

RE: NI Multiple Deprivation Measure 2009: Consultation

1. Background

- 1.1. The Community Relations Council (CRC) strategic aim is to “promote a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society founded on the achievement of reconciliation, equality, co-operation, respect, mutual trust and good relations.” CRC leads and supports change to achieve this vision by –
- Identifying and developing new and effective approaches to peace-building and reconciliation in partnership with people, organisations and government
 - Promoting the adoption of good relations policies and practice at local, community and institutional level
 - Assisting communities and institutions in working through and beyond the legacies of the Troubles

2. Legacy of the Conflict

- 2.1. The legacy of the conflict must be tackled alongside the challenges of unemployment, poverty, qualification attainments and poor health. Tackling disadvantage and mainstreaming good relations belong together. Improving access to employment, education, housing and tackling health inequalities are crucial as is the need to contribute to reconciliation.
- 2.2. According to Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) 17 of the top twenty most deprived areas in Northern Ireland are located in North or West Belfast. It is clear that some of the most deprived parts of Northern Ireland are also the most segregated, and contain the greatest number of peace walls. It should be noted that North and West Belfast alone accounted for 1240 (or over one third) of the 3636 fatalities in total that took place over the course of the conflict¹. Such statistics provide direct evidence of the disproportionate impact of the conflict on the poorest sections of our society.
- 2.3. Furthermore Oxford Economics and Perceptive Insights were commissioned in autumn 2007 to explore skills in the Belfast labour market. The research examined current level and views on skills needs and issues, and also reflected on the future trends for the

¹ CAJ Submission to Eames/Bradley, Legacy of the Past.

Belfast economy given its skills profile. Some of the key results from the quantitative analysis are:

- **Over half of net new jobs in Belfast over the next decade will require graduate qualifications.** Less than 1 in 7 are expected to require no qualifications.
 - As for the recent period, the **city centre** (Duncairn, Island and Shaftesbury) will be the 'red hot core' of jobs growth in Belfast, creating over three-quarters of Belfast's 13,980 jobs in the next decade².
 - Even with a forecast end in population decline and improvement in resident skills as better qualified young people start replacing older less qualified workers, Belfast's economy will depend on an increasing number of commuters (or more migrants) across all skill levels, particularly at graduate level. **This is partly because the number of inactive residents is forecast to remain extremely high still in 2015 (63,000). Of this 63,000, almost 37,000 are forecast to still have no qualifications in 2015.**
 - **The extent and longevity of disparities within Belfast are remarkable.** In the 2001 Census year, differences in resident employment rates ranged from 77% (Orangefield) to 32% (Falls), while the difference in the graduate share of working age population ranges from 59% (Malone) to 2% (Crumlin). By 2015 we still forecast 12 wards with a resident employment rate of less than 50% (the NI overall employment rate in 2015 is forecast to be 75% to put a rate of less than 50% in context).²
- 2.4. The above predictions are extremely sobering in relation to how we tackle poverty and disadvantage in the future. This current update and the future review of the multiple deprivation measures are important for planning and strategising and will be used by multiple departments and agencies, as well as communities, to test and monitor improvements and deteriorations in living conditions.
- 2.5. CRC is aware this current exercise is tasked with updating the current measures and that a more comprehensive review is due in the future. However there are a number of areas that we would like to draw your attention to, particularly in relation to segregation and sectarianism. It is within this context that CRC will comment.

3. Proximity to Services Domain

- 3.1. Council would like to make clear from the outset that it is crucial to recognise that proximity to services does not guarantee access. A 2006 report examined barriers to employment among disadvantaged young people stated 'For roughly one-half of the

² Belfast skills demand and supply, Oxford Economics, 2008, page 10.

young people interviewed the patchwork of tribalised areas interlaced with interfaces between opposing communities placed sharp boundaries around employment opportunities. They expressed a reluctance to enter a workplace perceived to be the domain of the religious outgroup: travelling through or into an area so perceived to get to work was regarded as an even greater threat. In addition to fear of attack, reasons given for not being prepared to take the risk of crossing interfaces for the sake of work included:

- lack of identification with people from those communities
 - an up-bringing of suspicion and avoidance
 - family anxiety caused by them working there
 - insufficient remuneration
- 3.2. Others stated that their willingness to cross an interface to work in an area of the other side was conditional upon remaining anonymous, not being harassed and the job being on a short-term basis'.³
- 3.3. In addition, the majority of current Belfast City Council leisure facilities are located in one or the other community. This is a disastrous aspect of the impact of fear on movement in Belfast. A recent report found that leisure facilities are 'similarly viewed as being divided on the basis of community background with some interviewees indicating a degree of fear in accessing certain areas to make use of the facilities'⁴.
- 3.4. The above perceptions and chill factors can be applied to the recommended updated list of services and facilities. Consequently CRC would like to see the inclusion of a 'health warning' within this domain to ensure a clear picture in terms of accessing the services and facilities.

4. Living Environment Domain

- 4.1. CRC is pleased the outdoor physical environment will continue to include the local area problem score which records problems including graffiti (including sectarian graffiti) and painted kerbs.
- 4.2. However, there are a number of other indicators that should be included e.g. flags, bonfires and interface barriers, all serving to reinforce a sense of territorialism, of exclusion, limit people's movements and access to resources, and reduce opportunities for contact between people from neighbouring areas. Furthermore many interface areas have also remained depressed and deprived due to the perception of such areas as dangerous and violent and

³ Breaking Down Barriers: Sectarianism, Unemployment, and the Exclusion of Disadvantaged Young People from Northern Ireland Society, Hargie et al 2006.

⁴ Segregated Lives: Social Division, Sectarianism and Everyday Life in Northern Ireland, Hamilton et al 2008.

- concerns for safety and security. According to the CRC *Towards Sustainable Security* report, the quality of life in Belfast is intimately linked to improvement in life chances in the most deprived areas. Attracting investment to the city will remain difficult, if whole districts are blighted by barriers to capital and labour and violence is held back only by massive physical barriers. Work in a modern economy depends on people being able to travel safely across the city. The days when whole districts could rely on a single employer, such as Harland and Wolff to employ large proportions of local communities are gone. People now work in different places, requiring safe and easy transport and access to all areas.
- 4.3. Furthermore, any employer will only locate in an area if they can be assured that the best people can travel to work safely and easily. Interfaces which are built to keep outsiders at bay, also keep employers and employment in other places.⁵

CRC would welcome a conversation with NISRA staff regarding the inclusion of the above data.

5. Crime and Disorder Domain

- 5.1. CRC welcome the updating of this indicator in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour incidents. However we are concerned that it will not record incidents of a hate crime nature. In relation to our comments for the other domains CRC believes it is essential to record sectarian and racist incidents at this level.
- 5.2. CRC's *Towards Sustainable Security* report notes that community safety strategies also play an important role. These strategies are not merely about securing local people against each other, but the far greater challenge of ensuring that the safety of all citizens and visitors throughout the city is guaranteed. Talented people will continue to leave interface areas, continuing the history of multiple deprivation. Public transport will continue to be restricted by demographic boundaries, impacting on movement around the city especially for the most economically dependent. As fascination with conflict since 1969 wanes, so the tourist trail will increasingly avoid blighted urban areas. Agreements over cultural matters, particularly in disputed areas like language and parades, would have a real impact in many interface areas.

6. Conclusion

⁵ Towards Sustainable Security; Interface Barriers and the legacy of segregation in Belfast; Community Relations Council. 2009

- 6.1. There are a number of concerns and recommendations that CRC have highlighted in our response to the updating of the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures. We look forward to receiving clarification on the points raised and discussing in more detail the recommendations set out.