

Information Briefing

Report from:	Assistant Chief Executive	Date:	03/07/2020
Report to:	Coordinating Overview & Scrutiny Committee		

City Board

1. SUMMARY

This report provides a history of the City Board, give an overview on how the City Board has operated during the COVID-19 pandemic, introduce the City Vision research project, and outline the plans for City Board moving forward.

2. HISTORY OF CITY BOARD

The City Board is a leaders' group launched in September 2018. The purpose of the Board is to provide a forum for representatives to discuss the strategic opportunities and challenges in the city and how partners can work together more effectively. The City Board does not hold any statutory powers; its focus is to build relationships, foster a shared level of understanding and identify opportunities and shared objectives.

Chaired by the former Home Secretary, Right Hon Jacqui Smith, it is attended by various sector representatives and chairs from statutory partnerships across the city.

The below table sets out some of the member organisations that make up City Board, alongside the sectors that they represent. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of members.

Organisation	Sector
Culture Central, Punch Records	Arts and Culture
Birmingham Chambers of Commerce	Business
Birmingham Children's Trust	Children
Birmingham Education Partnership	Education
Church of England	Faith
West Midlands Fire Service	Fire
South & City College Birmingham	Further Education
NHS Birmingham and Solihull CCG	Health
Birmingham City University	Higher Education
West Midlands Police	Police
West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner	
Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC), Crisis	Voluntary and Community Organisations
Birmingham Health & Wellbeing Board	Statutory Partnership
Birmingham Safeguarding Children's Partnership	Statutory Partnership

In its first year, the City Board identified four key 'themes': homelessness, knife crime, childhood obesity, and the 'Distinctly Birmingham' cultural offer. The Board brought the work in these areas being done by partners together to promote innovation and collaboration in these areas. In the first year the Board gained a greater understanding of how partners were responding to the four themes, how partners could work together on cross-sectoral issue and how the working relationship between partners could be developed.

The first year also saw the Youth City Board established and representation of young people at the City Board. The Youth City Board was established to ensure the youth voice was represented and responded to in discussions on key topics that affect young people across the city. In 2019, the Board agreed to commission a project via the Council aimed at developing an overarching vision for Birmingham as a city. This has been the focus of the Board since late 2019, with responses to the COVID-19 pandemic taking priority in recent months.

The next two sections set out how the City Board has been operating during the COVID-19 crisis and an overview of the work undertaken to begin developing a city vision for Birmingham.

3. CITY BOARD DURING COVID-19

The coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated the need for effective partnership working across the city, both as part of the initial crisis response and in developing a shared long-term vision for Birmingham to steer recovery. During the COVID-19 crisis, the City Board has been meeting regularly as a forum for City Board partners to share operational updates and organisation priorities, and identify areas for joint working. The meetings were used to share data and discuss the emerging evidence of impact on the city.

These meetings began in March 2020, when the United Kingdom went into lockdown and the scale of the crisis first became clear. The first 'City Board Coronavirus Teleconference' was held 31 March and initially the meetings were held fortnightly and now will be meeting monthly. The next scheduled meeting is on Wednesday 22 July.

As we move out of lockdown, the conversation is shifting away from operational updates and towards developing a shared city-wide approach to recovery. Feedback from all partners is that the meetings have been a useful part of their coronavirus response, providing insight into the challenges facing other sectors and a holistic overview of the impact of the crisis on the city.

4. CITY VISION RESEARCH PROJECT

The City Board met in October 2019 to discuss the opportunity to create a City Vision for Birmingham and improve the way members engage with citizens. The Board expressed support for a City Vision and to use the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a framework. It was agreed that the project should be divided into two phases; a mapping phase and an engagement phase. To develop a clear understanding of existing activity and good practice, the initial mapping phase would evaluate and analyse strategies, assessing their alignment to partner strategies and against the SDGs.

In the first phase, the research will focus on organisational strategies and city-wide collective targets (e.g. to be net zero by 2030) against a 15 year timeline (2020-2035), along with citizen engagement approaches across the partnership organisations. The aim is to identify common threads and divergent areas of focus across partners , and will be completed by leading thinktanks City-REDI and CLES,.

The City Vision Project Board was established to support the City Board in creating the City Vision by providing direction, ownership and resources to sustain momentum between meetings and alongside ongoing research to support the plan. The Project Board is chaired by Jonathan Tew and is comprised of BCC colleagues, members of the Youth Board, and representatives from Barrow Cadbury Trust and the LGA as co-funders of the project.

The specification of the research was revisited following the COVID-19 pandemic. It was decided that the research should remain largely the same but required an element of reflection relating to the changes brought by COVID-19. An interview between the research contractors and City Board partners was added to allow for analysis of how organisational strategies and citizen engagement may change after COVID-19.

The research project is being introduced to City Board partners individually through meetings with either Councillor Jones or Jacqui Smith. The meetings are used to discuss the research project and why it would be beneficial for partners to engage, tailoring the discussion towards their sector or area of work. These initial meetings are in the process of being scheduled and beginning to take place. The research project has now formally begun on 15 June, with contractors beginning the analysis of partner organisational strategies. It is expected to be completed by the end of September 2020.

The findings of the research will be presented to the City Board and include an options appraisal regarding citizen engagement in Birmingham. This will inform the second phase of the project; engaging with citizens. This part of the project will be completed by an established and experienced organisation in community participation. The aim is to inform the City Board of the people's priorities for the City Vision and will represent what our residents think Birmingham will/should look like in 2035, based on the SDGs.

5. FUTURE OF THE CITY BOARD

A workplan is being developed for the City Board for the remainder of 2020 as we move away from focussing on the emergency response to COVID-19. Initial suggestions include discussion of the City Vision research conclusions, planning Phase 2 of the City Vision work (engaging with citizens) and planning the governance of City Board in 2021.

The meetings between partners and either Councillor Jones or Jacqui Smith, as mentioned above, are additionally being used to discuss the City Board and how it should work moving forward. To reflect the aim and purpose of the City Board, it is key that partners are involved in developing the next phase of the Board.

Contact Officer:
Telephone:
E-Mail:

Varun Sitaram, Head of Business Improvement and Change Varun.sitaram@birmingham.gov.uk
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