

Response from Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods, Fife Council

I refer to your letter of 16th February, 2018 regarding the above which has been passed on to me for response. You ask a number of questions regarding how Councils take account of equalities and human rights in the budget process. I would reply as follows:

How are equalities taken into account in your budget process?

As part of the budget process, Services identify savings which are set out in Service Change Plans. For each saving, an equality impact needs to be completed and at the very least Services have to give due regard and consider one or more of the general duties. These are checked by the Equalities Team where an overall impact of budget savings on protected characteristics is also produced.

What use have you made of the information gathered through the Public Sector Equality Duty to inform your budgetary processes?

The Council funds Fife Centre for Equalities and on behalf of the Council, the Centre engages with all protected characteristics on an ongoing basis. Any concerns raised are fed directly into Services so they are aware of any equality impacts on an ongoing basis. Fife Centre for Equalities will also promote any direct consultation and engagement on the budget process with the protected characteristics.

How do you make the equalities aspects of your budget decisions transparent to the public?

The budget report presented to the Council includes an equalities statement. Anyone can also ask for a copy of the equality impact assessment for a particular budget saving and relevant impact assessments are also published on Fifiedirect.

What is your understanding of taking a human rights approach to budgeting?

Addressing human rights through the budget process means ensuring that no savings proposal breaches someone's dignity, equality or fairness. The Council's Senior Equalities Group oversees the impact assessment process and looks at whether the budget disproportionately affects a particular protected characteristic. Mitigating actions are identified where there is likely to be an adverse impact.

Aside from the budget process, equality impact assessments are undertaken on changes to service delivery and these are presented to committee as part of the decision making process on an ongoing basis.