



10 January 2020

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee to be held in
The Chamber, Cookstown at Mid Ulster District Council, Council Offices,
COOKSTOWN, BT80 8DT on Thursday, 09 January 2020 at 19:00 to transact the
business noted below.

Yours faithfully

Anthony Tohill
Chief Executive

AGENDA

OPEN BUSINESS

1. Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest
Members should declare any financial and non-financial interests they have in the items of business for consideration, identifying the relevant agenda item and the nature of their interest.
3. Chair's Business

Matters for Decision

- | | | |
|----|--|---------|
| 4. | Revised Mid Ulster District Council Media Protocol | 3 - 8 |
| 5. | Working Group on Outside Bodies - Report of Meeting held Thursday 5th December 2019 | 9 - 14 |
| 6. | Response to Consultation on the Disability Action Plan of The Executive Office (TEO) | 15 - 52 |
| 7. | Member Services | |

Matters for Information

- | | | |
|---|---|---------|
| 8 | Policy and Resources Committee minutes held on 5 December 2019 | 53 - 58 |
| 9 | Performance Improvement - Local Government Auditor's Audit and Assessment (Section 95) Report 2019-20 | 59 - 86 |

Items restricted in accordance with Section 42, Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014. The public will be asked to withdraw from the meeting at this point.

Matters for Decision

10. Verbal Briefing from the Director of Environment & Property on the Councils Contract for the Processing of Mixed Dry Recyclates
11. Aughnacloy Changing Rooms Relocation – Capital Project
12. Legal Matter for Decision
13. Staff Recruitment, Dark Sky Park & Observatory
14. Pay, Grading & Harmonisation Review within Leisure Services
15. Update on Appointment Process of Independent Members to Mid Ulster PCSP
16. IT system contract extensions for public Health and Email/Archival Systems
17. Former High School Site, Maghera
18. 2020/2021 Rates Estimates

Matters for Information

19. Policy and Resources Confidential Minutes of meeting held on 5 December 2019
20. Staff Matters for Information
21. Managing Attendance
22. Contracts and DAC Register
23. Financial Report for 8 months ended 30 November 2019

Report on	Revised Media Protocol
Date of Meeting	9 January 2020
Reporting Officer	Ursula Mezza
Contact Officer	Ursula Mezza

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	x

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The report provides details of proposed revisions to the Council's Media Protocol.
2.0	Background
2.1	A Media Protocol was first developed and agreed by the Council in November 2014.
2.2.	The Protocol reflects the Council's elected member-led approach to media relations, identifying spokesperson roles and arrangements for photographs, and asks members to observe embargoes and confidentiality of council business.
2.3	The Protocol was last updated in July 2015 and a recent internal audit of the marketing and communications service recommended that it be reviewed.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The internal audit of the marketing and communications service recommended that the Media Protocol be reviewed, that a section signposting to further advice and information be included, along with a brief description of the role of the marketing and communications service.
3.2	The Protocol has been reviewed as recommended and an additional element has been added to reflect the fact that, on rare occasions, an officer may be required to undertake a media interview, normally where technical knowledge would be required or where the member of staff is representing the Council at an event (e.g. tourism show).
3.3	A new section has been added which provides links to information and advice on media and social media compiled by NILGA and the Local Government Association.

3.4	A short description of the remit of the marketing and communications service is also now included, highlighting that members may also seek advice on corporate media issues from the service.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: N/A
	Human: N/A
	Risk Management: N/A
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	That the Committee recommends the revisions to the Media Protocol.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	Draft Revised Media Protocol.

Mid Ulster District Council Media Protocol

Introduction

While the Council will make decisions as a corporate body, individual elected Members have a right to express their own views and engage in their own communications' activity, via a variety of channels, including the news media and social media.

However, to ensure that the Council is given the opportunity to be proactive in its communications and to control the timely release of information, elected Members are asked to observe a media protocol.

The protocol reflects the Council's 'member-led' approach in terms of its communications' work.

Protocol

- Councillors undertake to respect the confidentiality of Council business to be discussed 'in committee'.
- Councillors undertake to respect any embargo associated with any formal corporate announcement concerning a major decision or significant achievement.
- Normally, the Chair will act as the Council's official spokesperson when:
 - corporate decisions or announcements are being made public
 - the Council is issuing a statement in response to a media enquiry concerning a significant corporate issue.
- On occasion, when significant or major corporate decisions or announcements are being made the Chair and the Deputy Chair may both contribute to news releases and statements being issued by the Council.
- In the absence of the Chair, the Deputy Chair will act as the Council's official spokesperson as outlined above.
- Following ratification of decisions by the Council, Committee Chairs will act as official spokespeople when announcements are being made public relating to business which is the remit of the Committee concerned.
- Committee Chairs will act as official spokespeople when the Council is issuing news releases or making announcements concerning business which is the remit of the Committee concerned.
- On occasion, when significant or major announcements are being made regarding the business of a Committee, the Chair and the Chair of the appropriate Committee may both contribute to news releases and statements being issued by the Council.

- On rare occasions and with approval of the Chief Executive or appropriate Director, a Council officer may undertake media interviews or act in the capacity of a spokesperson. This would normally be in circumstances where a specialist knowledge is required to undertake an interview or where the officer is representing the Council at an event (e.g. tourism show).
- Normally, the Councillor acting as official spokesperson will feature in any accompanying photograph issued by the Council. In photocalls to which the media are invited, all Members (of the Council or the relevant Committee) will be notified of the date, time and venue.
- In photo calls organised by other bodies to which the media are invited and which are being held to promote significant partnership projects, the Chair, Deputy Chair, members of the relevant District Electoral Area (DEA) and Party leaders, will be notified of the date, time and venue.
- Council news releases and media statements will reflect the Council's corporate position.
- All members will receive copies (by email) of news releases issued by the Council.
- If using social media channels during those parts of meetings which are open to the public, Councillors will adhere to data protection principles, respecting the privacy of those members of the public and staff who may be present, particularly with regard to the publication of images.
- When in doubt or unsure of the Council's position on any issue, Councillors will seek advice from the Chief Executive to ensure the accuracy and consistency of information being communicated.

Further Advice & Guidance

While Members will have access to their own sources of advice and guidance on media issues, the following may be useful:

NILGA: The 2019 Councillor Guide
(available to download at www.nilga.org/resources)

Local Government Association Checklist For Councillors: Social Media
www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/comms-hub-communications-support/digital-communications/social-1

Members can also seek advice and guidance on corporate media issues from the Council's Marketing and Communications service.

The service provides corporate responses to media enquiries, monitors media coverage of the Council and coordinates the release of information to the media, ranging from newsworthy stories on every day, operational issues to significant announcements. The service also manages the Council's social media channels.

Staff from the service also ensure that the appropriate spokespeople are used and that any written statements issuing in the name of a councillor are approved in advance.

Contact:

Ursula Mezza

Head of Marketing & Communications

Tel: 03000 132 132 ext 23313

Mob: 07769 726290

E: communications@midulstercouncil.org

DRAFT

Report on	Working Group Meeting Report - Council Representation on Outside Bodies
Date of Meeting	Thursday 9 th January, 2019
Reporting Officer	P Moffett, Head of Democratic Services
Contact Officer	P Moffett, Head of Democratic Services E Forde, Member Support Officer

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To receive and consider report of the first meeting of the Working Group on Council Representation on Outside Bodies held on Thursday 5 th December 2019.
2.0	Background
2.1	Policy and Resources Committee previously recommended and Council subsequently resolved that a working group of councillors be established to review, council's representation on outside bodies and on the approach taken to appoint representatives.
2.2	The remit of the Working Group is detailed within its Terms of Reference, extending to:
2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying outside bodies to which council has representation Reviewing continuing need for representation on the identified outside bodies Reviewing appropriateness of the number of representatives on the outside bodies Reviewing continuing need for those bodies, forums and partnerships established and facilitated by Council Reviewing approach taken on filling positions on outside bodies at annual meetings and as they arise Reviewing approach to dealing with 'in-year' requests to nominate to an outside body <p>The Working Group Terms of Reference confirms that it shall report to Policy & Resources Committee.</p>

3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Working Group met on Thursday 5 th December and a report of this meeting is attached for consideration and approval by the Committee
3.2	<p>Actions agreed by the working group to fulfil its Terms of Reference are contained throughout the meeting report at Appendix A. Specific attention is drawn to;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. agreement on outside bodies which should continue/not continue to receive representation was confirmed be included in the Recommendations Report for Policy & Resources Committee 2. agreement and discussion around the establishment, filling and continuance of Working Groups established by Council as of the AGM in 2023. To be included in the Recommendations Report for Policy & Resources Committee 3. agreement on the application of d'Hondt to fill Outside Bodies and identification of bodies which may need to be filled through 'party agreement', where d'Hondt application may not be suitable
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: not applicable
	Human: not applicable
	Risk Management: not applicable
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: not applicable
	Rural Needs Implications: not applicable
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	That the committee considers and approves the report of the Working Group on Council Representation on Outside Bodies held on Thursday 5 th December November 2019.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	Appendix A - Working Group Meeting Report: Council Representation on Outside Bodies

Working Group Report Council Representation on Outside Bodies

Report of Outside Bodies Working Group meeting of Mid Ulster District Council held on *Thursday 5 December 2019* in *Magherafelt* at *5.30pm*

Attendees **Members:** Councillors Brown, Clarke, Forde, McGinley, S McPeake, B McGuigan
Officers: Head of Democratic Services (P Moffett), Member Support Officer (E Forde)

Apologies Councillor Cuddy and Mallaghan

AGENDA	MATTERS AGREED	ACTIONS & RESPONSIBILITY
1.0	Election of Chair	
	<p>In the absence of the Chair, Councillor Mallaghan</p> <p>Proposed by Councillor Brown Seconded by Councillor B McGuigan and</p> <p>AGREED that Councillor McGinley Chair the meeting in the absence of the Chair</p>	
2.0	Working Group Report 6 November 2019	
	<p>Proposed by Councillor Clarke Seconded by councillor S McPeake</p> <p>AGREED report of meeting held on 6 November 2019</p>	
3.0	Consideration on (i) Outside bodies; (ii) Council Working Groups; and (iii) Application of D'Hondt	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outside Bodies <p>P Moffett referred to and took members through the updated list of Outside Bodies for clarity and confirmatory purposes. Consensus on the continuance/non-continuance of representation on each was</p>	Head of Democratic Services

agreed. Specific reference was made to; NI Amenity Council, COSTA, CDM Community Transport, Shop Mobility, Somme Association, William Carlton Summer School and Flavour of Tyrone.

AGREED that final changes be reported to the next meeting in a draft Recommendations Report for Policy & Resources Committee

- **Working Groups**

P Moffett referred to the updated list of Working Groups and sought the Group's consensus on status of same

AGREED that the Working Group recommends in the Recommendation Report to Policy & Resources Committee:

- 1 All Working Groups to have a membership of 10;
- 2 Working Groups in situ as of AGM 2023 to be filled by rolling d'hondt;
- 3 Working Groups established after council AGM 2023 D'Hondt calculation should be applied afresh each time a new one is established/appointed;
- 4 Working Group Terms of Reference to depict whether it is to be Standing or Task and Finish.
- 5 Planning Forums currently listed as 'working groups' be moved to list of Outside Bodies and appointed through the process agreed for filling 'Outside Bodies'. These may have to be identified as being filled by 'Party Agreement' given reps to be drawn from Planning Committee

- **Application of D'Hondt**

P Moffett outlined broadly the two methods of applying d'hondt and sought clarification for methods

AGREED that the Group recommends in Recommendation Report to Policy & Resources Committee:

- 1 Last quarter of 2023 of council term a list of outside bodies be agreed to be applied for d'Hondt
- 2 Appointment to Outside Bodies be filled by application of continuous d'hondt for the 4 year period
- 3 D'Hondt calculation be applied afresh each time a new outside bodies is added by Council;
- 4 Consideration given to Bodies such as NILGA and Growth Deal, which are specific in their representation from parties, be treated 'exception to rule' and be by 'Party Agreement' status

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEA Working Groups <p>Members discussed those DEA's (Moyola and Clogher Valley) without town centre forums to discuss issues within their DEA.</p> <p>AGREED that research as to best practice of other Councils in relation to DEA specific meetings/groups</p>	
4.0	Any Other Business	
4.1	<p>Establishment of an A5/N2 Cross Border Group</p> <p>AGREED that the Working Group recommends to add the A5/N2 Cross Border Group to the council's list of Outside Bodies and that they be filled on basis of current d'Hondt calculation SF 2, 1 DUP and 1 SDLP. It was further agreed that it should be expedited through December Council should governance arrangements permit it.</p>	Head of Democratic Services
4.2	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Thursday 9 January 2019 at 5.30pm</p>	
	Meeting ended at 6.30pm	

Report on	Response to Consultation on the Disability Action Plan of The Executive Office (TEO)
Date of Meeting	Thurs 9 January 2020
Reporting Officer	P Moffett, Head of Democratic Services
Contact Officer	M McSorley, Corporate Policy & Equality Officer

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	x

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To provide members with a draft response to the Executive Office consultation on its Disability Action Plan 2020-2025 and consideration for approval.
2.0	Background
2.1	Notification of The Executive Office (TEO) consultation on its Draft Disability Action Plan was provided to Council at its meeting held on 28 th November. It was subsequently resolved that the draft document under consultation be given consideration and a draft response prepared for consideration.
2.2	Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions, to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and to encourage their participation in public life. These Disability Duties are in addition to duties under the anti-discrimination provisions of the DDA and the duty to promote equality for disabled people under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act. Mid Ulster District Council as a public authority also has a duty under same. The Draft Disability Action Plan is TEO's response to meeting its Disability Duties.
2.3	Appendix A provides a draft response to the draft plan under consultation and Appendix B provides the Draft Plan itself.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Draft Disability Action Plan has been considered and a draft response is attached, as appendix A, to this report for review by the committee.
3.2	The Draft Plan sets out a number of action measures which TEO will undertake to comply with the duties to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and; To encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.
3.3	Consultees were specifically directed to say whether they agree with the proposed action measures and whether there are any other measures that should be included. There was also an invitation to provide any other comments.

3.4	A template was provided within which to receive responses so the draft response, and as such the draft response has been provided in this format.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: not applicable
	Human: not applicable
	Risk Management: not applicable
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: not applicable to council service delivery
	Rural Needs Implications: not applicable to council service delivery
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	That the committee considers the draft response on The Executive Office Draft Disability Action Plan, comment as necessary and recommend the approval of the response as a submission from Mid Ulster District Council.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	Appendix A: Draft Mid Ulster District Council Response
	Appendix B: Consultation Document - Draft Disability Action Plan from The Executive Office

The Disability Action Plan Comments Form

Confidentiality of Information

The Executive Office processes personal data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and in most circumstances this means that personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Name:	Philip Moffett
Position:	Head of Democratic Services
Organisation:	Mid Ulster District Council
Address:	Circular Road, Dungannon BT716DT

Do you agree with the actions that have been included in the draft Disability Action Plan?

Yes/No	Yes
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Are there any actions not included that you feel should be included? If so, please outline these below:

All of the stated action measures are to be welcomed. However, given the Executive Office's central co-ordinating function across all of government in Northern Ireland, it would be good to see that reflected in this Action Plan.

The following are suggestions to consider as additional Action Measures, which demonstrate leadership in implementing the Disability Duties. Council feels that consideration should be given to:

- Information or awareness sessions for people with disabilities to publicise the public appointment or participation opportunities that may be available in the organisations for which the Office is responsible.
- A Measure with a focus on promoting and sharing good practice across government in for example an annual workshop or seminar.
- A Measure around training specifically in the Disability Duties (as opposed to equality generally or Section 75). Those who have a role to play in complying with the duties may need role-specific training to ensure they recognise that 'participation in public life' is not limited to public appointments.

- A Measure around what the TEO will do to ensure that the Disability Duties feature in its strategies and plans and in the strategies and plans of bodies it oversees.
- A Measure that commits to producing information/communications relevant to the Disability Duties in appropriate formats.
- A Measure around developing (or facilitating the development of) a formal mechanism for engaging and consulting with the disability sector/disabled people on an ongoing basis, through for example a Disability Forum representing the disability sector

Any other general comments you wish to make?

All of the stated action measures are to be welcomed. However, some of the measures appear to be on general accessibility and should, perhaps be considered for inclusion in a more general Equality Action Plan. For example:

- Action Measure 2 appears to be about making information accessible to a range of groups covered by Section 75 and is not specific to the DDA Disability Duties. The DDA already requires such adjustments to be made for disabled people so measures in the DAP should be additional to these statutory requirements.
- Action Measure 4 is very general and should relate specifically to the Disability Duties. All public bodies are already required to ensure website accessibility under the DDA access provisions.
- Action Measure 6 is also very general and not specific to people with disabilities.
- Action Measure 7 – the council suggests that TEO work with a wider range of disability support organisations to promote opportunities for disabled people to apply for public appointments. Promotion should include other opportunities to participate in policy and decision making, for example, consultation events, focus groups, etc.
- Action Measure 8 – refers to obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act and not training specifically around the Disability Duties.
- Action Measure 12 - addressing staff issues relating to disability in the workplace is covered by the employment provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act and is not directly relevant to the Disability Duties.

Thank you for completing this comment form.

Please return your completed form on or before **14 February 2020**.

By Email:

EqualityandHumanRights@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

or post to:

Equality Unit,
The Executive Office,
Block 2, Knockview Buildings,
Stormont Estate,
Belfast. BT4 3SJ



DRAFT

Disability Action Plan

2020 - 2025

January 2020

V1.1

INDEX

	PAGE
BACKGROUND	3
The Disability Duties	3
Disability Action Plan	3
Due Regard	3
ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT	4
The Department works with these bodies	5
STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT	6
INTERNAL ARRANGEMENTS AND CONTACT DETAILS	8
MONITORING AND REVIEW	8
PUBLIC LIFE POSITIONS	9
Executive Office vacancies	9
PROMOTING POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS DISABLED PEOPLE	11
Mental Health Charter	11
JAM Card Initiative	11
Delivering Social Change – Dementia Project	11
Section 75 Duty	12
Equal Opportunities Policy	13
Recruitment Policy and Procedures	13
Training	13
Mentoring	14
Workforce monitoring	15
Procurement	16
Access to buildings	16
Policy Consultation	17
Public Appointments Policy	18
Best Practice Guide	19
Publications	20
All Aboard	21
Website	21
UN Convention on Disability Rights	22
Outcomes Delivery Programme	22
NICS Work Experience Scheme for People with Disabilities	23
ACTION MEASURES	24
ACTION MEASURES (Delivered by TEO)	25

BACKGROUND

The Disability Duties

1. Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995¹ (DDA 1995) requires the Executive Office, as a public authority, when carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to:
 - a) promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
 - b) encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

These requirements are referred to as “the disability duties” in this document.

2. For the purposes of Article 49A of the DDA 1995, a public authority is defined in the same way as in section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Executive Office is designated as a public authority for the purposes of section 75.

Disability Action Plan

3. Section 49B of the DDA 1995², requires those public authorities subject to section 49A to produce a disability action plan (DAP) showing how they propose to fulfil their disability duties. Public authorities are required to submit their DAP to the Equality Commission.
4. This DAP covers the period January 2020 to December 2025.

Due Regard

5. The term “due regard” means that a public authority must take their disability duties into account when carrying out their functions. It is established that the consideration must be given in advance of a final decision being made, not afterwards.

¹ Section 49A was inserted by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006

² Section 49B was inserted by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006

ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

6. The overall aim of the Executive Office is to contribute to and oversee the co-ordination of Executive policies and programmes to deliver a peaceful, fair, equal and prosperous society.
7. The key interlinked objectives of the Department are:
 - Driving investment and sustainable development: through regeneration of strategic former military sites; promoting effective long-term capital planning and delivery; and, promoting the Executive's policy interests internationally
 - Tackling Disadvantage and Promoting Equality of Opportunity: By driving a programme across Government to reduce poverty; promoting and protecting the interests of children, older people, people with disabilities, victims and survivors, and other socially excluded groups; addressing inequality and disadvantage; and, drive the delivery of Government responsibilities in a sustainable manner
 - The effective operation of the institutions of government in the delivery of an agreed Programme for Government: By providing a central source of information, co-ordination and advice to departments on Executive, Assembly, and legislative procedures; co-ordinating and reviewing the Programme for Government; driving the more efficient and sustainable use of capital assets across Government; and, ensuring the structure of public administration is efficient, effective and sustainable

The Department works with these bodies

- Equality Commission for NI
- Northern Ireland Community Relations Council
- Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation
- NI Judicial Appointments Commission
- Commission for Victims and Survivors for Northern Ireland
- Strategic Investment Board
- Victims and Survivors Service
- Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

The Northern Ireland Civil Service is one of Northern Ireland's largest employers with approximately 23,000 staff working across 9 Departments. The Executive Office may be one of the smaller departments with around 300 staff, but its central coordinating function means it has a key role to play in promoting equality of opportunity and social inclusion. In my role as Head of the Civil Service, I actively promote the importance of creating a positive, inclusive and welcoming environment for all. The Department is formally accredited by Employers for Disability NI (EFDNI) as a 'Disability Positive' employer and has recently been awarded Investor In People (IIP) Silver status accreditation.

Signing up to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's Mental Health Charter is another example of our commitment to provide a healthy, inclusive and open workplace both for staff and for the public who use our services. In addition the Department has recently implemented the JAM Card initiative which will help to reassure people with a learning difficulty, autism or communication barrier and who may need a little more patience and understanding, that they will receive the time they need when accessing our services.

The purpose of this Disability Action Plan is to set out what the Executive Office will do to fulfil our obligations in respect of our disability duties under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. We are committed to fully implementing the duties and will allocate the necessary resources to ensure that this Plan can be effectively implemented. All staff will be provided with the necessary

guidance and training to help them meet our objectives We will monitor our progress through an annual report, which will be published on our website and provided to the Equality Commission NI.

Signed

PERMANENT SECRETARY

Date February 2020

INTERNAL ARRANGEMENTS AND CONTACT DETAILS

8. Within the Executive Office, day-to-day responsibility for dealing with and reporting on the DAP lies with the Equality, Human Rights and Delivering Social Change Unit. Anyone seeking further information relating to the DAP and/or the disability duties should contact Peter Neill:-

Equality, Human Rights and Delivering Social Change Unit
The Executive Office
Block 2
Knockview Buildings
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3SR
Telephone: 028 9052 8370
E-mail: EqualityandHumanRights@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

9. If you require this plan in an alternative format or language, please contact the above person to discuss your requirements.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

10. This DAP sets out the actions that the Executive Office plans to take forward over the 5 year period of the plan. It will be kept under review and will be treated as a fluid document to which other actions can be added throughout its lifespan.
11. We are committed to monitoring and reviewing our policies and practices through the process of equality screening to ensure that we continue to deliver an effective service to people with disabilities.

12. The Equality, Human Rights and Delivering Social Change Unit will be responsible for monitoring of the Executive Office's compliance with the disability duties and for the reporting on progress to the Equality Commission through its annual equality progress reports.
13. The Executive Office will carry out a review of this DAP in 2025 to coincide with the review of its Equality Scheme. The review will be submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.
14. The Department will ensure the effective communication of the plan to staff and to providing all necessary training and guidance for staff on the disability duties and the implementation of this plan. The Department will consult with disabled people in the preparation and review of this plan. This plan will be published on the Department's website and issued to the Department's section 75 consultee list.

PUBLIC LIFE POSITIONS

15. The Executive Office believes that it is important that people from a wide range of backgrounds become engaged in all aspects of public life, from accessing services and participating in consultations, to taking up public appointments. It is important that the boards of public bodies reflect the rich diversity of our society and better understand the needs of the communities they serve. Appointments are made on merit, and applications are welcome from all sections of society.

Executive Office vacancies

16. All the latest Executive Office vacancies are published on the NI Direct website:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/government/public-appointments>

17. The Executive Office also produces the “All Aboard” news-sheet which provides advance information on forthcoming public appointment vacancies. The current issue of All Aboard can be downloaded from:

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/all-aboard>

18. The following public appointments are regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI) and appointed by the First Minister and deputy First Minister:

- Commissioner for Children and Young People;
- Commissioner for Older People;
- Strategic Investment Board;
- Victims and Survivors Service
- Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation;
- Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments (Lay members only);
and
- Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

19. The First Minister and deputy First Minister also appoint the following which, adhere to the spirit of the CPANI Code of Practice but are currently unregulated appointments:

- Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland;
- Commission for Victims and Survivors;
- Community Relations Council; and
- Attorney General for Northern Ireland.

PROMOTING POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS DISABLED PEOPLE

20. As part of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, the Executive Office is committed to promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people through a range of measures including recruitment, workforce mentoring and training as well as compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. TEO is now formally accredited as a 'Disability Positive' employer by Employers for Disability NI (EFDNI) and NICS has also signed up to the Mental Health Charter.

Mental Health Charter

21. The Northern Ireland Civil Service is one of Northern Ireland's largest employers and has a duty to protect the mental health of its 23,000 staff. Signing up to the Equality Commission's Mental Health Charter shows our commitment to provide a healthy, inclusive and open workplace both for staff and for the public who use our services.

JAM Card Initiative

22. The Executive Office has implemented the JAM Card initiative which will help to reassure people who need a little more patience and understanding that they will receive the time they need when accessing our services. The initiative will also help to raise awareness of autism and learning difficulties and help staff to ensure that they are meeting the needs of all colleagues and customers.

Delivering Social Change – Dementia Project

23. The Executive Office oversees the Delivering Social Change Programme. This Executive initiative is co-funded by Atlantic Philanthropies and aims to tackle poverty, improve health, well-being, educational and life opportunities. One of the projects

funded under this initiative focused on services for people with dementia, their families and carers, and in particular getting support to carers of people with dementia that is based around what they need to live their everyday lives. Following the success of the first phase of the project, the second phase has focused on using technology-enabled solutions to build on the investments made to date to improve the patient journey for people suffering from dementia. The second phase is also building the capacity to collect and use dementia data to improve the planning and commissioning of efficient, effective and value for money dementia services. The project aims to create a platform that can be used to enable data-driven care-planning solutions across the health and social care system.

Section 75 Duty

24. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a statutory obligation on all designated public authorities to ensure that they carry out their various functions relating to Northern Ireland having due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity across nine social categories, including:
- a) persons of different religious belief;
 - b) political opinion;
 - c) racial group;
 - d) age;
 - e) marital status;
 - f) sexual orientation;
 - g) men and women generally;
 - h) persons with dependants and persons without; and
 - i) persons with a disability and persons without.
25. The Executive Office is specifically responsible for the provision of strategic advice and support to policy makers in all NICS departments. The Equality, Human Rights and Delivering Social Change Unit has oversight responsibility for the Executive Office's statutory equality duties under Section 75. As one of nine social categories, disability warrants the same consideration as the other eight social categories.

Equal Opportunities Policy

26. The Northern Ireland Civil Service Equal Opportunities Policy, developed centrally through the Department of Finance, applies to all aspects of working life and is implemented fully within the Executive Office. Further information, including details of any actions taken or planned centrally in respect of the disability duties, is contained in the Department of Finance's Disability Action Plan.

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/disability-action-plan-0>

Recruitment Policy and Procedures

27. Recruitment policy for the Executive Office is undertaken centrally by the Department of Finance. NICS Recruitment Service participates in recruitment fairs to promote the Civil Service as an equal opportunities employer. Further information, including details of any actions taken or planned centrally in respect of the disability duties, is contained in the Department of Finance's Disability Action Plan.

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/disability-action-plan-0>

28. The use of the Guaranteed Interview Scheme is considered in Executive Office public appointments and has been used elsewhere in the NICS.³

Training

29. Equal Opportunities training for Northern Ireland Civil Servants is provided by the Centre for Applied Learning and supplemented by training from external providers when appropriate.
30. The Centre for Applied Learning also provides a "Disability Awareness for Frontline Staff" e-Learning course, which aims to

³ The aim of the Guaranteed Interview Scheme is to provide applicants with a disability, who demonstrate that they meet the criteria for the post, a guaranteed invitation to interview.

provide frontline staff with an introduction to disability awareness and increase their knowledge of disability. The training is available to staff at all grades who deal with the public. It aims to: define disability in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995; state how disability discrimination can occur; list barriers for people with disabilities accessing services; and explain appropriate positive language and etiquette to be used when providing services to people with disabilities.

31. The Executive Office has previously provided training courses for its staff which raised awareness of the Disability Duties. The Department, in conjunction with the Department of Health and external specialists, also regularly runs “Lunchtime Seminars” intended to increase staff awareness of a range of issues, including autism, mental health issues, stress management and caring for carers.

Mentoring

32. TEO has a Disability Focus Group to help ensure that the needs of disabled staff are properly addressed and to consider solutions to more complex cases as necessary.
33. TEO has a dedicated Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) to help staff identify and address any issues relating to disability in the workplace. The Disability Liaison Officer successfully completed the Disability Positive Assessment by Employers for Disability NI (EFDNI) which means that TEO are now formally accredited by EFDNI as a ‘Disability Positive’ employer. The DLO will act as departmental disability contact officer, work with managers to identify solutions where required and seek advice from experts when needed e.g. from RNIB or Action for Deafness.
34. The work of the Disability Liaison Officer is supported by a biennial survey of all staff to identify issues and ensure reasonable adjustments are in place. To date the role is working effectively and all issues raised and requests for reasonable adjustments have been satisfactorily addressed.

35. TEO follows the Northern Ireland Civil Service principles of equality, diversity and inclusion and has its own Diversity Champion who, in conjunction with representatives from all Departments, looks at what the Northern Ireland Civil Service needs to do in overall terms to advance awareness, knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity issues. The objective is to ensure that diversity and inclusion are firmly embedded within the department and across the Civil Service in a way that embraces and values difference.
36. The Policy Champions Network is a group of senior civil servants, whose role it is to build capability in policy making across the Northern Ireland Civil Service. Every department, including the Executive Office, has a dedicated Policy Champion responsible for leading the work to grow policy capability and capacity across the NICS. The group provides a forum to consider all aspects of policy development, including the needs of Section 75 groups, and communicating best practice.
37. The Executive Office is a member of Employers for Disability NI. This is a network of employers drawn from the public, private, and voluntary sectors. It works to promote training and employment opportunities and accessibility for employees and customers with disabilities.

Workforce monitoring

38. Statistical information on disability within the Northern Ireland Civil Service workforce is collated centrally by the Department of Finance. Further information is contained in the Department of Finance's Disability Action Plan.

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/disability-action-plan-0>

39. The Executive Office carries out a People Survey every year. The survey encourages staff to declare a disability, if appropriate, and to suggest further ways of promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people.

Procurement

40. Procurement of goods and services for the Northern Ireland Civil Service is undertaken centrally. Further information, including details of any actions taken or planned centrally in respect of the disability duties, is contained in the Department of Finance's Disability Action Plan.

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/disability-action-plan-0>

Access to buildings

41. Properties Division within the Department of Finance manages buildings and property within the Northern Ireland Civil Service Estate. Further details of any actions taken or planned centrally in respect of the disability duties, are contained in the Department of Finance's Disability Action Plan.

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/disability-action-plan-0>

42. All buildings occupied by Executive Office staff are accessible to wheelchair users, and braille is used widely on public signage to assist people with visual impairments.
43. All Executive Office staff who need assistance evacuating their building, have completed a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) with their line managers. The completion of the PEEP determines the best escape plan for them in an emergency. Each PEEP is a bespoke 'escape plan' for individuals who may not be able to reach an ultimate place of safety unaided or within a satisfactory period of time in the event of any emergency.

44. All TEO staff have workstation assessments to ensure that their working environment is safe and suited to their needs. Should a staff member's circumstances change, they can request a further assessment and reasonable adjustments will be made to adapt their workstation to meet their specific needs.

Policy Consultation

45. TEO maintains a list of people who have expressed an interest in the department's policy development work. The list is used to inform them of forthcoming consultations on new policies and to encourage them to contribute suggestions to help shape the policies. The consultation list reflects our diverse society but we particularly welcome greater representation from people with disabilities and women. If you would like to have your contact details added to the consultation list please contact the Equality and Human Rights and Delivering Social Change Unit.

E-mail: EqualityandHumanRights@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

46. To encourage maximum participation in consultations, officials arrange events on a series of dates, at different times of day and in a range of accessible venues. Additional arrangements can be made to facilitate the participation of people with specific needs, if officials are notified of them in sufficient time before the event.
47. All public consultation papers issued by the Executive Office may be made available in alternative formats on request and disabled people are encouraged to participate in consultation events arranged by TEO.
48. The Executive Office, as part of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, is committed to encouraging the participation of disabled people in public life.

Public Appointments Policy

49. Government policy states that appointments to the Boards of public bodies in Northern Ireland (public appointments) will be made on merit and, as far as practicable, in accordance with the Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Northern Ireland, published by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland, who is a statutory office holder operationally independent of Government. The Commissioner is responsible for regulating, monitoring and reporting on the process for making Ministerial public appointments.

50. The Code of Practice on Public Appointments requires that equality principles inform the public appointments process and stipulates that all public appointments must be made in accordance with the seven key principles underpinning the Code:

- Merit;
- Diversity;
- Equality;
- Openness, Transparency and Independence;
- Integrity;
- Proportionality; and
- Respect.

51. The procedures drawn up by the Commissioner and set out in her Code of Practice lay considerable emphasis on the need for all public appointments to be governed by the over-riding principle of selection based on merit; the inclusion of an independent element in this selection process; the need for openness and transparency in the appointments process; and for information to be published about any appointments made. In particular, the guidance emphasises the need for all candidates for public appointments to have access to a role profile and a summary of the key qualities sought (a person specification), and the need for a wide field of candidates to be obtained by making use, where appropriate, of public advertising.

52. The Code of Practice makes it clear that the principles of equal opportunity and diversity must be inherent within the appointments process and that departments must take care not to unlawfully discriminate against any group. Further information is available on the Public Appointment's website:

<https://www.publicappointmentsni.org/>

Best Practice Guide

53. The Central Appointments Unit in the Executive Office has central policy responsibility for public appointments in Northern Ireland. To complement the CPA NI Code of Practice, the Central Appointments Unit has produced and maintains "Public Appointments Principles and Practices: Departmental Common Guidance Handbook". The Guidance recommends that "Departments should offer arrangements for candidates with a disability (at the application stage as well as at formal interview) such as providing information packs and application forms in alternative formats, e.g. Braille, audio readings etc. The provision of these or other adjustments for candidates with disabilities must be conveyed to candidates".
54. The Guide also recommends that when advertising public appointments, a general equal opportunities welcoming statement highlighting the Department's commitment to the principles of public appointments based on merit with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process should be included in the advertisement.
55. In addition to criteria based application forms, public appointment applicants are also asked to complete a voluntary equal opportunities monitoring form, which records information in relation to gender, age, marital status, sexual orientation, whether or not you have dependants, educational level, employment sector, ethnic origin, community background and disability. This information is collected for monitoring purposes only and forms no part of the selection process.

56. Equal opportunities monitoring data, including information on disability, is collated within each Department and forwarded once each year to Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency (NISRA) staff within TEO for inclusion in the Public Appointments Annual Report. In line with normal practice this monitoring data is presented anonymously.

Publications

57. The Central Appointments Unit has also produced the “Public Appointments Guide – An overview of Public Appointments in Northern Ireland” and helpful information for those wishing to apply. The purpose of the Guide is to raise awareness and provide much of the information needed to understand what it means to be a member of the Board of a public body. It also explains the type of bodies currently in existence and the process of appointing people to these bodies. The Guide is available to all Departments and the general public from the Executive Office website:

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/public-appointments-guide-overview-public-appointments-northern-ireland-and-helpful-information>.

58. NISRA also produces the Public Appointments Annual Report, which sets out details of the number of applications received and appointments made in any given financial year. All of Northern Ireland’s Government Departments contribute to the Report, which also includes statistical information on the number of disabled people who applied for positions and the number appointed. The reports are available on the Executive Office website:

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/topics/public-appointments-reports>

All Aboard

59. The Central Appointments Unit maintains a mailing list of individuals and organisations interested in public appointments in Northern Ireland. It includes community/voluntary groups, political parties, pressure groups and disability organisations but anyone can have their details added to it. Everyone on the list receives a copy of “All Aboard” which is published approximately every six months.
60. Each edition of All Aboard contains a list of vacancies and the purpose of including this information is to provide early warning to those on the mailing list of the public appointments that Northern Ireland’s government departments intend to fill. The vacancy list provides an opportunity to see what vacancies will be coming up in the near future, to register an interest and find out more information about the vacancy from the designated official or contact point.
61. Being in receipt of All Aboard does not convey any unfair advantage. All appointments are made on merit following an open and transparent process and recipients of All Aboard are expected to apply and compete alongside all other applicants.

Website

62. The Executive Office maintains a public appointments page on its website, where copies of the Annual Report, the Public Appointments Guide, the latest edition of All Aboard and details of current TEO public appointments vacancies are available. The nidirect website is used to publicise all public appointment vacancies.

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/articles/public-appointments>

UN Convention on Disability Rights

63. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) sets out what human rights mean in the context of disability. By ratifying UNCRPD in 2009, the UK is committed to promoting and protecting the full enjoyment of human rights by disabled people and ensuring they have full equality under the law.
64. The Executive Office provides sponsorship to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and works closely with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. While the Department for Communities is responsible for monitoring compliance with UNCRPD in Northern Ireland, the Executive Office provides input on any of our work relevant to the convention

Outcomes Delivery Programme

65. The Executive Office has adopted an outcomes-based approach to business as a basis for making real improvements to the quality of life for citizens. The starting point is the draft Programme for Government framework which was consulted on extensively during 2016 and is designed to target areas of economic and societal wellbeing that people have said matter most to them. Taken together the desired outcomes provide strategic direction to the work of the department, and the following three, in particular, have helped shape the department's approach and actions to promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people and encouraging them to participate in public life:
- “We have a more equal society”;
 - “ We care for others and we help those in need; and,
 - “We are a shared, welcoming and confident society that respects diversity”.

NICS Work Experience Scheme for People with Disabilities

66. The Northern Ireland Civil Service has made a commitment to engage with external disability organisations to develop structured work placement programmes to make sure that people with disabilities have equal access to work opportunities. The scheme facilitates unpaid placements only and applications are accepted on an ongoing basis.
67. The Executive Office uses the Access to Work programme that aims to help more disabled people start or stay in work. It can provide practical and financial support for people who have a disability or long term physical or mental health condition. All recommendations identified in the Access to Work assessment are implemented and supplied to staff. Staff complete workplace Risk Assessments regularly and actions identified are addressed. This may include having an Access to Work assessment completed.
68. Work experience and work placement are excellent initiatives to provide opportunities for people with disabilities to gain experience and skills in work which may lead to employment in the future. The Executive Office has previously engaged people through the Access to Work scheme. The scheme has the additional benefit of increasing disability awareness of existing staff within the Northern Ireland Civil Service departments.
69. The Executive Office participated in International Job Shadow Day (IJSJ) 2019. IJSJ provides a person with a disability the opportunity to shadow a workplace mentor as they go about their normal working day. It also enables them to learn about job requirements and employer expectations. This year TEO was able to provide opportunities for two participants.

ACTION MEASURES

70. The following pages outline the action measures the Executive Office plans to take to contribute to one or both of the DDA disability duties. The Executive Office will regularly review and update this action plan, and will continue to engage with people with disabilities and their representatives.
71. The Executive Office is committed to monitoring and reviewing its policies and practices to ensure that it meets the disability duties.
72. Targets are clearly set out in this plan - some are continuous, while others reflect the nature of the challenges. The Equality, Human Rights and Delivering Social Change Unit will be responsible for the day-to-day monitoring of compliance with the disability duties and reporting on progress to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

ACTION MEASURES (DELIVERED BY TEO)

Outlined below are the measures which we propose to take over the period of this disability action plan, together with performance indicators or targets.

Measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/target	Owner	Outcomes
1. To ensure the views of disabled people receive the same consideration as others by engaging more effectively and holding fully inclusive events and consultations.	Every time a policy is being developed or a stakeholder event is arranged	<p>1. As per NICS Policy Making Guide (February 2017) adopting the models of co-production, co-design and co-create to ensure policies are developed in partnership with stakeholders, with voluntary and community groups, charities etc., as well as the people who are most likely to be impacted or otherwise affected by the implementation.</p> <p>2. Where possible, pre-engagement prior to formal consultation and consideration of outreach pre-engagement with community based groups where relevant.</p>	All TEO Branch Managers	<p>More accessible and inclusive consultations and Stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>Better informed and more representative policies will be developed.</p>

Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/target	Owner	Outcomes
		3. When organising meetings/ events, appropriate consideration will be given to the time of day, suitability / accessibility of the venue, how the meeting is to be conducted, the use of appropriate language, the need for a signer and/or interpreter, and the need for childcare provision / support for carers.		
2. To ensure information is available to everyone in a format that meets their needs, communications may be provided in alternative formats. Documents in alternative formats may be made available on request.	As requests are received	<p>1. Specific consideration will be given as to how best to communicate with children and young people, people with disabilities (in particular people with learning disabilities) and minority ethnic communities. Where appropriate Easy Read versions will be made available.</p> <p>2. Where possible information will be made available in alternative formats on request. Alternative formats, which may include Braille, audio formats (CD, mp3), large print, will be provided in a timely fashion, usually within 21 working days.</p>	All TEO Branch Managers	Better and more inclusive engagement, participation and information sharing.

Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/target	Owner	Outcomes
3. To display a more inclusive positive image of people with disabilities through the TEO website, communication with stakeholders and the public and internally on the TEO intranet and communications with staff.	To be considered when articles are being prepared.	External and internal publications and websites will, where possible, include more, positive images of people with disabilities participating in the work of the department and projects supported by it.	All divisions of TEO	Greater visibility of disabled people and an increased awareness of the positive contribution they make to our society.
4. To ensure that digital information is accessible to everyone by maintaining the TEO website to a high standard.	The website is regularly updated and checked for compliance	In line with NICS practice, TEO's website will be at least 'single A' compliant.	Executive Information Service.	Website will be more accessible for all.

Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/target	Owner	Outcomes
5. Create work placement/job-shadowing opportunities for people with disabilities.	Annually	TEO will provide job-shadowing and work placement opportunities for disabled people		To equip disabled employees with the necessary skills and knowledge required for public life positions and employment and enable disabled and non-disabled employees to work together, challenge negative stereotypes and promote positive attitudes.
6. To encourage more people to apply for public appointments by increasing the readership of “All Aboard” the public appointments newsletter.	Subject to vacancies becoming available	TEO will continue to expand the public appointments mailing list on request with a view to increasing the readership “All Aboard” to ensure that it reaches a wider and more diverse range of people.	Central Appointments Unit. https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/articles/public-appointments	Increase in the number and diversity of people applying for public appointments.

Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/target	Owner	Outcomes
7. To encourage more people to apply for public appointments TEO will advertise public appointments in the Employers for Disability Bulletin Board.	Subject to vacancies becoming available	Increased awareness of TEO public appointment opportunities	Central Appointments Unit, https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/articles/public-appointments	More disabled people will apply for public appointments
8. To promote awareness and understanding of issues faced by people with a disability and to ensure staff have the necessary skills to help promote a culture of positive attitudes.	Annually	Staff awareness seminars on disability/ diversity related themes are organised on a regular basis throughout the year.	All TEO Staff and Corporate Human Resources	Staff will have a greater understanding of issues faced by people with a disability

Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/target	Owner	Outcomes
9. To ensure that TEO staff are well trained to meet their obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, regarding the need to promote equality of opportunity for persons with a disability and duty regarding good relations.	Six monthly as part of in-year reviews in October and end of year reviews in April.	Through the Centre For Applied Learning (CAL) the Department offers a number of courses which comply with ECNI revised Section 75 guidance. i.e. classroom based courses include Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Workshops and Public Consultation & Engagement, whilst e-learning packages include Introduction to Section 75, Disability Awareness for Frontline Staff, and Autism Spectrum Disorder Awareness. The courses are signposted to relevant Departmental policy makers and participants to the disability duties. Training and development needs for individual staff are identified, evaluated and reviewed as an integral part of the Department's Performance Management system.	All TEO Staff and Corporate Human Resources	Any training requirements for staff are formally reviewed at the end and mid-point of the annual performance cycle.

Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/target	Owner	Outcomes
10. JAM Card awareness training	All staff to complete training by March 2020	All colleagues will complete E-Learning to ensure they are aware of how they can provide that support to JAM Card users when it's needed.	Line Managers	Improved support for people with a communication difficulty
11. To monitor equality and diversity improvements across the department the TEO Diversity Champion will monitor and evaluate progress on delivery of the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan. The Equality Champion will monitor the Disability Action Plan (DAP) and any relevant reports to the Departmental Board.	Diversity Strategy and Action Plan will be reviewed quarterly.	Equality & Good Relations Forum and Disability Forum to fully participate and contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan and DAP.	TEO's Diversity Steering Group. Equality & Good Relations Forum	Diversity Annual Progress Report submitted to the Board Annually.

Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/target	Owner	Outcomes
12. Identify and address any staff issues relating to disability in the workplace.	On a case by case basis and supported by a biennial survey of staff	100% compliance/success rate in relation to issues raised.	Disability Liaison Officer	All issues raised are satisfactorily addressed.
13. To improve TEO staff attitudes a regular staff survey will be carried out. All staff are encouraged, if appropriate, to declare disabilities, and suggest further ways of promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people.	Every year	Findings of survey will be compared with baseline data and will inform future TEO Business Improvement Plan.	TEO Business Improvement & Staff Engagement Unit	Accurate statistical information will be maintained and suggestions for promoting positive attitudes will be collected and implemented where appropriate

The Executive Office– Disability Action Plan

Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/target	Owner	Outcomes
14. Disability Liaison Officer will work to improve awareness of disability issues within the department.	Biennially	Consecutive staff surveys will show improving attitudes towards people with disabilities. More staff will feel able to declare any disabilities they may have previously not wish to disclose.	TEO Business Improvement & Staff Engagement Unit	Improvements in staff attitude towards disability issues.
15. To show progress TEO will prepare an annual report on the action points in this Disability Action Plan.	Annually by the end of August.	Annual Progress Report on Section 75 and disability measures will be sent to the Equality Commission for NI (ECNI).	TEO Equality Officer.	ECNI will receive Annual Progress Report highlighting the department's work to fulfil its statutory equality duties.

Minutes of Meeting of Policy and Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 5 December 2019 in the Council Offices, Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt

Members Present

Councillor Molloy, Chair

Councillors Ashton, Buchanan, Colvin, Doris, Elattar, Forde, Hughes, McFlynn, S McGuigan, McKinney, McLean, S McPeake

Officers in Attendance

Mr A Tohill, Chief Executive
Mrs Campbell, Director of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation
Mrs Canavan, Director of Organisational Development
Mr Cassells, Head of Environment and Property
Mr O'Hagan, Head of IT
Mr McCreesh, Director of Business and Communities
Ms McNally, Council Solicitor
Ms Mezza, Head of Marketing and Communications
Mr Moffett, Head of Democratic Services
Mr JJ Tohill, Director of Finance
Miss Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

The meeting commenced at 7.02 pm.

PR213/19 Apologies

Councillors Gildernew, Quinn and Totten.

PR214/19 Declaration of Interest

The Chair reminded members of their responsibility with regard to declarations of interest.

PR215/19 Chair's Business

The Chair, Councillor Molloy advised that agenda item 19 – 2020/21 Rates Estimates - would be considered as a matter for information and agenda item 23 – Planning System Replacement Update December 2019 - would be taken as a matter for decision.

Matters for Decision

PR216/19 Response to Maze Long Kesh Development Corporation Consultation on Equality and Disability Action Plans

The Head of Democratic Services presented previously circulated report which provided a draft response to the Maze Long Kesh Development Corporation consultation on its Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan.

Councillor S McPeake stated that he was content with the response as detailed but felt that the good relations objective could be strengthened and should include reconciliation and peacebuilding. Councillor S McPeake proposed that the response be submitted with these added comments.

Councillor Doris seconded Councillor S McPeake's proposal.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the draft response on the Maze Long Kesh Equality and Disability Action Plan as outlined at Appendix to report with reconciliation and peacebuilding to be added to the objectives.

PR217/19 Appointments to NILGA Policy and Learning Networks

The Head of Democratic Services presented previously circulated report which considered the appointment of elected members to represent the Council on NILGA Policy and Learning Networks. Networks requiring representation extend to:

- Reform, Devolution and Improvement
- Local Economic Development, Investment and International Affairs
- Place Shaping and Infrastructure
- Health, Social and Environmental Wellbeing

Councillor S McPeake stated that Councillor Doris had already been nominated and approved to sit on the Elected Member Development Network and that it was only fair to have representation from each political party on the remaining networks.

Councillor Colvin seconded Councillor S McPeake's proposal.

The Head of Democratic Services stated he would follow up on nominations to the networks with party leads.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council that nominations be sought from party leaders in respect of representation to NILGA Policy and Learning Networks.

PR218/19 Working Group Meeting Report – Council Representation on Outside Bodies

The Head of Democratic Services presented previously circulated report which considered the report of the first meeting of the Working Group on Council Representation on Outside Bodies held on Wednesday 6th November 2019.

Councillor McKinney proposed that D'Hondt should be applied for the filling of outside bodies from the AGM in May 2020 as opposed to May 2023 as set out in report.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy stated that this recommendation would probably have to be taken back to the Outside Bodies Working Group.

The Head of Democratic Services stated that the working group had held a further meeting tonight and that a paper with recommendations would be brought before the Committee in February.

Councillor S McPeake did not feel it was appropriate to cherry pick at the moment as some outside bodies had already been appointed for a four year term.

Councillor McKinney stated that he would stand by his proposal.

Councillor McFlynn seconded Councillor McKinney's proposal.

Councillor S McPeake stated that the situation had evolved since the paper before Members tonight was written.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy stated it may be premature to take a hard and fast decision now and that it may be better to wait on the outworkings of the working group and the report which will be brought forward in due course.

Members voted on Councillor McKinney's proposal –

For – 4

Against – 5

Councillor McKinney requested a recorded vote.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy stated that a recorded vote should be requested prior to the vote being taken.

Proposed by Councillor S McPeake
Seconded by Councillor Doris and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the report of the Working Group on Council Representation on Outside Bodies held on Wednesday 6th November 2019.

PR219/19 Council Performance Improvement Policy (draft)

The Head of Democratic Services presented previously circulated report which sought Member's approval on the draft Council's Performance Improvement Policy.

Proposed by Councillor S McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor Elattar and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the draft Performance Improvement Policy as detailed at appendix to report.

PR220/19 Parks and Play Five Year Strategic Plan

The Director of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation presented previously circulated report which sought approval for the recommendation from Development Committee for capital budget allocation associated with the Parks and Play Five Year Strategic Plan.

Councillor Ashton asked what the Parks and Play five year plan would add to the rates each year.

The Director of Finance advised that going forward, £500,000 would be added to loans year on year which will fund a cyclical programme.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy stated that maintenance and renewal should also be built into the plan and associated budget.

Proposed by Councillor McFlynn
Seconded by Councillor S McGuigan and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the recommendation from Development Committee for the allocation of £1,250,000 funding from Council Capital Budget, over a five year period from April 2020, for the delivery of the Parks and Play Five Year action plan subject to inclusion in the rates estimates.

PR221/19 Members Services

No issues.

Matters for Information

PR222/19 Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on Thursday 7 November 2019

Members noted Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on Thursday 7 November 2019.

PR223/19 Marketing and Communications Update

Members noted previously circulated report which provided an update on key areas of recent marketing and communications activity.

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 – Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor Colvin
Seconded by Councillor Doris and

Resolved In accordance with Section 42, Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 that Members of the public be asked to withdraw from the meeting whilst Members consider items PR224/19 to PR237/19.

Matters for Decision

- PR224/19 To consider a Council and Social Housing Association partnership approach across Mid Ulster towards the provision of social and affordable housing
- PR225/19 Land Acquisitions and Disposals
- PR226/19 Lands at Railway Park, Ballysaggart
- PR227/19 Staff Matters for Decision
- PR228/19 Staff Matters for Decision – Policies
- PR229/19 Server and Storage Infrastructure Review
- PR230/19 Broadband Connection Procurement
- PR231/19 Procurement of Valuation Services

Matters for Information

- PR232/19 2020/21 Rate Estimates
- PR233/19 Confidential Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on Thursday 7 November 2019
- PR234/19 Staff Matters for Information
- PR235/19 Planning System Replacement Update December 2019
- PR236/19 Contracts and DAC
- PR237/19 Financial Report for 7 months ended 31 October 2019

PR238/19 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7pm and concluded at 8.30 pm.
The Chair, Councillor Molloy wished everyone a Happy Christmas.

Chair _____

Date _____

Report on	Performance Improvement - Local Government Auditor's Audit and Assessment (Section 95) Report 2019-20
Date of Meeting	Thursday 9 th January 2020
Reporting Officer	P Moffett, Head of Democratic Services
Contact Officer	L Jenkins, Performance & Quality Officer

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To update the committee and members of the key findings of the Local Government Auditor's Audit and Assessment Report 2019-20.
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>Local government Auditor's Improvement Audit and Assessment Report 2019-20</p> <p>Part 12 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 ('the Act') places a duty on Councils' to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. This includes setting improvement objectives for each financial year and putting in place arrangements to achieve those objectives, as well as publishing annual progress reports.</p>
2.2.	<p>The Act places a statutory duty on the Local Government Auditor to:</p> <p>a) Report on whether a Council has discharged its duties in relation to improvement planning, the publication of improvement information and the extent to which each Council has acted in accordance with the Department's Guidance (LG Circular 21/2016 - <i>Guidance for Local Government Performance Improvement 2016 onwards</i>)</p> <p>b) Assess annually whether a Council is likely to make the required arrangements to secure continuous improvement in that year. This is called the "improvement assessment". The Local Government Auditor also has the discretion to assess and report whether a Council is likely to comply with these arrangements in future years.</p>

3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Audit and Assessment (Section 95) Report 2019/20 and Certificate of Compliance</p> <p>NI Audit Office issued correspondence on the 28th of November, which included a letter to the Chief Executive (Appendix One), which clarified that the Local Government Auditor had now certified the improvement audit and assessment for Council with a standard, unqualified opinion. Accompanying the letter was a scanned copy of the original Audit and Assessment Certificate of Compliance (Appendix Two) and the final Audit and Assessment Report (Appendix Three). The Local Government Auditor had also forwarded the Council's letter and attachments to the Department of the Communities (DfC).</p>
3.2	Certificate of Compliance – Council's Performance Improvement Arrangements
3.2.1	<p>Improvement Planning and Publication of Improvement Information</p> <p>The Local Government Auditor (LGA) believes the Council has discharged its duties in connection with (1) improvement planning and (2) publication of improvement information in accordance with section 92 of the Act.</p>
3.2.2	<p>Improvement Assessment</p> <p>The LGA, as a result, of the assessment believes the Council has discharged its duties under Part 12 of the Act and has acted in accordance with the Department of the Communities' guidance sufficiently. The 2019-20 was the fourth year in which Council was required to implement the performance improvement framework. Of particular note the LGA stated that the Council's arrangements to secure continuous improvement;</p> <p><i>"...should by now, be well embedded. Whilst the Council continues to strengthen these arrangements, it nonetheless delivered some measurable improvements to its services in 2018-19 and has demonstrated a track record of ongoing improvement and is likely to comply with Part 12 of the act during 2019-20."</i></p>
3.2.3	<p>Other Matters</p> <p>The LGA has no recommendations to make under section 95(2) of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014. It is not minded to carry out a special inspection under section 95(2) of the Act.</p>
3.3	<p>Audit & Assessment (Section 95) Report 2019-20</p> <p>Following significant engagement with relevant council officers throughout July to October, no formal recommendations were issued to the Council as a result</p>

of the audit. A single new proposal for improvement was introduced however, as outlined.

Thematic Area	Issue	Proposal For Improvement	Management Response
Collection and Publication of Data	Example of incorrect performance improvement information being published	The Council should ensure that appropriate supporting documentation is in place in order to accurately assess targets and that actual performance reported in the annual assessment is agreed back to supporting documentation prior to publication. Appropriate validation procedures should be put in place for all information reported in respect of improvement objectives.	A small number of inaccuracies have been noted. In terms of achieving targets and published assessment of performance (i.e. whether targets and measures were achieved or not) it is noted that this was accurately reported in both cases. The Performance Report has been updated to reflect the minor errors and a revised version published on the Council's web site. Council is currently working towards the introduction of a new validation sub-process, with the aim of improving data quality and accuracy in current hard copy system.

4.0 Other Considerations

4.1 Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications

Financial: not applicable, arrangements being delivered within existing resource

Human: not applicable, arrangements currently being delivered within existing resource

Risk Management: Will assist in council's compliance with Part 12 of the Local Government (NI) Act 2014

4.2	<u>Screening & Impact Statements</u>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: Not applicable No specific implications neutral impact on S75 groups and neutral impact on promotion of good relations
	Rural Needs Implications: not applicable
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	That the committee notes the findings of Audit and Assessment (Section 95) Report 2019-20.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	Appendix One: NIAO Correspondence dated 28 th November 2019 Appendix Two: Audit & Assessment Certificate of Compliance Appendix Three: Audit and Assessment (Sec. 95) Report 2019-20



Karen Beattie
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Mr Anthony Tohill
Chief Executive
Mid Ulster District Council
Council Offices
Circular Road
Dungannon
BT71 6DT

28 November 2019

Dear Anthony,

Mid Ulster District Council: Section 95 of the Local Government Act 2014


Improvement Audit and Assessment – Audit and Assessment Report

The Local Government Auditor has now certified the improvement audit and assessment for the Council with a standard, unqualified opinion. I attach a copy of our final audit and assessment report.

The report sets out the findings and conclusions from our work, it includes the audit and assessment certificate as an Annex. I also attach a scanned copy of the original certificate signed by the Local Government Auditor.

This letter and attachments have been copied to the Department for Communities as the legislation requires. I would like to thank you and your staff for the assistance and co-operation we received throughout the audit.

Yours sincerely



Karen Beattie
Audit Manager

Audit and assessment of Mid Ulster District Council's performance improvement arrangements

Certificate of Compliance

I certify that I have audited Mid Ulster District Council's (the Council) assessment of its performance for 2018-19 and its improvement plan for 2019-20 in accordance with section 93 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the Act) and the Code of Audit Practice for local government bodies.

I also certify that I have performed an improvement assessment for 2019-20 at the Council in accordance with Section 94 of the Act and the Code of Audit Practice.

This is a report to comply with the requirement of section 95(2) of the Act.

Respective responsibilities of the Council and the Local Government Auditor

Under the Act, the Council has a general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions and to set improvement objectives for each financial year. The Council is required to gather information to assess improvements in its services and to issue a report annually on its performance against indicators and standards which it has set itself or which have been set for it by Government departments.

The Act requires the Council to publish a self-assessment before 30 September in the financial year following that to which the information relates, or by any other such date as the Department for Communities (the Department) may specify by order. The Act also requires that the Council has regard to any guidance issued by the Department in publishing its assessment.

As the Council's auditor, I am required by the Act to determine and report each year on whether:

- The Council has discharged its duties in relation to improvement planning, published the required improvement information and the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the Department's guidance in relation to those duties; and
- The Council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act.

Scope of the audit and assessment

For the audit I am not required to form a view on the completeness or accuracy of information or whether the improvement plan published by the Council can be achieved. My audits of the Council's improvement plan and assessment of performance, therefore, comprised a review of the Council's publications to ascertain whether they included elements prescribed in legislation. I also assessed whether the arrangements for publishing the documents complied with the requirements of the legislation, and that the Council had regard to statutory guidance in preparing and publishing them.

For the improvement assessment I am required to form a view on whether the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act, informed by:

- A forward looking assessment of the Council's likelihood to comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement; and
- A retrospective assessment of whether the Council has achieved its planned improvements to inform a view as to its track record of improvement.

My assessment of the Council's improvement responsibilities and arrangements, therefore, comprised a review of certain improvement arrangements within the Council, along with information gathered from my improvement audit.

The work I have carried out in order to report and make recommendations in accordance with sections 93 to 95 of the Act cannot solely be relied upon to identify all weaknesses or opportunities for improvement.

Audit opinion

Improvement planning and publication of improvement information

As a result of my audit, I believe the Council has discharged its duties in connection with (1) improvement planning and (2) publication of improvement information in accordance with section 92 of the Act and has acted in accordance with the Department for Communities' guidance sufficiently.

Improvement assessment

As a result of my assessment, I believe the Council has discharged its duties under Part 12 of the Act and has acted in accordance with the Department for Communities' guidance sufficiently.

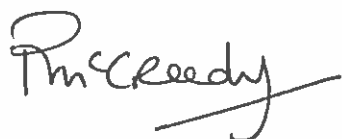
The 2019-20 year was the fourth in which councils were required to implement the performance improvement framework. The Council's arrangements to secure continuous improvement, should by now be well embedded. Whilst the Council continues to strengthen these arrangements, it nonetheless delivered some measurable improvements to its services in 2018-19 and has demonstrated a track record of ongoing improvement. In my opinion I believe that the Council is likely to comply with Part 12 of the Act during 2019-20.

I have not conducted an assessment to determine whether the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act in subsequent years. I will keep the need for this under review as arrangements become more fully established.

Other matters

I have no recommendations to make under section 95(2) of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014.

I am not minded to carry out a special inspection under section 95(2) of the Act.



PAMELA MCCREEDY
Local Government Auditor
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
Belfast
BT7 1EU

28 November 2019

Mid Ulster District Council

Audit and Assessment Report 2019-20

Report to the Council and the Department of Communities
under Section 95 of the Local Government (Northern
Ireland) Act 2014



28 November 2019

Contents	Page
1. Key Messages	3
2. Audit Scope	5
3. Audit Findings	6
4. Annexes	7

We have prepared this report for sole use of the Mid Ulster District Council and the Department for Communities. You must not disclose it to any third party, quote or refer to it, without our written consent and we assume no responsibility to any other person.

1. Key Messages

Summary of the audit

Audit outcome	Status
Audit opinion	Unqualified opinion
Audit assessment	The LGA has concluded that the Council is likely to comply with Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.
Statutory recommendations	The LGA made no statutory recommendations
Proposals for improvement	The LGA made one new proposal for improvement

This report summaries the work of the Local Government Auditor (LGA) on the 2019-20 performance improvement audit and assessment undertaken on Mid Ulster District Council (the Council). We would like to thank the Chief Executive and his staff, particularly the Performance Improvement Manager, for their assistance during this work.

We consider that we comply with the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) ethical standards and that, in our professional judgment, we are independent and our objectivity is not compromised.

Audit Opinion

The LGA has certified the performance arrangements with unqualified audit opinion, without modification. She certifies an improvement audit and improvement assessment has been conducted. The LGA also states that, as a result, she believes that Mid Ulster District Council (the Council) has discharged its performance improvement and reporting duties, including its assessment of performance for 2018-19 and its 2019-20 improvement plan, and has acted in accordance with the Guidance.

Audit Assessment

The LGA has assessed whether Mid Ulster District Council (the Council) is likely to comply with its performance improvement responsibilities under Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the Act). This is called the 'improvement assessment'.

In her opinion the Council is likely to discharge its duties in respect of Part 12 of the Act during 2019-20 and has demonstrated a track record of improvement. The LGA did not exercise her discretion to assess and report whether the Council is likely to comply with these arrangements in future years.

Audit Findings

During the audit and assessment we identified no issues requiring a formal recommendation under the Act. We made one proposal for improvement (see Section 3). This represents good practice which should assist the Council in meeting its responsibilities for performance improvement. Detailed observations on thematic areas are provided in Annex C and progress on key proposals for improvement raised in prior years, which had not been fully addressed last year, has been noted in Annex B.

Status of the Audit

The LGA's audit and assessment work on the Council's performance improvement arrangements is now concluded. By March 2020 she will publish an Annual Improvement Report on the Council on the NIAO website, making it publicly available. This will summarise the key outcomes in this report.

The LGA did not undertake any Special Inspections under the Act in the current year.

The total audit fee charged is in line with that set out in our Audit Strategy.

Management of information and personal data

During the course of our audit we have access to personal data to support our audit testing. We have established processes to hold this data securely within encrypted files and to destroy it where relevant at the conclusion of our audit. We can confirm that we have discharged those responsibilities communicated to you in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

2. Audit Scope

Part 12 of the Act provides all councils with a general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. It sets out:

- a number of council responsibilities under a performance framework; and
- key responsibilities for the LGA.

The Department for Communities (the Department) has published '*Guidance for Local Government Performance Improvement 2016*' (the Guidance) which the Act requires councils and the LGA to follow. Further guidance to clarify the requirements of the general duty to improve was issued by the Department during 2019.

The improvement audit and assessment work is planned and conducted in accordance with the Audit Strategy issued to the Council, the LGA's Code of Audit Practice for Local Government Bodies in Northern Ireland and the Statement of Responsibilities.

The improvement audit

Each year the LGA has to report whether each council has discharged its duties in relation to improvement planning, the publication of improvement information and the extent to which each council has acted in accordance with the Department's Guidance. The procedures conducted in undertaking this work are referred to as an "improvement audit". During the course of this work the LGA may make statutory recommendations under section 95 of the Act.

The improvement assessment

The LGA also has to assess annually whether a council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act, including consideration of the arrangements to secure continuous improvement in that year. This is called the 'improvement assessment'. She also has the discretion to assess and report whether a council is likely to comply with these arrangements in future years.

The annual improvement report on the Council

The Act requires the LGA to summarise all of her work (in relation to her responsibilities under the Act) at the Council, in an 'annual improvement report'. This will be published on the NIAO website by March 2020, making it publicly available.

Special inspections

The LGA may also, in some circumstances, carry out special inspections which will be reported to the Council and the Department, and which she may publish.

3. Audit Findings

This section outlines key observations in the form of proposals for improvement, arising from following thematic areas of the Council's audit and assessment:

- General duty to improve;
- Governance arrangements;
- Improvement objectives;
- Consultation;
- Improvement plan;
- Arrangements to improve;
- Collection, use and publication of performance information; and
- Demonstrating a track record of improvement.

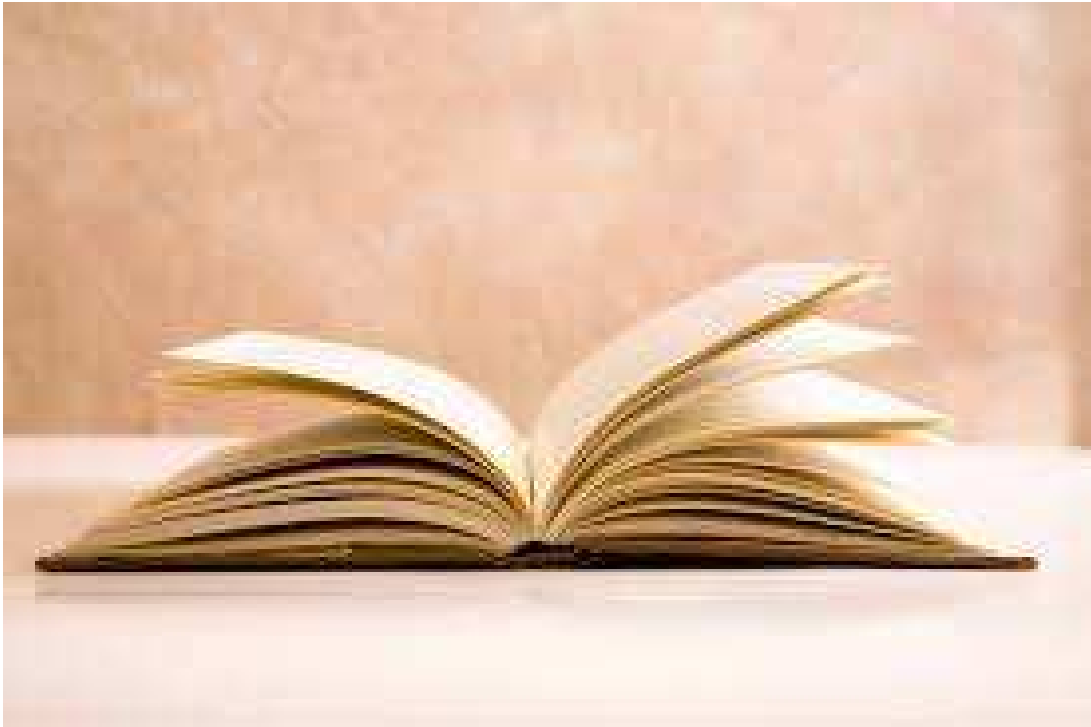
These are not formal recommendations, which are more significant matters which require action to be taken by the Council in order to comply with the Act or Guidance. Proposals for improvement include matters which, if accepted, will assist the Council in meeting its performance improvement responsibilities. The LGA may follow up how key proposals have been addressed in subsequent years. We recommend however that the Council's Audit Committee track progress on all proposals for improvement.

Our procedures were limited to those considered necessary for the effective performance of the audit and assessment. Therefore, the LGA's observations should not be regarded as a comprehensive statement of all weaknesses which exist, or all improvements which could be made.

Detailed observations for the thematic areas can be found at Annex C.

Thematic area	Issue	Proposal for improvement
Collection, use and publication of performance information	The detailed observations section of this report highlights examples of incorrect performance improvement information being published.	The Council should ensure that appropriate supporting documentation is in place in order to accurately assess performance against targets and that actual performance reported in the annual self assessment is agreed back to supporting documentation prior to publication. Appropriate validation procedures should be put in place for all information reported in respect to improvement objectives.

4. Annexes



Annex A – Audit and Assessment Certificate

Audit and assessment of Mid Ulster District Council’s performance improvement arrangements

Certificate of Compliance

I certify that I have audited Mid Ulster District Council’s (the Council) assessment of its performance for 2018-19 and its improvement plan for 2019-20 in accordance with section 93 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the Act) and the Code of Audit Practice for local government bodies.

I also certify that I have performed an improvement assessment for 2019-20 at the Council in accordance with Section 94 of the Act and the Code of Audit Practice.

This is a report to comply with the requirement of section 95(2) of the Act.

Respective responsibilities of the Council and the Local Government Auditor

Under the Act, the Council has a general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions and to set improvement objectives for each financial year. The Council is required to gather information to assess improvements in its services and to issue a report annually on its performance against indicators and standards which it has set itself or which have been set for it by Government departments.

The Act requires the Council to publish a self-assessment before 30 September in the financial year following that to which the information relates, or by any other such date as the Department for Communities (the Department) may specify by order. The Act also requires that the Council has regard to any guidance issued by the Department in publishing its assessment.

As the Council’s auditor, I am required by the Act to determine and report each year on whether:

- The Council has discharged its duties in relation to improvement planning, published the required improvement information and the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the Department’s guidance in relation to those duties; and
- The Council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act.

Scope of the audit and assessment

For the audit I am not required to form a view on the completeness or accuracy of information or whether the improvement plan published by the Council can be achieved. My audits of the Council’s improvement plan and assessment of performance, therefore, comprised a review of the Council’s publications to ascertain whether they included elements prescribed in legislation. I also assessed whether the arrangements for publishing the documents complied with the requirements of the legislation, and that the Council had regard to statutory guidance in preparing and publishing them.

For the improvement assessment I am required to form a view on whether the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act, informed by:

- A forward looking assessment of the Council’s likelihood to comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement; and

- A retrospective assessment of whether the Council has achieved its planned improvements to inform a view as to its track record of improvement.

My assessment of the Council's improvement responsibilities and arrangements, therefore, comprised a review of certain improvement arrangements within the Council, along with information gathered from my improvement audit.

The work I have carried out in order to report and make recommendations in accordance with sections 93 to 95 of the Act cannot solely be relied upon to identify all weaknesses or opportunities for improvement.

Audit opinion

Improvement planning and publication of improvement information

As a result of my audit, I believe the Council has discharged its duties in connection with (1) improvement planning and (2) publication of improvement information in accordance with section 92 of the Act and has acted in accordance with the Department for Communities' guidance sufficiently.

Improvement assessment

As a result of my assessment, I believe the Council has discharged its duties under Part 12 of the Act and has acted in accordance with the Department for Communities' guidance sufficiently.

The 2019-20 year was the fourth in which councils were required to implement the performance improvement framework. The Council's arrangements to secure continuous improvement, should by now be well embedded. Whilst the Council continues to strengthen these arrangements, it nonetheless delivered some measurable improvements to its services in 2018-19 and has demonstrated a track record of ongoing improvement. In my opinion I believe that the Council is likely to comply with Part 12 of the Act during 2019-20.

I have not conducted an assessment to determine whether the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act in subsequent years. I will keep the need for this under review as arrangements become more fully established.

Other matters

I have no recommendations to make under section 95(2) of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014.

I am not minded to carry out a special inspection under section 95(2) of the Act.

PAMELA McCREEDY
Local Government Auditor
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
Belfast
BT7 1EU

28 November 2019

Annex B – Follow up of implementation of key prior year proposals for improvement

Year of report	Reference	Proposal for improvement	Action taken by Council	Status
2018-19	Consultation	We would encourage any public body that regularly consults with the public to develop a flexible, principles based policy based on current good practice.	The Council has a draft policy in place which will be presented to the Policy & Resources on 5 December 2019.	In Progress
2017-18	General Duty to Improve	The Council needs to prioritise the development of its Performance Improvement Policy and performance management system and processes to support the general duty to improve. This will enable the performance management data across all its functions and services to be measured, benchmarked, and reported on to ensure the process of identification and selection of those areas which would benefit most from improvement is robust, transparent, well documented and subject to appropriate levels of scrutiny.	<p>The Council has a draft performance improvement policy, which will be included in the draft Corporate Performance Management and Improvement Framework. The policy is to be presented to the Policy & Resources Committee on 5 December 2019.</p> <p>The Council has started to benchmark year on year trend data in relation to both statutory and "self-imposed" indicators. The Council currently uses excel spreadsheets to track performance but is looking to further develop the capture and use of service data (or other qualitative data) by other electronic means/ a performance management system. This will enable more efficient performance measurement and benchmarking of its services and functions.</p> <p>The Council has undertaken extensive work in ensuring data in the three self-imposed' indicators is accurate, reliable,</p>	In Progress

Year of report	Reference	Proposal for improvement	Action taken by Council	Status
			valid and timely. Performance indicator templates have been developed and capture the descriptions, intent, purpose, calculations, data management, recording, potential for benchmarking, and accountabilities. These performance indicator templates will be a quality tool/standard for performance improvement development.	
2017-18	Improvement Objectives	Additional clarity over the level of improvement expected for each objective and how it will be measured would improve the objectives. This could be achieved by establishing baselines, and setting challenging and realistic standards at the objective level, against which the associated key performance indicators and measures would be used to measure improvement in terms of outcomes.		Implemented
2017-18	Performance Information	The Council should continue working with other councils and the Department to agree a suite of self-imposed indicators and standards as soon as practicable. This will enable meaningful comparisons to be made and published in line with its statutory responsibility as well as to demonstrate its general duty for continuous improvement across all of its functions and services.	<p>A sub-group from the main Performance improvement working group has produced a paper on how to move forward in establishing a regional performance framework (Benchmark Framework). The paper was discussed with the Department of Communities in November 2019.</p> <p>Some progress has been made in the current year as the Department of Communities required councils to benchmark two self-imposed indicators</p>	In progress

Year of report	Reference	Proposal for improvement	Action taken by Council	Status
			<p>relating to the general duty to improve, in addition to the statutory indicators. The Council has benchmarked these indicators against the other Councils within the annual assessment report 2018-19.</p> <p>The Council has recognised the need for council profiles to give an overview of councils, e.g. information such as population size, socio-economic data, whether rural, semi-rural, urban councils etc., and the need for this to be undertaken in conjunction with a province wide framework.</p> <p>Significant progress by all councils is essential in the coming year to allow a broader range of functions to be compared.</p>	
2017-18	Publication of Performance Information	<p>Self-assessment reports must include a self-assessment of performance in relation to the general duty to improve as required under the legislation.</p> <p>Self-assessments should not focus solely on the underlying projects, but also include an assessment of the Council's progress in delivering outcomes against its improvement objectives.</p>		Implemented
2016-17	General Duty to Improve	Use of service data (or other qualitative data) to enable performance measurement and		Implemented

Year of report	Reference	Proposal for improvement	Action taken by Council	Status
		<p>benchmarking. This will help identify those functions/services which would benefit most from improvement.</p> <p>Given the statutory nature of the framework, expand upon the current corporate performance management framework to develop a performance improvement policy. Whilst this is not a statutory requirement we would regard this as good practice</p>	<p>The policy is still in draft form and is due to be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee on 5 December 2019.</p>	In progress
2016-17	Governance Arrangements	<p>The Audit Committee should consider the benefit of using the internal audit function, where required, to provide them with future assurance on the integrity and operation of the Council's performance framework and identify areas for improvement.</p>	<p>To date there have been no internal audits in relation to performance improvement arrangements.</p> <p>However, performance improvement is scheduled in the Internal Audit programme for 2020-21.</p>	In Progress

Annex C – Detailed observations

Thematic area	Observations
General duty to improve	<p>The Council's arrangements to secure continuous improvement (including community planning, corporate planning, Service Plans and its Performance Improvement Framework and processes within) incorporate the seven aspects of improvement into its assessments of functions and services. The Council engaged with the public through its community planning consultation process to strengthen its understanding of community needs and what its citizens and stakeholders want. The Corporate Plan was extended by an extra year to 2019-20 due to the recent elections. Key improvement areas designated by the Council within its Performance Improvement Plan include: economic development, leisure and customer service, and these are aligned to its Community Plan outcomes.</p> <p>The Council's arrangements are becoming more established and continue to be developed. For example, the Council has a draft performance improvement policy to include in the draft Corporate Performance Management and Improvement Framework. The policy will be presented to the Policy & Resources Committee on 5 December 2019. The Council has also started to benchmark trend data in relation to both statutory and "self-imposed" indicators. The Council plans to further develop the capture and use of service data (or other qualitative data) to enable performance measurement and benchmarking of its services and functions.</p> <p>A sub-group of SOLACE's performance improvement working group has produced a paper on the way forward to establish a regional performance framework (benchmark framework). The approach will be agreed with the Department of Communities. A meeting of the sub-group discussed the issue in November 2019.</p> <p>Some progress has been made in the current year following advice from the Department of Communities that councils should benchmark at least two self-imposed indicators relating to the general duty to improve in addition to benchmarking the statutory indicators. The Council has benchmarked these indicators against the other councils within the annual assessment report 2018-19. Significant progress by all councils is essential in the coming year to allow a broader range of functions to be compared.</p> <p>It is important, in the interest of openness and transparency, that the logical evidence base and documented process to support the general duty to improve and the selection of priority areas for improvement continues to develop.</p>

Thematic area	Observations
	<p>The Council has already undertaken extensive work in ensuring data quality in the three self-imposed' indicators are accurate, reliable, valid and timely through the introduction of performance indicator templates.</p> <p>We expect that further improvements on the general duty will be made in 2020.</p>
Governance arrangements	<p>The Council's governance arrangements support effective decision making and oversight, relating to its responsibility for continuous improvement in its functions and it continues to develop these.</p> <p>Responsibility for delivering performance improvement objectives rests with established project teams under the direction of a Senior Responsible Officer appointed by the Chief Executive. The Democratic Services Team looks after the corporate planning and service delivery and improvement planning processes alongside performance management and improvement.</p> <p>The Audit Committee receives reports specific to performance improvement throughout the year, which includes considering audit reports and correspondence, as and when required. The oversight role on performance improvement is undertaken by its Policy & Resources Committee throughout the year. This includes the review and scrutiny of the council's performance improvement plans and reporting on various aspects the council's performance framework.</p> <p>A proposal for improvement raised in the 2016-17 performance improvement audit and assessment suggested that the Council consider that the internal audit function be used to provide assurance on the integrity and operation of the Council's performance framework and identify areas for improvement. The Council should also consider using internal audit to obtain independent validation of data collected for published self-imposed KPIs and standards. This will be reflected in the draft performance improvement policy being considered by the Policy and Resources Committee on 5 December 2019. An internal audit review of performance improvement has been scheduled for 2020-21.</p>
Improvement objectives	<p>The proposed improvement objectives, rationale and associated risks were considered and reviewed by Elected Members at the June 2019 Policy and Resources Committee meeting.</p> <p>Four improvement objectives were set, all of which meet at least one of the seven criteria required by legislation and relate to the functions and services identified for improvement set out in the Community Plan and the Council's Corporate Plan themes and outcomes. The Council's Corporate Plan for 2015-2019 has been extended for another year to cover the 2019-20 period pending new Council elections. This should be formally reviewed and updated as soon as is practicable. The objectives were selected on the basis of a range of factors including an analysis of available statutory,</p>

Thematic area	Observations
	<p>corporate and service performance measures, information from performance reports, as well as engagement with elected Members, the Senior Management Team, Heads of Service and consultation with citizens.</p> <p>Three out of four improvement objectives remained unchanged from the 2018-19 improvement objectives. The current year improvement objective relating to average processing time for planning applications has replaced the prior year improvement objective of reducing the amount of waste going to landfill. The Council ensured completeness of improvement objectives by engagement and linking to the Corporate plan themes and outcomes as detailed above.</p> <p>For each improvement objective the Council sets out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why have we chosen this improvement objective? • What have we done so far? • Actions – what are we going to do? • How will be know? • Visible improvements that residents, businesses or visitors expect to see? • Partnerships – who do we need to work with? • What risks do we need to manage? <p>Measurement (baselines, outturns, targets) have been included in the 2019-20 Performance Improvement Plan. There are several headings included in the forward looking plan 2019-20 and in the annual assessment 2018-19 that include the answers to the questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we measure how much we do? • How can we measure if we are delivering services well? • How can we measure if customers are better off? • What are the most important measures and how are we doing? • What works well and how do we improve? • What are we going to improve?
Consultation	<p>An internal process involving Heads of Service and Senior Management identified emerging objectives and improvement projects for 2019-20 which would contribute to achieving the Council's improvement objectives. The Council carried out consultation on its improvement objectives with staff, elected representatives, community and voluntary groups, local businesses and representative business organisations.</p>

Thematic area	Observations
	<p>The Council undertook a consultation exercise from February to March 2019 on the Council's draft corporate improvement objectives. In order to help raise the profile and transparency of the performance improvement framework, a number of communication channels were used including: advertising in local newspapers, on the Council website with an online survey, inviting comments through existing mailing lists and social media. The Council received 55 responses. Additional measures should be considered to attract a higher response rate amongst citizens.</p> <p>The Council's constitution and standing orders do not provide any guidance on matters relating to consultation although a draft policy has been prepared and is scheduled to be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee in December 2019. Good practice for any public body which regularly consults with the public is to develop a flexible, principles based policy.</p> <p>The consultation documentation was presented to the Policy and Resources Committee, and included the questions asked. The questions within the consultation survey directly related to each improvement objective. The improvement objectives remained the same in light of the high level of support shown within the 55 responses received from citizens.</p>
Improvement plan	<p>The Council published its Performance Improvement Plan in June 2019. It is available in electronic format on the Council's website and other formats upon request.</p> <p>The improvement objectives outlined in the Plan are based around the themes set out in the Community Plan and the Corporate Plan and align to the identified quality of life outcomes therein. It identifies a number of areas which the Council will focus on in the year ahead, with the aim of delivering improvements to benefit residents and service users.</p> <p>The Plan contains a high level description of the Council's arrangements for discharging its performance improvement duties and includes its improvement objectives as well as the related community planning and corporate plan outcome. A summary of the Council's consultation process, together with information on how citizens and stakeholders may propose new objectives during the year are included, in addition to the governance arrangements in place for the Performance Improvement Plan.</p> <p>The Plan sets out clearly the basis on which objectives were selected, together with related projects and key actions to contribute to the achievement of the higher level objectives, the visible improvements residents, businesses or visitors can expect, and how success will be measured. It also reflects how citizens and other stakeholders within the Council will be better off as a direct result of the improvement process.</p>

Thematic area	Observations
	<p>The Plan benefits promotes the transparency and meaningfulness of the Council's commitment to continuously improve its functions.</p> <p>More relevant data will become available as time progresses to help measure improvement.</p> <p>The Plan includes a separate section on the statutory imposed performance indicators and standards and provides sufficient information on its arrangements to exercise its functions so that any applicable statutory performance standards are met.</p>
Arrangements to improve	<p>The Council is required to establish arrangements to deliver on its improvement objectives each year. The underlying projects in relation to the improvement objectives are supported by delivery plans and budgets for use by operational teams. These are being project managed and have lines of accountability, including risk management, to senior management and Members.</p> <p>In addition, Members and Officers at full council and committee meetings with a strategy / policy and oversight focus receive regular updated from senior management on how these established arrangements to improve are progressing.</p>
Collection, use and publication of performance information	<p>The collection and use of timely and relevant performance information on a council's broad-ranging service areas is essential to the operation of an effective performance improvement framework. It enables the Council to measure and evaluate any improvement, assists in the identification of priority areas for improvement, facilitates comparison and benchmarking and supports the communication of outcomes and progress with its citizens and other stakeholders.</p> <p>The type of information required to be collected, used and reported falls under three key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the general duty to improve – reflected by "self-imposed" performance indicators and standards; • the improvement objectives – with specific associated performance measures and indicators; and • statutory indicators. <p>In September 2019, the Council published its 'Annual Report Performance Improvement Plan Self-Assessment 2018-19'. This gives an overview and a self-assessment of the performance of the Council during the previous financial year in accordance with its legislative requirements.</p> <p>The key purpose of the report is to show citizens and other stakeholders how the Council is discharging its duty under legislation to secure continuous improvement as set out in its 2018-19 Performance Improvement Plan. It enables the</p>

Thematic area	Observations
	<p data-bbox="562 236 1980 300">Council to communicate progress against its improvement objectives and to highlight what visible improvements it has made to its functions and services.</p> <p data-bbox="562 344 1966 480">Improved data collection and management processes during the year has allowed the Council to begin identifying and measuring improvement. This has enabled the Council to support its self-assessment and report on a number of improvements to its services, which would benefit its citizens. However there have been examples where incorrect information has been published:</p> <ul data-bbox="611 493 1993 778" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="611 493 1993 628">• A project from improvement objective 1 was selected to test for accuracy of reporting. The project was to "deliver 20 corporate strategic events across the district per annum and increase attendance figures by 5% in 2019." The Council had reported an attendance of 103,732 in 2018-19 however the supporting documentation included total attendance of 101,165. Nonetheless the target set was achieved. <li data-bbox="611 639 1993 778">• Within the 2018-19 annual self-assessment, a target of 19,131 tonnes has been reported for statutory indicator W2. This is the prior year target and has not been updated in the current year. It is important that all targets are accurately reported in the annual self-assessment, and agreed back to source documentation prior to publication. It should be noted that the Council still achieved the actual target. <p data-bbox="562 823 2004 994">Good progress was reported against each of the four improvement objectives. Baseline figures were included where possible and performance in the year was measured against this, with commentary provided. The Council also set out for each objective what was achieved in terms of improvements and whether the objective was achieved, substantially achieved, partially achieved or not achieved. This provided a useful link between the previous Improvement Plan, past performance and the current Improvement Plan, which helps to demonstrate continuous improvement.</p> <p data-bbox="562 1038 2004 1137">The Council's assessment of its performance and its published report now contains a comparison of its performance with previous years, and where reasonably practicable, with the other councils. In future years, year-on-year trend analysis should continue.</p> <p data-bbox="562 1182 1993 1281">The report includes a comparison of its performance statutory indicators to other councils. The issue of benchmarking with other councils is part of the work plan of the Multi-Stakeholder Group and it is expected that progress on this issue will continue to be made to allow a broader range of functions to be compared.</p> <p data-bbox="562 1326 1993 1386">The report also includes a section on the Council's achievement of its self-imposed performance measures based on the corporate plan priorities and commitments during the year.</p>

Thematic area	Observations
Demonstrating a track record of improvement	<p>A review of the performance of the improvement objectives, statutory indicators and standards and self-imposed indicators over the past three years has identified an overall trend of improvement.</p> <p>For improvement objectives in the current year two have been fully achieved and two have been substantially achieved in 2018-19 with all improvement objectives substantially achieved in the prior year, demonstrating a track record of improvement over the past three years.</p> <p>Statutory performance indicators ED1, P1, P2 and P3 have shown a decline in performance in the current year in comparison with prior years and the target set. The other three statutory indicators have shown improvement across the last three years.</p> <p>Two out of the three self-imposed indicators have shown improvement over the past three years.</p>

