



<b>Subject:</b>	Reconsideration of a decision in respect of the Irish Language Policy
<b>Date:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> June 2026
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Walsh, Chief Executive
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services Jim Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</b></p> <p>Insert number <input type="checkbox"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information relating to any individual</li> <li>2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual</li> <li>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)</li> <li>4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter</li> <li>5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained</li> <li>6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction</li> <li>7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</li> </ol>	
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b> <b>After Council Decision</b> <b>Sometime in the future</b> <b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of report or summary of main issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to furnish Members with Counsel's opinion in relation to the call-in of a decision by the Council at its meeting on 1 October 2025, to approve the draft Irish Language Policy.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>Council is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the contents the legal opinion;</li> <li>• Note that the call-in was not considered to have merit on community impact grounds; and</li> <li>• Note that the decision will now be implemented in accordance with Standing Order 48.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p>Members will recall at the meeting of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2025, the City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services submitted a report which addressed a number of proposed amendments to the draft Irish Language Policy that had been tabled at the Committee meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> September for consideration.</p> <p>The Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) noted the contents of the report including the documentation presented to the Committee at its previous meetings in August and September - SP&amp;R Committee - 22 August 2025 SP&amp;R Committee - 19 September 2025</li> <li>(ii) noted that the policy as presented to Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> September was agreed subject to consideration of the proposed amendments tabled at the meeting;</li> <li>(iii) agreed to the following proposed amendments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under Paragraph 15 "Belfast City Council will adopt a new bilingual (Irish/English) corporate identity and logo, having due regard to international best practice for minority languages, to reflect this commitment";</li> <li>- The proposed amendments outlined in the report under paragraphs 14, 19 and 24 would be detailed in the Implementation Plan; and</li> <li>- The development of an Educational Programme be included in the Implementation Plan and that a report be submitted to a future meeting in relation to the FLOURISH project.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Members will recall that on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025 the Council considered Agenda Item 6 – Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meetings of 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> September 2025 and, after a vote, resolved:</p> <p>"That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> September, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted."</p>

	<p>Subsequently, the decision of the Council of 1st October 2025 to ratify the minutes of the September Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meetings was ‘called-in’ under Section 41(1) (b) of the Local Government (NI) Act 2014.</p> <p>In accordance with Standing Order 48, the City Solicitor sought a legal opinion, and this is appended to the report (<b>Appendix 1 – Counsel’s opinion</b>).</p> <p>Members will note that the opinion has concluded there is no merit in the call-in.</p> <p>Members will be aware that judgement was recently issued in a case regarding the Council’s Standing Orders. It can be found at the following link:  <a href="https://www.judiciaryni.uk/judicial-decisions/2026-nikb-16">https://www.judiciaryni.uk/judicial-decisions/2026-nikb-16</a></p> <p>Mr Justice McLaughlin K.C concluded that the Council’s Standing Orders were lawful. He found that the 2014 Act does not require qualified majority voting in response to every requisition presented on the ground of disproportionate adverse effect, solely on account of the belief of 15% of councillors as to the effects of the decision.</p> <p>A notice of appeal has been received and Members are advised that the applicant has written to Council asking that it does not progress to a decision on this. However, the appellant has not actually applied for interim relief to prevent the Council from making a decision on the call in.</p>
3.5	<p><b><u>Next steps</u></b></p> <p>In accordance with Standing Order 48(9), Council is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the contents the legal opinion;</li> <li>• Note that the call-in was not considered to have merit on community impact grounds; and</li> <li>• Note that the decision will now be implemented.</li> </ul>
3.6	<p><b><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>There are no financial or resource implications arising directly from this report.</p> <p>A future report will be brought back to SP&amp;R Committee in relation to draft implementation plan, which will further consider financial and resource implications.</p>
3.7	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>There are no equality, good relations, or rural needs implications arising directly from this report. Members will recall that the public consultation in relation to the draft policy included a draft EQIA.</p> <p>This was subsequently updated to reflected feedback throughout the consultation and presented to SP&amp;R Committee at its meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2025.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
4.1	<p>Appendix 1 – Call-in Requisition</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Counsel’s opinion</p>

