

# Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'is of Londonderry

## Tionól Spioradalta Bhahá'ithe Dhoire

September 2015 CE

Submission to

**DERRY CITY AND STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Regarding

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROCESS**

**- INDICATORS FOR STRATEGIC OUTCOMES**

This submission is made by the Spiritual Assembly as the elected administrative and representative body for the Bahá'í Faith in Derry.

- We are glad to have the chance to participate in an on-going way in the community planning process, and applaud the Council for the way it has worked to involve the community and voluntary sector in the planning process.
- We wish to comment on the assessment criteria that we have found being used in draft documents for the measurement of outcomes.
  - Measurement of outcomes is vital for meaningful assessment of whether measures taken have been as fruitful as intended. However this requires a sound basis for such measurement.
  - We note that in the documents we have seen, organisations of the sort to be empowered are broadly classed as either “Community of Place” or “Community of Interest”. There is no mention of the churches / faith communities (\*) that are such a large part in the fabric of our society or of reaching out to them. Yet they are not only part of our culture, they often undertake community support activities and social benefit work of the sort the Council wishes to encourage, and they do this largely through volunteers.
  - Since the numbers and percentages of volunteers are stated indices, leaving the faith communities out of the picture will mean that results gathered would not be as valuable as hoped.
  - It may be argued that the faith communities would fall within the “Community of Interest” definition but we feel that they do not fit there in an entirely appropriate manner, and many members would not recognise the definition used as fairly reflecting their community. There is also a danger of “out of sight, out of mind” unless they explicitly are recognised, leading to overlooking of a powerful social force and a pool of actively engaged citizens. We are sure the Council would not wish this.
- **We therefore urge meaningful modification of the measurement indicators, currently in their draft stage, to include the faith communities as an explicitly recognised group.**

(\*) *We ask for the use of the term “faith communities” or something like “churches and faith communities” as the term “churches” used alone is appropriate in our increasingly diverse society.*

