Policy on Linguistic Diversity

Draft for consultation: 21 April 2017

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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.'

(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.

- 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.

(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.)

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;

- 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

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

Appendix 1

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

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

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

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.

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.

- 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.

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.

The Council's procedures are set out below.

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

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.

Appendix 5

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.

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.

DRAFT

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

Appendix 7

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

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.

Appendix 8

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.

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 Gaelscolaiochta (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.

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.