

**Five Year Review
Of the
L&CCC Equality Scheme 2020**

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Executive Summary – Five Year Review of Equality Scheme

Introduction

The following gives a summary of the 5 year review of the Equality Scheme as undertaken by LCCC and the points made explicit below are those as required by the Equality Commission NI. The agreed [Equality Action Plan 2015-2020](#) can be found on the Council Website.

Benefits to individuals

All individuals and designated groups will have directly or indirectly benefitted from the policies and activities implemented by Council over the past 5 year period.

This will have included building on existing good work and the continued mainstreaming of policies and activities across all departments, including ensuring that the “new” functions of Council post 2015 are included in same.

Importantly, the progression of the review of policies and activities within a framework of evidence based screening outcome decisions continues to underline the move toward measureable and achievable outcomes for all. Consequently, it is considered that positive outcomes have been delivered for all.

Good practice is constantly promoted and part of this is working with a range of groups, and by such engagement, networking and also feedback from the group’s good practice can be promoted and where there is room for improvement identified this is taken into consideration as the policy or activity is reviewed.

By way of example the continued progression of the Age Friendly initiative ensures that the voices of older groups are included in respect of service delivery and at the other end of the age spectrum the Youth Council provides opportunities for a younger age group to directly input into the development of services across Council.

Also, the Kerbside Collection service, which impacts on every household within LCCC, has been identified as requiring a full EQIA, forthcoming in due course. By so doing this will allow all households (of which there are many types) the opportunity to provide feedback to Council which will be given full consideration thus assisting Council in meeting local needs in respect of this major strategic service.

By undertaking the above, which involves internal mechanisms as well as working with other organisations and groups (statutory, voluntary, community) and importantly having both contact and feedback from all groups assists

Council in the development of and assessment of the impact of any policy or activity on the groups. Consequently, all individuals and all groups continue to benefit from the policies and activities of Council.

Engagement of leaders in implementation

In order to proactively implement the Equality Scheme it is important that leaders within Council, that is Elected Members and senior Officers, are fully engaged with the commitments outlined in the Equality Scheme.

This is undertaken through input to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) as well as each Departmental Management Team (DMT) to ensure that all policies and activities with an equality impact are identified and processed through the appropriate channels.

Such policies and activities will be presented to the relevant Committee and then Council for decision. To assist the decision making process (and further progress mainstreaming) the information and data to evidence e.g. the screening decision is provided to Elected Members. By so doing the necessity of early screening, the value of information and data in order to support any screening decision reached and, consequently, contribute to and assist with any future review of the policy or activity is emphasised.

Elected Members are “community representatives” and their engagement provides valuable input from their constituents in respect of particular policies and activities e.g. community centres, playgrounds and play parks as well as leisure centre usage.

It is important within the engagement of leaders that any timelines associated with policies and activities identified as having an equality impact are noted. For example, a minor policy or activity could be dealt with within a very short time frame whereas a more strategic policy, which would in all likelihood be subject to a full EQIA, would take a considerable longer period of time to fulfil the statutory duties as outlined in the Equality Scheme.

Training is provided to the leaders within Council as necessary and is delivered via a variety of means including in-house or other organisations may be called upon to facilitate delivery. For example, in respect of the “new” functions of Council two pilot sessions (one for planning staff and one for Councillors) were delivered by ECNI staff, following identification of this as a need by the Equality Officer of Council.

All of the above serves to illustrate that the leaders within Council are engaged within the statutory duty process and that this engagement has developed over time and that the decision making process within Council is explicit and transparent.

Challenges and how they were overcome

A number of challenges have been identified over this past period and all have been dealt with, as effectively as possible, these included but were not limited to the following:

- *Identification of the equality impacts of any policy or activity being developed and implemented.* For example, during the implementation of the Public Realm Scheme a number of mitigating actions were identified as “health and safety”, however, all had an equality impact and work has now progressed to ensure that all future equality impacts are identified as such.
- *Clarification of terminology in respect of undertaking the statutory duties.* For some staff terms such as “policy” can be problematical when such staff are involved in actively delivering a service to customers. By presenting the statutory duties in an inclusive manner (it is about all you are involved in) this issue has been overcome and staff are now more confident in their involvement with the statutory duties.
- *Interpretation and completion of the four screening questions.* The two equality of opportunity questions and the two good relations questions are presented as a package with staff advised to work through each in a consistent manner. By taking such an approach staff can better see the “flow” within the screening template and how best to work through the document.
- *Application of the statutory duties to both the strategic aspect of any policy or activity as well as the practical implementation of that policy or activity.* Again, during the Public Realm Scheme (in respect of a received Paragraph 10 complaint) the distinction was made between the strategic element of any policy or activity and the actual implementation of that policy or activity. This distinction has been both noted and, importantly, made known to senior staff and actively presented in meetings, when working through screening templates and in any training undertaken to ensure it is both known and embedded within the statutory duty process.
- *Value of providing evidence, through the provision of relevant information and data, to support decisions made in respect of the statutory duties.* During the past period the value and relevance of utilising both internal data as well as the data available from outside sources e.g. Census, NISRA etc. has been promoted. There is a wealth of such data available (especially in relation to particular areas of activity e.g. Economic Development, Leisure Services) and the “prioritisation” of relevant data is crucial to ensuring that the statutory duties are met at all times. Staff generally welcome this “prioritisation”

approach, e.g. if you are developing play parks for under 10's then a focus of your data should be under 10's and their carers, and it helps emphasise that what is required is relevant data and not "all" data.

- *Need to keep training relevant and updated for all levels of staff and also Elected Members.* Training at the appropriate level for both staff and Elected Members is a central component of both bringing staff on board regarding the statutory duties, answering their queries as well as walking them through the process and by so doing allow them to gain confidence around their involvement in the screening process and so on. The training of Elected Members has also to be undertaken at certain points to both reinforce previous awareness training and also to identify any present areas of concern that they may wish to have dealt with. The ECNI session with Elected Members, principally around the new functions of Council, was very well received and indicated to Elected Members the need to and value of undertaking the statutory duties in respect of these new functions.
- *Value of proactively undertaking the statutory duties,* in respect of all policies and activities across all groups, in order to help ensure that Section 75 complaints do not arise or if they do there is an "audit-trail" to evidence that the statutory duties have been given consideration.

Lessons learned

A number of lessons have been learned over the past period, including:

- The process of mainstreaming remains ongoing, continues to develop and still takes time to implement.
- The statutory duties must be taken on board at the earliest opportunity in respect of policy or activity development.
- The term policy, while given an all-inclusive definition in the ECNI guidance, can create problems for, in particular front-line staff, who on a practical level implement services.
- Importantly, for senior staff the distinction between the strategic implementation of a policy or activity and the practical implementation has now been crucially made distinct and proactively included in all statutory duty activities.
- Following on from this approach is the emphasis on the potential for mitigation and/or the consideration of an alternative policy in respect of implementing any policy or activity.

- The continued use of focused consultation and/or stakeholder engagement and involvement serves to directly allow input from the designated groups to the policy implementation process within Council.

By far the biggest learning experience has been in relation to the Public Realm Scheme. While the points noted above would be included in this learning experience the overall impact of the implementation of the Scheme has led to a virtual root and branch review of how the statutory duties are progressed within Council.

Good Practice

The Council continues to work toward excellent service delivery for all residents, as well as visitors to the area. The good practice element of this would include:

- Targeted consultation, through continuously updating the consultation list, inclusive of face to face meetings etc. when requested.
- Where policies and activities are screened out that there is a clear evidence base for so doing and where a full EQIA is considered necessary that this is undertaken as per the seven step process contained in the ECNI guidance.
- That relevant information and data is utilised at all times with respect to the statutory duty process.
- That alternative formats, inclusive of languages other than English, are made available as requested and that “social media” is utilised to help ensure that accessibility is maximised for all groups.
- Good practice continues to be reinforced through various networks and engagement with a broad range of bodies, organisations and groups (e.g. Statutory Duty Network, ECNI, SEH&SCT, voluntary and community sector) all of whom can provide positive input to the ongoing work of Council.
- Training continues to underline good practice across all Council services. By ensuring that training fits the needs of each audience then it is considered that participants gain the maximum from any sessions held.
- Indeed Council recognises that various “strategic” policies may run beyond a single five year reporting period and that this will be taken into account when reporting on these policies, be it in the annual report or the Equality Scheme review when next required.

All of the above results in excellent quality value for money services based on good practice being delivered across Council. This ensures, for example:

- Leisure services for all
- Access to community grants
- The provision of arts and community programmes
- Accessible information
- Kerbside waste collections
- Playground and play park provision
- Various grant based support programmes for the economic development of the area
- Development of groups such as the Youth Council
- Supporting the WHO Age Friendly initiative

Conclusion

The above clearly indicates that much good work has been undertaken in the past period to continue to implement the Equality Scheme and the commitments contained therein.

While acknowledging that issues have arisen from time to time, most were identified internally quickly and dealt with as effectively as possible. If a Section 75 complaint was made this was dealt with according to the ECNI guidance and the commitments given in the Equality Scheme and only one complaint which went to the Commission for investigation was upheld (this was in reference to the Public Realm Scheme).

The lessons learnt from such contexts have been made clear to all staff and by so doing staff are more informed to deal with similar programmes, policies and activities going forward over the coming period.

Consequently it is considered that the Equality Scheme does provide a sound basis on which to progress mainstreaming and promote equality of opportunity and good relations for all groups within the Council area.

Section 1 - Mainstreaming Overview

The present Equality Scheme of Council was approved by the Equality Commission on 25 March 2015. This Scheme related to the “new” Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (L&CCC, the amalgamation of the former Lisburn City and the former Castlereagh Borough Councils) which became operational on 01 April 2015. The new L&CCC also took on a range of additional powers and responsibilities than was the case previously in the former Councils.

The approved Equality Scheme sets out the obligations of Council in respect of the Sec 75 duties. The aim is to see equality of opportunity and good relations mainstreamed within and across the organisation.

Mainstreaming includes the following:

- Ensuring that all staff are aware of the Sec 75 obligations;
- Providing training to staff in respect of the statutory duties;
- Continuing to be proactive in that policy makers take on board the statutory duties at the earliest opportunity;
- Placing relevant Sec 75 documents on the website of Council to promote transparency of the decision making process;
- Ensuring decision makers are provided with all the relevant information and data required in respect of the statutory duties in order to facilitate the decision making process;

The Equality Scheme of Council has allowed the process of mainstreaming to continue through, for example, policy development, screening and re-screening, impact assessments, data and information collation, networking and training.

With the political make-up of Council open to change at any local government election this makes awareness of the Sec 75 obligations of Council to Elected Members crucial for the effective implementation of the Equality Scheme.

By reiterating the Equality Scheme and its commitments for Elected Members (as decision makers) and for staff at all levels (as policy makers) within the overall context of mainstreaming will help ensure this aim is met across Council.

The view of Council therefore is that the Equality Scheme does provide a workable base for mainstreaming equality of opportunity and good relations but implementation needs to be kept under review to ensure effectiveness is maximised both now and in the future.

The following would cover some of the main points considered to have been learnt within this period:

- Mainstreaming continually requires time to develop throughout the organisation in an efficient and effective manner.
- The statutory duties must be undertaken at the earliest opportunity in respect of all policies and activities to explicitly ensure that the commitments in the Equality Scheme are complied with.
- For some staff there remains an ambiguity in relation to a number of terms e.g. “policy”, and this can be problematical to provide clarity to those who work on a daily basis in terms of “services” and “activities”.
- Council continues to take a focused and targeted approach to consultation, the aim being to try to involve “communities” in an inclusive manner as is possible.

One example of lessons learnt from a Council Unit where the great majority of the workload is regulatory is that noted from Building Control, as follows:

While some 90% of the work of Building Control is regulatory and where policies, regulations or guidance comes through from the relevant Government Department, which is generally accompanied by a Section 75 screening outcome, this Unit of Council has promoted the statutory duties to raise overall awareness amongst staff and a core lesson learnt is that the statutory duties have to be actioned, where appropriate, at the earliest opportunity and cannot work effectively as an addition or afterthought to any decision previously enacted.

When a Unit such as this recognises the necessity of undertaking the statutory duties at the earliest opportunity this clearly indicates that the statutory duty message is permeating throughout all departments within Council.

The following notes what is required to continue to achieve outcomes for all groups:

- Build upon what has already been achieved.

- Further develop those areas recognised as requiring action to be taken e.g. the additional functions of Council.
- Continue to promote the review, evaluation and monitoring of all activities.
- Where it is possible to do so build achievable measurable outcomes into all activities.
- Work, where appropriate, with relevant groups and organisation's to promote good practice and ensure service delivery for all.

Implementation of the equality scheme over the five year period has involved a range of developments. One of these is the further involvement of senior management which has progressed through two related initiatives.

First, sessions with the Corporate Management Team (Chief Executive and Directors) whereby the strategic significance of the implementation of the statutory duties across Council is emphasised.

Secondly, quarterly meetings with each Departmental Management Team (comprising the Director and the Heads of Service). This has resulted in a number of positive outcomes including:

- the continued promotion of mainstreaming;
- the value of early screening in relation to either a new policy being developed or an existing policy being revised or amended;
- the need for data and information to assist the process and to evidence decisions;
- the monitoring of equality activity within an on-going timeline in respect of reporting to Committee/Council and decisions being made;

The above process was developed in order to ensure that policies/activities of Council are considered at the earliest opportunity across all Departments and that both those developing policy and the decision makers are aware of the Sec 75 obligations of Council.

By generating a more robust process inclusive of relevant timings for each Department it is considered that the overall process of implementing the statutory duties will be further enhanced.

Section 2 - Compliance

Council takes the view that positive outcomes have been delivered for both Council and all the designated groups.

The annual feedback report submitted to the Equality Commission is progressed through the relevant channels and both senior staff and Elected Members have an opportunity to input to its content.

All previous annual reports are submitted by the due date of 31 August and placed on the website of Council following guidance from the Equality Commission. The reports to cover the following periods:

Annual Progress Report 2015-2016*

[Annual Progress Report 2016-2017](#)

[Annual Progress Report 2017-2018](#)

[Annual Progress Report 2018-2019](#)

Annual Progress Report 2019-2020 (to be approved by Council in February 2020)

*(Due to LCCC being established in 2015 no report was required by the Equality Commission for this initial year)

This year's annual report it has been agreed by the Commission can be submitted at a later date upon completion, due to the Covid pandemic. Again the report will be accessible at www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk.

Likewise the present Equality Scheme of Council and the Equality Action Plan can also be accessed here.

Where good practice, from other organisations, has been identified consideration will be given to how this may be implemented within L&CCC if it is thought this would make an effective contribution to mainstreaming.

Networks and engagement with local groups and organisation's have been established over time and these are maintained, and links with new groups set up as they may arise.

The aim is to ensure such groups support input to the mainstreaming process thus allowing for relevant feedback in respect of each designated group and, as necessary, input from particular groups will be actively sought e.g. young people, those with disabilities, ethnic groups and so on.

Arrangements for assessing compliance with Section 75 duties are outlined at Section 4 of the Equality Scheme and these have developed over time, including the general implementation of the statutory duties as well as dealing with specific Sec 75 complaints.

There was one EQIA consultation undertaken and this was carried out in accordance with the relevant guidance as well as the commitments given in the Equality Scheme of Council.

Consultation was targeted as per good practice at the most relevant groups and organisation's and a face to face meeting between senior staff of Council and one group of stakeholders helped ensure relevant information was provided and clarified as well as concerns raised by the stakeholders noted for further consideration by Council.

By undertaking screening at the earliest opportunity and continually moving toward an evidence based screening outcome decision most policies/activities are now screened out but where consideration is required in respect of potentially undertaking a full EQIA this will be undertaken as per the guidance.

All policies/activities screened are placed on the website of Council inclusive of the screening template and where a full EQIA is undertaken all relevant documents are also included here in due course.

Officers maintain contact with a broad number and range of groups and this can be built into the screening process and allows for further mainstreaming. Where, for example an EQIA is undertaken, feedback from stakeholders is explicitly noted in relevant documents (including any final EQIA decision report).

The consultation list is updated/amended on a regular basis in order to ensure individuals, groups and organisations are "active" and that their inclusion on the consultation list complies with data protection requirements also.

The overall list presently contains some 160 contacts and these would generally be engaged through electronic means. Council continues to take a targeted approach to engagement relevant to any area of work on which a consultation is underway. For example, local community groups are consulted in that they not only represent a community but also form part of the constituents of Elected Members within an electoral area. This approach therefore provides a link between the two.

The consultation process is kept under review in order that engagement with groups and other relevant individuals and organisations may be further developed. This includes the review and use of social media, and similar methods of communication, in order to endeavour to involve all relevant stakeholders as may be necessary.

Council did consult directly with stakeholders representing the disability sector in respect of an EQIA being undertaken, as noted above this proved a useful process for both Council and the stakeholders.

Depending on whatever "policy" is being consulted upon then groups and individuals would be targeted accordingly and where appropriate consulted

directly (through Council initiating contact or through a request for contact from the relevant stakeholder).

Feedback to consultees occurs through making the outcome of any Impact Assessment available and can also include responses to individuals or groups who may have requested additional information.

Council is aware, however, that different groups may have different needs and this is accounted for both within the policy development process (including screening) and in any consultation that may subsequently take place. For example, an alternative format version of a final EQIA report was provided to a number of individual stakeholders at the time the availability of the final report was made known to all consultees.

Section 3 - Policy Assessment & Consultation

Council has not explicitly worked on the basis of making a distinction between equality of opportunity and good relations as regards either policies being “screened in” or “screened out”.

The number of policies being screened continues to increase as Council proactively works toward meeting its mainstreaming obligations in respect of both equality of opportunity and good relations.

The approach taken, within the Corporate Management Team/Departmental Management Team process as outlined above, can be summarised as follows:

- The progression of mainstreaming within Council including the emphasis on the importance and value of screening continues.
- The importance and value of screening is emphasised through all types of training that is undertaken by staff at all levels.
- The number of policies screened has continued to increase as the process of mainstreaming progresses.
- Policies are screened using the screening template and with appropriate screening it is anticipated that the policies requiring to be “screened in” will reduce in number.
- Where a policy/activity may require a full EQIA consideration will be given to undertaking this following the screening outcome decision and the relevant guidance.

The four screening questions as provided by the Equality Commission in their guidance generally serve as a baseline for each of the designated groups.

For example, in relevant training sessions and in other meetings, these four questions are covered to help facilitate the screening of any activity/policy and also to give consideration to the provision of evidence on which to make any screening decision. It is seen as important that those responsible for a policy or service work through these questions appropriately.

To facilitate an evidence based outcome of the screening process data is utilised from both internal and external sources. Officers are aware of the need to utilise relevant data and to do so within the “equality and good relations” context. By doing so, coupled with appropriate professional judgment, then outcomes continue to become robust.

Such an approach, in parallel with that taken regarding engagement, ensures that equality of opportunity implications are covered across Council.

As noted above only one EQIA has been undertaken in the present period and this was the outcome of a screening decision. It is recognised that the screening process is a central part of implementing the statutory duties be a policy screened out or screened in.

In respect of this particular screening exercise the identification of both the strategic nature of the policy as well as the implementation of that policy “on the ground” came to the fore and this subsequently now is included as a necessary consideration in all policies/activities going forward.

The Equality Impact Assessment undertaken by Council reached the decision making point (point 6). This decision was made by the appropriate Committee and then ratified by Council.

One central Council service (kerbside collections) has been approved for a full EQIA (in the forthcoming period) following the screening decision outcome. This indicates that if it is considered that a full EQIA is necessary then Council will approve that it is undertaken.

As noted at Good Practice (p.7), Council is very aware that various policies, principally of a strategic nature, will take a considerable period of time from, for example, conception and design to full completion and implementation. Consequently, Council recognises that it maintains responsibility for any such “policy/project” and that screening may have to be undertaken at different stages of implementation. This provides the opportunity for “ongoing” consultation and engagement with the relevant stakeholder groups and continues to support Council in meeting the statutory duty obligations.

Section 4 - Data

The value of having appropriate data in respect of the nine groups has long been recognised as central to the effective implementation of the statutory duties.

While much data originates from official sources it is agreed that for some groups there is still a need for further data to be developed, which can be utilised within the statutory duty process, for example where the local ethnic population may reside (including Syrian refugees recently arrived) can have consequences for a range of Council policies and services, and this is generally true for all groups.

By utilising all data, and doing so with the aim of both facilitating and developing services in an inclusive manner and monitoring the impact of those services, will ensure equitable and proportionate service delivery to all.

The following gives an indication of a number of data sources presently utilised:

- Census
- NISRA/NINIS
- Surveys (for particular groups)
- ARK (QUB/UU)
- Deprivation Indices
- Economic/Employment Data
- Academic Research/Policy Studies
- Council Data
- Voluntary and Community Sector Data
- GIS

Such data sources are underlined as potential contributors to ensuring that evidence based outcome decisions become the norm throughout Council.

Where any group would be “data poor” staff are encouraged to utilise available relevant sources of data and through evaluation and monitoring of the activity/service ensure data collection is undertaken in order that this may be fed into further service developments.

Section 5 - Publication of Assessments

Any Impact Assessment undertaken is published locally (inclusive of the website of Council) and if also published regionally where required. Each document, following the policy of Council on alternative formats, can be made available in Braille and audio and for those not fluent in English consideration is given to making information available in a language other than English. The Council's web site is accessible to individuals with a range of disabling conditions.

A number of publications – the Councils Annual Report and City-Wide – are made available in Braille as this has been identified as a local need. Other formats are given consideration on request and made available as appropriate. Such publications would also include references to screening and EQIAs as necessary and serve to make such activity known to all local residents.

All documents published follow both the guidance and the commitments given in the Equality Scheme of Council in order to provide transparency to all stakeholders.

Section 6 - Taking Account of Assessments and Consultation

With regard to any Impact Assessments undertaken mitigating measures are given consideration by Council. Feedback obtained through the consultation process would also as a matter of course be included in any report under consideration prior to a final decision being made.

The Public Realm Scheme EQIA included mitigation measures in the final report and these are being progressed with the involvement of a stakeholder representative group at this time.

Where the need for a full EQIA was given consideration and consequently undertaken, inclusive of consultation and feedback from stakeholders, this served to underline both the strategic and implementation aspects of any policy/activity.

This distinction has now been taken on board by Council and will be appropriately considered in future as screening takes place and where necessary full EQIAs undertaken.

Section 7 - Training

Training over the past five year period has centred on a combination of refresher training for staff as well as, for example, that which covered the broader statutory duty process for Heads of Service across all Departments, inclusive of screening etc. This, for example, emphasised the importance of evidence for any screening decision reached as well as the need to annually evaluate/monitor each service.

The feedback from such training was integrated into the mainstreaming/statutory duty process and helped to develop the quarterly meetings with each Department, with a view to:

- ensuring that staff are up to date on the statutory duties regarding their responsibilities etc. and
- having a mechanism to catch all equality of opportunity and good relations activity and subject same to the Sec 75 process.

With respect to Elected Members (and in particular to the new responsibilities of Council) training is undertaken as required in order to ensure that they are aware of their decision making responsibilities.

In respect of the new/additional responsibilities in order to ensure appropriate training is developed for both staff and Elected Members the following has taken place in order to progress this:

- Council has worked with the Commission to run pilot sessions, and consequently
- the Commission is now working with NILGA to hopefully progress this matter on an 11 Council basis

As deemed appropriate the LGSC Training Group is utilised to provide relevant training to both officers and Elected Members.

The LGSC TG sessions can cover a broad range of themes and areas based on identified needs either locally or regionally, for example:

- Sec 75 duties
- Engaging with groups
- Ethnic communities
- Disability awareness
- LGBT issues

Staff have received awareness training with respect to the statutory duty process and this is updated as required, including when a matter has been identified through the implementation of a service. For front line staff these

sessions are of a very practical nature as they generally require different training/information than their supervisors and managers.

Heads of Service and managers (including other relevant staff) have received training in relation to the screening and impact assessment process, providing evidence for any outcome and monitoring policies/activities over time. Each session would be focused and time allowed to work through examples for different departments. There is an emphasis on following through the impact on any group or groups within the policy and the screening template as well as looking at the level of impact – none, minor, major – to assist also in reaching the screening outcome decision.

The aims of training include:

- the consideration of equality and good relations matters at an early stage of policy development
- to assist Officers in identifying policies which may have an adverse impact on any group
- to assist officers to be able to screen the policy and where appropriate give consideration to the undertaking of an Impact Assessment
- facilitate the promotion of equality of opportunity across all groups within all departments.

In order to deliver effective training various examples are utilised, including the work of Council Units.

For example, while virtually all of the work of the Assets Unit is internally facing the Unit does ensure that the Council estate is accessible to, for example, older people and individuals with disabilities where possible to do so (i.e. dependent on the age of the building etc.).

The Unit would also be responsible for a number of other areas such as encroachment on Council land and property and would endeavour at all times to ensure that Council land is maximised for the benefit of all residents, as well as visitors to the area.

By using such examples allows the importance of applying the statutory duties to both internal and external services to be made clear. Staff can then explicitly recognise the need for complying with the statutory duties across all departments of Council.

Section 8 - Public Access to Information & Services

Across all areas the need to make information and services accessible is recognised and endorsed by each Department and Council as a whole. Alternative Formats are provided on request, inclusive of languages other than English, and these coupled with technology which can be utilised by a number of disabled groups ensures information can be and is disseminated to all. (Indeed several publications now go to residents with disabilities at the same time as to all local residents i.e. Annual Report of Council, CityWide).

Officers meet with a range of organisations (statutory and voluntary) locally and regionally and such meetings serve to gather information on the designated groups in the LCCC area inclusive of any particular service needs and, also, potential requirements for information in a range of suitable alternative formats.

By proactively taking such steps Council ensures both information and services are accessible to all, inclusive of those groups with particular identified needs.

Section 9 - Publication of the Equality Scheme

Commitments were met through the following procedures:

- The Equality Scheme was published as indicated.
- Policies and screening templates are published on the website of Council.
- Any EQIA undertaken is advertised locally and regionally as may be necessary.
- Both the draft and final EQIA documents are published and made available on the website of Council.
- As noted above, as necessary, any documents requested in alternative formats will be given consideration at all times.

Section 10 - Complaints

Within the past five year period only one complaint, that although Council did respond to it was unable to do so to the complainants satisfaction and hence was taken to the Commission for investigation, was upheld by the Commission. (This was a Para.10 complaint in respect of the Public Realm Scheme).

While there were a very small number of complaints brought to the attention of Council all were adequately dealt following the complaints procedure as provided for in the guidance and in the Equality Scheme of Council (such complaints were generally service focused e.g. use of a pool).

By way of a reminder of the complaints process:

- Council will respond to any written complaint as outlined in the Equality Scheme in order that a resolution may be obtained.
- If the individual making the complaint is not satisfied with the response of Council they then may take their complaint to the Equality Commission, who itself has a complaints procedure to follow (the complaint has to be brought to the notice of the public authority in the first instance).
- Council aims is to give a response to any complaint within a month. Complaints may be of a complexity that such a timescale may not be met and two months is allowed for a response.
- For those individuals who utilise the Equality Commissions complaint process they have one year from the time they become aware of the "issue" in which to make a complaint.
- Council is committed to working toward the resolution of any complaint and working with the complainant and/or the Commission as may be necessary to do so.

The very small number of complaints over the past period would strongly indicate that mainstreaming of the statutory duties is being undertaken as per the guidance and the Equality Scheme of Council. The recent mechanisms put in place (noted above) are with a view to further mainstreaming the statutory duties and to do so for the benefit of all groups.

Section 11 - Conducting the Five Year Review

While acknowledging that a 5 year review is required to be undertaken, as outlined in the NI Act 1998, for the local government sector which in effect, following RPA, commenced with 11 new Councils in 2015 this was something of a new beginning for all Councils.

The merging of Councils and their policies/activities etc. in parallel with the new responsibilities of Councils meant that a broad generic approach to all Sec 75 activity had to be taken from 2015 e.g. training, screening, revising activities/policies and so on, to build a foundation for statutory duty activity going forward.

The undertaking of this review has therefore been couched within this background. The above text will indicate that much has worked well and much good work in the period has been delivered. For those areas identified as in need of further development Council, as noted above, will continue to progress these in order that the statutory duties continue to be complied with and are beneficial to all groups.