

2008 Election for Mayor of London

- . Statement of Issues**
- . Questions for Candidates**
- . Statement of Inequalities
and Needs**

 **Federation of Irish Societies**

95 White Lion Street · London N1 9PF
Tel: 020 7833 1226 · fax: 020 7833 3214
info@irishsocieties.org · www.irishsocieties.org

Contents

Page 2 What is the Federation of Irish Societies?

Page 3 Key summary statement

**Pages 3-5
 Statements of Issues + Questions for Candidates**

**Page 5-6
 Appendix:
 Statistical data on the London Irish, identifying
 inequalities and needs**

The Federation of Irish Societies

The Federation of Irish Societies is a national umbrella body representing and providing services to its affiliated organisations throughout Britain. These organisations include welfare advice agencies, day centres, community care services, clubs, social and cultural organisations and housing providers; as well as projects to meet specific needs of particular sections of the community, such as women, elders, Irish Travellers and prisoners.

KEY SUMMARY STATEMENT

Those identifying as white Irish in the 2001 Census form 3.1% of London's population. 20% of that population is aged 65 or over and 21.6% of white Irish households comprise solely of pensioners. The White Irish population has one of the highest levels of limiting long-term illness (22.9%). There is research-based evidence of Irish health inequalities, including in the areas of cardio-vascular disease and mental health. 22% of white Irish men work in the building industry, the highest proportion of any BAME. 11% of white Irish men are not working because of permanent sickness or disability. 13% of white Irish 16-24 year olds have no qualifications.

FIS is particularly concerned that Irish Londoners should be fully included in the following areas: health and housing provision, services for older people, and services for the training and retraining of people for inclusion in the labour market. The lack of consistent monitoring, processing, and publication of comprehensive ethnic data, using an Irish category, makes the extent to which Irish people are accessing such services unclear. Further, the Black/White binary which dominates research, planning and monitoring accentuates this problem of Irish 'invisibility', which we are also requesting Mayoral candidates to address.

THE FOLLOWING ARE ISSUES WHICH ARE OF CONCERN TO THE FEDERATION OF IRISH SOCIETIES (FIS) IN RELATION TO THE FORTHCOMING MAYORAL ELECTION, ON WHICH WE ARE SEEKING THE VIEWS OF THE CANDIDATES

1 NEED FOR A STRONG OVERARCHING AUTHORITY FOR LONDON REGION

FIS believe that a metropolitan region of the diversity and complexity of London requires a strong, overarching authority to ensure coherent strategic development across the region. FIS welcomed the institution of an elected Mayor and Assembly for London, and supported the recent enhanced powers for the Mayor of London and the London Assembly incorporated in the Greater London Authority Act 2007.

1? FIS wish to know the views of the candidates on the continuing need for a strong, overarching authority for London.

2 NEED TO ENHANCE SYNERGY BETWEEN THE PAN-LONDON BODIES WITH STRATEGIC ROLES

There is a need for a positive, constructive relationship between the Mayor, Assembly, the LDA and other pan-London strategic entities (- such as London Councils, GOL, NHS London, and the London Skills Council). Such relations exist, to a degree, at the moment, but they need to be developed in order to achieve the best possible synergy in the planning and delivery of services across the region.

2? FIS wish to know the views of the candidates on the further development of synergy between key pan-London bodies with strategic roles.

3 SCRUTINY AND PRIORITISING

FIS believes that the Mayor of London should draw on research/data available within the GLA 'family', and elsewhere, to produce comprehensive baseline audits of the status and needs of London communities (including the best possible BAME (including Irish) data). A purpose of these audits should be to ensure transparency in the identification and prioritisation of the support requirements of Londoners in those areas of provision where the Mayor or the GLA 'family' have a competency (e.g. training/retraining for labour market, health, housing). Those baseline audits should also be used to identify performance outcomes against which service delivery can be measured.

3? FIS wish to know the views of the candidates concerning the provision of such comprehensive, good-quality baseline audits as described above, for the purposes mentioned.

4 NEED FOR INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO ETHNICITY

With regard to the GLA itself, FIS have been less than satisfied by the fact that those responsible for the GLA's Equality remit appear to interpret the terms 'racial equality' and 'ethnicity' in a restrictive manner, as co-terminate with 'visible minority'. Its Data Management and Analysis Group, although it has published a free-standing Irish 2001 Census Profile, has failed to integrate a sufficient Irish dimension into other relevant research. While the LDA uses an Irish category in at least some aspects of its monitoring, it is less than clear to FIS what use it makes of Irish data.

Despite the widespread acceptance of an 'ethnic deficit' in British society, and despite the profile of the Irish community in Britain as represented in the census data and other studies, there is little evidence concerning the degree to which key needs of the Irish community are being addressed via the actions/policies of the Mayor and GLA, the LDA and other pan-London strategic bodies (such as London Councils, GOL or NHS London). This will remain unclear in the absence of consistent monitoring with an Irish category, along with the processing and publication of that data.

4a? Are the candidates prepared to advocate/implement the use of inclusive definitions of ethnicity, combined with the processing and publication of comprehensive ethnic monitoring data for the region.

4b? Do the candidates support, as the norm, the inclusion of an Irish category in ethnic monitoring systems.

5 NEED TO EMBODY AN IRISH DIMENSION WITHIN A RANGE OF POLICIES

Census baseline data on the Irish population indicates that in at least three areas

- Services for elders
- Training and retraining for integration in the labour market
- Health (including mental health) services

there is evidence to suggest that an Irish dimension should be included in policies to address needs.

In addition, there are the needs of a particularly marginalised section of the Irish population, the Irish Travellers, to be considered.

Housing need has been a consistent issue among marginalised Irish people using the services of Irish support and advice agencies in the London region. We have previously supported the incumbent Mayor's commitment to a housing strategy which will seriously impact on the regional housing shortage and wish to see that commitment adhered to.

Further, in view of the relatively high percentages of Irish people, including Irish Travellers, involved with the criminal justice system, we would wish the Metropolitan Police Service (Met) to adopt a culturally sensitive and multi-agency approach in their dealings with vulnerable Irish people and Irish Travellers suffering from such conditions as mental illness and illiteracy who become involved with the system.

5a? FIS wish to have a clear indication of the intentions of the Mayoral candidates in relation to the housing shortage in London

5b? Are the Mayoral candidates prepared, if elected, to discuss with FIS the needs of members of the Irish community highlighted in this section (5) of our document

6 MULTICULTURALISM AND SOCIAL COHESION

We were very appreciative, in the aftermath of the 7/7 London bombings, of the leadership given by the present Mayor, designed at once to secure the safety of London's population, to maintain social cohesion, and to prevent the stigmatisation of London's Muslim population. In the intervening period we have appreciated his commitment to multiculturalism, and his challenging of views asserting a contradiction between multiculturalism and social cohesion.

6? Do the Mayoral candidates believe that there is a contradiction between support for multiculturalism and the promotion of social cohesion.

Appendix

Note on the statistical profile of the Irish community derived from the 2001 Census and other sources

There are several aspects of the specific demography of the Irish population identified in the 2001 Census¹ and elsewhere² which are of particular importance in relation to service delivery in the London region. These are:

¹ See G Limbrick, *London: The Irish Dimension – An exploration of 2001 Census Data* (FIS 2007)

² Including M Gaffney, *Employment and Training Needs Analysis: A report on the vocational guidance, training and employment needs of the Irish population of London* (IETC revised ed. 1999)

- (a) the poor statistical health-profile of Irish people (see M Gaffney et al. (eds.) *The Irish in Britain: An Annotated Bibliography on Health and Related Issues* (FIS 2000))
- (b) there is a relatively low level of economic activity in the Irish population of London, which is partly explained by the older age profile of the population and the number of younger people in full-time education; however, it is also due to the number of Irish people (particularly men) of working age who are permanently sick or disabled. 11% of 'white Irish' men aged 25-74 are not working because of permanent sickness or disability in comparison to 5.8% of such 'white British' men. (See also (g) below.)
- (c) the high proportion of Irish males employed in the construction industry ('white Irish' males make up 22% as opposed to 9% of London's male population as a whole) which has implications for injury levels and the need to retrain in later life;
- (d) the proportion of the Irish population with no qualifications (the 'white Irish' proportion is higher from 35 years upwards than for 'white British' and the whole London population), which has implications for training and retraining;
- (e) the older age profile of the Irish population (within the cohorts from 50 years old upwards so that 20% of the 'white Irish' population is aged 64 and over as opposed to 16% of the population as a whole), which has implications in terms of economic development, in that many older people will now – encouraged by the government - be faced with the necessity of working past what had been the traditional pension age, and - presumably - the GLA and the LDA will need to reflect this reality in their strategies (see also (c) and (d) above));
- (f) the increasing social emphasis within the Mayor's London Plan (welcomed by FIS) means that the age profile of the Irish population plus the very high proportion of Irish sole pensioner households and households comprising more than one related pensioner will have implications for housing and health support aspects;
- (g) the high proportion of Irish people identified in the Census as having a limiting long term illness (including Irish men of working age) will have implications for retraining, not least in terms of the ambitious plans of the government to reintegrate such people in the labour market;
- (h) the high proportion of Irish people without access to a car or van (48%) places this community among the most highly dependent on other forms of transport.