



Subject:	Review of the dual language street signs policy
Date:	11 th August 2026
Reporting Officer:	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number ☐	
1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Sometime in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	This report is provided for members to formally agree the start of a review of the Dual Language Street Signs (DLSS) policy. The review will seek to:
1.2	• Fulfil the commitment made on implementation of the policy to review the impact of the policy; • Address requests from and issues raised by Members in relation to various aspects of the policy; and • Review of the issues identified by officers who are administering the policy in practice.
1.3	The review will include the development of a robust consultation and engagement framework to identify any stakeholders whose views should be sought.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	Members are asked to consider the information provided and agree to the scope of the review of the DLSS policy as set out in the report
2.2	Officers will bring a further report to members outlining the associated timeframe for the review including further information on the consultant appointment for the specific aspects of the review discussed below and details of any proposed stakeholder engagement.
3.0	Main Report
	Background
3.1	The current DLLS policy was agreed and adopted by BCC in October 2022, following a public consultation and Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA).
3.2	A commitment was made at implementation in July 2022 to review the impact of the policy and monitoring information currently held will be used to feed into such a review.
3.3	Since Implementation this Committee have agreed various operational aspects of the policy including: - An approach to applications for DLSS on City Centre Streets - An approach to DLSS in the Gaeltacht Quarter - An approach to “long streets” (as defined by the policy).
3.4	Since implementation members have also raised issues and queries regarding application of the policy in practice and these matters have been discussed at the monthly People and Communities Committee and Council meetings.
	Review of Impact of Policy
3.5	Commitments were made, in keeping with those included in the council's Equality Scheme, to review the policy and take into account and remedy any identified adverse impacts.
3.6	It was duly recognised that the process of Section 75 assessment which is attached to each application moves beyond the normal practice of the council in regard to screening (which is typically relating to the process by which decisions are reached rather than each decision). However, it was felt at the time that this was a proportionate safeguard given the sensitivities attaching to this issue.
3.7	The overall policy review will include a consultant led review of the above issues and in

	this regard, officers will make available for such a review the monitoring information that has been collected to assist this process. This information includes but is not limited to: - • Quantitative data relating to the number of applications made, including the breakdown of support by community background at relevant stages of the application process; • Qualitative data regarding comments and feedback received on applications, together with correspondence/media coverage; • Feedback from staff involved in the application process; • Analysis of complaints register. Matters raised by members to be included in review:
3.8	There are several issues that have been raised by members since implementation of the policy. These matters will be considered in the review and include -
3.9	• <u>Calculation of Survey Results</u> The current DLSS policy states that “Where fifteen percent or more of the Occupiers of that street have indicated that they are in favour of the erection of a second language street sign, then such a sign may be erected”. Officers currently compile all results as a percentage of all occupiers on a street. This approach has been challenged in Committee and Council meetings where it has been suggested that results should be calculated as percentage of only those that have returned a survey rather than all occupiers of the street. A legal opinion has been requested in relation to this matter. Whilst street surveys will continue, processing of survey results and subsequent reporting to Committee has been put on hold awaiting this legal opinion being provided.
3.10	• <u>Streets which do not meet the fifteen percent threshold at survey</u> If the minimum threshold of fifteen percent is not met at street survey, the current DLSS policy states the applicant will be given two weeks to advise the Council of any special circumstances in relation to the application. If none exist, then the application is closed. These applications have been set out on the Council’s website but have not been reported to committee. However, since May 2026 these have been included within the monthly DLSS report for noting with the first such report including all those applications that had failed to date.
3.11	In noting the closure of a number of applications that have not met the 15% threshold at survey, Members have used the residual discretion clause within the policy to reconsider the applications and approve them. Both the reporting of these applications and the decision-making process using residual discretion has been queried by some members and it is proposed that this is also considered by the review.
3.12	• <u>Data collection as part of the survey process including use of the electoral register</u> Officers currently use the electoral list as a basis for street surveys which is the stated policy position. Whilst this matter has been subject to a previous report (May 2026), and a decision was taken by the Committee to maintain the current process it was agreed at Council in June that the matter would be further considered by the review.

3.13	• <u>Dealing with duplicate applications for streets that fail to meet the approval threshold at street survey.</u>
3.14	There are a number of streets that have failed to meet the threshold for approval at street survey. There has been no consensus on how subsequent applications in the same or a different language for streets that have failed to meet the 15% threshold in survey should be dealt with. It is proposed that this matter should be considered as part of the review.
3.15	Other matters to be considered by review
3.16	In addition to the above the review will consider and propose changes to the policy for any matters that have already been approved by members such as the reduction in survey response times from one month to 21 days.
3.17	It will also include a review of operational processes to establish and deal with any issues in application and administration of the policy in practice by officers.
3.18	The stakeholder's perspective will be an important component of the review and in this regard, officers will identify the stakeholders whose views should be sought to determine whether any policy changes may be required.
	Who will carry out the review.
3.19	Council officers will lead the operational review of the practical issues identified by Members and staff who have direct experience of implementing the policy.
3.20	The Business Research and Development Unit (in the Place and Economy departmental policy team) will support all objective elements of the review. This will include the development of a robust consultation and engagement framework to identify the stakeholders whose views should be sought to determine whether any policy changes may be required. This stakeholder engagement will be completed prior to any formal public consultation on proposed changes.
3.21	In line with the commitments made regarding the review of the impacts of the DLLS Policy, the Council will appoint a suitably qualified independent consultant with the necessary expertise to undertake this specific element of the review. This work will assess the policy's impact at both an individual and community level.
3.22	Officers will prepare Terms of Reference for the review, and a further report will be brought before this Committee once the independent consultant has been appointed, setting out the agreed scope and timescales.
3.23	Operational position while the review is ongoing
3.24	During the period the policy is subject to review, applications will continue to be processed, and subject to the impact of the legal opinion being sought into the calculation of the fifteen percent threshold as outlined above survey results brought to Committee in line with the current policy/procedures.
3.25	Duplicate applications for the same second language in any street previously surveyed which did not meet the threshold, or were refused, will be put on hold until the review is complete and a procedure for this matter is agreed. The impact of this is currently limited to 3 streets.

3.26	Officers will continue to use the current process for data collection as agreed at the committee meeting in May 2026 until the review is complete. <u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.27	Any consultant costs will be included in a future report when a consultant has been appointed.
3.28	There will be significant staff time required both in the operational part of the review and also collating information and working with any consultant which will impact on regular processing tasks. <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.29	The implications of any policy change and the revised policy will be assessed for impacts in line with corporate guidelines.
4.0	Appendices
4.1	None