

East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy Consultation

22nd April 2020

1. Introduction

1.1 This note is to:

- i. update the Economy & Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee on recent progress with respect to the East Birmingham and North Solihull Inclusive Growth agenda, and to invite the comments of the committee on the draft East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy (attached as Appendix 1) which is currently out for public consultation.
- ii. Set out the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the consultation and the proposed next steps.

2 Background

- 2.1 The East Birmingham and North Solihull (EBNS) area has historically faced a number of economic, social and environmental challenges including persistently high levels of unemployment; low levels of academic attainment and skills; poor transport connectivity; a shortage of employment land and a weak development market. A number of these challenges were highlighted in the independent review of Birmingham by Sir Bob Kerslake. Area based initiatives and programmes across the area have delivered positive outcomes, however persistent inequalities remain suggesting that these entrenched challenges will require a new approach.
- 2.2 The coming of HS2 and the proposed East Birmingham to Solihull extension of the Midland Metro, which will run through East Birmingham, are major opportunities for the area which can be harnessed to deliver wider positive change. The Metro will provide new connections to the two nationally significant economic hubs around the HS2 stations at Birmingham Curzon and UK Central in Solihull, and greatly improved connectivity along the route itself.
- 2.3 East Birmingham and North Solihull has been designated as an Inclusive Growth Corridor where Birmingham City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and the West Midlands Combined Authority are working with partners to maximise the benefits of the opportunities created by HS2 and the Metro extension, address the area's significant and sustained disadvantages, deliver growth, and to develop ways of working that will ensure that this growth is inclusive.
- 2.4 The East Birmingham Board (the Board) was established in late 2018, bringing together senior officers from multiple service areas within the City Council alongside external partners including Solihull Council, the NHS,

emergency services, Department of Work and Pensions, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the West Midlands Combined Authority. The Board is responsible for the Birmingham section of the East Birmingham/North Solihull Inclusive Growth Corridor and has two key objectives: to deliver growth; and to bring forward the key interventions to enable local residents to benefit from the jobs and opportunities created.

- 2.5 The Board has now produced an Inclusive Growth Strategy for East Birmingham (the Strategy), (attached as Appendix 1) which sets out; a shared vision for the regeneration of East Birmingham over the next 20 years; the *Big Moves* which will secure this vision; the principles which will guide the delivery of the Big Moves and supporting activities, and a summary of the next steps that will be taken in the delivery of the vision.
- 2.6 The draft Strategy is a shared statement of vision and approach, and each of the partners will commit to working in close collaboration to progress the Big Moves and wider delivery plan to address the persistent issues of poverty, deprivation and inequality which were identified by the baseline report (see Background Documents below).
- 2.7 The publication of the draft Strategy for consultation is intended to be the beginning of a continuous process of collaborative engagement through which local communities will shape and influence the projects emerging from the Strategy, in line with the City Council's principles of localism and community cohesion.

3 Consultation to Date

- 3.1 The engagement strategy (attached as Appendix 2) was developed in light of the particular demographic character of East Birmingham and is designed to reach the widest possible range of stakeholders and community groups in order to effectively engage with residents, particularly in "hard to reach" groups.
- 3.2 The committee's attention is drawn to the following key features of the engagement strategy:
 - At twelve weeks, the consultation period is significantly longer than is usual for this type of document
 - There is a strong emphasis on face-to-face engagement in order to reach consultees who may not engage with written/online consultation, and also on
 - Key organisations such as the Neighbourhood Networks (NNS) lead partners and The Active Wellbeing Society have been asked to both nominate contacts and stakeholder groups within their areas of

responsibility, and also where appropriate to directly support and facilitate the consultation.

- 3.3 Following Cabinet approval on 11th February 2020, public consultation on the Strategy commenced on 17th February for a planned period of 12 weeks, ending on 11th May.
- 3.4 The initial launch event was held at South & City College Birmingham (S&CCB) in Bordesley Green and was attended by more than 90 individuals representing many local stakeholders as well as the Council and its partners such as WMCA and the NHS. Speeches were made by the Principal of S&CCB, the Leader of the Council, and Liam Byrne MP.
- 3.5 Subsequent consultation activity to date has included the following measures and activities:
 - A page has been created on the Council's website and an online survey has been published on the Council's consultation portal Be Heard.
 - Copies of the strategy have been placed in the eight local libraries within the area and provided to community organisations and NNS partners.
 - 329 direct consultation emails have been sent out to stakeholders, predominantly local organisations.
 - Printed leaflets have been provided to libraries and stakeholders, and an electronic version has been widely distributed.
 - Meetings have been held with twenty stakeholders to date
 - Eleven public events were arranged to take place at local libraries, Heartlands Hospital and The Swan shopping centre.
 - Hard copies and electronic details have been provided to the 23 Ward Members and 4 MPs whose areas of responsibility are affected.
 - Briefings have been offered to all Ward Forums. Two briefings have taken place to date.
 - Information packs have been provided to all local schools and nurseries, including key questions for schools to invite children to consider
 - Contact has also been made with key individuals in the education community, including the chair of the Eastwards Consortium, to further encourage engagement with schools and nurseries.
 - The consultation details have been distributed to contacts within their networks by key partners including:
 - NHS Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group
 - University Hospitals Trust

- Nechells POD
- East Employment and Skills Board
- Pioneer Group
- POhWER
- The Disability Resource Centre
- TAWS
- B8
- St John's House
- Stechford and Glebe Farm Residents Association

4 Response to COVID-19 Pandemic and Next Steps

- 4.1 Due to the emerging Major Incident caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, from the week commencing 16th March consultation activities were modified to exclude face-to-face meetings and public events. Unfortunately, all eleven public events were due to take place after this date and had to be postponed.
- 4.2 All consultees who had been contacted previously were re-contacted and informed of the cancellation of the planned public events. A modified leaflet explaining the cancellation was sent to all planned venues and provided to partners to circulate. The website and Be Heard has also been updated accordingly.
- 4.3 Subsequently consultation activities have continued as far as is possible using email, telephone and video conferencing. At present Officers are working to engage with stakeholders by telephone, using a list of more than 800 potentially interested individuals and organisations.
- 4.4 In order to ensure that the consultation is valid and successfully engages with residents, businesses and other stakeholders affected by the Strategy, it is proposed to hold a second tranche of consultation activity later in the year. During this additional consultation period replacement public events and stakeholder meetings will be arranged.
- 4.5 In addition, further consultation questions will be added to collect comments relating to how the Strategy can be adapted to incorporate measures to address and mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in East Birmingham.
- 4.6 There will be a meeting of the East Birmingham Board on 30th June to discuss the consultation to date, plans for additional consultation, post-COVID-19 planning for East Birmingham, and preparations to begin the

implementation of the Strategy as soon as possible following the completion of the consultation.