

Report on	Council Policy on Accessible Communications (Reviewed)
Date of Meeting	Thursday 10 June 2021
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	The purpose of this report is to seek comment and approval for the Council's Policy on Accessible Communications. This policy was first considered and subsequently adopted by Council in January 2019 as an outworking of Council's Equality Action Plan 2015-2020.
1.2.	This policy has been revised as part of Council's policy review cycle.
2.0	Background
2.1	The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 prohibits the discrimination of disabled people and requires local authorities to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that services are accessible to everyone. This includes how Council communicates with people with a disability and all those wishing to access its services.
2.2	This policy has been reviewed and updated and as a result, now includes formalised direction and guidance in relation to translation and interpretation as well as updated guidance on PDFs on the Council's website.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	This policy was initially compiled following an Audit of Inequalities undertaken in 2014 as part of the development of the Council's Equality Action Plan. The audit identified that within the Council organisationally, <i>'there are opportunities within corporate practices to mainstream improve and equalities'</i> . The audit also identified that <i>'older people feel they cannot access Council facilities'</i> and that, <i>'residents from ethnic minority backgrounds feel a perceived inaccessibility to local democracy'</i> .
3.2	The development of the policy has allowed staff to more informed on the Council's legal obligation in relation to accessible communications. Feedback suggested that this is relevant for various Services, including those carrying out home visits and reception staff at various Council sites.

3.3	The updated policy further strengthens this position with the inclusion of guidance on new mechanisms such as Sign Video. Details on how to access are available on Council's website https://www.midulstercouncil.org/your-council/equality/sign-video
3.4	It allows people who are deaf to call our facilities and speak with members of staff via a remote sign language interpreter.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: There are no direct immediate costs associated with this policy. Under the legislation Council is already subject to financially incurring various types of alternative communication methods regardless of whether a formal policy is in place or not. Many requirements within the policy are free or cost very little e.g. altering size, colour contrast or text alignment.
	Human: Officer time.
	Risk Management:
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: An Equality Screening has been completed and identified a Minor Positive
	Rural Needs Implications: This policy was not influenced by rural needs therefore it was not deemed as proportionate to complete a RNIA.
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	It is recommended that the members consider, provide commentary as appropriate and approve the revised Policy on Accessible Communications.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Appendix A - Accessible Communications Policy (revised draft)