

Report on	Annual Progress Returns 2019-2020: Equality Commission and Dept. of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs
Date of Meeting	Thursday 2 nd July 2020
Reporting Officer	Philip Moffett, Head of Democratic Services
Contact Officer	Ann McAleer, Corporate Policy and 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 consider Mid Ulster District Council's Progress Reports for the period 2019-20 on meeting the statutory equality and good relations duties as detailed within Section 75(1) and 75(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Rural Needs Act Northern Ireland (2016).
2.0	Background
2.1	Mid Ulster District Council is bound by Section 75 of the N Ireland Act 1998. Section 75(1) requires that the council gives due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between groupings/categories as detailed within the Act and Section 75(2) requires that regard be given to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.
2.2	The council's overarching document and framework around which it fulfils its statutory duties is its Equality Scheme. The Annual Progress Report (2019-2020) sets out to what extent the Council has demonstrated fulfilment of its statutory duties to promote equality and good relations through its Equality Scheme.
2.3	The Equality Commission have requested that a progress report be made and published on Council's website.
2.4	The Equality Commission also require Council to undertake a 5-year review of Council's Equality Scheme. This includes developing a new audit of inequalities in order to update of the Equality and Disability Action Plans. As such, Council in is required to adapt a revised Equality Scheme and associated plans by March 2021. This review is being undertaken by the Corporate Policy & Equality Officer and relevant officers as appropriate.
2.5	Mid Ulster District Council is also bound by the Rural Needs Act NI (2016) to 'have due regard to rural needs when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and; • designing and delivering public services'. <p>Section 3 of the Rural Needs Act 2016 also requires that the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) publish an annual monitoring report containing</p>

	the information sent to it by public authorities on how they have paid due regard to rural needs and information of the exercise by DAERA of its functions under the Act.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The statutory progress report for the Equality Commission and DAERA for the period 2019-20 are attached as Appendix A and Appendix B.
	Equality Annual Progress Report
3.2	This reports on aspects of the council's Equality Scheme and how it has been implemented the over the period. This Progress Report is required to be submitted annually, by 31 st August each year but this has been extended for public authorities to no later than 30 th December 2020, in light of the Coronavirus outbreak. Officers have however prepared the annual return ready for submission subject to Committee and Council approval. The draft return is included as Appendix A to this report.
	Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report
3.3	Mid Ulster District Council's Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report (2019-2020) sets out to the extent to which the Council has demonstrated and delivered upon the Rural Needs statutory duty. Returns are required annually by end of June each year but the Department has extended this to 11 th September due to the Coronavirus outbreak. The draft return is included as Appendix B to this report.
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: As detailed
	Rural Needs Implications: As detailed
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	That Council considers approval of the Annual Progress Reports (2019-20) on the implementation and activities surrounding its Equality and Good Relations Duties and Rural Needs Duties. Both sets of duties are statutory requirements of Council.

6.0	Documents Attached & References
	Appendix A: Mid Ulster District Council Annual Equality Progress Report (2019-20) Appendix B: Mid Ulster District Council Annual Rural Needs Progress Report (2019-20)