

Title of Report:	Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Return
Committee Report Submitted To:	Corporate Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	25 June 2024
For Decision or For Information	For Decision
To be discussed In Committee	No

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Leader and Champion
Outcome	Establish key relationships with strategic partners to deliver our vision for this Council area
Lead Officer	Head of Policy and Community Planning

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 Rural needs assessment is the process by which policies, strategies, plans, service proposals, etc., are assessed to determine whether they have a differential impact on rural areas and, if so, make any adjustments required taking into account particular rural circumstances.

1.2 Rural needs assessment became applicable to Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council through the introduction of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. This requires the Council to:

“... have due regard to rural needs when

- Developing, adopting, implementing, and revising policies, strategies and plans, and
- Designing and delivery of public services.”

1.3 The Rural Needs Act also requires the Council to monitor and report on how the Council has complied with this requirement and to produce an annual monitoring report which will be forwarded to the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

1.4 Attached is a copy of the Council’s annual monitoring report to DAERA for the period April 2023 to March 2024 for your consideration.

2.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee recommends approval to Council of the attached annual monitoring report to DAERA on implementation of the Rural Needs (NI) Act 2016.



Appendix 2 - Template for Information to be Compiled

Information to be compiled by Public Authorities under Section 3(1)(a) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

(To be completed and included in public authorities' own annual reports and submitted to DAERA for inclusion in the Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report).

Name of Public Authority:

Reporting Period: April 20 to March 20

The following information should be compiled in respect of each policy, strategy and plan which has been developed, adopted, implemented or revised and each public service which has been designed or delivered by the public authority during the reporting period.

<p><i>Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016¹.</i></p>	<p><i>The rural policy area(s) which the activity relates to².</i></p>	<p><i>Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service³.</i></p>
<p>Identification of the Auction Venue and implementation process for concessionary trading locations.</p>	<p>Businesses</p>	<p>The organisers identified a need for individuals who wished to take part in the auction from rural areas to have the same access to bid. They identified that the auction potentially played a role in job creation and would bring services to rural communities as a proportion of the sites were based in rural areas. The organisers considered various alternative venues, times and the impact on rural dwellers such as access to</p>

		<p>effective broadband, increased costs of travel and the need for some people to use public transport. As a result, a central location, close to free parking was chosen and the timing of the auction planned to support individuals who may need to use public transport. Bidders could bid in person, online or via the telephone to facilitate those with reduced broadband. The catalogue was provided in written format and online and the lots were clearly scheduled to support individuals to plan for childcare and reduce the need to pay for all day care.</p>
<p>Development of Concessionary Trading Licensing and auction documentation.</p>	<p>Businesses</p>	<p>The section identified the need for the administration process for the application for license agreement, terms and conditions and code of conduct to support rural and urban dwellers alike. Concessionary trading in the borough supports job creation in all areas, however in rural areas it can also provide essential services, reduce the requirement for people to travel and create opportunities to reduce social isolation. The officers considered a number of options to collect forms, pay for licenses and how to reduce the need for additional costs associated with travel as not all areas within our borough have regular and efficient public transport and the fact that some rural areas have reduced broadband. As a result, the procedure was amended to include the option for postal or email receipt and submission of necessary documentation, the option of a face to face or online meeting at times to suit individual's during working hours and the option to pay in cash subject to money laundering regulations, by Bank transfer or cheque.</p>

Adoption of the Autism Action Plan.	Access to Leisure	Various consultation meetings were held with community groups, representative groups, health care providers, individuals with lived experience and their families and carers throughout the borough in both rural and urban locations. These meetings shaped the actions by identifying barriers and ways to remove or mitigate them leading to the development of measures to enhance current service provision over the lifespan of the action plan. Examples of such are multi-site membership access and family rates alongside measures to improve the service for all regardless of their location.
Development of a new Ballycastle Leisure Centre and outdoor leisure facilities.	Businesses, Tourism, Jobs or Employment, Health or Social Care Services, Deprivation and Crime or Community Safety	The Council identified the need to improve leisure facilities in Ballycastle. A consultation process was opened with all constituents, to identify if the preferred option met their needs. The new facilities will support rural dwellers health and wellbeing, bring employment to the area, provide a meeting hub with activities for all ages, offer activities supporting tourism and encourage trade with local businesses. Additionally, travel costs for rural dwellers will be reduced as the facility will be in a more accessible location which is currently part of the public transport network.
Implementation of the Corporate Business Continuity Plan.	Businesses, Tourism and Housing	These are corporate procedures which will be invoked in the event of an incident occurring to ensure continue delivery of critical services and applies to people in rural and urban areas equally. Rural needs will be taken account of in further detail when identifying critical functions and services at Departmental level.
Implementation of the Hardship Fund	Poverty and Deprivation	The development of the Hardship Fund proposals has

Programme.		<p>been influenced by the needs of all communities across Causeway Coast and Glens. The needs that are more prevalent in rural areas such as access to services, poor transport links, fuel poverty, increased cost of delivering services all influenced the development of the Hardship Fund proposals.</p> <p>Consideration has been given to how best to deliver services that are accessible to rural communities both in terms of location and method. As a result, different elements will be delivered by local groups with a wider rural reach such as through St Vincent de Paul, Salvation Army, social supermarkets and the local Community Advice Centre. In addition, foodbanks will stock fuel vouchers. A Food Hardship Grant will support community and voluntary organisations to deliver services and facilitate home deliveries where needed. Support information will be printed and delivered to all General Practice surgeries, libraries and community centres and advice provided by telephone and email with the opportunity for face-to-face pre-arranged appointments.</p>
Development of the Memorials Policy Framework and application assessment criteria.	Policy framework	No rural needs have been identified.
Implementation of the Complaints Handling Procedure.	Internal Procedure	No rural needs have been identified.
Development of the Equality Action Plan.	Tourism, Crime or Community Safety and Service Improvements	<p>The Council identified inequalities faced by rural dwellers and urban dwellers alike. A consultation process was opened with all constituents, to feed into draft equality improvement actions across the Council area. The plan contains specific actions to improve opportunities for socialisation locally, to mitigate additional cost barriers, to improve rural services and address other inequalities faced by rural dwellers,</p>

		businesses and visitors. The actions will result in improved services in urban areas in consultation with the local community.
Development of the Age-Friendly Strategy and Action Plan.	Businesses, Housing, Jobs and Employment, Education and Training, Transport Services and Infrastructure and Health and Social Care Services	The Age-Friendly Strategy and Action Plan was developed through co-design to ensure input from older residents from both rural and urban backgrounds. Research and consultation noted the lack of a joined-up approach, signposting, or information to support older people to access essential services which particularly impacted on individuals in rural areas due to the reduced opportunities for social interaction and ingrained self-dependence. These factors were further compounded by some rural areas experiencing reduced internet and communication access, accessible inclusion, and poorer transportation options. The Action Plan details the proposed plans to address the needs identified through the consultation process.
Review of Community Development Strategy 2023-2026.	Education or Training, Health or Social Care Services, Poverty, Deprivation and Development.	The consultation process highlighted social and economic needs which were specifically evident in rural areas: social isolation, Poor provision of facilities for leisure activities, sporting activities, training, health etc. Longer distance to travel to access facilities, commuting, poor public transport links and increased costs as a result. A higher prevalence of poverty among older people in rural areas combined with poor broadband and in some cases mobile phone coverage. Consideration was given to how best to deliver services, programmes and projects that were accessible to rural community groups and how best to support rural community groups to address the needs identified using a community development approach. The draft Community Development Strategy and Action Plan has incorporated the needs of rural communities across Causeway Coast and Glens.

<p>Development of the Growth Deal.</p>	<p>Business, Tourism, Housing, Jobs or Employment, Education or training, Broadband or Mobile communications, transport services or infrastructure, deprivation and development.</p>	<p>The Growth Deal has considered many of the themes/challenges associated with rural needs and embedded potential solutions into the various projects identified for funding. The project leads/sponsors identified that individuals in remote, rural areas may be detrimentally impacted by poorer Digital Connectivity which could lead to isolation so the planned digital hubs in Cushendall and Dungiven aim to reduce the digital divide. The various projects will develop job creation opportunities for individuals potentially in tourism, which will reduce poverty and encourage entrepreneurship. This will be further supported by regeneration projects which will enhance the two villages selected (Bushmills and Dungiven). The proposed greenway project will improve connectivity and increase safety on our roads, by removing pedestrians from our rural roads.</p>
<p>Planning Ballymoney Spring Fair.</p>	<p>Tourism, transport services or infrastructure.</p>	<p>The organisers identified the need of individuals from rural areas to have the same access to the event. Using feedback from previous events and by consulting with key stakeholders they identified the longer travel distance, reduced opportunities for socialisation and additional costs. These factors were considered at the planning stage and events developed to encourage increased social interaction, free carparking and the provision of free family activities.</p>
<p>Implementation of the Grant Funding Policy.</p>	<p>The impacts are dependent on the grant usage/project funded and could cover or include in full or any part of; any of the above rural policy areas</p>	<p>The policy itself will not have a direct impact on individuals in rural areas; however, all funding awards are based on an established need which may relate to a rural issue. As such no set social and economic needs are specifically detailed in the policy. To date schemes have contributed towards enhancing rural life, tackling poverty in rural areas, rural community development, education and training, increasing social interaction, improving education, safety, networking, good relations</p>

		and collaboration.
Implementation of Causeway Coast and Glens Landfill Communities Fund Policy.	The impacts are dependent on the grant usage/project funded and could cover or include in full or any part of; any of the above rural policy areas	The policy itself will not have a direct impact on individuals in rural areas; however, all funding awards are based on an established need which may relate to a rural issue. As such no set social and economic needs are specifically detailed in the policy. To date schemes have contributed towards enhancing rural life, tackling poverty in rural areas, rural community development, education and training, increasing social interaction, improving education, safety, networking, good relations and collaboration.
Adoption of public realm enhancements to the Kerr Street and Harbour area of Portrush.	None	No rural needs have been identified.

NOTES

1. This information should normally be contained in section 1B of the RNIA Template completed in respect of the activity.
2. This information should normally be contained in section 2D of the RNIA Template completed in respect of the activity.
3. The information contained in sections 3D, 4A & 5B of the RNIA Template should be considered when completing this section.