

Language Strategy Working Group

Tuesday, 15th March, 2022

LANGUAGE STRATEGY WORKING GROUP MINUTES HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillors Kyle, McMullan, O'Hara,
Spratt and Whyte.

In attendance: Ms. S. Williams, Governance and Compliance Manager;
Mr. M. Johnston, Language Officer;
Mr. C. McGuigan, Irish Language Officer;
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer;
Ms. V. Smyth, Democratic Services Officer; and
Ms. L. McConnell (Interpreter)

Appointment of Chairperson

The Working Group agreed that Councillor McMullan take the Chair for the duration of the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Ferguson, Hutchinson and Walsh.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Terms of Reference

The Governance and Compliance Manager referred to the Terms of Reference for the Language Strategy Working Group as agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in October 2022 and asked if Members were content.

A Member asked for clarity around New Community Languages and the Governance and Compliance Manager clarified that it referred to Newcomer Languages.

In response to a Member's concern around reaching key stakeholders, the Governance and Compliance Manager explained that stakeholder mechanisms would be put in place and would be discussed at future meetings in line with each of the five strands contained within the strategy.

There was further discussion about the changing demographic of Belfast.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided and the Terms of Reference.

Briefing for Members on the Language Strategy

The Governance and Compliance Manager delivered an overview of the Language Strategy 2018 – 2023, and provided the Members with background into the agreed visions and aims of the strategy which included the following five strands:

- Irish Language
- Ulster-Scots Language
- Sign Language (British and Irish)
- New Communities' Languages
- Languages and Communications for Disabled

The Governance and Compliance Manager outlined the agreed policy and messaging. She provided an overview of events and engagement activities undertaken so far in the context of the strategy and highlighted the challenges ahead.

Noted.

Language Strategy: proposed approach

The Governance and Compliance Manager provided Members with a high-level overview of the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan which outlined both short-term and long-term actions for All Languages and each of the five strands.

Following the presentation, the Working Group noted that the Members would review the Action Plan for discussion at the next Working Group meeting.

Chairperson