



Subject:	Draft Irish Language Policy Update
Date:	19 th April 2024
Reporting Officer(s):	Nora Largey, City Solicitor
Contact Officer(s):	Russell Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer Colm McGuigan, Irish Language Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

No

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To provide an update on the progress on the development of a Draft Irish Language Policy.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note the progress on the development of a Draft Irish Language Policy;2. Provide approval for the Draft Irish Language Policy to go out to public consultation;3. Agree the recommended next steps as set out at paragraph 4.0 and in particular to the development of an implementation plan aligned to budgetary considerations.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Work initially started on a draft Irish Language Policy in 2022. However following initial consultation it was considered more appropriate to focus on the work which had already begun on the Language Strategy Action Plan.</p> <p>The draft Policy was discussed at the Irish Language Stakeholders Forum on 1st February 2024. An updated version of the draft Policy was brought to the Language Strategy Working Group on 9th February 2024 and then Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 23rd February 2024.</p>
3.2	<p>Following feedback from stakeholders and CMT, the draft Policy was presented to SP&R on 23rd February 2024. At that meeting a number of amendments were proposed to the Policy. In addition, parties requested briefings on the draft policy in advance of it being brought back to SP&R for approval in advance of a formal public consultation.</p> <p>A copy of the minutes of that meeting are attached at Appendix One.</p>
3.3	<p>The following issues were raised at the Party briefings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential cost implications, particularly in relation to the proposed amendment to the Policy proposed at SP&R Committee (the adoption of a new bilingual logo);• The impact of any bilingual rebrand on staff; and• The impact on equality and good relations (including community relations).
3.4	<p>The amendments proposed at the Committee's meeting on 23rd February 2024 and subsequently adopted at Council, are as follows:</p> <p><i>"Belfast City Council will adopt a new bilingual (Irish/English) corporate identity and the bilingual logo will become the new, proactive, de-facto council logo to be used comprehensively across all corporate branding. The English-only version of the logo will be available upon request. The same typeface and font-size will be used for both languages and the Irish text will be as visible and legible as the English text."</i></p>

<p>3.5</p>	<p><i>Appendix 1:</i></p> <p><i>To be added into Category 1(a): City Centre Public Realm Signage (street signposts)</i></p> <p><i>To be added into Category 1(b) and 2(b): Dumps, Recycling Centres / stations</i></p> <p><i>To be added into Category 3 (as being upgraded): Bins</i></p> <p><i>Point 14 (page 3):</i></p> <p><i>The Council will develop a list of key strategic Council documents and publications to proactively be made available in Irish. The 10 most common front-facing forms (online and hard copy) will be identified and translated into Irish for immediate use. The Council commits to publishing information leaflets, marketing and promotional materials bilingually in printed form and online. In instances where consultations are being conducted and the subject matter has the potential to impact the use of the Irish language or the Irish language community themselves, consultation questionnaires, engagement sessions and associated documents will be conducted proactively through the medium of Irish/bilingually as part of the active offer.</i></p> <p><i>Point 18 (page 4):</i></p> <p><i>The Council commits to publishing regular and often bilingual English / Irish content across all social media platforms. Information posts, marketing initiatives, community / service announcements will take place in Irish and in English. The relevant officer(s) will work in conjunction with the marketing team to develop a comprehensive strategy on how best to promote the Irish language across the Council's platforms. The Strategy will set out clear annual goals, increasing annually, around the % of social media posts produced.</i></p> <p><i>To be added under 'Communications':</i></p> <p><i>The Council will develop and maintain a functioning bilingual (Irish/English) website. A choice of languages, English/Irish, will first appear on the Council home page and users will be asked which language they wish to view the site in. The Council website will also develop, host and regularly update a specific Irish language page, with information about the Irish language services available from Council, information on classes throughout the city and on Irish medium education."</i></p> <p>Members are reminded that there are already commitments to some of these actions in the draft Language Strategy Action Plan. Consultation arrangements are dealt with through the Council's Equality Scheme which commits the Council to removing barriers to consultation. Therefore there are existing obligations mirroring some aspects of the proposal.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p><u>Next Steps</u></p> <p>If Members are content for the Draft Irish Language to issue for public consultation, then officers recommend that the following steps be undertaken as part of the overall policy development process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Officers will prepare a draft consultation document and associated questionnaire to issue alongside a draft EQIA for formal public consultation;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. staff will be consulted through the Council's Industrial Relations Framework as part of the consultation process; iii. officers will undertake to develop indicative costings of the proposals whilst the public consultation is ongoing; iv. any identified costings to be presented to Committee once the Policy has been subject to consultation and a final policy position proposed; v. that the policy will be subject to a detailed implementation plan which will outline delivery of specific actions arising out of the policy.
5.0	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The financial implications of the implementation of this policy will need to be considered once a final policy position is proposed.</p>
6.0	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations / Rural Needs Implications</u></p> <p>The draft Irish Language Policy is currently being subject to a Section 75 Equality Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment.</p> <p>It is anticipated that an EQIA will be required and consulted upon along with the draft Policy.</p>
7.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1: SP&R Minutes dated 23rd February 2024</p> <p>Appendix 2: Draft Irish Language Policy</p>