

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Community Empowerment Committee

approval noting

Ref LMcM/AC/EW

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Action on Gender Equality Project: Gender Budgeting: From Theory to Action

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Executive Summary

This report provides details of a proposal for the Council to participate in an Action on Gender Equality Project with the Scottish Women's Budget Group (SWBG). The project aims to support greater use of gender budgeting tools in local decision making in Scotland to reduce inequalities.

These aims directly align with the Plan for North Lanarkshire and would have the benefit of strengthening our understanding of gender budgeting processes and embedding these across the Council to ensure challenging inequalities is at the forefront of our decision making.

Recommendations

Committee is recommended to:

- (1) endorse participation in the Action on Gender Equality Project: Gender budgeting: From Theory to Action; and
- (2) agree to the implementation of the training as detailed in Section 2.1.3 of the report.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority Improve economic opportunities and outcomes

Ambition statement (25) Ensure intelligent use of data and information to support fully evidence based decision making and future planning

1. Background

- 1.1 As members are aware, in March 2021 the Council became one of the first Local Authorities to be awarded Bronze Standard in the world leading Equally Safe at Work employer accreditation programme. Equally Safe at Work aims to advance gender equality in the workplace as a strategy for tackling violence against women. It is well understood that violence against women is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality.
- 1.2 In November 2021, the Scottish Women's Budget Group launched a project (Gender Budgeting from Theory into Action) which aims to support greater use of gender budgeting tools in local decision making in Scotland to reduce inequalities. Five Scottish Local Authorities were invited to come forward to participate.
- 1.3 The Council's Equally Safe at Work Working Group and Elected Member Equality Champion agreed that participating in such a project would bring benefits to both the Council and women. Research into the impact of Covid-19 on women shows that, without mitigating action, the pandemic has the potential to reverse gender equality gains and reinforce women's pre-existing inequality.
- 1.4 Building on ongoing commitments to address gender inequality, an initial note of interest to participate was lodged, on behalf of the Council, with the Scottish Women's Budget Group (SWBG).

2. Report

2.1 Action on Gender Equality Project: From Theory to Action

- 2.1.1 As previously mentioned the project aims to support greater use of gender budgeting tools in local decision making to reduce inequalities. The Council's participation in the project will:
 - build the knowledge of key staff and elected members regarding the role of intersectional gender analysis within policy and budget decision making processes;
 - ensure that the Council is making best use of data to reduce inequalities;
 - improve the quality of the Council's equality impact assessments and budget decision making processes in terms of reducing inequalities; and
 - assist the Council to meet its Public Sector Equality and Fairer Scotland Duties to advance equality and tackle socio-economic disadvantage.
- 2.1.2 In terms of project support, the Council will receive specialist resources and support provided by SWBG which will include:
 - access to free online and in person training, with tailored provision based on our identified needs;
 - 40 hours mentoring support to look at specific policy areas and support the use of gender analysis tools in equality impact assessments and budget processes; and
 - access to action learning sets to support staff for the duration of the project and until 2024.

- 2.1.3 Input will be required from both officers and elected members and participation would involve the Council signing up to the following:
- commit that 75% of elected members will attend a 2 hour briefing on Gender Budgeting and their role – with opportunity for further input with elected members if requested;
 - commit that staff at various levels and services will engage in training sessions including:
 - Heads of Services attending 2 half day training sessions;
 - open opportunity for staff across all services to attend introductory training;
 - key staff in finance, policy, equalities to attend bespoke training and will work with the SWBG to embed gender budgeting analysis;
 - a link worker within the council who will act as a key contact and conduit;
 - support to circulate a survey to elected members and key staff, and participate in some small focus group discussions to understand existing knowledge and barriers to gender budget analysis, and help inform the programme of work; and
 - provide access to the Council's equality impact assessment and budgetary paperwork, governed by a confidentiality understanding.
- 2.1.4 The project will be undertaken over three years beginning in January 2022 when briefing information on gender budgeting will be issued to elected members, before the training proceeds with the new administration members post-May. Engagement with key employees can and will begin immediately.
- 2.1.5 As detailed in this report it is clear that the aims of this project directly align with the Plan for North Lanarkshire by strengthening our understanding of gender budgeting processes and embedding these across the Council to ensure challenging inequalities is at the forefront of our decision making.

3. Public Sector Equality Duty and Fairer Scotland Duty

- 3.1 Participating in this project will assist us to meet our Public Sector Equality and Fairer Scotland Duties to advance equality and tackle socio-economic disadvantage

4. Impact

4.1 Financial impact

- 4.1.1 Participating will help the Council ensure that budget decisions are seen through a gendered lens thus advancing equality.

4.2 HR policy / Legislative impact

- 4.2.1 Assists the Council meet our equality and Fairer Scotland duties.

4.3 Technology / Digital impact

- 4.3.1 None anticipated.

4.4 Environmental impact

- 4.4.1 None anticipated.

4.5 **Communications impact**

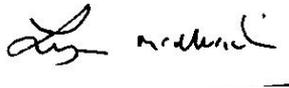
- 4.5.1 Participation in the Gender budgeting: From Theory to Action programme will provide an opportunity for the Council to actively promote its work in terms of Equality and Fairer Scotland duties.

4.6 **Risk impact**

- 4.6.1 Participation in the Gender budgeting: From Theory to Action programme will assist the Council to reduce any risks associated with non-compliance in terms of Equality and Fairer Scotland duties.

5. **Measures of success**

- 5.1 Improve the quality of the Council's equality impact assessments and budget decision making processes in terms of reducing inequalities.
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