



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Final draft of BCC Framework to Tackle Poverty & Reduce Inequalities
Date:	16 March 2011
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	<p>Members will be aware that the original proposal for a Poverty & Inequalities strategy was taken to the Development Committee on 11th November 2009. At that time, the Committee was reminded that in 2008 the Development Department had commissioned Dr. Mike Morrissey to undertake a study to assess the level of poverty in Belfast and to recommend anti-poverty initiatives which the council could undertake in the short and medium term. A number of workshops were held with Members and officers in 2009 to consider Dr. Morrissey's findings, which had concluded that the council should develop a framework to tackle poverty and inequalities.</p>
1.2	<p>Three main methods by which the council could implement the Framework were highlighted at the November 2009 Committee meeting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. improve access to, and delivery of, council services;2. better targeting of the council's existing budgets; and3. using the council's statistical and performance management systems to monitor both the levels of poverty at a neighbourhood level and the council's achievements following the implementation of the strategy. <p>The Development department and its Policy and Business and Development Unit (PBDU) were tasked to lead on the development of a council framework to tackle poverty and reduce inequalities, within the context of the corporate theme of "Improving Health and Tackling Health Inequalities", as recommended by the Chief Officers.</p>

1.3	<p>It was agreed that the process to develop the framework would involve working closely with Members, consulting key stakeholders and public consultation. Between November 2009 and October 2010, PBDU worked on this project and developed the first draft of a Framework for consideration by Committee.</p> <p>The draft Council Framework to Tackle Poverty and Reduce Inequalities was taken to Committee in November 2010. At Committee, following a recent Good Relations seminar under the 'One City' project, where Dr Mike Morrissey had presented on the relationship between economic development, good relations and tackling inequalities, Committee requested that Dr Morrissey be asked to give this presentation to Members and address how the issues he raised might be addressed by the new Framework.</p> <p>Dr Morrissey gave a presentation to the Committee in February 2011. Further details are given below. Issues raised by him have been addressed in the final draft of the Framework which is now being presented to Committee.</p> <p>Members also requested party briefings on the Framework. At the time of writing two briefings have been confirmed and Democratic Services are currently confirming the others so that they can be held before March Committee. Any additional issues raised in the party briefings will be raised verbally at the Committee.</p>
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2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>Presentation from Dr Morrissey, February 2011</p> <p>Dr Morrissey's presentation focused on the strong economic arguments for ensuring that cities exercise leadership in addressing poverty and inequalities. He noted a Centre for Cities report in 2011 which stated:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">'The varied geography of both recession and recovery makes it even more important that local authorities are empowered to devise strategies that respond to their distinctive local economic circumstances. Empowering cities, in particular to build on local assets, will be vital to supporting the UK's prosperity. Containing over 70 percent of Great Britain's private sector jobs, cities and their hinterlands will be critical to driving private sector growth in the future.'</p> <p>Given Belfast's key role as a regional economic driver, we need to look at what makes an urban economy successful. He noted that talented people are at the core of the urban economy and that these people are attracted to cities rather than to specific jobs. As such, cities need to be attractive, safe, green, clean and open. Therefore, we need a model of urban competitiveness that embraces comparative economic advantage; a commitment to social inclusion; engaged citizens and a sense of belonging and crucially, sharing.</p> <p>He also noted that Belfast has experienced persistent poverty which will be worsened by the extensive impact of the economic crisis. The most deprived wards in Belfast under the Robson Index in 1991 were the same under the Multiple Deprivation Index in 2010¹.</p>

2.2

Most Deprived Wards in Belfast (Common to Both)

Robson 1991	Noble 2010
Ardoyne	Ardoyne
Ballymacarett	Ballymacarrett
Beechmount	Beechmount
Blackstaff	Blackstaff
Clonard	Clonard
Crumlin	Crumlin
Duncairn	Duncairn
Falls	Falls
Glencairn	Glencairn
Glencolin	Glencolin
New Lodge	New Lodge
Shaftesbury	Shaftesbury
Shankill	Shankill
The Mount	The Mount
Upper Springfield	Upper Springfield
Whiterock	Whiterock
Woodstock	Woodstock
Woodvale	Woodvale

Macro-level policy development and interventions are the role of national and regional governments, but there is a need for city level action. Dr Morrissey noted that the Council had a key leadership role at this city level. In the first instance, he noted that Council would be exercising considerable leadership just by confirming this Framework, the first Council to do so in Northern Ireland. He noted that the Framework outlines Belfast City Council's unique role in exercising leadership, developing services and delivering interventions that will tackle poverty and inequalities. He made specific mention of research and monitoring on economic development issues and on the social impact of the current policy environment. The latter is included within the Framework, while the former will be addressed by the Review of the Masterplan and the new Integrated Economic Strategy.

2.3

Members presented Dr Morrissey with a series of questions including but not limited to: the need to shrink the public sector and encourage private sector growth; the impact of poor housing on poverty and inequalities; the issue of corporation tax; the need for immediate action rather than more research; the need for leadership on the part of the Council; the need to support people into employment and to target our resources effectively; the need to address segregation; the need to reduce benefit dependency and the need for participative democracy.

In his various responses, Dr Morrissey noted the need to build the private sector and mitigate the negative social impact of the economic crisis; the need to reduce economic inactivity rates; the need to encourage more movement and connection between public and private sectors; the need to see Belfast as a whole city and importantly to focus on the economic arguments for supporting inclusion as a path to creating a more competitive urban economy.

2.4

Developing the draft Framework

The draft Framework has taken considerable time to develop. As can be seen in the action plan, every council department is contributing to it. There was also pre-consultation research carried out with some key stakeholders. The Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network, Barnardos, the Women's Support Network and the Council for Homeless were commissioned to provide preliminary research findings on the needs of people in poverty and on ways the council could improve its service delivery. This qualitative research took the form of focus groups and was completed at the end of June 2010. The main objectives of this research were to address three main areas: a brief overview of what council services people in poverty (young people, older people, lone parents, homeless, etc) currently use; what problems or difficulties they face; and what they believe should be changed or improved. These research findings have been very useful in framing this draft plan making it more grounded.

In addition, the changing economic and financial climate has meant that Chief Officers and other key staff wished to ensure that any draft Framework was realistic about current and future council resources. As a result, any proposed action which could not confirm resources either in existing budgets or planned budgets for 11/12 and 12/13 was removed. Chief Officers met twice to consider and confirm this and to ensure the draft Framework presented to Committee was realistic.

At the time of writing two party briefings have been confirmed and Members Services are currently confirming the others so that they can be held before March Committee. Any additional issues raised in the party briefings will be raised verbally at the Committee.

2.5

Purpose of the draft Framework

The purpose of the Framework is:

- To raise awareness of poverty and inequalities in Belfast;
- To improve access to, and delivery of, councils services;
- To better target existing council resources to contribute to tackling poverty and inequalities in Belfast; and
- To use the council's statistical and performance management systems to monitor the levels of poverty across the city and in neighbourhoods and to monitor the council's achievements following implementation of the Framework.

The Framework defines clear and concrete actions the council is already taking or is planning to take over the next five years.

The Framework clearly notes that the council can't solve poverty or end inequalities. Rather, the council can:

- be more inclusive in our service delivery;
- ensure that the resources we have are used in the best way and with highest social impact;
- provide support to citizens at a time when it is most needed;
- collect poverty and inequality indicators and information to raise awareness, monitor and challenge; and
- build partnerships for more integrated service delivery.

<p>2.6</p> <p>2.7</p>	<p>In terms of managing public expectations, it is important to note that the Framework does not aim to end poverty and inequalities in Belfast, which would be beyond its scope and beyond the remit of the Council. The purpose described above very clearly notes that this is a Framework for how the Council can raise awareness of these issues and contribute to tackling poverty and inequalities.</p> <p>As such, the draft Framework is realistic and resourced. The emphasis is on describing and highlighting the work already being carried out across the council (which is already resourced) and to identify a relatively small number of new initiatives that have the potential to contribute to tackling poverty and reducing inequalities by improving the ways in which current services are delivered.</p> <p>The Council will closely monitor the performance of the Framework in order to ensure that it does make a difference on the ground. There will be a review of the Framework every two years which will identify its successes and areas for improvements. The draft Framework will be equality screened before going out for public consultation.</p> <p>Next steps for the draft plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - equality screening of the Framework, March 2011 - Draft Framework to be ratified by council on 1 April 2011 - Public consultation, April 2011 – June 2011 - Changes to draft Framework resulting from public consultation, July 2011 - Final Framework to Committee in August 2011, and - Final Framework ratified and launched in September 2011 <p><u>Monitoring and reporting</u></p> <p>The Development department will monitor the day-to-day progress of the Framework and a formal report on progress will be brought to the Development Committee once a year.</p>
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<p>4</p> <p>4.1</p>	<p>Resource Implications</p> <p>The budget for this work was agreed by Committee in November 2009 – a total of £32,000. So far, £12,000 has been spent on pre-consultation research and developing the strategy. This leaves £20,000 for public consultation events, consultation materials, production of the final document and a launch event. It should be noted that it is not intended to produce a high spec designed document, rather a simple publishable Framework, designed internally. The aim is for a fully engaged consultation process.</p>
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<p>5</p> <p>5.1</p>	<p>Good Relations and equality Considerations</p> <p>The Framework to Tackle Poverty & Reduce Inequalities aims to address inequalities in the city and as such will enable further the council's work on equality and good relations. The action plan within the Framework outlines specific actions that include work with marginalised communities including those in the Section 75 categories and actions which aim to mainstream approaches to reducing inequalities across the council's work.</p>
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6	Recommendations
6.1	<p>The Committee is asked to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the draft Framework; and 2. Approve a public consultation on the Framework.

7	Decision Tracking
<p>John McGrillen will present the final Framework after the public consultation.</p> <p>Time Line: October 2011 Reporting Officer: John McGrillen</p>	

8	Documents Attached
<p>Appendix 1: Poverty in Belfast: What can the Council Do? Belfast City Council's Framework to Tackle Poverty and reduce Inequalities</p>	