



Subject:	Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 – DAERA Annual Monitoring Report
Date:	23 May 2025
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor and Director of Legal & Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Russell Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance 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 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To provide the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee with the Council's annual monitoring return (the "Annual Return"), which provides evidence of how the Council has met certain duties under the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 (the "Act").

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to approve the submission of the Council's Annual Return for 2024 – 2025 (attached to this report as Appendix 1) to DAERA, subject to ratification by the Council at its meeting on 2 June.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	As Members will be aware, the rural population of Belfast is comprised of the small settlements of Edenderry, Hannahstown and Loughview.
3.2	Section 1(1) of the Act requires public authorities to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services.
3.3	As part of that duty, Council officers complete Rural Needs Impact Assessments.
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.4	Section 3(1) of the Act requires public authorities to: (i) compile information on the exercise of their functions, (ii) include that information in annual reports and (iii) send that information to DAERA.
3.5	The Annual Return is designed to inform stakeholders and other interested parties of how the Council has had due regard to rural needs in the exercise of its functions. The attached Annual Return shows how the Council has met this duty for 2024-25.
	<u>Next Steps</u>
3.6	Subject to Committee and Council approval, the Annual Return will be submitted to DAERA next month for inclusion in its Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report.
3.7	A copy of the Annual Return, together with a list of the completed Rural Needs Impact Assessments will be published on the Council's website, as the Council does not have an annual report.
	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
3.8	Officers from across the organisation are involved in completing Rural Needs Impact Assessments and the Equality and Diversity Unit have corporate responsibility for collating this information.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.9	The Annual Return provides evidence as to how the Council has met its duty under the Act to have due regard to Rural Needs.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Annual Monitoring Return to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs