



Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

Legal Services Chief Executive's Department

SERVICE PLAN - 2019 / 20

Date

Consulted within staff team

28/05/2019

Discussed & signed off by Director

/ / 2019

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1.0 OVERALL PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE SERVICE

1.1 Purpose and Scope of the Service

The service is responsible for the management and the provision of a comprehensive legal advice and support service to the Council across the Council's wide range of functions and responsibilities. The aim of the service is to provide high quality, proactive and timely advice to the Council in order to assist it operating within the wider legal landscape.

1.2 Responsibilities

The service is specifically responsible for the following:

- The provision of proactive, accurate and timely professional legal advice on matters relating to the functions and the exercise of the powers and duties of the Council;
- The drafting and settling of legal documentation;
- The provision of training and information on legal and quasi legal matters to officers and Elected Members as required;
- The instigation and defence of claims, actions, applications and other legal proceedings, including representation, as required on behalf of the Council;

To liaise with other legal professionals, the courts, government departments, statutory bodies and other organisations in relation to legal matters pertaining to the Council.

1.3 Customers & Stakeholders

Customers & Stakeholders
• The Council; officers and Elected Members
• Other members of the legal profession, including solicitors and barristers
• The judiciary and court officials
• Individuals residing in and businesses and organisations operating within the district
• Other government departments and agencies
• Other councils, statutory bodies

1.4 Performance Overview in 2018/19

The following table provides a progress summary and the impact made by last years' Service Plan (2018-2019). It also details key successes, a summary of the end of year progress, remaining challenges for the Service and how it made a difference.

2018/19 Performance Overview	End of Year Progress Status:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Legal Services Contract has recently been awarded and it is hoped that this will provide better access to specialised and timely legal advice and be more cost effective 	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Engagement Series is ongoing to ascertain how legal services can better serve the Council with improvements being implemented where possible 	Commenced and ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ongoing challenge for the service stems from the very nature of the work involved, i.e., the unpredictability of workflow, work type and caseload, making it difficult to accurately budget and allocate resources. 	Kept under review

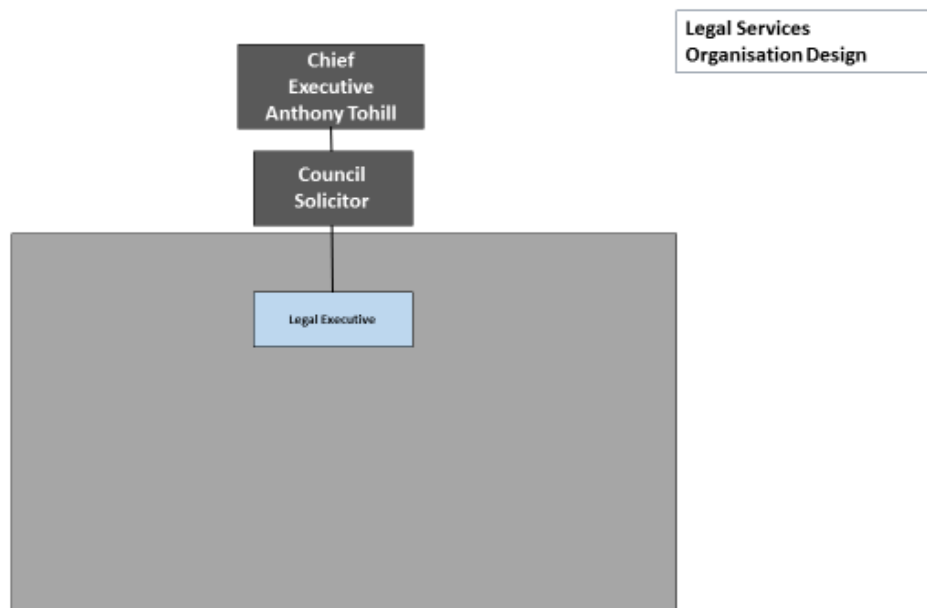
2.0 SERVICE WORKPLAN 2019/20

The following tables confirm the resources, financial and people, which the Service has access to throughout 2019-20 to deliver its actions, activities and core business.

2.1 Budget 2019/20

Service Budget Headings	£
Legal Fees & Subscriptions	129,497
Salaries and mileage	103,550
Gross Budget	
Income	
Net Budget for 2019-20	240,812

2.2 Staffing Complement - 2019/20



Staffing	No. of Staff
Head of Service	1
Managers	
Officers	1
Remaining Team	
Total	2

2.3 Service Work Plan - 2019/20

This plan confirms the core activities and actions, which will form your Service Work Plan for 2019-20. This should be a high-level capture of the Service activities and work which it will focus on throughout 2019-20. The Plan links to the Council's 2015-2020 Corporate Plan priorities (the Corporate Plan 2015/19 priorities were extended for another year to include 2019 to 2020), Annual Corporate Improvement Plan Objectives, Corporate Indicators and Mid Ulster Sustainable Community Plan themes & outcomes:

SERVICE WORK PLAN

Link to Community Plan Theme:		Corporate Plan Theme					
<i>CMP 3.1 Education & Skills - Our People are better qualified & more skilled</i>		<i>CRP 1.6 Delivering for Our People - Integration of a culture of service improvement as the key to service delivery.</i>					
Service Objective	How Will we measure the impact of our work (PI's)	Where are we now? (Baseline data)	What do we want to achieve? (Targets)	How Will we get there?			
				Key Actions	Dates	Owners	Outcome
Increase staff awareness and knowledge in two key areas of challenge for legal services and the Council; (i) Planning; and (ii) Prosecutions, by March 2020.	Standard of case officer reports; and number of successful JR challenges. Standard of prosecution file/evidence.	Standard of reporting is high; and one successful planning judicial review the past two years; Standard of prosecution file/evidence is high; and prosecution success rate at court is c.95%	Very high/Excellent Standard; and not increase the number of successful challenges pa; Very high/excellent standard; and increase prosecution success rate to 100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise training on legal issues in both areas for staff; Service areas to implement recommendations and changes; Review implementation of changes; Consider if further/follow up training needed; Consider if other avenues to explore; Consider if additional training needed for members 	Sept 2019 Nov 2019 Feb 2020 Feb 2020 Feb 2020 Mar 2020	C McNally Service areas C McNally C McNally & Service areas	To help improve knowledge, capacity and confidence of the Council in relation to legal issues to ensure Planning decisions and Prosecutions are progressed as soundly as possible, which in turn should help encourage increased public confidence in Council's decision making.

3.0 IMPROVING OUR SERVICE AND MANAGING PERFORMANCE

3.1 Annual Improvement Objectives and Associated Programs

The Council has set a number of annual improvement objectives and associated programs (projects and activities) for 2019/20, which aim to bring about improvement. The improvement objectives and key improvement programs, set out Council's contribution to the sustainable Community Plan for the District; against which we can monitor and report progress.

Each Council department provides resources to assist with the improvement activities contained within each improvement project (individual service improvement contribution activity linked to corporate improvement programs can be found in 3.2 of the service plan). The annual improvement objectives also align to the Council's main corporate planning document, which contains the council's strategic direction and main priorities.

The Council will focus on the following improvement objectives for 2019 to 2020:

- 1. To assist the growth of the local economy by increasing the number of visitors to our district.*
- 2. To improve the average processing time of Local Planning Applications (New).*
- 3. To improve the accessibility of our services by increasing the number available online.*
- 4. To support people to adopt healthier lifestyles by increasing usage of Council Recreational Facilities.*

We utilise outcome based accountability methodology to manage our performance. This tells us the impact our services are having on communities. Further detailed information relating to Council's improvement objectives, associated activities, outcome indicators, projects and targets is available at www.midulstercouncil.org/Council/Performance (Mid Ulster Council's Improvement Plan 2019- 2020) or by contacting the Democratic Services Team on 03000 132132.

4.0 Equality

The council is committed to fulfilling its obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This commitment is demonstrated by allocating the appropriate time, people and resources to fulfil our equality duties. The Equality Scheme commits us to implementing our duties effectively and in a timely way alongside implementing this Service Plan. Without impacting upon our obligations, when carrying out our equality duties we will also take into account the desirability of promoting good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. We are also required to take into account the need to

promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability and encourage the participation of people with a disability in public life. Mid Ulster District Council are committed to fulfilling our disability duties and we set out how we intend to do this in our disability action plan.

3.2 Service Contribution to the Corporate Improvement Objectives/Projects

Link to Community Plan Theme:		Corporate Plan Theme						
Choose an item.		Choose an item.						
Improvement Plan Objective	Service Objective	How Will we measure the impact of our work (PI's)	Where are we now? (Baseline data)	What do we want to achieve? (Targets)	How Will we get there?			
					Key Actions	Dates	Owners	Outcome
Choose an item.								

3.3 RISK MANAGEMENT OF SERVICE

The purpose of risk management is to manage the barriers which prevents the Council from achieving its objectives. This section of the service plan includes space for the Service to input their key risks (in summary form), which have been identified during the business planning process. The Council uses risk management to maximize opportunities and minimize risks. This improves its ability to deliver priorities and improve outcomes. This is why the Council deems it important to link business planning and risk management. Risk Management aims to:

- Help the Council achieve its overall aims and objectives
- Manage the significant risks the Council faces to an acceptable level
- Assist with the decision making process
- Implement the most effective measures to avoid, reduce and control those risks
- Balance risk with opportunity
- Manage risk and internal controls in the most effective way.

This table illustrates the risks identified to deliver the Services business in 2019-20.

Risk Ref Number	Description of Risk	Risk Rating	Mitigation Activity
1.	<i>Potential breach of Information Security</i>	6	<i>Ensure Policies and security measures being followed within legal services; Keep staff and members training requirements under review with DPO</i>
2.	<i>Potential increase in challenges against the Council</i>	6	<i>Identify training needs on legal issues and organise appropriate training where relevant; Regular meetings with Directorates; Provision of prompt legal advice; Use complaints system as a means of continuous improvement.</i>

Rating	Descriptor
16 - 25	Extreme Risk (immediate action required)
10 - 15	High Risk (urgent action required)
7 - 9	Moderate Risk (action required)
1 – 6	Low Risk (keep under review)