

# CORPORATE SERVICES Policy and Community Planning

BUSINESS PLAN 2024/25

# **SECTION 1: SETTING THE CONTEXT**

### 1.1 FUNCTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT

### **Corporate Policy**

- Assist with the development and review of the Council's Council Strategy
- Development and review of the Council Constitution
- Development of policy initiatives and provide assistance and support to the policy making processes of Council.
- s of Council.

# **Community Planning**

- Evidence gathering and analysis of data for an evidence informed Community Plan
- Facilitate capacity building and culture change re community planning
- Initiate consultation, engagement and communication initiatives with stakeholders
- Develop appropriate delivery mechanisms to achieve the outcomes identified within the Community Plan.
- Develop and establish performance monitoring and reporting mechanisms for the community plan/delivery plan.

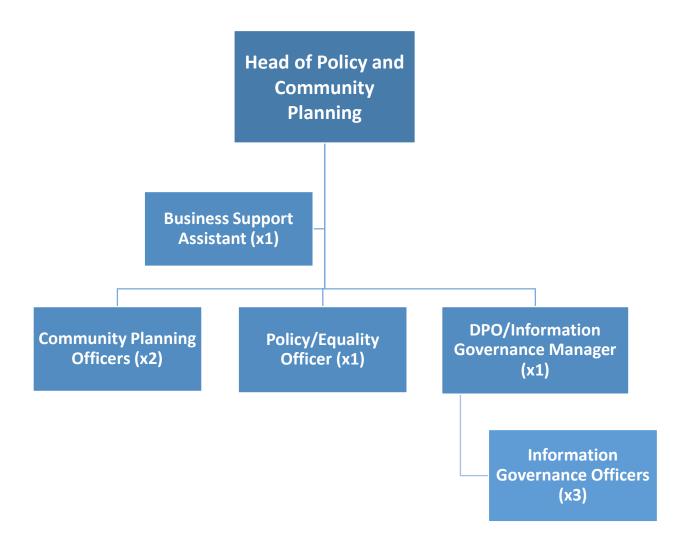
### **Information Governance**

- Co-ordinate Council compliance with access to information legislation such as Freedom of Information Act, Data Protection Act and Environmental Information Regulations.
- Development of a corporate records management strategy and framework with associated policies, procedures and systems.
- Development and implementation of a Disposal and Retention Schedule for Council

# **Equality and Diversity**

- Develop and implement strategies, policies and initiatives to promote equality of opportunity and appreciation of diversity within Council.
- Ensure Council meets its legal obligations in relation to equality and diversity.
- Ensure the Council meets its obligations in relation to the disability duties.

# 1.2 DEPARTMENTAL STAFFING STRUCTURE



### 1.3 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The strategic objectives of the Service area are to:

- Ensure that the Council delivers its services in accordance with its legal obligations and best practice relating to equality and diversity and develops/implements strategies, policies and initiatives which promote equality and diversity within the Council.
- Ensure the Council meets its obligations in relation to the promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourages participation by disabled people in public life.
- Support the development and implementation of the Causeway Coast and Glens Community Plan which includes evidence gathering, community engagement activities, performance management and putting in place governance and reporting mechanisms.
- Develop and implement an information management strategy and framework for the Council which co-ordinates Council compliance with a range of access to information legislation.
- Develop and implement a records management strategy and framework for the Council with associated policies, procedures and systems, ensuring that it supports the priorities and statutory obligations of the Council.
- Support the development of relevant strategies, policies, procedures and systems to support the priorities and statutory obligations of Council.

### **COUNCIL STRATEGY:**

Aligned with the following Council Strategic Aims and Objectives:

- Cohesive Leadership
- Local Economy
- Improvement and Innovation
- Healthy, Active and Engaged Communities
- Climate Change and Our Environment.

### **LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT:**

The functions of the service are shaped primarily by a range of legislative obligations such as the Local Government Act 2014, S75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the

Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

### **RESOURCE CONTEXT:**

The functions of the service are facilitated by a small team of 7 people and the budget for the service for the 2023/24 financial year is £438,622. Staff salaries make up the bulk of the Department's budget.

### **INTERNAL CONTEXT:**

The policy, equality and information governance functions of the service are primarily corporate in nature and require the co-operation and input of officers across the Council, for example in relation to dealing with requests for access to information, screening of policies, etc.

### **EXTERNAL CONTEXT:**

The Community Planning function is externally influenced by legislation and by statutory guidance issued by the Department for Communities. It also requires input from, and external reporting to, statutory partners, the community and voluntary sector and the general public.

The Equality Commission plays a major role in oversight and compliance as well as offering advice and guidance on the application of Section 75 Equality and Good Relations legal obligations by Council, as well as a range of other legislation relating to equality and diversity issues such as disability, race, gender, etc.,

The Information Commissioners' Officer undertakes an oversight role and compliance role in relation to how Council has dealt with requests for access to information, data protection and other information related legislation. The Information Commissioners' Office also provides guidance in relation to a range of information related legislation.

### 1.4. SWOT ANALYSIS AND PESTLE ANALYSIS

A SWOT Analysis and a PESTLE Analysis were undertaken in relation to the Policy and Community Planning Department to help identify issues which could potentially impact on the business planning process:

# **STRENGTHS**

- Knowledgeable and skilled team of staff able to use their own initiative to take forward projects.
- Established systems and processes in place which underpin and support the functions of the service area.
- Positive relationships established with a range of internal and external stakeholders.

# **WEAKNESSES**

- A small team of staff and resource light.
- Unforeseen or long-term absence can have a detrimental impact on the work of the service area due to lack of cover.
- Lack of co-operation internally and externally can impede progress of actions.

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

- Able to access best practice ideas from other Councils.
- Can provide positive PR opportunities for Council.
- Can help develop a robust and effective Council Strategy.
- Can help deliver positive change for people in Causeway Coast and Glens area through community planning activities.

### **THREATS**

- Increasing use of legal actions taken against Council which impact on the service area, eg compliance issues.
- Impact on resources available through the budgeting and rates setting process within Council.

### **POLITICAL**

 Programme for Government yet to be developed – could possibly have implications for the Community Planning process.

### **ECONOMIC**

- Impact of cost of living on community planning activities.
- Challenges to financial resources both internal and external.
- Setting of central government budgets could potentially have an impact on the ability to progress community planning initiatives.

### **SOCIO-CULTURAL**

- Increased lobbying by special interest groups which impact particularly on the equality agenda.
- An ageing population in CC&G which will impact on community planning and equality activities.

### **TECHNOLOGICAL**

 New technological developments which can help provide better customer accessibility to Council services, for example the introduction of SignVideo.

### **LEGAL**

- Data Protection issues increasingly arising, particularly data breaches.
- Increasingly complex requests on a range of access to information issues.
- Complex guidance from ICO on information access issues and the need for legal guidance.
- Increased likelihood of legal challenge to various decisions of Council.

# **ENVIRONMENTAL**

- Greater emphasis on climate change and environmental issues and indicators which will impact on community planning activities and initiatives.
- Use of Rural Needs Assessments in policy development work within Council.

### 1.5. PRE-REQUISITES AND EXTERNAL DEPENDENCIES

The following outlines the pre-requisites and external dependencies which could potentially impact or influence this Business Plan (predicated on certain things being in place):

- The Equality Forum is maintained and meeting quarterly.
- The S75 consultee database is reviewed and updated on a regular basis.
- ICT systems will support any new technology introduced, such as SignVideo.
- The Community Planning Partnership continues to work together effectively.
- A revised/updated Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan are agreed and in place.
- An Information Security and Management Working Group is in place and meeting regularly.
- Sufficient resources (people and financial) are made available to the Department to enable it to function effectively.

### 1.6. ASSUMPTIONS

- Sufficient resources will be available to enable the Department to function effectively.
- The Community Planning baseline data can be reviewed and updated as required.
- A process for the management of requests for access to information is in place and adequately resourced.
- Processes for S75 screening, Rural Needs Assessments and Data Protection Assessments are in place and such screening is actively taking place within Council.

# **SECTION 2:** POLICY AND COMMUNITY PLANNING BUSINESS PLAN

# 2.1 BUSINESS PLAN OBJECTIVES

- Support the development and implementation of the Causeway Coast and Glens Community Plan which includes evidence gathering, community engagement activities, performance management and putting in place governance and reporting mechanisms.
- Support the priorities and statutory obligations of Council by developing and maintaining relevant strategies, policies, procedures and systems.

Directorate	Corporate Services
Service Area	Policy and Community Planning
Reporting Year	2024/25 (Update February 2025)

# **Business Plan Objective 1: Community Planning**

Support the development and implementation of the Causeway Coast and Glens Community Plan which includes evidence gathering, community engagement activities, performance management and putting in place governance and reporting mechanisms.

Lead Officer(s):

**Head of Policy & Community Planning** 

**Community Planning Officers** 

# **Link to Corporate Strategy:**

- Cohesive Leadership
- Local Economy
- Improvement and Innovation
- Healthy, Active and Engaged Communities Climate Change and Our Environment

# **Link to Community Plan:**

- A Thriving Economy
- A Healthy Safe Community

**A Sustainable Accessible Environment** 

# **Link to Performance Improvement Plan:**

Work Stream	Actions	Financial Information/ Budget £	Timescale	Performance Indicator(s)  APSE Benchmarking Indicators	Progress	RAG Status
Community Planning	Management and facilitation of the Causeway Coast and Glens Community Planning Strategic Partnership	£2000.00	April 2024 to March 2025	<ul> <li>No of Partnership Meetings</li> <li>No of Action Steering Group Meetings</li> <li>Attendance Improvement (Increase by 10%)</li> </ul>	All statutory obligations were met with:  4 x Partnership Meeting held 2024 and 4 x ASG meetings held 2024  Aprox.90% attendance	
	Provision of training and development opportunities for Community Planning Action Leads and Community Planning partners for progression of performance monitoring and reporting in relation to Community Planning Delivery Plan Actions for CC&G.	£3000.00	April 2024 to March 2025	<ul> <li>Training Conference event to be delivered early 2024.</li> <li>Participation Improvement (Increase by 10%)</li> <li>Community Planning Partners / Thematic and Action Leads participate in OBA Performance Monitoring</li> </ul>	CP Conference event held in Bushtown Hotel 29.05.2024 45 attendees Keynote speakers	
	Collaborative training, awareness raising sessions and events across the themes of the CC&G Community Plan. Promotion of inter-professional interactions across the themes of community,	£2000.00	April 2023 to March 2024	<ul> <li>Participation Improvement (Increase by 10%)</li> <li>Community Planning Partners / Thematic and Action Leads participate in</li> </ul>	Thematic Sub-Group Event held on 20.10.2024 Full participation with cross evaluation by all Thematic areas with subsequent	

health, the environment, tourism, and the economy.			OBA Performance Monitoring	Revisions made to Delivery Plan
Participative and innovative community engagement and consultative activities in support of Community Planning in CC&G	£2000.00	April 2024 to March 2025	<ul> <li>Participation Improvement (Increase by 10%)</li> <li>Participative support with Dementia Suffers Partners through Age Concern &amp; Public Health Authority (PHA)</li> <li>Number of Community Planning collaborative events / training taking place local</li> <li>Inter-professional participation and engagement at Community Planning events</li> </ul>	Dementia Support Wristband initiative lead by Age Concern successfully launched by Health Minister Coleraine Town Hall Sept. 2024. Further roll-out currently being evaluated.  Housing Poverty Conference and Report In September 2024, Community Planning worked alongside the Causeway Coast and Glens Anti-Poverty Group and the Northern Ireland Anti- Poverty Network to host a seminar "Housing Poverty in Causeway Coast and Glens: Impacts and Solutions." The event was organised to highlight the complex nature of housing poverty and its

				impacts, and to attempt to explore potential solutions in the short and longer term. Following the event Community Planning assisted the APSSG led to develop and produce the Housing Poverty Conference Report.  Mental Health Networking Event Community Planning assisted Vineyard Compassion to connect and make linkages with PHA, NHSCT and NACN to host the first Mental Health Practitoners Networking Event in the Borough in October 2024	
To further develop engagement opportunities with young people of CC&G through a 'Youth Voice' initiative.	£2000.00	April 2024 to March 2025	<ul> <li>Number / range of engagement activities undertaken</li> <li>Evaluation of effectiveness of engagement activities.</li> </ul>	Youth Voice The Youth Voice 2 <sup>nd</sup> Cohort continues to progress well. Young People attending from DEA's: Ballymoney, Bann, Limavady,	

Benbradagh. The Glens, Causeway, Community Planning continues to assist EA in Chairing the Youth Voice Project Board continues to meet quarterly. Attendance also at the Youth Voice meet the Project Board session in **June 2024.** Risk Management **Identify Risks and any Mitigating Actions Required:** Risk 1 - Nonparticipation by supporting partners in Community Planning process. Mitigation **Advanced schedule of Statutory Partnership meetings Enhance and sustain relationships with Statutory Partners** Risk 2 - Budget Cuts Mitigation Mitigation Partnership support with greater collaboration

# **Business Plan Objective 2: Policy Development**

Support the priorities and statutory obligations of Council by developing and maintaining relevant strategies, policies, procedures and systems.

Lead Officer(s):

Head of Policy and Community Planning Policy/Equality Officer

# **Link to Council Strategy:**

- Cohesive Leadership
- Improvement and Innovation

# **Link to Community Plan:**

- A Thriving Economy
- A Healthy Safe Community
- A Sustainable Accessible Environment

# **Link to Performance Improvement Plan:**

Work Stream	Actions	Financial Information/ Budget £	Timescale	Performance Indicator(s)  APSE Benchmarking Indicators	Progress	RAG Status
Policy Development	Assist with the development of a new Council Corporate Strategy.	£5,000	March 2025	New Corporate Strategy in place for 1 April 2025	Consultation underway with Councillors with a view to having a	

			new draft Strategy prepared by end of March.
Review and amend Council Constitution on an annual basis (or as required).		ril 2024 March 25	Amendments of Constitution conducted as required. Annual Review due in February 2025.
Review the log of Council policies and develop a resource to provide easy access to policies for staff.	0 Dec 202	cember 24	Yet to be progressed due to review of Staff Portal.

**Risk Management** 

**Identify Risks and any Mitigating Actions Required:** 

None identified.

# **Business Plan Objective 3: Equality and Diversity**

Ensure that the Council addresses equality and diversity issues in accordance with its legal obligations and best practice and develops/implements strategies, policies and initiatives which promote equality and diversity within the Council.

Lead Officer(s):

Head of Policy and Community Planning

**Policy/Equality Officer** 

**Link to Corporate Strategy:** 

• Improvement and Innovation

• Healthy, Active and Engaged Communities

# **Link to Community Plan:**

- A Thriving Economy
- A Healthy Safe Community
- A Sustainable Accessible Environment

# **Link to Performance Improvement Plan:**

Work Stream	Actions	Financial Information/ Budget £	Timescale	Performance Indicator(s)  APSE Benchmarking Indicators	Progress	RAG Status
Equality and Diversity	Work with the proposed EDI working group to identify key improvement actions to support building accessibility.		April 2024 to March 2025	Increase the percentage of Council owned buildings that are accessible to people with a disability.	<ul> <li>No EDI Working group has been set up.</li> <li>Alternatively working with Head of Estates who has scheduled Access Audits on 20 key buildings.</li> <li>Car Park at Cloonavin has improved accessible spaces.         Still waiting for work to commence on space nearest to the door. (Estates and J Anderson)     </li> </ul>	

Develop a programme of actions to address known inequalities.	April 2024 to March 2025	<ul> <li>Achieve the AutismNI Impact Award in RVLC and CLC.</li> <li>Trial the introduction of communication boards in Council.</li> <li>Introduce Makaton Flash Cards in Civic Centre Reception areas and Leisure Centre Reception areas.</li> <li>Provision of JAM Card training to Leisure Centre Reception areas.</li> <li>Provision of JAM Card training to Leisure Centre Reception areas.</li> <li>In discussions to implement these. Drafts developed.</li> <li>JAM card training has been rolled out to all staff. Leisure centre staff have received reminders to complete this training asap.</li> </ul>	
Develop and implement a range of communication, information and engagement activities designed to positively improve levels of interaction on equality and diversity issues.	April 2024 to March 2025	<ul> <li>Develop 10 new easy read documents across Council.</li> <li>Increase the accessibility of GDPR documentation.</li> <li>Facilitate officers to engage with the equality forum on 4 Council projects/policies.</li> <li>10 new easy read documents have been developed, finalized and on web.         Additional 2 in draft format awaiting finalization.     </li> <li>Initial draft has been developed. GDPR</li> </ul>	

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		for	um regarding:
			Accessible
			Signage in Leisure
			Centres.
		2.	Recruitment &
			Selection
			Advertising
			Platforms.
		3.	Assisted Help
			Scheme at
			Recycling
			Centres.
		4.	Go Succeed
			"Request for
			Agency feedback
			on needs of their
			client groups who
			are
			entrepreneurs".
		5.	Ballycastle Public
			Realm.
		6.	Ballymoney Public
			Realm.
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Improve consultation practices	April 2024		licy drafted.
within Council	to March		ave been peer
	2025		riewed and
		, ,	urned. An
		ad	ditional 3 have

	Easy Read documents peer reviewed.	been sent for peer review.	
Risk Management			

**Identify Risks and any Mitigating Actions Required:** 

There is a risk that the budget required for improvements exceeds current agreement by Director of Corporate Services, mitigate by ranking and scheduling key actions. Reliance on other departments may mean actions slip into the following year, mitigate by asking Heads of service to feedback on Equality Action Plan Actions on a quarterly basis.

# **Business Plan Objective 4: Disability Duties**

Ensure the Council meets its obligations in relation to the promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourages participation by disabled people in public life.

- The Equality Forum has met 4 times during the period and has become involved in various projects. This group has expanded over the past year as members have experienced greater interaction with Council representatives and the Equality Section will continue to encourage officers to interact with and take into account feedback and participation with the forum members. This Forum provides a vital conduit to develop participation. One of which is the Accessible signage for Leisure Centres which has been co-designed by this group. The group has taken part in 2 site visits one at Ballycastle to feedback on the public realm project and to co-design signage at CLC.
- The policy officer will draft an update for SMT outlining the importance of the Equality Forum to meet this obligation and outline some of the excellent work to date through officer participation and involvement of forum members. The report will also ask for SMTs support to continue and raise officer participation.
- As a result of the Autism Action Plan work is underway to provide pre-visit guides using an electronic flip-book. This has been produced using canva and the equality section plans to look at ways to extend this provision to other areas in the next business plan using the same consistent format. Such guides support and encourage participation and socialisation for people with disabilities as it removes some environmental barriers.

- Through meetings with Causeway Neurodiversity Disability groups have been encouraged to use our centres and have been working in partnership with Centre Management and the Equality Section to develop a water safety session.
- Disability Hate crime has been profiled through the PCSP section and Good Relations in their schools education projects. The Equality section have partnered with these 2 sections and been part of the projects in planning, preparation and the event itself.
- The Policy Officer and Councils Diversity Ambassador Cara McShane have attended LGSC training sessions to reinvigorate the Ambassador role within Council.
- The Policy Officer gave a best practice presentation on Councils disability hate crime work to LGSC a professional panel which included a representative from NILGA along with other Councils representatives. The work was commended by the panel.
- The Policy Officer has entered the PCSP Disability Hate Crime project into a Local Government award competition regarding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. (The Head of Policy and Community Planning will attend any subsequent event along PCSP representative and the Diversity Ambassador). This work involved co-design and partnership with various disability organisations and specialist representatives. (Accessible Signage has been earmarked as a potential entrance for next year due to the co-design work, following discussions at the LGSC training. In turn this will promote Councils work and invigorate the role of Diversity Ambassador while meeting our disability duties)
- Councils Diversity Ambassador has raised the profile of disabilities and encouraged positive attitudes through various tweets, and updates on social media.
- An update on this type of equality work has been included in the next citizens newsletter.
- Councils Diversity Ambassador has requested that a pilot of Cubbie be considered by Council. A 'cubbie' is a venue for neurodiverse individuals to self-regulate.

# Lead Officer(s):

Head of Policy and Community Planning Policy/Equality Officer

# **Link to Corporate Strategy:**

- Improvement and Innovation
- Healthy, Active and Engaged Communities

# Link to Community Plan:

- A Thriving Economy
- A Healthy Safe Community
- A Sustainable Accessible Environment

# Link to Performance Improvement Plan:

Work Stream	Actions	Financial Information/ Budget £	Timescale	Performance Indicator(s)  APSE Benchmarking Indicators	Progress	RAG Status
Disability Duties	Review the Council's Disability Action Plan in line with identified inequalities.		April 2024 to March 2025	Draft and consult on a new Disability Action Plan for Council.	Consultation has ended and a report will be complied in the next few weeks.	
	Develop and implement measures to improve access to Council services by people with a disability.		April 2024 to March 2025	<ul> <li>Draft and design a pilot for an improved assistance scheme for individuals at Recycling Centres.</li> <li>Develop a reasonable adjustment in service provision protocol for managers.</li> <li>Review feedback from the citizens survey 2024 to identify new inequalities.</li> </ul>	Pilot has been drafted and consultation is ongoing. Protocol in development. On-going	
				<ul> <li>Expand Changing places provision at Rathlin Island.</li> </ul>	On-going	Amber

		•	Continued provision of Makaton sign education to staff and Elected members via inclusion in the staff news. Reinvigorate Equality Screening within Council through reminders and support. Autism Friendly visitor guides provided for 4 main Leisure centres.	On-going  1/4ly reminders in place. Flip book has been designed consulted on and agreed for RVLC. Will be rolled out in	Amber Amber Red
Develop and implement initiatives to promote awareness of and positive attitudes to people with a disability.	April 2 to Ma 2025		Involve the Diversity Champion in 3 awareness raising campaigns.	the next 1-3 months. Due to staffing in other areas there will be a delay.  Diversity Champion has been involved in: 2 campaigns	
				regarding the Olympics. Disability Hate Crime Project. Disability Action Plan. LGSC training and associated campaign. Diversity	
				Ambassador will now attend	

	Equality Forum on an ad hoc basis.  4 articles produced to date. Will add last one to next
Provision of 5 awareness raising articles on lived experience or	Staff news.  Staff training has taken place.
All staff re-trained on equality and diversity issues in 2024 / 2025	

# **Business Plan Objective 5: Information Governance**

Develop and implement an information management strategy and framework for the Council (including an effective data protection regime and records management strategy and framework).

Lead Officer(s):

Head of Policy and Community Planning
Information Governance Manager/Data Protection Officer

# **Link to Corporate Strategy:**

• Improvement and Innovation

# **Link to Community Plan:**

- A Thriving Economy
- A Healthy Safe Community
- A Sustainable Accessible Environment

# **Link to Performance Improvement Plan:**

Work Stream	Actions	Financial Information/ Budget £	Timescale	Performance Indicator(s)  APSE Benchmarking Indicators	Progress	RAG Status
Information	Review, streamline and update		April 2024	Number of logged	Review undertaken	
Governance	Council's information governance		to March	requests responded to	by Cleaver, Fulton,	
Policies and Guidance	policies and procedures taking into account ICO issued guidance and relevant case law.		2025	within 20 working days to increase from 85% to 90%	Rankin and the IG Team. Complete.	
	Consolidate the information held within Information Governance's repository. Review and update the Staff Portal as regards information law policies.				Yet to be completed due to review of Staff Portal	
	Develop a guidance bank for all staff in relation to the requirements of information legislation.				Guidance Bank currently being developed.	
	Undertake a review of the Council's Publication Scheme.				Yet to progress.	
	Work with OD/HR to ensure the	Training			Training roll-out	
Information	annual training plan includes	budget held			underway with	
Governance	information governance training	by OD/HR			Tiers 3 and 4	
Training	appropriate to different levels of staff within Council (to include				complete.	

	induction training and annual refresher training for senior managers).				
Records Management	Work with OD/HR to ensure training on records management is included in the annual training plan for different levels of staff (to include induction training).	Training budget held by OD/HR		Still to be completed.	
	Support the on-going work of the Information Security Management Group (ISMG).			Work on Action Plan for ISMG underway.	
	Establish a process for monitoring adherence to records management guidance.			Yet to be established.	
	Review the Council's Retention and Disposal Schedule and work with Departments to ensure regular implementation of the Schedule.			Currently underway.	
Data Protection	Review, streamline and update Council's data protection policies and procedures taking into account ICO issued guidance and relevant case law.			Completed as part of Fulton, Cleaver, Rankin and IG review.	
	Work with other Departments to review operational issues and policies relating to CCTV and other mobile cameras.			Still to be completed.	
	Conduct a review of privacy notices across the Council.			Currently on-going.	
	Review data breach training and notification/logging system.			Currently on-going	

	isk Management dentify Risks and any Mitigating Actions Required:
N	lone identified.