

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee -  
7 September 2016

**Subject:** Equality Action Plans Update

**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive (People, Policy and Reform)

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**Summary**

This report provides an update on the delivery of the Directorate Equality Action Plans 2016/17 and agreed Equality Impact Assessments. It also provides an initial overview of the developing approach to equality planning within the budget and business planning process for 2017/18 – 2019/20.

**Recommendations**

The Committee is invited to note and provide comment on the contents of this report.

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**Wards Affected:** All

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**Background documents (available for public inspection):**

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the officers above.

Budgets and Business Plans: *Communities Scrutiny Committee, 27 January 2016*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In February this year, the Council published its budget and business plans 2016/17. As part of developing these plans officers give consideration to their implications for the Council's duties and objectives in relation to equalities. Each Directorate produced an Equality Action Plan (EAP) which outlined:
- how its work and proposals supported the promotion of equality aligned to the performance areas of the Equality Framework for Local Government
  - where proposals were likely to have an impact on equality in general or on specific characteristics
  - an initial appraisal of which budget proposals would be subject to an equality impact assessment
- 1.2 The EAP approach and template was designed and implemented to respond to comments from Members on the equality contents of the 2014/15 business plans as well as feedback from the LGA following the Council's assessment as part of the Equality Framework for Local Government accreditation process. Members had noted that the 2014/15 plans lacked clarity and detail on equality issues, and the decision was taken to introduce a dedicated EAP as an appendix to the budget and business plan to address this.
- 1.3 In order to embed equality considerations within business-as-usual activity in Directorates, the development of the EAPs was overseen by the Corporate Equality Champions Group which brings together senior managers from across Directorates. The Council's Equality Team played a key role in supporting this process and providing professional support to the Champions and senior managers. This ensured a degree of consistency and alignment to Corporate equality priorities across the EAPs.
- 1.4 The draft EAPs were presented to this Committee in January of this year. Members noted the improvements made in terms of both the clarity of information and how equality considerations were being embedded within Directorates. At this meeting, Members made a number of suggestions for further improvements to the equality planning process and asked for an update on progress with the draft plans part way through the financial year.
- 1.5 This report picks up on both the requests noted above. It provides the Committee with an update on each Directorate's progress against the proposals in its EAP, indicating how equality considerations have been factored into the delivery of some of the Council's activities. The focus is largely on activity in response to those budget and business proposals which were identified as having a potential impact on equality. Reports to this committee in November and February will include further detail on activity in support of the Council's Equality Objectives. The report also outlines the emerging approach to equality action planning in the 2016/17 – 2019/20 business and budget planning process.

## 2. Update on Corporate Core Equality Action Plan

### *Performance, Research and Intelligence*

- 2.1 The Performance, Research and Intelligence service proposed savings of £100k which included the cessation of the telephone survey and a move to an alternative method of understanding residents' views. The telephone survey has become an expensive process to deliver, as the survey requires 30,000 - 40,000 calls to yield a response from 1,100 people. The cost effectiveness of this exercise is further compromised by the fact that it does not effectively reach the full spectrum of resident types. In addition, the process is affected by residents' reduced use of landline telephones as their preferred communication method and a greater use of mobile and online options. As this is not a direct service to residents, it was not envisaged that the changes would impact on people with protected characteristics.
- 2.2 The proposal was agreed and work is ongoing to develop more modern ways of gathering and understanding residents' views. By adopting a mixed-method approach, which utilises new technology and strengths-based conversations aligned to the Our Manchester approach, the Council will be able to conduct more in-depth conversations with residents about what is best about their area, what aspects of their city and their community they are most proud of and how people's strengths and commitment to the city can make Manchester an even better place to live.
- 2.3 It will be important that the new approach also provides an understanding of residents' levels of satisfaction with different services that the Council and its partners provide as this data is an integral part of the Council's commitment to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions.
- 2.4 The new survey will launch in summer 2016. Testing will occur during the first year to understand how effective the new survey is, and the evaluation of the testing will inform the long-term approach.
- 2.5 The ability to analyse the results of this new survey by protected characteristic is an important consideration and is being factored into its development.

### *City Solicitor's*

- 2.6 A number of proposals in City Solicitor's were outlined in the Core EAP, specifically:
- review the existing arrangements for electoral registration thus creating a centralised registration function across GM
  - reduce legal support to taxi licensing applications
  - change the pricing structure for the Nationality Checking Service so that this non statutory service is financially viable and reflects the pricing structure introduced by the Home Office

- 2.7 The review of arrangements for electoral registration is ongoing. Manchester, as part of the AGMA Election Coordination and Support project, continue to look to collaborate with other GM authorities in the delivery of election and registration activity. This includes a GM wide communication strategy and supporting activity for both election and annual canvass periods to encourage all residents to register to vote and participate in the democratic process. The annual canvass process, although different since the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER), still provides for canvassers to visit non responding properties to assist those resident in the completion of registration forms.
- 2.8 The service did not go ahead with the proposal to reduce legal support to taxi licensing applications. The proposal did not proceed at this stage to allow further consideration of delegations by Members. There was therefore no need to develop a full analysis of the equality impact.
- 2.9 The proposal to change the pricing structure for the Nationality Checking Service has been implemented without it causing an equality impact. The Nationality Checking Service (NCS) is voluntarily operated at the Council's discretion. People applying for British Citizenship can send their applications directly to the Home Office, or they can use the NCS to get their applications checked by the Council who will then send them on their behalf. This ensures that people can keep all their original documentation and significantly reduces the risk of errors in the application process.
- 2.10 Applicants can make individual, joint or family applications. The changes to the pricing structure for the Nationality Checking Service involved removing the previously available discount for joint and family applications (the fee for a single adult and for a child has not changed). The new fee structure was launched on 22 March 2016 for appointments booked after 1st April.
- 2.11 It is difficult to determine whether there has been a decrease in demand for the NCS resulting solely from the removal of the discount. A key relevant factor is that the Home Office announced in January 2016 that it was increasing its fees on 18th March, which impacted on the number of applications being made overall. The announcement led to high demand for NCS appointments before the Home Office fee increase, followed by an expected drop in demand afterwards.
- 2.12 The number of individuals booking to use the NCS (adults + children), before and after the Home Office fee change was:

Feb 16	Mar 16	Apr 16	May 16	Jun 16
381	324	261	248	301

Despite the expected lull in April and May, the number of applications is now increasing again. The NCS reports that during this period, there has not been any negative feedback from the public and there have not been any equality issues raised, indicating that the change has not had an adverse equality impact on equality.

### *Communications*

- 2.13 The EAP proposed that the Communications Team would deliver a reduced service offer, together with a review of how services are commissioned and where there would be opportunities for collaboration. Since the publication of the EAP, the proposals have been mitigated and there is no service reduction in Communications that will impact adversely on residents.

### *Revenues and Benefits*

- 2.14 The significant changes to benefits and the welfare reform agenda have, in the main, been implemented by central government and have been subject to their equality assessment and analysis. Where the Council has discretion and has developed local policies, these have been subject to EIAs which have shown that whilst locally implemented policies are relevant to numerous equality groups, they have not had an adverse impact on any one group. The analyses have considered the Welfare Provision Scheme (WPS), the Council's Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme, the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) Scheme and the Discretionary Council Tax Payment (DCTP) scheme. The practical application of these policies in terms of access and spend is considered by the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.15 These discretionary policies will be reviewed ready for the new financial year and, where required, further EIAs carried out to support the new policy implementation.
- 2.16 The Council is currently improving the processes to claim housing benefit. The claim process as determined by central government is complex and difficult for residents. As a result, the Council is moving to an on-line claim process that is accessed via self service, supported self service and full support, i.e. by visiting a resident and completing the form on line with them or at the customer counter. Moving to this process allows claims to be risk assessed and processed more quickly with claimants paid quicker and without having to supply lots of supplementary information. An EIA has been completed which demonstrates that the change will be particularly relevant to the characteristics of race, disability and older age, with the main impacts relating to accessibility of the on-line service. The EIA outlines how accessibility issues will be mitigated, either through support provided directly by the Council or signposting to other avenues of support.
- 2.17 From Autumn 2016 (date to be confirmed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)), the maximum amount a household can receive in income on certain out of work benefits will be reduce from the current £26,000 for couples and lone parents and £18,200 for singles, to £20,000 for couples and lone parents and £13,400 for singles (outside Greater London). Initial indications are that the new capped figures will impact around 1,498 households in the city currently in receipt of Housing Benefit. The Revenues and Benefits Unit has not yet been able to obtain figures for Universal Credit claimants being affected by the cap.

- 2.18 Although a full EIA has been carried out by the DWP of the above change, the Council will be undertaking local activity to ensure that where possible, appropriate advice and support is provided to affected residents. The nature of the cap means that it is likely to have a disproportionate impact on households with children.
- 2.19 Individual household data will be shared by the Revenues and Benefits Unit with Registered Housing Providers, in line with the data sharing powers in the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Social Security (Information-sharing in relation to Welfare Services etc) Regulations 2012, to enable them to carry out proactive engagement, and data will be cross referenced with the Early Help Hubs so that family key workers are aware and can discuss implications and options. The Council's commissioned advice service partners will be providing support for residents. This includes specific support for residents living in private rented accommodation and people who may need additional support due to language.

### *Customer Services*

- 2.20 The proposals to revise the opening hours of the Contact Centre (Council Tax and Benefits service area) and Customer Service Centre which were approved as part of the Council's budget proposals were implemented in May of this year without causing an equality impact. A business impact analysis was considered in the planning of these proposals. This gave the service the opportunity to have due regard of the needs of customers as well as consider any potential impacts on people with protected characteristics should the option to revise opening hours be implemented.
- 2.2 Although it has meant a slight reduction in the universal service offer, monitoring of customer satisfaction demonstrates that the change in the opening hours of these services has had no adverse impact on residents or communities that identify with protected characteristics. These services remain available to all residents and communities and there is no proposal to withdraw the services in their entirety.

## **3. Update on Growth and Neighbourhoods Equality Action Plan**

- 3.1 The Growth and Neighbourhoods Directorate has three main objectives: creating growth; places where people want to live; and, access to jobs for Manchester people. These are delivered through specialist teams which balance the work programme between leading Manchester in sustainable economic growth and the transformation of the city whilst also getting the basics right; ensuring the city is clean safe and green and communities take pride and ownership in their areas and lives. Although the majority of services delivered in Growth and Neighbourhoods are universal and accessed by all Manchester's residents, equalities and consideration to those with additional access needs are integral to the planning and delivery of services throughout the Directorate.

- 3.2 Within the Equalities Action Plan a number of services responsible for delivering change proposals advised that equalities considerations had already been built into their business planning activity. The proposals have been revisited to ensure there have been no changes to what was initially agreed, and to review whether any equality issues have arisen.

*Parks, Leisure and Events*

- 3.3 There have been no changes to the proposals regarding the Commercial Strategy for Parks, Leisure and Events or the temporary closure of Abraham Moss and Moss Side Leisure Centres: work is underway to implement the proposals outlined in the EAP and no equality implications have arisen to date. The proposals regarding parking provision at Heaton Park have been firmed up since the publication of the EAP; the number of disabled drivers' parking spaces will be increased and appropriate usage will be robustly enforced. The parking bays may change location within the park and consideration of accessibility is being incorporated into the planning, which will include an assessment of gradient access to the parking areas and consultation with existing users regarding the new provision.

*Mediation Service*

- 3.4 The proposal to deliver the Mediation Service through a different model, thereby ensuring the continuation of the service provision, has been progressed. The review has resulted in a recommendation which will continue to deliver the service without impacting on the service users. This recommendation is scheduled to be considered in the autumn and subject to agreement, the implementation process will commence by the end of the financial year. Any potential impact on service users with protected characteristics will continue to be considered throughout the process, as mitigating the impact of any changes on residents is a priority.

*EIA Update*

- 3.5 Within the Equalities Action Plan three areas for Equality Impact Assessments were identified:

**Changes to VCS support (working with Children and Families Directorate) including the implementation of the Community Association Grants and Neighbourhood Investment Fund.**

- 3.5.1 Since the EAP was developed the Neighbourhood Investment Fund (NIF) has been separated out from this process. The existing Community Association Grants have been extended until March 2017 to allow time for the overall review to be completed, preventing any impact on equality. There are therefore no changes to the services and no further requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment at this time. The review process is being conducted in consultation with the voluntary and community sector and throughout the review process equalities remains a priority.



3.5.2 As the NIF has been removed from the Voluntary Sector Grant review the process for this grant scheme remains unchanged from the previous year and follows the process formerly used to allocate Cash Grants. Priorities for NIF grants (£20K per ward) are determined with Elected Members and reflect the needs of local communities highlighted in the ward plan. It has been concluded that a full EIA is not needed for this grant scheme at this time as the continuation of arrangements means there is no differential impact on equality. Completion of an EIA will be considered should any future changes to this service be proposed.

### **Reductions to Culture Grants**

3.5.3 Due to the range of Cultural grants that the Council supports, separate EIAs have been completed for:

- changes to the level of funding to support the Halle performing at the Bridgewater Hall;
- Z-Arts' contribution to core costs, and;
- changes to the Cultural Partnership Agreement (small grants) funding.

3.5.4 These equality impact assessments concluded that there was minimal impact on service delivery and no individuals with protected characteristics would be negatively impacted by these changes.

3.5.5 The funding for the Halle performing at the Bridgewater Hall directly contributes to the number of performances that are held. The existing provision is in excess of the minimum contracted amount and the proposed solution would reduce the number of rehearsal days, but it will not impact on the public facing offer and does not have an impact on equality.

3.5.6 Z-Arts receives strategic investment from the Council as a contribution to core costs, to lead the work within the cultural sector working with children, young people and their families. As the organisation works directly with children and families there was some risk a reduction in funding could adversely impact on this group. However, Z-Arts has indicated that it can absorb the proposed funding reduction for 2016/17 without impacting on frontline service delivery, thereby mitigating any potential impact on this group.

3.5.7 The Cultural Partnership Agreements had the largest risk of impact due to the nature of the grants programme, which supports more community focused art organisations that work with a range of individuals with protected characteristics. It has since been agreed that there would be no change to the service provision within this funding programme and any budget reductions would be as a result from a naturally occurring under-spend. Any potential impacts on equality have therefore been mitigated.

### **Waste Management Contract**

3.5.8 The waste, recycling and street cleansing functions are organised into two teams: a dedicated Contract Management Team to effectively manage the

performance of the contract; and an Improvement Team to develop, co-ordinate and monitor a range of programmes and activity designed to change behaviour to reduce the cost of services. The area under consideration for the EIA is the change to clinical waste collections which would impact directly on older or disabled residents. 33 households were identified as recipients of the service and the service has liaised with each household to ensure they are not adversely affected by the changes on a case by case basis. Alternative provision has been agreed thereby mitigating any negative impact on residents.

#### 4. Update on Children and Families Equality Action Plan

4.1 Due to the nature of the Children and Families Directorate's purpose, the majority of its functions and activities are relevant to equality. The major programmes of reform and transformation underway in all areas of the Directorate are aimed at improving services for the most vulnerable in our city and understanding and considering the impact on different equalities groups is fundamental to the delivery of these programmes and embedded in working practices.

4.2 The Children and Families Directorate focus on equalities and subsequent EIAs can be broadly split across children's, adults and education:

<b>Broad area</b>	<b>Identified EIA</b>
Children's	LAC Placements, Permanence and Leaving Care
Education	Reduce free travel to schools
Adults	Living Longer, Living Better
	Learning Disability Services (now incorporated into the All-Age Disability Strategy work)
	Supported Accommodation

4.3 Progress is being made across all of the above areas and service areas are identifying the most appropriate time to complete the EIAs given current programme plans and work on the Manchester Locality Plan.

4.4 Updates on the areas identified in the Directorate's Business Plan are set out below.

##### *LAC Placements, Permanence and Leaving Care*

4.5 The Children's Improvement Programme is focussed on ensuring that the Council has excellent services which effectively meet the needs of all children and young people in the city, particularly those who are at risk and most vulnerable. Taking account of all equalities issues is fundamental to this approach, and runs through the entire improvement programme. Some examples of how equalities issues have specifically been picked up are:

- Focus on increasing the number of foster carers and adopters with an ethnic minority origin is a priority for the Improvement Board and is being monitored.

- Establishment of Children with Disabilities team to provide targeted support for children with additional needs.

4.6 In addition, Children's Services will be working over the coming months to draw together its equalities related activity to inform future planning. In this way, Children's Services proposals in the EAP will be assessed and implemented without causing an adverse impact on equality.

*Living Longer, Living Better*

4.7 The Living Longer, Living Better programme has now moved into the Locality Plan delivery and the One Team integrated health and social care work. The breadth and complexity of this work does not lend itself to a single EIA; it is unlikely that one EIA would be able to capture and articulate the equality impacts related to such a broad spectrum of work in sufficient detail for the Council and NHS to be able to satisfactorily show that due regard has been had. Instead, there is a clear overarching commitment to produce EIAs for each of the individual service specifications that will deliver the strategic objectives of the programme. These EIAs will be produced during the service development stage prior to the commissioning process, which is in line with standard Council practices. Officers from the Council and NHS are working in partnership to coordinate and quality-assure this process with an initial review of progress in the autumn of 2016.

*Learning Disability Services –now part of the All-Age Disability Strategy.*

4.8 The All-Age Disability Strategy has now been produced following a lengthy, bottom-up co-production approach which Members of the Communities and Equality Scrutiny are familiar with. The Strategy was formally signed off in July, this with a clear mandate to set up both the new Partnership Board to oversee the work and a new cross-disability Citizen Engagement Group (CEG). An EIA of the strategic approach will be prepared in late 2016/17 when the Partnership Board has gathered sufficient evidence from its engagement with the CEG to be able to assess the likely impacts on disabled citizens across key age groups. The Learning Disability EIA has been subsumed within this broad portfolio and will contribute to the overall analysis.

4.9 *Supported Accommodation*

A Supported Accommodation Improvement Board has been established which has a holistic focus on implementing a qualitative framework within which managers and employees will work to provide the best levels of care. This new framework will ensure that the proposals within the EAP are implemented without causing an adverse impact on equality, by equipping employees with the relevant skills and knowledge to discharge person centred support to Manchester's most vulnerable citizens. Managers, by example, influence the behaviours of the workforce to jointly deliver a first class service. This will be against a backdrop of improved communication, training and development, and systems and procedures that are fit for purpose and meet statutory duties.

Work is underway to develop a range of products that will ensure this is implemented in a timely and effective manner.

*Reduce free transport to schools*

- 4.10 The proposal to reduce free transport to schools has been implemented and it is not anticipated that this will cause an adverse impact on equality; the EAP stated that the EIA produced in 2015-16 for reductions to this scheme would be reviewed to ensure that its findings were still fit for purpose going into 2016-17, as the reductions extend into this financial year. The review has been completed and the existing EIA analysis was found to be satisfactory. The scheme is therefore currently open to applications in its reduced state. It will not be possible to evaluate whether there have been any equality implications of reducing the scheme until it has closed, decisions on the provision of passes have been confirmed and feedback is received from parents. Information of this type will be available in the autumn.

**5. Equality Action Planning 2017/18 – 2019/20**

- 5.1 The improvements to the Equality Action Planning approach implemented in the 2015/16 business and budget planning process respond to comments previously expressed by the Committee and represented a significant improvement, providing greater clarity and transparency about Directorates' equality related priorities and commitments. The development of these plans and, more broadly, the role of the Corporate Equality Champions Group have represented a positive step in embedding equalities into day-to-day activity across Directorates and services.
- 5.2 In broad terms the intention is to continue with a consistent approach as part of this year's planning process whilst recognising that a three year planning period will inevitably have an impact on how developed some areas of the plan can be. It is recognised however that there are a number of areas where improvements can be made:
- EAPs can give more specific examples of activity that Directorates will deliver to support the Council's strategic equality objectives which have been agreed and published since the 2015/16 EAPs were developed
  - The EAPs can use more accessible language and reduce jargon to give clarity on their messages
  - The timeline for EIAs can be strengthened to show how they will be completed at an appropriate point to enable their findings and proposed mitigating actions to inform the final decisions made on business and budget proposals
  - The role of the Corporate Equality Champions Group (and the Equality Team's support to it) can be further strengthened to ensure that Equality Champions are empowered to provide a more holistic view of equality activity and the implications of proposals across their broad area of responsibility.

5.3 The detailed process for developing the next round of budget and business plans is still developing.. However, the proposal is to incorporate the above improvements within this process.

## **6. Conclusion**

6.1 Building on the feedback provided by the Committee on the equality content of the 2014/15 business planning process, the successful development of EAPs has given all stakeholders including Elected Members and residents improved clarity around Directorates' equality related priorities and activities. Focus is however needed to continue with and build on these improvements.

6.2 Across all of the EAPs, there is evidence that progress on the key proposals has been monitored and understood, and that equality considerations have been factored into delivery. The EAPs act as useful tools to help officers to identify and articulate the potential effect on equality of their business (both positive and negative). This has led in several areas to reasonable measures being used to mitigate any adverse equality impacts.

6.3 The published EAPs outlined where proposals would be subject to an EIA, or where equality considerations had already been factored into the development of the proposals and equality impacts were unlikely. This mid-year review has found that where required, EIAs that were committed to have been completed. Where equality impacts were deemed to be unlikely, services have reviewed customer feedback from the intervening period and been able to demonstrate that this has been the case.

6.4 Across the three EAPs, this mid-year review has identified that the Council is being effective in monitoring and measuring the equality implications of its business and budget planning proposals and in reducing any potential adverse impact on equality as a result.

6.5 It is proposed that the use of EAPs continues and is refined in the next round of planning to support the Council in maintaining its commitment to consider the equality implications of changes and to demonstrate how we are working to drive forward the Council's Corporate Equality Objectives.