

Report to: Policy & Resources Committee **Agenda Item: 4.11**

Report Title: **Outcome of Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Consultation on Customer Service Strategy, Communications Strategy and Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy** **(Paper J)**

Date: 15 June 2016

Report by: Director of Corporate Services and Governance

For Publication: Yes

If 'not for publication', Insert reference to grounds upon which information is deemed 'confidential' [ref Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014 section 42(2), (3)] or 'exempt' [ref Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014 section 42(4) Schedule 6]:

(i) Confidential grounds: Not applicable

(ii) Exempt grounds: Not applicable

1. Relevant Background and Introduction

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's (The Council) Corporate Plan sets out the Council's commitment to the people of the district to deliver high quality and cost effective services, to plan for the future, to engage with communities and to place the needs of the people of the district at the forefront of all it does, ensuring it has a 'Customer First' focus.

In taking this commitment forward, three draft Strategies were developed which will act as policy documents, a practical resource and as a guide to the development of associated Action Plans going forward.

At the Policy and Resources Committee on 10 February 2016, the three draft Strategies were presented to Members for consideration and it was agreed to proceed to Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on all three Strategies for a 12 week period. The 12 week consultation period closed on 27 May 2016.

The draft Strategies and associated EQIA questionnaire were circulated to all 465 email and postal addresses on the Council's consultee database, it was advertised in the local press – Tyrone Constitution, Ulster Herald, Fermanagh Herald and Impartial Reporter, it was also advertised on and uploaded to the Council's website where respondents could use survey monkey to provide their comments, and a link was placed on the Council's facebook page with reminders posted at regular intervals on

the consultation being undertaken. A public consultation event was arranged at the Public Services Centre Omagh on Wednesday 25 May 2016 and face to face consultation was undertaken with representatives from the Council's Disability Advisory Group at the Bawnacre Centre on Thursday 26 May 2016.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 There were no responses received from the circulation of the consultations to those listed on the Consultee database, two responses were received on survey monkey, one of which was incomplete and some verbal feedback was provided at the public consultation event in the Public Services Centre and by the representatives from the Disability Advisory Group. These are highlighted in the attached summary report.
- 2.2 Following consideration of the comments received through the consultation, the three Strategies have been reviewed to determine if they already address the issues highlighted or if amendments are required. Due to the limited response, it is recommended that the three draft Strategies are approved as finalised, and that the associated Action Plans which will now be developed will ensure that the issues highlighted by the respondents are included for action.

3. Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

There are no financial implications associated with this report on the EQIAs but there may be costs associated with the implementation of the Action Plans going forward. Any associated costs will be brought to Members' attention.

3.2 Human Resources

There are no Human Resource implications associated with this report on the EQIAs but there may be costs associated with the implementation of the Action Plans going forward. Any associated costs will be brought to Members' attention.

3.3 Assets and Other Implications

There are no assets or other implications associated with this report on the EQIAs but there may be costs associated with the implementation of the Action Plans going forward. Any associated costs will be brought to Members' attention.

4. Equality and Good Relations Implications

The Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) have ensured the Council has complied with its Equality Scheme, to consult as widely as possible with all Section 75 groups.

5. Sustainable Development Implications

Supports sustainable development.

6. District Electoral Area(s) Affected

All district electoral areas

7. Recommendations

RECOMMENDED: That the Council:

- (i) Notes the consultation responses to the Equality Impact Assessments on the three Strategies – Customer Service; Communications and Community Engagement and Involvement; and**
- (ii) Agrees that in light of the review of the feedback received, that final approval is given to the three Strategies and that Officers proceed to develop the associated Action Plans for implementation across the Council**

8. Appendices and Attachments

Appendix 1 – Summary of Consultation Responses

9. Background Documents

Draft Customer Services Strategy and Equality Impact Assessment Questionnaire
Draft Communications Strategy and Equality Impact Assessment Questionnaire
Draft Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy and Equality Impact Assessment Questionnaire



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

Draft Customer Service Strategy

Draft Communications Strategy

**Draft Community Engagement and Involvement
Strategy**

Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs)

**Collation of Consultation Response Comments and
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
Commentary**

June 2016

Consultation Responses Received

Internal reference	Date received	Format	Details on storage
DCS 1	22 March 2016	Survey Monkey questionnaire (Incomplete)	Hard copy kept on file in Democratic and Customer Services office, electronic copy kept on server.
DCS 2	24 May 2016	Survey Monkey questionnaire (Complete)	Hard copy kept on file in Democratic and Customer Services office, electronic copy kept on server. (Name and email address supplied)
DCS 3	25 May 2016	Public Consultation at Public Services Centre Omagh	Hard copy kept on file in Democratic and Customer Services and R-drive: Customer Service folder
DCS 4	26 May 2016	Disability Advisory Group representatives, Bawnacre Centre, Irvinestown	Hard copy kept on file in Democratic and Customer Services and R-drive: Customer Service folder

(Summary of responses contained overleaf)

Internal reference: DCS 1

Date received: The format of this consultee's response was on survey monkey. It was received on Tuesday, 22 March 2016 and was incomplete.

Comments (plus Fermanagh and Omagh District Council commentary)

No details provided by Consultee. Answered only Q1 which was to state they were responding as an individual. All other questions were skipped

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Response:

Not applicable

Internal reference: DCS 2

Date received: The format of this consultee's response was on survey monkey. It was received on Tuesday, 24 May 2016 and was completed for the Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy.

Comments (plus Fermanagh and Omagh District Council commentary)

Respondent: An individual

Question 1 :

What are your views on Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's draft Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy with regard to equality issues that affect you?

Answer: Council should look to engage with as many people as possible. From previous experiences, there is very little engagement with young people. For the Council to successfully provide programmes and events that are inclusive of all the community they must engage with all of the community.

Young people should be engaged with. Council should look to attend youth clubs meetings, engage with local sports and GAA clubs which work with young people in order to gain their thoughts.

Question 2:

Do you believe the draft Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy will help the Council to engage with and involve all S75 equality groups in its decision making process? If No, what else could be put in place to address this properly?

Yes

No

Question 3:

Are there any changes to the draft Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity or good relations within the District?

Yes

No

Please detail what those changes could be:

Answer: More joined up approach is required between Council and other government agencies like DARD.

More focused aims, ie, how to target specific groups to ensure all groups are included

Question 4:

Please provide any other comments you may have on the draft Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy

Answer: The need to include the public in communicating results. Once engagement is finished, it's important to let everyone know the results of the

process. This could be either in writing, email, or telephone – just to outline the results and what is being done.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Response:

The Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy specifically refers to engagement and involvement of all Section 75 groups going forward and in particular to enhance efforts to engage hard to reach or seldom heard groups or individuals. Young people have been identified as a consultee group in their own right and the Fermanagh and Omagh Youth Council will also contribute to ensuring greater engagement and involvement of young people in the Council's decision making process.

Reference has also been made in the Strategy to more collaborative working with other agencies and organisations and this will be better developed as the Community Planning process becomes embedded and mainstreamed.

It is the intention of the Council to better communicate results to its public of consultations it undertakes. This is also identified as a priority within the Strategy.

Actions to address these issues will be included in the Community Engagement and Involvement Action Plan. There will also be correlation with the Communications Strategy and the Customer Service Strategies and Action Plans which are closely aligned and compliment the Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy.

Internal reference: DCS 3

Date received: The format of this consultee's response was through face to face consultation at the Public Services Centre. It was received on Wednesday 25 May 2016. The Consultee preferred to give general feedback on her customer service experience with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council as opposed to answering the consultation questions on the Customer Service Strategy.

Comments (plus Fermanagh and Omagh District Council commentary)

The Consultee said she had experience of 3 service areas of the new Council – the Recycling Centre at Gortrush, Omagh Leisure Complex and the Strule Arts Centre. She said she regularly visited the Recycling Centre at Gortrush where she found the Staff to be excellent as they were very attentive in helping out or giving advice. She asked that this compliment be passed on to the staff. She also said she was a regular attender at the Active Club at the Omagh Leisure Complex, which she felt was very well targeted at people of 'a certain age', and that it offered not only health improvement activities which were set at the correct pace but also a social aspect that people like herself who were widowed valued. She again complimented the staff who delivered the Active Club Programme. Her only negative comment in relation to the Leisure Complex was that the Jacuzzi had been out of operation for a while and at times the temperature could be cold. Finally, she said she was an occasional attender at the Strule Arts Centre which she again enjoyed and she also complimented the Cafeteria for providing a varied menu, the best coffee in the town and a lovely relaxing atmosphere in which to eat and socialise. She said she had several friends of a similar age bracket who also utilised the Council facilities and would also be complimentary of the services provided.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Response:

The compliments to staff were relayed to the appropriate Line Managers.

Whilst the comments did not directly relate to the specific EQIA consultation questions, the information provided was by a consultee in the over 60 age bracket, which she said were reflective of her peer group. This provided an insight into how the Council is delivering for this age bracket.

Internal reference: DCS 4

Date received: The format of this consultation was through face to face consultation at the Bawnacre Centre, Irvinestown, Co Fermanagh. It was received on Thursday 26 May 2016 from representatives of the Council's Disability Advisory Group. The discussion included the three Strategies which the consultees felt were very closely aligned.

Comments (plus Fermanagh and Omagh District Council commentary)

Draft Customer Service Strategy

- (i) What are your views on Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's draft Customer Service Strategy with regard to equality issues that affect you?

Answer: If the Council wishes to be inclusive of all, it should consider the provision of sign language, information in various languages and in braille. For a person with a disability, it is very important that they are provided with a point of contact, so that whether the person communicates with the Council by phone or face to face, they know who the Officer is who is dealing with them and they are afforded the appropriate time to deal with their query – this can be the difference between a good day or a bad day for a person with a disability. Accessibility for wheelchairs at all Council facilities is also very important. In relation to something as traumatic as registering a death, it is vital that the person has a known point of contact.

- (ii) Do you believe the draft Customer Service Strategy puts in place ways of delivering a 'customer first' approach that meets the needs or issues of all S75 equality groups? If No, what else could be put in place to address these needs or issues?

Answer: For a person with a disability, it is very important that they know a name of an Officer who can deal with them, particularly if they have to call back. It is also very important that frontline staff face the customer and give attention to the customer – body language is very important and for those with hearing loss it is particularly important that the member of staff faces them directly as much of the communications is by lip-reading. It is important for a person with a disability to feel relaxed and comfortable when dealing with Council staff. It is also important that the auto-attendant message on the switchboard is kept to a minimum of options.

- (iii) Are there any changes to the draft Customer Service Strategy which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity or good relations within the District?

Answer: Once or twice per year make the public aware of what the Council has achieved – this could be through the local papers, on the local radio and on social media. Also prompt action in dealing with matters is very important – making sure that follow up is taken within a timeframe and then communicated to the member of the public that action has been taken.

Draft Communications Strategy

- (i) What are your views on Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's draft Communications Strategy with regard to equality issues that affect you?

Answer: When developing communications materials or communicating in writing with persons with a disability, the Council should always use plain and simple language; give exact and clear instructions. Clear, precise and consistent messages in all areas should be provided as the wrong message can mean rumours circulate. Communications should be at the right time. For many persons with a disability, local radio is their greatest medium for receiving information – precise information out at peak times is essential.

- (ii) Do you believe the draft Communications Strategy will help the Council meet the communications needs or issues of all S75 equality groups? If No, what else could be put in place to address these needs or issues?

Answer: For a number of persons with a disability, they use their computers for newsfeed from the BBC and UTV, so the Council should utilise this mode of communication for getting important information out to residents. Also facebook pages for 'Enniskillen Friends and Family', the Fermanagh and Omagh PSNI facebook page and the local newspapers websites are visited by many seeking up to date information relating to the area and the Council could use these as a medium for getting out messages.

- (iii) Are there any changes to the draft Communications Strategy which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity or good relations within the District?

Answer: If the Council wishes to engage and communicate with young people the Council should remember that young people do not buy newspapers – use the communications mediums that appeal to the young – social media and face to face discussion – ask their opinions.

Draft Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy

- (i) What are your views on Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's draft Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy with regard to equality issues that affect you?

Answer: For persons with a disability, consultation by email is one way of involving people in the consultation process. Consultation should also be undertaken through Church groups, Youth Clubs, Women's Institute, Rotary, Round Table, Probus, Chamber of Commerce as these groups and organisations have a wide range of members of varying professional and social groups as well as varying age groups and varying interests. It would be useful to send the details of consultation to the Groups for inclusion of their meeting agenda for discussion. The Council needs to be more accessible to the people and needs to be seen to act on and respond to requests – lack of response to requests sets a bad precedence. Word of mouth is also considered a good consultation format.

- (ii) Do you believe the draft Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy will help the Council to engage with and involve all S75 equality groups in its decision making process. If No, what else could be put in place to address this properly?

Answer: Councillors dealing with grassroots issues and being focussed on the public's needs will help with engagement. Councillors need to be aware that many citizens feel they are only visible to the public when they are looking for votes at

election time. A courteous approach and providing a good service in dealing with requests from the public will sent out a positive message about the Council.

(iii) Are there any changes to the draft Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity or good relations within the District?

Answer: No response given to this question as Consultees felt they had already addressed this question.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Response:

The Council already provides sign language at major events such as the St Patrick's Day Parade and the Christmas Lights Switch-on. It is also provided at consultation events when required, Information is also provided in other languages, alternate formats and in braille on request.

Front line staff provide their names to callers on the telephone and the issue of ensuring a named Officer is provided to callers both in person and by other means will be addressed in the Action Plan.

The Council provides updates on achievements through the Inform Newsletter which is delivered to all households and businesses in the district once per year. Other means of providing information to the public through various mediums are also utilised but a more structured approach will be taken in the future.

Consultation and Engagement will be more structured and targeted in the future and will be planned to ensure it is effective, timely and appropriate to the audience.

The Action Plans which will be developed to ensure the three strategies are fully mainstreamed and embedded in the Council corporately, will give recognition to all the feedback elicited from the consultation process.