

EQIA STAGE 7 PRICING POLICY

Belfast City Council remains committed to fulfilling its responsibilities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. In its Equality Scheme, the Council gave an undertaking to carry out an equality impact assessment (EQIA) on each policy or group of co-joined policies where screening had indicated significant issues in relation to one or more of the nine equality dimensions.

The Council's Pricing Policy was identified as one such policy and, following consultation, was scheduled to be carried out in Year One of the EQIA programme. The stated aim of the Pricing Policy is: 'To operate a tariff of charges for the provision of facilities and services so as to recoup a reasonable proportion of the Council's expenditure while acting in a fair and equitable manner towards both residents of and visitors to the City.' For the purposes of the EQIA, the Policy has been restricted to those facilities and services where the Council is able to operate some discretion in the levying of charges. Therefore the Pricing Policy EQIA relates mainly to the following facilities: Leisure and Community Centres, Outdoor Leisure, Belfast City Hall, the Ulster Hall / Group Theatre, Waterfront Hall, Belfast Zoo, Belfast Castle, Malone House, Cemeteries and the Crematorium. The Council's management / leasing agreements concerning certain sporting and community facilities are also included in this assessment.

In carrying out the EQIA the Council has taken into account information and data from a number of sources. These sources did not suggest that the Council's Pricing Policy had been a significant cause for concern among residents of Belfast. Indeed it was felt that the actions of the Council generally had been directed towards providing concessions for a number of the equality categories in order to promote equality of opportunity. However, mindful of the duty to promote equality of opportunity and good relations it was felt important to review the pricing schedules which operate at each location to consider whether adverse impact may occur.

An assessment of the impact of the Council's Pricing Policy was then conducted in respect of the nine equality dimensions identified in Section 75 and a number of issues were identified.

Monitoring update

Admission and membership - A consistent approach regarding admission and membership will apply to the Council's leisure centres and outdoor leisure facilities and the Council will ensure that similar rates of concession apply to council-owned facilities governed by management agreements. A proposed Pricing Policy for Leisure Centres was agreed by Community & Leisure Sub Committee in January 2006. This proposed pricing policy will require endorsement by the Community and Recreation Committee in January 2006 and

the approval of full Council in February 2006 before the policy can be implemented. It should be noted that the comments regarding Leisure Centre charges included in the following paragraphs are based on the proposed pricing policy.

Concessionary rate - In terms of membership and admission to these facilities, persons aged 60 years and above will have 'free' access to leisure centres before 11am, Monday to Friday and will be required to pay a £1 concessionary charge per activity outside of these times. Admission prices will be reviewed in the Zoo. For Waterfront Hall Promotions - concessionary rate for persons aged 60 years and above; under 16 years; students; persons "unemployed"; and persons registered disabled. 50% reduction for wheelchair spaces. For Waterfront /Ulster Halls external promotions certain promoters will offer concessionary rates at their own discretion for persons aged 60 and over; under 16 years; persons with a disability and persons "unemployed".

Children - Children aged 3 and under will be admitted free of charge. However the Waterfront Hall policy in relation to the admission of children under the age of 3 will still apply; all juveniles, including those under the age of 3, will pay a concessionary rate, where applicable. The Zoo is free for children under 4 years of age. There are concessionary rate where applicable for Waterfront/Ulster Halls.

Families - A consistent approach regarding concessionary rates for family units with at least one adult and a maximum of two adults will apply. However the Waterfront Hall will only apply this family unit concession rate on appropriate performances and will continue to use the 'children' designation for those aged 16 years and under. The Zoo operates a Family Day Ticket. Waterfront/Ulster Halls apply Family Saver tickets where applicable.

Hire charges - Existing charges for hire of the Waterfront Hall, Ulster Hall/Group Theatre, Malone House, Belfast Castle and Belfast City Hall will continue to operate. Where concessionary rates may apply these will operate at the discretion of management. The rate charged for hire of the Ulster Hall will not differentiate between religious and voluntary groups. Rates of hire for the Waterfront Hall / Ulster Hall are currently under review, with revised scales due to be launched in the 2006-2007 financial year.

Community Development Activity - The concessionary rates made available to groups involved in Community Development Activity will continue to apply. The Waterfront Hall offers reduced room hire rates to Community Groups and a Community ticketing scheme offers reduced price tickets for selected shows.

Concessionary rates - The concessionary rates currently operated by the Waterfront Hall will continue to apply. Standby tickets for selected performances will be available to students only. For Waterfront/Ulster Halls a student standby rate is applicable for selected performances. A new incentive launch in Autumn

2005 as part of the Waterfront Hall's youth strategy offers complimentary tickets for selected performances to all under-18's.

Burials and cremations - A differential rate for burial and cremation will continue to operate between Belfast residents and others, with provision for older people who have lived in Belfast but have moved away from the City for residential or nursing care.

Advertising - The Council will publicise the availability of concessionary rates in all its facilities to ensure wider uptake, and will also contact groups representing relevant equality dimensions. Community & Leisure current practice is to publicise in all facilities. Leisure consulted fully with Equality Groups on proposed pricing policy. The rates advertised in the Zoo and on the website and Waterfront/Ulster Halls are publicised via flyers and website.

Disability - The Council will apply a consistent policy of permitting significantly reduced rates for hire of facilities by groups representing persons with a disability where the use of the facility is linked to therapeutic measures. Leisure will be based on ability to pay on income status in proposed pricing policy.

Carers - The Council is sympathetic to the extension of concessionary rates to those who are significant carers whose presence as a carer is essential to the attendance of the person with a disability. Carers are free in Leisure Centres. There is a 50% reduction for wheelchair users and carers only, for selected events in the Waterfront Hall

Staff training - All relevant staff will be trained in the Council's policy in relation to the granting of concessionary rates in order to ensure sensitivity and consistency of approach. In Recreation & Community, all Staff will be trained on the new pricing policy. All Staff are trained in Parks & Cemeteries & Waterfront/Ulster Halls.

The Council will endeavor to ensure that events/activities which are restricted to particular groups (e.g. women, men) will not be scheduled exclusively at peak-rate times. This is current practice in Recreation/Community.

The Council will review its arrangements for the granting of franchises within Council facilities to ensure that pricing schedules are fair and equitable in relation to the nine equality dimensions.

Complaints - The Council reviews its complaints procedure to ensure that all pricing complaints associated with pricing are registered and monitored centrally.

EQIA STAGE 7 HUMAN RESOURCES

Model Equal Opportunities Policy

Sexual Harassment Policy

Community Outreach Programme

Background/Rationale to EQIA

Belfast City Council remains committed to fulfilling its responsibilities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. In its Equality Scheme, the Council gave an undertaking to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on each policy or group of co-joined policies where screening had indicated significant issues in relation to one or more of the nine equality dimensions.

The Model Equal Opportunities Policy

The aim of this policy, which covers all Section 75 categories plus trade union membership and those with a criminal record, is to communicate and demonstrate to employees and potential job applicants that the Council is opposed to all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination in any aspect of employment and that selection will be made on the basis of merit.

Community Outreach Programme

The aim of this programme is to promote the Council as an attractive equal opportunity employer and to reach a wide pool of potential applicants representing the diversity of Northern Ireland's society.

The Sexual Harassment Policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure employees are not subjected to behavior that causes offence, harasses, humiliates, threatens, intimidates or causes apprehension because of their gender; it also provides procedures for dealing with complaints of sexual harassment.

Monitoring Update

- Representation in the workforce is a key priority area in the Good Relations Strategy

- Work experience requests from targeted under represented groups have been approved by Council
- A project entitled Women into Non traditional roles has been developed.
- The Council endorses projects such as Women into Politics and Women in Local Councils initiatives
- An employee monitoring programme has been introduced
- Unfair Treatment procedures have been approved by the Council
- Child Care Voucher scheme has been introduced
- A work life Balance Handbook has been produced and circulated to all employees. The monitoring and evaluation regarding the outcome of the work life balance policies is ongoing.

Complaints

No complaints have been received

EQIA STAGE 7 HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES

Background/Rationale to EQIA

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Belfast City Council's Recruitment and Selection procedures are based on the Local Government Staff Commission's (LGSC) Code of Procedures. The aim is to provide a best practice approach to recruitment and selection and to ensure consistency across Belfast City Council through the application of common procedures and in compliance with legislative requirements and standards.

The EQIA of this policy has identified that although there is some under representation in certain job groups, the Council is addressing this through complementary policies.

Monitoring update

Issues were raised during the EQIA consultation process. As part of Stage 7 EQIA process all issues arising from the EQIA and consultation responses have been reviewed.

- Premature Retirement Policy – no comments were received in relation to this Policy and the Council did not identify any adverse impact.
- Advertising - All publicly advertised vacancies are now e-mailed to a range of under represented groups prior to advertisement e.g. Disability Action, NICEM, Age Concern etc.

The EQIA has highlighted issues which have now been completed, examples being voluntary monitoring and logging for reasonable adjustments.

As a result of review of policies, Unfair Treatment guidelines are now in place – these will determine the appropriate course of action after an initial interview. Other proactive measures included the Women into Non-traditional Sectors project, targeted outreach and positive recruitment of ethnic minorities.

An employee monitoring process has been established. Employees will be invited to attend particular equality theme groups. Issues such as multiple disadvantages will come under the work life balance scheme and will be addressed by the equality groups.

The Council continues to liaise with the Department of Education and Learning and has placed people under the Employment Support Scheme/New Deal.

Complaints

No complaints have been received.

EQIA STAGE 7 ACCESS POLICY

Background/Rationale to EQIA

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The Council's Access Policy was identified as one such policy and, following consultation, was scheduled to be carried out in Year Two of the EQIA programme. The stated aim of the Access Policy is: "As far as is reasonably practicable and within its resource limitations, the Council will ensure that its buildings and associated facilities are accessible to all and that fair and equitable treatment will be given in the use of such buildings and associated facilities."

For the purposes of this EQIA, the policy has been restricted to buildings and associated facilities owned or managed by the Council. The Policy Aim is:

"As far as is reasonably practicable and within its resource limitations, the Council will ensure that its buildings and associated facilities are accessible to all and that fair and equitable treatment will be given in the use of such buildings and associated facilities."

Monitoring update

Issues were raised during the EQIA consultation process. As part of Stage 7 EQIA process all issues arising from the EQIA and consultation responses have been reviewed.

The Pricing team has reviewed the pricing policies in relation to persons with a disability and carers.

As a direct result of the annual focus group meeting, all jobs are automatically circulated to Disability Action in advance of public advertisement.

The Council hosts an annual focus group for stakeholders on access issues.

The Council has developed a Disability Strategy using extensive consultation with our stakeholders.

An action plan has been drawn up and communicated to all stakeholders.

The Access audits cover all nine equality dimensions

The Council is monitoring employees on Section 75 categories.

Many of the actions in relations to access are included in the Disability Strategy Action Plan 2005-2006 as follows:

- Consult interested people on our disability strategy
- Tell our staff about the disability strategy
- Produce guidelines for signs and communicate these to employees
- Launch the strategy to disability organisation
- Deliver disability awareness training throughout the organisation
- Monitor applicants with disabilities, those we short-list and those we appoint from April 2005 to March 2006
- Develop a logging system to monitor reasonable adjustments we have considered and put into practice, or refused, for employees with disabilities
- Make available at least 30 work-experience placements for people with disabilities from April 2005 to March 2006
- Hold careers fairs and training in interview skills for people with disabilities
- Increase the number of placements in the Government's Employment Support Scheme from four to no more than eight
- Provide details of publicly advertised council vacancies to the Disablement Advisory Service and to individual disability organisations
- Develop an online recruitment system which will help applicants with disabilities, in line with guidance from the Employer's Forum on Disability (NI)
- Consider not applying recruitment and selection conditions for people with disabilities for certain posts, where this does not affect their ability to carry out the basic duties of the post
- Try out processes for testing people's skill for basic-grade clerical recruitment campaigns to encourage disabled applicants
- Complete the programme of access work
- Complete disability access audits

Complaints

There have been no complaints received on access issues.

EQIA STAGE 7 FLYING OF THE UNION FLAG

Background to EQIA

The Council decided to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on the current policy on the flying of the Union Flag on Council properties in October 2002, following a complaint made under the Council's Equality Scheme. The policy in October 2002 was that the Union Flag was flown:

- outside the City Hall on a permanent basis
- outside the Duncrue Complex and the Ulster Hall on specified days per year (15 Flag Days plus 4 additional days).

The EQIA has now been completed in accordance with the Equality Scheme and the guidance published by the Equality Commission. The Council considered a draft report of the EQIA findings in April 2003 when it agreed that widespread formal consultation should be carried out in the autumn of 2003. A final report, which included the results of the consultation and further advice from Senior Counsel, was considered on 24 March 2004. A decision was taken at Council on 4 May 2004 that no change should be made to the policy and the Union Flag continues to be flown at City Hall.

Monitoring update

Issues were raised during the EQIA consultation process. As part of Stage 7 EQIA process all issues arising from the EQIA and consultation responses have been reviewed.

As part of the means of addressing the original complaint, the Council set up an Advisory Panel on Memorabilia, which examined the display of artifacts within the City Hall. The Advisory Panel recommended that nothing should be removed or taken down, but that in future, steps should be taken to ensure that the display was more balanced and inclusive.

The Council has taken action in a number of broader related areas since then. These include the commissioning of a bust of the radical reformer Mary Ann McCracken; the re-naming of Committee Rooms as the Conor and Lavery Rooms; the re-location of various portraits; and the broadening of the range of Council events to ensure that they reflect minority interests in the city e.g. Irish, Ulster-Scots, Chinese, Indian and Filipino.

In addition, the Council continues to undertake regular six monthly "good and harmonious" audits in all its workplaces.

The issue must be seen in the light of the wider equality/good relations context in the Council and city. The Council's Good Relations Steering Panel continues to work towards achieving political consensus on a wide range of controversial

topics and is, for example, currently debating the broader issue of flags in the city.

Since the decision of May 2004 not to change the original policy, this subject has been monitored informally through regular discussion with the party political groups within the Council.

Complaints

No further complaints have been received or any similar issues raised since publication of the EQIA in May 2004.

EQIA STAGE 7 GRANT-AID FOR COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Background/Rationale to EQIA

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The Grant Aid Policy was adopted in June 1999 and was intended to apply for 3 years. In the event, it was extended for a further year to allow a detailed review to be completed. The review resulted in a revised policy which was approved in June 2003. The EQIA focused on the operation of the policy over the first 3 years.

Monitoring update

Issues were raised during the EQIA consultation process. As part of Stage 7 EQIA process all issues arising from the EQIA and consultation responses have been reviewed.

Communication: Grants are advertised widely in local press. A new post of grants advisory officer will be advertised shortly. This position will assist with communication issues. Grant forms, guidelines etc are available on the Council website.

Targeted areas: The department is now using ACORN (previously used Noble) and is continuously updating targeting social need guidelines. Monitoring of applications will be developed by the new grants advisory officer. Outreach officers encourage under represented groups to apply.

Availability of grants information: Information on allocation of individual grants is accessible through the BCC minutes on the website.

Accessibility: BCC will make Community Centres available free of charge if there are accessibility issues.

Inter Agency Funders Forum: The new grants advisory officer will be in a position to provide information to all requests regarding funding.

Further work

A Community Support Plan was developed and consulted upon. Section 75 issues in relation to targeted areas were addressed by this. A major review of the grant-aid in 2006 has emanated from this.

The grant aid procedure is still conducted in the same way. Funding is based on merit and not on historical precedent, and the funding cycles are still the same. There has been a change in the structure in that funding to resource centres has been stopped and replaced by capacity building funding. Following the consultation process changes were implemented.

Complaints

Two complaints have been received concerning the lack of clear appeals procedures. The appeals procedure is currently being reviewed.

EQIA STAGE 7 CULTURE & ARTS FUNDING

Background/Rationale to EQIA

Belfast City Council remains committed to fulfilling its responsibilities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. In its Equality Scheme, the Council gave an undertaking to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on each policy or group of co-joined policies where screening had indicated significant issues in relation to one or more of the nine equality dimensions

Belfast City Council Development Department has been providing direct funding to arts organisations since the mid 1990s. Initially these grants were to support specific projects but the policy has evolved to include annual funding for professionally managed organisations to support a year long programme of arts initiatives. More recently the Council undertook a pilot scheme of grants to support development and outreach projects in specific areas of the city. The policy has also evolved to support a wider definition of culture which includes both arts and heritage initiatives.

Funding for culture and arts projects has been administered over the years under the auspices of a number of strategies and plans. However, although the strategies may have changed, the basic principles of the way funding has been provided have remained constant.

Monitoring update

Issues were raised during the EQIA consultation process. As part of Stage 7 EQIA process all issues arising from the EQIA and consultation responses have been reviewed.

- Accessibility of information - All information relating to funds awarded is published on the BCC website and published in Culture & Arts documents.
- Development & Outreach (D&O) – the revised NOBLE indices are used. The scheme was reviewed at the end of the pilot year and is still running. It is being proposed that in 2006/07 the D&O initiative will be widened to include disability as a criterion. The D&O was designed to address imbalance in community applications. This has now been achieved.
- Assessment criteria – each criterion is weighted equally.
- List of applicants – a list of applicants is included in the final report and is widely available through minutes, website and on request from the Unit.
- Disability access – this is not a condition of funding. Good relations is one of the criteria under which the applications are assessed.
- Advice on applications – funding advice clinics are now being offered. These are advertised in the three main local papers, on the website and previous clients are also informed.

- Appeals procedure – an appeals mechanism has not been developed to date.

Further information

The proposed new Integrated Cultural Strategy will supersede the Culture & Arts Plan. The Development Department Capital City II strategy will also contain the Culture & Arts policy. A new funding procedure is now in operation. This includes four areas of funding, namely Multi-annual, Annual, Development & Outreach & Rolling Programme funding. This has been fully consulted on, with no adverse impact indicated. Extensive consultation is continuing on the next plan.

The Unit continually monitors and evaluates systems in conjunction with stakeholders.

Complaints

No complaints have been received.

EQIA STAGE 7 BCC OWNED INDOOR LEISURE FACILITIES

Background/Rationale to EQIA

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The Council requested that an Equality Impact Assessment be undertaken pending the implementation of their decision of the 1st April 2003 in relation to the Strategic Review of Belfast City Council owned Indoor Leisure Facilities.

Over the last number of years B.C.C. has conducted an in-depth review of leisure provision in the City Council area. As a result of the review the Council has taken the following decisions at a Council meeting held on 1 April 2003.

- (i) the transfer of the Beechmount Leisure Centre site to St Mary's University College and Forbairt Feirste;
- (ii) the closure of Maysfield Leisure Centre by the end of 2003/4 financial year and to the commencement of a new facility in South Belfast by the year 2006;
- (iii) continue to review the future format and operation of other Centres, including Shankill Leisure Centre, Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre, Loughside and Ormeau (Ozone) Centre; and
- (iv) the commencement of new facilities in North and East Belfast taking place during the period 2006 – 2009."

Monitoring update

Issues were raised during the EQIA consultation process. As part of Stage 7 EQIA process all issues arising from the EQIA and consultation responses have been reviewed.

Range and level of services – All services and facilities are being dealt with on a site by site basis.

Consultation - Consultation will be undertaken at the appropriate time in relation to the facilities to be included in each new/replacement leisure centre, as well as other customer issues such as opening hours. The consultations will be targeted and include Section 75 groups.

Access & socio-economic issues – Access issues are covered by DDA audits in all our buildings. The indoor leisure pricing policy has been reviewed.

Mitigation - School users of Maysfield were given the option of using other leisure centres. Summer schemes have been financially supported across the city, via direct Council provision and grant aid to the voluntary and community sector.

Further information

Transfer of Beechmount to St Mary's College - There has been a change in the transfer arrangements, but the outcome in terms of public use is the same. The land is to be sold or leased to the Department of Education, with the facility managed by Colaiste Feirste.

Closure of Maysfield Leisure Centre - Maysfield Leisure Centre closed in June 2004. Council has decided to locate the new South Belfast Leisure Centre in Ormeau Park. Additional public consultation will take place on the nature of facilities to be provided. Council has been approached regarding a possible City of Belfast Stadium in Ormeau Park, and it will be necessary to make a decision on this before progressing the leisure centre.

Temporary closures for refurbishment – Leisure and recreation centres are closing, a few at a time, to enable refurbishment work to be undertaken. Discussions are taking place with the North & West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust regarding the possibility of part of Shankill Leisure Centre being used as a day care centre for elderly people. Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre is due to be transferred to community management in the near future.

North & East Belfast - Council is working towards provision of new facilities for North and East Belfast. A joint centre in East Belfast, in conjunction with Castlereagh Borough Council, is one of the options. In North Belfast, two possible sites have been identified - Girdwood and the Waterworks. The outcome will be affected by the master-planning exercise which is currently underway in respect of the land at Crumlin Road Gaol/Girdwood.

Complaints

Some complaints had been received regarding the closure of Maysfield Leisure Centre, as some groups were unable to be accommodated.

