

Report on	Implementation of Review on Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016
Date of Meeting	Thursday 2 nd July 2020
Reporting Officer	Philip Moffett, Head of Democratic Services
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Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	This report provide Members with an update in relation to the Review of the Rural Needs Act legislation. The review of the implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016, undertaken by the Rural Needs Working Group, was done so between October and December 2019.
1.2	The purpose of the review was to look at how the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 was being implemented by public authorities and to consider what further support measures might be introduced to help public authorities comply with the legislation.
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 requires councils to carry out rural impact assessments on council policies, strategies and plans from 1 June 2017. The Act places a duty for the following aspects of Councils work to be assessed for rural impact to include new policies or strategies, reviewed policies and the consequent service delivery of new and revised policies</p> <p>Key information points in relation to the legislation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural settlements are considered by the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to be settlements of less than 5,000 residents. Within that context the majority of Mid Ulster District Council, excluding the larger settlements of Cookstown (11,599), Dungannon (14,340), Magherafelt (8,805) and Coalisland (5,682), will be considered as a rural area • Returns on rural impact assessments must be made to DEARA on an annually • Rural Impact Assessments should take place at the outset of the development of Council policy/strategy, development or review • Policy/Strategy Authors will be primarily responsible for ensuring that the rural impact assessments are undertaken.

3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>The Departmental Review concluded with 25 recommendations for both DAERA and Local Authorities of which 6 are specific to public authorities/local government are that. These are summarised as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public authorities host regular workshops for decision makers within their organisation (subject to need) for the purposes of increasing awareness • Public authorities review the resources allocated to supporting the implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 with a view to ensuring that rural needs co-ordinators have access to the resources necessary to undertake their role effectively. • Public authorities take steps to seek to embed the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 further within their organisation including, for example, by incorporating compliance with the Act in their Assurance Statements, Submission Templates and Audit and Risk Procedures • Public authorities seek to develop effective relationships with rural community organisations and, where appropriate, to seek to engage with the rural community sector in a meaningful and timely manner as part of the Rural Needs Impact Assessment process being undertaken in respect of Section 1 activities • Public authorities be open to adopting new and innovative approaches to engaging with the rural community sector when seeking to gather information on rural needs including taking measures to engage with people in rural areas who may not normally participate in public consultations or stakeholder engagement • Public authorities publish their RNIA Rural Needs Impact Assessments) Templates on their website on a single webpage and that the annual monitoring report includes a link to each public authority website
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p>Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial: The recommendations as detailed at 3.0 require consideration for cost impact</p> <p>Human: Existing staffing complement will be required to prioritise existing resource</p> <p>Risk Management: N/A</p>
4.2	<p>Screening & Impact Assessments</p> <p>Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A</p>

	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	<p>It is recommended;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That Mid Ulster Council review the additional actions detailed in Appendix A which will be implemented by Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs; and • That Mid Ulster Council implement the six recommendations emanating from the Review of the Implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 by approving the associated Action Plan, detailed in Appendix B.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	<p>Appendix A: Report on Review of Implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016</p> <p>Appendix B: Action Plan (draft) by Mid Ulster DC on DAERA Recommendations</p>