

Equality Impact Needs Assessment Screening Executive Summary:

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Package Plan EINA

Policy Outline

The central focus of the ERDF programme is to promote equality between and within EU regions. This strategic Package Plan sets out the intention for use of £24m ERDF funds to match-fund local investments in economic development in some of the most deprived areas of Birmingham and indeed in England, as statistics show:

Birmingham has 254 SOAs in the top 10% most deprived nationally; this represents 40% of the region's SOAs in this category. (ERDF Priority 3 Research, February 2010 West Midlands Regional Observatory p6). Birmingham City Council mapping shows the Birmingham ERDF Priority 3 area covers the central point of 106 of these representing around 16% of the Region's most deprived neighbourhoods. 4 of the 6 wards in the Birmingham ERDF area are listed as having the highest Job Seekers Allowance Claimant% in the Region (ERDF Priority 3 Research, February 2010 West Midlands Regional Observatory p12).

As well as suffering from high levels of deprivation, the ERDF Package area also has a higher than average BME population: 71% compared to a Birmingham average of 29% (2001 census). The single largest ethnic group is Asian/Asian British at 56%, followed by Black/Black British at 9%. These compare with the Birmingham averages of 20% and 6% respectively (2001 Census).

The wards that fall entirely within the Package Area have the following BME population: Sparkbrook 80%; Aston 77%; Washwood Heath 73%; Bordesley Green 71%; and Nechells 57% (2001 Census).

As the Package aim includes the promotion of local growth, there should be a positive impact on local businesses. Given the high percentage of BME population in the area, it would be expected that a significant number of these should be BME led (there are no statistics to analyse this). It is therefore proposed that monitoring of business support be undertaken to determine the impact, at least within each project, across ethnic groups.

In seeking to co-ordinate a Package of funding applications to invest in economic development in the locality such as: business infrastructure, managed workspace, business support solutions, energy efficiency projects, job creation, and projects to support local people to access employment, the Package Plan aims to support some of the most in need with the opportunity and the access to better infrastructure for business and more and better jobs.

The local communities will also benefit from environmental improvements resulting from the re-use of redundant or under-used sites and buildings, and the investment in energy efficiency solutions which should improve quality of life and incomes for local businesses and householders.

Birmingham City Council, as owner of the Package Plan, has created and supported an ERDF Package Steering Group including BCC Officers from the relevant area development and business support teams. The Vice Chair is the representative from the employment related team and other members include the Council officer leads of the Aston Pride New Deal for Communities Partnership and the Enterprising Communities Partnerships. In addition there are representatives of external partner organisations: Advantage West Midlands, Business Link West Midlands, the Skills

Funding Agency and the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. Each member is tasked with inputting to the co-ordination of the Package Plan projects regarding their area of expertise and strategic and local knowledge to seek to ensure that the plan delivers its aims for economic development for the locality and its communities.

In terms of promoting equality on the delivery of projects, a cross-cutting theme of the ERDF regional programme is Equality of Opportunity, and each individual project in the plan will be required to plan for equality of opportunity throughout the project development process. In 2010 the Regional Development Agency (the Agency's) project application was improved in this regard to be more rigorous, demonstrating the continuous improvement of the ERDF programme in this regard.

The ERDF Package Plan will compliment the delivery of main programme economic development, business support and innovation and access to employment activities being undertaken by the City Council and other providers.

Steps taken to carryout the EINA Assessment Initial Screening Stage

The EINA Lead officer (Tara Verrell, ERDF package Strategic Coordinator) sought the advice of the Birmingham City Council Development Directorate Equality and Diversity champion who provided comments on the initial draft.

The draft EINA Assessment Initial Screening Stage was then submitted to the Birmingham City Council Development Directorate Diversity and Equalities Steering Group meeting on 11 August, no comments were received at the meeting or during the following response time for comments.

The Final EINA Assessment Initial Screening Stage was then submitted to the Birmingham ERDF Package Steering Group meeting on 13 September resulting in the following comments:

- there should be finer detail on the local demographics to show the localisation of communities in the area (amendments made in the Screening Document and this Executive Summary)
- That the difficulties in equalities monitoring regarding businesses (i.e. regarding the sole trader or directors of SMEs) should be explored and included in any monitoring recommendations. (advice provided by Birmingham City Council Business Development team and Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry; amendments made in the Screening Document and this Executive Summary)

These comments were taken into account in the final version of the Screening report, this Executive Summary and a Monitoring Guide for projects, which were then agreed by the ERDF Steering Group on the 3rd December 2010.

Summary of recommendations

The findings of the EINA Assessment Initial Screening Stage are that the ERDF Package Plan has the potential to indirectly promote Equality of Opportunity and good community relations, but that the specific equalities impact effects should be assessed and managed via the individual projects, since the projects are the only vehicle through which the funding is implemented. Therefore a Full Equalities Impact Assessment is not suitable for the Package Plan itself.

ERDF guidance requires projects to monitor beneficiaries by number supported and gender. However, to better determine the impact of ERDF on specific groups within

the Package Area, it is proposed that projects should make every endeavour to monitor additional information including: ethnicity, age, disability, post code, employment status and gender.

Projects that support businesses should also make every endeavour to monitor the number of businesses supported by ethnicity and gender.

These expectations will be applied to all projects within the Package, including those delivered by Partners. It is expected that details of this additional monitoring should be included in a project's "Evaluation Plan" (a required Annex of each Project Application).

ACTION: A Monitoring Guide will be produced to assist all projects with this requirement.

It is also proposed that there be an assessment as to whether it is practicable that the Birmingham ERDF Package projects managed by Birmingham City Council utilise a corporate client tracking system currently used by the Working Neighbourhood Fund programme. This assessment will be carried out by 31 December 2010.

Future Arrangement for Monitoring and Review

The monitoring of the recommendations above will be undertaken by the ERDF Package Coordinator and overseen on a quarterly basis by the Birmingham ERDF Package Steering Group, or if that group should not continue for the duration of the Package Plan (to December 2015) the monitoring should be carried out by the Development Directorate of Birmingham City Council as long as it continues to be Package Owner.

The equalities impact of the Birmingham ERDF Package Plan should be reviewed annually from the date of the approval of the assessment.