



Subject:	Rural Needs: Annual Monitoring Report 2019-20 and Review of the Implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016
Date:	18 September 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal & Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Sarah Williams, Governance & Compliance Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time 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 or summary of main issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• submit for approval the Council's Rural Needs' Annual Monitoring Return for 2019-2020; and• advise Members of the relevant recommendations from the Review of the Implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approve the submission of the Council's Annual Monitoring Return to DAERA for 2019-2020, on a holding basis, subject to ratification by the Council at its meeting on 1 October; and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the recommendations from the Review of the Implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 and that the Equality and Diversity Unit will co-ordinate their implementation
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>The Council has a statutory duty under the Rural Needs (NI) Act 2016 to consider rural needs in the development of new policies, plans or strategies or in any service design/delivery decisions. The rural population of Belfast is approximately 1,484 people comprising the small settlements of Edenderry, Hannahstown and Loughview. Officers complete a Rural Needs Impact Assessment form.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p><u>Annual Monitoring Return</u></p> <p>The requirement to monitor and report applied to all Northern Ireland departments and district councils from 1st June 2017. The Council is required under section 3(1) of the Act to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compile information on the exercise of its functions under section 1(1) of the Act; Include that information in their annual report; and Send that information to DAERA on the Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Return <p>The Rural Needs Annual Monitoring return relating to the period April 2019 – March 2020 is set out in Appendix 1. A copy of this 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>
3.2	<p><u>Report on the Review of the Implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016</u></p> <p>The Rural Needs Working Group (comprising members from various government departments, Health Trusts, Local Authorities and the Rural Community Network) has completed a review of the implementation of the Act. The main purpose of the review was to evaluate the effectiveness of the support measures put in place by DAERA to assist public authorities with implementing the Act and to review the monitoring and reporting arrangements with a view to identifying any potential improvements that could be made. A copy of the Executive Summary of the Report is attached at Appendix 2.</p>
3.3	<p>The Working Group made 25 recommendations covering all aspects of the Rural Needs Act. The six recommendations which are relevant to the Council, set out below, will be taken forward by the Equality & Diversity Unit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host regular workshops for internal decision-makers to raise awareness of duty

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review resources allocated to supporting the implementation of rural needs • Seek to embed by incorporating compliance with the Act into assurance statements, submission templates and audit and risk procedures; • Seek to develop effective relationships with rural communities organisations • Be open to adopting new and innovative approaches to engaging with the rural community sector • Publish RNIA templates on a single webpage
3.4	<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>
3.5	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The actions outlined contribute to our legal compliance regarding the implementation of the rural needs duty.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1: Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Return 2019-20</p> <p>Appendix 2: Executive Summary Review of the Implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016</p>