

**Blackpool Council
Equality Analysis (EA) (formally Equality Impact Assessment)
Record Form**

Department: Deputy Chief Executive's Department

Date of proposals: February 2015

Committee: Executive/ Full Council

1. What is the aim and purpose of the proposals?

To approve the General Fund Revenue Budget 2015/2016.

2. Please outline any proposals being considered.

The purpose of this equality analysis is to:

1) Describe the work and decision making processes to assess potential impacts on key equality groups (protected characteristics) of the Budget proposals and highlight potential areas of adverse impact that could constitute discrimination.

2) Set out actions to ensure procedures are in place to continue to monitor and review the Equality impact of reduced funding and consequent service and staff reductions.

Background and legal context

The Council has a statutory responsibility under Equality Law¹, known as "Public Sector Duty" "to examine and analyse the impacts on equality issues on all related decisions. This is set within the context of our overarching requirement under Equality law, as a designated public authority to have "due regard" to the need to –

- **Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct**
- **Advance equality of opportunity**
- **Foster good relations between different (defined) groups²**

Council commitment to Equality and Diversity

The Council's priorities and commitments are published in two key publications a). The Equality Objectives b) The Council Plan 2013-15

¹ Public Equality Duty is set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010,

² As abbreviated from section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, summarising the (General) Public sector equality Duty

Both these documents describe the importance of this agenda to the Council and set out four overarching Objectives³

The Council monitors and evaluates its work to advance all these objectives. Copies of a recent performance review report (dated December 2014) are available on request.

The Councils approach to Equality Analysis of the 2015-16 Budget proposals

The Council adopts a multi level approach to the equality analysis covering impact of the current Budget decisions arising from the Government's financial settlements.

This is in recognition of the complex effect on service users, staff, citizens and visitors of these decisions.

This involves a number of elements including the following :

- Briefings for key decision makers , at both Elected Member (Executive) and Senior Officer levels, on the Public Sector Equality duty and the implications for decision making.
- Meetings with each Chief Officer to undertake high level equality impact screening of all key departmental budget proposals – prior to formal consultation processes.
- Briefing and Training for Senior Departmental Equality representatives, Service Accountants and HR Advisors to ensure they can support their managers and departments in approaching the Equality Analysis of budget related proposals.
- Service level assessments of the expected and known impact of service reduction proposals on key equality groups/ protected characteristics commissioned by Senior Managers responsible for the services. This work includes examining the potential to mitigate the negative effects of these decisions, and the initiation of appropriate levels of consultation with service users and others affected.
- Detailed advice, guidance and Pro forma paperwork for all key decision makers involved in the budgetary decision process. This guidance paperwork is also available upon request.

³The Council's Equality Objectives are :

Services – We will deliver services that are fair - more people tell the Council they experience fair treatment by Council services

Staff – We will ensure that the workforce is more representative of the community the Council serves and equality and diversity is embedded in our staff culture

Decision making – We will involve people from diverse backgrounds in decision making at every level

Cohesion – We celebrate the growing diversity in Blackpool and increase respect and understanding for all

Together with another two Equality ambitions , which we work alongside other agencies in the public , voluntary and private sectors to :

Reduce economic inequalities - We will work with partners to help reduce economic inequality

Reduce health inequalities - We will work with partners to help reduce health inequality

- This detailed summary analysis feeding into the decision making processes, at Departmental and Corporate Management levels, together with Elected Member decision levels.

The Council's overall Budget position has also been communicated to stakeholders during autumn 2014 and has been the subject of a number of high level briefings with the Trade Unions and other stakeholders.

Concurrently, briefings on the likely scope of the overall Budget position has been conducted with the Community wide Equality Engagement groups including November 2014 with both the town wide Equalities Forum and Disability partnership.

To assess the effects of these cuts on staff diversity issues we have prepared a benchmark analysis of the current levels of workforce diversity for each of the key equality strands – Race , Gender , Disability , Age , Religion and Belief , and Sexual Orientation, as at August 2014. The work was summarised in the annual report which was reviewed by the Council Chief Officers in September 2014.

Copies of this detailed report are also available on request.

In due course, the equality profile of employees who are at risk of redundancy due to specific service impacts will be produced to compare with the benchmark report and any significant variances investigated.

3. Please outline proposals being considered.

Funding and budgetary proposals as set out in the Executive report entitled General Fund Revenue Budget 2015/16 and in the report's appendices.

4. Why are the proposals being made - for what reason?

To manage the impact of a large reduction in funding from the Government and other economic pressures which have led to a funding gap of approximately £25 million in 2015/16 and further pressures anticipated in future years.

5. Summary of the key decisions being assessed?

The detailed impact on service areas are set out in the Executive report and its appendices. Many of the Council's services are specifically aimed at addressing social and economic inequalities and have a wide impact on inclusion and community cohesion in Blackpool.

6. What are the impacts or effects for communities?

General impacts covering protected characteristics

In drawing together the detailed proposals the authority has been mindful of the need to assess the Equality impact and wherever possible, mitigate the adverse effects on service provision to key vulnerable groups.

The Council's values have equality and fairness at their core, this together with the Council's set of published priorities have provided the foundation of the approach to these decisions.

Although the scale and continuing patterns of cuts have made it impossible to protect all services to the most vulnerable children and adults in our community, we have made these decisions having regard to the impact this will have on people who share protected characteristics, and have tried to mitigate and reduce impact, wherever we can.

The collective effects of combined service cuts alongside other government initiatives such as welfare reform are difficult to judge at this stage and will only really become apparent over time. The opportunity for these issues to be explored further through consultation and engagement with key community groups and service providers will be important in the year ahead.

The effect of the Budget in respect of the Council's workforce diversity will continue to be measured and assessed for the impact on the overall balance of employees, compared with the Blackpool population. This will help us to assess our target of becoming an employer that better reflects the composition of the community we serve.

As stated above, a benchmark report has been produced measuring current levels of staff diversity across all key equality strands, prior to the implementation of the HR impact of this budget. Further reports will follow in order to measure the immediate impact of staff reductions on this. Actions to mitigate any disproportionate adverse impacts will be discussed following this, as necessary. Engagement and involvement will be maintained throughout with our various Equality Staff groups and Trade Unions.

Specific impacts

A number of direct services are potentially significantly affected within the Council's various departments. These equality issues and impacts have been – and will continue to be – explored in detailed Equality Analysis, which has in turn informed the decision making process. This particularly includes proposed changes / reductions in the following areas :

- All Services are expected to make savings this year; some saving targets will be higher than others. Across the board savings will be made in management, the removal of vacant posts, increased income targets and reduction in supplies and services spend etc.

Adult Services

- Delivering services differently in some areas of day service, respite services, supported living, care at home, and residential services
- Implement the new housing related support contract which was retendered in 2014/15
- Absorb additional work as a result of the implementation of the Care Act within existing services
- Efficiencies brought about by a review of integrated health and social care services

Places

- Libraries Protected
- Delivering services differently in the Housing Client, Housing Options and Planning teams resulting in staffing reductions
- Ceasing some data gathering activities of the partnerships and business

development services such as footfall monitoring

- Review of the arts and heritage spend including grants, staffing and exploring future options for the Grundy Art Gallery
- Increased income targets for the Illuminations service whilst reviewing the operational costs to maximise efficiencies
- Reduced events budget for Visit Blackpool

Children's Services

- Protecting front line social workers
- Review synergies between the Positive Steps and Connexions services
- Review service provision across School Improvement and Pupil Welfare. Review commissioning arrangements around educational related transport and SEN.
- Implement a different model of delivery around targeted youth services
- Review nursery provision and delivery models in light of capacity in the sector
- Implementation of the Families in Need commissioning review that was undertaken in 2014/15 and new reviews of administration and safeguarding support arrangements.
- Review of social work processes and procedures with view to increased efficiency

Right sizing the Youth Offending Team to meet the current needs

Community and Environmental Services

- School crossing patrols protected
- Rideability protected
- Operational efficiencies in Public Protection, Street Cleansing , Highways Maintenance/ Waste, Parks and Catering which will result in staffing reductions
- Contractual savings in the streetlight and waste collection (PFI) Public Finance Initiative projects
- Generate additional income through service and business development – Stanley Park high ropes course and Moor Park leisure centre

Other Services

- Retention of the social fund to support those most in need
- Staffing efficiencies and increased income targets across all teams
- Reduction in engagement activity and civil contingencies support
- Cessation of area forums budgets
- Some increases in fees and charges and greater choice of service offers being explored
- Contractual and staffing savings in public health and procurement
- Review of Property and Estate management including the sale of property assets

Corporate measures

- Additional income from the Council's wholly owned companies
- Impact of lower than planned inflationary pressures
- The proposals for voluntary sector grants set out in the Budget report
- Retendering of corporate contracts

Mitigations

In all these individual service areas consultation is on-going and every effort will continue to be made to mitigate and reduce the impact of cuts wherever possible. Despite the difficulties inherent in balancing a budget whilst securing a £25.2 million reduction, we believe it's important to protect a number of our direct services that provide vital support for vulnerable groups.

In this context , you will see that we are proposing to protect front line service in Libraries , front line social workers support , the School crossing patrols, the Rideability service and to retain our social fund to support those most in need.

Relationships between or within communities (cohesion)

The continued reduction in Council funding for deprived communities across much of Blackpool will have an inevitable effect on services and support for these neighbourhoods, and therefore add to the pressures and tensions within these areas. The Council will keep a close dialogue with key community groups and leaders, as well as engagement through the Fairness Commission and Equality forums - to monitor this, and react if / when required.

The Council will also continue to fulfil obligations and responsibilities in recording and monitoring Hate Crime and related incidents.

Monitoring the levels and patterns of Hate Crime will be a very important means of tracing the effects on community tensions of the reductions in the wider public sector spend in Blackpool in the period ahead.

7. What can be done to improve the policy, service, function or any proposals in order to reduce or remove any adverse impact or effects identified?

Significant budget reductions on this scale, by their very nature, have an unavoidable adverse impact on service delivery. However, the decisions on individual service areas, as far as possible, have been made with regard to the impact on particular vulnerable groups and people sharing protected characteristics.

The impact on staff sharing protected characteristics will also be equality monitored to ensure, wherever particular groups do not suffer disproportional adverse impact due to this.

In due course, further Equality engagement will be important as the effect of combined service cuts are difficult to measure at this stage and will only really become apparent over time. The budget reductions over the last few years are completely unprecedented in scale and the opportunity for these issues to be explored further through consultation and engagement with key community groups and service providers will be important in the year ahead.

The effect of the reduction in budget in respect of the workforce diversity will be measured and assessed and the long term impact on the staffing profile in respect of the overall balance of the workforce will be tracked.

8. Please outline the steps taken to test out your findings and possible courses of action below.

Consultation meetings on the broad budget position facing the Council have been undertaken with the community engagement groups during 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 and 2015/16 budget cycles. The Council's Director of Resources or his representative has personally attended and briefed a number of these groups.

Wider communication has also taken place via the Council's extensive corporate communication methods – which include web site, social media, media briefings & press statements and interviews.

At a detailed service level, where equality impact work has identified a need - consultations over the individual proposals have also taken place, with service users, potential users, staff and other key stakeholders.

Consultation with the Trades Unions with regards to staffing issues has been embedded into normal working practices and has also met all formal consultation requirements.

- Action Plan

Issues/ adverse impact identified	Proposed action/ objectives to deal with adverse impact	Targets/Measure	Timeframe	Responsibility
1. Need for continued dialogue and engagement with vulnerable groups and communities on the long term impact of budgetary reductions	To maintain current support for structures of community engagement in equality and diversity	To engage key groups over the long term impact of service reductions on specific Equality issues in Blackpool	On going throughout 2015, specific discussion at Equalities Forum and Disability Partnership	Director of Resources Deputy Chief Executive Pay Equality and Policy Manager
2. Need for a full examination of the effect of service reduction on workforce diversity and continued dialogue and engagement with staff over budgetary reductions in future years	To conduct equality monitoring on staff at risk of redundancy and take appropriate action if adverse impacts are identified To track staff equality monitoring data to ensure an accurate picture of current workforce diversity.	To mitigate any disproportional effect on staff who share protected characteristics, and monitor the target of becoming a more diverse employer.	Within current and any future Compulsory redundancy processes	Director of Resources Deputy Chief Executive Pay Equality and Policy Manager
3. Need for detailed examination of the effect of service reductions on specific service users and continued dialogue/ engagement with them over budgetary reductions in future years	To conduct equality analysis as part of service redesign proposals and take appropriate action if possible to mitigate adverse impacts are identified To track staff equality monitoring data to ensure an accurate picture of the impact is available.	To mitigate any disproportional effect on service users who share protected characteristics if possible, and monitor the outcome of changes.	Within current and any future budget reduction exercises	Relevant Chief Officers

Monitoring arrangements

Agreed action	Monitoring arrangements	Timeframe	Responsibility
1.To maintain support for structures of community engagement in equality and diversity	To be built into the Directorate Business planning and Performance review processes for 2015/16	On going throughout 2015	Deputy Chief Executive Pay Equality and Policy Manager
2. To conduct equality monitoring on staff at risk of redundancy and take appropriate action if adverse impacts are identified	To be built into the Directorate Business planning and Performance review processes	Throughout January – April 2015	Deputy Chief Executive Pay Equality and Policy Manager
3. To produce a new Equality workforce profile and utilise the staff equality groups covering BME, LGB&T and Disability strands to explore ways of improving.	To be built into the Directorate Business planning and Performance review processes	By October 2015	Deputy Chief Executive Pay Equality and Policy Manager
4. Where appropriate to conduct equality monitoring on service changes and take appropriate action if adverse impacts are identified	To be built into the Directorate Business planning and Performance review processes	Throughout January – April 2015	Relevant Chief Officers