



Subject:	Anti Poverty / Social Value Work Programme
Date:	22 January 2016
Reporting Officer:	Jill Minne, Director of Organisational Development
Contact Officer:	Claire Patterson, Business Research and Development Manager Jelena Buick, Policy Officer, Development Department Mark McCann, Business Research and Development Manager

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	<p>To provide recommendations to harness the Council's role as city leader, employer, and deliver and commissioner of services, in order to better address the risk of poverty faced across the city.</p> <p>The paper acknowledges the substantial existing work of the Council and its partners in addressing aspects of poverty and highlights the importance of taking a strategic and integrated approach, within the economic growth context of the Belfast Agenda, to maximise our combined contributions to social outcomes.</p>
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the current contribution that the Council makes in addressing aspects of poverty in its roles as civic leader, service deliverer, employer; deliverer of programmes and purchaser of goods and services.To agree that the Council, in the creation of Belfast's first community plan, works

	<p>with its partners to develop a joint approach to tackling poverty in the city that maximises the social impact of city growth and investment agenda.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To agree that the Council develops options to maximise the social value potential as employer and purchaser of goods and services in addressing aspects of poverty. • To agree that members conduct a workshop with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (as in initial step) to support the development of a strategic and integrated approach to addressing issues of poverty and inequality within the economic growth context of the Belfast Agenda, to maximise our combined contributions to social outcomes.
<p>3.0</p>	<p>Main report</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>3.1 Most governments, including the Northern Ireland Executive, agree that an individual or family is at risk of poverty if their household income is 60% less than that of the average household income. Under this definition more than 56,000 people in Belfast live in poverty. (In financial terms this works out at around £115 per week for a single adult with no dependent children or £195 per week for an adult with two dependent children.)</p> <p>3.2 The 2013 'End Child Poverty' report noted that nearly 28% of Belfast's children are growing up in poverty (a figure that rises to more than 40% in our six most deprived wards). According to an Institute for Fiscal Studies report for OFMdFM, these numbers are expected to increase substantially by 2020.</p> <p>3.3 Those most at risk include households headed by a lone parent with dependent children; pensioners wholly dependent on state benefits; ethnic minorities; people with disabilities; and people living around the interface areas. In addition, 'In-work poverty' is a growing problem in Belfast with nearly a quarter of the city's employees earning less than the Northern Ireland Living Wage (£7.65 per hour).</p> <p><u>The current role of Belfast City Council</u></p> <p>3.4 The Council, across all of its departments, has a substantial and proud track record of delivery aimed at addressing elements of poverty. We have a number of roles through which we support this work - civic leader; deliverer of services; employer; and purchaser.</p>

The following, while not exhaustive, illustrates the breadth of this work:

- Provision of annual core funding for advice provision in each quarter of the city.
- Provision of annual funding for a citywide Advice Tribunal Service – particularly aimed at addressing Welfare Reform changes
- Providing a central city location for Advice NI's debt advice service.
- Provision of financial support to the Belfast Food Network which, as part of the Sustainable Food Cities Network, tackles the issue of food poverty in Belfast.
- Working with DSD to deliver the Affordable Warmth Scheme to more than 1,000 households at risk of fuel poverty.
- Working with the Public Health Agency, Surestart and Age NI to procure and distribute over 3,000 Winter Warmth Packs to vulnerable families each year.
- Supporting inter-agency partnerships to address the issue of homelessness in the city.
- Delivery of the annual Community Support programme to ensure that the necessary community development infrastructure is in place to assist communities in addressing issues of deprivation and marginalisation.
- Tackling the impact of fuel poverty by supporting communities to establish local oil buying clubs; and administering the Belfast fuel oil stamps scheme which, to date, has sold £1.25 million worth of stamps.
- Supporting the Belfast Home Safety & Repair Service for Older People.
- Provision of community gardens across the city which provide access to locally grown, healthy food.
- Provision of concessionary rates for those on means tested benefits in our leisure facilities.
- Focused delivery of Active Communities programme aiming to get more people involved in sport and physical recreation, in areas of high deprivation.
- Delivery of a free events programme in our parks including educational activities and summer fun days.
- Delivery of coach development and training programme which provides qualifications and skills to volunteers that may increase employability.
- Adopting the Living Wage for Council employees
- Encouraging the use of social clauses through our procurement processes (to maximise the social value of our purchasing power).
- Developing the Belfast Employability and Skills strategy to support those who are furthest from the labour market.
- The delivery of a corporate employment initiatives, including provision of work

placements, apprenticeships, job opportunities and pre-recruitment and training programmes for the long term unemployed from across the city.

- Member and officer representation on all of Belfast's Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships leading an annual £10 million programme specifically aimed at tackling deprivation in the Top 10% most deprived areas of the city.
- Membership and support to the Belfast Strategic Partnership which has a cross-cutting commitment to addressing poverty-related issues.
- Supporting the Youth Forum - which this year is raising young people's awareness of child poverty, homelessness and shared space
- Development of small-scale locality pilots to work with residents to agree local outcomes and priorities and work together on shared actions
- Participation in the Children and Young People' Strategic Partnership – which works with city partners to address childhood inequalities.
- Working with Queen's University of Belfast on a joint bid to the Urban Living Partnership to tackle the issue of neighbourhoods disconnected from city centre growth
- A recent application to the \$1 million Rockefeller 100 Resilient Cities programme aimed at building resilient communities amongst those most at risk from social, economic and environmental impacts.

Harnessing the Council's new leadership role

3.5

The Council has a number of roles through which it can help address poverty issues in the city including:

- Civic leader for the Belfast Agenda – particularly in bringing our partners together to deliver on shared social and economic outcomes;
- The deliverer of a large number of neighbourhood services (including services directly aimed at mitigating the impact of poverty)
- As a large employer; and
- As a purchaser of local goods and services.

3.6

A future approach to tackling poverty needs to maximise the impact each of these roles. It is important to note that while national and regional Government remain the key actors in terms of addressing the underlying causes of poverty, local authorities do have a significant role to play. A recent Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) report notes that the approach of national government towards addressing poverty is changing: moving

away from special initiatives to one where addressing poverty is an outcome of economic growth, welfare reform and public service reform. CLES suggest that if this approach is to actually benefit those at risk from poverty a city will need strong leadership to ensure there is an ongoing commitment to integrated anti-poverty commitments in all aspects of statutory service planning and delivery.

3.7

This was also a key finding of the IBM Smarter Cities Challenge and the Lord Mayor's Civic Forum on Poverty. And it is supported by evidence from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) which has looked at the range of city policies across the UK¹. The JRF report notes that there is no guarantee that urban economic growth in itself will reduce poverty. And, **cities should not approach growth and poverty as two separate strands but as mutually re-enforcing agendas**. They suggest that local authorities thus have a critical convening, lobbying and co-ordinating role that can make interventions much more impactful. But that councils need to think carefully about the nature of these roles.

3.8

The leadership role is one that Belfast City Council is well positioned to play as the city's 'place leader'. It is proposed that, in contributing to the outcomes of the Belfast Agenda, the Council should seek to work with partners to determine poverty outcomes, priorities, and to develop a shared Belfast approach and commitments to achieving them.

3.9

In terms of our role as a major employer and purchaser of goods and services, two related papers are being presented to Committee which measure the multiplying impact of our purchasing power and another which considers how we best maximise the outcomes of our contracts through a revised social clauses policy. In addition, further work is being planned on employability initiatives including plans to ring fence further job opportunities to the long term unemployed; to deliver relevant pre recruitment and training programmes; and to provide paid placement opportunities as part of SIF projects.

3.10

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has led work across a number of UK cities looking at the connection between economic growth and reducing poverty and is in the process of developing an 'anti-poverty strategy'. It is therefore proposed that the Council should engage JRF and others to support the development of a strategic and integrated approach to addressing issues of poverty and inequality(within the economic growth context of the

¹ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/cities-growth-and-poverty-evidence-review>

	<p>Belfast Agenda) to maximise our combined contributions to social outcomes. This work would also support and enhance Council initiatives and ensure that our services and programmes are designed and delivered in ways that align with the needs and characteristics of the Belfast context. As a first step, it is proposed that a members workshop take place on this issue and is supported by the JRF.</p>
3.11	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The development of an approach to tackling poverty Belfast is included within current Council estimates. This includes a budget to engage the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to support the Council in maximising its role in dealing with poverty and creating better social outcomes.</p>
3.12	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>Equality and good relations implications will be taken into consideration in relation to tackling elements of poverty; however it is anticipated that any collaborative efforts should have a positive effect on section 75 groups.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
4.1	None