



August 11th, 2021

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting to be held on **Thursday, 12th August 2021** at **6:00 pm** in **Mourne Room, Downshire Chamber.**

Chairperson - Councillor O Hanlon

Deputy Chairperson - Councillor P Brown

Councillor P Byrne

Councillor S Doran

Councillor H Gallagher

Councillor R Howell

Councillor O Magennis

Councillor D Murphy

Councillor B O'Muirí

Councillor H Reilly

Councillor M Savage

Councillor G Sharvin

Councillor D Taylor

Councillor J Tinnelly

Councillor W Walker

Agenda

1.0 Introduction and Apologies

2.0 Declarations of Interest

3.0 Action Sheet arising from SPR Committee Meeting held on Thursday 17 June 2021

 *SPR-Action Sheet arising from 17 June 2021 (002).pdf*

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For Consideration and/or Decision

4.0 Notice of Motion regarding Digital Poverty

 *Notice of Motion re Digital Poverty Draft.pdf*

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 *Appendix 1 Letter to M McIlveen M for Education.pdf*

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 *Appendix 2 letter to Northern Ireland Executive Office.pdf*

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 *Appendix 3 Workshop and presentation for Elected Members.pdf*

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5.0 Future Funding opportunities & resource requirements

 *Future Funding Opportunities.pdf*

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6.0 PHA Covid-19 Testing Facility at Albert Basin, Newry

 *Albert Basin Covid-19 Testing Facility Aug 21 SPR.pdf*

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7.0 Response to NIPSO Consultation on Complaints Handling Procedures

 *Response to NIPSO Consultation.pdf*

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 *NIPSO Consultation Questionnaire.pdf*

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8.0 Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Bill - Survey

 *Parental Bereavement Leave.pdf*

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Conferences/Events

9.0 APSE Annual Seminar (7 - 9 September 2021 The ICC, Birmingham)

- Councillor Andrews
- Three nights' accommodation **£290.00** per person
- Plus Return Flights Approx **£155.00**

Items deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

10.0 Options for the Distribution of the 2022 Annual Report/NMD Connect Citizens Magazine

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

 *Options for the Distribution of the 2022 Annual Report - NMD Connect.pdf*

Not included

11.0 Sub-lease of store room at Downshire Civic centre

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

 *Sub-Lease of Store room at Downshire Civic Centre to NIHE.pdf*

Not included

 *Lease map - Downshire CC - Store room highlighted.pdf*

Not included

12.0 Bridge Street car-park, Kilkeel

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

 *Bridge Street car-park Kilkeel.pdf*



Not included

 *Bridge Street car-park Kilkeel (003).pdf*

Not included



13.0 Surrender of Lease - Units 1 and 8 McGrath House, Margaret Street, Newry.

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to an individual and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

 <i>Surrender of Lease - 1 and 8 McGrath House Newry.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>SPR - Request to surrender Lease of Unit 1 and 8 McGrath House - 13th August 2020.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>

14.0 Surplus Asset - The Clock Recreation Area Shrigley D1 Process Update

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

 <i>Disposal of Surplus Asset - Recreational Area Shrigley.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Appendix 1 - EOI Questionnaire - Sir Hans Sloane Centre.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>


15.0 Appointment of a Consultant for the purposes of business case development for the upgrade of the Council's Public Space & Facilities CCTV Systems

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) - and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business

 <i>Appointment of Consultant for CCTV Business Case.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
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16.0 Regularisation and upgrade of ESRI Software and Procurement of Enterprise Licence Agreement

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) - and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

 <i>Regularisation and upgrade of ESRI Software and Procurement of Enterprise Licence Agreement_.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Appendix 1 - ESRI Regularisation Business Case.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>

17.0 Newcastle Centre - Capital Build Project

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) - and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

 Newcastle Centre - Capital Project August 2021.pdf	Not included
 Appendix 1 Newcastle Centre Extension Report.pdf	Not included
 Appendix 2 Newcastle Centre Extension Report Cost Breakdown.pdf	Not included
 Appendix 3 Newcastle Centre Extension ME Report.pdf	Not included
 Appendix 4 - Newcastle Centre Revised Operating Hours.pdf	Not included

18.0 Terms and Conditions Update





This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – 1) Information relating to any individual, 2) information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual, 4) information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the Council or a government department and employees of, or office holders under, the Council and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

 Terms and Conditions update.pdf	Not included
 Copy of Agreed Workplan with JTUS - 09 08 21.pdf	Not included

Items deemed to be exempt under paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

19.0 Staff Severance Scheme

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the Council or a government department and employees of, or office holders under, the Council and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business

 Staff Severance Scheme.pdf	Not included
 Appendix 1 - 23 October 2020 SPRC Report.pdf	Not included
 Copy of Appendix 2 - Financial Impact of Severance Examples.pdf	Not included
 Appendix 3 - Ready Reckoner.pdf	Not included

FOR NOTING Items deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

20.0 Management Accounts – Q1 2021/22

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

 **Management Accounts.pdf** **Not included**

 **Copy of Appendix 1 - Mgt Acs by Directorate.pdf** **Not included**

 **Copy of Appendix 2 - Mgt Acs Detail by AD.pdf** **Not included**

21.0 Strategic Finance Working Group Action Sheet - 2 July 2021

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

 **SFWG - Action Sheet 2.7.2021.pdf** **Not included**

For Noting


22.0 NMDDC Response to the NILGA Consultation Paper: Vision and Development of Local Government (Phase One) 2021-23

 **SPR Cover Report - NMDDC Response to NILGA Framework.pdf** **Page 48**

 **Appendix 1 NMDDC Consultation Response - NILGA Framework.pdf** **Page 51**

 **Appendix 2 Vision Dev Plan 2021 - 2023 (FOR COUNCIL CONSULTATION FINAL).pdf** **Page 57**

23.0 Annual report for the period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021 on requests related to naming Council facilities, planting trees and to locate artworks/sculptures on Council property

 **Annual report for the period 1 April 2020 31 March 2021 on requests related to naming Council facilities planting trees and to locate artworkssculptures_.pdf** **Page 66**

24.0 Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period April – June 2021 & Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2020-2021

 **Statutory reporting - Quarterly Policy Screening Report for period April - June 2021 Annual Report to ECNI.pdf** **Page 70**

Invitees

Cllr Terry Andrews

Mr Alan Beggs

Ms Kate Bingham

Cllr Patrick Brown

Cllr Robert Burgess

Cllr Pete Byrne

Mr Gerard Byrne

Mrs Dorinnia Carville

Cllr Charlie Casey

Cllr William Clarke

Cllr Dermot Curran

Cllr Laura Devlin

Ms Louise Dillon

Cllr Sean Doran

Cllr Cadogan Enright

Cllr Aoife Finnegan

Cllr Hugh Gallagher

Cllr Mark Gibbons

Cllr Oonagh Hanlon

Cllr Glyn Hanna

Cllr Valerie Harte

Cllr Roisin Howell

Miss Veronica Keegan

Mrs Sheila Kieran

Cllr Mickey Larkin

Cllr Alan Lewis

Mr Michael Lipsett

Mrs Regina Mackin

Cllr Oonagh Magennis

Mr Conor Mallon

Cllr Gavin Malone

Cllr Cathy Mason

Mr Johnny Mc Bride

Colette McAteer

Cllr Declan McAteer

Cllr Leeanne McEvoy

Jonathan McGilly

Cllr Harold McKee

Patricia McKeever

Cllr Karen McKevitt

Cllr Andrew McMurray

Catrina Miskelly

Mr Colin Moffett
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Mr Ken Montgomery
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Cllr Roisin Mulgrew
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Cllr Declan Murphy
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Cllr Barra Ó Muirí
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Mr Fearghal O'Connor
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Linda O'Hare
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Cllr Gerry O'Hare
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Cllr Kathryn Owen
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Mr Andy Patterson
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Colin Quinn
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Cllr Henry Reilly
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Ms Alison Robb
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Cllr Michael Ruane
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Cllr Michael Savage
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Cllr Gareth Sharvin
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Donna Starkey
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Cllr Gary Stokes
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Sarah Taggart
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Paul Tamati
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Cllr David Taylor
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Cllr Jarlath Tinnelly
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Cllr John Trainor
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Cllr William Walker
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Mrs Marie Ward
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ACTION SHEET – STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING (SPR) – THURSDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2021

SPR/019/2021	(SPR/003/2021- Letter to Health Minister Mr Swann and contact with PHA)	Further that previous request for a drive-in and walkthrough facility in Newry to remain on Action Sheet and update provided to members as situation evolves.	D Carville	To update members	N

ACTION SHEET – STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING (SPR) – THURSDAY 17 JUNE 2021

SPR/086/2021	To agree start times for SPR Committee Meeting dates & times	it was agreed that the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meetings would commence monthly at 6.00pm.	D Carville/ Democratic Services	Noted	Y
SPR/087/2021	Action Sheet of the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meetings held on 13 May 2021.	It was agreed that the action sheet from the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meetings held on 13 May 2021, be approved.	D Carville	Noted	Y
SPR/088/2021	Social Media & Acceptable use Policy and Procedure	It was agreed to approve the draft Social Media and Acceptable Use Policy and Procedure.	R Mackin	Approved	Y
SPR/089/2021	Directorate Business Plans	It was agreed to approve the Assessment of the Chief Executive's and Corporate Services Emergency Business Plans (October 2020 – March 2021) and the Chief Executive's and Corporate Services Directorate Business Plans 2021-22.	M Ward	Approved	Y

SPR/090/2021	Performance Improvement Plan 2021-22	It was agreed to Performance Improvement Plan 2021-22 (including the five performance improvement objectives), Consultation and Engagement Report 2021-22 and Objective Delivery Plans 2021-22.	D Carville	Approved	Y
SPR/091/2021	Report Re: The creation of a Northern Mutual Bank	It was agreed to support the campaign for the implementation of a Northern Mutual Bank and for a Councillor to join the Advisory Committee.	D Carville	Agreed	Y
SPR/092/2021	Centenary Commemoration of the opening of the Ulster Tower – 20 November 2021.	It was agreed to approve 4 places be booked to attend the Ulster Tower Centenary Commemoration event 18-21 November 2021, with Councillor Walker to confirm if Councillor Owen will be attendance. If confirmed that Councillor Owen wished to attend, it was agreed that Councillor Walker could also attend, however, he would be paying the cost himself.	R Mackin	Approved	Y
SPR/093/2021	Request for names to be added to Killyleagh War Memorial	It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Taylor, to approve the request for 5 names as listed in 2.6 of the officer's report to be added to the Killyleagh War Memorial.	A Robb	Approved	Y
SPR/094/2021	National Association of Councillors Management Meeting	It was agreed to approve the request for Councillor Casey to attend as Vice-Chair of National Association of Councillors.	Democratic Services	Approved	Y
SPR/095/2021	Sickness Absence Report June 2021	It was agreed to note the contents of the report.	L Fitzsimons	Noted	Y
SPR/096/2021	Friends of The Somme – Yearly Subscription 2021/2022	It was agreed to note the contents of the report.	Democratic Services	Noted	Y

SPR/097/2021	Newry City Regeneration Programme Board	It was agreed to note the minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting held on 13 April 2021 and Workshop held on 4 May 2021.	C Mallon	Noted	Y
<u>ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014</u>					
SPR/098/2021	Forkhill Former Barrack Site Report of Slieve Gullion.	<p>It was agreed that Elected Members approve the following recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Council reply to DFC acknowledging the correspondence following the completion of the public consultation process and reaffirm its continuing commitment to work with them and others to take forward the overall development of the site. 2. Given the ongoing maintenance issues with the former play area/toilets Bog Road leased site (which is not in Council ownership), acquisition of the remaining green central acreage of the Forkhill Site presents an opportunity to work with the local community to develop a grassed/planted open space area under full Council maintenance and management. 3. Officials to approach funders to work with Council and the local community to help develop and fund green space proposals for future community use and enjoyment of the Forkhill Former Barracks Site. 4. Council to ensure that any transfer of lands from DFC to Council is at Nil Cost as previously discussed at the outset of the DI process. 5. Relevant Council Departments to be mindful of the site in regards future leisure/play/sports plans and strategies that they are developing. 	J McGilly	Approved	Y

SPR/099/2021	Bann Road, Castlewella - Storm Attenuation Project	<p>It was agreed that Elected Members approve the following recommendations:</p> <p>3.1 Members to note the content of the report and approve to add this project to the Capital Programme.</p> <p>3.2 Based on the costs estimate provided by our consultant approval of a budget of £95,000 be assigned to the capital programme for this project.</p>	C Quinn	Approved	Y
SPR/100/2021	Request from PHA For National Testing Partnership Venue in Downpatrick (walk-in testing facility)	<p>It was agreed that Elected Members approve the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That members consider the content of the report. • Members confirmed their agreement to continue discussions with the PHA for the potential leasing of the all-weather play area at Down Leisure Centre, for the purposes of a 'walk-in' Covid-19 test centre for up to 6 months. • A further report to be brought to this Committee prior to the end of the first 3 months to determine if Council wishes to exercise our rights to terminate the lease after the first 3 months. 	C Quinn	Approved	Y
SPR/101/2021	Regularisation of IDOX Procurement & Contractual arrangements	<p>It was agreed that Elected Members approve the following:</p> <p>To consider the attached business case and approve the regularisation of the procurement and contractual arrangements for a five-year term with the incumbent supplier, utilising Lot 2b of Crown Commercial Service Framework Agreement RM3821, as a compliant procurement vehicle to direct award existing service continuation.</p>	D Carville	Approved	Y
SPR/102/2021	Rates Support Grant 2021/2022	<p>It was agreed that Elected Members note the officer's verbal update provided and the contents of the letter attached, and together with other affected Councils contact the Minister for Communities and the Minister for Finance to express this Councils concern at the reduction of Rates Support Grant to Councils and request its immediate reinstatement to previous level of support.</p>	D Carville	Noted	Y

SPR/103/2021	Siting of Bee-Hives on former Council landfill site at Aughnagun	It was agreed that Elected Members approve the following: i) Valuation is obtained to assess the licence fee payable for use of the Council Lands at Aughnagun by the bee-keeping group, following which approval is then Sought from the Department for Communities for the granting of the Licence agreement at a nominal sum.	F O'Connor	Approved	Y
SPR/104/2021	Licence agreement with Drumaness Snooker Club	It was agreed that Elected Members approve the following: i) That approval be given to a 10-year Licence agreement with Drumaness snooker club at an annual rate of £1,000 subject to Departmental approval being obtained of the lower rate payable in respect of the annual licence fee.	F O'Connor	Approved	Y
SPR/105/2021	Licence of strip of land at Down Leisure Centre	It was agreed that Elected Members approve the following: i) That approval to be sought from the Department for Communities for the granting of the Licence agreement for the operation of a cycling hub at a nominal sum and a Licence agreement is then entered into with Cycling Ireland;	F O'Connor	Approved	Y
SPR/106/2021	Proposed lease of lands at Ameracam Lane, Cranfield, Killeel to NI Electricity Networks.	It was agreed that Elected Members approve to grant a Lease to NIEN of the lands outlined in red on the Map as per the officer's report, for the term of 99 years subject to a one-off premium of £1000.00.	F O'Connor	Approved	Y
SPR/107/2021	Management Accounts to March 2021	It was agreed to note the Management Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021.	D Carville	Noted	Y

SPR/108/2021	Communications and Marketing Activities in Responses to Covid-19 (1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021)	It was agreed to note the contents of the report.	R Mackin	Noted	Y
SPR/109/2021	Drumee Road, Castlewella	It was agreed to note the contents of the report, and to write to the Divisional Manager and seek clarity in the correspondence received by Council.	A Robb	Noted	Y
SPR/110/2021	Construction Industry: Material shortages & price increased – Potential impact to Council's Capital Programme.	It was agreed to note the contents of the report.	C Quinn	Noted	Y

END

Report to:	Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	12 August 2021
Subject:	Notice of Motion regarding Digital Poverty
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Dorinnia Carville, Director of Corporate Services
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Alan Beggs, Head of Evidence and Research

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	X	For noting only	
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1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	<p>The following Notice of Motion, in the name of Councillor Savage, was referred from the monthly Council Meeting in May 2021</p> <p>Notice of Motion:</p> <p><i>"This Council acknowledges that blended learning is likely to be with us for some time to come due to the graduated easing of restrictions relating to the Pandemic.</i></p> <p><i>Council recognises that Digital Poverty needs to be urgently addressed across our district and throughout the North in order to tackle growing inequalities in education with children in many families unable to access online learning due to lack of computers in the home and lack of access to adequate broadband.</i></p> <p><i>Council agrees to set up a Working Group to work with local schools, community groups, youth organisations and sports clubs to devise a community-based short-term initiative to assist families to gain access to online learning and adequate broadband.</i></p> <p><i>Council calls for a Digital Poverty Task Force to be set up within the NI Executive to ensure that no child loses out in their education due to lack of access to a computer or broadband and requests that the Council Chief Executive writes to the Education Minister and the Executive Office outlining the Council's call for a Digital Poverty Taskforce to be established".</i></p>
1.2	<p>Correspondence to Education Minister and Executive Office</p> <p>Subsequent to this Notice of Motion the Chief Executive wrote to both the Minister of Education and the Executive Office outlining the Council's call for a Digital Poverty Taskforce to be established. Copies of this correspondence are included in appendix 1 and 2</p>
1.3	Digital Poverty

	<p>In their report entitled "Learning from lockdown 12 steps to eliminate digital exclusion" the Carnegie Trust state that</p> <p><i>"the current crisis has re-emphasised both our increasing reliance on technology as a society, as communities and as individuals; and the significant disadvantage experienced by those who are not sufficiently digitally connected. The negative impacts of digital exclusion are felt in all areas of life, from our ability to access work and resulting impacts on income, quality of education, availability of healthcare, costs of goods or services, and even the ability to connect with loved ones during incredibly challenging times."</i></p> <p>They further found that digitally excluded individuals risk losing their voice and visibility as government services and democratic engagement are increasingly moved online and digital exclusion impinges on children's rights to education, information and participation.¹</p>
2.0	Key issues
2.1	<p>Existing Activity Addressing Digital Poverty</p> <p>Project Stratum/ FFNI Council already address digital poverty issues through the Full Fibre NI and Stratum Projects. These projects will increase the access to high speed broadband services throughout the District. The report from the recent project briefing for Stratum and FFNI are included in appendix 1.</p> <p>Regional Colleges</p> <p>The regional colleges are working cooperatively across Northern Ireland to apply for funding through the UK Community Renewal Fund. This project aims to increased digital literacy and self-efficacy. SERC have identified that 21% of their full-time students do not have access to a desktop PC, while 6% of students do not have sufficient access to the internet.</p> <p>Other Partners</p> <p>The Community Planning Team is currently contacting Community Planning Partners to ascertain any other interventions being undertaken to address to digital poverty across the District. The information collated will inform the community planning working group.</p>
2.2	<p>Collaborative Working</p> <p>Community Planning Partnership</p> <p>The Newry Mourne and Down Community Planning Partnership enables collaborative working across the statutory partners to deliver against the indicators and outcomes of the Community Plan. While full partnership meetings take place only three times a year, thematic priority sub groups meet regularly to address specific identified need and provide update reports to The Partnership.</p> <p>COVID Community Coordination Hub</p> <p>The COVID Community Coordination Hub was established in April 2020 to coordinate activity in response to the COVID 19 pandemic and lockdown. The group consists of representatives</p>

¹ Learning from lockdown 12 steps to eliminate digital exclusion. Carnegie Trust UK 2020

	<p>from statutory community planning partners, the community voluntary sector and Council officers. The Hub continues to meet to coordinate COVID recovery activity and address emerging social need resulting from the impact of COVID across our community</p> <p>Strategic Stakeholder Forum</p> <p>The Strategic Stakeholder Forum brings together key representatives from across the community voluntary sector. The forum provides a mechanism for the local community voluntary sector to engage collectively both with the Council and the Community Planning Partnership.</p> <p>It is imperative that the working group established to address digital poverty coordinates closely with the above fora to ensure that activity is aligned to existing collaborative work and is fully informed of the activity or planned activity undertaken by our Community Planning Partnership or by the community voluntary sector.</p>
3.0	<p>Recommendations</p> <p>Digital Poverty Working Group</p> <p>It is recommended that Council agree to establish a working group, coordinated by the Community Planning team. The membership of the working group should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Officers from Community Planning, Community Development and Economic/ Rural Development. • Statutory Partner Representatives from Education Authority and Regional Colleges • Community Voluntary Sector Representatives as nominated by the Strategic Stakeholder Forum • Sports Club Representatives as nominated by Sports Association Newry, Down and South Armagh <p>Aims of working group</p> <p>The working group will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise the knowledge and experience of members to better understand the nature of digital poverty across the District and identify where further initiatives are required. • To understand current activity addressing digital poverty and identify "gaps" in provision as well as opportunities for better coordination and collaboration. • To identify funding opportunities to support community-based short-term initiatives to address the identified needs • To design, implement, monitor and report on initiatives assisting families in gaining access to online learning, adequate broadband or appropriate computer equipment. <p>Reporting</p> <p>Update reports on the activity of the Working Group will be provided to Council Committee, the Community Planning Partnership and the Community Coordination Hub. Updates will also be provided to the Strategic Stakeholder Forum through their appointed representatives.</p>

4.0	Resource implications
4.1	Resource implications include officers time in convening, attending and administering the working group. Any further resource implications relating to any proposed intervention activity have not yet been determined.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<p><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></p> <p>It is not anticipated that the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.2	<p><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></p> <p>Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i></p>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>

	<p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p>
7.0	Appendices
	<p>Appendix 1: Letter to Minister of Education</p> <p>Appendix 2: Letter to Northern Ireland Executive Office</p> <p>Appendix 3: Workshop and presentation for Elected Members conducted on 29 March 2021 at 11am to provide an update on Project Stratum and FFNI</p>
8.0	Background Documents
	N/A

Marie Ward
Chief Executive



Comhairle Ceantair
**an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin**
**Newry, Mourne
and Down**
District Council

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Our ref: C/109/2021

16 June 2021

Miss Michele McIlveen
Minister of Education
Room 310
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Dear Minister McIlveen

Re: Notice of Motion – Digital Poverty

At a Meeting of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council held on 4 May 2021, the following Notice of Motion was referred to the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6:

"This Council acknowledges that blended learning is likely to be with us for some time to come due to the graduated easing of restrictions relating to the Pandemic.

Council recognises that Digital Poverty needs to be urgently addressed across our district and throughout the North in order to tackle growing inequalities in education with children in many families unable to access online learning due to lack of computers in the home and lack of access to adequate broadband.

Council agrees to set up a Working Group to work with local schools, community groups, youth organisations and sports clubs to devise a community-based short-term initiative to assist families to gain access to online learning and adequate broadband.

Council calls for a Digital Poverty Task Force to be set up within the NI Executive to ensure that no child loses out in their education due to lack of access to a computer or broadband and requests that the Council Chief Executive writes to the Education Minister and the Executive Office outlining the Council's call for a Digital Poverty Taskforce to be established".

I would ask that you give this matter serious consideration and I look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully

Marie Ward
Chief Executive

**Oifig an Iúir
Newry Office**
O'Hagan House
Monaghan Row
Newry BT35 8DJ

**Oifig Dhún Pádraig
Downpatrick Office**
Downshire Civic Centre
Downshire Estate, Ardglass Road
Downpatrick BT30 6GQ

0330 137 4000 (Council)
council@nmandd.org
www.newrymournedown.org

**Ag freastal ar an Dún
agus Ard Mhacha Theas**
**Serving Down
and South Armagh**



Marie Ward
Chief Executive



Comhairle Ceantair
**an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin**
**Newry, Mourne
and Down**
District Council

15

Our ref: C/109/2021

16 June 2021

Northern Ireland Executive Office
SDO3 Stormont Castle
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3TT

Dear Ministers

Re: Notice of Motion – Digital Poverty

At a Meeting of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council held on 4 May 2021, the following Notice of Motion was referred to the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6:

"This Council acknowledges that blended learning is likely to be with us for some time to come due to the graduated easing of restrictions relating to the Pandemic.

Council recognises that Digital Poverty needs to be urgently addressed across our district and throughout the North in order to tackle growing inequalities in education with children in many families unable to access online learning due to lack of computers in the home and lack of access to adequate broadband.

Council agrees to set up a Working Group to work with local schools, community groups, youth organisations and sports clubs to devise a community-based short-term initiative to assist families to gain access to online learning and adequate broadband.

Council calls for a Digital Poverty Task Force to be set up within the NI Executive to ensure that no child loses out in their education due to lack of access to a computer or broadband and requests that the Council Chief Executive writes to the Education Minister and the Executive Office outlining the Council's call for a Digital Poverty Taskforce to be established".

I would ask that you give this matter serious consideration and I look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully

Marie Ward
Chief Executive

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**Ag freastal ar an Dún
agus Ard Mhacha Theas**
**Serving Down
and South Armagh**



Appendix 3: Workshop and presentation for Elected Members conducted on 29 March 2021 at 11am to provide an update on Project Stratum and FFNI

Workshop and presentation for Elected Members conducted on 29 March 2021 at 11am to provide an update on Project Stratum and FFNI with Fibrus and Department for Economy in attendance. The virtual event, via Microsoft Teams, provided an opportunity for Elected Members to ask questions and seek clarifications.

Project Stratum

Delivered by Hyperfast NI, owned by Fibrus Wholesale, aims to improve broadband access infrastructure throughout Northern Ireland to:

- Increase the number of premises able to access Next Generation Access (NGA) broadband services capable of delivering in excess of 30 Mbps
- Maximise Next Generation Access (NGA) broadband coverage by increasing provision in areas poorly served and not capable of attracting commercial investment
- To target an intervention area of 97% of Northern Ireland, targeting just below 76,000 premises by March 2024
- Equating to approximately 11% of premises in Northern Ireland, as circa 89% can currently access broadband capable of 30Mbps+

Although 89% of premises in Northern Ireland have access to broadband services in excess of 30Mbps, the figure is 66% in Rural Northern Ireland.

Implementation timescales for NMDDC:

	SPRING	SUMMER	AUTUMN	WINTER
2021	Coalisland Ballycastle	Killyleagh Kilkeel Castlewellan	Ballynahinch Warrenpoint Maghera Portstewart Enniskillen Ballymoney	Castlerock Keady Carnlough Cullybackey
2022	Castlederg Fintona Newtownstewart	Garrison Omagh Downpatrick Larne	Aughnacloy Fivemiletown Kesh Irvinestown Newtownbutter	Crossmaglen Rathfriland Cookstown Garvagh Moy
2023	Kircubbin Seahill	Ballystrudder Bleary	Templepatrick Cushendall	Newry Derrylin

	Dromore	Randalstown	Clough Mills	Limavady
	Laurelvale	Lower Ballinderry	Claudy	Gortin
		Broughshane	Pomeroy	Strabane
				Moneyrea

Communications plan:

- Quarterly Newsletters and site visits for Councillors and MLAs throughout the rollout
- Address level postcode checker for 'Where and When' available via <https://hyperfastni.com/>
- Opportunities as communities go live for local events photo ops, as local areas switch on
- Fibre Ambassador employed by Fibrus in each council area

Project Stratum is a state aid funded project, focusing mainly on those key rural areas where improvements to connectivity would not be possible without an intervention.

Full Fibre Northern Ireland (FFNI)

The FFNI Consortium, is made up of ten councils outside Belfast and the Business Services Organisation (BSO) and is led by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Overview

- FFNI is a PSAT project – Public Sector Anchor Tenancy
- Public Sector buildings act as hubs or anchors to roll out fibre to surrounding areas.
- Non State Aid - Buying connections to our own buildings to stimulate further investment
- Improves the business case for rollout of next generation "Ultrafast" Fibre by the private sector (up to 1000mbps)
- Rural and Urban (work has been completed with DCMS/DFE to avoid duplication with Stratum)
- The programme lies between the urban market and the hard to reach areas addressed by project Stratum. In so doing, it will strongly support project Stratum.
- The FFNI programme is estimated to deliver £180m increase in GVA in the region over 15 years.
- Objective of FFNI to drive digital infrastructure delivery throughout Northern Ireland (not just Fibre)

More Information:

FFNI aims to expand the high-speed fibre ultrafast broadband (1000 Mbps) footprint in Northern Ireland having secured funding from the Department of Digital Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) through their Local Full Fibre Network and Rural Gigabit Connectivity programmes.

- FFNI will use approximately £24 million of DCMS funds (matched by Fibrus investment for total project value of £52m) to enable Fibrus to deliver fibre broadband infrastructure across Northern Ireland.
- Fibrus will connect public sector buildings by extending its own fibre broadband network and by commissioning Openreach to extend the Openreach fibre broadband network.

- Both approaches will directly increase the availability of fibre broadband to business and domestic premises close to the path of the network extensions. The Fibrus approach is also likely to bring increased competition to the NI broadband market, driving further economic benefits.
- The project will connect 957 public sector buildings, ensuring that almost all Council, Health, Fire and Ambulance sites in Northern Ireland are connected with future-proofed ultrafast fibre connectivity.
- The commercial model for the Fibrus network infrastructure provides for connectivity with minimal revenue cost for the 35-year life of the fibre, and offers opportunities for substantial further network cost savings and service improvements through its design.
- The Openreach network infrastructure provides a tried and tested approach to access connectivity from a wide range of service providers.
- Following the award of the contract, full fibre 'gigabit capable' broadband is now being installed in many of our public sector buildings, such as Council buildings, Community centres, fire stations, GP surgeries and health clinics across Northern Ireland.
- These sites are estimated to unlock access to 56,000 premises in NMDDC allowing Fibrus and Openreach to potentially reach further businesses and residents with a full fibre connection.
- FFNI will bring a number of substantial benefits for digital transformation to NMDDC allowing the Council to offer new digital services for corporate use and to our businesses and local residents.
- Work to complete the new full fibre network for public sector sites is expected to be completed with minimal disruption by December 2021.
- FFNI is non-state aid funded, focusing mainly on semi-rural to urban and is helping to deliver the next stage of ultrafast connectivity.

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resource Committee
Date of Meeting:	12 th August 2021
Subject:	Future Funding opportunities & resource requirements
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Jonathan McGilly Assistant Director of Enterprise, Employment and Regeneration
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Amanda Smyth Head of Regeneration and Business Development

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	X	For noting only	
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1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	<p><u>Purpose</u> To outline the approach required to manage funding opportunities and the associated resource implications, for a range of anticipated funding programmes / projects / streams to include (not exclusive);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Levelling Up Fund - Community renewal fund - Shared Prosperity Fund - Peace Plus - Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Rural Business Micro Grants - Any future pilot programmes funded by DAERA as a precursor to interventions informed by the Rural Policy Framework <p><u>Background</u> A number of funding schemes are outlined above, which may present Council with a key opportunity to access and administer finance to progress a range of Council strategic priorities and projects. Council need to ensure that an appropriate resource is available to investigate funding opportunities in a strategic and managed approach.</p> <p><u>Funding opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levelling Up Fund <p>The Levelling Up Fund aims to invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities in supporting economic recovery. The Fund will be jointly managed by HM Treasury, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Transport. The fund is currently open for capital bids and will run to 2024/25. The key investment themes are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transportation - Urban Regeneration

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural assets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Prosperity Fund <p>The UK government will engage the Devolved Administrations and local partners to develop the UK Shared Prosperity Fund's Investment Framework and in advance of its publication. We have demonstrated this commitment by confirming that the Devolved Administrations will have a place within the governance structures for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This fund will replace the ERDF and ESF funds used by Local authorities to fund Economic Development activity, key investment themes will be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skills and employment - Business growth - Innovation - Place - Infrastructure • Peace Plus <p>Peace Plus is a new funding programme designed to support peace and prosperity across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland, building upon the work of the previous PEACE and INTERREG Programmes. The design reflects the importance of peace-building activity, but also the importance of actions that will contribute positively to the economy, building prosperity and adjusting to the new environment and challenges. Key investment themes are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Smart Europe - Greener/ low carbon Europe - Connected Europe - Social - Citizen focused Europe • Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation <p>NMDDC previously administered a Rural Micro Business Development scheme on behalf of DAERA which provided grant assistance up to £5K for businesses located in a rural setting across the district. As this has proved successful in its pilot approach and a subsequent call, a further call for applications has now been released.</p> • Future DAERA Pilot Schemes <p>DAERA continue to initiate a number of pilot programmes similar to that mentioned above as a precursor in advance of the Rural Policy Framework which is currently with the Minister for approval. These pilots are normally minor in the financial commitment with large volumes of administration required to cater for the demand it creates across the large rural area within NMDDC.</p> • UK Community Renewal Fund <p>The UK government approach to delivering the fund in Northern Ireland takes account of the different local government landscape in Northern Ireland compared to Great Britain. There will be a pre-determined national allocation for Northern</p>
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	<p>Ireland, set at £11 million. By treating Northern Ireland as one geographical area we will ensure all communities have equal access to apply for the Fund.</p> <p>The programme aims to nurture innovative thinking and offer flexibility, projects may align with one, or deliver across several, of the following investment priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in skills • Investment for local business • Investment in communities and place • Supporting people into employment <p>The programme is established as an opportunity to pilot programmes ahead of shared prosperity fund</p>
2.0	<p>Key issues</p> <p>A number of funding schemes are outlined above, which may present Council with a key opportunity to access and administer finance to progress a range of Council strategic priorities and projects. In order to appropriately scope out opportunities, prepare funding strategies and develop proposals there is a need to consider resource, to ensure an approach of fully investigating funding opportunities in a strategic and managed approach</p> <p>By continuing to spread the existing resource held within ERT across a range of interventions, there is the possibility of not fully investigating other funding opportunities in a strategic and managed approach. A number of new initiatives have been introduced and are being delivered on top of business as normal with no additional resource, adding further pressures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID19 response initiatives • TRPSI Rural Micro Business Development scheme • DFC/DAERA/DFI Covid recovery programme <p>I</p>
3.0	<p>Recommendations</p>
3.1	<p>With the above funding streams presenting themselves it is imperative NMDDC are in a position to ensure that the finance is accessed to deliver against NMDDC / ERT strategic objectives in a coordinated fashion, while continuing to deliver business as normal activity.</p> <p>It is requested that Council approve an additional resource which is recruited on a fixed term bases for 18 months to support development work required around the above emerging programmes as detailed in this report</p>
4.0	<p>Resource implications</p>
4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 number additional full time fixed term resource at SO2 <p>Note: A Capacity fund may be available under some of the funding programmes to support the development of projects. If available and secured, this fund could be</p>

	utilised to offset staff costs, consultant costs and / or any other developmental costs.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<p><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
5.2	<p><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></p> <p>Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i></p>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p>

	Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.0	Appendices	
	None	
8.0	Background Documents	
	None	

Report to:	Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	12 th August 2021
Subject:	PHA Covid-19 Testing Facility at Albert Basin, Newry
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Colin Quinn - Assistant Director, Estates and Project Management
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Colin Quinn - Assistant Director, Estates and Project Management

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	X	For noting only	
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1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	In June 2021, Council approval was given for a portion of ground at Albert Basin to continue be leased to the PHA/DHSC for a 'walk-in' Covid-19 testing facility.
1.2	The lease which commenced on 1 st July 2021 is initially for a minimum of 3 months with a potential extension for a further 3 months. The lease also includes a clause permitting Council to terminate after the first 3 months.
1.3	At May's SP&R meeting it was agreed that a further report would be brought back to this Committee to give an update prior to the end of the initial 3-month lease period, to determine the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If PHA still required a test facility at this location; and - The potential impact on Council events if the site is retained as a testing facility.
1.4	The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on the use of Albert Basin and advise of PHA intentions after the initial 3 months and seek associated approval for lease to remain in place after this period.
2.0	Key issues
2.1	In June 2021, Council approval was given for a portion of ground at Albert Basin to continue to be leased to the PHA for a 'walk-in' Covid-19 testing facility.
2.2	The lease is for 6 months but includes a clause permitting PHA to terminate the lease at any time. This is to reflect the possibility of the testing facility being no longer required.
2.3	The lease also includes a break clause which would enable Council to terminate the lease after 3 months, with 20 days' notice to be given to the PHA. Therefore, the earliest date Council could terminate the lease is 30 th September 2021.

2.4	Following recent discussions with the PHA, it has been confirmed that there is a continued need for the testing facility and will require the site after the initial 3-month period and depending on demand potentially for remainder of the lease period (31 st December 2021).
2.5	If members are content for the testing facility to remain in place at Albert Basin, this would impact on future Council events at this location, particularly at Halloween and Christmas 2021.
2.6	It is also worth noting the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - access to the Greenway and to the remainder of the site has not be impacted by testing facility being operational; and - the longer-term development of Albert Basin has not been impacted by the testing facility, as the next stage of this project is predominantly design development, which is office based.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	That members consider the content of this report.
3.2	Members approval not to trigger the termination clause within the lease agreement with PHA/DHSC for the Covid 'walk-in' test facility at Albert Basin on 30 th September 2021.
3.3	A further report to SP&R Committee prior to the end of the lease period, to gauge if the testing facility is likely to remain in place thereafter and how this would impact on future Council events at Albert Basin.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	Staff time and costs to liaise with the PHA, review legal agreements and review submitted documentation from PHA/DHSC.
4.2	Lost income due to receipt of peppercorn rent.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<p><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
5.2	<p><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p>


	<p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></p> <p>Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i></p>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p>
7.0	Appendices
	None
8.0	Background Documents
	None

Report to:	Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	12 August 2021
Subject:	Response to NIPSO Consultation on Complaints Handling Procedures
Reporting Officer:	Alison Robb Assistant Director Corporate Services (Administration)
Contact Officer:	Gerry McBride Head of Administration and Customer Services

		For decision	X	For noting only	
1.0	Purpose and Background				
1.1	Under Part 3 of the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (the Act) NIPSO have been given the authority by the Northern Ireland Assembly to produce a set of principles and procedures to help standardise complaints handling by public bodies in Northern Ireland. It is expected the Ombudsman will introduce sector specific complaints handling procedures following this consultation.				
1.2	<p>Currently Council operates a three Stage complaints procedure:</p> <p>Stage 1 Local Resolution – response due within 5 working days Stage 2 Service Investigation - response due within 15 working days Stage 3 Service review – response due within 15 working days.</p> <p>The proposals set out in the NIPSO consultation paper recommend a two Stage procedure:</p> <p>Stage 1 Early Resolution – response due within 5 working days Stage 2 Service Investigation - response due within 20 working days.</p>				
1.3	<p>In furtherance of its authority NIPSO are consulting on two documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a draft Statement of Principles (SOP) and • a draft Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP). <p>NIPSO is also asking for comment on the suggested approach it plans to take when implementing future complaint handling changes in the public sector in Northern Ireland. Details on accessing the full consultation documents is provided at 6.0 below.</p> <p>The consultation which is being conducted by way of an online questionnaire (attached) has been extended to 30 September 2021.</p>				

1.4	<p>Principles</p> <p>NIPSO believes their plans will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a positive culture where complaints are welcomed and valued as an important source of feedback. • Simplify the way complaints are handled. • Encourage many complaints to be resolved much earlier than at present. • Set clear and consistent standards for effective and high quality investigation of complaints. • Promote best practice in complaints handling by creating networking and learning opportunities for public bodies and their staff. • Help it to provide ongoing support and guidance to public bodies to support best practice complaints handling.
1.5	<p>NIPSO have identified six key principles. They state that public bodies should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Start off right 2. Fix it early 3. Focus on what matters 4. Be fair 5. Be honest 6. Learn and improve. <p>Under each of these headings NIPSO has set out a number of key things they expect to see from public bodies when they receive a complaint (contained within the Statement of Principles).</p>
1.6	<p>Complaints Handling Procedures</p> <p>NIPSO's aim is to develop and implement Model Complaints Handling Procedures for each public service sector. Therefore, while all public bodies will be expected to agree to the same Statement of Principles, the expectation is that detailed discussions will be needed with public bodies on how the complaints handling procedures will be implemented within each sector. The MCHPs will act as a starting point for these discussions.</p> <p>NIPSO intend, where possible, to establish formal complaints handling networks with identified sectors as part of a rolling programme of implementation.</p> <p>Council's Head of Administration and Customer Services, is a member of an inter-Council Working Group on complaints handling. The Group which meets regularly with NIPSO would hope to achieve a degree of consistency in policy provision across Councils through that forum.</p>

1.7	<p>NIPSO believes that complaints handling principles should contain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An agreed definition of what is and what is not a complaint - A process in which complaints are dealt with in no more than two stages - A register of all complaints received - A focus on resolution of complaints within a specified time period as a key objective - An investigation stage which lasts a specified number of working days, and which signposts complainants to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman if they remain unhappy with the outcome - Clear standards of investigation - Reporting and publicising of complaints information - Demonstration of active learning from complaints.
1.8	<p>There will also be a Complaints Standards Team set up</p> <p>Training will play an essential role in supporting the proposed changes. The NIPSO Complaints Standards Team intends to develop a range of training for public bodies to support senior managers, complaints managers and front-line staff to manage complaints effectively. NIPSO aims to ensure training is available in a range of formats to include face to face, online learning and self-directed e-learning.</p> <p>Once a public body is subject to the new arrangements, NIPSO proposes to monitor their compliance with the new standards.</p>
1.9	<p>Implementation of the Model</p> <p>When the Model is finalised Council will develop a policy and procedures to reflect the new complaints handling arrangements. As part of this implementation standard templates will be available for staff to use in responding to complaints. This will ensure consistency of approach. Training will be required to support staff in dealing with responses and to understand the new Model. NIPSO will be providing training resources for this purpose.</p> <p>Council will revise its public facing complaints documentation and corporate communications around how to make a complaint to support the new Model.</p>
2.0	<p>Key issues</p>
2.1	<p>Consider draft response to NIPSO consultation on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles governing future complaints handling by public bodies. • Mandatory Complaints handling procedures for public bodies. • Delivering an improved and consistent complaints handling service to the public.
2.2	<p>The proposals are consistent with and support the Administration Department's Service Plan 2021-22 in relation to Complaints and having in place a robust complaints management framework, improving knowledge of complaints handling processes and introducing better reporting of and learning from complaints.</p>

3.0	Recommendations
3.1	<p>It is recommended Council consider and adopt, with any required amendments, the draft response appended to this document. In doing so Council should welcome the standardisation of complaints handling across the public sector.</p> <p>The on-line questionnaire to be completed on behalf of Council.</p>
4.0	Conclusion
	Council should welcome the proposals for a consistent approach to Complaints Handling across the local public sector.
5.0	Appendices
	<p>Draft consultation response</p> <p>Consultation Survey Questionnaire.</p> <p> NIPSO Complaint Handling Questionr</p>
6.0	Background Documents
	<p>All consultation documents and the research report can be found on NIPSO's website along with a short video of the Ombudsman, Ms Margaret Kelly's official launch of the consultation. Please click here to view: https://nipso.org.uk/nipso/publications/complaints-handling-consultation/.</p>

Draft Consultation Response

The six main areas of interest within the questionnaire covering the Statement of Principles and Model Complaints Handling Procedure are shown *italic* and **bold** in the following draft response which Members should consider.

Introduction

The Statement of Principles

The draft Statement of Principles (SOP) consists of six basic principles that NIPSO believe all public bodies should follow when handling a complaint.

The six key principles are:

1. Start off right
2. Fix it early
3. Focus on what matters
4. Be fair
5. Be honest
6. Learn and improve.

For each of the six principles above, NIPSO has set out what it expects public bodies to do when they receive a complaint. These include: acknowledging mistakes at the earliest opportunity, providing clear reasons for decisions, investigating complaints fairly, and using complaints as an opportunity for improvement.

1. ***Is there anything you would like to see added or changed in terms of the content of the principles? If yes, please indicate which principles and provide details.***

Council values complaints as important feedback from the people it serves on how it is performing. The principles as outlined underpin an effective complaint handling system.

Model Complaints Handling Procedure

2. ***Please consider each element of the draft MCHP outlined below and comment on any changes or additions.***

Council accepts a Complaint Handling Procedure should contain an agreed definition of what is and what is not a complaint. In addition, NIPSO should produce as part of the MHCP an indicative, but not definitive, list of examples of matters which are and are not complaints. The following are suggested matters for inclusion on an Indicative list, either at this stage or when developing sector specific documents.

A complaint can be made about,

- inadequate standard of service
- failure or refusal to provide a service
- dissatisfaction with a Council policy
- failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services
- failure to follow the appropriate administrative process
- conduct, treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or contractor working on our behalf
- disagreement with a decision where the customer cannot use another procedure (for example an appeal or statutory procedure) to challenge the decision
- the Council's failure to follow the appropriate administrative process.

Exceptions

Certain issues and complaints fall outside the scope of this Policy. A complaint is not:

- a routine first-time request for a service (for example a missed bin)
- a first-time report of a fault
- a request for compensation only
- disagreement with decisions appropriately made by Councillors or Officers under Council's Scheme of Delegation
- an explanation of Council policy and practice
- disagreement with a decision where a statutory right of appeal exists, (for example in relation to planning permission)
- information requests or an explanation of Council policy or practice
- a Press enquiry
- matters for which there is a right of appeal to a tribunal and or a legal remedy
- matters concerning human resources where other Council policies and procedures apply
- an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where Council has already given a final decision
- a matter concerning a Councillor's behaviour.

A register of all complaints received should be kept by public bodies.

Agreed. The essential and desirable information to retain on the register should be specified by NIPSO. Timescale for retaining this information should also be identified.

Complaints should be dealt with in no more than two stages; an initial 'frontline response' based on early resolution and a stage 2 'investigation' where early resolution is not possible and a complaint needs to be thoroughly investigated.

Agreed. Two stages are sufficient to fully investigate and respond to a complaint.

Based on experiences in other places, a 'frontline response' should be responded to within a maximum of 5 working days, with the possibility of an extension in exceptional circumstances of up to 5 additional working days.

A frontline response time of 5 working days is appropriate for routine complaints. The facility for a 5-day extension provides scope for the collection of information to support a response to a more complex complaint.

All complaints escalated to stage 2 'investigation' should be acknowledged within 3 working days.

This is an acceptable timescale which reassures the complainant the matter is being considered by the public body.

A full response to stage 2 complaints should be provided as soon as possible but no later than 20 working days from the time the complaint was received for investigation

This timescale is acceptable and provides sufficient time to prepare a response to a complaint.

In more complex cases, if it is not possible to meet the 20-day timeframe, a revised timescale should be provided, and an update at least once every 20 working days on the progress of the investigation.

The clarification regarding the extension provisions in complex or sensitive cases is welcomed. The use of a revised timescale is likely to be helpful in Planning related cases which often require considerable investigation before a response is issued.

Information about complaints received should be reported and publicised.

Agreed. Where this done any such information should be anonymised and be compliant with organisations' GDPR requirements.

Public bodies should demonstrate active learning from complaints.

Feedback can help inform policies and services. It can also improve customer satisfaction levels.

Suggested approach to implementation

NIPSO feels standardisation is necessary across all public bodies, however it also recognises that circumstances may sometimes differ between sectors. It is therefore expected that detailed discussions will be needed with public bodies within each sector, to decide precisely what their complaints handling procedures should look like. Five distinct sectors have been identified: health and social care, councils, government departments, housing, and education.

3. ***NIPSO is proposing to introduce MCHPs for public bodies on a sector by sector basis. Do you consider this is the most effective approach? If not, what would you propose?***

Council welcomes greater standardisation across the whole public sector in terms of definitions, consistency of approach and complaints handling. A sector by sector approach would be appropriate when issues of common interest in complaints handling can be addressed.

4. ***NIPSO has yet to decide the first sector(s) it will work with to introduce the MCHPs. Some of the factors being considered in this decision are: the number of complaints received by the sector, size/complexity of the sector, risk attached to public service provision. Do you have any views on this issue?***

Councils would expect to be considered as early adopters of the Model Complaints Handling Procedures.

5. ***Are there any issues or concerns specific to any particular sector or area of work, that you feel NIPSO should take into account when refining MCHPs?***

There is a concern at the misuse of the complaints process to provide a means to interfere with the normal land use planning mechanisms. Forms of Alternative Dispute Resolution should be offered where this is an appropriate mechanism.

- 6. If you have any further comments on these proposals, or any other suggestions or comments about NIPSO's SOP, MCHP and/or approach for implementing complaints standards and ensuring compliance with them, please provide details below.**

We would welcome that NIPSO, as the complaints regulator, is to develop training support for public sector bodies on implementing complaints standards and ensuring compliance with them. Council also welcomes the proposal, to be implemented by The Complaints Standards Team, to develop a range of training for public bodies to support senior managers, complaints managers and front-line staff to manage complaints effectively. We would be keen to work with NIPSO to identify suitable areas for training and access that training support.

Profiling Section.

In what way are you responding to this questionnaire?


A corporate response is being provided on behalf of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Report to:	Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	12 August 2021
Subject:	Response to NIPSO Consultation on Complaints Handling Procedures
Reporting Officer:	Alison Robb Assistant Director Corporate Services (Administration)
Contact Officer:	Gerry McBride Head of Administration and Customer Services

		For decision	X	For noting only	
1.0	Purpose and Background				
1.1	Under Part 3 of the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (the Act) NIPSO have been given the authority by the Northern Ireland Assembly to produce a set of principles and procedures to help standardise complaints handling by public bodies in Northern Ireland. It is expected the Ombudsman will introduce sector specific complaints handling procedures following this consultation.				
1.2	<p>Currently Council operates a three Stage complaints procedure:</p> <p>Stage 1 Local Resolution – response due within 5 working days Stage 2 Service Investigation - response due within 15 working days Stage 3 Service review – response due within 15 working days.</p> <p>The proposals set out in the NIPSO consultation paper recommend a two Stage procedure:</p> <p>Stage 1 Early Resolution – response due within 5 working days Stage 2 Service Investigation - response due within 20 working days.</p>				
1.3	<p>In furtherance of its authority NIPSO are consulting on two documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a draft Statement of Principles (SOP) and • a draft Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP). <p>NIPSO is also asking for comment on the suggested approach it plans to take when implementing future complaint handling changes in the public sector in Northern Ireland. Details on accessing the full consultation documents is provided at 6.0 below.</p> <p>The consultation which is being conducted by way of an online questionnaire (attached) has been extended to 30 September 2021.</p>				

1.4	<p>Principles</p> <p>NIPSO believes their plans will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a positive culture where complaints are welcomed and valued as an important source of feedback. • Simplify the way complaints are handled. • Encourage many complaints to be resolved much earlier than at present. • Set clear and consistent standards for effective and high quality investigation of complaints. • Promote best practice in complaints handling by creating networking and learning opportunities for public bodies and their staff. • Help it to provide ongoing support and guidance to public bodies to support best practice complaints handling.
1.5	<p>NIPSO have identified six key principles. They state that public bodies should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Start off right 2. Fix it early 3. Focus on what matters 4. Be fair 5. Be honest 6. Learn and improve. <p>Under each of these headings NIPSO has set out a number of key things they expect to see from public bodies when they receive a complaint (contained within the Statement of Principles).</p>
1.6	<p>Complaints Handling Procedures</p> <p>NIPSO's aim is to develop and implement Model Complaints Handling Procedures for each public service sector. Therefore, while all public bodies will be expected to agree to the same Statement of Principles, the expectation is that detailed discussions will be needed with public bodies on how the complaints handling procedures will be implemented within each sector. The MCHPs will act as a starting point for these discussions.</p> <p>NIPSO intend, where possible, to establish formal complaints handling networks with identified sectors as part of a rolling programme of implementation.</p> <p>Council's Head of Administration and Customer Services, is a member of an inter-Council Working Group on complaints handling. The Group which meets regularly with NIPSO would hope to achieve a degree of consistency in policy provision across Councils through that forum.</p>

1.7	<p>NIPSO believes that complaints handling principles should contain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An agreed definition of what is and what is not a complaint - A process in which complaints are dealt with in no more than two stages - A register of all complaints received - A focus on resolution of complaints within a specified time period as a key objective - An investigation stage which lasts a specified number of working days, and which signposts complainants to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman if they remain unhappy with the outcome - Clear standards of investigation - Reporting and publicising of complaints information - Demonstration of active learning from complaints.
1.8	<p>There will also be a Complaints Standards Team set up</p> <p>Training will play an essential role in supporting the proposed changes. The NIPSO Complaints Standards Team intends to develop a range of training for public bodies to support senior managers, complaints managers and front-line staff to manage complaints effectively. NIPSO aims to ensure training is available in a range of formats to include face to face, online learning and self-directed e-learning.</p> <p>Once a public body is subject to the new arrangements, NIPSO proposes to monitor their compliance with the new standards.</p>
1.9	<p>Implementation of the Model</p> <p>When the Model is finalised Council will develop a policy and procedures to reflect the new complaints handling arrangements. As part of this implementation standard templates will be available for staff to use in responding to complaints. This will ensure consistency of approach. Training will be required to support staff in dealing with responses and to understand the new Model. NIPSO will be providing training resources for this purpose.</p> <p>Council will revise its public facing complaints documentation and corporate communications around how to make a complaint to support the new Model.</p>
2.0	Key issues
2.1	<p>Consider draft response to NIPSO consultation on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles governing future complaints handling by public bodies. • Mandatory Complaints handling procedures for public bodies. • Delivering an improved and consistent complaints handling service to the public.
2.2	<p>The proposals are consistent with and support the Administration Department's Service Plan 2021-22 in relation to Complaints and having in place a robust complaints management framework, improving knowledge of complaints handling processes and introducing better reporting of and learning from complaints.</p>

3.0	Recommendations
3.1	<p>It is recommended Council consider and adopt, with any required amendments, the draft response appended to this document. In doing so Council should welcome the standardisation of complaints handling across the public sector.</p> <p>The on-line questionnaire to be completed on behalf of Council.</p>
4.0	Conclusion
	Council should welcome the proposals for a consistent approach to Complaints Handling across the local public sector.
5.0	Appendices
	<p>Draft consultation response</p> <p>Consultation Survey Questionnaire.</p> <p> NIPSO Complaint Handling Questionr</p>
6.0	Background Documents
	<p>All consultation documents and the research report can be found on NIPSO's website along with a short video of the Ombudsman, Ms Margaret Kelly's official launch of the consultation. Please click here to view: https://nipso.org.uk/nipso/publications/complaints-handling-consultation/.</p>

Draft Consultation Response

The six main areas of interest within the questionnaire covering the Statement of Principles and Model Complaints Handling Procedure are shown *italic* and **bold** in the following draft response which Members should consider.

Introduction

The Statement of Principles

The draft Statement of Principles (SOP) consists of six basic principles that NIPSO believe all public bodies should follow when handling a complaint.

The six key principles are:

1. Start off right
2. Fix it early
3. Focus on what matters
4. Be fair
5. Be honest
6. Learn and improve.

For each of the six principles above, NIPSO has set out what it expects public bodies to do when they receive a complaint. These include: acknowledging mistakes at the earliest opportunity, providing clear reasons for decisions, investigating complaints fairly, and using complaints as an opportunity for improvement.

1. ***Is there anything you would like to see added or changed in terms of the content of the principles? If yes, please indicate which principles and provide details.***

Council values complaints as important feedback from the people it serves on how it is performing. The principles as outlined underpin an effective complaint handling system.

Model Complaints Handling Procedure

2. ***Please consider each element of the draft MCHP outlined below and comment on any changes or additions.***

Council accepts a Complaint Handling Procedure should contain an agreed definition of what is and what is not a complaint. In addition, NIPSO should produce as part of the MHCP an indicative, but not definitive, list of examples of matters which are and are not complaints. The following are suggested matters for inclusion on an Indicative list, either at this stage or when developing sector specific documents.

A complaint can be made about,

- inadequate standard of service
- failure or refusal to provide a service
- dissatisfaction with a Council policy
- failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services
- failure to follow the appropriate administrative process
- conduct, treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or contractor working on our behalf
- disagreement with a decision where the customer cannot use another procedure (for example an appeal or statutory procedure) to challenge the decision
- the Council's failure to follow the appropriate administrative process.

Exceptions

Certain issues and complaints fall outside the scope of this Policy. A complaint is not:

- a routine first-time request for a service (for example a missed bin)
- a first-time report of a fault
- a request for compensation only
- disagreement with decisions appropriately made by Councillors or Officers under Council's Scheme of Delegation
- an explanation of Council policy and practice
- disagreement with a decision where a statutory right of appeal exists, (for example in relation to planning permission)
- information requests or an explanation of Council policy or practice
- a Press enquiry
- matters for which there is a right of appeal to a tribunal and or a legal remedy
- matters concerning human resources where other Council policies and procedures apply
- an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where Council has already given a final decision
- a matter concerning a Councillor's behaviour.

A register of all complaints received should be kept by public bodies.

Agreed. The essential and desirable information to retain on the register should be specified by NIPSO. Timescale for retaining this information should also be identified.

Complaints should be dealt with in no more than two stages; an initial 'frontline response' based on early resolution and a stage 2 'investigation' where early resolution is not possible and a complaint needs to be thoroughly investigated.

Agreed. Two stages is sufficient to fully investigate and respond to a complaint.

Based on experiences in other places, a 'frontline response' should be responded to within a maximum of 5 working days, with the possibility of an extension in exceptional circumstances of up to 5 additional working days.

A frontline response time of 5 working days is appropriate for routine complaints. The facility for a 5-day extension provides scope for the collection of information to support a response to a more complex complaint.

All complaints escalated to stage 2 'investigation' should be acknowledged within 3 working days.

This is an acceptable timescale which reassures the complainant the matter is being considered by the public body.

A full response to stage 2 complaints should be provided as soon as possible but no later than 20 working days from the time the complaint was received for investigation

This timescale is acceptable and provides sufficient time to prepare a response to a complaint.

In more complex cases, if it is not possible to meet the 20-day timeframe, a revised timescale should be provided, and an update at least once every 20 working days on the progress of the investigation.

The clarification regarding the extension provisions in complex or sensitive cases is welcomed. The use of a revised timescale is likely to be helpful in Planning related cases which often require considerable investigation before a response is issued.

Information about complaints received should be reported and publicised.

Agreed. Where this done any such information should be anonymised and be compliant with organisations' GDPR requirements.

Public bodies should demonstrate active learning from complaints.

Feedback can help inform policies and services. It can also improve customer satisfaction levels.

Suggested approach to implementation

NIPSO feels standardisation is necessary across all public bodies, however it also recognises that circumstances may sometimes differ between sectors. It is therefore expected that detailed discussions will be needed with public bodies within each sector, to decide precisely what their complaints handling procedures should look like. Five distinct sectors have been identified: health and social care, councils, government departments, housing, and education.

3. ***NIPSO is proposing to introduce MCHPs for public bodies on a sector by sector basis. Do you consider this is the most effective approach? If not, what would you propose?***

Council welcomes greater standardisation across the whole public sector in terms of definitions, consistency of approach and complaints handling. A sector by sector approach would be appropriate when issues of common interest in complaints handling can be addressed.

4. ***NIPSO has yet to decide the first sector(s) it will work with to introduce the MCHPs. Some of the factors being considered in this decision are: the number of complaints received by the sector, size/complexity of the sector, risk attached to public service provision. Do you have any views on this issue?***

Councils would expect to be considered as early adopters of the Model Complaints Handling Procedures.

5. ***Are there any issues or concerns specific to any particular sector or area of work, that you feel NIPSO should take into account when refining MCHPs?***

There is a concern at the misuse of the complaints process to provide a means to interfere with the normal land use planning mechanisms. Forms of Alternative Dispute Resolution should be offered where this is an appropriate mechanism.

- 6. If you have any further comments on these proposals, or any other suggestions or comments about NIPSO's SOP, MCHP and/or approach for implementing complaints standards and ensuring compliance with them, please provide details below.**

We would welcome that NIPSO, as the complaints regulator, is to develop training support for public sector bodies on implementing complaints standards and ensuring compliance with them. Council also welcomes the proposal, to be implemented by The Complaints Standards Team, to develop a range of training for public bodies to support senior managers, complaints managers and front-line staff to manage complaints effectively. We would be keen to work with NIPSO to identify suitable areas for training and access that training support.

Profiling Section.

In what way are you responding to this questionnaire?

A corporate response is being provided on behalf of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Report to:	Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	12 August 2021
Subject:	Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Bill - Survey
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Philip Preen – HR Policy and Projects Manager
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Philip Preen – HR Policy and Projects Manager

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	x	For noting only	
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1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with proposed responses on behalf of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, to the Parental Leave Bill survey issued to local government, via SOLACE, from the Northern Ireland Assembly Economy Committee.
1.2	Parental Bereavement Leave, with pay, was introduced in GB on 6 April 2020. Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay in GB is currently £151.97 per week or 90% of average weekly earnings (whichever is lower).
1.3	If passed, the Bill will require the Minister for the Economy to introduce regulations creating a legal requirement for all employers to grant a period of 2 weeks Parental Bereavement Leave, with pay (if eligible) at the statutory rate.
1.4	The online survey closes for responses on 16 August 2021.
1.5	The proposed survey responses were considered by and agreed with the Council's Senior Management Team at their meeting on 26 July 2021.
2.0	Key issues
2.1	The survey questions (<i>shown in italics</i>) broadly mirror the main elements of the GB provisions and the proposed responses from the Council are listed below in bold type .
2.2	<i>Should there be a legal entitlement to employment parental Leave and pay (if eligible) in NI?</i> a) Yes b) No c) Don't know
2.3	<i>The definition of a parent should extend beyond biological parents to 'primary carers'</i> a) Strongly agree (GB provisions include day to day responsibility for a child of 4 weeks or more) b) Somewhat agree c) Neither agree or disagree d) Somewhat disagree e) Strongly disagree

2.4	<p><i>The Bill should apply to parents/primary carers of a child up to the age of 18?</i></p> <p>a) Strongly agree (GB provisions include children up to 18 years of age) b) Somewhat agree c) Neither agree or disagree d) Somewhat disagree e) Strongly disagree</p>
2.5	<p><i>The leave is for a period of at least 2 weeks, what is your view?</i></p> <p>a) Strongly agree (GB provisions provide for 2 weeks leave) b) Somewhat agree c) Neither agree or disagree d) Somewhat disagree e) Strongly disagree.</p>
2.6	<p><i>The Bill will allow for two weeks leave to be taken together or in separate blocks of 1 week, what is your view?</i></p> <p>a) Strongly agree (GB provisions provide for 2 weeks continuous leave or blocks of 1 week each) b) Somewhat agree c) Neither agree or disagree d) Somewhat disagree e) Strongly disagree.</p>
2.7	<p><i>Regulations to follow at a later date intend to allow for leave to be taken up to 56 weeks after the death of a child. Is this appropriate?</i></p> <p>a) Strongly agree (Under the GB provisions leave can be taken up to 56 weeks after the death of a child – this is to allow other statutory leave for example maternity leave to be taken in full). b) Somewhat agree c) Neither agree or disagree d) Somewhat disagree e) Strongly disagree.</p>
2.8	<p><i>Notice required to take the leave:</i></p> <p>a) None b) Less than one week (GB provisions split leave into that taken 0-8 weeks from the death of a child, where no more than 1 weeks' notice is required, and leave taken 9-56 weeks from the death of a child where 1 weeks' notice is required). c) One to two weeks d) More than two weeks</p>
2.9	<p><i>If leave is taken at a later date should notice be required?</i></p> <p>a) Yes (GB provisions require 1 weeks' notice for leave taken in weeks 9-56. b) No c) Don't know</p>

2.10	<p><i>The qualifying period for bereavement <u>pay</u> will be 26 weeks' continuous employment, what is your view?</i></p> <p>a) Strongly agree (GB provisions require 26 weeks' continuous service before statutory parental bereavement pay can be claimed)</p> <p>b) Somewhat agree</p> <p>c) Neither agree or disagree</p> <p>d) Somewhat disagree</p> <p>e) Strongly disagree.</p>
2.11	<p><i>What is your view in order to receive payment and employee must give notice when they intend to take leave?</i></p> <p>See 2.8 and 2.9</p>
2.12	<p><i>What is your view that evidence be provided for parental bereavement pay and leave be in line with employer guidance?</i></p> <p>a) Strongly agree (GB provisions do not require proof of death or stillbirth)</p> <p>b) Somewhat agree</p> <p>c) Neither agree or disagree</p> <p>d) Somewhat disagree</p> <p>e) Strongly disagree.</p>
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	Members are asked to confirm their agreement to the proposed survey responses as set out at 2.2 to 2.12, and to allow these responses to be submitted on behalf of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	As a new piece of employment law if the Parental Leave, with Pay, Bill is introduced the Council will need to review existing bereavement leave provisions to ensure compliance with the legislation.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
	<p>1. General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
	<p>2. Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p>

	<p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
	<p>3. Proposal initiating consultation</p> <p>Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i></p>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If no, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy / strategy / plan / public service is not influenced by rural needs <input type="checkbox"/></p>
7.0	Appendices
	None
8.0	Background Documents
	Information in relation to the Bill can be found here . The survey can also be accessed directly from this link .

Report to:	Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	12 August 2021
Subject:	NMDDC Response to the NILGA Consultation Paper: Vision and Development of Local Government (Phase One) 2021-23
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Dorinnia Carville – Director: Corporate Services
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Kate Bingham – Head of Performance and Improvement Alan Beggs – Head of Evidence and Research Colin Moffett – Head of Corporate Policy

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	For noting only	X
1.0	Purpose and Background	
1.1	The NI Local Government Association (NILGA) issued an 11 Council policy consultation - Vision and Development of Local Government (Phase One) 2021 – 2023 on 18 May 2021. The outcome of this policy consultation will prioritise a series of integrated, evidence-based lobbying, co-ordinating and communication actions, in the run up to the Stormont and Council elections scheduled in 2022 and 2023, respectively.	
2.0	Key issues	
2.1	The Council has reviewed the consultation document and commented on the following areas: (i) The suitability or otherwise of the vision statement (ii) The suitability or otherwise the five main themes (iii) The suitability or otherwise the eleven actions identified (iv) How the local government sector can be strengthened in a post pandemic environment	
2.2	The consultation response at Appendix 1 was approved by the Senior Management Team on 7 July and submitted to NILGA on 9 July, in order to meet the consultation deadline. The consultation response indicates that the content may be subject to amendment, following the consideration of the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee in August 2021.	
3.0	Recommendations	
3.1	To note: • The NMDDC Response to the NILGA Consultation Paper: Vision and Development of Local Government (Phase One) 2021-23	
4.0	Resource implications	
4.1	There are no financial resource implications within this report.	

5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<p><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
5.2	<p><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></p> <p>Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i> No consultation required.</p>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p>
7.0	Appendices
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appendix 1 – NMDDC Response to the NILGA Consultation Paper: Vision and Development of Local Government (Phase One) 2021-23 Appendix 2 – Council Consultation - Local Government's Vision and Development – A Framework to the 2023 Election

8.0	Background Documents
	None

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Response to the NILGA Consultation Paper: Vision and Development of Local Government (Phase One) 2021-23

Consultation deadline: 9 July 2021

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council welcomes the opportunity to consider and respond to NILGA's consultation paper: **Vision and Development of Local Government (Phase One) 2021-23**. The Council believes that this important and timely piece of work reinforces the collective role of local government in supporting the economic, environmental and social recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, navigating the EU Exit and delivering positive outcomes for all local communities.

This engagement process also presents a real opportunity for the eleven Councils to agree a shared vision and direction of travel which places local government at the centre of effective, efficient and resilient public service provision across Northern Ireland. This consultation response has been approved by the Council's Senior Management Team and may be subject to amendment when considered by the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee at the next scheduled meeting in August 2021.

The Council has reviewed and commented on the following areas:

- (i) The suitability or otherwise of the vision statement
- (ii) The suitability or otherwise the five main themes
- (iii) The suitability or otherwise the eleven actions identified
- (iv) How the local government sector can be strengthened in a post pandemic environment

(i) Vision Statement

Newry, Mourne and Down welcomes the proposed shared vision of **'Strong local government, investing in local people and places, with 11 Councils empowered, skilled and resourced, delivering high quality leadership, services and representation for the whole community, working in innovative, accountable partnership'**. Implicit within this shared, regional vision is the collective value and strength of local government as 'place shapers' and 'civic and community leaders', representing the needs and aspirations of all local communities and stakeholders. The proposed vision statement is also likely to complement and reinforce the visions/missions which have already been adopted by

each of the eleven Councils. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has adopted the following mission statement:

'To support and advocate for a welcoming District which is progressive, healthy and sustainable, providing better economic, environmental and social outcomes for all'.

(ii) Five Main Themes

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council broadly agrees with the five main themes:

1. Council sustainability and improvement
2. Climate action
3. Community and economic development
4. Wellbeing and community planning
5. Planning and infrastructure

The Council recognises that the themes identified are both current and relevant and will benefit from a united and consistent local government voice. In addition, the themes are broadly aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-23 and Community Plan for the District, as well as the emerging Programme for Government, which together, are focused on delivering positive outcomes for all communities across the common, shared pillars of social, economic and environmental wellbeing. The Council suggests that it may be beneficial to design a diagram which visually demonstrates the linkages between the vision, themes and actions outlined in the NILGA Framework, highlighting the alignment with the outcomes and priority action areas within the emerging Programme for Government.

In relation to the five themes identified, Newry, Mourne and Down proposes that:

- 'Resilience' should be referenced and incorporated within theme one, in light of the emergency response to the pandemic and the need for local government to be in a position to respond swiftly and effectively to any future shocks within the internal and external environments.
- There is potentially an overlap between themes three and four, specifically in relation to 'community' and 'wellbeing and community planning'. The Council suggests that community cohesion, peace building and housing should also be incorporated as significant areas for further consideration and improvement within theme four.
- The effective and efficient delivery of essential and core services should be referenced, such as refuse collection, street cleansing, Environmental Health and Building Control. These services fall directly under the responsibility of local government and are therefore functions where Councils can potentially

drive forward and achieve the greatest impact and improvement. As such, these areas may also benefit from a shared and collaborative 'sector led approach' to data analytics, performance management, business improvement and policy development.

A. Corporate Relations, Performance and Sustainability

- (i) Accountable strategic partnerships
- (ii) A new constitution for NILGA
- (iii) NILGA Policy and Learning Networks
- (iv) NILGA – SOLACE protocol and work-plan contemporised

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is content with the four actions listed in relation to Corporate Relations, Performance and Sustainability. These actions will build the capacity and expertise of Elected Members and officers, whilst promoting the value and impact of partnership working across the local government sector and beyond.

In relation to point (i) around accountable strategic partnerships, all Councils have already established Community Planning Partnerships which are made up of Elected Members and representatives from the statutory and voluntary sectors. In Newry, Mourne and Down, the community planning structures are the designated mechanism to engage and take on board the views of local communities, ensuring stakeholder feedback influences strategic initiatives and programmes of work, thereby securing a level of accountability between the Partnership and its citizens. The Council suggests that more support should be given to Community Planning Partnerships, specifically in relation to expanding and embedding the principles of **'innovative, accountable partnership'** across the public and voluntary sectors, similar to the level of accountability currently placed on Councils through Part 10 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.

In relation to point (iii) 'NILGA Policy and Learning Networks', recognition should be given to the expertise of the officer led Local Government Working Groups which already exist across the sector. These groups tend to be subject specific, such as the Association of Local Government Finance Officers, Performance Improvement Working Group, Statutory Duty Network, Building Control Northern Ireland, Statisticians Working Group and Community Planning Officers Network, and often include representation from Government departments. These existing networks are generally well established and provide platforms to facilitate communication, share information, promote innovation and identify opportunities for collaboration and improvement across the public sector. The Council suggests that there may be merit in mapping out existing officer and member led networks across the sector. This process will establish a baseline of what exists, what works well and where the gaps

are, and can be used to inform and determine specific areas for improved networking in the future. By providing an overview of the 'networked local government' sector, from both an organisational and political perspective, this process will also help identify the level of complementarity and joined up working between existing 'political' and 'officer' networks and eliminate the risk of duplicating what might already be in place.

B. Strategic Policy and Governance

- (i) An effective Partnership Panel
- (ii) Research to consider merits of a new Public Affairs Service
- (iii) Research to consider merits of a strengthened Shared Policy Unit

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is broadly content with the actions listed in relation to Strategic Policy and Governance, and particularly welcomes the proposed link between the Partnership Panel and the emerging Programme for Government.

In relation to point (ii) around the merits of a new Public Affairs Service, whilst the proposal is welcome, more clarity is required in relation to the practical value the service will offer at a regional and local level and how the service will interact with the existing processes which may already be in place across each of the eleven Councils.

In relation to point (iii) around the strengthened Shared Policy Unit, the Council sees the benefit in effective, cohesive and joined up working around policy development at a regional level, which could result in an additional resource, 'think tank' and source of expertise to shape and strengthen the current and future role of local government.

However, whilst the proposal of a strengthened Shared Policy Unit would provide a platform to explore common 'strategic' themes and regional issues, it should also be noted that the eleven Councils continue to mainstream and embed robust and reliable policy development processes at a local level. A strengthened remit for the Shared Policy Unit should therefore seek to complement and add value to existing structures, practices, roles and responsibilities. Controls should also be put in place to maintain and strengthen the sovereign role of Council's in developing policies and setting the strategic direction of their respective organisations.

C. Improvement and Investment

- (i) Progress to be made on sector improvement and data/evidence provision
- (ii) Progress of shared services and embedding innovation at the heart of local government
- (iii) Sustainable funding for Local Government
- (iv) Digital technology for members, officers and service improvement

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is broadly supportive of the actions listed in relation to improvement and investment. The Council particularly recognises the value in partnering with and learning from UK, Irish and other Local Government Associations in relation to policy and other financial matters.

In relation to point (i) around the proposed Service Improvement Hub, Councils continue to establish and embed effective performance management arrangements, which are subject to an annual Performance Audit and Assessment by the NI Audit Office (NIAO). Through this comprehensive audit, the Local Government Auditor assesses the governance arrangements, improvement objectives and collection, use and publication of performance data, and concludes whether each Council has discharged its duties in relation to Part 12 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014. The eleven Councils are also represented on the Regional Performance Improvement Working Group (LGPIWG) which is chaired by a SOLACE representative. This group is currently working with Government Departments and the NIAO to ensure continued compliance with the Act. The group will also be engaged in reviewing the Act, associated guidance issued by the Department for Communities and any subsequent amendments to the Statutory Performance Indicators and Standards Order (2015).

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, a sub group of the LGPIWG had developed a draft plan to map existing performance management arrangements across the sector, with a view to defining a way forward regarding the development of a regional performance/benchmarking framework for local government. It would therefore be beneficial to build on the expertise of the LGPIWG to identify the business case for and added value of the proposed Service Improvement Hub.

In relation to the Data and Evidence Centre, Newry, Mourne and Down District recognises the role data analytics can play in informing and influencing effective decision making, policy development and service improvement. Whilst the provision of a virtual, regional library would certainly be welcome, the Council would like further clarification on how this 'library' would interact with the regional and local data analytics service provided by the NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). In addition, the eleven Councils currently have representation on both the Community Planning Officers Network and Statisticians Working Group which successfully lead the collation, analysis, interrogation and reporting of data for both Councils and Community Planning Partnerships. The Council would like further information regarding the need and business case for a Data and Evidence Centre which may be 'subscription based', content of the virtual library, how the Data Centre would operate, how collaboration with NISRA and existing Council networks would operate in practice and assurances in relation to data quality, accuracy, relevance and reliability.

In relation to point (iii), the Council welcomes the inclusion of sustainable funding for local government and suggests that, going forward, it is vital that Government budgets are directly aligned to the outcomes and priority action areas within the emerging Programme for Government. Delivering effective and sustainable outcomes for all local communities is unlikely to be achieved if funding continues to be allocated on an historic departmental and silo basis.

In relation to point (iv), the Council welcomes the inclusion of digital technology which has become an important enabler for continued service provision during the pandemic. The Council recognises the opportunity to drive forward, strengthen and modernise the overall 'digital' agenda, so that local government is in a position to meet the evolving needs and aspirations of all local communities, in an effective and efficient way.

Local Government in the post pandemic environment

Newry Mourne and Down District Council supports the overall principles and intent of this Framework, particularly in relation to strengthened and accountable partnership working across the public sector in Northern Ireland. The Council suggests that:

- There is consensus amongst the eleven Councils to progress the themes and actions outlined in this Framework and work collaboratively across a number of key strategic functions at a regional level, so that they complement and add value to existing visions, structures, processes and arrangements which exist locally.
- There should be renewed calls to strengthen the relationship between central and local government and embed more effective, accountable and sustainable community planning arrangements which underpin the proposed vision of 'delivering high quality services' and 'representing the whole community'. The emerging Programme for Government is based on the 'whole system approach', which seeks to create and facilitate an environment of joined up service provision across all tiers of Government and the broader public sector in Northern Ireland. Enhanced devolution with additional powers and resources for local government, such as regeneration, skills investment and local transport planning, would revitalise the sector, strengthen leadership, facilitate collaborative working and improve local decision making within the Community Planning Partnerships. It would also secure more effective and integrated service provision across all tiers of Government, delivering positive and sustainable outcomes for all local communities across Northern Ireland.



A. Local Government's Vision & Development – A Framework to the 2023 Election – Council Consultation.

Emerging from the pandemic is a time for reflection, action and new vision.

Strong local government, investing in local people and places, with 11 councils empowered, skilled and resourced, delivering high-quality leadership, services and representation for the whole community, working in innovative, accountable partnership.

NILGA sees this vision for local government as key to a better democracy and improved public services across NI.

Reflecting on the role of councils, at the height of a world pandemic, local government delivered everything required of it, and more besides. All councils did so efficiently and effectively, tailoring their decisions and actions to local need. Over £130 million in service and other Covid related income deficits placed already fragile finances on red alert. Dynamic partnership, within councils and between councils, in the latter instance co-ordinated by NILGA and SOLACE on an emergency footing throughout 2020/21, through to today, has led to the recovery of much of this deficit from the NI Executive and Treasury, new investment for 2021/22 to keep councils sustainable, and a new impetus to re-model how councils are funded, to mitigate against red alerts of any type ever again.

Prudent rates struck by all councils for 2021/22 reflect the deficit recovery funding and the efficiencies deployed to minimise ratepayer impact and maximise essential service delivery. Understanding the roles and responsibilities, together with the potential within local government, was stepped up as part of evidence lobbying and negotiation. "Councils Make it Happen" visually illustrates the community and collective value of local government in Northern Ireland and this NILGA campaign continues well into recovery and 2021.

However, as council members and officers know, there is no time to waste. Councils, NILGA and SOLACE will continue the strategic push for more resources, locally designed and applied by local government, on matters like the Shared Prosperity and Levelling Up Funds – multi-million, multi-annual investment designed to replace EU funds which councils spent wisely in their communities. Similarly, regeneration powers and resources must come equally and fully to all councils. The Councillor Code of Conduct has outlived its original design back in 2015. Experience has taught everyone – particularly today's councillors - that we cannot offer this Code to new elected members without major revisions. New ways of working with central government must be ramped up, with councils protected legislatively for any new burdens coming to them, and with members and officers alike gaining new skills, learning and development to keep pace with technological change and a **modern Programme for Government** (PIG) that has locality-based budgets at its policy centre, and which recognises Community and Local Development Planning as being key to its delivery – fuelling engines of local economic development, environmental custody and social

cohesion. We have neither the budget nor the wish to outsource the future of local government to consultants. We want to tap into the excellence and commitment that is within.

This **two-year framework** takes us to the Council Elections of 2023. NILGA seeks high level feedback and input from each Council in regard to finalising and fulfilling this Vision, the actions and their development. Feedback from the 11 councils will lead to the development of a series of regional actions, applied and agreed locally, by each sovereign council. As part of it, NILGA's governance, resources and products will be aligned to ensure that all member councils and strategic partners, working within and alongside the Association, do so in an explicitly joined up manner on matters which strengthen local government.

Collaboration works. Other regional bodies (like SOLACE and the Local Government Training Group) and council services (like waste management, local development, community and emergency planning) will benefit from innovation and improvements. **Local government is changing. This framework and consultation seeks to ensure that councils are the change makers rather than having changes imposed on them by other institutions and /or events.**

The framework has been drawn from substantial engagement and work across councils pre and during pandemic, by NILGA and others, including the corporate responses to formal consultation on devolution and the future roles and resources of local government in the Programme for Government. It provides a platform for the necessary evolution of councils as we enter a totally new economic, health and public service landscape here and around the world. It offers self-determination and enables the sector's development, and whilst focussing on councils themselves it will materially assist in making the case for stronger local government to the devolved Assembly and nationally, together with other key strategic partners across business and the community.

The framework will underpin and influence NILGA's Corporate (Electoral Term) Plan to June 2023 and its annual work plan for & with councils but also looks ahead, beyond the two-year core period, in terms of forecast activity, to assist the Association and the wider sector to *better plan and to be more sustainable*. It provides explanatory context and suggested delivery detail, abridged into five themes and three main emphases.

5 Key Themes Identified:

1. Council sustainability & improvement (e.g., devolution, training, capacity, ethics)
2. Climate Action (e.g., waste/ circular economy, LGCAN, clean air, COP26 outcomes)
3. Community & Economic Development (e.g., anti-poverty, new economy, recovery, skills, digital connectivity & regeneration)
4. Wellbeing and Community Planning (e.g., changing demographics, mental health, biodiversity, Comm Planning review)
5. Planning and infrastructure (e.g., legislation review, LDPs, Planning Training & Conduct, Roads, NI water, green infrastructure)

Councils, NILGA and SOLACE, including through the NI Partnership Panel and the Association's Policy & Learning Networks, are pinpointed as being the primary means to achieve both the vision and the actions associated with it.

It must be stressed that this framework is by necessity dynamic, complementary and propositional, not analytical, duplicative nor rigid. It offers local government the chance to look ahead, self-direct and improve, with a strong vision to be developed locally by each council and regionally through NILGA & SOLACE.

Noting the five themes above, delivering actions across them will be important. Three categories for action are offered for discussion below:

A. Corporate Relations, Performance & Sustainability

Corporate relations are of course owned by the 11 sovereign councils, NILGA and SOLACE. The sector has many corporate partners locally, regionally, nationally and internationally who, in the new landscape post pandemic, should materially assist local government whether in terms of skills development, new investment opportunities, legislative / policy guidance, best practice in service delivery, and more. NILGA has appointed eleven Strategic Partners that work closely and accountably with the Association to help develop and inform practical and policy ideas for strengthening local government in Northern Ireland.

Actions for consideration:

- (i) Accountable strategic partnerships outside of political and government centres enable community, business, social, environmental and improvement experience to be brought to bear when making decisions, defining policy and advocating positive change. These partners will be scoped out and assessed to ensure they add real value & impact to the Association and to councils. In turn, the assessment will result in new partners and post pandemic policy, investment, capacity and sustainability opportunities for local government – from July 2021. List of existing strategic partners attached per Appendix I
- (ii) A new constitution for NILGA considering Membership, Executive and Networks for AGM 2021 and developed thereafter with councils
- (iii) NILGA Policy & Learning Networks work plus other regional, and sub regional member – officer groupings should be fully scoped to hone added value / impact – from Aug 2021
- (iv) NILGA – SOLACE Protocol & Workplan contemporised & refined by end November 2021.

B. Strategic Policy & Governance

NILGA is constituted to drive in partnership the development of strategic policy and forward planning for the sector and suggests a focus on a small number of key actions, working collaboratively, resulting in more effective policy, legislation and resources for the 11 local councils.

Actions for consideration:

- (i) An effective Partnership Panel materially linked to the Programme for Government, other strategic member – officer groupings, formally reviewed by end November 2021 (with the Department for Communities) and lobbying central government in respect of performance led evidence-based devolution and sustainable council finances with practical benefits to services, citizens and governance, from July 2021
- (ii) Research to consider merits of a new Public Affairs Service, to include an evaluation of alternatively available services – designed to provide scanning & reporting of Assembly & Parliamentary committees & questions alongside liaison with MLAs and MPs individually and on a party basis to improve policy & legislation input by / affecting local government & local areas – by end October 2021
- (iii) Research to consider merits of a strengthened Shared Policy Unit to inform and be informed by our sector: development of capacity and capability – existing (NILGA – Councils) service, cost benefit analysis to strengthen, structure, strategic partners involved, research and application of best international practice, better gathering and use of local data and evidence options by end October 2021 and establish thereafter if appropriate.

C. Improvement & Investment

NILGA will develop and refine its own partnerships ensuring clear, added value, to strengthen links across the public, private & voluntary sector and to offer opportunities for local government to innovate, improve performance and enhance its services, knowledge, skills & expertise. Apart from within NI, we will partner with UK, Irish and other local government associations to (evidence-based) lobby on policy & financial matters which have the potential to affect the local government sector positively or negatively.

As we move through a precarious period for public sector finances, alongside the ending of EU funding and the construct of replacement investments, we will ensure the local government sector is adequately resourced and new models of resourcing including rates re-modelling, are developed, so that councils can continue to deliver for communities.

Actions for consideration:

- (i) Progress to be made on sector improvement and data/evidence provision – owning our own information. Research required – including a comparative exercise with other jurisdictions, by end December 2021, to consider merits of a Service Improvement Hub (if all council desired / owned) and Data Centre (inc. virtual library) by June 2022
- (ii) Progress of shared services & embedding innovation at the heart of local government. This has the potential to generate substantial efficiency savings and revenue generation if the sector takes risks and challenges itself. To do this NILGA – in partnership with all councils - will scope the following actions:
 - The delivery of action research – in partnership with SOLACE & councils - on shared services, transformation & improvement to identify what local government requires and can develop, from September 2021 and to align with and adapt existing models of improvement.
 - Research to be completed during 2021 on an Innovation by Councils Programme, to scope the potential for innovation and technology to propel local government, identify & learn from best practice and aligned to outcomes of LGTG review and to NILGA's Regional Learning & Development Programme, so as to identify and apply innovative practice in local government, reporting in January 2022.
 - Consider partnership with an organisation(s) to promote & deliver an incentivised "Innovation Challenge" for local government senior practitioners from October 2021
- (iii) Sustainable Funding for Local Government: as councils are place shapers, additional investment in local government brings direct benefit for local communities. We will work to ensure that services and funds that can be best delivered by local government are entrusted to local government and that councils' values are better understood by the rest of government, utilising the Task and Finish Group on Sustainable Councils Finances and reporting in October 2021
- (iv) Digital Technology for members, officers and service improvement: Investigate opportunities for NILGA / SOLACE and other regional bodies to drive and / or promote new offerings for the sector. This could include (research in 2021):
 - Increased digital delivery of regional representation, co-ordination and services, to include webinars, policy led training / learning within the Regional Elected Member Development Group and courses
 - Retention of non-digital regional representation, co-ordination and services if it is best to do so, including Conferences and interactive policy development across councils
 - Consideration of the merits of a subscription-based statistics service via the Data Centre for local government and other interested parties to provide dynamic up to date data and evidence required for decision making.

B. Getting It Done in Good Time & Measuring Success

Consultation with Councils will subsequently be collated, referred to all councils and a timeline and measurement tool developed.

Measuring success post-finalisation will very much depend on this being clearly communicated, largely kept to time and outcomes being positively recognised by member councils / partners.

To this end, NILGA & SOLACE will establish a regional and all council inclusive means to assess feedback, and design & manage the framework, with formal results against targets reports provided to the NILGA Executive / SOLACE and onward to councils on a twice-yearly basis in April and September, from 2022.

All work will be completed within existing budgets unless a Business Case for any additional service or personnel is provided within the NILGA – SOLACE protocol.

Good communication in relation to this development framework and its roll out will be vital – across NILGA, SOLACE & councils. Existing communications e.g., for the "Councils Make it Happen" campaign will be utilised and NILGA & SOLACE networks & Council Standing Committees will be formally communicated with to ensure scrutiny.

C. Practical Next Steps

Approval of the Consultation Framework by both NILGA & SOLACE by 20th May 2021, dissemination to councils, as an emerging regional programme, for comment by 9th July 2021.



D. Appendix I – Strategic Policy Partners

See <https://www.nilga.org/about/nilga-strategic-partners> for more detail, but these are:

Association of Public Services Excellence, Centre for Effective Services, Centre for Local Economic Strategies, Development Trusts NI, Enterprise NI, Federation of Small Businesses, Inner City Trust, Strategic Investment Board, Strategem, Sustainable NI and Social Enterprise NI.

E. Appendix II – Glossary of Terms

<p>Service Improvement Hub – supporting, promoting and improving local government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholly local-government owned and driven. • Using peer support - experienced councillors and senior officers from across the UK, who support and challenge councils to improve themselves • Enabling councils to share good practice, with good ideas shared on the NILGA website. • Elected member development programmes helping councillors become better leaders. • Promoting the development of local government's management and workforce? • Advising councils on improving customer service and value for money. • Helping councils to tackle difficult challenges.
<p>Public Affairs Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting councils as they manage an ever-growing number and variety of responsibilities. • Informing the NILGA membership of parliamentary and Assembly activity, and political monitoring. • Developing relationships with MLAs, MPs and parties to influence Assembly & Parliamentary policy & legislation • Providing support for campaigns
<p>Data and Evidence Centre</p> <p><i>Councils possess large amounts of data covering every aspect of their daily activities. This resource is valuable and provides an opportunity for transformative change through effective use in decision making. Transforming data to knowledge with the help of analytics can provide councils with additional information which can help to design better policies and improve business operations.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A trusted source of information on local government, working closely with NISRA and F&H Education Institutions. • Aiming to be the NI local government's centre of choice for data and research. • Acting as a 'hub' of knowledge about and for NI councils, reaching beyond into a wider network of experts, organisations and innovators. • Developing high impact good practice models and concepts. • Providing a 'virtual library' of information about and for local government in Northern Ireland

<p>Shared Policy Unit</p> <p>A wholly local government owned and driven shared unit that would</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deal with long-term, cross-cutting issues; • develop and co-ordinate regional policy for the sector; • create a flexible pool of 'experts' who can be deployed quickly on developing issues – utilising the knowledge and experience of the officer groups; • enable council officers to co-locate and work with NILGA staff on an ad-hoc basis • be supported by SOLACE and the NILGA Executive Committee – working at a senior level to scrutinise policy centrally, and link to government.
<p>Innovation Working Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harnessing the power of innovation to accelerate progress towards achieving the vision, aims and objectives of local government • Initiating, catalysing and enabling the scaling of innovations across the 11 councils – in technological, social, financial, policy and service delivery areas. • Showing leadership in supporting collaborative efforts among councils and their partners. • Membership drawn from council officers, with strategic advisors. Reporting to NILGA Executive & SOLACE.
<p>Research and Advisory Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligned to the Service Improvement Hub, Data centre and Shared Policy Unit; • Providing an agile proactive and responsive policy research and advisory service on key regional issues, to ensure the policy positions taken by the sector are contemporary, evidence-based and credible.

F. Response by Council

A corporate response by Council is strongly sought, ideally by Friday, 9th July 2021, with high level consideration of

- (i) The suitability or otherwise of the Vision Statement
- (ii) The suitability or otherwise of the 5 main themes identified
- (iii) The suitability or otherwise of each of the 11 actions listed
- (iv) Comment by the Council in regard to its own ideas and suggested actions on how the local government sector can be strengthened in a post pandemic environment in the run up to the Local Council elections scheduled for May 2023.

Please send Council's submission to s.little@nilga.org for the attention of NILGA's Chief Executive. Thank you for your comments and your committed partnership within the local government sector.

Report to:	Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	12 August 2021
Subject:	Annual report for the period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021 on requests related to naming Council facilities, planting trees and to locate artworks/sculptures on Council property
Reporting Officer:	Regina Mackin, Assistant Director Corporate Planning and Policy
Contact Officers:	Colin Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy Suzanne Rice, Corporate Policy & Equality Officer

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	For noting only	X
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1.0	Purpose and Background																
1.1	<p>Requests related to naming Council facilities, planting trees and to locate artworks/sculptures on Council property fall within the scope of the following Council policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy on naming Council facilities• Policy on requests to plant a tree on Council property• Policy on new Artworks/Sculptures on Council property <p>Applications are administered as per each policy’s specific agreed guidelines and associated procedure.</p>																
1.2	<p>During the reporting period Council received nine applications; four related to the policy on naming Council facilities, one related to the policy on requests to plant a tree on Council property and four related to the policy on new Artworks/Sculptures on Council property.</p>																
1.3	<p>The following table sets out details related to the applications received during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021:</p> <table><tr><th>Applicant</th><th>Relevant Policy</th><th>Detail of request</th><th>Decision</th></tr><tr><td>Marian Park Residents Association</td><td>Policy on naming Council facilities</td><td>To locate two benches adjacent to Marian Park</td><td>Approved</td></tr><tr><td>Bridge Street & Mount Crescent Community Association</td><td>Policy on naming Council facilities</td><td>To donate two benches to be located at Mount Crescent playpark</td><td>Approved</td></tr><tr><td>Drumalane Quayside Close Community Association</td><td>Policy on naming Council facilities</td><td>To locate a bench beside Drumalane Quayside Close Community Centre</td><td>Approved</td></tr></table>	Applicant	Relevant Policy	Detail of request	Decision	Marian Park Residents Association	Policy on naming Council facilities	To locate two benches adjacent to Marian Park	Approved	Bridge Street & Mount Crescent Community Association	Policy on naming Council facilities	To donate two benches to be located at Mount Crescent playpark	Approved	Drumalane Quayside Close Community Association	Policy on naming Council facilities	To locate a bench beside Drumalane Quayside Close Community Centre	Approved
Applicant	Relevant Policy	Detail of request	Decision														
Marian Park Residents Association	Policy on naming Council facilities	To locate two benches adjacent to Marian Park	Approved														
Bridge Street & Mount Crescent Community Association	Policy on naming Council facilities	To donate two benches to be located at Mount Crescent playpark	Approved														
Drumalane Quayside Close Community Association	Policy on naming Council facilities	To locate a bench beside Drumalane Quayside Close Community Centre	Approved														

	Kilbroney Community Association	Policy on naming Council facilities	To place a marker with the wording 'The Friendship Bench' in Kilbroney Park	Approved
	Drumalane Quayside Close Community Association	Policy on requests to plant a tree on Council property	To plant a tree at Drumalane Quayside Close Community Centre	Approved
	Brian Steenson Memorial Committee	Policy on new Artworks/Sculptures on Council property	To locate a memorial stone to Brian Steenson at Killyleagh Castle	Approved
	Newry Willie Maley Memorial Group	Policy on new Artworks/Sculptures on Council property	To place a sculpture of Willie Maley on Council property	Approved Of six locations proposed by the applicant Monaghan Row Corner identified as site
	Down Community Arts	Policy on new Artworks/Sculptures on Council property	To install 5 artworks in Saintfield Community Centre	Refused based upon the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the applicant did not provide detail on the design or style of the proposed artworks; the applicant advised that the proposed artworks will not reflect the historical significance of the area.
	Saintfield Development Association	Policy on new Artworks/Sculptures on Council property	To place an artwork of Francis Hutchinson at Saintfield Community Centre (On the external gable of Building A)	Refused based upon the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the rationale and basis had not been clearly established; the panel could not identify the link between the proposed artwork and the applicant's choice of location; that the most suitable location for an artwork of this nature should be the proposed Community Heritage Park referred to within the application.
2.0	Key issues			
2.1	No issues have been identified.			
3.0	Recommendations			
3.1	Members are asked to note Annual report for the 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021 period on requests related to naming Council facilities, plant trees and locate artworks/sculptures on Council property			

4.0	Resource implications
4.1	No financial or resources implications.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<p><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
5.2	<p><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></p> <p>Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i></p>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p>

	Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.0	Appendices	
	N/A	
8.0	Background Documents	
	N/A	

Report to:	Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	12 August 2021
Subject:	Statutory reporting – 1) Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period April – June 2021 2) Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2020-2021
Reporting Officer:	Regina Mackin, Assistant Director Corporate Planning and Policy
Contact Officers:	Colin Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy Suzanne Rice, Corporate Policy and Equality Officer

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	For noting only	X
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1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	<p>In line with Council's Section 75 statutory duties and commitments within our approved Equality Scheme; policy screening reports are published quarterly; and Council will prepare an annual report on the progress made on implementing the arrangements set out in its equality scheme to discharge its Section 75 statutory duties.</p> <p>The Quarterly Report for the period April to June 2021, including screening reports, is available on Council's website www.newrymournedown.org. This information has also been forwarded to all equality consultees.</p>
2.0	Key issues
2.1	<p>As per the Council's approved Equality Scheme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All policies Council proposes to adopt must be equality screened, prior to implementation, to assess the likely impact of the policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and/or good relations. • Council must publish quarterly reports on equality screening which are available on Council's website and forwarded to equality scheme consultees. • The Section 75 annual progress report should be sent to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland by 31 August each year and will follow any guidance on annual reporting issued by the Equality Commission. • The latest Section 75 annual progress report should be available on Council's website.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	<p>I. To note the Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period April – June 2021.</p>

	II. To note Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report for the period 2020 - 2021 for submission to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland by 31 August 2021.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	No financial or resources implications are anticipated.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<p><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
5.2	<p><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></p> <p>Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i></p>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>

	<p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p>
7.0	Appendices
	<p>Appendix I: Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period April – June 2021.</p> <p>Appendix II: Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2020-2021</p>
8.0	Background Documents
	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Equality Scheme.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Section 75 Policy Screening Report Quarterly Report April - June 2021

Policy	Details of policy	Screening Outcome
Mournes Gateway Project	<p>The Mourne Mountains Gateway Project is a Tourism Project within the Belfast Region City Deal, aimed at enhancing Northern Ireland's tourism offering and which seeks to redefine the visitor destination experience associated with the Mourne Mountains and coastline.</p> <p>The project proposal is for the establishment of the Thomas Quarry Visitor Centre in the Mournes, with a Gondola/cable car uplift that will commence in Donard Park. It will be a world class international tourist attraction which will provide sustainable enhancements for access from Newcastle town into the Mournes. The project aims to catalyse the sustainable tourism industry in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The vision of the Gateway Project is to:</p> <p>“Deliver a world-class visitor attraction that will support the sustainable regional growth of tourism in Northern Ireland and will help to position Newry, Mourne and Down as one of the premier tourism destinations on the Island of Ireland.</p> <p>The project will provide major enhancements to the visitor experience in and around the Mournes, whilst protecting and enhancing the natural heritage and habitat of the region”.</p> <p>The project will deliver:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Increased access to the Mournes by all abilities & age groups2. The project will contribute to the Belfast Region City Deal's ambition to deliver a step change in the region's economic prosperity, help achieve a 15-year programme of inclusive growth, an increase of	No EQIA considered necessary

	<p>£470m Gross Value Added and create up to 20,000 new and better jobs, accessible to people from all communities.</p> <p>3. The estimated economic benefits of the project include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 226 direct, indirect and induced jobs 251 construction job £5.1m annual GVA by 2032, £74.6m GVA over 30 years 	
Policy on Management of Bonfires on Council Land	<p>The aim of the policy is to provide clear guidance to ensure the safe management of bonfires held on Council land.</p> <p>The objectives of the policy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To manage bonfires on Council land through the implementation of a Bonfire Management Framework which sets out the conditions for safe, well managed bonfires and related events. To enable the safe and respectful celebration of cultural expression while adhering to health and safety guidance. To engage with communities to encourage and promote education and awareness, specifically amongst young people, of the health and safety risks and good relations matters associated with bonfires. To safeguard, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and wellbeing of contractors, visitors and members of the public accessing Council land in accordance with statutory requirements. 	No EQIA considered necessary
Proposed Children Memorial Gardens Landscape Scheme	<p>This relates to a notice of motion acknowledging the importance of small memory gardens where families can visit for reflection, remember their deceased children and find solace in a purpose built peaceful setting, other than a cemetery.</p>	No EQIA considered necessary

	<p>The memory garden will be a simple construct, a small corner in one of our public spaces surrounded by planting for privacy and containing nothing more than a couple of benches with a few symbolic flowers and plants.</p> <p>The proposal is to establish two memory gardens, one within each health trust area, at Ross Monument, Rostrevor and The Quoil, Downpatrick.</p>	
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Newry, Mourne and Down District Council



Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2020-2021

Contact:

➤ Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Equality Scheme	Name: Suzanne Rice Telephone: 0330 137 4887/07841477072 Email: suzanne.rice@nmandd.org
➤ Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan	As above <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (double click to open) Name: Telephone: Email:

Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:

www.newrymournedown.org

Signature:

This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.

It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties, and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.

This report reflects progress made between April 2020 and March 2021

PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme

Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice

- 1 In 2020-21, please provide examples of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.

As a public authority, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council continues to strive to ensure that programmes, initiatives and activities undertaken by Council promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

2020-2021 has been a year like no other. The impact of the Covid- 19 pandemic and its many implications on public authorities cannot be overestimated. However, as a Council we continued to ensure that we met our statutory duty requirements during this reporting period.

In fulfilling our Section 75 statutory duties, Council has developed an Equality Scheme which has been approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. It outlines corporate responsibilities, legal commitments and specific actions.

Below is a summary of some of the outcomes and improvements achieved in the 2020-21 financial year:

Financial Assistance Programme 2020-2021

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has several financial assistance programmes which promote Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations. Last year saw additional financial support being made available through the delivery of Community Covid-19 grants.

The following outlines the specific examples of funding allocated in the 2020 - 2021 financial year:

- **Good Relations Financial Assistance Scheme** - £40,590 allocated to support 30 initiatives which promoted children and young people, shared space, celebrating cultural expression and promoting Good Relations at a local level.
- **Irish Language Financial Assistance Scheme** – £50,504 allocated to 19 Initiatives aimed at promoting the Irish Language.

- **Minority Communities Fund** – £7,865 allocated to 16 applications applied under the two distinct themes of the funding stream:
 - **Theme 1: Cultural Expression**
This theme is for projects/initiatives that positively promotes minority community culture, tradition and identity.
 - **Theme 2: Positively engaging minority communities**
This theme is for projects/initiatives to build positive relations, raise awareness and understanding, address perceptions and promote respect for minority communities.

Equality Action Plan 2020-2023

Council initiated a 12-week public consultation on the draft Equality Action plan on 17 January 2020. This was reported to The Equality Commission in last year's annual report for the period 2019-2020.

The public consultation closed on the 10 April 2020 and below is a summary of some of the views of the consultees:

- In regard to Principle 1 in the plan '*Ensuring we work in a non-discriminatory environment, promote equality and model best practice in equality and good relations*', 100% of respondents strongly agreed with the issues and positive actions under this principle.
- In regard to Principle 2 in the plan '*Ensuring all our decisions are based on evidence to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations*', 90% of respondents strongly agreed while 10% agreed with the issues and positive actions under this principle.
- In regard to Principle 3 in the plan '*Providing access to services, facilities and information*', 100% strongly agreed with the issues and positive actions under this principle.
- In regard to Principle 4 in the plan '*Recruiting and employing people fairly*', 90% of respondents strongly agreed while 10% agreed with the issues and positive actions under this principle.
- In regard to Principle 5 in the plan '*Responding to and learning from complaints and incidents in a positive and proactive way*', 90% of respondents strongly agreed while 10% agreed with the issues and positive actions under this principle.

The draft Equality Action Plan 2020- 2023 was updated taking account of consultee comments received during the public consultation. The draft plan was approved by Council in August 2020 and was then forwarded to The Equality Commission for attention and information.

The Equality Action Plan 2020-2023 recommends key areas of activity and details positive actions relevant to our Council's functions. The positive action measures have been set out under the five principles of the Local Government

Staff Commission's Equality and Diversity in Local Councils Framework to which Council have signed up to.

Disability Action Plan 2020-2023

Council undertook a 12-week consultation on its draft Disability Action Plan. Below is a summary of some of the comments made:

- In regard to the theme of '*Awareness and Understanding*' 100% of respondents strongly agreed with this theme in the plan for the next three years,
- In regard to the theme of '*Engagement*', 73% of respondents strongly agreed and 27% agreed with this theme in the plan for the next three years,
- In regard to the theme of '*Promotion*', 73% of respondents strongly agreed and 27% agreed with this theme in the plan for the next three years,
- In regard to the theme of '*Access*', 73% of respondents strongly agreed and 27% agreed with the theme in the plan for the next three years,
- In regard to the theme of '*Workforce*', 73% of respondents strongly agreed and 27% agreed with the theme in the plan for the next three years.

Good Relations Programme & Council's District Electoral Area Forums

Council continued with the implementation of the Council's Good Relations Programme through the Good Relations Strategy. The Council's Good Relations Strategy complements the themes outlined in the Together Building and United Community Strategy (TBUC) and the policy context both locally and regionally. Many of the actions detailed within the action plan are addressed at a local level through the Council's seven District Electoral Area (DEA) forums.

In the 2020-2021 financial year, the work of the DEA Forums primarily concentrated on providing assistance to community groups and statutory agencies to help those most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. This included the management and delivery of the food parcel scheme.

The Good Relations action plan also supported several initiatives directly such as those related to the Traveller Community and the management of bonfires.

Support for Travelling Community programmes is delivered through the Newry, Mourne and Down District Traveller Forum. The Traveller Forum aims to promote an inclusive and civil society in the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area by championing Traveller rights and addressing current provisions for the Traveller community within the district. Four meetings (8 June 2020, 7 September 2020, 7 December 2020 and 8 March 2021) were held in the 2020-2021 financial year and issues discussed included Traveller accommodation provision, youth initiatives and Traveller support. Two PEACE IV funded

programmes began during this reporting period. A summary of the projects is detailed below:

➤ ***A Documentary Photography Project - 'Life Thru My Lens'***

This project ran for six months and participants had the opportunity to learn the art of photography composition, and the art of storytelling through images. Participants participated in a blended engagement opportunity. Some of the engagement was delivered via online group sessions and face to face opportunities to meet and explore

➤ ***Sports Heritage – 'A Game of Two Halves'***

Participants had the opportunity to experience a variety of sports, team and individual. This project also had an element of online engagement where clients participated in forums and workshops exploring the sporting heritage of Northern Ireland, sports which are no longer played and sports which participants may never have tried before.

The Bonfire Management Subgroup, supported through the action plan and managed by the PCSP, held three meetings during this period (25 June 2020, 8 July 2020 and 7 December 2020). The group which consists of Elected Members and representatives from statutory agencies collaborated to develop, with the assistance of the PEACE IV programme, protocol arrangements for bonfire management across the district.

Other initiatives supported during this period included the following:

➤ ***Newry, Mourne & Down Intercultural Forum***

The forum is an interagency partnership committed to working together towards an inclusive community to create opportunities that embrace diversity.

➤ ***Syrian Integration Group***

The Council is part of the Syrian Integration Group led by the Department for Communities (DfC) which aims to consider and address the practical steps that are needed to meet the immediate and longer-term needs of Syrian refugees arriving in the District through the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.

➤ ***Inclusive cities***

Inclusive Cities is a knowledge exchange initiative supporting UK cities and their local partners to achieve a step-change in their approach towards the inclusion of newcomers in the city. Newry, Mourne and Down were selected to join Inclusive Cities in February 2020. The programme overall aims to create a step change in local authority practice within and throughout the city. It does this through the development of a city-wide action plan

Councillors' Equality and Good Relations Reference Group

The Equality and Good Relations Reference Group is a facilitated discussion space. The reference group is the Council's vehicle for considering and discussing politically sensitive and contentious issues, including those relating to

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events, policy and procedure, single issues requiring specific consideration for advice, and guidance on the establishment of wider good relations fora etc with a view of reaching a common understanding, agreement and actions. Four meetings of the Equality and Good Relations Reference Group took place in the 2020-2021 period.

The Meetings were held on the 19 June 2020, 10 August 2020, 23 October 2020 and 8 January 2021.

A summary of some of the issues discussed and addressed included:

- **Notice of Motion re Commemorating WW2 Veterans living in the district** – A notice of motion to formally acknowledge surviving World War II veterans living in the district. Further to identifying four surviving veterans living in the Newry, Mourne and Down District, Council commissioned four Silver Poppies for presentation to the veterans and families.
- **Matters related to John Mitchel statue and information panel.** Following a tender process and subsequent approval granted by SEUPB, Footsteps Consultancy was appointed to deliver the Peace IV funded John Mitchel Educational Programme.
- **Consideration and discussion of draft policies, guidelines and associated procedures including:**
 - Draft Policy on naming Council facilities V2 (reviewed)
 - Draft Policy on requests to plant a tree on Council property
 - Draft Policy on new Artworks/Sculptures on Council property

The aim of the policy on new artworks/sculptures on Council property is to provide the framework for a consistent approach to consideration and decision-making in relation to requests for the installation of new public artworks/sculptures on council property.

Taking into account the potential political sensitivities related to such requests, it was agreed that all requests which meet basic eligibility criteria be forwarded to members of the Councillors' Equality & Good Relations Reference Group.

The Councillors' Equality and Good Relations Reference Group serves as a 'barometer of opinion' and its membership reflects the party-political representation on the Council and takes account of the need to create a space for minority political voices including Independent Councillors.

Should any member of the Councillors' Equality & Good Relations Reference Group believe the request merits discussion the application is then considered by the Councillors' Equality & Good Relations Reference Group. Requests must receive unanimous approval from the Councillors

present at the Councillors' Equality & Good Relations Reference Group meeting to progress to full appraisal and assessment.

Should the members believe it does not merit discussion the application will proceed directly to full appraisal and assessment by a 3-Officer panel comprising the Director of Corporate Services or their representative and two other officers of Council.

➤ **Notice of Motion – racism**

"That this Council recognises that racism is a scourge across this society. This Council further recognises the positive contribution made to society by those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds; deplores the discrimination Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities face regularly; condemns racism in all its forms, and calls on this Council to work together with the sector; local BAME representative groups; schools and colleges; private businesses and public enterprises to ensure that this Council area becomes a racism free zone".

➤ **Notion of Motion – Impact of misogyny and transmisogyny.**

"This Council recognises the impact of misogyny and transmisogyny on those affected by it, as well as the role these attitudes play in a variety of crimes, including harassment, assault, sexual assault and hate crimes, and on the career choices and personal lives of women, girls and non-binary people. The Council supports the inclusion of misogyny as a standalone offence and as a category of hate crime, recognising crimes targeted at women including trans women as hate crimes based on misogyny and will write a letter to that effect to Judge Desmond Marrinan, as part of his ongoing review of hate crime legislation in Northern Ireland. The Council supports also the Raise Your Voice Project, which tackles sexual harassment and sexual violence across Northern Ireland, by placing posters in all Council properties to raise awareness of the project."

➤ **Notice of motion re Planting trees of remembrance - 'The Council undertakes a review of the policy that refuses to allow the planting of trees in our parks to remember deceased relatives and friends. There should be a flexible policy to allow families and friends to plant a tree in council owned parks, to honour loved ones who have passed away'.**

➤ **Notice of Motion – NI 100 Years**

In relation to the Northern Ireland Centenary it was agreed that the "Council should recognise this, and in so doing provide financial support to mark this important Anniversary by establishing a Centenaries Funding Programme of £40,000 to be included in the first financial call for 2021/2022." The funding programme call opened in February 2021 and closed in March 2021.

The Ethnic Minority Support Centre

An update provided by Artur Kmiecik, Social Inclusion Officer stated that Lockdown, Covid-19 restrictions and Brexit were the three main factors which had the greatest impact on the work of the Ethnic Minority Support Centre last year.

With the announcement of lockdown in March 2020, the Centre had switched to new forms of operation during the pandemic. Instead of face-to-face meetings, front line services were delivered over the telephone and through online contacts. 3750 phone appointments and 677 face to face appointments took place during the 2020-2021 financial year.

Emergency funding was secured from The Executive Office (£10,000) with 127 families benefitting from this fund. Covid-19 food parcels were delivered weekly to families in need up to July 2021 and 404 centre clients were referred to The Migrant Workers Centre for EU Registration as part of the EU Settlement Scheme.

Age

The Newry, Mourne and Down Age Friendly Alliance have developed a new Strategy for 2021. Below is a summary of some of the projects undertaken in 2020-2021.

- As part of Positive Ageing Week 2020 and working in partnership with the regional, local and statutory agencies, 17 individual local events (10 virtual/7 physical location) were held in the district.
- The Age Friendly Alliance contributed to a funding application for a new project called 'Taking Action on Elder Abuse'. The project will be a two-year initiative, focused on prevention and early intervention in cases of elder abuse. The Alliance was also involved in an Art reimagining project in North Street and the Abbey Yard Tunnel areas of Newry City. Its aim was to address the anti-social behaviour and the increased fear amongst older people.
- The Age Friendly Alliance continued to coordinate and distribute 700 packs of thermal clothing across the district.
- The Alliance continued to coordinate and distribute 315 PHA (Southern) 'keep warm' packs.
- The Alliance coordinated and distributed of 1700 Health and wellbeing packs across the district.

The examples detailed above provides a snapshot of examples of how Council is meeting its Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations obligations and details on the outcomes achieved.

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- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2020-2021 *(or append the plan with progress/examples identified)*.

As noted in our response to Section 1, Council's Equality Action Plan recommends key areas of activity and details positive actions relevant to our Council's functions.

The positive action measures have been set out under the five principles of the Local Government Staff Commission's Equality and Diversity in Local Councils Framework. The following are examples of specific objectives and the impact of the Equality Action Plan measures in the 2020-2021 financial year:

Principle 1: ensuring we work in a non – discriminatory environment, promote equality of opportunity and model of best practice in equality and good relations

Objective – To continue to develop an understanding of the Council's duty to promote Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations

Outcome and Impact

- Officers worked with the Learning and Development section within Council to assist in the development of E-learning training modules on Equality and Disability Awareness. The training will be delivered to Council employees through the Council's eLearning platform.
- Council continued to utilise the Councillors' Equality and Good Relations Reference Group during 2020-2021 to address issues of a sensitive and contentious nature. Four virtual meetings were held in the reporting period.
- Information on Equality and Good Relations continued to be provided to all new staff joining the organisation.
- Information provided from The Equality Commission outlining that Council continue to ensure it meets the statutory obligations in relation to Covid-19 decision-making was circulated to members of the Council's Senior Management Team and Corporate Management Team for attention.
- Continued the provision of a Good Relations and Minority Communities funding programmes for community groups and organisations to avail of for good relations initiatives in their local area. £7865 was allocated to 16 applicants under the themes of cultural expression and positively engaging with minority communities.
- Continue to offer and expand on support services available through the Council's Ethnic Minority Support Centre. In 2020-2021 over 4200 appointments were taken by the Social Inclusion Officer.

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- Continue to utilise the Council's Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Traveller Forum whose objective is to champion the rights of the Traveller community living in the district. Four meetings were held in the reporting period.
- Participation in the Equality Commission's learning webinars – Unconscious bias and equality in the workforce, Section 75 – using evidence in policy making, Annual employers equality update, and the ESRC Festival of Social Science NI webinar Building a shared future for English, Irish and Ulster Scots languages.

Principle 2: Ensuring all our decisions are based on evidence to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality and good relations

Objective – To ensure that all policies and procedures are equality screened

Outcome and Impact

- 21 policies were equality screened in the reporting period.
- The quarterly policy screening reports were tabled at the Council's Strategy, Policy and Resource Committee and made available on the Council's website.
- Implementation of a Policy Framework which outlines a detailed corporate approach to policy development within Council. The new framework allows the Head of Corporate Policy and the Corporate Policy and Equality Officer to engage with Officers through the policy development process and ensure that equality screenings have been completed if required.
- Implementation of the revised Corporate Reporting Template. The revised template supports Officers in the completion of reports and helps develop greater consistency. This also contributes to Council meeting its statutory duty responsibilities, assist with monitoring information, and the preparation of Council's annual reports on progress to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (Section 75 and Disability Duties).

The appropriate and relevant completion of the sections within the reporting template underpins improving confidence in decision-making and recording and providing evidence that appropriate consideration has been given to the Section 75 statutory duties should a complaint arise alleging breach of the Council's Equality Scheme.

Principle 3: Providing access to services, facilities and information

Objective - To have relevant section 75 data

Outcome and Impact

- The Evidence and Research section in Council continued to provide relevant data to officers to assist them with Equality Screenings and supporting decision-making.
- Monitoring data is also compiled for all users of council facilities. This data identifies those availing of Council facilities and highlighting gaps in provision.
- Monitoring data was collated as part of the draft Equality Action Plan and draft Disability Action Plan public consultation. This data will assist in identifying where targeted engagement may be required for future consultation. The information collected ensures ratepayers and residents have a say in service delivery.

Objective – Services and facilities are accessible to all parts of the community

Outcome and Impact

- The Shopmobility scheme continued to be utilised in the Mournes DEA during the reporting period. Due to the success of this scheme, officers are investigating the potential of the scheme being available in other towns in the district.
- Council continues to ensure that information is available in alternative and accessible formats when required.

Principle 4: Recruiting and employing people fairly

Objective – Integration of Section 75 statutory duties within job description

Outcome and Impact

Examples of specific relevant duties and responsibilities listed in new job descriptions include the following:

- Promote diversity across the organisation and in the Department by adhering to the Council's Equal Opportunity policies and procedures and avoiding all forms of discrimination both as an employer and a service provider.

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- Promote Equality and Diversity across the organisation by demonstrating an open commitment to and actively promoting and celebrating diversity, promoting social inclusion and community cohesion.
- Work towards improving equality and diversity by ensuring that allocated targets to reduce inequalities and promote good relations are achieved.

Principle 5: Responding to and learning from complaints and incidents in a positive and proactive way

Objective - Everyone has a right to complain about discrimination and harassment in good faith, without being victimised at any time.

Outcome and Impact

- The NMD Traveller Forum has an established reporting process in place for members of the Traveller Community to utilise if they have been the victim of a hate crime. The Equality Commission provided advice and expertise on a specific issue in the 2020-2021 reporting period.
- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has a Complaint, Comment and Compliment Policy and process in place for residents to avail of when required.

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- 3** Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2020-2021 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes ☒ No (go to Q.4) ☐ Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

- 3a** With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

- 3b** What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? *(tick all that apply)*

☐ As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy *(please give details):*

☐ As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise *(please give details):*

☐ As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details):*

☐ As a result of changes to access to information and services *(please specify and give details):*

☐ Other *(please specify and give details):*

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Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures

Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

4 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2020-21 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- ☐ Yes, organisation wide
- ☒ Yes, some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- ☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Recruitment processes, albeit a much less amount, continued during the 2020-2021 financial year. Examples of specifically relevant duties and responsibilities listed in new job descriptions include the following:

- Promote diversity across the organisation and in the Department by adhering to the Council's Equal Opportunity policies and procedures and avoiding all forms of discrimination both as an employer and a service provider.
- Promote Equality and Diversity across the organisation by demonstrating an open commitment to and actively promoting and celebrating diversity, promoting social inclusion and community cohesion.
- Work towards improving equality and diversity by ensuring that allocated targets to reduce inequalities and promote good relations are achieved.

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2020-21 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- ☐ Yes, organisation wide
- ☒ Yes, some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- ☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

- The **Council's Corporate Plan 2021-2023** outlines a commitment to core values to be accountable, collaborative and transparent. We are also committed to delivering on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations in accordance with our statutory duties as laid out in Section 75 of the

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Northern Ireland Act 1998. Due to Covid-19 restrictions the Corporate Plan launch was delayed and officially launched in January 2021.

- The **Corporate Services Directorate Emergency Business Plan** which was introduced in May 2020 to redirect/amend services and functions as a result on the Covid-19 pandemic made direct reference to the Section 75 statutory duties and actions relating to the implementation of the Council's Equality Scheme.

In the 2020-21 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? *(tick all that apply)*

- ☐ Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- ☐ Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- ☒ Yes, in some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's ongoing corporate plan
- ☐ No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2017-18 report
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Council's equality and policy functions are located under the Corporate Services Directorate, within the Corporate Planning and Policy Department's Corporate Policy Section.

The Corporate Services' Directorate Emergency Business Plan 2020-2021 makes direct reference to the Section 75 statutory duties and actions relating to the implementation of the Council's Equality Scheme. This outlined key directorate actions, and a timetable / measure of success also include actions in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Advice and Guidance was also received from The Equality Commission reiterating that Council should continue to ensure their commitment to Section 75 in all issues relating to Covid-19 decision-making.

In addition, as stated previously, all employees of the predecessor organisations have transferred to Newry, Mourne and Down District Council under TUPE arrangements. Examples of specifically relevant duties and responsibilities listed in new job descriptions include the following:

- Promote diversity across the organisation and in the Department by adhering to the Council's Equal Opportunity policies and procedures and avoiding all forms of discrimination both as an employer and a service provider.

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- Promote Equality and Diversity across the organisation by demonstrating an open commitment to and actively promoting and celebrating diversity, promoting social inclusion and community cohesion.
- Work towards improving equality and diversity by ensuring that allocated targets to reduce inequalities and promote good relations are achieved.

Equality action plans/measures

7 Within the 2020-21 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:

2

Actions ongoing:

15

Actions to commence:

9

Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*)

Examples of actions completed and ongoing to date are:

- The utilisation of the Equality and Good Relations Reference Group during 2020 -2021. Four meetings were held in this reporting period.
- Implementation of the Good Relations Action Plan which is delivered through the District Electoral Area Forums. The allocated budgets have been spent and projects detailed in the DEA action plans have been delivered.
- Production of a Policy Development Framework which details a dedicated corporate approach to policy development in Council.
- Implementation of revised Corporate Reporting Template which records and provides evidence that appropriate consideration has been given to the Section 75 statutory duties.
- Collaborative working with disability organisations. Production of an online Disability Awareness Training programme for Council employees.
- Continued the screening of all new and current policies.
- Continuing to ensure that council facilities are accessible to all.
- Continuing to facilitate reasonable for adjustments within the workplace and for those working from home.
- Continue to provide information in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable. Where the exact request cannot be met we ensure a reasonable alternative is provided.

8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2020-21 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

There were no changes to the equality action plan in the 2020-2021 reporting period.

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- 9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2020-21 reporting period, the following have been identified: *(tick all that apply)*

- ☒ Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality
- ☒ Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way
- ☒ Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities
- ☐ Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)

- 10 Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: *(tick one box only)*

- ☒ All the time ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never

- 11 Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2020-21 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

During the reporting period Council adopted a 'Policy on requests for the installation on new Artworks/Sculptures on Council property'. The aim of this policy is to provide the framework for a consistent approach to consideration and decision-making in relation to requests for the installation of new public artworks/sculptures on council property.

Taking into account the potential political sensitivities and contention related to such requests, all requests which meet basic eligibility criteria are forwarded to members of the Councillors' Equality & Good Relations Reference Group.

The Councillors' Equality and Good Relations Reference Group is a facilitated discussion space which serves as a 'barometer of opinion', playing a role in considering and discussing politically sensitive and contentious issues. Its membership reflects the party-political representation on the Council and takes account of the need to create a space for minority political voices including Independent Councillors.

Should any member of the Councillors' Equality & Good Relations Reference Group believe the request merits discussion the application is then considered by the Councillors' Equality & Good Relations Reference Group. Requests must receive unanimous approval from the Councillors present at the Councillors' Equality & Good Relations Reference Group meeting to progress to full appraisal and assessment.

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Should the members believe it does not merit discussion the application will proceed directly to full appraisal and assessment by a 3-Officer panel comprising the Director of Corporate Services or their representative and two other officers of Council.

- 12 In the 2020-21 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: *(tick all that apply)*

- ☐ Face to face meetings
- ☒ Focus groups
- ☒ Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- ☒ Questionnaires
- ☒ Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- ☐ Internet discussions
- ☐ Telephone consultations
- ☐ Other *(please specify)*: DEA public engagement events.

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

The online public consultation for the Council's draft Equality Action Plan 2020-2023, draft Disability Action Plan 2020-2023 and draft Irish Language Strategy 2020-2023 closed in April 2020. While we acknowledge the Covid-related restrictions may have limited feedback, responses were received from a variety of individuals and organisations reflective of people from particular Section 75 categories including people with disability.

- 13 Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2020-21 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Corporate Policy and Equality Officer continued to utilise the dedicated equality database of contacts to engage with and to inform on all aspects of the Council's Equality functions throughout the reporting period. Officers also continued to participate in online Statutory Duty Network meetings during the

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reporting period. This forum provides an opportunity to share information including examples of best practice.

- 14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2020-21 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Not applicable – no commitment to review

The consultee list was last updated in December 2019. The consultee list will be reviewed during the 2021-2022 reporting period.

Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

Equality screening templates and reports associated with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Equality Scheme commitments can be accessed on Council's website at: <https://www.newrymouredown.org/equality>

- 15 Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year *(as recorded in screening reports)*:

21

- 16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2020-21:

0

Policy consultations conducted with **screening** assessment presented.

0

Policy consultations conducted **with an equality impact assessment (EQIA)** presented.

0

Consultations for an **EQIA** alone.

- 17 Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:

Not-applicable.

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- 18 Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes ☐ No concerns were raised ☒ No ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Arrangements for publishing the results of assessments (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

- 19 Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQLAs published during the 2020-21 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Arrangements for monitoring and publishing the results of monitoring (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

- 20 From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2020-21 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes ☐ No, already taken place
☒ No, scheduled to take place at a later date ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details:

- 21 In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

- 22 Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2020-21 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

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Not-applicable.

- 23** Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:
- Monitoring data of users of the Ethnic Minority Support Centre provides the evidence required for Council to determine the types of service provision that needs to be offered.
 - In line with council policy, all participants of training programmes complete monitoring forms which evaluates the delivery and content of the programme and helps identify potential training programmes going forward.
 - All Good Relations activity is evaluated and monitored. Those participating in programmes and activities must complete information at which they outline the impact of the programme for them, their understanding of Good Relations and this data assists in identifying need and programmes going forward.
 - The monitoring data received as part of the Draft Equality Action Plan and Draft Disability Action Plan consultation will assist in identifying gaps for future targeted consultation.
 - The policy framework ensures that officers can monitor the policy development process from the beginning and can ensure that Equality Screenings are undertaken if required.

Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)

- 24** Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2020-21, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

Training	Number of sessions
Introduction to Health and Safety	Due to Covid-19 restrictions, all training was delivered through the Councils E learning platform.
Evac chair refresher training	Due to Covid-19 restrictions, all training was delivered through the Councils E learning platform.
Modern slavery and human trafficking	Due to Covid-19 restrictions, all training was delivered through the Councils E learning platform.

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Safeguarding Awareness training	Due to Covid-19 restrictions, all training was delivered through the Councils E learning platform.
Remote worker essential training	Due to Covid-19 restrictions, all training was delivered through the Councils E learning platform.

- 25 Please provide any examples of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)

- 26 Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2020-21, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

The monitoring data from respondents to the public consultation inviting comments on the draft Equality Action Plan 2020-2023 and draft Disability Action Plan 2020-2023 has resulted in improvement to service delivery.

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

- 27 How many complaints in relation to the Equality Scheme have been received during 2020-21?

Insert number here:

0

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

Section 3: Looking Forward

- 28 Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:

The five-year review of the Equality Scheme was undertaken during the 2019-2020 reporting period. The revised scheme was considered approved by Council in March 2020 and forwarded to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. The Equality Scheme is due for review in 2025.

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- 29 Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? *(please provide details)*

The relevant officers continue to engage with officials from the Council's Human Resources Department to develop training modules for an E-Learning Training programme. It is envisaged that this training tool will be a useful asset considering the current social distancing arrangements which are in place in the office and workspaces and the increase of employees working from home. Disability Awareness training and Equality training modules have been completed and will be delivered virtually in the 2021-2022 reporting period.

In relation to equality screening, officers must continue to ensure that they meet section 75 obligations, including that related to changes of service delivery due to the current restrictions in place. Officers will continue to avail of advice and guidance from the Equality Commission and Section 75 guidance from the Equality Commission and a link to a webinar delivered by Paul Oakes, Manager of Advice & Compliance, ECNI has been circulated to the Council's Senior and Corporate Management Teams.

- 30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next (2020-21) reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

- ☒ Employment
- ☒ Goods, facilities and services
- ☒ Legislative changes
- ☒ Organisational changes/ new functions
- ☐ Nothing specific, more of the same
- ☐ Other (please state):

To ensure that Council continues to comply with its statutory obligations, we will continue to avail of advice, guidance and expertise from the Commission in relation to the delivery of our functions.

As stated above, to assist with this process Section 75 guidance from the Equality Commission for developing Covid-19 related policies and a link to a webinar delivered by Paul Oakes, Manager of Advice & Compliance, ECNI has been circulated to the Council's Senior and Corporate Management Teams.

PART B

PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

1. Number of action measures for this reporting period that have been:

9		
Fully achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved

2. Please outline below details on all actions that have been fully achieved in the reporting period.

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs ⁱ	Outcomes / Impact ⁱⁱ
National ⁱⁱⁱ			
Regional ^{iv}			
Local ^v	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council directly promotes positive attitudes towards disabled people through service delivery and programming which includes a disability under Active and Healthy Communities Sports Development. This is delivered by Council's Activity Officer (formerly Disability Liaison Officer) which includes a disability leisure membership	While we do recognise that leisure facilities were closed on a number of occasions throughout the reporting period due to the Covid -19 pandemic, the following services were available when facilities were opened.	Enables those living with a disability or restricted mobility to enjoy access to swimming pools / leisure facilities.
		Continue the implementation of a	Increased access to leisure facilities and a broad, appropriate and relevant programme of activities.

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<p>scheme, core classes and development of a disability sports hub.</p> <p>Raise awareness of the services and facilities for disabled people provided by the Council.</p> <p>Engage with forums in the district.</p>	<p>disability leisure membership scheme (Buddy Card and concessionary rates).</p> <p>Autism Friendly swim sessions introduced in the Council's Leisure Centre.</p> <p>The continued implementation of the 'Just a Minute', JAM Card initiative which includes training for all front-line services staff.</p> <p>Officers continued to meet with representatives from the Cedar Foundation to develop training programmes for Council employees. The Cedar Foundation is a support organisation that assists people with a disability, Autism or Brain Injury to live the life they choose.</p> <p>Civic Building 'Light up'. During 2020-2021 Disability organisations highlighted</p>	<p>JAM Card allows people with a learning difficulty, autism or communication barrier tell others they need 'Just A Minute' discreetly and easily. Those with a communication barrier are often reluctant or unable to tell others about their condition, and the JAM Card allows this to happen in a simple, effective non-verbal manner.</p> <p>Improved access to facilities and services.</p> <p>Development and promotion of programmes of activity involving people with a disability.</p> <p>Awareness raising and support initiatives in the community.</p> <p>Awareness raising and support initiatives in the community.</p> <p>Reduce rural isolation and increase social inclusion for both carers and people living with Alzheimers.</p>
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		<p>included Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, Epilepsy Action, Alzheimer's and Dyslexia Awareness.</p> <p>Continue to provide information in alternative and accessible formats when required.</p> <p>Development of a Policy Framework which ensures a corporate consistent approach is undertaken when developing policies within Council. The new framework ensures Officers undertake Equality Screenings when required.</p>	<p>Support service for young people who are 'carers' for family.</p> <p>Support services and awareness raising within the community and within Council.</p> <p>Availability of support services in the community.</p> <p>Ensuring people with disabilities have access to Council facilities and other venues.</p> <p>Raise awareness of services available.</p> <p>Ensuring people with disabilities have access to local services.</p> <p>Provide support services for local businesses.</p> <p>Disabled people encouraged to directly participate in public life as valued employees.</p>
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2(b) What training action measures were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Provide appropriate training concerning the disability duties	Worked in partnership with the Cedar Foundation to prepare a Disability Awareness Training video to be delivered on the Council's E-Learning Platform.	Greater awareness and understanding of disability issues, the standards of behaviour required of employees and principle of equality of opportunity.
2	Disability duties delivered as part of staff training	Due to restrictions in place during the 2020-2021 reporting period, training sessions did not take, however information was made available to all new recruits virtually and literature was provided.	Greater awareness and understanding of disability issues, the standards of behaviour required of employees and principle of equality of opportunity.

2(c) What Positive attitudes action measures in the area of Communications were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Engage with the disability forums in the district.	Officers continued met with representatives from the Cedar Foundation to discuss the development of training programmes for Council employees and also investigate the possibility of short term work placements for Cedar clients. The Cedar Foundation is a support organisation that assists	Development and promotion of programmes of activity involving people with a disability and reviewing and improving access to information and services.

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		<p>people with a disability, Autism or Brain Injury to live the life they choose.</p> <p>NMDDC worked in partnership with CYPSP to launch the 'Our Journey through Disability' report in November 2020. The report outlines the barriers for children and young people living with disabilities and proposed recommendations to support the children, young people and their families.</p>	
2	<p>Raise awareness of the services and facilities for disabled people provided by the Council</p>	<p>Continued the Implementation of the Disability leisure membership scheme. (eg Buddy Card and concessionary rates)</p> <p>Continue the implementation of the 'Just a Minute', JAM Card initiative which includes training for all front-line services staff.</p> <p>Promotion of services available on council social media platforms.</p> <p>Continued implementation of a Shopmobility Scheme from Newcastle Centre, Newcastle and also Delamont Park</p>	<p>Increased awareness of accessibility and access to Council services and facilities.</p> <p>JAM Card allows people with a learning difficulty, autism or communication barrier tell others they need 'Just A Minute' discreetly and easily. Those with a communication barrier are often reluctant or unable to tell others about their condition, and the JAM Card allows this to happen in a simple, effective non-verbal manner.</p> <p>Positive impact and encouragement for people with mobility issues to participate in public life through increasing access to services and enhance tourism experience for people with disability.</p>

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3	Embed the disability duties into the Council's corporate consultation process.	Relevant employees aware of the requirement to mainstream equality and disability principles and considerations when undertaking consultation processes.	Arrangements for consulting reflect the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of our statutory duties.
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2 (d) What action measures were achieved to 'encourage others' to promote the two duties:

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Development of a Policy Framework which ensures a corporate consistent approach is undertaken when developing policies within Council.	The new framework ensures that in regard to decision making, consideration is given to Section 75 categories through the screening process when required. The new Policy Development Framework was circulated to the members of the Council's Senior Management Team and Corporate Management Team for consideration and to all officers for implementation.	Improved access to and delivery of services.

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2 (e) Please outline any additional action measures that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1	Provide work experience for people with disabilities.	People with disabilities provided with work experience and Job opportunities.	Disabled people encouraged to directly participate in public life as valued employees.
2	Workplace adjustments	Adjustments continued to be provided in the workplace and for those working from home.	Facilitate the requirements of employees ensuring they have access to undertake duties.

3. Please outline what action measures have been partly achieved as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones / Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	N/A			

4. Please outline what action measures have **not been achieved** and the reasons why.

	Action Measures not met	Reasons

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1	N/A	
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5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

- Evaluation / feedback from training sessions
- Discussion / consultation with disability groups and individuals

(b) Quantitative

- Number of employees who have received training
- Number of Elected Members who have received training
- Number of documents requested in alternative formats
- Number of complaints received

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original disability action plan / any other changes?**

No

If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1	N/A		

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7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation's annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

The draft Disability Action Plan 2020-2023 public consultation closed in April 2020. Following an analysis of the responses and a review of the plan to incorporate some of the responses provided, the draft Disability Action Plan was approved at the August 2020 SP&R committee meeting and ratified by full Council in September 2020. Following ratification, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Disability Action Plan 2020-2023 was submitted to The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

- i **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.
- ii **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.
- iii **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments
- iv **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level
- v **Local** : Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora.
- vi **Milestones** – Please outline what part progress has been made towards the particular measures; even if full output or outcomes/ impact have not been achieved.