**Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council**

**Section 75 Equality and Good Relations Screening template**

**Part 1. Activity/Policy Scoping**

**Information about the activity/policy**

# Name of the activity/policy

|  |
| --- |
| **Revised Standing Orders – September 2021 -** Incorporating amendments required under the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 & Local Government (Meetings and Performance) Bill 2021  **Background**  In May 2020 the Council had to alter its normal decision-making processes during the COVID-19 pandemic to comply with Public Health Agency guidance on social distancing and essential travel. This resulted in the Council having to put measures in place in order to conduct all its meetings via remote means including remote access by members of the public.  The authority to meet remotely is governed by Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 which came into effect on 1 May 2020 and expired on 6 May 2021. Following the expiry of the legislation the Council had to make further changes to its Standing Orders which required Elected Members to attend meetings in person in order to participate in the decision making process. Any Member in remote attendance could not propose, second or vote upon a motion.  The Local Government (Meetings and Performance) Bill 2021 came into effect on 26 August 2021 which removed the restriction in Section 78(3) of the Coronavirus Act 2020 thereby extending the provisions included in the Meetings Regulations regarding the holding of remote council meetings beyond 6 May 2021 until the Coronavirus Act 2020 expires on 25 March 2022.  The Council now needs to make changes to its Standing Orders to give those Members in remote attendance the ability to fully participate in the decision making process. This will enable Members in remote attendance to propose or second a proposal and participate in vote. |

Please attach copy of the activity/policy to this document.

# Is this activity/policy

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| An existing policy? |  | A revised policy? | **X** | A new policy? |  |

What are the intended aims/outcomes the activity/policy is trying to achieve?

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Comply with relevant legislation which applies to all Councils and all Council/Committee meetings. |
| 1. The continuation of Council business through its Committee structure. |
| 1. Provide an open and robust decision making mechanism for the Council. |
| 1. Protect the decision making process of the Council and its Elected Members. |
| 1. Reduce any potential legal action against the Council on its decision making process. |

Are there any expected benefits to the Section 75 categories/groups from this activity/policy? If so, please explain

|  |
| --- |
| The primary purpose of this review is to amend procedures to take account of new legislation. The revised Standing Orders apply equally to all Elected Members, staff and members of the public. Temporary arrangements put in place in the absence of legislation had created a situation where those Elected Members who were unable to attend meetings in person were unable to vote on an equal basis. This interim policy had the potential to disadvantage a Member who had to isolate for a reason related to health, age or disability. The revised procedures have addressed that potential disadvantage. |

Who initiated or wrote the activity/policy?

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| --- |
| The Department for Communities is responsible for the legislation which governs the conduct of councils and specifically Statutory Rule 2020 No. 74. LCCC is responsible for producing Standing Orders which comply with relevant legislation and this review has been prompted by ongoing Covid-19 legislation and guidance. The new legislation on the conduct of hybrid meetings has required LCCC to revise its Standing Orders. The revised Standing Orders have been produced by the Members Services Unit. |

Who owns and who implements the activity/policy?

|  |
| --- |
| LCCC and implemented by Member Services Unit |

**Implementation factors**

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the activity/policy/decision?

If yes, are they

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Financial? |  | Legislative? | **X** | Other? |  |

If other, please detail below

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**Main stakeholders affected**

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the activity/policy will impact upon?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Staff | Chief Executive, Senior Management Team, Heads of Service, Members Services Unit, Centre Management Unit |
| Service Users | Members of public who wish to access the proceedings of Council and Committee Meetings |
| Other Public Sector Organisations – please list |  |
| Voluntary/Community/Trade Unions – please list |  |
| Other, eg, Elected Members – please list | Elected Members |

**Other documents/activities/polices with a bearing on this activity/policy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of document/activity/policy | Who owns or implements document/activity/policy? |
| 1 Standing Orders of Council September 2021 | Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council |
| 2Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 | Northern Ireland Assembly  <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2014/8/contents> |
| 3 Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 | Department for Communities |
| 4 Local Government (Meetings and Performance) Bill 2021 | Department for Communities |

The above would include both internal and external documents/activities/policies.

If there is a web-link/link to any of the above please provide details.

**Available evidence**

What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this activity/policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Sec 75 Category | Details of evidence/information |
| In reviewing Council’s Standing Orders, we have considered the new Regulations on remote attendance, government health guidance on conduct of business during the ongoing pandemic, and experience over the past number of months since Council adopted a hybrid model of in person and remote attendance. We have also taken into account views of Elected Members and staff concerned.  We note that the Department for Communities, having carried out its own screening exercise, is satisfied that the Regulations will not lead to any significant discriminatory or negative differential impact on any particular Section 75 group.  The Regulations introduce temporary measures to enable Council meetings to be held during the current COVID situation. The measures will ensure that council business can proceed with the involvement of as many members as possible. | |
| Religious Belief | Elected Members, staff and the general public who attend meetings and participate in Council business who are likely to be affected by this policy come from a range of backgrounds. |
| Political Opinion |
| Racial Group |
| Age |
| Marital Status |
| Sexual Orientation |
| Men & Women Generally |
| Disability |
| Dependants |

### Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular activity/policy/decision? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Sec 75 Category | Details of needs/experiences/priorities |
| Religious Belief | No differential needs or experiences identified in relation to religious belief, political opinion or racial group |
| Political Opinion |
| Racial Group |
| Age | Older people who serve as Elected Members or members of the public who wish to attend meetings are more likely to want or need to access meetings remotely as they may be at higher risk of infection due to Covid-19. Some older people may not have online access and may prefer to physically attend meetings. |
| Marital Status | No differential needs or experiences identified for these groups in relation to the Revised procedures. |
| Sexual Orientation |
| Men & Women Generally | No differential needs or experiences identified for these groups in relation to the Revised procedures. |
| Disability | Elected Members, staff and members of the public who have a disability may be more likely to need/want to attend meetings remotely as they may be in a higher risk category for Covid-19 infection. |
| Dependants | People who have dependant children or adults, including those with disabilities, may need to self isolate and therefore prefer remote attendance during the pandemic. |

**Part 2. Screening questions**

1 What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this activity/policy, for each of the Sec 75 equality categories? (minor/major/none\*)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sec 75 Category | Details of activity/policy impact | Level of impact (minor/major/none\*) |
| Religious Belief | No differential impact by religious belief, political opinion or racial group as the proposed changes apply equally to all. | None |
| Political Opinion |
| Racial Group |
| Age | Older Elected Members or others who need to isolate may find that they can continue to participate in meetings if they are allowed to attend and participate fully remotely.  However, some members of the public may not have the necessary technology or skills to participate online and would prefer to attend meetings in person. | Minor – positive  Minor - negative |
| Marital Status | No differential impact identified for these groups | None |
| Sexual Orientation |
| Men & Women Generally |
| Disability | Elected Members, staff or members of the public with a disability are more likely to need to access remotely if they have a health condition that makes them high risk. | Minor - positive |
| Dependants | The ability to attend meetings remotely will facilitate attendance for people who have caring responsibilities. | Minor - positive |

\*See Appendix 1 for details.

2 Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Sec 75 equality categories?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sec 75 Category | IF Yes, provide details | If No, provide details |
| Religious Belief |  | Not affected |
| Political Opinion |  | Not affected |
| Racial Group |  | Not affected |
| Age | If necessary arrangements could be put in place to accommodate an older person who cannot access the meeting online. |  |
| Marital Status |  | Not affected |
| Sexual Orientation |  | Not affected |
| Men & Women Generally |  | Not affected |
| Disability | Meeting documentation is published on the Council’s website five days prior to the meeting. If necessary the documents could be provided in another format. | Not affected |
| Dependants |  | Not affected |

3 To what extent is the activity/policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? (minor/major/none\*)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Good Relations Category | Details of activity/policy impact | Level of impact (minor/major/none\*) |
| Religious Belief | No differential impact identified on grounds of religious belief, political opinion or racial group | None |
| Political Opinion | None |
| Racial Group | None |

\*See Appendix 1 for details.

4 Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Good Relations Category | IF Yes, provide details | If No, provide details |
| Religious Belief | No | No |
| Political Opinion | No | No |
| Racial Group | While all our corporate information on the website can be translated using the Browsealoud assistive software, could possibly do more to make those from racial minorities, newcomers to district/NI or those who do not have English as a first language aware of council meetings and opportunities to participate in council business | No |

**Additional considerations**

**Multiple identity**

Provide details of data on the impact of the activity/policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

|  |
| --- |
| Consideration was given to the potential implications of the policy for the different equality categories.  The Department for Communities, having carried out its own screen exercise, is satisfied that the Regulations will not lead to a significant discriminatory or negative differential impact on any particular Section 75 group.  In responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, people who are older and disabled are potentially more likely to be disadvantaged. However, this policy is likely to have benefits for this group. |

**Part 3. Screening decision**

There are 3 screening decision outcomes, as noted below.

Choose only 1 of these and provide reasons for your decision outcome and ensure evidence is noted/referenced for any decision outcome reached.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Screening Decision Outcomes Options | Reasons/Evidence |
|  |  |
| Option 1  Screen out without mitigation |  |
| Option 2  Screen out with mitigation | We have also concluded that there is no need to carry out a full equality impact assessment on the proposal to continue to operate a hybrid model of in person and remote attendance at meetings. The proposed changes are fairly minor procedural changes and are more likely to be slightly beneficial for a number of groups. Where potential for some minor disadvantage has been identified, it can be mitigated by reasonable adjustments if needed. |
| Option 3  Screen in for a full EQIA |  |

**Mitigation (Relevant to Option 2)**

When the public authority concludes that the likely impact is ‘minor’ and an equality impact assessment is not to be conducted, the public authority may consider mitigation to lessen the severity of any equality impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

Can the activity/policy/decision be amended or changed or an alternative activity/policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?

If so, give the **reasons** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative activity/policy.

|  |
| --- |
| Elected Members, staff and members of the public who experience difficulty accessing remote meetings because of age or disability will be accommodated with reasonable adjustments where possible. The Regulations are temporary until March 2022 and will require further review at that time |

**Timetabling and prioritising (Relevant to Option 3)**

Factors to be considered in timetabling and prioritising activities/policies for equality impact assessment.

If the activity/policy has been **‘screened in’** for equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the activity/policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Priority criterion | Rating (1-3) |
|  |  |
| Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations |  |
| Social need |  |
| Effect on people’s daily lives |  |
| Relevance to a public authority’s functions |  |
|  |  |
| Total Rating Score |  |

Is the activity/policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

If yes, please provide details

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**Part 4. Monitoring**

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission’s Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

The Commission recommends that where the activity/policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced, the public authority should monitor more broadly than for adverse impact (See Benefits, P.9-10, paras 2.13 – 2.20 of the Monitoring Guidance).

Effective monitoring will help the public authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the activity/policy which may lead the public authority to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and activity/policy development.

Who will undertake and sign-off the monitoring of this activity/policy and on what frequency?

Please give details below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Will be undertaken by:  Name & Position/Job Title: | Frequency (eg. Annually): |
| Cara McCrory | Will be kept under review on an ongoing basis until the Regulations expire or are extended in March 2022  The following will be monitored:   * feedback from Members, staff and the public; * complaints or issues raised; * demand for alternative provision/adjustments |
| Frances Byrne |
| Cathy Adamson |
| Will be signed-off by: |  |
| Name & HoS Title: |  |
| Frances Byrne | Head of Corporate Communications & Administration |

**Part 5 - Approval and authorisation**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Screened by:** | **Position/Job Title** | **Date** |
| Cathy Adamson | Acting Member Services/PCSP Manager | 10/09/21 |
|  | Manager |  |
| Reviewed by MMcS | Equality Officer | 13/09/21 |
| **Approved by:** | Frances Byrne | 20/09/21 |
|  | Head of Service |  |

Note: A copy of the Screening Template, for each activity/policy screened should be ‘signed off’ and approved by a senior manager responsible for the activity/policy, made easily accessible on the public authority’s website as soon as possible following completion and made available on request.

Appendix 1

Major impact:

1. The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
2. Potential equality matters are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
3. Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
4. Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;
5. The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
6. The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

Minor impact

1. The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
2. The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
3. Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;
4. By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

No (none) impact

1. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations;
2. The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.

Appendix 2

The following documentation (as a minimum) should be available to support the screening outcome decision:

* A written copy of the activity/policy in question;
* The screening template duly completed with the screening decision made explicit;
* All evidence utilised/referenced to support the screening decision to be available.