

Core Grants Budget Equality Impact Assessment - Report

1. Introduction

This report summarises the findings of the equality impact assessment (EqIA) carried out on the proposals on future grants set out in the report on Core Grants for 2012-13 by the Assistant Director for Economic Prosperity.

The EqIA was undertaken by a small team consisting of: Jen Anderson (Assistant director Active Communities), Cllr. John Cooper (Portfolio holder for Communities, Safety & Public Health), Andrew Palmer (Head of Strategic Housing), and Ian Barrett (Equality Adviser). With additional input from an external person, Diana Wooldridge (an independent consultant with many years experience of voluntary sector and equality issues) and Eloise Appleby (Assistant Director for Economic Prosperity.)

The aim of the assessment was to ensure that in making its decision on core grants the Cabinet had met its Equality Act 2010 duty to pay “due regard” to equality issues. The growing body of case law in this field has established that to meet this legal duty means councils **must**:

- Ensure consultations are genuinely timely, inclusive, provide sufficient information for participants to make informed decisions, and that the results can be seen to influence the final decision(s).
- Do Equality Impact Assessments (or equivalent processes) properly, in sufficient depth and **before** decisions are made.
- Undertake sufficiently detailed analysis – not just in the EqIA, but in relevant policies, strategies and other documents - to identify **all** the impacts of a proposed decision *and consider mitigating action(s)*.
- Ensure that decision-makers are both aware of their responsibilities in terms of equality *and* have all the necessary information to make an informed decision.

2. Process

The EqIA examined the whole grants budget, but focussed mainly, but not exclusively, on the 5 organisations that will receive the largest grants in 2012/13, namely:

Theatre Royal Winchester
Hatfair
Trinity Winchester
Winchester Area Community Action (WACA) and
The new Winchester District Citizens' Advice Bureau

The assessment team sought to understand the impact of the proposed grants budget on both the organisations themselves and on those groups of people in the community who are protected by the Equality Act whom they serve.

The assessment was undertaken using the information provided in grant applications and associated documents plus team members' knowledge of the organisations. It began by reviewing the very thorough consultation process that been undertaken by officers and by Cllr. Cooper as portfolio holder. This had been undertaken over an extended period and has ensured that:

- Potential applicants have been properly informed about the council's aims, objectives and priorities in making grants.
- All potential applicants have been properly and fully consulted and given every opportunity to give their views.
- Potential applicants needs have been understood and, where the proposals in the budget are to reduce the grant in 2012-13 or in future years, the council has sought to assist and encourage the affected organisations to adapt to these changes and, crucially, given them time to do so.

This has resulted in almost all applicants being offered the level of grant they had requested or looking to the commissioning process to provide equivalent funding from other sources.

The team then explored how the various services, projects and activities of the five organisations listed earlier related to the protected groups covered by the Equality Act and some other characteristics that previous EqIA of council policies and services have identified as potential factors that can contribute to disadvantage or make it harder for vulnerable groups to access services. This was done using a matrix adapted from the council's EqIA process. This is attached as Appendix 1.

N.B. The team was aware that they did not have complete information as applicants had not been asked to supply detailed equality information when applying for grants. The lack of information about how the 5 organisations are interacting with people from some protected groups is neither a criticism of them nor a surprise as, until very recently, few organisations were collecting information on, for instance, religion and belief. At present, the Council is proposing to adopt more detailed service level agreements, and to designate a number of recipients of 'core funding' as Partner Organisations. This will provide an opportunity to improve the Council's understanding of whom the services and projects it is funding are actually benefiting, and ensure that it is meeting its Community Strategy aspiration of "working with our most vulnerable communities". This should be achieved by ensuring that Partner Organisations have in place the correct systems for monitoring equality and diversity in relation to their services and that this information is reported to the Council on a regular basis. If Partner Organisations are struggling to implement these requirements the Council and WACA should ensure that assistance is made available to them.

The team also spent some time discussing some of the other applicants that provide services targeting particular sections of the community - such as older people - and particular neighbourhoods - such as Stanmore - that the Council has identified as priorities.

Lastly, the team considered how the proposals would affect the organisations and those they serve in terms of:

- The impact of the proposal for “A three year funding agreement...in 2012/13, with a specific funding allocation for the first year and a provisional funding commitment for the following two years subject to the Council’s budgetary position.” (Report. Para 4.2)
- The interaction between the grants programme and the development of a ‘commissioning approach’ to services.
- The further development of service level agreements.

3. Key Findings

The assessment team is satisfied that:

- The consultation process has been timely, inclusive and that the proposed budget takes proper account of the views expressed by applicants.
- The grant application process was fair and has not excluded any group from applying.
- Where reductions in grant have been proposed, this has been done on a case-by-case basis with due consideration of applicants’ needs and circumstances.
- Smaller organisations have been protected.
- The Council has negotiated reductions with larger organisations and considered appropriate mitigation measures - such as encouraging Winchester and Bishops Waltham Citizens’ Advice Bureaux to merge so they can use available funding more effectively and protect services.
- Proposals did not discriminate against any protected group.

The assessment identified positive benefits to many protected groups - in particular disabled people, older people and children. These include promoting equal opportunities and fostering good relations between different groups as part, for instance, of arts projects.

The analysis showed clearly that WACA is providing services to or actively seeking to engage with almost all of the protected groups. It also revealed that, in addition to providing services to vulnerable groups, many of the organisations also provide employment and volunteering opportunities that are of great value to both individuals and the wider community. This is a feature of many locally based organisations and should continue to be given due weighting in commissioning processes, which include the grants programmes.

The assessment team takes the view that the proposal of a 3 year funding agreement for partner organisations which provides stability and enables medium term planning is essential to enable reductions in funding to be adapted to. This, together with the ongoing commitment to continuing to engage with partners to help them adapt to economic circumstances, are the key mitigating measures in the proposals. The assessment team also believes that the shift to more detailed service level agreements and a twin-track approach that uses commissioning options creatively and flexibly will help drive efficiencies and innovation and ensure that all vulnerable groups in the district are identified, reached and supported.

In addition to developing equality monitoring, Partner Organisations should also be asked to specifically demonstrate what they do to make their services accessible to these groups.

That might identify some good practice which is currently taken for granted and currently not mentioned in applications; alternatively it could draw out opportunities for improvement.

Recommendations:

1. That the 3 year funding agreement proposal is agreed.
2. That the council works with its Partner Organisations to include useful, appropriate and proportionate equality monitoring requirements in the evolving detailed service level agreements and requires them to provide evidence that they are promoting an active policy to make services accessible to vulnerable/minority groups to meet their needs.

Appendix 1. Grants EqIA – Equality groups covered by key partners.

KEY: Y = group/sub-group can access services Y* = Group-specific project, service or activity
N = Don't provide services for this group/sub-group **N/A** = Not applicable ? = No information
(N.B. This does not imply that these groups cannot access services/projects/ activities, just that assessment team had no information about whether they did.)

PROTECTED CHARACTERISTIC	SUB-GROUP	TRINITY	CAB	HATFAIR	THEATRE ROYAL	WACA
SEX (GENDER)	Women	Y*	Y	Y	Y	Y*
	Men	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
AGE	Over 80	?	Y	Y	Y	Y**
	Over 55	?	Y	Y	Y	Y***
	22-55	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	16 to 21	Y	Y	Y*	Y***	Y*
	Under 16	Y*	N	Y***	Y***	Y**
RACE	White British People	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	White European or Other White People	?	Y	Y*	?	Y*
	Irish People	?	Y	?	?	Y*
	Black or Black British People	?	Y	?	?	Y*
	Asian or Asian British People	?	Y	?	?	Y*
	Chinese or Chinese British People	?	Y	?	?	Y*
	Mixed Race People	?	Y	?	?	Y*
	Gypsies/Travellers	?	Y	?	?	Y*
	People from other minority ethnic groups	?	Y	?	?	Y*
DISABILITY & HEALTH	Physical Impairment	?	Y	Y	Y*	Y***
	Sensory Impairment	?	Y	Y	Y	Y*

PROTECTED CHARACTERISTIC	SUB-GROUP	TRINITY	CAB	HATFAIR	THEATRE ROYAL	WACA
	Long-Term Health Problem	Y*	Y*	Y	Y	Y**
	Mental Illness	Y*	Y	?	?	Y*
	Learning Disability	?	Y	?	?	?
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	Lesbians	?	Y	?	?	Y*
	Gay Men	?	Y	?	?	Y*
	Bisexuals	?	?	?	?	Y*
RELIGION & BELIEF	Faith Groups	Y Partners	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y*
	Atheist, Agnostic or Other belief	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y*
TRANSGENDER		?	?	?	?	Y*
MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP	Married	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Civil Partners	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A	N/A
PREGNANCY & MATERNITY	Pregnant	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A	N/A
	On Maternity Leave	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A	N/A
OTHER	Poor Literacy &/or Numeracy	Y	Y	N	N	N
	Unemployed	Y	Y	?	?	Y*
	Living in rural area	N	Y*	Y*	Y*	Y Indirectly
	Low Income	Y	Y**	Y	Y	N/A
	On Benefits	Y	Y	Y	Y	N/A
	Caring Responsibilities	?	Y*	N/A	N/A	Y*
	Domestic Violence	Y*	Y	N/A	N/A	Y**
	Drug & Alcohol	Y*	?	N/A	N/A	N