification of equality outcomes for publication in April 2013, and is working with other Councils, national organisations and Community Planning Partners to pool relevant data and carry out joint consultations where possible.

As of setting equality outcomes the Council will look at both local and national data, including that from the Scottish Government’s Equality Evidence website to ensure it has a robust evidence base from which to proceed.

Chief Executive
West Dunbartonshire Council
20 August 2012