**Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council**

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

**Part 1. Information about the activity/policy/project being screened.**

The adoption of a hybrid (remote) meetings model for council and committee meetings to align with the Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024.

**Name of the activity/policy/project**

Remote/Hybrid meetings model.

# **Is this activity/policy/project – an existing one, a revised one, a new one?**

Revised policy – based on legislative grounds. Explained below:

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 to conduct all its meetings via remote/hybrid means.

The authority to meet remotely was governed by Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 which came into effect on 1 May 2020 and expired at the beginning of March 2024. Following the expiry of the legislation the Council had to revert back to in person meetings which required Elected Members to be physically present in order to participate in the decision making process. Any Member observing meetings remotely could not propose, second or vote upon a motion.

In June 2024, the Northern Ireland Assembly approved the Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 became operational. This legislation gives Councils the flexibility to adopt remote/hybrid meeting arrangements on a permanent basis if desired. This will enable Elected Members to participate in council and committee meetings remotely again.

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

The intended aim/outcome is to adopt permanent arrangements for remote/hybrid meetings.

**Who is the activity/policy/project targeted at and who will benefit? Are there any expected benefits for specific Section 75 categories/groups from this activity/policy/project? If so, please explain.**

The reinstatement of remote/hybrid meetings will benefit Elected Members. It is expected that some Section 75 categories/groups will benefit from this activity. It will enable those with:

* A disability or illness,
* Young families,
* Caring responsibilities

to become involved in political life. The option of attending meetings remotely would encourage candidates from a broader demographic to stand for election as this would help enable them to fulfil their duties as a local representative.

**Who initiated or developed the activity/policy/project? Who owns and who implements the activity/policy/project?**

The Department for Communities is ultimately responsible for the legislation giving Councils the flexibility to conduct remote/hybrid meetings. The Council will take the decision at its Monthly Meeting in August 2024 whether to adopt a remote/hybrid meetings model. The project will be overseen by the Head of Corporate Communications and Administration in conjunction with the Acting PCSP/Member Services Manager and the Member Services Unit.

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

**Yes~~/No~~ - If yes, give brief details of any significant factors.**

The following factors would contributed/detract from the intended aims/outcomes of the policy:

* A change in legislation would affect the Council’s ability to operate its meetings remotely.
* The Council has the flexibility to decide whether or not it wishes to adopt a remote meetings policy.

**Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the schedule will impact upon? Delete if not applicable.**

**Staff**

* Chief Executive
* Directors
* Heads of Service
* Staff presenting at Council/Committee meetings

**Service Users**

* Representatives from organisations or an individual participating in a Council meeting will have the option to attend meetings remotely.

**Other public sector organisations**

* Other public sector organisations participating in a Council meeting will have the option to attend meetings remotely.

**Voluntary/community/trade unions**

* Representatives from voluntary/community/trade unions participating in a Council meeting will have the option to attend meetings remotely.

**Other**

* Elected Members

**Other policies/strategies/plans with a bearing on this activity/policy/project**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name of policy/strategy/plan** | **Who owns or implements?** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Standing Orders – updated and to be agreed to reflect Council decision to implement remote meetings | Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council  [Part 3 - Rules of procedure - Lisburn & Castlereagh (lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk)](https://www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk/w/part-3-rules-of-procedure) |
| The Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 | Department for Communities  [The Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 (legislation.gov.uk)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nidsr/2024/9780338023223/data.pdf) |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| LCCC Remote Meetings Protocol – updated to reflect new legislation and to be agreed by Council | [Governance & Risk platform (decisiontime.online)](https://lccc.decisiontime.online/new/document_library?folder=14160&document=1054828&page=1) |

**Available evidence**

**What evidence/information (qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered or considered to inform this activity/policy? Specify details for each Section 75 category.**

The key information considered to inform this activity is the legislative framework that the Council works within. The main beneficiaries are the Elected Members of LCCC.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Section 75 Category** | **Details of evidence/information** |
| Religious Belief | The Council does not hold information on the religious belief of Elected Members.  The Council has 40 Elected Members drawn from the following political parties:  DUP - 14  APNI - 13  UUP - 6  SF - 4  SDLP – 2  INDEPENDENT – 1 |
| Political Opinion |
| Racial Group | No racial groups represented.  The composition of LCCC Elected Members crosses the following Section 75 groups:   * Age (18 years - 65+ years) * Marital status * Sexual orientation |
| Age |
| Marital Status |
| Sexual Orientation |
| Men & Women Generally | The structure of LCCC Elected Members:   * Female – 22.5% * Male – 77.5% |
| Disability | Some Members may fall into this category. |
| People with and without Dependants | A number of Members have caring responsibilities which fall into the three main categories:  The care of a child or children  The care of an elderly relative/person  The care of someone with a disability |

### 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.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Section 75 Category** | **Details of needs/experiences/priorities** |
| Religious Belief | No evidence of specific needs identified in  relation to this activity.  No evidence of specific needs identified in  relation to this activity. |
| Political Opinion |
| Racial Group |
| Age |
| Marital Status |
| Sexual Orientation |
| Men & Women Generally |
| Disability | Members who live with a disability/illness will benefit from having the option to attend meetings remotely. |
| People with and without Dependants | Members who have caring responsibilities will benefit from having the option to attend meetings remotely. |

**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 Section 75 equality categories?**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Section 75 Category** | **Details of likely impact – will it be positive or negative? If none anticipated, say none** | **Level of impact -** **major or minor\*** - see guidance below |
| Religious Belief | No impact identified | N/A |
| Political Opinion |
| Racial Group |
| Age |
| Marital Status |
| Sexual Orientation |
| Men & Women Generally |
| Disability | Potential positive impact anticipated | Minor |
| People with and without Dependants | Potential positive impact anticipated | Minor |

\* See Appendix 1 for details.

**2(a) Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Section 75 Category** | **IF Yes, provide details** | **If No, provide details** |
| Religious Belief | No opportunities identified in relation to this policy/project/activity for any of these groups. | |
| Political Opinion |
| Racial Group |
| Age |
| Marital Status |
| Sexual Orientation |
| Men & Women Generally |
| Disability | Members who live with a disability/illness will benefit from having the option to attend meetings remotely. |  |
| People with and without Dependants | Members with caring responsibilities will benefit from having the option to attend meetings remotely. |  |

**Equality Action Plan 2021-2025**

Does the activity/policy/project being screened relate to an action in the [Equality Action Plan 2021-2025](https://www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk/council/publications/equality-section-75/action-plans-equality-and-disability)? ~~Yes~~/No If yes, specify which action.

**2(b) DDA Disability Duties (see Disability Action Plan 2021-2025)**

Does this policy/activity present opportunities to contribute to the actions in our [Disability Action Plan](https://www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk/council/publications/equality-section-75/action-plans-equality-and-disability):

* to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?
* to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life?

**Yes**/~~No~~ If yes, give details/specify which action.

The ability to attend Council meetings remotely will encourage the participation of disabled people in public life. Elected Members living with a disability will be able to fulfil their duties as a public representative from having the ability to attend meetings remotely.

**3 To what extent is the activity/policy/project likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Good Relations Category** | **Details of likely impact. Will it be positive or negative?** [if no specific impact identified, say none] | **Level of impact –** **minor/major\*** |
| Religious Belief | No direct impact | None |
| Political Opinion | No direct impact | None |
| Racial Group | No direct impact | 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 | N/A | No opportunities identified to promote good relations for any of these groups. |
| Political Opinion |
| Racial Group |

**Multiple identity**

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

No impact has been identified which would impact people with multiple identities.

**Part 3. Screening decision/outcome**

Equality and good relations screening is used to identify whether there is a need to carry out a **full equality impact assessment** on a proposed policy or project. There are 3 possible outcomes:

1. **Screen out** - no need for a full equality impact assessment and no mitigations required because no relevance to equality, no negative impacts identified or only very minor positive impacts for all groups. This may be the case for a purely technical policy for example.
2. **Screen out with mitigation** - no need for a full equality impact assessment but some minor potential impacts or opportunities to better promote equality and/or good relations identified, so mitigations appropriate. Much of our activity will probably fall into this category.
3. **Screen in for full equality impact assessment** – potential for significant and/or potentially negative impact identified for one or more groups, so proposal requires a more detailed impact assessment. [See Equality Commission guidance on justifying a screening decision.]

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Screening Decision/Outcome** | **Reasons/Evidence** |
| Option 1  **Screen out** – no equality impact assessment and no mitigation required [go to Monitoring section] | Equality screening has concluded there is no need for a full equality impact assessment. There are no negative impacts associated with the project. |
| Option 2  **Screen out with mitigation**  Not applicable |  |
| Option 3  **Screen in** for a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)  Not applicable |  |

**Mitigation (Only relevant to Option 2)**

**Can the activity/policy/project plan be amended, 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 and ensure the mitigations are included in a revised/updated policy or plan.

**N/A**

**Timetabling and prioritising for full EQIA (only relevant to Option 3)**

If the activity/policy has been **‘screened in’** for full equality impact assessment, give details of any factors to be considered and the next steps for progressing the EQIA, including a proposed timetable.

Is the activity/policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities? Yes/No. If yes, please provide details.

**N/A**

**Part 4. Monitoring**

**Two elements to monitoring:**

1. **Monitoring the activity generally as part of normal review and evaluation or service improvement**

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

Effective monitoring will help a 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.

**What will be monitored and how? What specific equality monitoring will be done? Who will undertake and sign-off the monitoring of this activity/policy and on what frequency?** Please give details:

* The legislative position on the remote meeting regulations will be monitored on an ongoing basis.
* The Council will be notified of any changes in legislation by the Department for Communities.

**Part 5 - Approval and authorisation**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Position/Job Title** | **Date** |
| Screened by: Cathy Adamson | Acting PCSP/Members Services Officer | 19/08/2024 |
| Reviewed by: Annie Wilson | Equality Officer | 03/09/2024 |
| **Approved by: Frances Byrne** | Head of Corporate Communications & Administration | 04/09/2024 |

Note: On completion of the screening exercise, a copy of the completed Screening Report should be:

* Approved and ‘signed off’ by a senior manager responsible for the activity/policy.
* Included with Committee reports, as appropriate.
* Sent to the Equality Officer for the quarterly screening report to consultees, internal reporting and publishing on the LCCC website.
* Shared with relevant colleagues.
* Made available to the public on request.

Evidence and documents referenced in the screening report should also be available if requested.

**Appendix 1 – Equality Commission guidance on equality impact**

\*Major impact:

1. The policy/project 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 impact (none)

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.

Updated Template @ Oct 2022