

## Equality Impact Assessment: COE/7 Reduction in Ward Discretionary Grant

### Purpose of the Equality Impact Assessment:

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requiring public bodies to give due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations

Consideration must be given to the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act. Assessments should 'consider relevant evidence relating to persons with relevant protected characteristics in relation to such assessments of impact'.

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is to ensure that policies, functions, plans or decisions (hereafter referred to as 'policy' do not create unnecessary barriers for people protected under the Act, and that negative impacts are eliminated or minimised and opportunities for positive impact are maximised.

Screening is a short exercise to determine if a policy is relevant to equality and whether a full equality impact assessment (EQIA) should be carried out.

Title/description of the policy	COE/7 Reduction in Ward Discretionary Grant
Name of the person(s) carrying out the assessment?	Alison Clark, Principal Policy Officer, Rosemary Mackinnon, Principal Policy Officer - Equality
Service and Department	CEO
Date of assessment	08/02/2016
What are the aims and objectives of the policy/function/strategy?	<p>The Council's Programme has commitments to supporting localism and for community-run services. A reduced budget means doing less but some progress with the commitment could still be supported with a reduced Ward Discretionary Budget.</p> <p>The Ward Discretionary Budget is made up of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• £1,178,518 for Ward Discretionary Grants - £53,569 per Ward in 2015/16</li><li>• £148,467 for the Discretionary Youth Budget - £4,879 per Ward, apart from in Wards 1 and 5 where the youth budget is £7,203 and in Wards 3, 7 and 8 where it is £17,062.</li></ul> <p>The Council agreed in December 2014 a reduction in Ward Discretionary Grant by £36k each year for the next 3 years. For 2016/17 the budget would reduce to £1,142,526 (£51,933 per ward) in 2016/17.</p>

	<p>The proposals are to reduce the ward discretionary budget overall by £519,788 in 2016/17, split by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Removing the discretionary youth budget of £148,467; and</li> <li>2. Reducing the Ward Discretionary Grants by a <u>further</u> 32.5% in 2016/17, amounting to £371,321. If agreed, and because of the earlier savings agreed for future years, the profile would become: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £771,205 in 2016/17 (£35,055 per ward)</li> <li>• £735,283 in 2017/18 (£33,422 per ward)</li> <li>• £699,361 in 2018/19 (£31,789 per ward)</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
Who may be affected by the policy	Third sector organisations, and the individuals they support, potentially some organisations will support groups and individuals covered by the protected characteristics.
How have stakeholders been involved in the development of the policy?	
<i>Which parts of the public sector duty is the policy relevant to?</i>	
1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination	
2. Advance equality	✓ Opportunities to remove or minimise barriers or disadvantage, including steps to promote equality and meet different people's needs.
3. Promote good relations	✓ Opportunities to fund community activities that support inclusion
<i>What existing sources of information have you gathered to help identify how people covered by the protected characteristics may be affected by this policy or service?</i>	
Eg Consultations, national or local data and/or research, complaints or customer feedback. Are there gaps in available data?	<p>Discretionary grant, not recurring expenditure, groups supported vary annually.</p> <p>A <u>record</u> is kept of the recipients of grants which demonstrates the types of organisations supported.</p> <p>Consultation: Highland Council's Budget Consultation 2014 included public consultation events, surveys and focus groups. Full details are at <a href="http://www.highland.gov.uk/budgetconsultation">www.highland.gov.uk/budgetconsultation</a>.</p> <p>Respondents to surveys with the Citizen's Panel, the Community Panel and an online questionnaire expressed that the proposals relating to third</p>

	sector funding including further reductions or removal of the ward discretionary budge – <i>Could cause some difficulty</i> to them/their group and the wider community. This was one of the proposals ranked amongst the highest across all surveys for <i>Could cause some difficulty</i> .
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**Screening: Which of the protected characteristics is the policy relevant to?**

Tick and briefly describe any likely equalities impact (positive/negative/neutral).

Characteristic	Positive	Negative	Neutral	comments
Gender		✓		Potential for all PCs to be affected but only because all groups are able to apply. Grant streams are not targeted at groups.
Age		✓		
Disability		✓		
Religion or Belief		✓		
Race		✓		
Sexual Orientation		✓		
Gender reassignment		✓		
Pregnancy/maternity		✓		
Marriage and Civil Partnership*				

*Other groups? As well as the protected groups, are there vulnerable groups e.g. Looked after Children, Homeless people, Carers etc. Please note below: as above*

**Assessments:**

<i>Is there any evidence of, or potential for, negative impact? Does the policy contribute positively to the promotion of equality on any particular group?</i>	Fewer community projects supported, or community projects funded at lower amounts. Potentially as some grant could support groups with protected characteristics e.g. young people, older people.  Age- The removal of the youth discretionary grant means no further support for youth activities from this source is possible, unless it is considered
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	<p>through the remaining ward discretionary grant and/or in using Participatory Budgeting where young people are encouraged to participate.</p> <p>Disability- reduced resource to support any potential applications</p> <p>Gender- reduced resource to support any potential applications</p> <p>Gender Reassignment- reduced resource to support any potential applications</p> <p>Pregnancy/Maternity- reduced resource to support any potential applications</p> <p>Race- reduced resource to support any potential applications</p> <p>Religion and Belief- reduced resource to support any potential applications</p> <p>Sexual Orientation- reduced resource to support any potential applications</p>
<p>Justification – if negative impact is identified, can this be justified?</p>	<p>This is discretionary spend on a one-off basis and does not support long-term activities and is not for core funding. The fund will still be available albeit on a reduced basis. This reduction in funding supports the Council’s requirement to balance its budget.</p>
<p>Mitigation - can the potential for negative impact on particular groups be removed or minimised?</p>	<p>Participatory Budgeting (PB) is underway in some Wards and to date has been successful in engaging members of the public in how best to deploy the grant. This would still be possible but at a much lower level. This method can support the community empowerment and localism agenda.</p> <p>Some funding still exists so continuing support is available, but at a lower level. Members could consider an alternative apportionment of the remaining grant, rather than it being allocated on a flat rate per Ward. For example, factors such as rurality and deprivation could be factored in.</p>
<p>Are there actions identified to advance or promote equality? Please detail.</p>	<p>The grant is retained and consideration is given in the assessment process to the purpose of the funding and the potential to advance equality.</p>

Please provide details of arrangements to monitor and review the policy: Grant awards are reviewed annually and details are published on the Council website.

Please state where the EQIA will be published: The assessment will be published on the Council website.

**Equality Impact Assessment Sign off: For completion by Director or Head of Service**

1. Please check if you are satisfied that the following elements of the EQIA have been considered:

- Gathering information
- Consultation and involvement
- Assessing impact for all protected characteristics
- Mitigating actions identified (if required)
- Opportunity to promote equality
- Arrangements to monitor and review
- Publication arrangements

2. a) Are you prepared to sign off the EQIA? **YES**

b) If "NO" provide details of why and next steps

Name Carron McDiarmid

Position Head of Policy and Reform

Date: 17.2.16