**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

|  |
| --- |
| **Standardised minutes format for Committee and Council meetings**  **Background**  Following analysis of the minutes for Council and Committee meetings the absence of a corporate style in the presentation of minutes was identified. The level of detail contained in the minutes is not consistent.  The different approaches applied to minutes has proved difficult for new staff in the Member Services Unit to grasp when preparing minutes. Additionally, shorthand skills cannot be used as recruitment criteria, as it is a proficiency which is no longer taught at higher education colleges and could discriminate against younger people.  This recommendation also takes account of:   * The increasing number of special meetings; * The time needed to produce detailed minutes; * The approval process for draft minutes by Officers/Directors/Chairs of Committee   It is challenging for staff to achieve the two day target to have draft minutes agreed and issued on Decision Time as per the “Access to Council and Committee Meetings and Agenda Report Minutes Protocol”.  **Current approach:**  The level of detail in minutes currently varies from Committee to Committee. For the purpose of example and comparison below is synopsis on how the reports of Officers are detailed in the minutes:   * Additional comments from the reporting officer are included * Detailed notes of agreed proposal * General comment advising Officers responded to Members’ comments/questions   **Comparison to other Councils**  As part of this review a sample of minutes from other Councils have been considered to compare approaches. The level of content varies from almost verbatim accounts to very brief minutes. A sample is outlined below:  Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council   * Planning Committee   + Minutes are very brief with no details of Members’ questions or comments * Operations Committee (similar to LCCC ESC)   + Minutes give all the detail from the reports followed by what was agreed. Members’ comments/questions are not included   Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Council   * Governance, Resources & Strategy Committee   + Minute is very brief, contains report heading followed by proposal   + Members’ comments/questions are not included. * Planning Committee   + Minute is very detailed and similar to LCCC minutes   Belfast City Council   * Council Meeting   + Summary of report and decision agreed is the only information recorded – no debate included. * Strategic Policy and Resources Committee   + Minutes summarise the presentation of the report and any debate which led to a vote. If no vote then the summary and proposal only are noted in the minutes.   **Consultation**  Following consultation with Directors the feedback identified a preference to streamline minutes to contain recommendations only for all meetings with the exception of Planning Committee which requires detailed minutes. The provision of audio recordings of Committee meetings on the Council website was mooted which would help to further increase Council transparency in its business. The viability of providing audio recordings will be explored by officers and reported to Committee in due course.  It is recommended that:   * Minutes for Council and Committee Meetings be kept to recommendations only with the exception of the Planning Committee which requires a verbatim minute. * Members’ comments only be noted if specifically requested and in the instances of a vote, the discussion preceding would be summarised together with the outcome.   Pending Council approval a streamlined format for minutes of all Council and committee meetings will be implemented with the exception of the Planning Committee. |

# Is this activity/policy

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

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

|  |
| --- |
| 1. To provide a standardised format for minutes of all Council and Committee meetings with the exception of the Planning Committee. |
| 1. To provide a consistent approach to preparing minutes for Member Services Officers. |
| 1. To support a more efficient operating model for Members Services officers |
| 1. To provide an appropriate level of detail that supports transparency in the Council’s decision making process without being unduly burdensome by providing unnecessary narrative. |

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

|  |
| --- |
| The proposed changes are not intended to benefit or target particular Section 75 groups. However, the provision of more succinct minutes (with the exception of the Planning Committee) may prove more user-friendly for a number of Section 75 groups. |

Who initiated or wrote the activity/policy?

|  |
| --- |
| The new policy to standardise minutes was produced by the Members Services Unit of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council. |

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 minutes of Council and Committee Meetings |
| Other Public Sector Organisations – please list | All key public sector partners |
| Voluntary/Community/Trade Unions – please list | All key voluntary and community sector partners as well as Trade Unions |
| Other, eg, Elected Members – please list | Elected Members and other public representatives |

**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 |
| 5 LCCC Access to Council and Committee Meetings and Agenda Report Minutes Protocol | Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council |

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 format of minutes of its meetings, the practices of other councils have been taken into account as well as the views of staff and Elected Members. | |
| Religious Belief | We do not hold information on which categories of the public access our meetings and minutes.  Elected Members, staff and the general public who are likely to be affected by the proposed changes will 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 different needs or experiences identified in relation to religious belief, political opinion. |
| Political Opinion |
| Racial Group | People who do not have English as a first language need council information to be accessible and user-friendly. This may require website content, including minutes, being made available in other languages if requested. |
| Age | No different needs or experiences identified in relation to religious belief, political opinion. |
| Marital Status | No different needs or experiences identified for these groups in relation to the proposed changes. |
| Sexual Orientation |
| Men & Women Generally | No different needs or experiences identified for these groups in relation to the proposed changes. |
| Disability | People with different disabilities have different access needs when it comes to information. We therefore need to make sure that our minutes/information are available in a range of formats to suit different disabilities. |
| Dependants | No different needs or experiences identified for these groups in relation to the proposed changes. |

**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 or political opinion as the proposed changes apply equally to all. | None |
| Political Opinion |
| Racial Group | More succinct minutes may be more user friendly for those who do not have English as a first language. | Minor - positive |
| Age | Briefer minutes may be more user friendly for older and younger people. | Minor - positive |
| Marital Status | No different impact identified for these groups | None |
| Sexual Orientation |
| Men & Women Generally |
| Disability | Briefer minutes may be more user friendly and the provision of alternative formats, if required, may be more manageable. |  |
| Dependants | No different impact identified for these groups |  |

\*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 |  | No opportunity identified |
| Political Opinion |  | No opportunity identified |
| 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 aware of council business, including meetings. |  |
| Age | Older people who require minutes of meetings in hard copy or other formats can be facilitated. |  |
| Marital Status |  | No opportunity identified |
| Sexual Orientation |  | No opportunity identified |
| Men & Women Generally |  | No opportunity identified |
| Disability | Minutes of meetings can be provided in a range of alternative formats if required. |  |
| Dependants | No impact identified. |  |

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 direct impact on good relations for any of these groups identified in relation to the proposed changes. | 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 |
| Political Opinion |  | No |
| Racial Group |  | 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 proposed changes for the different equality categories.  We do not anticipate any particular impacts on grounds of multiple identity from the proposed changes to the format of minutes. |

**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 | It has been concluded that there is no need to carry out a full equality impact assessment on the proposal to streamline the format of minutes. The proposed changes are fairly minor procedural changes and no negative equality impacts have been identified. If any unanticipated impacts arise, action will be considered accordingly. |
| Option 2  Screen out with mitigation |  |
| 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.

**Timetabling and prioritising (Relevant to Option 3) – not applicable**

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 | The new arrangements will be reviewed on an annual basis. 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: |  |
| 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 | 26/01/22 |
| Reviewed by Mary McSorley | Equality Officer | 26/01/22 |
| **Approved by:** |  |  |
| Frances Byrne | Head of Service | 27/01/22 |

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.