

Policy Screening Form

Policy Scoping

Policy Title: Remote Meetings Protocol

Brief Description of Policy (please attach copy if available). Please state if it is a new, existing or amended policy.

This is a new Protocol which has been designed to provide a guide to remote formal meetings to help Members, Officers and the public. Mandatory Standing Orders remain in place and the process for 'call-in' will remain unchanged. The provisions of the Code of Conduct apply to remote meetings of the Council in the same way as they do to physical meetings.

As part of the overall emergency response (Coronavirus Act 2020) to the current COVID 19 pandemic The Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, issued on the 1st of May, makes provision for remote attendance at, and remote access to Council meetings.

The Regulations enable the Council to hold meetings without all, or any, of the Members being physically present in a room. They allow for remote meetings through electronic and digital means at remote locations using video and telephone conferencing, live webcast and live interactive streaming. In order for Members to be able to attend meetings of the Council remotely, they need not be physically present, provided they are able to hear and be heard (and where practicable, see and be seen by) other Members and members of the public attending remotely or in person.

Intended aims/outcomes. What is the policy trying to achieve?

This Protocol provides a guide to remote formal meetings to help Members, Officers and the public.

Policy Framework

Has the policy been developed in response to statutory requirements, legal advice or on the basis of any other professional advice? Does this affect the discretion available to Council to amend the policy?

The Protocol has been developed in response to the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, issued on the 1st of May which makes provision for remote attendance at, and remote access to Council meetings. The Protocol must comply with these regulations.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the policy? If so, please outline.

Having a Protocol in place which enables the Council to have remote meetings in place will particularly benefit those who are over 70, those who are disabled with underlying health conditions and need to self isolate as well as those with dependants that have caring responsibilities.

Who initiated or wrote the policy (if Council decision, please state). Who is responsible for implementing the policy?

Who initiated or wrote policy?	Who is responsible for implementation?
The Council	The Council

Are there any factors which might contribute to or detract from the implementation of the policy (e.g. financial, legislative, other)?

No

Main stakeholders in relation to the policy

Please list main stakeholders affected by the policy (e.g. staff, service users, other statutory bodies, community or voluntary sector, private sector)

Elected Members, Staff Members, members of the public

Are there any other policies with a bearing on this policy? If so, please identify them and how they impact on this policy.

The Protocol has been developed in response to the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Available Evidence

Council should ensure that its screening decisions are informed by relevant data. What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

Section 75 category	Evidence
Religious belief	The Protocol has been developed in response to the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020. It has been developed so that the Council can continue to operate
Political opinion	
Racial group	
Age	

Marital status	effectively while ensuring government requirements on social distancing are met.
Sexual orientation	
Men and women generally	
Disability	
Dependants	

Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information gathered above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories in relation to this particular policy/decision?

Section 75 category	Needs, experiences and priorities
Religious belief	N/A
Political opinion	N/A
Racial group	N/A
Age	Current government guidance advises those who are over 70 to self-isolate. Members who are over 70 would be unable to attend meetings in person. Being able to access meetings remotely will ensure they are able to participate.
Marital status	N/A
Sexual orientation	N/A
Men and women generally	N/A
Disability	Current government guidance advises those who have certain health conditions or disabilities to self-isolate. Members who fall into this category would be unable to attend meetings in person. Being able to access meetings remotely will ensure they are able to participate.
Dependants	Those who have caring responsibilities either for older people or young children are likely to find it more difficult to attend meetings in person. Being able to access meetings remotely will ensure they are able to participate.

Screening Questions

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy for each of the Section 75 categories?

Category	Policy Impact	Level of impact (Major/minor/none)
Religious belief	None	None
Political opinion	None	None
Racial group	None	None
Age	Current government guidance advises those who are over 70 to self-isolate. Members who are over 70 would be unable to attend meetings in person. Being	Positive minor

	able to access meetings remotely will ensure they are able to participate	
Marital status	None	None
Sexual orientation	None	None
Men and women generally	None	None
Disability	Current government guidance advises those who have certain health conditions or disabilities to self-isolate. Members who fall into this category would be unable to attend meetings in person. Being able to access meetings remotely will ensure they are able to participate.	Positive minor
Dependants	Those who have caring responsibilities either for older people or young children are likely to find it more difficult to attend meetings in person. Being able to access meetings remotely will ensure they are able to participate.	Positive minor

2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 categories?

Category	If yes, provide details	If no, provide reasons
Religious belief		This Protocol has been introduced so that the Council can continue to operate effectively while ensuring government requirements on social distancing are met. These are temporary measures.
Political opinion		
Racial group		
Age		
Marital status		
Sexual orientation		
Men and women generally		
Disability		
Dependants		

3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion, or racial group?

Category	Details of Policy Impact	Level of impact (major/minor/none)
Religious belief	None	None
Political opinion	None	None
Racial group	None	None

4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Category	If yes, provide details	If no, provide reasons
Religious belief		No
Political opinion		No
Racial group		No

Multiple Identity

Generally speaking, people fall into more than one Section 75 category (for example: disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; young lesbian, gay and bisexual people). Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant s75 categories concerned.

This policy will have a positive impact on older disabled people

Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006

Is there an opportunity for the policy to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?

As stated above having a Protocol in place which enables the Council to have remote meetings in place will particularly benefit those who are disabled with underlying health conditions and need to self-isolate.

Is there an opportunity for the policy to encourage participation by disabled people in public life?

As stated above having a Protocol in place which enables the Council to have remote meetings in place will particularly benefit those who are disabled with underlying health conditions and need to self-isolate.

Screening Decision

A: NO IMPACT IDENTIFIED ON ANY CATEGORY – EQIA UNNECESSARY

Please identify reasons for this below

This Protocol has been developed in response to the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, issued on the 1st of May which makes provision for remote attendance at, and remote access to Council meetings. The Protocol has been designed to provide a guide to remote formal meetings to help Members, Officers and the public and allow the Council to continue operating effectively while ensuring government requirements on social distancing are met.

Having a Protocol in place which enables the Council to have remote meetings in place will particularly benefit those who are over 70, those who are disabled with underlying health

conditions and need to self isolate as well as those with dependants that have caring responsibilities.

B: MINOR IMPACT IDENTIFIED – EQIA NOT CONSIDERED NECESSARY AS IMPACT CAN BE ELIMINATED OR MITIGATED

Where the impact is likely to be minor, you should consider if the policy can be mitigated or an alternative policy introduced. If so, an EQIA may not be considered necessary. You must indicate the reasons for this decision below, together with details of measures to mitigate the adverse impact or the alternative policy proposed.

C: MAJOR IMPACT IDENTIFIED – EQIA REQUIRED

If the decision is to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

Timetabling and Prioritising

If the policy has been screened in for equality impact assessment, please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3 with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority criterion	Rating (1-3)
Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations	
Social need	
Effect on people's daily lives	

The total rating score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the council in timetabling its EQIAs.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities? If yes, please give details.

Monitoring

Effective monitoring will help the authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy. It is recommended that where a policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced to mitigate adverse impact, monitoring be undertaken on a broader basis to identify any impact (positive or adverse).

Further information on monitoring is available in the Equality Commission's guidance on monitoring (www.equalityni.org).

Identify how the impact of the policy is to be monitored

These are temporary measures and will only be in place until 7 May 2021 at the latest. These arrangements will be carefully monitored.

Approval and Authorisation

A copy of the screening form for each policy screened should be signed off by the senior manager responsible for that policy. The screening recommendation should be reported to the relevant Committee/Council when the policy is submitted for approval.

Screened by	Position/Job title	Date
Mary Hanna	Policy & Diversity Officer	11.05.20
Approved by	Position/Job Title	Date
Eamonn Kelly	Head of Governance and Democratic Services	12.05.20

Please forward a copy of the completed policy and form to:

mary.hanna@armaghbanbridgescraigavon.gov.uk

who will ensure these are made available on the Council's website.

The above officer is also responsible for issuing reports on a quarterly basis on those policies "screened out for EQIA". This allows stakeholders who disagree with this recommendation to submit their views. In the event of any stakeholder disagreeing with the decision to screen out any policy, the screening exercise will be reviewed.