

Environment Planning and Regeneration (EPR)***Equalities Impact Assessment statement on 2013/14 Budget Proposals***

The EPR directorate has a total savings target contribution of £3.056 million for the next financial year 2013/14 which represents savings contribution of £1.530 million from the Development and Regulatory Services (DRS) and £1.526 million from the Streetscene service (including Parking.) The savings break down into a total of £2.411 million in efficiency savings, £425,000 in service reductions and £220,000 in new revenue streams.

Details of these proposals were published in the council's Business Planning 2013/14 – 2015/16 report to Cabinet on 7 November 2012. Public consultation on these proposals commenced on 8 November and will end on 31 January 2013.

EPR has also consulted on its proposed 2013/14 schedule of fees and charges increases that it intends to implement from March 2013. The Schedule includes proposed new and above inflation charges for a range of services within EPR. The consultation ran from 8 November to 21 December 2012.

A review of the equality impact of the EPR budget decisions and fees & charges for the 2013/14 year has been undertaken. Most of the proposals have rolled forward from the budget savings process of the previous financial year 2011/12 and for which equalities impact analysis had already been considered and kept under review.

Where a proposal is at an early stage of development EPR will further consider and analyse what, if any, impact there on any protected group when the proposal is better formed. The result of this analysis will then be presented to members when they further consider the proposal.

Efficiency Savings

Consultation and equalities impact assessment for the 2013/14 Parking efficiency savings was undertaken as part of the 2011/12 budget planning process. As the proposal was to maintain the existing service, albeit at a lower cost, and via a private provider it was not anticipated that the change will have an adverse or significant impact on the way the service is delivered or experienced by users in the protected characteristic groups. Nevertheless these are continually monitored via the existing contract protocols in place to ensure that our equalities considerations are up to date.

The other efficiency savings proposed within Streetscene relate to projects and work streams that will be developed over the course of the 2013/14 year. Service led consultations and equality impact assessments will be done as part of the project development and implementation plans. These will give careful consideration in terms of equality and diversity issues in order to identify and analyse what, if any, potential impact the proposals may have on any residents and users of the services within the protected groups.

The bulk of the efficiency savings £1.530 million relate to the ongoing DRS procurement process under the One Barnet Programme. Equalities impact assessment has been undertaken as part of that project.

Service Reductions

Service reduction proposals for the re-profiling of the street lighting column installation programme were considered carefully in terms of equalities impacts during the previous 2011/12 budget savings and consultation process. The programme of street lighting column replacements was being halted and the capital funding saved re-invested in new technology which will allow lights to be dimmed and switched at different times and thus deriving savings in the energy charges of operating the street lighting. By dimming lights the lighting levels will be lowered, however this will be strictly controlled to ensure that the lowered lighting levels are still in compliance with the Code of Practice for lighting the public highway. That assessment concluded an equal impact on the community with no adverse effect in one particular protected characteristics group. Nevertheless these proposals have been considered again to ensure that our equalities considerations are up to date.

Income and Charging proposals

Initial assessments done on proposals relating to changing provider for the textile bring bank contract and introduction of moving traffic violations concluded there is no need to proceed to a full impact assessment. This proposal will use the council's existing powers of enforcement against traffic contraventions to ensure flow of traffic. The duty and service is universal and impact only to road users who are in contravention of traffic laws such as banned turns and obstruction to yellow box junctions. There is no equalities impact anticipated to any of the protected characteristics groupings.

Income generating proposals for roll out of private events in parks were considered carefully in terms of equalities impacts during the previous 2011/12 budget savings and consultation process. Due consideration was given to the equalities impact of proposals to extend hiring of parks for private events in specific parks and identified minimal impact to park users and local residents. These were further mitigated by detailed policies that included assessments on individual application basis. The proposals were subsequently subject to a public consultation which generated significant interest and feedback from local residents. No private events have actually happened in the year since implementation but this will continue to be monitored for impact.

Fees and Charges

The Fees and Charges schedule includes above inflation increases to a number of services including Trade Waste, Clinical Trade waste, & Household domestic and green waste collection, as well as new charging regime for special collections. Careful consideration has been given to these proposals in terms of equality and diversity issues in order to identify and analyse what, if any, potential impact the proposals may have on any residents and users of the services within the protected groups.

EIA risk assessments for proposals to introduce above inflation fees and charges increase to trade clinical waste and trade waste collections concluded that a full equalities impact assessment would not be required. These are services provided primarily to private businesses in a commercially competitive environment and equalities impact is anticipated for any of the protected characteristics.

An equalities impact assessment also considered the potential impacts of the above inflation charges for fete bin services, special collections and household domestic and green waste bins.

Overall, it is not envisaged that the service change will have an adverse impact nor discriminate specifically against any of the equalities groups. The refuse collection service is delivered universally to all households within the borough. It is anticipated that the changes will in fact affect all the identified groups equally.

However the assessment also recognised that whilst overall the proposed changes may have an equal and manageable effect on all the service users/customer groups considered, the impact on specific individuals and households may be higher depending on the income levels of different parts of the borough. Due to the implicit nature of these proposals it is likely the impact on residents who live in areas of greater deprivation within the borough and with lower incomes could be higher than for those who live in other parts of the borough and have greater wealth.

However, this is mitigated by the fact that for most the purchase of a domestic waste Wheeled Bin will be a 'one off' at the point of moving in purchase and so unlikely to affect the vast majority of existing households. New arrivals into the borough or relocating households are more likely to be impacted where there isn't already an existing bin present on location.

Furthermore, the free door to door household recycling service is an encouraged alternative to household residual waste levels that might otherwise require additional and chargeable domestic waste wheeled bins. Recycling boxes are free. The council's free drop in Civic amenity and recycling centre provides an alternative for the chargeable special collections service. There are also other organisations whose services are accessible by residents not willing or able to use the Special Collections service such as Recycle for Free and Barnet Furniture Centre.

Conclusion

EPR is satisfied that due consideration has been given to the equalities impact assessment of the 2013/14 budget decisions including the proposed fees and charges schedule. Care has been taken to ensure that the focus of efficiencies, service reductions and savings are in areas within minimal or no impact to these groups. For instance, above inflation fees and charges increase to reflect increasing disposal and fuel costs have been restricted mainly to commercial trade services. The cost of clinical waste disposal for residents who are typically vulnerable or disabled has been kept free whilst the trade or commercial service fees have increased to reflect costs. Similarly, trade waste collection rates have gone up to reflect costs whilst still remaining competitively priced within the market. The impact of fee increases in services to residents such as special collections and additional domestic waste bins are mitigated by the availability of viable options such as the free drop in civic amenity and recycling centre.