

Argyll and Bute Council: Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment

Section 1: About the proposal

Title of Proposal	
Reconstructing the Council's budget - Business Gateway budget template	
Intended outcome of proposal	
Budget saving	
Description of proposal	
£23k reduction in Business Gateway budget from 2019-20. Possible 1.8 FTE reduction in headcount from 2021-22 (as part of Economic Development & Strategic Transportation Service redesign)	
Business Outcome(s) / Corporate Outcome(s) to which the proposal contributes	
Budget reduction required from Economic Development & Strategic Transportation Service. The service contributes towards: BO15: Argyll and Bute is open for business (proposal will decrease the contribution to this outcome). BO23: Deliver the Local Growth Accelerator Programme to support entrepreneurs. Argyll and Bute Council priority of championing economic development, working in partnership with businesses and supporting targeted economic development within the local areas as part of a strategic approach (proposal will decrease the contribution to this outcome).	
Lead officer details:	
Name of lead officer	Ishabel Bremner
Job title	Economic Growth Manager
Department	Economic Development & Strategic Transportation, Development & Infrastructure
Appropriate officer details:	
Name of appropriate officer	Fergus Murray
Job title	Head of Economic Development & Strategic Transportation
Department	Economic Development & Strategic Transportation, Development & Infrastructure
Sign off of EqSEIA	
Date of sign off	11/01/2019

Who will deliver the proposal?

To allow Business Gateway to deliver discretionary activity aligned to the remaining opportunity to lever in European funding, it is proposed that a review of staffing resources is made during 2020/21, **aligning to the requirement for a redesign of the Economic Development and Strategic Transportation Service**, to be realised, as appropriate, for the financial year 2021/22.

Section 2: Evidence used in the course of carrying out EqSEIA

Consultation / engagement

Discussion with Fourth Tier Manager responsible for Business Gateway team during one-to-one meetings further to the publication of the Reconstructing the Budget templates during 2018 which focused on the requirement to articulate a **minimum service delivery** for Business Gateway.
All Business Gateway staff informed of the resulting budget proposal prior to being published in advance of the Policy and Resources Committee on Thursday, 13th December 2018.

Data

Business Gateway CRM system and Business Gateway results, showing the volume of SMEs supported, volume of adviser meetings and enquiries, geographical location of SMEs and their growth potential.

Other information

N/A

Gaps in evidence

Uncertainties still remain on how this proposal will sit with the proposed Economic Development & Strategic Transportation Service redesign.

Section 3: Impact of proposal

Impact on service users:

	Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
Protected characteristics:				
Age		X		
Disability		X		
Ethnicity		X		
Gender		X		
Gender reassignment		X		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		X		
Pregnancy and Maternity		X		
Religion		X		
Sexual Orientation		X		
Fairer Scotland Duty:				
Mainland rural population	X			
Island populations	X			
Low income	X			
Low wealth	X			
Material deprivation	X			
Area deprivation	X			
Socio-economic background	X			

	Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
Communities of place	X			
Communities of interest	X			

Impact on service deliverers (including employees, volunteers etc):

	Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
Protected characteristics:				
Age		X		
Disability		X		
Ethnicity		X		
Gender		X		
Gender reassignment		X		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		X		
Pregnancy and Maternity		X		
Religion		X		
Sexual Orientation		X		
Fairer Scotland Duty:				
Mainland rural population	X			
Island populations		X		
Low income	X			
Low wealth	X			
Material deprivation		X		
Area deprivation		X		
Socio-economic background		X		
Communities of place		X		
Communities of interest		X		

If any 'don't know's have been identified, at what point will impacts on these groups become identifiable?

N/A

How has 'due regard' been given to any negative impacts that have been identified?

Any reduction in Business Gateway headcount (under consideration for 2021-22) will reduce the capacity to deliver the current level of support to Argyll and Bute's SMEs. The potential savings identified would result in **only** the minimum service (as specified in the Business Gateway National Service Specification) being delivered.

This would mean only SMEs with higher growth potential (+£100k turnover growth or taking on staff) can access face-to-face Business Adviser support. The remainder (the majority of Argyll and Bute's business base) would be referred to online support or workshops. This is likely to impact island and remote mainland populations most, since workshops are delivered for cost-efficiency reasons in Argyll's main towns. Focusing resource on growth businesses is also likely to disadvantage low income/low wealth clients as they will not be able to access face-to-face support.

In addition Business Adviser travel to island and remote areas is likely to be reduced with a reduction in Adviser capacity. This could be mitigated in part by Skype/email support from Business Advisers or clients could travel to 'Meet The Adviser' sessions in Argyll's main towns.

How has 'due regard' been given to any negative impacts that have been identified? (continued)

The £23k budget reduction from 2019-20 has been mitigated for three years by using the West of Scotland Loan Fund surplus as match funding for the European funded programme of business support running until 2022. However, after this, the budget cut will mean zero capacity to fund (or match fund) any future business grant/support programmes.

The staff that will be affected by the 1.8 FTE reduction could also have a negative impact on mainland communities if redundant staff need to move out of the area to find alternative employment, or remain in the area will on no and/or lower income which will not only impact on personal wealth but the general wealth creation for the Argyll and Bute area.

It is hoped that assistance will be provided to enable staff subject to redundancy to again alternative employment within the Argyll and Bute area.

Section 4: Interdependencies

Is this proposal likely to have any knock-on effects for any other activities carried out by or on behalf of the council?

Yes

Details of knock-on effects identified

Reduced support for Argyll and Bute's SMEs may impact businesses' perceptions of the Argyll and Bute Council. It will also limit Business Gateway capacity to deliver SME support aligned to the Rural Growth Deal.

Businesses will be made aware of any reduction in service provision.

Section 5: Monitoring and review

How will you monitor and evaluate the equality impacts of your proposal?

All client enquiries and support given is recorded on the Business Gateway CRM system. This permits the geographical location of SMEs supported to be monitored, which should show any impact on remote rural or island businesses.