



<b>Subject:</b>	Request made by Councillor McMullan at Council Meeting on 1 June 2021 – Sign Language
<b>Date:</b>	17 June 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Walsh, City Solicitor
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Michael Johnston, Language Officer

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Some time in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of report or summary of main issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide an update report related to Sign Language as requested by Councillor McMullan at Council meeting in June 2021.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Note this report.</li></ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	At the request of Councillor McMullan, the Council on 1 June 2020 agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee to provide an update on the potential to

3.2	<p>work with deaf people and the Department for Communities, to promote and roll out classes or training to local community and voluntary. Due to an administrative error, this was only passed to the Equality &amp; Diversity Unit in December.</p> <p>The Council launched its Language Strategy in April 2018. The Strategy commits to establishing a transparent set of principles for promoting, protecting and enhancing the linguistic diversity of the city. There are five language strands within the Strategy including Sign Languages. We also have a Disability Action Plan (2019-2022) which consists of action measures related to Sign Languages.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p><u>Work to date in relation to Sign Languages</u></p> <p><b>British Sign Language and Irish Sign Language Charter</b></p> <p>In March 2019, the Council signed up to the British Deaf Association’s British Sign Language and Irish Sign Language Charter and one of the pledges made was to ensure council staff working with Deaf people can communicate effectively using British Sign Language and/or Irish Sign Language.</p> <p><b>Sign Language Users’ Forum</b></p> <p>A Sign Language Users’ Forum consisting of local Sign Language users was established in June 2019 and meets twice a year to advise, guide and support the Council to respond better to the needs of Sign Language Users in Belfast.</p> <p><b>Staff training</b></p> <p>In the current Language Strategy Action Plan and the Disability Action Plan, a number of action measures are listed to support Sign Language users including the delivery of Sign Language courses for council staff and providing guidance on how to communicate with a Sign Language user.</p> <p><b>3.6</b></p> <p>A pilot Sign Language course for a pool of front-line council staff was completed in October 2019. Additional courses were put on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic and feedback indicated that the course was best delivered in a face-to-face setting.</p>

3.7	<p><b>Department for Communities</b></p> <p>DfC provides funding to a number of Deaf organisations who are members of their Sign Language Partnership Group to deliver Sign Language projects including classes and courses for local communities. Further information on this can be found at <a href="https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sign-language">Sign language   Department for Communities (communities-ni.gov.uk)</a>.</p>
3.8	<p>Council officers recently met with the Head of Sign Language Policy at Department for Communities' (DfC) Language Branch. The Language Branch is currently reviewing membership of its Sign Language Partnership Group and a new sub-group consisting of public authorities including local Councils is being considered. This would enable Belfast City Council and the Department for Communities to potentially work together to identify initiatives including funding to support voluntary groups and businesses to provide Sign Language courses. Any related actions will be considered by the Language Strategy Working Group and members will be kept updated.</p>
<p><b>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</b></p>	
3.9	<p>None associated with this report.</p>
<p><b>Equality, good relations or rural needs implications</b></p>	
3.10	<p>None associated with this report.</p>
<p><b>4.0 Appendices – Documents Attached</b></p>	
	<p>Appendix 1 - Special Council Meeting minutes; 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021.</p>