Democratic Services Section
Chief Executive's Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

21st September, 2017

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

As previously notified to you, I enclose a copy of the report for the following item 4b and additional items 2d, 8e and 8f to be considered at the meeting to be held at 9.30 am on Friday, 22nd September, 2017.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

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Belfast City Council

Subject:	European Capital of Culture 2023 – Special Committee Meeting
Date:	22 September 2017
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?   Yes ☐   No ☑

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 or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To seek the Committee's authority to hold a Special Committee meeting during the w/c Monday 25 September [Thursday 28 September @4pm] to discuss European Capital of Culture 2023.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to; • Approve that a Special Committee meeting be held. • Agree that, due to the urgency of the matter, the decision to be taken at the Special meeting will not be subject to the call-in process.
3.0	Main report
3.1	The Committee will be aware that Belfast City Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council are progressing a bid to secure European Capital of Culture 2023 designation. This is a once in a generation transformational opportunity for both cities and wider region to promote

	and showcase the cultural and creative aspects of our place as well as delivering many wider social and economic benefits to our citizens.
3.2	A key milestone in the process is the formal submission of a Phase 1 Bid Book to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sports (DCMS) by **27 October 2017.**
3.3	Given the significance of this programme and to enable Members to discuss the emerging concept, vision and ambition behind the ECOC proposition as well as to explore some of the key decisions required in moving forward, it is proposed that a Special Committee meeting be held on Thursday 28 September @ 4pm.
3.4	This Committee meeting will receive a presentation on the bid summary, the overall theme, the candidate city issue and some of the programme ideas. Some of the discussion will need to be restricted where it could be deemed commercially sensitive.
3.5	If the decision taken at the Special Committee meeting is to be ratified at the Council meeting on 2 October, then there will not be sufficient time for the normal call-in process to be completed. Therefore, the Committee is requested to agree that, due to urgency, the call-in process is set aside for the decision to be taken at the Special meeting.
3.6	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> None associated with this report.
3.7	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> None.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	None.

STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	Peace and Beyond Conference: request for authority to invite former President Clinton
Date:	22 September 2017
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
Contact Officer:	Lisa Toland, Head of Economic Initiatives and International Development

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?		Yes		No	X

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision ☐
After Council Decision ☐
Some time in the future ☐
Never ☐

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?		Yes	X	No	

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of the report is to seek authority for the Lord Mayor of Belfast, on behalf of the City, to invite former US President Bill Clinton to attend a major conference planned to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement in April 2018.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to:-

	• Authorise the Lord Mayor to issue an invitation, on behalf of the City, to former US President Bill Clinton to address a major conference in Belfast to mark the 20th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement in April 2018.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	As Members will be aware, 10th April 2018 marks twenty years since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA).
3.2	The British Council, working with both universities as well as the Centre for Democracy and Peace Building, is proposing to host a major conference in Belfast to mark the event. The conference will take place in a nuber of venues across the City from 10th-12th April 2018.
3.3	The objective of the Conference is to bring together policy makers and peace practitioners from around the world to share reflections and case studies on building effective, inclusive and sustainable peace. The series of plenary sessions, workshops, site visits and cultural events will create an open, inclusive and shared space for international dialogue to reflect upon the experience of peace processes across the world. The events will build on the Northern Ireland experience of and expertise in conflict resolution and peace building. By marking the achievement of the multi-track work that led to the signing of the Agreement, the conference will provide opportunities for international dialogue to reflect on the experience of everyday peace building. The Conference will also reflect on the contribution of partners such as the EU and the USA in the achievement and continuation of peace.
3.4	The British Council and its partners hope to attract a number of individuals who played a key role in the negotiations to attend the event. They hope, in particular, to invite former US President Bill Clinton to attend the event. In order to provide civic endorsement to the invitation, the British Council has asked whether the Lord Mayor of Belfast can issue this invitation on behalf of the City.
3.5	The Conference programme is currently being drafted. It will involve a series of tours, discussion and panel sessions, cultural showcases and visits to relevant projects and sites across the City. These are likely to involve Girdwood and the Innovation Factory. Attendees at the event will come from Northern Ireland but there will also be representation from international cities that are dealing with issues of conflict resolution.
	The involvement of former President Clinton is seen as highly symbolic given his close

3.6	involvement in local politics at the time of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. His visit to City Hall and the former Mackie's site in 1995 were also undertaken at a critical time in the process. A return visit to both locations offers a significant opportunity to explore how the City has developed since that time and to showcase how local partners are working collectively to improve lives within our communities.
3.7	This Conference presents a significant opportunity for the City to tell its story twenty years on from the Good Friday Agreement. It also offers an opportunity to reflect on developments since that time and to engage in discussion with other cities and locations that have undergone similar experiences.
3.8	Equality and Good Relations Implications The conference programme will be designed to ensure that it is reflective of all relevant groups in the City.
3.9	Financial and Resource Implications The costs associated with hosting the conference will be met by the British Council and other partners. The organisers are likely to request access to Belfast City Hall for part of the programme. This request will be considered at a future meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	None.

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STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	Consultation Report on Draft Linguistic Diversity Policy and Language Strategy Action Plan
Date:	22nd September 2017
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor
Contact Officer:	Lorraine Dennis, Equality and Diversity Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	Yes		No	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes	X	No	

1.0	Purpose of report or summary of main issues
1.1	Members will be aware that at the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 21 April 2017 approval was given to consult on the draft Policy on Linguistic Diversity **(Appendix 1)**. A report on the findings from the consultation, which ran from 23 May 2017 to 18 July 2017 is presented for discussion **(Appendix 2)**. One of the key recommendations is to further develop the draft Policy on Linguistic Diversity as a Language Strategy, and the related action plan, to run from October 2017 until March 2018, which has been developed from the consultation findings, is also presented for approval **(Appendix 3)**.
1.2	Committee should note that this report was brought to Party Group Leaders and they requested briefings for clarity but Sinn Fein have asked that it is considered by September Committee.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • To note the findings of the consultation on the draft Linguistic Diversity Policy and approve the recommendations; • To approve the Language Strategy Action Plan Oct 2017 – March 2018.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	<u>Background</u> Belfast aims to be a welcoming and inclusive city for all. To help achieve this aim and to meet other best practice guidance and legal requirements, we developed a draft Linguistic Diversity Policy, approved for consultation at Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 21 April 2017 **(Appendix 1).** The draft Linguistic Diversity Policy outlined our approach to promoting different languages in the Belfast City Council area. It builds on our 2006 Language Policy which needed to be revised to take account of the changing population and other developments.
3.2	The draft policy provided background on the changing dynamics of the population of Belfast and also explained the legal framework, current central government strategies and details of previous engagement with stakeholders. Based on this information, the draft policy recommended an approach which included: • The development of an over-arching Language Framework, which articulated our commitment to supporting minority languages whilst allowing the different needs of speakers of Irish, Ulster-Scots and other minority languages to be addressed effectively. • Development of an Irish Language Policy which focused primarily on the enhancement and protection of the language; • Development of an Ulster-Scots Language policy which looked more to the promotion of the language and the cultural and heritage aspects of the language rather than the need for translation of documents and interpretation services. • Development of a policy on other minority languages (including sign languages) which focused on ensuring good communication and increasing awareness and understanding of minority cultures.
3.3	The draft Policy on Linguistic Diversity was subject to a formal consultation period which ran from 23 May 2017 to 18 July 2017. Prior to this period, there had already been informal engagement / pre-consultation meetings with relevant sectors to ensure that the draft policy reflected on priorities and issues for each stakeholder group, these had taken place

	over the period from 2013-17. The Policy was then considered in draft form by the various Party political groups represented within the Council before the formal consultation period began.

The consultation was launched on with a press statement, article on staff intranet and an invitation on the Council's website to respond to the consultation. |
| 3.4 | For the general public different ways to respond were:

- An online questionnaire of public opinion on the Council's Consultation Hub, including information (hard copies were also available)

- Attendance at one of two engagement events, designed to gather the same information as the online questionnaire.

- Attending any of four themed focus groups: Irish Language, Ulster-Scots Language, New Communities and Deaf or Partial Hearing, and / or Disabled people.

- Consultation comments could also be received by email and letter |
| 3.5 | For staff different ways to respond were:

- An online survey available (internally only) on the online Consultation Hub, including information and completion of an online questionnaire, available from 26 June until 18 July 2017 (hard copies were also available);

- One to one meetings with Dr John Kremer, independent equality and diversity consultant who co-facilitated the consultation activities

Meetings with Trade Union representatives were also planned as part of the consultation. |
| 3.6 | <u>Key Issues</u>

A Consultation Report on the Draft Policy on Linguistic Diversity **(Appendix 2)** has been prepared is structured under the following headings:
     A. Information on the policy consulted upon
     B. Our approach
     C. Consultees' comments
     D. Emerging issues and preliminary recommendations
The following recommendations are put forward for approval:

- The draft Linguistic Diversity Policy should be re-branded as a Language Strategy, outlining a strategic approach to the development of accessible and inclusive communications;

- The current Section 3 (Recent developments) should be amended to take on board |

		consultees' comments and to ensure that the strategy is consistent with current legislation and guidance in Northern Ireland;
		• The overarching principles should include further reference to the positive benefits attached to linguistic diversity and bilingualism;
		• Terminology used within the strategy should be consistent throughout, avoiding use of labels such as 'minority' wherever possible;
		• Separate strands of work should be established under the strategy, for example – Irish Language, Ulster-Scots Language, Sign Language, New Communities' Communications and Language, and Communications and Language Strand for those with a Disability;
		• Each strand should be assessed fully to inform appropriate resourcing, for example with dedicated human and material resources that are tailored to the particular needs and priorities of that language community;
		• The job description for the post of language officers attached to one or more strands should be precise and reflect on the needs and priorities of the language communities in question. Recruitment of an Irish Language officer is recommended as an identified need for the Irish language community;
		• Further engagement with each sector should be used to fine tune the aims and implementation sections of each strand of work to reflect the needs and priorities of the relevant community in any agreed policy;
		• Pilots of work identified through the consultation will provide a useful insight in to wider implementation and how it impacts on operational delivery;
		• The principles of shared space should be considered in the development of actions within the strategy and its related strands of work;
		• Resource implications associated with the strategy should be clarified at an early stage, and action measures put in place that reflect on best value principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
		• Further analysis of staff training and capacity building needs should be undertaken;
		• To take forward these recommendations, an action plan should be put in place with immediate effect, setting out a staged approach to full implementation, with resources made available for each strand in order to provide continued momentum to the emerging strategy.
3.7		Reflecting the recommendations a Language Strategy Action Plan to run from October 2017 to March 2018 **(Appendix 3)** has been prepared and Members are asked to approve

	the Action Plan for implementation commencing in October 2017.
3.8	<u>Next steps</u> The Language Strategy Action Plan will commence in October 2017 and run until March 2018. This will allow for alignment with the financial year, with a further one year action plan to run from April 2018 – March 2019 submitted for approval in early 2018.
3.9	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> A budget of £25,000 was approved by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 23 June 2017 to support the initial Language Strategy Action Plan, to run from October 2017 - March 2018.
3.10	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> A draft Equality Screening Report was presented as part of the consultation documentation. An updated screening will be undertaken at appropriate stages in the implementation of the Language Strategy.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – draft Policy on Linguistic Diversity Appendix 2 – Consultation Report on Draft Policy on Linguistic Diversity Appendix 3 – Language Strategy Action Plan, October 2017 until March 2018

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Policy on Linguistic Diversity

Draft for consultation: 21 April 2017

Access to Information

As part of our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations, we want to ensure that everyone is able to access the documents we produce. We would therefore be happy to provide any of the information in this document in alternative formats on request. If you have any queries about this document, and its availability in alternative formats (including Braille, disk and audio cassette, and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English) then please contact:

Equality and Diversity Officer, Legal and Democratic Services

Belfast City Council, Belfast, City Hall BT1 5GS

Direct Line: 028 9027 0511 Freephone: 080 0085 5412 Text phone: 028 9027 0405

Email: equality@belfastcity.gov.uk

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1.   Purpose of the report

The Council adopted the current Language Policy in 2006. In 2013 the Council agreed that the policy needed to be revised and updated and consultation was undertaken with representatives of the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) sectors to discuss the priorities for the promotion of minority languages. A draft revised policy was then developed and considered by the party political groups but no decision was taken at that time.

This paper sets out background information and details of recent developments and proposes an approach to the revision of the Language Policy consisting of an overarching Language Framework which will allow for the development of three separate policies on Irish, Ulster-Scots and Other Languages (including sign languages). A first draft of the overarching Language Framework is included at Appendix 1.

2.   Current policy

As a result of guidance from the Department of the Environment Local Government Division, the Council agreed in December 2002 to take certain actions to ensure compliance with Part III (Article 10) of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages ('the European Charter'), in relation to the use of the Irish language. These included providing translation services and guidance for staff. (Article 10 is reproduced in Appendix 2 for reference).

Subsequently, in September 2006, the Council adopted a wide ranging Language Policy (see Appendix 3) addressing the use of languages other than English in Council business, with specific references to Irish, Ulster-Scots, other minority languages and sign languages.

In 2013 the Council considered revising and updating the Language Policy as a result of the legal opinion of Mr Richard Gordon QC on the extent to which the existing policy might be open to legitimate criticism. There had been significant developments in the way that the needs of users of minority languages had been addressed over the intervening years and the Council had made a number of additional decisions affecting minority language users, including the provision of bilingual external signage in certain locations and circumstances (see Appendix 4).

3. Recent developments

There are a number of developments which lead to the conclusion that the current policy needs to be revised and updated. Brief details are set out below and additional information is provided in appendices.

3.1 Legal position

(a)   Counsel's opinion

In January 2013 the Council sought the opinion of Mr Richard Gordon QC, who is widely recognised as a leading counsel on constitutional, administrative, public and civil liberties law. Mr Gordon was asked to advise:

- whether the Council is in any legal conflict with the provisions of the European Charter and whether the current policies in relation to the use of Irish meet with the spirit and requirements of the Charter;

- whether the current language policies are open to legitimate criticism.

Mr Gordon advised that there would be potential for judicial review in relation to allegations of the Council's non-compliance with the European Charter and recommended that the Council should – as a minimum – have in place a clear strategy which can be shown to be implemented for facilitation of the Irish language so as to meet all the requirements of Article 10 of the European Charter. He suggested that the Council should reformulate the Language Policy in a comprehensive and easily accessible form and should attempt to itemise in the clearest terms what is being done to implement the policy.

(b)   High Court ruling

In December 2014, the High Court ruled on an application for judicial review by Eileen Reid of a decision taken by Belfast City Council to refuse to erect an additional street name plate in Irish at Ballymurphy Drive, Belfast. The application was made on five grounds, one of which was that the Council's street naming policy was inconsistent with its commitment to act in accordance with the European Charter. The ruling stated that, as a general proposition, international treaties or agreements which have not been incorporated into national law are not enforceable and went on to say:

'a public authority … cannot be obliged to treat itself as bound to act in compliance with international obligation. Even where it does so it is clear from the authorities that the courts will adopt a very light touch review which will not extend to ruling on the meaning or effect of the International Treaty.'

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(c)   International and domestic legal obligations and standards

In addition to the European Charter, there are several international and domestic legal obligations and standards that are relevant to the use of minority languages, including:

- the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement;
- the Northern Ireland (St Andrew's Agreement) Act 2006;
- the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities;
- the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights;
- the European Convention on Human Rights.

Brief details are set out in Appendix 5.

(d) Judicial Review Application Conradh Na Gaeilge March 2017

The High Court found that the Executive Committee of the NI Assembly had failed to comply with obligations flowing form the NI Act 1998 requiring it to adopt a strategy in respect of the Irish language and that consideration was not sufficient to discharge the duty arising under the Act.

3.2   Demand for minority languages

The 2011 Census includes information on the main languages spoken by residents of Belfast and knowledge of Irish and Ulster-Scots, and the School Census 2014/15 provides information on the number of schools in the Belfast City Council area providing teaching through the medium of Irish. The figures (which relate to the Council's extended boundary) show that:

- 13.45% of the Belfast population (aged 3+) have some ability in Irish, compared with 10.65% of the population of Northern Ireland as a whole;
- over 16,000 people in Belfast speak, read, write and understand Irish;
- just under 3,000 pupils receive education through the medium of Irish in the Council area;
- 5.23% of the Belfast population (aged 3+) have some ability in Ulster-Scots, compared with 8.08% of the population of Northern Ireland as a whole;
- just over 2000 people in Belfast speak, read, write and understand Ulster-Scots;
- 5.47% of people in Belfast are deaf or have partial hearing loss – 18,261
- 4.94% of Belfast households contain at least one person who does not have English as a main language and in 2.71% of Belfast households, no-one has English as a main language;
- the most commonly spoken languages in Belfast (excluding English and Irish) are Polish, Chinese, Tagalog/Filipino and Slovak.[1]

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[1] NISRA have indicated that all Chinese languages are grouped together for the purposes of the 2011 Census.

The relevant data are set out in Appendix 6.

It should also be noted that the Council is co-operating with the DSD in respect of the resettlement of refugees from Syria and surrounding countries under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme. The first group of 51 refugees from Lebanon arrived in Belfast on 15th December 2015. For most of the refugees resettled under this scheme, the main language will be Arabic; research by the Multi-Cultural Resource Centre in 2006 showed that, after the Chinese languages, Arabic is probably the second most used minority ethnic language in Northern Ireland, with up to 1000 speakers in Belfast.

3.3   Feedback from consultation

As part of the review of the Council's language policy in 2013, the Joint Diversity Group met separately with representatives from the Irish language sector and the Ulster-Scots sector and the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee received a presentation from POBAL on the use of the Irish language in public life. Officers also met with representatives from the relevant sectors to discuss minority language issues. The purpose of each meeting was to seek the views of the various groups on what actions they considered should be a priority for the Council in promoting minority languages.

The key points raised were:
- there is a need for greater clarity on the services which the Council can provide in minority languages;
- there is a desire for greater support (including access to Council venues) for minority language and cultural events;
- there is a need for staff to be more aware of minority language issues.

Further details are set out in Appendix 7.

3.4   Central Government Strategies

Structural changes within central government have resulted in this work being taken forward by the Department of Communities.

(a)   Irish Language Strategy
In January 2015, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) published a Strategy to Enhance and Protect the Development of the Irish Language over the period 2015-2035 (Straitéis le Forbairt na Gaeilge a Fheabhsú agus a Chosaint).

The key aims of the strategy are:

- support quality and sustainable acquisition and learning of the Irish language;
- enhance and protect the status and visibility of the Irish language;
- deliver quality and sustainable Irish language networks and communities; and
- promote the Irish language in a way that will contribute towards building a strong and shared community.

In relation to the delivery of public services, the strategy envisages that public authorities will facilitate the use of Irish both orally and in writing and will produce and adhere to a Code of Courtesy that meets the needs of those who wish to conduct their business through Irish. The strategy notes that language awareness and language training programmes need to be provided so that a higher proportion of public service staff can effectively deliver services in Irish to customers who seek them.

Local councils will be expected to:

- adopt Irish language policies and plans and appoint Irish language officers;
- initiate or expand facilities for the use of Irish in their council and committee meetings;
- increase the visibility of the Irish language by publicising the availability of their Irish language services;
- provide an Irish or bilingual version of publications, official documents and forms in line with the approach of the Strategy and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages;
- facilitate the proper preservation and signposting of Irish place-names and the naming of new housing developments; and
- encourage tourism and cultural initiatives through Irish.

(b)   Consultation on proposed Irish Language legislation
In accordance with the Strategy, DCAL is working towards introducing legislation to secure legislative protection of the Irish language and issued a consultation document in February 2015 setting out the provisions that might appear in an Irish Language Act. The consultation period closed in May 2015 but the results have not yet been published. Some of the key proposals are summarised below:

- Irish will be defined as an Official Language in Northern Ireland in such a way as to guarantee services through Irish on a par with those available through English.
- There will be provision to create the position of an Irish Language Commissioner whose functions would include approving language schemes and providing advice to the public and public bodies.
- The Irish Language Commissioner would have the power to instruct public bodies to draft language schemes.

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- Public bodies, including district councils, will have a statutory duty:
    - to ensure that correspondence sent to them in Irish is replied to in Irish without undue delay;
    - to ensure that when information is provided to the public, the communication is in Irish and English;
    - to publish simultaneously in Irish and English documents setting out public policy proposals, annual reports, audited accounts or financial statements etc.;
    - to agree language schemes with the Irish Language Commissioner and to implement the commitments of such statutory schemes; and
    - to undertake public consultation exercises to assist in the preparation of language schemes.

(c)   Ulster-Scots Strategy

In January 2015 DCAL also published a Strategy to Enhance and Develop the Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage and Culture over the period 2015-2035 (Roadin furtae Brïng Forrits an Graith tha Ulstèr-Scotch Leid, Heirskip an Cultùr).

The strategy has four key aims:

- promote and safeguard the status of, and respect for, the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture;
- build up the sustainability, capacity and infrastructure of the Ulster-Scots community; and
- foster an inclusive, wider understanding of the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture in a way that will contribute towards building a strong and shared community.

In relation to public services, the strategy indicates that Departments, councils and public bodies need to:

- facilitate and encourage the use of Ulster-Scots in public life;
- increase awareness and visibility of the Ulster-Scots services they provide;
- encourage the promotion of Ulster-Scots cultural and heritage tourism initiatives;
- ensure that respect for Ulster-Scots within the context of cultural diversity is an element of their commitment to good relations;
- facilitate the proper preservation and signposting of Ulster-Scots place names.

The strategy also says that awareness training for relevant staff needs to be a good practice requirement.

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(d)   Sign languages

DCAL set up a Sign Language Partnership Group in 2005 which produced best practice guidance on providing public services to deaf people who use British Sign Language (BSL) or Irish Sign Language (ISL). Speaking in the Assembly on 1st December 2015, the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure said that the Partnership Group had contributed much to improving the lives of sign language users and their families but that she was convinced of the need to do much more. She indicated that the Deaf community had made it clear that they want legislation to safeguard their rights as a cultural and linguistic minority. The Minster said that she would take initial steps to address this issue before responsibility transfers to the Department of Communities in 2016. A draft Sign Language Framework was opened for public consultation in 2016.

3.5   Guidance from Foras na Gaeilge

In March 2015 Foras na Gaeilge (the statutory body charged with the promotion of the Irish language) published a Guidance Document: Irish Language Services in the New Councils. Foras na Gaeilge has been assisting councils to develop their service provision in Irish since 2006, principally through the Irish Language Officers' Scheme. Under this scheme, joint funding for a three year period is provided towards the salary of an Irish Language Officer, provided that a Council Action Plan is prepared in collaboration with Foras na Gaeilge. The most recent scheme ran from 2013-2016. Foras na Gaeilge has advised that a review of the Scheme has been initiated to take account of the changed environment following local government reorganisation. A consultation on the Scheme will be carried out in early 2017.

Foras na Gaeilge recommends that each council should include the Irish language in their Community Plans, adopt a strong Irish Language Policy and adopt a strategy for the development of Irish both within the council and in the community. They suggest that development of a strategic approach should be based on:

- consultation with local Irish speaking communities to gather information on which Irish language services would be beneficial to them and which they would be most likely to use; and
- an audit of the Irish language skills of existing staff.

The Guidance Document sets out examples of good practice in terms of support for minority languages and offers practical advice on ways to support and promote the Irish language; these are set out as a 'menu' ranging from the simplest actions to a more comprehensive approach. (This section of the guidance document is reproduced at Appendix 8 for reference.)

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3.6   Guidance from the Ulster-Scots Agency

The Ulster-Scots Agency has highlighted that it is essential that, when public authorities are undertaking actions to promote Ulster-Scots, they reflect the situation of the language, in accordance with the European Charter. The Ulster- Scots Agency has adopted the Fishman Model for reversing language shift, which sets out an eight stage process for language development. The Model states that efforts should be concentrated on the earlier stages of restoration until they have been consolidated before proceeding to the later stages. The stages are:

1. Acquisition of the language by adults, who in effect act as language apprentices (recommended where most of the remaining speakers of the language are elderly and socially isolated from other speakers of the language).

2. Create a socially integrated population of active speakers (or users) of the language (at this stage it is usually best to concentrate mainly on the spoken language rather than the written language).

3. In localities where there are a reasonable number of people habitually using the language, encourage the informal use of the language among people of all age groups and within families and bolster its daily use through the establishment of local neighbourhood institutions in which the language is encouraged, protected and (in certain contexts at least) used exclusively.

4. In areas where oral competence in the language has been achieved in all age groups encourage literacy in the language but in a way that does not depend upon assistance from (or goodwill of) the state education system.

5. Where the state permits it, and where numbers warrant, encourage the use of the language in compulsory state education.

6. Where the above stages have been achieved and consolidated, encourage the use of the language in the workplace (lower worksphere).

7. Where the above stages have been achieved and consolidated encourage the use of the language in local government services and mass media.

8. Where the above stages have been achieved and consolidated encourage use of the language in higher education, government, etc.

3.6   Policies of other councils

It should be noted that, since April 2014, three councils have adopted formal language policies and one is in the process of doing so:

- Fermanagh & Omagh DC has adopted an overarching Linguistic Diversity Policy;
- Derry City & Strabane DC has introduced separate policies on Irish and Ulster-Scots;

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- Newry, Mourne & Down DC has adopted a Bilingual Language Policy to facilitate and encourage the promotion and use of both the Irish language and English language in the Council area;
- Mid Ulster DC adopted an Irish Language Policy in December 2015 and has conducted an EQIA on a proposed Ulster-Scots policy.

Appendix 9 contains background information on language policies in Wales, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland.

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4.   Recommendations

The Council, by reason of the commitments made in 2002 and 2006, has created an expectation that it will implement the relevant standards of Article 10 of the European Charter in respect of the Irish language. Ulster Scots is accorded status under part 2, Article 7 of the Charter relating to the promotion of language and culture. The NI Executive has adopted 20 year strategies on both Irish and Ulster-Scots. In recent years the Council has made ad hoc decisions which also go beyond the scope of Article 10, particularly in relation to bilingual signage.

In view of recent developments, there is clearly a need for the Council to revise and update its Language Policy to meet the needs of all minority language users and anticipate the likely requirements of future legislation. The opportunity therefore arises to provide both clarity in terms of the services that the Council will provide in minority languages and a clear statement of commitment to recognise the needs of all minority language users and the promotion of related cultures and heritage. It is recommended that the Council should develop an overarching Language Framework setting out this commitment and the principles deriving from it and subsequently develop three separate policies on the Irish, Ulster-Scots and other minority languages (including sign languages). The Framework and the policies should reflect the principles set out in the DCAL strategies, the ambitions of users and stakeholders and take account of best practice guidance.

Three separate policies should be developed to meet the current needs and priorities of each sector as established and gleaned in the course of the Council's consultation with key stakeholders. The Irish Language Policy focuses primarily on the enhancement and protection of the language whilst the Ulster-Scots Language policy looks more to the promotion of the language and the cultural and heritage aspects of the language rather than the need for translation of documents and interpretation services. The third policy on other minority languages focuses on ensuring good communication and increasing awareness and understanding of minority cultures.

The development of an over-arching framework and three separate policies would allow the Council to articulate its commitment to supporting minority languages whilst allowing the different needs of speakers of Irish, Ulster-Scots and other minority languages to be addressed effectively. The consultation carried out in 2013 and subsequent engagement has shown that different sectors have very different needs and priorities. It will also provide clarity in terms of the services that the Council will provide in minority languages.

It should be noted that street naming is addressed in a separate policy which meets the obligations set out in the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995. Consideration could be given to the development of additional and complimentary policy guidance relating to the naming of streets or places/areas having a special connection with

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minority language users without application of the thresholds of consensus currently required by the Council policy on dual street naming.

5.   Draft Language Framework

A proposed Language Framework is attached at Appendix 1.

It is suggested that the Council should adopt a Language Framework and progress towards the development of three separate policies in parallel.   Under the provision of the Council's Equality Scheme, it will be necessary to screen both the Language Framework and the individual policies and it is suggested that it would be beneficial to screen the three policies collectively rather than individually.

6.   Further information

Detailed background on the issues listed above are set out in Appendices 2-9 as follows:

Appendix 2: European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
Appendix 3: Belfast City Council Language Policy 2006
Appendix 4: Other Council policies and decisions
Appendix 5: International and domestic legal obligations
Appendix 6: Demand for minority languages
Appendix 7: Feedback from consultation (2013)
Appendix 8: Examples of good practice from Foras na Gaeilge Guidance Document
Appendix 9: Language legislation in the UK and RoI

Proposed Language Framework

1.   Overarching principles

1.1   Belfast City Council appreciates the linguistic diversity which exists in the city and recognises the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity. We acknowledge that the creation of a climate of tolerance and dialogue is necessary to enable cultural diversity to be a source, not of division, but of enrichment for our society.

1.2   The Council is committed to recognising and respecting the rights, traditions and culture of users of minority languages, to promoting and supporting the continued use of such languages and increasing awareness of the heritage and culture of linguistic minorities.

1.3   The principal language of the Council is English and our approach to the use of other languages in Council business is based on a proportionate response to the needs and demands of users of those languages. The Council will take all reasonable steps to address these needs and demands, within the resources available.

1.4   The Council considers that the protection and encouragement of minority languages should not be to the detriment of the English language and the need to learn it.

1.5   The Council wishes to ensure that everyone who uses its services is able to communicate and access information in their language of choice and that users of minority languages are afforded equality of opportunity. We recognise that people can express their views and needs better in their preferred language.

1.6   The Council is mindful that the right to use a regional or minority language in private and public life is an inalienable right conforming to the principles embodied within international and domestic law, including human rights law. We are committed to implementing the requirements of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in the provision of public services to users of the Irish language and in helping to develop and strengthen the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture insofar as is reflected within the language policy. We are also committed to respecting the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of each person within Belfast belonging to a national minority in line with the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and to increasing

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awareness and tolerance of minority cultures at a time when the diversity of the city is increasing.

2.   Principal and minority languages

2.1   The term 'minority languages' encompasses all other languages spoken by people who live in, work in or visit Belfast, whether this is their main language or their language of choice. The Council is mindful of the number of people in Belfast with ability in Irish, which is particularly high in the west of the city where there is an established Gaeltacht area. The Council is also mindful of the status of the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture within the city and the number of people who associate with it. The Council is also aware that there is a significant percentage of the population for whom English is not the main language and that a wide range of languages are spoken within the city.

2.2   The Council recognises that sign language is a language in its own right and will address the needs of those who use British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL) as their principal means of communication.

2.3   The Council also recognises the particular needs of those with literacy problems and those for whom the written word may not always be fully accessible.

3.   Aims of the Language Framework

3.1   To establish a transparent set of principles for promoting, protecting and enhancing the linguistic diversity of the city.

3.2   To increase the visibility of minority languages and awareness and understanding of minority cultures and traditions.

3.3   To respond appropriately to local language communities in the development and integration of minority languages into mainstream civic life.

3.4   To enhance good relations within the city through the promotion of linguistic diversity and celebrate the significance of minority languages in the history and culture of the city.

4.   Corporate approach to linguistic diversity

4.1   The Council will continue to support a range of Irish, Ulster-Scots and other minority traditions, cultural activities and languages in practical ways, for example, by providing use

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of the City Hall, or by providing grant-aid for significant events and projects where they meet the funding criteria.

4.2   The Council will proactively seek opportunities to work with the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and minority language sectors to promote minority traditions through exhibitions and publications.

4.3   The Council will respect the right of the public, Members of Council and staff to use their name in the language of their choice and to express their linguistic identity.

4.4   The Council will give consideration to linguistic diversity when planning events and promote inclusion of and participation from members of different linguistic communities in these events.

4.5   The Council will encourage tourism and cultural initiatives that reflect the linguistic diversity of the city.

4.6   The Council will continue to provide welcome information for newcomers and visitors to Belfast giving information on the Council's services in a user-friendly way and will translate this into other languages as requested.

4.7   As opportunities arise to renew existing signage in Council properties, text will be supplemented by pictorial and tactile signage.

4.8   The Council will continue to provide tours of the City Hall in Irish and develop tours of other Council venues in Irish and other minority languages as appropriate.

5.   Development of supporting policies

5.1   Within the overall context of the Language Framework, the Council will develop and implement three separate policies on Irish, Ulster-Scots and Other Languages (including sign language). Each policy will include an action plan, which will be reviewed on an annual basis, and will be resourced appropriately.

5.2   The Council is aware of the Executive's strategies on Irish[2] and Ulster-Scots[3] and will take full account of these when developing policies under this Framework. We will also take

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[2] Strategy to Enhance and Protect the Development of the Irish Language over the period 2015-2035 (Straitéis le Forbairt na Gaeilge a Fheabhsú agus a Chosaint), DCAL Jan 2015

[3] Strategy to Enhance and Develop the Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage and Culture over the period 2015-2035 (Roadin furtae Brïng Forrits an Graith tha Ulstèr-Scotch Leid, Heirskip an Cultùr), DCAL Jan 2015

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account of best practice guidance such as that published by Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency.

5.3   The development of individual policies will allow the different needs of speakers of Irish, Ulster-Scots and other minority languages to be addressed effectively. The development process will include consultation and engagement with interested parties and will take full account of views expressed to the Council in recent years.

6.   Irish Language Policy

6.1   The Irish Language Policy will be developed in line with the proposals in the Executive's Strategy and will take account of best practice guidelines published by Foras na Gaeilge.

6.2   The aims of the Irish Language Policy may include:

- to increase the visibility and use of the Irish language in Belfast as appropriate through Council services, facilities and events;
- to publicise the fact that that the Council will facilitate the use of the Irish language in the provision of its services as appropriate
- to encourage tourism and cultural initiatives through Irish.

6.3   The development of the policy will enable consideration of the Council's approach to the following services:

Documents –documents are provided in either bilingual (English and Irish) format on request or as a matter of course when likely to be used primarily by the Irish speaking community.

Communication – correspondence and telephone calls received in Irish are responded to in Irish.

Translation and interpretation – requests from the Irish speaking public to use Irish in face-to-face discussions are welcome if notice is given so that simultaneous interpretation services can be made available.

Signage and Branding – the use of Irish whenever the Council's title and emblem appear on stationery, publications, signs, buildings and other contexts in which it will be seen primarily by users of Irish.

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Council meetings – recognise the practice of speaking Irish in the Council Chamber. Individual Members may speak in Irish and subsequently provide an English translation (within the allocated time), acknowledging the principal language of the Council is English. We will facilitate the use of Irish at Council and Committee meetings by public delegations, including the provision of interpreting services.

Development of Website/social media – in the first instance, the development of an Irish language microsite and material on Facebook as appropriate.

Irish language media – the provision of an Irish language or bilingual version of press statements to the Irish language media as appropriate.

Irish in the community – support for the use of the Irish language within communities in Belfast within appropriate resources , including the provision of information.

Support for Irish medium schools – the provision of Irish versions of information generally provided to schools in relation to all Council services and events.

Council staff – pending the outcome of the review by Foras na Gaeilge, appointment of an Irish Language Officer to promote Irish within the Council and in the Council area, with responsibility for the development of an action plan to ensure the promotion of Irish language can be effectively provided by Council , including awareness raising and language training.

Irish in the community - The Council will support Irish cultural, educational heritage and tourism activities by facilitating events within Council buildings and venues where practicable and in line with Council policy.

Belfast City Council will promote opportunities for the promotion of Irish by encouraging grant-aid applications for Irish initiatives to current and future schemes as appropriate.

7.   Ulster-Scots Language Policy

7.1   The Ulster-Scots Language Policy will be developed in line with the proposals in the Executive's Strategy and will take account of advice from the Ulster-Scots Agency.

7.2   The aims of the Ulster-Scots Language Policy may include:

- to increase the visibility and use of the Ulster-Scots language in Belfast as appropriate.

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- to publicise the fact that the Council will facilitate the use of the Ulster Scots language   as appropriate
- to encourage the promotion of Ulster-Scots cultural and heritage, educational and tourism initiatives;

7.3   The development of the policy will enable consideration of the Council's approach to the following services:

Documents – the provision of documents which are either bilingual (English and Ulster-Scots) or as a matter of course when likely to be used by the Ulster Scots speaking community.

Communication – Council will accept written correspondence in Ulster-Scots and where possible, will reply in Ulster-Scots.

Translation and interpretation – requests from the Ulster-Scots speaking public to use Ulster-Scots in face-to-face discussions are welcome if notice is given so that simultaneous interpretation services can be made available.

Signage and Branding – the use of Ulster-Scots whenever the Council's title and emblem appear on stationery, publications, signs, buildings and other contexts in which it will be seen primarily by users of Ulster-Scots.

Council meetings – recognise the practice of speaking Ulster-Scots in the Council Chamber. Individual Members may speak in Ulster-Scots and subsequently provide an English translation (within their allocated time), acknowledging the principal language of the Council is English. We will facilitate the use of Ulster-Scots at Council and Committee meetings by public delegations, including the provision of interpreting services.

Development of Website/social media – the development of an Ulster-Scots language microsite and material on Facebook as appropriate.

Ulster-Scots language media – the provision of an Ulster Scots language or bilingual version of press statements to the Ulster Scots language media as appropriate.

Ulster Scots in the community - The Council will support Ulster-Scots cultural, educational heritage and tourism activities by facilitating events within Council buildings and venues where practicable and in line with Council policy.

Belfast City Council will promote opportunities for the promotion of Ulster-Scots by encouraging grant-aid applications for Ulster-Scots initiatives to current and future schemes as appropriate.

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Council staff – development of an action plan to ensure that Ulster-Scots language services can be effectively provided by the Council including awareness raising and language training.

8.   Other Languages Policy (including sign language)

8.1   The Other Languages Policy will be developed in line with best practice advice from appropriate sources and will take into account the increasing ethnic diversity of the city, as well as the communication needs of some disabled people. However, it will also emphasise the importance of using plain English at all times in the delivery of goods, services and facilities.

8.2   The aims of the Other Languages Policy may include:

- to ensure that residents and customers who have difficulty communicating in English are not disadvantaged in accessing key Council services;
- to ensure good practice is observed in producing information for people with sensory disabilities and make appropriate provision for those with learning disabilities;
- to support community cohesion and good relations by seeking to remove the barriers to the development of positive relationships that arise from inability to communicate in a common language;
- to publicise the fact that the Council will facilitate the use of minority languages as appropriate to encourage the promotion of cultural and heritage tourism initiatives through minority languages and traditions.

8.3   The development of the policy will enable consideration of the Council's approach to the following services:

Documents – continue to publicise the commitment in the Council's Equality Scheme to provide information in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable, by ensuring that appropriate information to this effect is included in all documents. All service providers to consider the need for translation of documents in relation to the specific nature of their service.

Translation and interpretation – requests from speakers of minority languages to use minority languages in face-to-face discussions are welcome if notice is given so that simultaneous interpretation services can be made available.

Council meetings – facilitation of the use of minority languages by public delegations at Council and Committee meetings, including the provision of interpreting services.

Website – ensuring that the Council's website is written in plain English, that the Google Translate tool is readily available and that the website contains information on the Council's minority language services, events and initiatives.

Welcome guides – provision of up-to-date information on Council services for newcomers/visitors in a range of languages.

Events – promotion of inclusion and participation from members of different linguistic communities in all Council events and the provision of interpretation where appropriate.

Council staff – development of an action plan to ensure that minority language services can be effectively provided by the Council where appropriate, including the development of linguistic diversity guidelines, awareness and language training and the provision of language identification cards and hearing loop induction at customer service reception desks.

Minority Languages Forum – establish a forum of organisations representing people from ethnic minority backgrounds and people with disabilities.

9.   Implementation of the Language Framework

9.1   The Council will develop the three policies outlined above as a matter of priority. The Council will consult and engage with interested parties and ensure that the implications for the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations are properly addressed.

9.2   The Council will publicise the adoption of the Language Framework and ensure that all staff and suppliers are made aware of it. The Council's commitment to linguistic diversity will be appropriately addressed within the corporate plan and other high level strategies.

9.3   The Council will ensure that adequate resourcing is available to implement the Language Framework effectively.

9.4   The implementation and effectiveness of the Language Framework will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.

Appendix 2

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

The Charter applies to Irish and Ulster-Scots and Part III to Irish only. Part II places a general duty on the state to facilitate and/or encourage the use of regional or minority languages, in speech and writing, in public and private life, but does not place any obligations directly on district councils.

However, Part III of the European Charter extends to public services under public control. In this context, the European Charter states (in Article 10) that services need to be able to be provided in the specified language (in this case, Irish) and users of the language need to be able to submit requests for services in this language. Article 10 makes it clear that public authorities should have a capacity for translation and interpretation, allow or encourage the use of traditional forms of place-names and family names, draft documents in the specified language, facilitate oral and written applications in the language, facilitate the use of the language in debates, and allow people to submit requests in the language.

Article 10 is reproduced in full below. It should be noted that the UK Government have signed up to nine paragraphs within this Article: 1a (iv); 1c; 2b; 2e; 2f; 2g; 3c; 4a; 5, they are shaded in the full Article below:

Article 10 – Administrative authorities and public services

1. Within the administrative districts of the State in which the number of residents who are users of regional or minority languages justifies the measures specified below and according to the situation of each language, the Parties undertake, as far as this is reasonably possible:
    a.
        i. to ensure that the administrative authorities use the regional or minority languages; or
        ii. to ensure that such of their officers as are in contact with the public use the regional or minority languages in their relations with persons applying to them in these languages; or
        iii. to ensure that users of regional or minority languages may submit oral or written applications and receive a reply in these languages; or
        iv. to ensure that users of regional or minority languages may submit oral or written applications in these languages; or

     v.   to ensure that users of regional or minority languages may validly submit a document in these languages;

    b.   to make available widely used administrative texts and forms for the population in the regional or minority languages or in bilingual versions;

    c.   to allow the administrative authorities to draft documents in a regional or minority language.

2.   In respect of the local and regional authorities on whose territory the number of residents who are users of regional or minority languages is such as to justify the measures specified below, the Parties undertake to allow and/or encourage:

    a.   the use of regional or minority languages within the framework of the regional or local authority;

    b.   the possibility for users of regional or minority languages to submit oral or written applications in these languages;

    c.   the publication by regional authorities of their official documents also in the relevant regional or minority languages;

    d.   the publication by local authorities of their official documents also in the relevant regional or minority languages;

    e.   the use by regional authorities of regional or minority languages in debates in their assemblies, without excluding, however, the use of the official language(s) of the State;

    f.   the use by local authorities of regional or minority languages in debates in their assemblies, without excluding, however, the use of the official language(s) of the State;

    g.   the use or adoption, if necessary in conjunction with the name in the official language(s), of traditional and correct forms of place-names in regional or minority languages.

3.   With regard to public services provided by the administrative authorities or other persons acting on their behalf, the Parties undertake, within the territory in which regional or minority languages are used, in accordance with the situation of each language and as far as this is reasonably possible:

    a.   to ensure that the regional or minority languages are used in the provision of the service; or

    b.   to allow users of regional or minority languages to submit a request and receive a reply in these languages; or

    c.   to allow users of regional or minority languages to submit a request in these languages.

4.   With a view to putting into effect those provisions of paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 accepted by them, the Parties undertake to take one or more of the following measures:

a. translation or interpretation as may be required;

b. recruitment and, where necessary, training of the officials and other public service employees required;

c. compliance as far as possible with requests from public service employees having a knowledge of a regional or minority language to be appointed in the territory in which that language is used.

5. The Parties undertake to allow the use or adoption of family names in the regional or minority languages, at the request of those concerned.

Appendix 3

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL LANGUAGE POLICY

September 2006

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

All employees should understand the Council's obligations in relation to language and respond positively to all our customers or clients, who are entitled to be treated with courtesy and respect.

This is in line with the Council's stated commitments to:

- equality in the delivery of our services, as set out in our Equality Scheme

- compliance with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

- customer focus, one of the key elements within our improvement agenda

- improving communication and access to Council services and

- our corporate objective of promoting good relations, which includes celebrating cultural diversity.

The principal language of the Council is English and its approach to the use of other languages in Council business is based on need and demand, balanced with consideration of the resources available to deliver services.

SIGN LANGUAGE

In line with official government policy, the Council recognises that sign language is a language in its own right. The Reception staff in the City Hall and Cecil Ward Building have been trained in sign language and other staff should make appropriate arrangements to provide sign language for customers if requested.

SOURCES OF GUIDANCE

There are two primary sources of guidance on language.

The first of these is our **Equality Scheme**, approved by the Equality Commission in April 2001, which commits the Council to making information available on request in minority languages to meet the needs of those "who are not fluent in English". This is increasingly important as our city becomes more diverse.

The second relevant document is a circular from the Local Government Division, issued as guidance to all District Councils in NI in 2002, which relates to the **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages**.

The European Charter is an international agreement designed to protect and promote regional and minority languages; it places emphasis on the cultural dimension of the language in all aspects of the life of its speakers and in Northern Ireland relates to Irish and Ulster-Scots.

To ensure compliance with Part III of the European Charter, the Council agreed to adopt certain recommendations in relation to the use of Irish at its meeting in January 2003. This includes accepting requests/applications in Irish (oral and written) and providing translation or interpretation when required.

The Council is also committed to the active promotion of Ulster-Scots as an expression of cultural heritage and identity, as Ulster-Scots is recognised under Part II of the European Charter at this time.

<div align="center">The Council's procedures are set out below.</div>

TRANSLATIONS – WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE

The Council uses the translation service within the Linguistic Operations Branch of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), which co-ordinates translation services for all government departments for all other languages. All Council Departments have a designated person within Business Support to take responsibility for translations and the current system is operating well.

When someone chooses to write to the Council in Irish, the Council will reply in Irish.

INTERPRETATION

The Council will also provide interpreters for small meetings or in individual interview situations if required, provided advance notice is given. Please contact the Good Relations Unit for details.

TELEPHONE CALLS

A Language Line telephone interpreting service has been established to assist with telephone enquiries from those who are not fluent in English. Currently this service is available only within the Office of the Registrar of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships; please contact the Good Relations Unit for details if required.

An Irish Voicemail service is available as an extension from the main switchboard; guidance has been issued to staff on its use.

NAMES and ADDRESSES

The Council will respect the wishes of anyone who wants to use the Irish form of their name or address and use those in correspondence or official business.

STREET NAMING

The Council provides dual language street names, if two-thirds of the residents of the street request this.

PERSONAL STATIONERY for ELECTED MEMBERS of COUNCIL

The Council has provided dual language personal headed notepaper, business cards and compliment slips in English/Irish and English/Ulster-Scots for elected Members of Council, as requested, for the past ten years.

SUPPORT for HERITAGE and TRADITIONS

The Council will continue to support a range of Irish and Ulster-Scots traditions, cultural activities and language in practical ways, for example, by providing use of the City Hall, or by providing grant-aid for significant events and projects as appropriate.

The Ulster-Scots bodies agree that this type of support for their work is more beneficial and cost-effective than simply translating written documents into Ulster-Scots.

IRISH MEDIUM SCHOOLS

The Council is aware that the Irish medium schools represent a fast growing sector and all correspondence to Irish medium schools will be in Irish. We will provide information in Irish on request for pupils who visit Council properties for educational/study purposes e.g. the Zoo, the City Hall etc. Information on major Council initiatives or policies may also be provided in Irish where schools are considered key target audiences.

SIGNAGE in COUNCIL PROPERTIES

Fixed signage at and in Council properties is either pictorial, tactile or in English. A 'Welcome' sign may be provided, at a reception area or other appropriate place, in a number of languages, including Irish, Ulster-Scots and other languages e.g. Filipino/Polish to reflect Belfast's growing diversity and multi-cultural composition.

RECRUITMENT

The Council is an equal opportunities employer and welcomes applications from all sections of the community. We currently offer a Careline telephone number (9027 0396) giving assistance to job applicants whose first language is not English.

WELCOME PACK

A Welcome Pack for newcomers and visitors to Belfast is being prepared. This will provide information on the Council's services in a user-friendly way and will be translated into other languages as requested.

COUNCIL WEBSITE

The Council website is designed to be as accessible as possible, with current on-line information in plain English (we aim to have the Plain English Internet Crystal Mark by April 2007). The Council will keep this under review and may provide information in other languages as requested.

ADVERTISEMENTS

Council advertisements will be in English.

LANGUAGE TRAINING

Departments may choose to organise basic conversational level language classes for appropriate staff, where management decides it will be useful to improve service delivery and increase local customer response.

OTHER FORMATS

Major Council policies, strategies and publications (e.g. City Matters) may be made available in other formats on request, e.g. Braille, audio or large print.

CONSULTATION

This policy was circulated to the relevant Irish and Ulster-Scots language bodies in Belfast i.e. the official North-South Language Body, made up of Foras na Gaeilge, which promotes the Irish language and the Ulster-Scots Agency (tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch), which promotes the Ulster-Scots language and culture; also Pobal and the Ulster-Scots Heritage Council.

We have also consulted with the Council's Equality Consultative Forum and appropriate representatives of minority ethnic groups in the Belfast area.

Any comments received have been incorporated into this policy.

MONITORING and REVIEW

The policy will be monitored and reviewed in due course, in line with Council procedure.

GUIDANCE and ENQUIRIES

Comprehensive guidance on language issues and translation arrangements was circulated to all Departmental Business Support Managers in May 2005. This will be re-circulated along with this policy when adopted and training will be provided for appropriate Council staff.

If you have any queries regarding this policy or our arrangements with DCAL, please contact the Good Relations Unit, extension 6025.

Adopted by Policy & Resources Committee 22 September 2006

Appendix 4

Other Council Policies and Decisions

The Council's current Language Policy was adopted in September 2006. However, the Council has also has in place other policies and has made a number of ad hoc decisions which have a bearing on the language policy, mainly in relation to signage. The following paragraphs summarise the decisions made.

1. Street naming power

The Council has a statutory power under Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995 to erect nameplates expressing street names in English and any other language. When exercising this power, the Council must have regard to any views on the matter expressed by the occupiers of premises in that street. The Council has a well-established street naming policy which allows anyone to request a dual language sign; the Council will carry out a survey and erect dual language signs if two-thirds of the occupiers in the street are in support. The relevant Committee (formerly Health and Environmental Services) has the power to review the street naming policy at any time; it was last reviewed in February 2012 when the Committee agreed that it should not be changed.

In December 2014, the High Court ruled on an application for judicial review by Eileen Reid of a decision taken by Belfast City Council to refuse to erect an additional street name plate in Irish at Ballymurphy Drive, Belfast. The Court ruled that the Council's policy and process were not unlawful and the application failed.

2. Signage

On 7 December 1999 the Parks & Amenities Sub-Committee agreed that a welcome sign in English and Irish should be installed at the entrance of Falls Park.

On 18 May 2012 the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee agreed that hoardings and signs relating to the delivery of the Investment Programme projects in the Gaeltacht Quarter should be bi-lingual (English/Irish).

On 7 September 2012 the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee agreed that the Nollaig Shona sign (donated by An Cultúrlann) be erected again at the East entrance to the City Hall.

It should be noted that the Council considered a draft policy on dual language (English/Irish) signage in November 2007 but decided that signage should be in English only, with the exception of multi-lingual welcome signs where there is appropriate demand.

3. Equality Scheme

The Council's Equality Scheme (approved in 2012), which sets out the Council's arrangements for complying with the equality duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, includes a commitment to providing information in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable. The Scheme states that alternative formats may include Easy Read, Braille, audio formats (CD, mp3 or DAISY), large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language (Para. 6.3). The same commitment is included in the draft Equality Scheme 2015.

International and Domestic Legal Obligations

1.   Belfast/Good Friday Agreement

Strand three of the Agreement contains a series of commitments in respect of economic, cultural and social issues, including a general provision relating to minority languages:

> 'All participants recognise the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various ethnic communities, all of which are part of the cultural wealth of the island of Ireland.'

The Agreement was concluded before the European Charter and it is clear that the commitments in strand three were focusing on the transitional period prior to the ratification of the European Charter by the UK.

2.   Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Act 2006

This Act places a duty on the Northern Ireland Executive to adopt a strategy for the enhancement and protection of the Irish language.

3.   Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

Unlike the European Charter (which focuses on languages) the Framework Convention focuses on linguistic minority groups. It does not place any directly enforceable obligation on local councils, but includes a number of provisions in relation to minority languages. In particular, Article 11 requires the state to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to use his or her surname (patronym) and first names in the minority language. The article also requires the state to facilitate the display of traditional local names, street names and other topographical indications in the minority language, where there is a sufficient demand and in areas traditionally inhabited by substantial numbers of persons belonging to a national minority.

4.   EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

The EU Charter provides simply that "the Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity." The EU Charter has been incorporated into domestic law.

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5. European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)

The ECHR and the general case law of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg place a general obligation on the state to respect linguistic pluralism and minority rights. The ECHR has also been incorporated into domestic law.

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Appendix 6

Demand for Minority Languages

1.   Irish

Table 1 shows that 13.45% of the Belfast population (aged 3+) have some ability in Irish, compared with 10.65% of the population of Northern Ireland as a whole. Over 16,000 people speak, read, write and understand Irish and this is the group most likely to benefit from the provision of services in Irish.

Table 1

	Belfast		Northern Ireland	
	No.	%	No.	%
Understand but cannot read, write or speak Irish	15,069	4.70	70,501	4.06
Speak but do not read or write Irish	6,129	1.91	24,677	1.42
Speak and read but do not write Irish	1,555	0.49	7,414	0.43
Speak, read, write and understand Irish	16,440	5.13	64,847	3.74
Other combination of skills	3,913	1.22	17,459	1.01
Total - Some ability in Irish	**43,106**	**13.45**	**184,898**	**10.65**

Table 2 shows the percentage of people in the four Assembly Areas/Parliamentary Constituencies (Belfast East, North, South and West) who have some ability in Irish; however, it should be noted that these areas do not coincide exactly with the new city council boundary and include approximately 60,000 people who live outside the Belfast boundary. Figures are much higher in the Belfast West constituency which includes the established Gaeltacht area.

Table 2

	East	North	South	West
Understand but cannot read, write or speak Irish	1.49	4.19	4.69	7.05
Speak but do not read or write Irish	0.47	1.77	1.41	3.41
Speak and read but do not write Irish	0.15	0.46	0.52	0.69
Speak, read, write and understand Irish	1.26	4.3	4.97	8.15
Other combination of skills	0.38	1.10	1.33	1.69
Total - Some ability in Irish	**3.75**	**11.72**	**12.92**	**20.98**

2. Irish Medium Education (IME)

Table 3 provides information on the number of pupils receiving education through the medium of Irish. The data is drawn from the School Census 2014/15.

Table 3

	No. of establishments	No. of pupils 2014/15
Naíscoileanna (Nursery/Pre-School Units)	13	442
Gaelscoieanna (Primary Schools/Units)	9	1,194
Gaeloideas Dara Leibhéil (Secondary Stream)	1	580
Youth club provision	7	760
Total		**2,976**

There are also 16 secondary schools teaching Irish within the Council area.

3. Ulster-Scots

Table 4 shows that 5.23% of the Belfast population (aged 3+) have some ability in Ulster-Scots, compared with 8.08% of the population of Northern Ireland as a whole. Just over 2000 people speak, read, write and understand Ulster-Scots and this is the group most likely to benefit from the provision of services in Ulster-Scots.

Table 4

	Belfast		Northern Ireland	
	No.	%	No.	%
Understand but cannot read, write or speak Ulster-Scots	11,028	3.44	92,040	5.30
Speak but do not read or write Ulster-Scots	889	0.28	10,265	0.59
Speak and read but do not write Ulster-Scots	575	0.18	7,801	0.45
Speak, read, write and understand Ulster-Scots	2,205	0.69	16,373	0.94
Other combination of skills	2,061	0.64	13,725	0.79
Total - Some ability in Ulster-Scots	**16,758**	**5.23**	**140,204**	**8.08**

Table 5 shows the percentage of people in the four Assembly Areas/Parliamentary Constituencies (Belfast East, North, South and West) who have some ability in Ulster-Scots.

Table 5

	East	**North**	South	**West**
Understand but cannot read, write or speak Ulster-Scots	4.87	3.28	4.40	1.60
Speak but do not read or write Ulster-Scots	0.36	0.27	0.34	0.14
Speak and read but do not write Ulster-Scot	0.26	0.16	0.25	0.05
Speak, read, write and understand Ulster-Scots	0.82	0.89	0.68	0.46
Other combination of skills	0.87	0.57	0.91	0.25
Total - Some ability in Ulster-Scots	**7.18**	**5.17**	**6.57**	**2.51**

4.   Main languages spoken

Table 6 shows that 4.94% of Belfast households contain at least one person who does not have English as a main language and in 2.71% of households, no-one has English as a main language.

Table 6

	Belfast		**Northern Ireland**	
	No.	**%**	**No.**	**%**
All people aged 16+ years in household have English as a main language	134,567	95.06	678,135	96.43
At least one but not all people aged 16+ years in household have English as a main language	2,734	1.93	8,618	1.23
No people aged 16+ years in household but at least one person aged 3-15 years has English as a main language	433	0.31	1,546	0.22
No people in household have English as a main language	3,833	2.71	14,976	2.13

The Census showed that the most commonly spoken languages in Belfast (excluding English and Irish) are Polish (1.22%), Chinese (0.30%), Tagalog/Filipino (0.24%) and Slovak (0.17%).

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) has recently published data on language use for Northern Ireland as a whole which shows that very high proportions of residents whose main language is Tagalog / Filipino (99%), Irish (98%) or Malayalam (92%) can speak English well or very well. However, the figures are much lower for those who speak mainly Chinese (61%), Lithuanian (62%), Slovak (64%), Polish (66%), Russian (66%), Hungarian (68%), Latvian (71%) or Portuguese (73%).

There are also variations in terms of age group with over 50% of those whose main language is not English aged between 25-44, compared with 28% of those whose main language is English.

5.   Communication difficulties

Table 7 provides information on people with deafness (or partial hearing loss), blindness (or partial sight loss) and other communication difficulty. The Northern Ireland Census does not provide information on users of sign language or readers of Braille, but DCAL estimates that approximately 5,000 people in Northern Ireland use sign language as the preferred means of communication, with 3,500 using BSL and 1,500 using ISL.

Table 7

	Belfast		Northern Ireland	
	No.	%	No.	%
People with deafness or partial hearing loss	18,261	5.47	93,091	5.14
People with blindness or partial sight loss	6,729	2.02	30,862	1.70
People with a communication difficulty	6,460	1.93	29,871	1.65

Feedback from consultation (2013)

1.   Irish language sector

Various practical suggestions to build on currently available services were made, including:

- information on services currently available for Irish speakers could be provided on the Council's website together with a link from the homepage to Irish language and culture sector websites; key Council documents could also be provided in Irish on the website;

- there could be better promotion of the availability of tours of the City Hall in Irish and an increase in the number of such tours available; consideration could also be given to making tours of other venues available in Irish;

- greater access to Council venues and facilities for Irish language and culture events could be facilitated and opportunities to present joint heritage exhibitions could be pursued;

- initiatives should be implemented to raise awareness among Council staff of the current language policy and the practical issues around translation; staff could also be made more aware of the work of the Irish language sector in Belfast;

- the possibility of appointing an Irish Language Officer could be considered.

2.   Ulster-Scots sector

The sector representatives indicated that Irish and Ulster-Scots were at different stages of development and the use of the Ulster-Scots language was not received in Belfast in the same way as in other parts of Northern Ireland. There was an underlying prejudice with the use of Ulster-Scots and there was a need for wider cultural engagement with Ulster-Scots heritage as well as language and for celebration of the culture in a more open way.

The sector representatives wished to see a focus on the cultural and heritage aspects of the language rather than promote the need for translation services. They welcomed the Council's commitment to support Ulster-Scots traditions and cultural activities in practical

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ways; however, they were concerned that the promotion of any language might be seen to be political and lead to division.

3.   Minority ethnic languages

The BME sector representatives suggested that:

- the Council's Welcome Pack should be more widely publicised and an electronic link to the Welcome Pack could be included in a regular electronic update circulated to appropriate organisations;

- Council staff should be made more aware of the Big Word interpreting service and trained in how to use it;

- a leaflet could be made available to Council staff so that they can assist service users to identify the language translation required;

- the Council could support initiatives to promote the heritage and traditions associated with different languages spoken in Belfast.

Examples of Good Practice from Foras na Gaeilge Guidance Document: Irish Language Services in the New Councils

Branding

1. The Council emblem and title appear in Irish and English on Council buildings, on its website and on Council stationery.
2. The Council emblem and title appear in Irish and English as mentioned under No. 1 and in other contexts in which it will be seen by users of Irish (leisure centres, vehicles, other resources) in areas where there are communities of Irish-speakers.
3. The Council emblem and title appear in Irish everywhere they appear in English.
4. The Foras na Gaeilge website (www.gaeilge.ie/treoir) gives comprehensive guidance on international good practice in bilingual signage for minority languages. It includes the following:
   a. The same typeface is used for both languages.
   b. Irish is positioned first (above or to the left). Because all Irish speakers can read English, the Irish text would be superfluous if placed second.
   c. Irish has equality with English so as not to suggest to the Irish-speaking public that they are less important than English-speakers.
   d. The colour of the Irish text makes it as legible and as visible as the English text.

Documents in Irish

1. The documents most used by the public are available bilingually in electronic format.
2. The documents most used by the public are available bilingually in both hard copy and electronic format.
3. Customers are asked what is their language of choice: Irish or English.
4. Corporate documents, forms (internal and external) and other Council documents are available bilingually, in hard copy or electronic format.

Council Staff with Irish

1. A short-term implementation plan exists to help move towards providing services to the Irish-speaking public.
2. Job applications from Irish speakers are welcomed.
3. Specific staff members are nominated to provide Irish-language support to all Council departments who deal with the Irish-speaking community.

4. Irish is desirable for a certain percentage of new employees.
5. Irish is required for a certain percentage of new employees.
6. There are staff members with competency in Irish in each department.
7. An Irish Language Officer is employed to promote Irish within the Council and in the Council area.
8. The Communications Officer has competency in Irish.

Other Ways to Provide Services in Irish

1. People are invited to send emails in Irish, which are replied to in that language.
2. An Irish-speaking staff member is available to answer calls made in Irish.
3. Each department has a dedicated telephone line for Irish speakers and a staff member capable of answering calls in Irish. The option to use Irish can be given either automatically or by the receptionist.
4. Calls made in Irish are answered in Irish by having a nominated staff member available when the call is made.

Correspondence

1. A standard acknowledgement in Irish is sent thanking correspondents and informing them how long it will take to answer their correspondence in Irish.
2. Correspondence in Irish is welcomed and is replied to by a staff member with that responsibility.
3. Correspondence in Irish is welcomed and responded to in Irish and a dedicated email address exists, e.g.: gaeilge@derrycity.gov.uk.
4. Correspondence in Irish is welcomed and responded to in Irish and staff members are available to that end in each department.

Services for the Irish Language Media

1. A spokesperson with Irish is provided on request.
2. Irish press statements are made available to the Irish language media where the subject relates to Irish or to the Irish-speaking community.
3. Irish language version or bilingual version of all press statements are made available to the Irish language media.
4. A spokesperson with Irish is available to the media and all press statements are issued bilingually.

Services for Irish language Social Media.

1. Bilingual material on Facebook and Twitter.
2. Material about Irish and related matters appears in Irish on Facebook and Twitter.
3. Material in Irish appears on Facebook and Twitter regularly and often.
4. The Council works closely with the Marketing and Communications Department in order to process requests from Irish language media, they are in regular contact with the Irish language broadcast, print and online media. There is a contacts database for Irish language media.

Website

1. Some bilingual information on the Council website – headings and information relating to Irish language events and activities.
2. Some bilingual information on the website, on the home page and on other pages with material about Irish and related matters.
3. A choice of languages, English/Irish, on the home page and two parallel Irish and English languages sites.
4. An Irish-language microsite featuring an archive of forms, applications and publications as well as information on events and initiatives.

Training in Irish – It is recommended that the European Certificate in Irish (TEG) system be followed.

1. The issue is discussed with the Human Resources Department.
2. An audit is held to establish ability in Irish among Council staff.
3. Employees are given information on classes.
4. DCAL is invited to give a presentation on *Líofa* and employees are encouraged to register with *Líofa*.
5. A training certificate is provided for any Irish language course completed.
6. *Gaelchultúr* is engaged to provide specialist training to employees with specific Irish language duties.
7. *Gaelchultúr* is engaged to provide specialist training to general employees.
8. Irish language classes at every level are available to Council staff and to Council members on a weekly basis within working hours, at lunchtime or after work.
9. Support and funding are made available to the staff for training in linguistic diversity.
10. Gaeltacht scholarships are available to staff.

Irish-Language Awareness for Staff

1. Training in Language Awareness is included in the induction programme for new staff.
2. Should such a course not be available within the Council, employees are encouraged to attend an awareness course run by another Council.
3. An Irish-language booklet and information leaflets are prepared for the Council in collaboration with Irish-language organisations such as Foras na Gaeilge or Conradh na Gaeilge.
4. An Irish Language Awareness Scheme for staff is initiated which describes the Council's obligations under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and training under this scheme is made available to every employee on a regular basis.

Internal Signage in Irish (within the Council)

1. Bilingual signage is available on request and if there is a demand from the public, according to Foras na Gaeilge guidance (www.gaeilge.ie/treoir) and in keeping with international good practice.
2. All signage is bilingual according to the Foras na Gaeilge guidance and in keeping with international good practice.

Irish Language Signage outside the Council

1. Bilingual signage is available where there is demand.
2. Bilingual signage where there is an IM nursery school or centre. Directions to these are also in Irish.
3. The Council's policy mentions signage in Irish in a way that incorporates streetnames, road nameplates, etc.

Street and Placename Service

It is recommended that the placename heritage is used to promote awareness of Irish and that, in co-operation with the Environmental Services Directorate, translations of street and placenames are provided. It is recommended that a bilingual database of streetnames is created and made available on line.

1. The use of addresses in Irish is welcomed.
2. The use of addresses in Irish is welcomed and advice given on placenames.
3. In collaboration with the appropriate bodies, the public is given advice on local street names and placenames.
4. The public are encouraged to use the Irish form of their address.

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Translation and Interpreting Service (at Council meetings)

1. Translation and interpreting services are available if a member of Council staff is available to provide this.
2. Translation and interpreting services are available by demand.
3. Requests from the Irish-speaking public to use Irish are welcome if notice is given, so that a translation/simultaneous interpreting service can be made available and translation and interpreting services are provided to the public.
4. Councillors wishing to use Irish are welcome if notice is given so that a translation/simultaneous interpreting service can be made available.
5. Translation and interpreting services are provided from a panel of translators.
6. The Council employs a translator/interpreter or an Irish-speaking employee is available to provide translation and interpreting.
7. An interpreting system and translation software is made available in the Council for use by nominated officers.

Approaches towards the Development of Irish in the Council Area

1. The Irish language is recognised in the funding criteria for Council support schemes.
2. Some publications are made available, where there is demand.
3. All publications are made available bilingually.
4. A quarterly newsletter is published with a section (in English) about Irish language events, information about Irish-medium schools in the area, etc.
5. A quarterly newsletter is published with a section in Irish to publicise details of events and other relevant information.
6. An Irish language newsletter is published regularly to publicise the Council's Irish language services, information about Irish language events (*Seachtain na Gaeilge*, etc.), and Irish-medium education in the Council area.

Irish Language Awareness for the Public

1. Irish language events are supported and the holding of such events in Council buildings is welcome.
2. Officers from *Líofa* are invited to give a presentation about the initiative.
3. Information is provided about Irish-language classes in the Council area (in collaboration with Gael Linn).
4. Links with the Irish-speaking community in the Council area are developed through a database of contact people.
5. A series of Irish-language events and events about Irish is organised on a yearly basis.
6. An online language-awareness scheme for Irish is developed for the public with a link to Connect 3 http://www.connect-3.co.uk for children.

7. An Irish-Language Community Forum is co-ordinated to discuss and assess the development of Irish in the area and to develop a language plan.
8. The establishment of a community radio station is supported with support from Raidió Fáilte.
9. Gaeltacht or summer-college scholarships are provided for school pupils and families.

Services for the Public

1. Irish documents are available for registration of births, marriages, civil partnerships, deaths etc. according to demand.
2. Bilingual documents are available for registration of births, marriages, civil partnerships, deaths etc. according to demand.
3. Computer systems are compatible with receiving information from the public in Irish (accents; preset selection lists for language choice; inflected forms of surnames; placenames and case-sensitive computer settings).
4. Staff with competency in Irish for registration of births, marriages, civic partnerships, deaths etc.).
5. Staff with competency in Irish are available to provide these services to the public on an appointment basis.
6. All customers are given the option to use the Irish language for registration services.

Support for Irish-medium Education and other Schools

1. The public is provided with information on Irish-medium schools and are directed to Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (the Irish-medium education council).
2. Workshops, schemes and information packs are provided in Irish to Irish-medium schools as is done with English-medium schools, about Council services and events, e.g. Recycling, Biodiversity, Equality and Good Relations, Christmas Scheme (children in Irish-medium schools are welcome to write to Santa Claus in Irish) and Seachtain na Gaeilge (contact and co-operation with Irish-medium and English-medium schools for its duration).
3. All information, contacts and schemes made available to English-medium schools and their pupils are made available to Irish-medium schools and their pupils.
4. Scholarships for Gaeltacht courses are provided for pupils in English- and in Irish-medium schools.

An Irish-language Policy

1. Develop a courtesy code for the Irish language.
2. Develop a policy that meets the requirements of the European Charter and the needs of the Irish-speaking community.
3. Develop, in consultation with the Irish-speaking community, a comprehensive policy that covers all aspects of the Irish language both in the Council and among the community in the Council area.
4. Develop, in consultation with the Irish-speaking community, a strategic plan that will cover all aspects of Irish in the Council area – service provision, the development of Irish in the community and in the Council itself and enabling the Council to provide Irish-language services.

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Language Legislation in the UK and RoI

1.   Wales

The Welsh Language Act 1993 established the principle that, in the conduct of public business and the administration of justice in Wales, the Welsh and English Languages should be treated on the basis of equality. Public bodies, including local councils, are required to prepare a Welsh Language Scheme to outline the Welsh language services they will provide and state how and when those Welsh services will be available.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 replaced many of the provisions of the Act and established official status for the Welsh language in Wales. The Measure created a new legislative framework to impose a duty on public authorities to comply with standards relating to the Welsh language, with these standards replacing existing Welsh Language Schemes over time. The purpose of introducing standards was to provide greater clarity to public authorities regarding their duties and to Welsh speakers about the services they could expect to receive in Welsh. Standards will also ensure greater consistency of Welsh language services and improve their quality. The Measure also required public authorities to use the Welsh language in a reasonable and proportionate manner.

Local councils in Wales have had Welsh Language Schemes in place for a number of years. Typically, these cover three specific areas:
- Dealing with the Welsh speaking public (including correspondence, meetings and by telephone);
- The Council's public image (including corporate identity, signs, publications, forms, advertising, news releases, exhibitions, surveys, public notices and recruitment advertisements);
- Staffing issues (including recruitment, language training and vocational training).

2.   Scotland

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 established the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland, commanding equal respect with the English language. It also established Bòrd na Gàidhlig as a public body with responsibility for preparing a National Plan for Gaelic every five years. The Bòrd has powers to require public authorities, including local councils, to draft and implement a Gaelic Language Plan. Each individual plan must

take into account the National Plan and the extent to which Gaelic is used within, and in relation to, the work and services of the public authority.

The Bòrd has identified four core areas of service delivery that it wishes public authorities to address when preparing Gaelic Language Plans. These are:

- Identity (including corporate identity and signage);
- Communication (including reception, telephone, mail and e mail, forms, public meetings and complaints procedures);
- Publications (including public relations and media, printed material, websites and exhibitions);
- Staffing (including training, language learning, recruitment and advertising).

3.   Republic of Ireland

The Irish Constitution establishes that the Irish language is to be regarded as the first official language, while the Official Languages Act 2003 provided the public with the right to conduct business with the state solely through Irish. The Act requires the preparation by public authorities of Irish Language Schemes, specifying which services will be provided exclusively in Irish, exclusively in English and through the medium of both languages. Each scheme must set out the measures that the public authority will adopt to ensure that any services that are not currently provided in Irish will be so provided over a period of time. In developing its scheme, the public authority may take into account the underlying level of demand for specific services in the Irish language and the resources and capacity to develop or access the necessary language capability.

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Belfast City Council

Consultation Report on Draft Policy on Linguistic Diversity

Accessibility

The relevant documents are available, on request, in alternative formats - Braille, audio, large print, easy read. The council will also consider requests to produce it in other languages. If you require the documents in these or other formats please contact us:

Equality & Diversity Officer
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

Telephone: 028 90270511
Freephone: 0800 0855 412
Text phone: 028 90270405
Email: equality@belfastcity.gov.uk

Introduction

This report is prepared in line with the commitments outlined in our Equality Scheme, to provide timely feedback to our consultees, on this occasion in relation to our Draft Policy on Linguistic Diversity. The report is structured under the following headings:

      A. Information on the policy consulted upon

      B. Our approach

      C. Consultees' comments

      D. Emerging issues and preliminary recommendations

A. Information on the policy consulted upon

Belfast aims to be a welcoming and inclusive city for all. To help achieve this aim and to meet other best practice guidance and legal requirements, we developed a draft Linguistic Diversity Policy.

Our draft Linguistic Diversity Policy outlined our approach to promoting different languages in the Belfast City Council area. It built on our 2006 Language Policy which needed to be revised to take account of the changing population and other developments.

The draft policy provided a background on the changing dynamics of the population of Belfast and also explained the legal framework, current central government strategies and details of previous engagement with stakeholders.

Based on this information, the draft policy recommended an approach which included:

- The development of an over-arching Language Framework, which articulated our commitment to supporting minority languages whilst allowing the different needs of speakers of Irish, Ulster-Scots and other minority languages to be addressed effectively.

- Develop an Irish Language Policy which focused primarily on the enhancement and protection of the language;

- Develop an Ulster-Scots Language policy which looked more to the promotion of the language and the cultural and heritage aspects of the language rather than the need for translation of documents and interpretation services.

- Develop a policy on other minority languages (including sign languages) which focused on ensuring good communication and increasing awareness and understanding of minority cultures

The draft Policy on Linguistic Diversity was subject to a formal consultation period which ran from 23 May 2017 to 18 July 2017, the approach to the consultation is outlined in the next section.

B. Our approach

The draft Policy on Linguistic Diversity was presented in full and a Citizens' Summary was also made available, along with a draft Equality Screening. In line with our Equality Scheme an accessibility statement highlighting availability of the document in different formats and languages, on request, was included on each document.

The draft Policy on Linguistic Diversity consultation document set out the context for the policy change and suggested there should be an overarching framework to establish broad principles governing the use of all forms of language in the City and within the Council, whether written, spoken or signed, and whether this was through need or choice. Beneath this framework it was further suggested that initially there should be three separate strands, dealing separately with Irish, Ulster-Scots and Other Languages (including sign language and new communities' languages). The consultation was structured with this tripartite or three dimensional approach in mind, to give clear opportunities for all interested stakeholders to have their opinion heard.

While there may be common issues and priorities attaching to all forms of linguistic diversity, equally there are particular concerns that are unique to specific language users and cultures, and the consultation aimed to capture these by seeking views from both staff and the general public, but then also holding separate meetings with interest groups associated with a particular language, including Irish, Ulster Scots, sign language (BSL and ISL) and minority languages linked to new communities.

The consultation was launched on 23 May 2017 with a press statement, article on staff intranet and an invitation on the Council's website to respond to the consultation, which was due to close on 18 July 2017, although short extensions were requested by a number of individuals and organisations and were granted.

For the **general public** different ways to respond were:

- An online questionnaire of public opinion on the Council's Consultation Hub, including information (hard copies were also available)

- Attendance at one of two engagement events, designed to gather the same information as the online questionnaire

- Attending any of four themed focus groups: Irish Language, Ulster-Scots Language, New Communities and Deaf or Partial Hearing, and / or Disabled people.

- Consultation comments could also be received by email and letter

For **staff** different ways to respond were:

- An online survey available (internally only) on the online Consultation Hub, including information and completion of an online questionnaire, available from 26 June until 18 July 2017 (hard copies were also available)

- One to one meetings with Dr John Kremer

Meetings with Trade Union representatives were planned as part of the consultation.

Further detail on the content of each consultation method is included in the next section, along with an outline analysis of the quantitative and qualitative information gathered from data collected through the consultation.

C. <u>Consultees' comments</u>

Comments from consultees have been arranged in the following order:

- C1. Public engagement events and focus groups
- C2. Correspondence from public and external organisations by email and letter
- C3. An online questionnaire of public opinion on the Council's Consultation Hub
- C4. Staff consultation

C1. Public engagement events and focus groups

Two information and engagement events were held on Tuesday June 20th (10.30 – 12.30, City Hall, Belfast) and Thursday June 29th (15.30 – 17.30) at NICVA HQ, Duncairn Gardens, Belfast). The sessions were designed to give members of the public an opportunity to learn more about the draft policy and proposed framework, and to provide feedback on these proposals, with questions structured around the online questionnaire. The first session was attended by two people, both from an Irish language organisation and the second event by one person, on behalf of the Deaf and partial hearing community.

Each session was guided by a series of prompts, however, as the attendees were representative of specific communities and the related issues, the Irish Language and Deaf community respectively, comments gathered at the engagement events are included within the focus groups for those two areas.

Four focus group discussions were held in the Reception Hall, Belfast City Hall with the following:
- Other Minority Languages and Newcomers to the City (Monday June 26th, 10.30 – 12.30 am)
- Ulster Scots Language (Monday June 26th, 2.30 – 4.30 pm)
- Irish Language (Wednesday June 28th, 10.30 – 12.30 am)
- Other Minority Languages and Deaf, Partial Hearing and/or Disabled Persons (Wednesday, June 28th, 2.30 – 4.30 pm)

All focus group discussions followed the same format; having established ground rules and further to a brief introduction on the draft policy, participants were asked briefly to reflect on the overarching framework and the proposal for the separate policies before spending the majority of

time considering the outline proposals for either Irish Language Policy, Ulster-Scots policy or Other Languages Policy, as appropriate to the theme of the group. This included both the aims and approach to service delivery.

At the request of participants, a single group was employed in three of the sessions while numbers attending the Irish language group meant that two groups were run in parallel. A note taker was present at each group together with either one or two discussion facilitators.

<u>C1 (i) Other Minority Languages and Newcomers to the City</u>

Four people attended the focus group and a wide ranging discussion highlighted the unique problems faced by those from new communities who may not have access to written English and who often struggled to fully engage with the Council and its services because of this deficit. This was often in very practical ways, such as bins and waste, and the group reported on mixed experience of dealing with the Council among their communities. While the Council's efforts were duly recognised it was felt that more could be done to be genuinely inclusive. In particular the group saw that the Council could play a lead role in coordinating activity across the sector to enhance engagement with marginalised language communities.

The use of the term minority was questioned, and instead it was suggested that linguistic diversity was a better alternative. The overarching framework was generally accepted although it was argued that the term 'promotion' required greater clarification, along with the need to coordinate with wider regional initiatives.

A previous campaign to translate into five languages was seen as unsuccessful as there were now so many new communities. Instead it was suggested that headlines or key phrases could be made available in many languages on the understanding that translation services could then be accessed in a timely and proportionate manner. This was viewed as particularly relevant when letters were sent from services in relation to compliance issues.

The important role played by young people in helping elderly relatives in new communities was discussed and seen as a valuable resource but with the caveat that this type of support could potentially nurture a dependency culture that may not be healthy or enhance well-being.

Seeing evidence on signs etc. that other languages are acceptable was seen as welcomed in order to increase the visibility of languages other than English. A database of drop-in support services across the voluntary sector was also mooted as a useful link for members of new communities who often struggled to know who to contact, or how.

A significant amount of time was taken discussing the merits of bilingualism, and how it should be seen as the norm rather than the exception in society, also aiding personal development and cognitive ability of children. It was felt the aims of the policy should extend to these benefits and more generally, an overt celebration of linguistic diversity.

The coordination of ESL classes was seen as problematic at present, and it was argued that the Council could play a significant role in sharing resources and partnering with other organisations, including colleges, would be helpful. In general there was a need for more outreach work, in which the Council could play a role alongside other sectors (e.g. voluntary, educational, health).

It was argued that a separate policy should be available for new communities ('heritage languages'), and to ally these with language attached to disability was inappropriate. This strand should focus on access and how to open the Council to those from new communities, for example including employment opportunities as well as facilities and services.

There was some support for a linguistic diversity forum to establish examples of good practice and to disseminate information across communities, however, the BCC Migrant Forum was seen as the best starting point to facilitate discussion, as many potential attendees would be present. Staff training was also highlighted, and the need to have specific contact points or gatekeepers with the skills and knowledge to assist particular groups.

Overall the group welcomed the new policy and broadly accepted the overarching principles, with the addition of reference to the positive benefits of bilingualism. It was felt that a separate policy strand should focus on heritage languages and apart from Irish, Ulster Scots and language forms attached to disability.

C1 (ii) Ulster Scots Language

The discussion, which four people attendees, began by a consideration of the wording of Parts 2 and 3 of the European Charter, highlighting the obligation to promote the Ulster-Scots Language, before moving on to consider practical ways in which the rights enshrined within the charter could effectively be put into practice for those from the Ulster-Scots community.

It was argued that one officer could not hope to deal with all facets of linguistic diversity but instead separate policies and resources should be established for different languages. The issue of what each policy should prioritise was highlighted, and it was felt that the priorities of the Ulster-Scots community may be quite different from other communities. It was argued that Ulster-Scots had enjoyed less support than Irish in the past, and yet it was argued that Part 2 of the European Charter did establish the basis for a range of positive action measures to protect Ulster-Scots, and this should be acknowledged by the Council in terms of resourcing.

The framework and separate policies for each language were welcomed as an opportunity to target resources proportionately at Ulster Scots, although the current outline of services in 7.3 was not seen as appropriate for this community, for example highlighting documents, translations etc. but not cultural activities or outreach measures. Instead it was felt that the focus should fall on promoting the language in contexts where it can be best understood and appreciated, and to generally raise the awareness and profile of the language, in written and spoken form, in a positive

way. One specific example which was cited was for the Council to promote a message of Happy Christmas in a range of language forms at the City Hall, including Ulster-Scots.

As a designated minority language within the European Charter it was argued that Ulster-Scots required special conservation measures, especially given its minority status in Belfast, for example by work within schools to help appreciate its influence on everyday language and culture in the City. It was argued that this should involve prioritising heritage work rather than translation work or documents, but only at the present time, and the policy should not be to the detriment of the availability of documents and signage in Ulster-Scots. Current examples of work being undertaken, which the Council should support include looking at the derivation of place-names, or branding and signage allowing the language to be enjoyed and celebrated in a positive way. It was argued that Section 7 of the policy should be rewritten to accommodate these views, and community engagement was seen as an essential element to make the work come alive.

Overall, there was support for the draft policy in principle on the understanding that adequate resources would be made available for the Ulster-Scots Language and that it should be addressed through a separate policy strand.

C1 (iii) Irish Language

Due to large numbers present (15), two focus groups were eventually held simultaneously, although early discussions involved a single combined group.

In early discussions, significant concerns were raised with regard to the factual accuracy of Section 3 of the policy, setting out the background, international comparators, guidance documents and relevant legislation. On the eventual understanding that these matters were to be addressed in subsequent drafts of the policy, the discussion moved on to consider the consultation process. Once more significant concerns were raised regarding available documentation, poor translations and various failings of the engagement process itself. Written communications were read to support opposing views before the groups split to discuss the overarching framework for the draft policy and the proposed strands. While discussions in both groups were generally quite distinct, one strong theme that emerged in both was the need for a dedicated Irish Language Unit within the Council with sufficient resources to turn principles into meaningful positive actions that were sustainable in the medium and long term.

In the first group, fears were expressed that the promotion of the Irish language could be constrained by it being placed under a good relations agenda, and instead it was argued that there was a clear and separate imperative to prioritise Irish given the European Charter on Minority Languages, and especially Part 3.

It was argued that equality in terms of language use was critical, and that one of the aims 'to publicise the fact that the Council will facilitate the use of the Irish language in its services as

appropriate', could actually be used to stifle language use. It was maintained that there was a need for more detail on the corporate approach to linguistic diversity but also that practical steps should be encouraged to increase the visibility of Irish, for example via signage, which should be changed to bilingual within 12 months in e.g. leisure centres and the City Hall. Also, it was suggested that the Council's webpage should include an Irish page and the overarching policy statement should make reference to Irish as part of the Belfast culture and heritage. In these ways the language should continue to be normalised, and the lead should come from Stormont but taken up by the Council.

Specific comments were made on the document itself, removing 'as appropriate' and ambiguous terminology. It was suggested that all Council letterhead should be bilingual, and the Christmas sign bearing the message 'Happy Christmas' in Irish should be moved from the side to the front of the City Hall. All application forms should be made available in Irish, and a database on Irish use in schools should be maintained by the Council. It was further suggested that there needed to be a focal point for new initiatives, i.e. an Irish Language Officer with appropriate support, and a clear job description that moves beyond providing translation services to the development and management of targeted projects and initiatives, both within the Council and in the wider community, with a support team spread across other departments and with identified points of contact within each. It was suggested that this should be encompassed within an Irish language plan for the Council, supported by a dedicated Irish language Unit, as exists in Newry, Mourne and Down Council. There was also an identified need to audit available resources within the Council, including Irish language speakers who could provide valuable support.

The second group felt that the framework contained within the policy was generally acceptable although there was a need to clarify terms such as indigenous and minority. It was argued that general principles should be enshrined in a framework that encompasses all language forms but it was felt that the present principles fell short of the mark. The policy should encourage greater visibility of the language, for example using bi-lingual signage in the city centre and around City Hall, and allow for applications to the Council in Irish. An audit of needs was also essential, extending to resources, offices/duties, advocacy work, support for local groups, and Irish speakers in the Council.

The group felt that priority should be afforded to young people, including language planning (e.g. education, youth provision, services), and outreach work should extend to those outside Irish speaking areas, to avoid identification of specific languages with geographic areas. The use of signage only to be 'seen primarily by users of Irish' likewise should be avoided and there should be an agreed approach to language on signage which promotes the entire city.

In general it was argued that the primary focus of the work of an Irish Language Officer or unit should be working with young people and encouraging outreach work in order that the language can become more normalised across Belfast, with bi-lingualism recognised as a positive, both personally and culturally.

Overall, while individual group members may have significant concerns with the draft policy, in general terms there was support for an overarching framework with separate strands dealing with particular languages, including Irish. Development of a measurable action plan which could be developed through engagement with key stakeholders was seen as the next positive step forward. Both groups felt the Council could be more proactive in taking more ambitious steps to actively promote the Irish language through signage and general use and visibility within the Council and across Council properties, although some acknowledged that this may not be welcomed by others; bi-lingual signage was supported as becoming the normal policy within the Council, with communities choosing to 'opt out' if they wished.

It was argued the work would be taken forward by a dedicated Irish Language Unit, although it was acknowledged the single Irish Language Officer, as outlined in the draft Policy was a positive starting point.

The two attendees at the first engagement event were both supporters of the Irish language in their personal and professional lives, working within the Irish language sector in Northern Ireland. Both were very positive about the overall aims of the draft policy, and could accept the logic for the overarching framework together with separate language strands and in particular Irish.

It was argued that each language brought particular issues and priorities and these could not be combined except under very broad overarching parameters. Within the policy there was an identified need to consider tailored ways in which the language could be promoted, celebrating linguistic diversity in appropriate ways, for example working in schools, community centres and Irish language groups, and with those without Irish.

The need to use appropriate terminology was stressed, for example prioritising indigenous languages such as Irish over other minority languages. Use of the term minority was also discussed, and it was felt that wherever possible it should be replaced with terms such as 'linguistic diversity' to avoid creating an artificial hierarchy of language forms.

Community development work was seen as a priority, and examples of good practice from other councils was referenced on a number of occasions. It was argued that this sort of work should take priority over, for example, translation of documents or minutes, except on those occasions where the document was of particular relevance. The goal should be to normalise the use of the Irish language, and to remove prejudice and lower barriers to acceptance across all communities. The dangers of only working in existing Irish speaking areas was mentioned, thereby running the risk of marginalising the language yet further.

The need for a dedicated Irish Language Officer was emphasised but that person's work should be carefully set out to ensure maximum impact, and the location and role of the officer would require considerable thought and careful planning.

Raising the profile of the language through events and displays was also discussed but in general, there was support for the main thrust of the draft policy and in particular where adequate

resources could be made available to effect real change across the city in existing attitudes and behaviour.

C1 (iv) Other Minority Languages and Deaf, Partial Hearing and/or Disabled Persons

The seven attendees at this focus group were all members of the deaf and partial hearing community; two accredited BSL signers were present throughout. From the outset, the group collectively welcomed the draft policy and especially the inclusion of sign language and it was acknowledged that Belfast City Council were the first to address the needs of the Deaf community in a meaningful way.

All attendees were united in insisting that sign language (both BSL and ISL) has such unique qualities that it should be dealt with under an entirely separate policy strand. The overarching framework was seen as generally acceptable, so long as the particular needs of sign language users could be looked at as a separate group under that framework (i.e. apart from disability). This was especially true as there are so many sign language users in Northern Ireland (circa 5000), many without a disability, and this would be in keeping with impending legislation planned for introduction within the next 18 months.

It was argued that there should parity for sign language with Irish and Ulster Scots and particularly as many users had no alternative language available to them other than signing. Within the document it was felt that good relations should be extended to cover all grounds of identity, and this may also help address a perceived funding deficit for the signing community at present.

One priority was seen to be ready access to interpreters when engaging with the Council, not as a choice but a necessity, along with sign links via video. The provision of signers at Council events was welcomed but opportunities for extending the service were also suggested in order to actively encourage attendance among those with hearing loss, not merely on request. Repeatedly it was pointed out that interpreters needed to be qualified and operating at the appropriate standard otherwise the service became ineffective and potentially misleading.

Overall, the group was positive about many aspects of the draft policy and could see useful opportunities presenting themselves for their community should a dedicated resource be made available in the future.

The one attendee at NICVA advised that his primary concern was the interests of young people with hearing loss, and was conscious that new legislation was planned but stalled for sign language, legislation which he warmly welcomed. Discussion tended to focus on how the Council could make services and facilities more accessible and available for young people with hearing loss, and including in particular sport and leisure. The work that was needed to make competitive sport more accessible was emphasised, including training for coaches etc.

The draft policy was broadly welcomed and including the overarching framework. At the same time the need for more work was emphasised and including within the mainstream school system. The

aims of the policy were broadly accepted, and in particular the need to mainstream effectively within schools and leisure services and thereby remove hidden barriers. Practical techniques for providing information were outlined in some detail, including how websites could be made friendlier for those with hearing loss.

The respondent was keen to point out that users of BSL were not necessarily disabled, and sign language users should be set apart from other forms of communication given its unique identity. Also the use of plain English and easy read versions of documents was a priority and these could often be provided at minimal cost.

Overall this person was in support of the aims of the draft policy but felt that a separate policy tailored to users of sign language was important.

C2. Correspondence from public and external organisations by email and letter

C2 (i) Response from Community Relations Council

General Comments
- Believe that policies relating to languages should be developed on the basis of international and domestic law as well as best practice.
- Framework should be utilised to enhance the delivery of services to promote racial equality and fulfil the Councils section 75 duties.

Policy Context
- Suggest placing this framework development and associated policies in context of The Executive Office's "Together: Building a United Community" strategy , in particular under the priority heading " Our Cultural Expression"
- Final policy should also detail the relationship with other Council policies eg Good Relations; Belfast Agenda; Peace IV
- Provide detail as to what recent engagement has taken place with various language sectors on this current draft (since 2013), taking into account changes in infrastructure and funding climate. Recommend an audit update, both in terms of accessing services and developmental work
- Amend documentation to reflect correct status of previous consultation exercises

Good Relations
- CRC recommends that BCC adopts and make clear that the following principles will characterise all if its interventions in the area of language protection, development and promotion:

1) The principles of Equity, Diversity and Interdependence (EDI) should be used as a practical framework;

2) A commitment to the principle that any linguistic diversity policy must meet the international obligations for minority languages as set out in the Charter and the Framework and meet Human Rights standards.

Irish Language Policy

- Policy should implement the various recommendations from the Committee of Experts on the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

- Helpful to include some practical steps in a final action plan that address the relational difficulties eg via arts and cultural activities

- Urges Council to engage with those who are, or have been involved in this work to create an inclusive atmosphere and outreach to the wider society in order to increase awareness and understanding

- Legacy of conflict and division needs to be factored into any policy

Ulster Scots Language Policy

- Welcomes focus on promotion of language and the cultural and heritage aspects of Ulster Scots

Other Minority Languages Policy

- Highlight best practice and promote understanding among staff as to why the use of interpretation services is important.

- NISRA stats on language use point to need to pay particular attention to those who have limited or lower levels of English Language proficiency

- Ensure council services are accessible ie include access to services of an interpreter and access to advice and written information

- Pay attention to heritage languages eg second generation children. Proposed Minority Languages Forum can over time support the Council in this.

- Ensure policy includes provision for the use of sign language and takes into account the substantial work already undertaken by DCAL

Implementation

- Develop an action plan with measurable short, medium and long tern objectives

- Allow flexibility to alter and revise the policy in order to meet new demands/ challenges

- Replicate Minority Languages Forum within the Irish Language and Ulster Scots Languages Policy implementation.

- Continue to engage with relevant stakeholders, both statutory and community and voluntary in order to ensure final details/policies meet needs and demands of language users.

C2 (ii) Response from Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

The ECNI response was provided within the context of their remit on Section 75 and the provisions of anti-discrimination legislation and CRPD; not directly or primarily concerned with the promotion of languages. General comments included:

- Supportive of Council staff receiving awareness and language training
- Supportive of Minority Languages Forum with representatives from ethnic minority backgrounds and people with disabilities

Comments received on the key provisions of the draft Policy:

Irish and Ulster Scots

- Supports taking account of Executive strategies and best practice guidance from Foras na Gaelige and Ulster Scots Agency
- Supports use of minority languages where they are proportionate to the language needs of the situation and in a spirit of respect for the freedom of minority language speakers to speak or use their language of preference
- Use of minority languages (or any language) for common or official purposes be considered a neutral act that would not be discriminatory and should not be perceived, or intended, as a threat
- Speaking or use of the Irish Language or Ulster Scots does not diminish the entitlements of those who identify as British or Irish.

Sign Language

- Supports recognition of sign language as a language in its own right and commitment to address the needs of those who use British Sign language and Irish Sign Language as their principal means of communication
- Supports introduction of a BSL/ISL Bill as step towards meeting Priority 7 of the Northern Ireland Disability Strategy
- Recognises that adoption of provisions will enable BCC to contribute to the fulfilment of obligations under UNCRPD,
- In addition recognise that proposed sign language provisions are consistent with Article 5 of the Convention and in particular with the stipulation that in order to promote equality and eliminate discrimination, public authorities shall take all appropriate steps to ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided.
- Consider proposed provision is likely to enhance equality of opportunity and good relations between sign language users and non-sign language users
- Recommends Council involves deaf people and representative organisations in review process.
- As per Councils Equality Scheme, recommend consideration given to including specific reference to making information available in Easy Read and Makaton formats for those with

learning disabilities and in large print, Braille or by audio recording for those with visual impairment, in order to promote inclusion.

Minority Ethnic Languages

- Supports the focus of the policy strand on minority languages on ensuring good communication and increasing awareness and understanding of minority cultures as appropriate.
- Proposed provision likely to enhance equality of opportunity ad good relations between persons belonging to Black and Minority Ethnic Groups who are minority language speakers and other citizens.

Section 75 of the NI Act

- Expected as per terms of our Equality Scheme that a screening document would have been issued with the consultation document or be available on Council website. Refer to SP&R minutes of 21st April 2017 which refer to draft screening of policy and recommend screening document made available asap.
- Recommend overarching policy and the resulting three policies should be screened and considered for EQIA, as per equality scheme commitments.

Anti-discrimination legislation

- Whilst recognising a draft they recommend that: final policies are considered within the context of the Councils equality policies, relevant anti-discrimination statutes and that Council should satisfy itself that its policies comply with the relevant provisions.
- Recommend that Council refers to its Section 75 statutory duties and the relevant anti-discrimination legislation in appendices

C2 (iii) Conradh na Gaeilge Questionnaire

Conradh na Gaeilge submitted 80 questionnaires based on the elements of the Council's consultation questionnaire which related to the Irish language. A summary of the key issues are presented below:

(i)   92% agreed with the development of a Linguistic Diversity Policy. Of the remainder 5% disagreed with the development of a Linguistic Diversity Policy for Belfast, with 2% nether agreed or disagreed or did not answer the question.

(ii)   26 comments argued for the need for a separate policy, reflecting the following statement, either exactly or with minimal changes: 'Although we strongly support the aims and objectives of the draft policy and the recommendations made for the development and safeguarding of Irish, it is our view that it is would be more effective to develop stand-alone policies for each language and that an indigenous language should be given precedent – both of which are supported by the Council of Europe.'

(iii)   95% agreed with the over-arching principles of the Language Framework. In regard to comments on how they could be improved 23 of the 26 responses ,included the statement, either exactly or with minor changes:

'We strongly support the fundamental principles of the language framework, especially in terms of the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The Council of Europe has consistently criticised how the charter has been implemented and we welcome any attempt to fully comply with this important international charter. Irish is protected up to Part III of the Charter and the Council needs, therefore, to lay out a plan of work which gives a comprehensive breakdown of how all of the provisions under the Charter, as they pertain to Irish, can be implemented.

For instance, the Council of Europe and COMEX (which monitors the implementation of the Charter) has made very clear recommendations on bilingual signage and street names. Currently, the Belfast City Council policy on street names contravenes this guidance and we would expect the Council's policy to change in order to comply fully with the charter, as stated above.'

(iv)   99% agreed with the development of an Irish Language Policy which focuses primarily on the enhancement and protection of the language. All of the 27 comments received in the request for suggestions for improvement, regarding the proposed Irish Language policy, stated, either exactly or with minor changes: 'It is vitally important that Councils sets out clearly, on a step by step basis, how they will implement the policy in a way that is measurable. While we welcome the policy, the measures contained within it are general and must be accompanied by a comprehensive implementation action plan'. The statement continued with details of how the action plan should be implemented structured around engagement, visibility and funding.

(v)   99% agreed with the recruitment of an Irish Language Officer (79 out of the 80 respondents, with 3 supporting recruitment only in Foras na Gaeilge part-funded the salary).

C2 (iv) Altram

Altram is the regional support group for Irish-medium early years projects. It was founded in 1990 by local preschools in Derry, Belfast, Armagh and Newry.

A summary of general comments:
- Disagree with BCCs statement in consultation document that 3,000 children receive education through medium of Irish in Belfast. They quote over 5,500 children attending Irish-medium educational settings.

- Altram has developed a State of the Sector report into Irish-medium early years education for further reference if required.
- Altram believes that BCC in considering the development of policy and programmes relating to linguistic diversity in NI should have due regard to the undertakings in respect of language (and the Irish language in particular) which the UK Government and NI Executive have entered into, particularly since the Good Friday Agreement 1998.
- Bilingualism gives added value in an early years setting and it is vital that this crucial area of work is supported, promoted and nourished at strategic policy and government levels.

Policy Content

- Welcomes consultation as positive attempt by Council to update its 2006 Language Policy and to respond to increasing linguistic diversity within the city, including a vibrant and burgeoning Irish language sector.
- NI only part of the UK without a specific language act and vital that a core aim within BCC Policy is to support a strategic underpinning Irish Language Act.
- Believe that a robust policy from BCC will send a positive message to other Councils to adopt, implement and promote similar policies.
- Believes that the effective implementation of this policy will assist local and national government to deliver on a wide range of policies.
- Need more than one reference in the policy document to Irish Medium education and more detail.
- BCC policy should embrace recommendations from the Languages for the Future – Northern Ireland Languages Strategy, a report produced by an expert working group for the Department of Education in September 2012, which recognized the positive and unique contribution of the Irish-medium sector to second language acquisition and set out recommendations for a Northern Ireland Languages Strategy.
- Need to include more support and development services alongside translation and interpretation services in the policy document.
- Protection and promotion of the Irish Language needs to be at the core of the document as a clearly stated aim and placed within a language development as well as a respect context.
- Supports approach to ensure that people for whom English is a second language are not disadvantaged in their communications with Council.
- Argue that circumstances and needs of indigenous languages and those of ethnic minority languages are different. Altram recommends that the principle of 'language of choice' should be embedded in the Council's policy.
- Welcomes inclusion of three different policies and specific needs of different language groups.

- Would welcome further information on what these policies will be based on, for example, objective need?
- Welcomes recommendation to appoint an Irish Language Officer
- Altram also supports the POBAL recommendations as a result of their audit of needs of Irish language groups in Belfast (2017).

C2 (v) Pobal

Pobal, the independent advocacy organisation for the Irish speaking community submitted two responses regarding the contextual information presented. The points in summary:

- Highlighted concerns that there appear to be a number of 'factual inaccuracies in the document which give a misleading impression of the statutory and policy basis for the Irish language and Ulster-Scots'.
- The contextual statement: 'Structural changes within central government have resulted in this work being taken forward by the Department of Communities' was identified as being misleading as: 'Unfortunately, in early 2016, the NI Executive rejected all proposals in relation to both the Irish language strategy and Ulster Scots strategy. It is therefore unclear what authority or standing, if any, the DCAL strategies have.'
- Emphasises that the current suspension of the NI Assembly raises further uncertainty on how and when progress will be made on this issue [language].
- A further example of an 'inaccuracy' in the document included: The NI Executive has adopted 20 year strategies on both Irish and Ulster-Scots.' As noted above, this is simply not accurate and shows an alarming lack of background awareness to the promotion and protection of Irish here.
- Provided details of key findings from the Committee of Experts (COMEX) on the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities:
- In particular, we refer to the issue of interpretation of Section 75, the Equality Duty. The Committee of Experts (COMEX) on the European Charter state, (ECRML (2010)4, Strasbourg 21 April 2010, Application of the Charter by the UK, p. 19, parag 12)
  123. The COMEX has been informed of several instances, especially within local councils where it was decided not to promote or use the Irish language within their services on the grounds that it would contravene Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, which states that public authorities should take due regard of the need to promote equality of opportunity, among others between persons of different religious belief or political opinion. The Committee of Experts emphasises that this undertaking states that the adoption of special measures in favour of regional or minority languages aimed at promoting equality between the users of these languages and the rest of the population or which take due account of their specific conditions is not considered to be an act of discrimination against the users of more widely-used languages.

In addition, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention also note, (Strasbourg, 22 Dec 2011, ACFC/OP/III/ (2011) 006)

147. […] The Advisory Committee regrets that, in addition to a lack of clear legal guarantees for the use of the Irish language, there is a lack of promotion of the Irish language and culture. It understands that, in practice, very little is done to promote the use of Irish in the public sphere and that, although some Irish language officers have been appointed in a few municipalities, the possibilities to use this language in relations with local administrative authorities remain limited. It is also concerned that the overall climate in Northern Ireland does not encourage Irish speakers to use and develop their language freely. The Advisory Committee was disconcerted to hear that some representatives of the authorities consider that promoting the use of the Irish language is discriminating against persons belonging to the majority population. Such statements are not in line with the principles of the Framework Convention, and in particular with the provisions of Article 10. It also reiterates that, in line with Article 4.2 and Article 4.3 of the Framework Convention, implementation of minority rights protected under the Framework Convention are not be considered as discriminating against other persons.

- Pobal presented the findings of an audit and needs assessment of Irish language groups in Belfast. The audit focused 'on Irish language groups located in the Belfast City Council area, whose core work has been created over time in a wide range of areas, from work in the arts, in education, in the media, in community development and more. They are all groups that are extremely active and who are high achieving in terms of the promotion of the diversity and vitality of the city. It is difficult for senior representatives to put aside time to participate in research when they are carrying heavy workloads on a daily basis. To ensure the validity of this audit, POBAL set a target of 8 participating groups as our goal. Ultimately, 17 groups participated in it, more than twice the target number. Early in the investigation, it became clear that the groups were proud of what they have achieved on behalf of the city, and that they want to contribute to efforts to drive Belfast forward into a vibrant, diverse society.'

The findings presented the extensive work that is undertaken by Irish language groups, often on a voluntary basis. The proposals presented were:
  - Establishing a new department within the Council: Language and community development, tourism, arts and Good practice / Capacity building
  - The creation of full-time post(s) of Irish Language Officer / Officers within Belfast City Council
  - Developing criteria to recognize the added value of the Irish language within each funding scheme of the Council, including the multiple annual core funding scheme
  - Making available Language Awareness Training courses to Council staff and Councillors

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C2 (vi) Individual by letter

·One written response was received from an individual interested in Ulster-Scots and Irish, who has been trying in a very small way to promote Ulster-Scots. Her suggestions include:

- Provide books of stories/poetry for children.
- Offer short classes in school to raise awareness that Ulster-Scots language exists and that is in danger of being lost – use the sessions to introduce some everyday words for children to use.
- Run competitions for writers in English, Irish and Ulster-Scots poetry.
- Use of the media to promote language.
- Work in collaboration with libraries for courses, readings, books, and evenings of celebrations of the languages.

C3. An online survey of public opinion on the Council's Consultation Hub

The survey contained 31 questions, 15 capturing personal information (e.g. age, gender, postcode etc) while the remaining questions considered the draft policy itself. The bespoke self-completion questionnaire was completed on-line through the Council's Consultation Hub by 235 individuals, 23 people acting on behalf of organisations and 2 did not disclose the basis for completion. One hard copy in English was received was input into the online questionnaire, as were 2 in Irish, following translation.

In total 260 public questionnaires were completed and the Consultation Hub report is available on request. The information highlighted below includes the key information extracted from the full report, providing percentages of the 260 responses received, the question number is provided in brackets

(vi)   92% understood the context and rationale for this policy change (Q5).

(vii)   61% agreed with the development of a Linguistic Diversity Policy. Of the remainder 36% disagreed with the development of a Linguistic Diversity Policy for Belfast, with 4% neither agreed or disagreed or did not answer the question. (Q7).

(viii)   For those who disagreed with the development of a Linguistic Diversity Policy a list of options were also presented. The majority of respondents indicated that 'cost implications' were the main reason for not agreeing with the development of the Policy If 'Other' was chosen as an option, space was provided for the respondent to provide detail on why they did not support the development of a Linguistic Diversity Policy; of

the 38 comments, many indicated the strength of feeling around the funding of languages and observations on the perceived politicisation of the two indigenous languages. (Q7)

(ix) The themes of funding of languages and observations on the perceived politicisation of the two indigenous languages were further evident in the 104 responses received which were received regarding the improvement of, or any comments, regarding the Policy (Q8).

(x) 64% agreed with the development of a Language Framework. Of the remainder 30% disagreed with the development of a Language Framework, whilst 6% nether agreed or disagreed or did not answer the question. Of the 93 comments received two areas dominated: cost implications (22%) and the need for a comprehensive plan (28%). (Q9)

(xi) 63% agreed with the development of an Irish Language Policy, as one of the three proposed policies. Of the remainder 33% disagreed, whilst 4% neither agreed or disagreed or did not answer the question. (Q10a).

(xii) A further question was asked regarding the level of agreement on the development of an Irish Language Policy which focuses primarily on the enhancement and protection of the language, to which 63% agreed. Of the remainder 32.31% disagreed, whilst 5% neither agreed or disagreed or did not answer the question. From the 83 comments provided, two key issues dominated: cost implications (25%) and the need for improved engagement with the Irish speaking community (33%). (Q13)

(xiii) 26% agreed with the development of an Ulster-Scots Language Policy as one of the three proposed policies. Of the remainder 42% disagreed, whilst 32.31% neither agreed or disagreed or did not answer the question. (Q10b)

(xiv) A further question was asked regarding the level of agreement on the development of an agreed Ulster-Scots Language policy which looks more to the promotion of the language and the cultural and heritage aspects of the language rather than the need for translation of documents and interpretation services to which 31% agreed. Of the remainder 29% disagreed, whilst 40% neither agreed or disagreed or did not answer the question. From the 68 comments provided, two key issues dominated: cost implications (22%) and the status of Ulster-Scots as a dialect (25%). (Q14)

(xv) 60% agreed with the development of an Other Language Policy as one of the three proposed policies. Of the remainder 19% disagreed, whilst 21% neither agreed or disagreed or did not answer the question. (Q10c)

(xvi)   58% agreed with the development of a Policy on other minority languages (including sign language) which focuses on ensuring good communication and increasing awareness and understanding of minority cultures. Of the remainder 29% disagreed with the development, whilst 22% neither agreed or disagreed or did not answer the question. From the 47 comments provided, two key issues dominated: cost implications (21%) and the need for sign language as a separate policy 32%). (Q15)

(xvii)   51% agreed with our definition of "minority languages". Of the remainder 28% disagreed with the definition, whilst 20% neither agreed or disagreed or did not answer the question. The comments gave an insight into some of the issues around the term 'minority', particularly around indigenous languages within a post-conflict environment. (Q12)

(xviii) 61% agreed with the recruitment of an Irish Language Officer. Of the remainder 34% did not agree, whilst 5% weren't sure or did not answer the question. (Q16)

(xix)   Regarding the first alternative presented to the recruitment of an Irish Language officer 28% agreed with the recruitment of a staff member dedicated to the promotion of all minority languages. Of the remainder 49% did not agree, whilst 22% did not agree nor disagree or did not answer the question. (Q17a)

(xx)   Regarding the second alternative presented to the recruitment of an Irish Language 53% agreed with the recruitment of two posts, one dedicated to the Irish Language and one dedicated to promoting all other languages. Of the remainder 40% did not agree, whilst 7% did not agree nor disagree or did not answer the question. (Q17b)

(xxi)   Comments or suggestions in response to the draft Equality Screening, which was provided as an attachment, were requested. Of the 70 responses received 36%, closely followed the wording: 'A strong Irish language policy will enhance equality in the council and it will ensure, if implemented effectively, that Belfast City Council will be fulfilling their duties as established in international treaties and frameworks that have been ratified by the British Government.' Other dominant themes were regarding the density of the information presented in a complex format, cost implications and perceived tensions between equality and good relations implementation of the Policy may bring and their impact on different community backgrounds. (Q19)

C4. Staff consultation

A self-completion staff survey was available internally through the Consultation Hub and was promoted through interlink on three occasions, the full survey report is available on request. The survey contained nine questions, three capturing personal information (i.e. name, email, service/unit) while the remaining six considered awareness of the draft policy, experience of dealing with minority languages, and current knowledge of minority languages. A total of 35 surveys were completed and given the low sample size, the survey cannot be considered as a representative sample of staff views, although they may provide some insight into future analysis required. Key results are summarised below, with the question number stated in brackets.

(i)   Comments and suggestions on the implementation of the Policy includes concerns around cost, awareness realising sessions for staff, staff across the Council becoming involved in developing and implementing the Policy. (Q4).

(ii)   In response to the level of awareness of the 2006 Language Policy, 17% were fully aware, 46% were aware to some extent and 37% were not aware.

(iii)   51% understood the need for a linguistic diversity policy, with 37% indicating they understood to some extent and 11% indicating they did not understand.

(iv)   Information on the frequency of encountering different languages was requested. The percentages below give an indication of the presence of the language within the work of Belfast City Council as they are based on a total of responses including often, sometimes, occasionally, and rarely:

- Irish – 69%
- Ulster-Scots – 23%
- Sign Language – 63%
- Chinese – 54%
- Polish – 69%
- Tagalog/Filipino – 31%
- Slovak – 40%
- Arabic – 34%

(v)   Information on individual knowledge of different languages was requested. The percentages below give an indication of any knowledge of the language as they are based on a total of responses including fluent, basic speaking skills and basic reading skills:

- Irish – 43%

- Ulster-Scots – 6%

- Sign Language – 26%

- Chinese – 0%

- Polish – 6%

- Tagalog/Filipino – 0%

- Slovak – 0%

- Arabic – 0%

Availability of staff engagement sessions with Dr John Kremer were promoted through interlink. The purpose of these 15-minute time slots was to afford members of staff, either individually or in small groups of up to five, an opportunity to air their views on the draft policy, face-to-face but in confidence. The structure of these sessions was designed to be more fluid than the public engagement session, to allow staff to focus on matters that were of greatest concern or priority to themselves. The turnout for the staff engagement session was likewise disappointing, with only one appointment booked and feedback reflected on themes including the potential role of staff with language skills in implementing the policy and staff relations around language issues.

Two meetings with Trade Union Representatives have taken place in relation to the draft Linguistic Diversity Policy. The TU Coordinators will want to be fully engaged in all potential industrial relations issues relating to the implementation of a Linguistic Diversity Policy. Going forwards, it was agreed that appropriate communication mechanisms with all Trade Union Representatives will be fully utilised, as the roll out of the action plans are agreed and implemented.

D. Emerging issues and preliminary recommendations

In identifying emerging issues and preliminary recommendations this report attempts to draw together the consultation findings and consider how the original consultation document: the draft Policy on Linguistic Diversity, may need to be revised to be 'fit for purpose'. More than anything, the consultation has revealed how extraordinarily diverse the needs and aspirations of the various language communities that currently exist in Belfast are, and how any single Linguistic Diversity Policy simply cannot ignore the different priorities and issues that each community has articulated. Nonetheless the steps the Council has taken to plan strategically for the diverse needs and aspirations were welcomed by many as a positive step forward in Belfast being a welcoming and inclusive city.

For some, the primary concern is the ability to be able to engage with the Council meaningfully, and to be aware of, and have access to, all its facilities and services. For these groups, and

including sign language users, those others with a sensory disability and those from new communities, the overarching framework attached to the draft policy was broadly welcomed, but with an understanding that the separate policy strands should be tailored more precisely to the needs and priorities of each particular language community.

For others, the focus fell not so much on a need to communicate in language forms because of no access to written and spoken English but instead a desire to actively promote a language form of choice. Here the priority may again be a tailored means by which a particular language can be best promoted, enhanced and protected.

This is not an attempt to establish an artificial hierarchy based on need or want but instead to be candid about, and mindful of, the different contexts that may underpin the linguistic diversity that now characterises the city and its communities. With concerns around the financial implications also being emphasised in many different comments, an approach delivered through co-design is further recommended to ensure that any monies spent will demonstrate investment against the strategic aims of the Council: to be a welcoming and inclusive city. In turn, this should help to tailor appropriate measures to deal with the array of language forms that may potentially fall under the approach. The resources required to implement such an approach may be considerable, hence the need for staged implementation, with a year on year action plan, developed in line with communities' priority needs and aspirations is strongly recommended.

In summary, the following preliminary recommendations are put forward for consideration:

- The draft Linguistic Diversity Policy should be re-branded as a Language Strategy, emphasising a strategic approach to the development of accessible and inclusive communications;

- The current Section 3 (Recent developments) should be amended to take on board consultees' comments and to ensure that the strategy is consistent with current legislation and guidance in Northern Ireland;

- The overarching principles should be reviewed in light of feedback, including further reference to the positive benefits attached to linguistic diversity and bilingualism;

- Terminology used within the strategy should be consistent throughout, avoiding use of labels such as 'minority' wherever possible;

- Separate strands of work should be established under the strategy, for example –Irish Language, Ulster-Scots Language, Sign Language, New Communities' Communications and Language, and Communications and Language Strand for those with a Disability;

- Each strand should be assessed fully to inform appropriate resourcing, for example with dedicated human and material resources that are tailored to the particular needs and priorities of that language community;

- The job description for the post of language officers attached to one or more strands should be precise and reflect on the needs and priorities of the language communities in question. Recruitment of an Irish Language officer is recommended as an identified need for the Irish language community;

- Further engagement with each sector should be used to fine tune the aims and implementation sections of each strand of work to reflect the needs and priorities of the relevant community in any agreed policy;

- Pilots of work identified through the consultation will provide a useful insight in to wider implementation and how it impacts on operational delivery;

- The principles of shared space should be considered in the development of actions within the strategy and its related strands of work;

- Resource implications associated with the strategy should be clarified at an early stage, and action measures put in place that reflect on best value principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness;

- Further analysis of staff training and capacity building needs should be undertaken;

- To take forward these recommendations, an action plan should be put in place with immediate effect, setting out a staged approach to full implementation, with resources made available for each strand in order to provide continued momentum to the emerging strategy.

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Language Strategy Action Plan October 2017 – March 2018

Appendix 3

Accessibility

Documents are available, on request, in alternative formats - Braille, audio, large print, easy read. The council will also consider requests to produce it in other languages. If you require the Action Plan in these or other formats please contact us:

Equality & Diversity Officer   Legal & Democratic Services   Belfast City Council   City Hall   Belfast   BT1 5GS

Telephone: 028 90270511   Freephone: 0800 0855 412   Text phone: 028 90270405

Email: **equality@belfastcity.gov.uk**

Purpose – what is the Language Strategy Action Plan for?

Belfast aims to be a welcoming and inclusive city for all. To help achieve this aim and to meet other best practice guidance and legal requirements, we want to develop and implement a Language Strategy. The development of a Language Strategy came in response to public consultation on a draft Linguistic Diversity Policy, the forerunner to the Language Strategy.

The consultation revealed how extraordinarily diverse the needs and aspirations of the various language communities that currently exist in Belfast are, and how any single policy simply cannot ignore the different priorities and issues that each community has articulated. Nonetheless the steps the Council has taken to plan strategically for the diverse needs and aspirations were welcomed by many as a positive step forward in Belfast being a welcoming and inclusive city.

The Language Strategy will be developed and then implemented through a staged approach, central to which is the development of one year action plans which will be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

This is the first action plan presented in the development of the Language Strategy, it includes priority actions from the preliminary recommendations made during the consultation. Delivery of these actions should take place in October – December 2017 (Q3) and January – March 2018 (Q4).

Area of focus/ priority	Activities	Q3	Q4
1 Further develop a strategic approach to linguistic diversity	1.1 Agree resourcing for developing a strategic approach to linguistic diversity, including re-branding, delivery of the related action plans and membership of an internal working group	✓	
	1.2 Agree the accountability and governance structures for development and delivery of the strategic approach to linguistic diversity and associated action plans	✓	
	1.3 Analyse consultees responses in relation to context and rationale and update with desk based research into current legislation and guidance	✓	
	1.4 Review the overarching principles of the proposed Language Framework, including further reference to the positive benefits attached to linguistic diversity and bi-lingualism	✓	
	1.5 Assess the scope of a second post related to accessible and inclusive communications	✓	
	1.6 Prepare a costed one year action plan 2018-19 and submit for approval		✓

Area of focus/ priority	Activities	Q 3	Q 4
2 **Implement recommendations related to the Irish Language**	2.1 Meet with Foras na Gaeilge regarding part-funding for an Irish Language Officer, and take forward actions to secure part-funding	✓	
	2.2 Develop a job description for an Irish Language Officer and assess requirement of post through agreed job evaluation mechanisms to determine pay scale	✓	
	2.3 Recruit an Irish Language Officer	✓	
	2.4 Consider the priority needs and aspirations of the Irish language community, utilising appropriate engagement mechanisms for outreach activities and pilot actions.	✓	
	2.5 Scope operational impact and resource requirement of identified priority needs and aspirations of the Irish language community	✓	
	2.6 Prepare a costed one year action plan 2018-19 and submit for approval		✓

Area of focus/ priority	Activities	Q 3	Q 4
3 **Implement recommendations related to the Ulster-Scots Language**	3.1 Consider the priority needs and aspirations of the Ulster-Scots language community, utilising appropriate engagement mechanisms for outreach activities and pilot actions.	✓	
	3.2 Scope operational impact and resource requirement of identified priority needs and aspirations of the Ulster-Scots language community	✓	
	3.3 Prepare a costed one year action plan 2018-19 and submit for approval		✓
4 **Implement recommendations related to New Communities**	4.1 Consider the priority needs and aspirations of New Communities, utilising appropriate engagement mechanisms for outreach activities and pilot actions.	✓	
	4.2 Scope operational impact and resource requirement of identified priority needs and aspirations of New Communities.	✓	
	4.3 Prepare a costed one year action plan 2018-19 and submit for approval		✓

Area of focus/ priority	Activities	Q3	Q4
5 **Implement recommendations related to Sign Language**	5.1 Consider the priority needs and aspirations of the Sign Language community, utilising appropriate engagement mechanisms for outreach activities and pilot actions.	✓	
	5.2 Scope operational impact and resource requirement of identified priority needs and aspirations of the Sing Language community	✓	
	5.3 Prepare a costed one year action plan 2018-19 and submit for approval		✓
6 **Implement recommendations related to Disabled People**	6.1 Consider the priority needs and aspirations of disabled people in relation to communication and language, utilising appropriate engagement mechanisms for outreach activities and pilot actions.	✓	
	6.2 Scope operational impact and resource requirement of identified priority needs and aspirations of disabled people in relation to communication and language	✓	
	6.3 Prepare a costed one year action plan 2018-19 and submit for approval		✓