



Belfast City Council

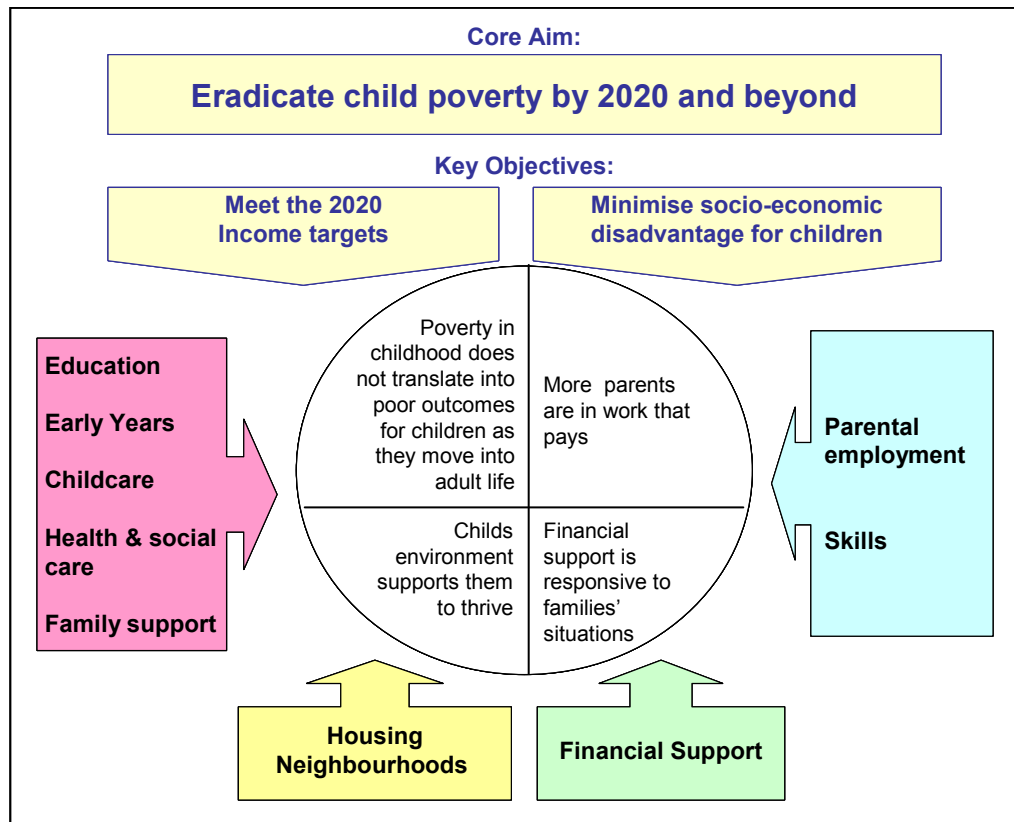
Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Consultation: OFMDFM Child Poverty Plan
Date:	22 February 2011
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen Director of Development ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Barbary Cook, Policy & Business Development Manager, ext 3620

Relevant Background Information	
1.1	The Council has been asked to respond to the Office of the First Ministers and Deputy First Minister's Child Poverty Plan. The Child Poverty Act 2010 (The Act), see the attached documents, enacted on 25 March, places a statutory obligation on the Executive to develop a child poverty strategy and lay it before the assembly by 25 March 2011.
1.2	The aim of the strategy is to provide the opportunity for all children and young people to thrive and to address the causes and consequences of disadvantage. The strategy is based on the framework for tackling child poverty, produced by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) although in recognising the Northern Ireland context, they have separated childcare and education as these are not represented by one service.
1.3	The strategy is not intend to replace or replicate existing strategies or work but rather to provide the strategic direction for the eradication of child poverty. The strategy also allows for the current financial climate and the uncertain Budget allocations, therefore it is a high level strategy intended to bring focus to the issue and promote a common aim.
1.4	The strategy contain four priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ensure, as far as possible, that poverty and disadvantage in childhood does not translate into poorer outcomes for children as they move into adulthood- Support more parents to be in work that pays- Ensure the child's environment supports them to thrive

1.5

- Target financial support to be responsive to family situations

The elements of the strategy are shown in diagram 1.



1.6

Diagram 1.

A number of principles will underpin and support the delivery of this strategy:

- A shift towards tackling the root causes of poverty and not just treating its symptoms;
- Putting children at the centre of the Strategy and taking into account their views when developing policies and programmes to tackle child poverty;
- Adopting a Life Cycle approach, breaking the cycle that results in children born into poverty becoming working age adults in low income;
- Promoting excellence in support across a range of key policy areas including employment and skills, education, childcare, health and family support, housing and neighbourhoods, and financial support;
- A gradual shift towards the use of preventative measures to tackle child poverty and, when families face difficulties, intervention at an early stage, reducing the likelihood of more serious problems developing in the future;
- Applying an evidence based approach;
- Adopting a whole family approach which concentrates on all members of the family - children, young people, and their parents and supporting family life;
- Empowering and enabling parents on low income into work and make work pay for those on low pay;
- Promoting partnership working across all sectors including public, private, voluntary, and community sectors;
- Recognising the current economic climate and the need for the Strategy to be balanced against existing financial limits.

1.7	More information about the strategy can be found online at: http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/improving-public-services/ofmdfm-consultations/ofmdfm-consultations-current-forthcoming.htm
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2	Key Issues
2.1	The main issues for Belfast City Council are:
2.2	- The principles of the strategy are complementary to the Council's Draft Corporate Action Plan to tackle Poverty and Reduce Inequalities.
2.3	- The majority of the strategy document sets out the legislation and rationale for having a strategy. There is less detail about the specific actions that will be undertaken. Where actions are proposed, no target, resources or accountabilities are mentioned. Therefore it is difficult to provide much feedback on the document.
2.4	- The document does not mention the role of Councils other than to acknowledge our input to workshops and to commit support for local councils, and others, who provide services and programmes which meet the needs of local communities, particularly disadvantaged communities.
2.5	- The original deadline for a response was the 6 February 2011. We have managed to secure an extension until the 10 February. This allows us one day after committee to make any changes.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	There are no immediate resource costs associated with this consultation response.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no equality and good relations considerations associated with this response.

5	Recommendations
	The Committee is asked to :
5.1	1. Approve the attached draft consultation response; and
5.2	2. Raise any issues about the draft response that they wish to be included.

Decision Tracking
Further to approval the response will be sent to the Office of the First Ministers and Deputy First Minister's Child Poverty Plan Timeframe: April 2011 Reporting Officer: Barbary Cook

Key to Abbreviations
Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM)

Documents Attached
OFMDFM "Executive approved draft child poverty strategy for consultation" 6.12.10-2 "OFMDFM Child Poverty Strategy Draft Consultation Response"