



Subject:	Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 – Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Annual Monitoring Return
Date:	24th November, 2023
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, Interim City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Sarah Williams, Governance and Compliance Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To present for the Committee's approval the Council's annual monitoring return (the "Annual Return"), which provides evidence of how the Council has met certain duties under the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 (the "Act").
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to approve the submission of the Council's Annual Return for 2022 – 2023 to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, subject to ratification by the Council on 1st December.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>As the Committee will be aware, the rural population of Belfast is comprised of the small settlements of Edenderry, Hannahstown and Loughview.</p>
3.2	<p>Section 1(1) of the Act requires public authorities to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services.</p> <p>As part of that duty, Council officers complete Rural Needs Impact Assessments.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Section 3(1) of the Act requires public authorities to: (i) compile information on the exercise of their functions, (ii) include that information in annual reports and (iii) send that information to DAERA.</p>
3.4	The Annual Return is designed to inform stakeholders and other interested parties of how the Council has had due regard to rural needs in the exercise of its functions. The attached Annual Return shows how the Council has met this duty for 2022-23.
3.5	<p><u>Next Steps</u></p> <p>The Annual Return was submitted to DAERA last month for inclusion in its Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report in order to meet DAERA's deadline for publication. DAERA will note in its Annual Monitoring Report that the Council Annual Return is subject to Council ratification.</p> <p>A copy of the Annual Return, together with a list of the Rural Needs Impact Assessments completed will be published on the Council's website as the Council does not have an annual report.</p>

3.6	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Officers from across the organisation are involved in completing Rural Needs Impact Assessments and the Equality and Diversity Unit have corporate responsibility for collating this information.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The Annual Return provides evidence as to how the Council has met its duty under the Act to have due regard to Rural Needs.</p>
4.0	<p>Document Attached</p>
	<p>Annual Monitoring Return to Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs</p>