

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Statement for City & County of Swansea Budget 2015/16

1. Introduction

This statement provides an overall view of the budget EIA process for the Council, along with any specific relevant details for 2015.

The budget is set for the council's operation which covers a wide range of services delivered to the citizens of the City & County of Swansea. This includes both providing and commissioning of services from other organisations and agencies.

As reported previously, the council has needed to take substantial action to respond to the wide range of service and financial pressures that it faces, including the reduction in external grant.

We, like other local authorities, will be facing a 4.5% reduction in budgets every year for the foreseeable future. We also need to manage increased expectation and demand for services and financial pressures in a number of areas across the Council.

Taken together it means we will need to make £81m of savings over the next three years. Change is already taking place and over the last few years the council has cut costs by being more efficient and more effective in what we do. But this is not enough to meet the scale of cuts and ensure council services are sustainable and fit for the future. Clearly, the sheer amount of savings required means that difficult decisions and potential impacts are inevitable. However, we continue to focus on mitigating any adverse impacts via our EIA process as well as officer expertise.

The authority has embarked on a specific strategy 'Sustainable Swansea - Fit for the Future' as a means of setting Council priorities, transforming services and addressing current and future deficits.

The council has agreed a set of budget principles to help guide the debate and provide an approach driven by council policy.

There are four key issues:

- Improving efficiency
- New models of delivery
- Prevention
- Future service provision

Further information on 'Sustainable Swansea - Fit for the Future' is available at: <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/sustainableswansea>

In terms of equality, the council is committed to protecting the vital frontline services that matter most to the people of Swansea, tackling poverty and looking after the most vulnerable in our communities. This will continue, although services may be delivered in different ways in future.

2. The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process

The council has had an EIA process in place for a number of years which was reviewed and streamlined about five years ago. The process covers:

- The nine protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010
- The Public Sector Equality Duty for Wales
- Consultation and engagement
- Poverty and social exclusion
- Welsh language
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Carers
- Community cohesion.

In order to apply the EIA process, officers follow the following steps:

- An initial screening exercise (to identify whether a full EIA report is necessary)
- Completion of an EIA report form (where required)
- Quality assurance and feedback
- Sign off at Head of Service level
- Publication on the internet
- Review.

Officers have access to dedicated departmental support from members of the Access to Services Team who co-ordinate the quality assurance of EIAs while also offering advice and guidance.

The process does not change for specific budget proposals, although additional information is provided to Directors and Heads of Service by way of briefings, reminders and updates.

3. Assessing impact

Due to both the nature of the proposals being considered and the regulatory framework around EIAs, many now take months to reach a conclusion. The budget planning process operates over a 3-year period, with many proposals being implemented over this time period. As a result, proposals that were put forward last year are still being worked through, with a number of EIA reports still being worked upon.

Officers are always advised to undertake the initial screening as early as possible, with (if required) a full EIA report opened as soon as possible. This is then completed as proposals are worked through and means that we are working on budget EIAs throughout the year.

As a result, the assessment of impact is not a one-off exercise – it is a continuing process.

To ensure an ongoing rigorous process, the following elements are of note:

- Where officers have concerns and/or queries, meetings are held with the Access to Services Team to look at both the proposal and the EIA
- EIA reports are often added to over a period of time, e.g. following consultation and engagement activities, following changes to the details of proposals
- Quality assurance is carried out by officers with expertise in the areas of equality, Welsh language, poverty and the UNCRC
- The Access to Services Team is maintaining a log of all EIAs, which includes recording potential cumulative impacts, e.g. negative impacts on certain groups or certain geographical areas
- Where a proposal has potential adverse impacts, officers utilise the EIA process to focus on mitigation
- Where a proposal has potential adverse impacts that cannot be mitigated, the EIA is referred to senior managers for attention and consideration.
- Executive Board are kept informed on progress (including any potential issues) and Cabinet Members receive details of EIA reports

As noted above, the total or overall impact of the proposed budget is difficult to fully assess at this stage of implementation, particularly with the EIA process being a continuing feature as proposals are further developed.

Therefore, this statement will remain in draft, to allow for updates as EIAs reach completion. As they are completed each report will be published on the Council's website at: <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/eia>

4. Budget: Assessment of impact on Equality

Service Savings:

At the start of the process over 100 EIA screening forms (which identify whether or not a full EIA is required) were completed.

Place Directorate

The Place Directorate consists of the following service areas:

- Corporate building and property services
- Highways and transportation
- Waste management
- Culture, sport, leisure and tourism
- Housing and public protection
- Economic regeneration and planning

Place: Summary Assessment of Impact:

A large number of screenings were undertaken, the majority of which established that a full EIA was not required. Of those proposals that needed an EIA, some identify potential negative impacts for the community, which is

inevitable due to the nature of the service. Areas of concern currently include cease programme of providing disabled parking spaces, closure of Plantasia and closure of urban toilets. However, some mitigation opportunities have been identified in all these areas which means Cabinet would not be prevented progressing these proposals.

There are also some proposals requiring further consideration in future (pending outcomes of consultation or discussions with alternative providers), such as those for restructuring and co-locating libraries and local history services, potential transfer of services to another model e.g. Trust or joint venture.

People Directorate

The People Directorate consists of the following service areas:

- Poverty and prevention
- Social services
- Education

People: Summary Assessment of Impact:

Social Services

The EIAs for these proposals have been opened. The proposals are in the context of the commissioning frameworks in relation to re-configuring and modernising services and will remain open for updating and completion as the proposals (if agreed) are progressed. This will include taking account of service specific engagement undertaken. The completion of the EIAs and engagement process will be overseen by the Commissioning Group. Potential impacts have been identified within remodel learning disabilities day services, reconfigure older people days services and charging and income generation.

Some of Social Services' proposals in relation to prevention, e.g., Local Area Coordination and the development of a "citizen's pathway" that promotes well-being as part of implementing the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act rely partly on services provided in other council service areas, e.g., in libraries and leisure centres. It is suggested that consideration is given to any potential impact of budget proposals within other directorates, e.g., Place on the achievement of the above.

Education

The EIAs undertaken identify potential negative impacts for children and young people and poverty, which is inevitable due to the nature of the service. Areas of concern include reduction in the schools delegated budget, delivery of music services, increasing school meal charges, free breakfast club provision and proposals around post 16 transport. However, some mitigation opportunities have been identified and (in particular for the transport proposal) further statutory consultation will be required in future.

Poverty & Prevention

The EIAs undertaken within this service do identify potential negative impacts for children and young people (mainly due to the reconfiguration of youth services). However, mitigation opportunities have been identified to minimise

the impact here. Further work is required in relation to a further youth club proposal and this doesn't preclude Cabinet from progressing with this proposal.

Corporate Services

The Corporate Services Directorate consists of the following service areas:

- Communication and consultation
- Delivery and information
- Legal and democratic services and procurement
- Financial services
- Human resources and organisational development

Corporate Services Summary Assessment of Impact:

The majority of proposals within this area did not require a full EIA. There are some concerns in terms of the impact on poverty on proposals around council tax costs, however some mitigations opportunities have been identified.

5. Consultation and engagement

Whilst there is a specific regulation around engagement (contained within the Public Sector Equality Duty for Wales), our 'Sustainable Swansea - Fit for the Future' strategy contains a substantial emphasis on consultation and engagement too.

Corporate budget consultation takes place on a wide variety of specific proposals. This includes consultation with children and young people. Others are consulted on using service-specific groups and/or activities.

Corporately, the consultation results are reported separately via the budget reports themselves.

6. Local information

Our stakeholders are:

- All citizens of, and visitors to, the City & County of Swansea
- Council staff
- Partner organisations
- Council Tax Payers.

The Council delivers services to all the citizens of the City & County of Swansea. The overall population profile from the 2011 Census is as follows:

- ∇ The gender split of the **City & County of Swansea** is **50.6% Female** (120,936 people) and **49.4% Male** (118,087 people).
- ∇ Children and young people **aged 0-25 years** represent **32.9%** of the population, or **78,697** people.
- ∇ **Over 50s** represent **36.3%** of the population (86,800 people), of which **42,812** are over 65 (around 17.9% of the total population).
- ∇ **6.0%** of the total population of Swansea (**14,300** people) came from an ethnic minority background. In terms of religion, **8,530** people (**3.6%** of the population) belonged to non-Christian faiths with 34% (81,219 people) having no religion.
- ∇ **23.3% (55,719 people)** had a long term health problem or disability including 11.3% of people of working age (26,988 people). **6.9%** of those aged 16-74 (**12,146 people**) were economically inactive due to long term sickness or disability.
- ∇ In 2011, there were **26,332** Welsh speakers in Swansea, or **11.4%** of the population. **44,659** people had one or more skills in Welsh.



Further information about Swansea's population can be found at <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/keyfacts>

Officers consider the particular service users or groups affected when applying the EIA process.

7. Staffing

Heads of Service have been provided with the same advice as in previous years that where an application is made for early retirement/voluntary redundancy, consideration should be given to whether there is any potential equality impact or effect and, if there is, to follow the EIA process. To date, no concerns have been raised in this area.

8. Third Sector Impact

Any reduction in grants to external bodies may impact Third Sector organisations. There could also be other proposals that may impact the sector which, if agreed, may require re-configuring or re-commissioning of services. In this context there may be opportunities for Third Sector organisations to be involved in this work. There could also be proposals that look to Third Sector support in the continuation of services through different means of delivery.

9. Publication arrangements

All EIA reports will be published as they are finalised. As mentioned earlier in this statement, due to the nature of many of the proposals this is likely to take

time as assessment of impact continues to be undertaken as proposals are further developed.

10. Conclusion

We know from previous years that, due to the scale of budget reductions, those with protected characteristics are likely to be affected. In assessing the impact of the budget proposals, we continue to attempt to ensure that any effect is not disproportionate and that we continue to focus on mitigation wherever possible. In this context the following should be noted:

- where EIAs show potential significant impact with no possible mitigation, these proposals will be referred for further consideration
- for those EIAs where potential significant impact has been identified and mitigation has been possible, the associated action plans will be monitored and reviewed
- the outcomes of engagement will inform the EIAs
- this is an ongoing process and as noted this statement and many EIAs will remain open
- there is a focus on the council doing things differently in order to further deliver services that are flexible, citizen-centred, meet individual needs and are sustainable for the future.

The council continues to deliver a wide range of services for all the citizens of the City & County of Swansea. Many of these are of particular benefit to the areas covered by our EIA process, e.g. the protected characteristics defined within the Equality Act 2010.

As highlighted earlier in this statement, the council is committed to protecting the vital frontline services that matter most to the people of Swansea, tackling poverty and looking after the most vulnerable in our communities. The council will continue to do everything it can to meet this increasing challenging commitment given the financial constraints that it faces. However, services may be provided in a different way in line with 'Sustainable Swansea - Fit for the Future'.