

Language Strategy Working Group

Friday, 30th September, 2022

LANGUAGE STRATEGY WORKING GROUP MINUTES HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillors Ferguson, Kyle, O'Hara, Spratt, Walsh and Whyte.

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor;
Mrs. S. Williams, Governance and Compliance Manager;
Mr. M. Johnston, Language Officer;
Mr. C. McGuigan, Irish Language Officer;
Ms. L McKee, Democratic Services Officer;
Mr. A. Mayrs, Building Control Officer,
Mrs. G. Boyd, Democratic Services Officer; and
Ms. J. Beck (Interpreter)

Apologies

Apologies for an inability to attend were received from Councillor McMullan. Consequently, Councillor Whyte offered to act as for chair the meeting.

(Councillor Whyte in chair.)

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 26th August were taken as read and signed as correct. Councillor O'Hara asked that it be noted that he had sent apologies for the meeting of 26th August and that the minutes be updated to reflect his apologies.

Language Strategy Update

The City Solicitor referred Members to the report that had been circulated to Members updating the working group on the progress achieved in relation to the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan and the progress in relation to the setting up of the Community Stakeholders' Forums associated with the Language Strategy. She advised the Members that officers would ensure that Members' priorities would be clearly defined and dealt with through the draft action plan.

A discussion followed where Members raised a number of issues that they felt should be addressed through the draft action plan, especially the data that was emerging from the NI Census. Members raised the need to look at the variety of new languages emerging through the NI census and at a definition for 'new' languages. The members of the working group had a discussion about translation services and the criteria for providing these services. The group agreed to discuss the items raised with their parties and the views would be fed into the consultation process. Councillor Kyle requested a party briefing for the UUP and asked to see a copy of the dual language logo.

Noted.

Feedback on Draft Irish Language Policy Including Sinn Féin Suggestions

The City Solicitor referred members to the report that had been circulated in advance of the meeting and explained that the purpose of the report was to present a further draft of an Irish Language Policy to the working group for discussion and asked for their feedback in relation to the policy and to Sinn Féin's suggestions that had been circulated previously. Officers agreed to liaise with corporate communications to get a draft mock-up of the dual language logo and the City Solicitor agreed to look at any financial implications of any proposed changes. She undertook to bring both items back to the next meeting of the Language Strategy Working Group.

Noted.

Dual Language Street Sign Policy

The Members of the working group considered the content of the report below;

“Introduction

- **Since 15th July Building Control Service has received over 500 requests for street signs in a second language.**
- **Most of these requests required further information to be sought from the applicant, and all needed a response in relation to the accompanying privacy notice and officers are working their way through these requests.**
- **The Service is awaiting an appointment with the Electoral Office to get the details of residents in the first batch of 15 streets and are aiming to send out members notification in respect of these applications w/c 3rd October 2022.**
- **This member notification process will replicate the process for notifying members in relation to planning applications that relate to their DEA or within the City Centre.**
- **The purpose of the notification is to allow members to raise any potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations or rural needs in relation to the proposed street sign. That representation must be sent to the Director of Planning & Building Control within 21 days of the notification. If either the elected member notification or the initial assessment identifies a potential adverse impact on equality, good relations or rural needs the**

application will be referred to Committee for approval to proceed to survey.

- **The process for the initial assessment is being finalised but that assessment will initially include officers from Building Control, Good Relations, Equality & Diversity Unit and Legal Services.**
- **Timeframes for a final decision in respect of applications will be dependent on a number of factors including the size of any street surveyed, whether the application has to be referred to Committee and current resources as officers prioritise the tasks.**
- **Approval has been granted for 3 additional staff members to be recruited on a temporary basis who will be focussed on dealing with the applications once recruited and trained. It is hoped these officers will be in post by in December 2022.”**

The Members requested that officers bring regular updates on the number of applications to the Working Group. After discussion, the Working Group noted the contents of the report.

Chairperson