



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Position Paper on a Proposed Council Strategy to Tackle Poverty and Inequalities
<b>Date:</b>	11 November 2009
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Shirley McCay/Tim Husbands, Interim Co- Directors of Development
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Barbary Cook, Policy and Business Development Manager, ext 3620

### Relevant Background Information

Late last year the Development Department commissioned Dr Mike Morrissey to research poverty in Belfast and assess the level of poverty in the City and recommend a set of anti-poverty initiatives that the Council could take forward in the short and medium term.

Drawing on the research findings, a number of workshops were held with Members and several key Council decision-makers leading to the recommendation that BCC should develop a poverty strategy/action plan for the Council. However, due to internal restructuring, this process was delayed.

### Key Issues

It is now proposed to move this initiative forward as it is believed it will contribute significantly to the corporate and departmental goals in terms of:

#### Fulfilling existing obligation under the Corporate Plan:

The Council's strategy for tackling poverty and inequalities would make a substantial commitment to fulfilling the strategic objective to reduce health and social inequalities under the 'Better Support for People and Communities'.

Fulfil the action of the current Departmental Plan 2009/10 which was accepted by the Committee on 13th May 2009

#### Fulfilling existing obligation under the Community Support Plan:

Objective 1.1 in the Community Support Plan has a specific action 'to develop a Council policy on poverty' - as confirmed by the Department for Social Development, commits the Council to developing a poverty strategy.

#### Supporting the Council's work on improving health and tackling health inequalities:

In particular support the work of the Interdepartmental group for Health and Wellbeing.

Responding to legislative drivers:

The new Child Poverty Bill 2009 will oblige the Government to eradicate child poverty by 2020. Its stated purpose is to give new impetus to the Government's commitment and to drive action across Departments - Local Government will be expected to support this process.

Improving Belfast's competitiveness:

Evidence shows (by Prof. Parkinson) that economic inequalities across the City inhibit Belfast's increasing competitiveness.

Enhancing civic leadership:

By developing and implementing the anti-poverty strategy for the City, Belfast City Council would show leadership in an area in which there has been limited success so far. This strategy would also offer an opportunity for the Council to engage more closely with its citizens in greatest need and a wider range of stakeholders.

There are three main ways in which Council could successfully implement an anti-poverty strategy:

1. Improving access to and delivery of our services

Given the fact that people in poverty usually have poorer access to services, it is an area of the Council's work where most changes could be made.

2. Bending the budget

The strategy would focus on the more sustainable option of finding ways to better target our existing budgets.

3. Monitoring and research

With the Council's sophisticated small area statistics system, Belfast Citystats, and the Corporate Performance Management system, CorVu, it will be possible to monitor the levels of poverty at a neighbourhood level and therefore the Council's achievements with the implementation of the anti-poverty strategy.

Process for the development of the strategy:

- Work closely with Members and Council Officers as key stakeholders
- Consult with other key stakeholders
- Prepare by March 2010 a draft strategy with an outline of the priorities and actions which would go to COMT and Development Committee for approval
- By May 2010 – commence official public consultation
- By October 2010 – launch the strategy

**Resource Implications**

There is £12,000 in the first year 2009/10. It is anticipated that an additional £20,000 will be required for 2010/11 to cover the costs of:

- Consultation workshops
- Production of a draft strategy
- Design and production of a final strategy
- Necessary translations of the document
- Strategy launch

**Recommendations**

Committee are asked to:

1. Note the content of this report; and
2. Approve the process as outlined

**Decision Tracking**

1. Further to approval regular update reports will be brought to Committee.  
Timeline: January 2010 Reporting Officer: Barbary Cook
2. Commence Public Consultation:  
Timeline: May 2010 Reporting Officer: Barbary Cook
3. Launch Strategy  
Timeline: October 2010 Reporting Officer: Barbary Cook

**Key to Abbreviations**

COMT – Chief Officers Management Team

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