

Extract from minutes of –

ADJOURNED DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

28th MARCH, 2011

**“Belfast City Council Framework to Tackle Poverty and Reduce Inequalities”**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1 Relevant Background Information”**

- 1.1 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.**
- 1.2 Three main methods by which the council could implement the Framework were highlighted at the November 2009 Committee meeting:**
- 1. improve access to, and delivery of, council services;**
  - 2. better targeting of the council’s existing budgets; and**
  - 3. 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.**

**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.**

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.

- 1.3 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.

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.

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.

## 2 Key Issues

### 2.1 Presentation from Dr Morrissey, February 2011

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:

**'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.'**

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.

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 2010.

## **2.2 Most Deprived Wards in Belfast (Common to Both)**

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

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.

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 be addressed.

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.

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.

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.

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.

## **2.6 Next steps for the draft plan**

- 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

## **2.7 Monitoring and reporting**

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.

## **4 Resource Implications**

- 4.1 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.

## **5 Good Relations and equality Considerations**

- 5.1 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.

## Appendix 1

### Introduction

One of Belfast City Council's corporate objectives is to contribute to reducing inequalities in Belfast. This Framework describes the role our services can play in raising awareness of poverty and inequalities in Belfast and in contributing to tackling poverty and inequalities in Belfast. It is not in the Council's power to end poverty in Belfast, but we can make our services more accessible and effective. The Council will play a key leadership role by promoting a model of urban competitiveness that balances economic development and social inclusion.

### Purpose of the Framework

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- To better target existing council resources to contribute to tackling poverty and inequalities in Belfast; and
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The Framework defines clear and concrete actions the council is already taking and will take over the next 5 years.

### Poverty in Belfast

Poverty remains one of the most persistent and significant issues facing Northern Ireland with the population in Belfast being particularly affected. The city has eight of the 10 most deprived wards<sup>1</sup> in the region and nearly half (48%) of the population in the Belfast local government district live in the most deprived Super Output Areas (SOAs) in Northern Ireland. The most recent

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ninis.nisra.gov.uk/>



deprivation measures from 2010 show that 57% of the most deprived SOAs in Northern Ireland are in Belfast.

In 2008 the council commissioned some exploratory research<sup>2</sup> from Dr Mike Morrissey into the issue of poverty in Belfast to assess the scale of the issue and its complexity. Some of the findings include:

- Around 20% of people in Belfast live in poverty which is higher than the Northern Ireland average of 18% and the EU average of 16%;
- 37.6% of children live in workless households – NI average is 21%;
- 11% of lone parents are in poverty compared to 8% for NI;
- Those groups who in poverty or who are most at risk of poverty include:
  - Older people
  - Children in workless households
  - Lone parents
  - People from minority ethnic communities
  - People with disabilities.

The NI Executive defines a household in poverty<sup>3</sup> as having one that has an income that is 60% or less than that of the median household income in the year. This is equal to £115 per week for a single adult with no dependent children or £195 per week for a single adult with two dependent children under 14.

At a presentation to Council in February 2011, Dr Mike Morrissey noted that Belfast struggles with persistent poverty. The 20 most deprived wards in Belfast under the Robson Index in 1991 were the same under the Noble Multiple Deprivation Index in 2010<sup>4</sup>.

<b>Most Deprived Wards in Belfast (Common to Both)</b>	
<i>Robson 1991</i>	<i>Noble 2010</i>
Ardoyne	Ardoyne
Ballymacarett	Ballymacarrett
Beechmount	Beechmount
Blackstaff	Blackstaff
Clonard	Clonard
Crumlin	Crumlin
Duncairn	Duncairn
Falls	Falls

<sup>2</sup> M. Morrissey, 'Research on Poverty in Belfast', 2008

<sup>3</sup> [www.niassembly.gov.uk](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk)

<sup>4</sup> Presentation from Dr Mike Morrissey to Belfast City Council on the 3rd February 2011.

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

The EU defines relative poverty as:

*‘People are said to be living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live.*

*They may experience multiple disadvantages through unemployment, low income, poor housing, inadequate health care and barriers to lifelong learning, culture, sport and recreation. They are often excluded and marginalised from participating in activities (economic, social and cultural) that are the norm for other people and their access to fundamental rights may be restricted.<sup>5</sup>*

The council has limited powers in terms of increasing income. However, we can have some impact on the disadvantages listed above that create poverty and inequalities. The Framework therefore adopts the EU definition of relative poverty and focuses on these wider determinants.

#### What can a local authority do?

Northern Ireland district councils do not have a direct statutory remit to tackle poverty and we recognise that we can't provide an additional income to households at risk of poverty. However, we can contribute to tackling poverty and inequalities by raising awareness, making services more accessible and better target our resources. Given the large number of services that we deliver at a local level, there are opportunities for the council to have a direct and positive impact.

For example, we offer a range of programmes at our leisure centres and in our community facilities. Decisions around the design of such programmes, their pricing, opening times and promotion will all affect how easy it is for those in poverty to get access to them.

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<sup>5</sup> From The European Anti-Poverty Network's website ([www.eapn.org/](http://www.eapn.org/)) and adapted from, Joint Report on Social Inclusion, European Commission, 2004

**We can be more inclusive in our service delivery, focus on where the needs are and ensure that the resources we have are used in the best way and with high social impact to serve all citizens in Belfast.**

**The council also delivers economic development programmes and works with small and micro businesses to help them grow and build their capacity in obtaining contracts from the public sector. The work of our procurement and economic development work clearly demonstrates that small actions can make a big difference in providing opportunities for micro businesses or social economy enterprises. A full list of council's activities and services that have an impact on people in poverty is in Appendix 1.**

**These interventions reflect the Council's key leadership role at a city level. Macro-level policy development and interventions are the role of national and regional governments, but there is a need for city level action. This Framework and action plan outlines Belfast City Council's unique role in exercising leadership, developing services and delivering interventions that will tackle poverty and inequalities.**

#### **Why create a Framework now?**

**Belfast City Council has decided to develop this Framework in order to:**

- 1) Improve Belfast's urban competitiveness and encourage sustainable economic growth by addressing persistent social inequalities. Belfast can only become the leading world city if economic growth is supported by a decrease in social inequalities.**
- 2) Align the council to the emerging regional and national policies in the area of poverty and social inclusion, including but not limited to OFMDFM's Lifetime Opportunities and its current work on developing a regional Child Poverty Strategy.**
- 3) Ensure that through joint working we achieve economies of scale and integrate people and place based approaches 'doing more for less'.**
- 4) Reduce the cost to the economy (and to the council): Recent research<sup>6</sup> estimated that child poverty costs £25 billion each year in costs to the Exchequer and reduced GDP. This research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that child poverty represents 71% of social services spend across the UK.**

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation: 'What can we do to tackle child poverty?', 2009

- 5) **Raise the council's profile as a key city wide local service provider supporting citizens across the city.**
- 6) **Fulfil our existing obligation under the Corporate Plan: A Framework for tackling poverty and reducing inequalities will make a substantial contribution to fulfilling our strategic objective to reduce inequalities under the 'Better Support for People and Communities'.**
- 7) **Support communities to deal with the legacies of the conflict - The most deprived areas within Belfast are those areas that suffered most during the recent conflict and are also the areas where there are disproportionate levels of poor health, educational opportunities, job opportunities and social opportunities. These legacies need to be tackled in a coordinated manner in order to reduce overall poverty and inequality.**
- 8) **Build on the 2010 European Year of Social Exclusion: This is the European year against poverty and exclusion. The key objectives were to raise public awareness about these issues and renew the political commitment of the EU and its Member States to combat poverty and social exclusion.**

**How does the Framework support the Council's corporate objectives?**

The Corporate Plan sets out six strategic themes for the organisation (NOTE: Once new corporate plan is developed, these themes and goals will need to be revisited). These are based on our analysis of need in the city, the views of the public and future challenges and opportunities.

Below we describe how the Framework supports each themes:

**1. City leadership - strong, fair, together**

This is about 'place-shaping' and being ambitious for Belfast and its people through advocacy, partnership working and leading by practical example.

Related poverty aims:

- **Improve poverty and inequalities knowledge base and awareness;**
- **Influence regional and national poverty and inequalities policy; and**

- Enhance the council's role in reducing poverty and tackling inequalities in Belfast.

## **2. Better opportunities for success across the city**

This is about wealth creation – supporting business, developing key growth sectors and securing investment within the city by supporting opportunity, skills, innovation and regeneration.

Related poverty aims:

- Increase the use of the council's assets to support employment and job creation; and
- Increase the growth of social economy projects.
- Reduce worklessness and improve skills

## **3. Better care for Belfast's environment**

The council supports a clean, green city now and for the future by securing the long term viability of the city and its environment by creating a cleaner, greener and healthier environment and through education and protection.

Related poverty aims:

- Contribute to waste reduction; and
- Reduce fuel poverty.

## **4. Better support for people and communities**

This is about finding ways to better connect with local people; building capacity to influence and address local issues, tackling inequalities and improving relationships; making the best use of local services to address the issues facing the city and its neighbourhoods and enhancing the city by making it safer, healthier, more inclusive, welcoming and enjoyable.

Related poverty aims:

- Improve the quality of life of people in or at risk of poverty;
- Effectively engage people in or at risk of poverty, particularly in areas in and around interfaces where the legacies of conflict are most stark; and
- Provide advice services for people at risk of poverty.

## **5. Better services**

**Making the best use of our resources to provide a range of services which best meet local need and improve quality of life; providing services to a high standard that are easy to access and that maximise their value for money and effectiveness.**

**Related poverty aims:**

- **Improve our service delivery to provide a better access for people in poverty.**

## **6. Better value for money**

**Ensuring resources are fully aligned to our priorities; that our services deliver value for money; that we attract people who will work to deliver the best services and develop the organisation and lead the organisation through the RPA.**

**Related poverty aims:**

- **Maximise social impact of our procurement, project and regeneration spend.**

**To achieve the goals we have developed a detailed Framework that brings together many existing contributory strands of council work with a number of new initiatives which have been proposed by the relevant council services.”**

After discussion, during which it was agreed that the amount specified for the undertaking of public consultation exercises on the Framework be reduced from £20,000 to £10,000, the Committee endorsed the contents of the document.”