

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES & TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 6
15 NOVEMBER 2010	Public Report

Report of the Solicitor to the Council

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TRANSLATION & INTERPRETATION POLICY

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report is presented to allow this Scrutiny Committee to comment upon the draft Translation & Interpretation Policy attached, before it is considered by Cabinet on 8th December 2010.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Scrutiny is asked to recommend the draft policy for adoption by Cabinet.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The policy sets out our obligations in respect of translation & interpretation, and sets out our approach to fulfilling it. Whilst recognising that encouraging use of the English language is an important part of developing community cohesion, the report recognises that there will be circumstances where translation and interpretation is necessary and appropriate, to enable the Council's service users to have achieve the aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy:

Improving health: by ensuring appropriate access to health services

Supporting vulnerable people: so that those in need can properly access the services available to them

Regenerating neighbourhoods: so that the most deprived communities can access services they need to achieve their full potential

Improving skills and education: assisting everyone to access appropriate learning opportunities, specifically so that they can learn language skills

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council does not currently have a Translation & Interpretation Policy. It does have a very sensible approach to translation and interpretation, and this has now been encapsulated into a policy. This is because there has been a considerable amount of interest in the amount spent in this area, which is actually very small; in the last year it was in the region of £154 000, which is less than 0.1% of the Council's budget. There is no specific budget for this service, each Directorate incurs costs as is necessary to enable it to fulfil its legal obligations and deliver its service. However, in view of the increased concern it was considered appropriate to produce a policy.

5. KEY ISSUES

- 5.1 It is not possible for the Council to cease the provision of Translation & Interpretation costs without being in breach of its statutory duties. Costs are kept to a minimum, and general information is not translated as a matter of course. Translation & Interpretation costs include the cost of providing information in Braille to some service users, use of British Sign language interpreters, and provision of information in simple language to adults with learning difficulties.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council is not legally obliged to have a policy, it already operates good practice in relation to translation & interpretation, and this policy simply records that practice

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 This is coming to scrutiny for consultation, there has been no wider consultation as no new approach is being introduced; the Council already operates as this policy states, and does so to fulfil its legal obligation to its service users. Consultation in these circumstances would not provide further assistance.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 Cabinet on 8th December 2010 for approval.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 9.1 None.

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 Draft Translation & Interpretation Policy