

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Section 75 Equality and Good Relations Screening template

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

Background

In November 2021 the Council agreed in principle to adopt a Notice of Motion recommending webcast recordings of all Council and Committee meetings to be published on the Council's website.

Current Provision of Recordings by LCCC

In compliance with the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (Section 47) audio recordings of Full Council Meetings are currently published on the LCCC website for a period of two years. This legal obligation does not apply to Committee, Sub-Committee or Working Group meetings.

Further to the agreed Notice of Motion, a recommendation has been made to produce video recordings of Full Council meetings and audio recordings of all Committee meetings to be published on the Council website for two years.

In addition to the publication of recordings Members agreed at the Corporate Services Committee meeting held on 9 February 2022 that streamlining the format of minutes should also form part of this project.

Name of the activity/policy/project

At its Full Monthly Council Meeting on 23 November 2021 the following Notice of Motion was adopted:

“That this Council recognises the importance of transparency and accountability in local government and agrees that strengthening public access to decision-making is key to improving public trust and confidence at Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council.

The Council agrees that it is in both ratepayers and public interest to grant access to Video and Audio recordings of Full Council and Committee meetings following the Live Stream. It therefore agrees to publish these recordings online, leaving them freely accessible to the public going forward”.

To fulfil the aim of the Notice of Motion recordings of Council and Committee meetings will be published on the Council's website.

It was further agreed by Council in February 2022 that consideration would be given to streamlining the format of minutes which would provide a consistent and succinct approach to the presentation of minutes.

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

This project is a new initiative for the Council.

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

The intended aims/outcomes of this project are:

- To provide openness and transparency to the Council's decision making process by publishing recordings of all Council and Committee meetings.
- To provide enhanced access to all Council and Committee meetings for members of the public.
- To provide a standardised format for minutes of all Council and Committee meetings with the exception of the Planning Committee which requires a detailed record of proceedings.
- To manage this process in the most cost effective way.

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 main objectives of the proposed activity are not targeted at any specific Section 75 groups however the publication of recordings and standardised minutes may provide incidental benefits for some Section 75 groups.

Who initiated or developed the activity/policy/project?

The activity is a result of a notice of motion adopted by the Council and will be developed by the Member Services Unit within the Corporate Communications and Administration Department.

Who owns and who implements the activity/policy/project?

The project is owned by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and will be implemented by the Corporate Communications and Administration Department.

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

Yes

If yes, give brief details of any significant factors.

Financial implications due to budget pressures may impact the quality of the arrangements put in place.

Legal implications e.g. GDPR issues will have to be monitored.

Technical issues may mean that there are delays in publication in occasion.

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the activity/policy/project will impact upon? Delete if not applicable

Staff

- Chief Executive
- Senior Management Team
- Heads of Service
- Member Services Unit
- Technicians
- Corporate Communications Unit
- IT Services
- All Staff

Service users

- Rate payers
- Members of the public
- Media

Other public sector organisations

The following public sector organisations will be impacted as representatives who attend Council and Committee meetings on a regular basis will be captured in the recordings to be published:

- DfI – Roads Services
- Northern Ireland Water Services
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Voluntary/community/trade unions

N/A

Other

- Elected Members
- Other stakeholders who have reason to engage with the Council through formal structures

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

Name of policy/strategy/plan	Who owns or implements?
Standing Orders	LCCC
Local Government Act (NI) 2014	Northern Ireland Assembly
Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020	Department for Communities
Local Government (Meetings and Performance) Bill 2021	Department for Communities
LCCC Access to Council and Committee Meetings and Agenda Report Minutes Protocol	LCCC

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 following information has been considered in developing options for the recordings of Council meetings and streamlining minutes:

- Financial implications involved
- Consultation with Party Group Leaders on preferred options
- Practices adopted by other Councils for both publishing recordings of meetings and format of minutes
- Legal advice around GDPR issues
- The number of people watching the current live streams

Section 75 Category	Details of evidence/information
To develop options for the publication of recordings of meetings and reviewing the Council's format for minutes, consideration has been given to the practices of other councils. The opinions of staff and Elected Members concerned have also been taken into account.	
Religious Belief	<p data-bbox="708 707 1385 781">We do not hold information on the categories of people who access our meetings and minutes.</p> <p data-bbox="668 808 1425 920">Elected Members, staff and the general public who are likely to be affected by the proposed changes will come from a range of backgrounds.</p>
Political Opinion	
Racial Group	
Age	
Marital Status	
Sexual Orientation	
Men & Women Generally	
Disability	
People with and without Dependents	

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 different needs or experiences identified in relation to religious belief, political opinion.
Political Opinion	
Racial Group	Council information should be accessible for everyone including people who do not have English as their first language. This may require modification to the

	Council website, including recordings of meetings and minutes. Provision of information in alternative languages would be investigated if requested.
Age	It is anticipated that this category is more likely to want or need access to recordings of meetings or obtain copies of minutes. They may also prefer access to the live stream which will no longer be available for committees.
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. Recordings will be accessible for those with visual impairments but those with hearing impairment will need written content or subtitles. We therefore need to make sure that our minutes/information are available in a range of formats to suit different disabilities. Arrangements will be made on request. They may also prefer access to the live stream which will no longer be available for committees.
Dependants	People who have dependent children or adults, including those with disabilities, may not be able to attend meetings and therefore would benefit from being able to access a recording at a time that suited them. Streamlined minutes will also provide a succinct account of the business. They may also prefer access to the live stream which will no longer be available for committees.

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 differential impact by religious belief or political opinion as the proposed changes apply equally to all.	None
Political Opinion		
Racial Group	<p>Recordings of meetings could potentially disadvantage those whose first language is not English.</p> <p>Succinct minutes will also be easier transcribed by the current Browsealoud software.</p>	<p>Minor – negative</p> <p>Minor - positive</p>
Age	<p>Some older people may appreciate the opportunity to access recordings in their own time.</p> <p>However, some members of the public may not have the necessary technology or skills to access recordings and may prefer to obtain a hard copy of the minutes. They may also prefer access to the live stream.</p>	<p>Minor – positive</p> <p>Minor - negative</p>
Marital Status	No different impact identified for these groups	None
Sexual Orientation		
Men & Women Generally		

<p>Disability</p>	<p>Anyone who is unable to attend meetings will find it useful to access recordings in their own time and at their own pace.</p> <p>However, recordings may be suitable for some people with certain disabilities but less accessible for those with hearing impairment. The provision of subtitles will be considered. They may also prefer access to the live stream which will no longer be available for committees.</p>	<p>Minor – positive</p> <p>Minor - negative</p>
<p>Dependants</p>	<p>The ability to access recordings of meetings may facilitate people who have caring responsibilities. They may also prefer access to the live stream which will no longer be available for committees.</p>	<p>Minor - positive</p>

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 opportunity identified
Political Opinion		No opportunity identified
Racial Group	Whilst our corporate information on the website can be translated using the Browsealoud assistive	

	<p>software, the Council could possibly do more to make those from racial minorities, newcomers to the area aware of council business, including meetings.</p> <p>People for whom English is not their first language may require translations.</p>	
Age	Older people who cannot access recordings can be provided with a hard copy of the minutes.	
Marital Status		No opportunity identified
Sexual Orientation		No opportunity identified
Men & Women Generally		No opportunity identified
Disability	<p>Recordings and minutes will be published on the Council's website. Anyone who is unable to listen to attend meetings will find it useful to access recordings in their own time and at their own pace.</p> <p>If requested consideration needs to be given to those with hearing difficulties and subtitles provided. The public gallery is accessible for those with disabilities who wish to attend the live meetings.</p>	
People with and without Dependents	The ability to listen to audio recordings after the meeting has taken place may facilitate people who have caring responsibilities.	

Equality Action Plan 2021-2025

Does the activity/policy/project being screened relate to an action in the Equality Action Plan 2021-2025? Yes/No If yes, specify which action.

No

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:

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

Yes

If yes, give details/specify which action.

The publication of recordings of meetings will provide access to the Council’s decision making process for those who are unable to physically attend meetings. They can access the recording in their own time and at their own pace.

The recordings will be complimented by streamlined minutes which will provide a summary of main recommendations adopted by the Council at its meetings.

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 on good relations for any of these groups identified in relation to the proposed changes.	
Political Opinion		
Racial Group		

*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 specific good relations opportunities identified
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.

Consideration was given to the potential implications of the proposed activity for the different equality categories.

We do not anticipate any particular impacts on grounds of multiple identity from the proposed project.

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
<p>Option 1</p> <p>Screen out – no equality impact assessment and no mitigation required [go to Monitoring section]</p>	
<p>Option 2</p> <p>Screen out with mitigation – some potential impacts identified but they can be addressed with appropriate mitigation or some opportunities to better promote equality and/or good relations identified [complete mitigation section below]</p>	<p>It has been concluded that there is no need to carry out a full equality impact assessment on the proposal to publish recordings of Council/Committee meetings on the Council website, remove the streaming of committees and to streamline the format of minutes.</p> <p>The proposed changes are fairly minor procedural changes and are likely to be slightly beneficial for a number of groups.</p> <p>However potential for minor negative impact was identified for those who are unable to access the recordings and who may prefer to watch a live stream – see Mitigation section below.</p>
<p>Option 3</p> <p>Screen in for a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)</p> <p>[If option 3, complete timetabling and prioritising section below]</p>	

Mitigation (Only relevant to Option 2)

It is recognised that whilst publishing recordings of all Council and Committee meetings will benefit some groups this may not be accessible to everyone. The

Council will therefore be prepared to make alternative provision for those who cannot access recordings. All public galleries are open and are accessible for this with disabilities.

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.

It is recognised that whilst publishing recordings of all Council and Committee meetings will benefit some groups this may not be accessible to everyone. The Council will therefore be prepared to make alternative provision for those who cannot access recordings by providing hard copies of minutes or making alternative arrangements on a case by case basis.

The minutes published on the Council's website can be transcribed into alternative languages using the browsealoud software which supports the Council's website. This will provide access for those whose first language is not English.

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.

Not Applicable.

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

No

Part 4. Monitoring

Following consideration and equality screening, it is identified that there may be some issues in accessing the recordings of Council meetings for certain Section 75 groups. For example, older people who do not have access to the internet, people with hearing difficulties or people whose first language is not English. It

may be necessary for hard copies of minutes to be provided on request or subtitles to be provided for recordings. The browsealoud software which facilitates the Council website can generate an audio of the minutes in alternative languages.

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:

What will be monitored, how and frequency	Monitoring will be undertaken by:
The new arrangements will be reviewed on an annual basis. The following will be monitored: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the number of complaints or issues raised by Members, staff and the general public; the number of times the recordings are viewed the demand for alternative provision/adjustments 	Cathy Adamson, Acting Member Services Manager
	Will be signed-off by:
	Frances Byrne Head of Corporate Communications & Administration

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

	Position/Job Title	Date
Screened by: Cathy Adamson	Acting PCSP/Member Services Officer	29.07.22

Reviewed by:	Equality Officer	11.08.22
Approved by: Frances Byrne	Head of Service	19.08.22

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:

- a) The policy/project is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) 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;
- c) 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;
- d) 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;
- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

Minor impact

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) 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;
- c) 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;
- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

No impact (none)

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations;
- b) 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.

Revised Template @ April 2022