

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee - 11 February 2021

Subject: Equalities Update

Report of: City Solicitor

Summary

This report describes the process for and the role of Equality Impact Assessment in the budget process for 2021-22. It outlines how this process has been evolved from previous years as well as highlighting how the service planning and business planning processes have also evolved, to ensure that equality considerations are more fully embedded. The report gives a high level overview of some of the Equality Impact Assessments linked to the 2021-22 budget proposals.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note and comment on the contents of this report.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

The production of an Equality Impact Assessment does not directly impact on the achievement of the City's zero-carbon target, and environment is not one of the monitored characteristics within the EIA template. However, it is recognised that some resident groups in Manchester will potentially particularly benefit from advancement on the zero-carbon agenda (i.e. health impacts for residents with respiratory conditions, such as some older people and some disabled residents) and the EIA provides an opportunity for services to highlight this under the 'other groups relevant to the activity' section.

Our Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	EIAs are a vital component of how the Council has due regard for equality and equitability in its decision making processes. Communities and customers are the focus of the EIAs and the analysis allows the Council to safeguard and enhance community potential and wellbeing in the delivery of its business. This
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	

A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	analysis is relevant across all service areas and functions, and covers a diverse range of resident groups. As such, the EIA framework potentially connects with all of the Our Manchester Strategy outcomes.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

None.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Manchester City Council has a long-standing commitment to promoting equality, celebrating diversity and advancing inclusion. This commitment has underpinned the Council's decision making and business planning processes for some years, with equality featured explicitly in business planning documents and Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) carried out for both budget proposals and business as usual changes to Council functions.
- 1.2 As reported to this scrutiny committee on 14 January, funding announcements in the government's spending review on 25 November 2020 and provisional local government finance settlement on 17 December 2020 suggest the Council be required to make saving in 2021-22 in the region of £50m. The report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer, to Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee 12 January provides more detail on the finance settlement.
- 1.3 The detrimental and compounding effects that the Covid-19 pandemic is having on long-term challenges around inequality mean that these issues are at the forefront of the Council's approach to managing the savings required. In line with its established procedures, the Council will utilise its business and service planning approaches and its EIA framework to ensure that the budget saving process is managed with a particular focus on equality and inclusion.
- 1.4 The committee is asked to note that the cumulative impact assessment, outlined at point 2.7 of this report, has been requested by the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee at its March meeting.

2. Assessing In/equalities in the Budget Process

- 2.1 Completion of equality analyses, to assess the implications of the business planning process for protected groups, is a well-established approach for Manchester City Council. As has been previously reported to this committee, the Council has a two-tiered equality analysis methodology:
 - A brief **Equality Relevance Assessment** tool (ERA) helps services to assess whether there is any relevance to protected groups and / or the Equality Duty (see *Appendix 1*) stemming from their functions, where this is not immediately clear.
 - Where there is a demonstrable relevance to equality issues, services are required to complete a more detailed **Equality Impact Assessment** (EIA), to establish the nature of any impacts arising and to help inform what action can be taken to avoid a disadvantageous impact.
- 2.2 In April 2020, as part of the Council's response to the Coronavirus pandemic, the standard EIA template was amended to streamline the process and allow for swift decision-making whilst retaining due regard for equality. The Council took the opportunity to add several characteristics to the template, in addition to those protected by the Equality Act 2010 (the Act). These additional

characteristics reflect a greater breadth of inequalities than those addressed by the Act, and touch upon the provisions of Section 1 of the Act, the Socioeconomic Duty (which was not enacted). The additional characteristics are:

- Ex-armed forces personnel and their families
- Children, families and other people living in poverty
- People with continuing health conditions
- People with caring responsibilities
- Trans people, non-binary people and other consideration of gender identity (a broader definition than 'gender reassignment' as protected by the Act)
- Homeless people
- Any other group identified as relevant to the activity (must specify)

- 2.3 In response to positive feedback, the 'Covid-19 EIA template' has been amended and adopted for use in the budget and business planning process for 2021-22. This includes inserting an action plan, which requires services to identify what actions will be taken to avoid any adverse impacts identified through the analysis.
- 2.4 The inclusion of poverty in the budget-related assessment template is particularly useful; it is recognised that some of the characteristic groups most likely to be impacted by budget reductions / service changes are also some of those most likely to be living in poverty.
- 2.5 Whilst the EIA template does allow for a high level assessment of poverty impact, where services identify poverty as a distinct issue related to their proposals, a more in-depth analysis of this can be undertaken using the Budget Impact on Family Poverty Assessment Template (short and in-depth versions are available). This tool assesses poverty in relation to place and service, as well as focusing on key groups, i.e. workless families, people in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, lone parents.
- 2.6 Officers are working to progress the Relevance Assessments, EIAs and / or Family Poverty Assessments required against the budget-related proposals put forward. An initial overview of those completed at the time of writing is at *Appendix 2*, with more expected in the coming weeks.
- 2.7 Upon the completion of the individual impact assessments, officers will conduct a read-across the findings to produce a cumulative assessment. This will seek to assess the effects that the combined proposals will have on the various characteristic groups outlined at point 2.2, and stress-test the gathered mitigations from the action plans to ensure that they are viable in the round.

3. Equalities in Service and Business Planning

- 3.1 The 42 services that collectively make up Manchester City Council have recently completed individual service plans, which outline their achievements in 2020/21, their priorities for 2021/22 and what activities will contribute to the

achievement of these. For this year's service planning process, additional questions are included under the following headings:

- **Reductions** - what are services doing differently or stopping?
- **Neighbourhoods** - how does the service take a neighbourhood-focused approach in terms of priorities, decision making and delivery?
- **Equalities** - how does the service support the Council's equalities objectives?

3.2 This builds on the previous approach to service planning and offers clarity on the equality activities of Council services. The service plans underpin the development of:

- the new **Corporate Plan**, which reflects the re-set of the Our Manchester Strategy for the city, the future shape of the Council work and the service plans
- the single **Council-wide Business Plan**, structured around the Corporate Plan priorities

3.3 The Business Plan provides insight into the strategic priorities of the 42 service areas as well as ensuring that the Council continues to get the basics right and prevents problems down the line, with services tackling complex issues together.

3.4 Section 8 of the Business Plan sets out the strategic context of equalities for the Council under the Corporate Plan heading of:

Deliver on our equality, diversity and inclusion commitments to support Manchester's vision to be a progressive and equitable city.

Underpinned by commitments to:

- Work together with Manchester's citizens and our partners to understand our diverse communities, improve life chances, and celebrate diversity.
- As an employer, ensure a fair and inclusive working environment which recognises, values and responds to the dynamics and opportunities of a diverse workforce.

3.5 The inclusion of equality as part of the Corporate Plan, alongside the detail on the Council's equality priorities and activities in the Business Plan, provide useful monitoring, measuring and reporting mechanisms going forwards. The Council is due to renew its accreditation against the Equality Framework for Local Government in the summer of 2021, and the ability to measure progress against the equality priorities set out in the business plan will perform an important function in that reaccreditation process.

4. Conclusion

4.1 The approach described above to further embed equality and inclusion considerations within the annual service and business planning processes is

an evolution of existing practice in the Council. The approach is continually refined to give greater clarity and assurance, and the approach taken this year reflects the prominence of equality considerations in the Council, linked in part to events in 2020 such as the disproportionate impacts linked to Covid-19 and the focus on race equality.

- 4.2 Similarly, the focus on Equality Impact Assessments to analyse and mitigate for adverse impacts is well established. With considerable challenges for the Council's budget in this and coming financial years, the organisation will need to make some very difficult decisions. The approach to EIAs aims to assist this, by helping decisions makers to understand the potential impacts for communities of identity at individual service level, across a range of linked services and with consideration of poverty and deprivation in the City.
- 4.3 The Council's focus on equality and inclusion is not limited to the actions described by the service / business planning process: the plans capture some of the equality-related activity that the Council will progress in 2021-22 but it is not a definitive account. Numerous business as usual works and / or projects that aim to advance equality for one or more identity group will continue to be delivered across a wide range of services. This breadth of activity will be more fully considered in preparation for the Council's reaccreditation against the Equality Framework for Local Government.
- 4.4 It is noted that Member of this scrutiny committee are interested in the progress of the work of the Race Working Group. As a workforce focused project, this work comes under the remit of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee and Members are encouraged to review the notes of its meetings of 1 September and 3 November 2020. Further updates on this work to Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee are yet to be scheduled.