

**Equality Action Plan and Revised Disability Action Plan**  
**Consultation Response Summary**  
**Report for SMT**  
**October 2017**

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The public consultation on Council's Draft Equality Action Plan and Revised Disability Action Plan was held between 23 June 2017 and 29 September 2017. The consultation ran for a total of 14 weeks, 2 weeks more than normal protocol. The rationale for the additional two weeks was that the consultation timeframe included the public holidays in July and August and Council's Equality Scheme requires that additional time is provided for consultations should it be carried out during peak holiday times.

**2. Consultation Process**

2.1 The consultation process included three consultation events held as follows:

- 7 September 2017-Magherafelt Council Offices-2.30pm-4pm
- 14 September 2017- Dungannon Council Offices-6pm-7.30pm
- 22 September 2017- Cookstown Council Offices-9.30am-11am

2.2 One event was held in each of the legacy Council areas. In order to maximise accessibility of attendance, the timing, location and day of the week differed for each event.

2.3 The consultation process was advertised in local press and was distributed amongst Council's Equality List twice, before and during the consultation period.

### 3. Consultation Respondents

3.1 Unfortunately there was a limited response to the consultation events.

However, six responses were received from the following individuals and organisations detailed below:

- Ursula Marshall responding on behalf of Mid Ulster Disability Forum (MUDF)
- Valarie Black responding as an individual citizen
- Cllr Robert Mulligan responding as an Elected Member
- COSTA (Community Organisations of South Tyrone & Areas)
- First Steps Women’s Centre
- Parkinson’s UK

### 4. Information Gathered on Equality Action Plan

4.1 Consultation questionnaires were provided to respondents. Three of the six respondents used the consultation questionnaire format to respond to the consultation.

<b>Strategic Theme 1: Accessibility</b>	
<b>Respondents Feedback</b>	<b>General Comments</b>
The three respondents who made use of the structured feedback questionnaire either ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with this theme and the associated actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May be useful to have more outreach sessions for both politicians and Officials out in the community so people can engage directly, particularly those who find it difficult to travel, or find it off putting to go into official buildings.</li><li>• Communication is a key factor – multichannel communication methods need to be utilised if this is to be accessible to all.</li><li>• This would help include more people who feel isolated or removed from local government – this may present an opportunity to link this with Community Planning and feeding back to the community at the grass roots level.</li></ul>

<b>Strategic Theme 2: Corporate Practices</b>	
<b>Respondents Feedback</b>	<b>General Comments</b>
The three respondents who made use of this format either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with this theme and the associated actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes these are all very positive and to be actively encouraged by all and will enable the mechanics of Council to be better meet the needs of the local community.</li> <li>• Would it be beneficial to look at the monitoring used by other organisations, e.g. ESF funded projects as an exemplar?</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Theme 3: Participation Levels</b>	
<b>Respondents Feedback</b>	<b>General Comments</b>
The three respondents who made use of this format either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with this theme and the associated actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes these are all very positive and to be actively encouraged by all and will enable the mechanics of Council to be better meet the needs of the local community.</li> <li>• The recognition of Parents, Carers and even those who work are important to take into account and we are happy to see these being recognised and catered for.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Theme 4: Partnership Working</b>	
<b>Respondents Feedback</b>	<b>General Comments</b>
One of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, one strongly agreed and one agreed with this theme and the associated actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with the Voluntary / Community Sector and the continuance of a vibrant and wide ranging Voluntary / Community Sector are absolutely key to success particularly under this theme.</li> <li>• May be useful to have more outreach sessions of both Politicians and Officials out in the community so people can engage directly, particularly those who find it difficult to travel, or find it off putting to go into official buildings.</li> <li>• This would help include more people who feel isolated or removed from local government this may present an opportunity to link this with Community Planning and feeding back to the community at the grass roots level.</li> </ul>

4.2 On examination of the feedback and comments set out in the table above Actions 1a and 4b of the Equality Action Plan will be amended. Specific details of the amends will be set out in the conclusions in Section 8.

## 5. Information Gathered on Disability Action Plan

5.1 The following feedback was provided in relation to the revised Disability Action Plan.

<b>Action Measure 1: ‘Equality proof’ our Community Plan providing better promotion of equality and services for people with a disability.</b>	
<b>Respondents Feedback</b>	<b>General Comments</b>
The three respondents who made use of the questionnaire format either ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with this action measure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, totally agree with this as this has been severely lacking in the current Community Plan. Equality and Human Rights are the responsibility of everyone and need to be central to the culture, ethos and practical day-to-day delivery of everything that an organisation does – once this is truly in place then this creates positive outcomes for all.</li> <li>• Special consideration to be given migrants and people who don’t have English as a first language.</li> <li>• All action plans derived from the Community Plan should be equality screened. The Community Plan should encourage cradle to grave support for people with a disability at every age and every stage of life.</li> </ul>
<b>Action Measure 2: Integrate Disability duties into new policies including all new and revised policies screened for impact on disability duties.</b>	
<b>Respondents Feedback</b>	<b>General Comments</b>
The three respondents who made use of the structured feedback questionnaire either ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with this action measure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human Rights, Equality and Disability duties should be central to all new policies and central to all MUDC does and how MUDC does it.</li> </ul>
<b>Action Measure 3: Council will work towards the BS:8300:2009 +A1:2010 in its buildings and facilities, subject to practical implementation allowing issues which may affect people with a disability will be sorted out at the earliest possible juncture.</b>	
<b>Respondents Feedback</b>	<b>General Comments</b>
The three respondents who made use of the structured feedback questionnaire either ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with this action measure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, very strongly agree - this is very important and to ensure that dropped curbs, parking bays and other requirements are in place.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This standard should be put in place at every opportunity. Not adhering to the standard is selling short people in the District who have a disability.</li> </ul>
<b>Action Measure 4: Prepare an annual report on progress on meeting the Disability Action Plan and publish this on its website. Increased awareness of Employee's responsibility towards Council's compliance and achievements in relation to disability duties.</b>	
<b>Respondents Feedback</b>	<b>General Comments</b>
The three respondents who made use of the structured feedback questionnaire one respondent 'neither agreed nor disagreed; one 'agreed' and one 'strongly agreed' with this action measure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes, this is positive and anything that increases accountability will also help increase positive action so we welcome this development.</li> </ul>
<b>Action measure 5: Keep in contact with disability support services/groups within the District in order to gauge their views and opinions. Focussed consultation and engagement with people with disabilities will be carried out in order to understand their needs and requirements.</b>	
<b>Respondents Feedback</b>	<b>General Comments</b>
The three respondents who made use of the structured feedback questionnaire two 'agreed' and one 'strongly agreed' with this action measure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with the Voluntary/Community Sector and the continuance of a vibrant and wide ranging Voluntary/Community Sector are key to success particularly under this theme. Organisations such as COSTA, CWSAN, STEP, Agewell, Age NI, MUSN, Disability Action and Willowbank and many many others is so important to ensure that this being properly met, evaluated and evolved.</li> </ul>
<b>Action measure 6: Any new/substantially renovated play areas meet the highest possible standards.</b>	
<b>Respondents Feedback</b>	<b>General Comments</b>
The three respondents who made use of the structured feedback questionnaire 'strongly agreed' with this action measure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes, it is so important that children with complex disabilities/needs can access appropriate and high quality play areas right across the MUDC area.</li> </ul>
<b>Action measure 7: Appoint a Disability Champion at officer and elected member level to progress the disability duties.</b>	

<b>Respondents Feedback</b>	<b>General Comments</b>
The three respondents who made use of the structured feedback questionnaire two 'strongly agreed' and one 'neither agreed nor disagreed' with this action measure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, this is a positive development and increases visibility and accountability and shares that across officials and elected representatives. We strongly support this development.</li> <li>• This a great idea!!</li> </ul>
<b>Action measure 8: Provide up to 6 work placements per year for individuals with disabilities.</b>	
<b>Respondents Feedback</b>	<b>General Comments</b>
The three respondents who made use of the structured feedback questionnaire two 'strongly agreed' and one 'agreed'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, this is a very practical and positive development and creates better real-life opportunities for people with disabilities. We strongly support this development.</li> <li>• Council should aim to exceed this target and also try to make permanent employment opportunities available for disabled people.</li> </ul>
<b>Action measure 9: Training on universal accessibility auditing allowing the Corporate Policy &amp; Equality Officer will be skilled to advise when required.</b>	
<b>Respondents Feedback</b>	<b>General Comments</b>
The three respondents who made use of the structured feedback questionnaire two 'strongly agreed' and one 'agreed'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, this is a positive development and creates better real-life opportunities for people with disabilities through raising awareness of issues and how to better deal with them. We strongly support this development.</li> </ul>
<b>Action measure 10: Develop, deliver and implement a programme of awareness training for Council Officers providing increased awareness of disability legislation and understanding of the issues relating to the service users.</b>	
<b>Respondents Feedback</b>	<b>General Comments</b>
The three respondents who made use of the structured feedback questionnaire two 'strongly agreed' and one 'agreed'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, this is a positive development and creates better real-life opportunities for people with disabilities through raising awareness of issues and how to better deal with them. We strongly support this development.</li> <li>• Enhanced training should be provided for some members of staff.</li> </ul>

<b>Action measure 11: Develop, deliver and implement a programme of awareness training for Elected Member</b>	
<b>Respondents Feedback</b>	<b>General Comments</b>
The three respondents who made use of the structured feedback questionnaire two 'strongly agreed' and one 'agreed'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, this is a positive development and creates better real-life opportunities for people with disabilities through raising awareness of issues and how to better deal with them. We strongly support this development.</li> </ul>
<b>Action measure 12: Develop and implement and a set of Accessible Information Protocols</b>	
<b>Respondents Feedback</b>	<b>General Comments</b>
The three respondents who made use of the structured feedback questionnaire two 'strongly agreed' and one 'neither agreed nor disagreed'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, this is a positive development and creates better real-life opportunities for people with disabilities through raising awareness of issues and how to better deal with them. We strongly support this development.</li> </ul>
<b>Action measure 13: Continue to assess and improve accessibility of website and other communications materials providing improved accessibility of Council online information and services</b>	
<b>Respondents Feedback</b>	<b>General Comments</b>
The three respondents who made use of the structured feedback questionnaire two 'strongly agreed' and one 'neither agreed nor disagreed'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, this is a positive development and creates better real-life opportunities for people with disabilities through raising awareness of issues and how to better deal with them. We strongly support this development. However it is important to recognise that some people – particularly older generations and those in rural areas who have difficulty accessing suitable broadband can face challenges and information – therefore services should always also be easily and widely available via other means.</li> </ul>

5.2 The feedback and comments set out in the table above on the Revised Disability Action Plan will be considered during the implementation of the plan. However, the actions measure do not require amendment as a result of the feedback and comments.

## **6. General Comments**

6.1 As part of the course of the consultation events the following information was provided by the respondents:

- Comments were made regarding accessibility issues within Seamus Heaney Homeplace. It was noted that the doors were quite heavy and is difficult for wheelchair users to open them.
- It was pointed out that the customer service desk in the Burnavon with a drop down is not used by staff. Staff tend to operate from the desk with no drop down and this makes accessing the service/staff difficult for disabled people, especially wheelchair users.
- Clarification was sought as to whether Council's website has AAA status. (This has been confirmed and will be fed back to the group from whom the enquiry came).
- It was recommended that the Disability Action Plan should be prominent on the Council website and in relevant Council literature and correspondence
- Parkinsons UK asked to be placed on the list of consultees for any Plans or Strategies relevant to disability and broad community health
- The current layout of the Council's Chamber in Council's Dungannon Office was also queried regarding its accessibility. Clarification was sought as to whether it meets the BS:8300:2009 +A1:2010 that Council is working towards

## **7. Actions**

7.1 From the general comments identified in Section 6 actions have been set out in the table below in order to address the issues:

<b>Action No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Estimated Timeframe</b>	<b>Consultee to be Informed of Progress</b>
1.	Seamus Heaney HomePlace-Making doors user friendly	Manager, Seamus Heaney HomePlace	Jan 2018	Ursula Marshall on behalf of MUDF
2.	Customer service desk in the Burnavon with a drop down is not used by staff	Head of Culture & Arts	Dec 2017	Ursula Marshall on behalf of MUDF
3.	Clarification was sought as to whether Council's website has AAA status.	Corporate Policy & Equality Officer	Complete	Ursula Marshall on behalf of MUDF
4.	the Disability Action Plan should be prominent on the Council website and in relevant Council literature and correspondence	Corporate Policy & Equality Officer	Complete	Parkinson's UK
5.	Parkinson's UK asked to be placed on the list of consultees for any Plans or Strategies relevant to disability and broad community health	Corporate Policy & Equality Officer	Complete	Parkinson's UK

6.	Council's Chamber in Dungannon Office- clarification was sought as to whether it meets the BS:8300:2009 +A1:2010 that Council is working towards	Head of Property Services	Jan 2018	Cllr. Mulligan
7.	All action plans derived from the Community Plan should be equality screened.	Action Plan Authors/Community Planning Officer	Ongoing	Ursula Marshall on behalf of MUDF

7.2 Consultees will be updated when the issues they raised have been addressed/resolved.

## 8. Conclusions

8.1 The content and the valuable nature of the feedback and suggestions will be taken into account with the delivery of the action plans. Specifically for the Equality Action Plan, Action 1a will now read, 'Increased accessibility of Council services available online and in other requested formats while incorporating of multi-channel communication tools'. While Action 4b now reads, 'Provide opportunities for residents, customers and visitors to engage directly with Elected Members. Include outreach sessions with Elected Members and Officers'.

8.2 The operational issues identified in Section 6 will be acted upon as per the Action Plan set out in Section 7.