TAKING THE COUNCIL TO THE PEOPLE ROADSHOW

DRAFT SECTIONS ON VISION FOR THE CITY 2020+

Prepared 16th November 2015

Headlines

- Vision themes that occurred most frequently were for a city that:
  - ✓ Stands up for itself where citizens have pride and dignity, have a sense of purpose and direction, and take responsibility.
  - ✓ Is inclusive with engaged communities, provides for the needs of *all* its residents and focuses on equality.
  - ✓ Has a strong community spirit where residents are informed and feel that they own the city.
  - ✓ Values and provides education, training, employment and other opportunities for its young people.
  - ✓ Is a good place to grow old.
  - ✓ Through its links into the Combined Authority and independent action, attracts investment and retains firms.
  - ✓ Ensures investment benefits all parts of the city and not just the city centre.
  - ✓ Links into the digital economy where all can access the internet.
  - ✓ Is creative and adaptive and at the cultural cutting edge.
  - ✓ Has an excellent, integrated and green transport system.
  - ✓ Ensures social or affordable housing is available for all.
  - ✓ Is safe and clean.
  - ✓ Improves health and wellbeing.

- Key roles identified for the Council included:
  - ✓ Providing strong but accountable political leadership and management at both a city-wide and local level.
  - ✓ Encouraging community activity particularly in areas where community organisation is weaker and co-ordinating volunteer work.
  - ✓ Doing more enforcement through its own tenancies and with the private sector.
  - ✓ Communicating good quality information using different communication methods for different groups in the city.
  - ✓ Enabling not necessarily delivering services.
  - ✓ Libraries working with local businesses to ensure free internet access for everyone.
  - ✓ Concentrating resources in areas where there was greatest need in partnership with others.
  - ✓ Providing one stop shop/'one doorway in' for related requests for services in partnership with others, and investing in buildings where community groups can meet.

- Businesses needed to take responsibility for cleanliness and safety in the areas surrounding their workplace. Businesses also need to invest more in community organisations and share their skills and knowledge with them.

- Residents need to be more engaged, take pride in their streets and act appropriately.

- Communities should be more joined up, working to share services and facilities.

- Schools should be more engaged with their local communities.

- Trust has to be built amongst all partners and between the citizen and the Council.

Section 3 of full Report: Vision 2020+

As an ice-breaker and also as a way of feeding residents' concerns and priorities into the development of a sense of direction for the city which is owned by its citizens, each workshop started, after a brief introduction, with smaller groups discussing what their vision of the city 2020+ is and the different roles in achieving this vision. Participants were asked to:

Start with "We want Birmingham to be a place in 2020 where . . .". Each group to produce a short vision statement.

In doing this please consider the role each of the following should play and identify the extent *(more, same, less)* of their role:

- Council
- Citizen (you)
- Businesses
- Public, voluntary and community organisations.

Extensive notes were written up on each discussion group and comments were summarised on flipcharts, pinned up for all attendees to see and key points reported verbally, in most cases, to all attendees.

The visioning exercise was a great success judging by the level of engagement in the discussions by workshop participants and by the number of ideas put forward. The enthusiasm of those present, the range of ideas raised and the keenness to work with others to bring about the visions expressed underlined the value of engagement exercises of this kind. They also demonstrate the reservoirs of good will and energy that the city has for partnership working focused on delivering positive results for the city's residents and businesses.

This section summarises the visions expressed across all the small group discussions in all the workshops and the views on who should do what to make these visions happen. (Summaries of the discussions in each District are contained in Appendix III.) An attempt has been made to categorise the different vision statements into broad themes and to give an idea of how frequently each theme was mentioned as a very crude indicator of how strongly an idea was held. Quotations are provided to give a flavour of what people said although they are usually not verbatim quotes but statements as taken down by note takers or composite statements coming out of the small group discussions.

Vision

Participants' views on the vision they have of what Birmingham should be in 2020 and beyond can be grouped broadly into 13 themes.

1. At almost every workshop there were participants who said that they want a Birmingham to be a **city that they can be proud of,** where

    'We are proud to say we come from.'

    Participants wanted a city that stands up for itself and one where citizens have pride and dignity, have a sense of purpose and direction, and take responsibility. Comments on flip charts included:

    'A city that stands up for itself and empowers people to do it for themselves.'

    'To be the clear 2nd City and powerhouse as a region in the UK and beyond.'

2. Another frequently mentioned vision theme was for an **inclusive city** with **engaged and integrated communities**, and which provides for the needs of *all* its residents. In saying all must be included, reference was frequently made to the ill and disabled, to older people and to young people. Statements on this theme were usually linked with a desire that the city focused on **equality**. Example of vision statements on this theme are:

    'Cohesive, engaged communities that give input. Engaged wards – democratically active.'

    'Birmingham to be an integrated city with strong bonds within and between communities.'

    And consequently:

    'A city where a wide range of people want to live.'

3. Pride in the city and inclusivity were often connected to a wish to see a city with a **strong community spirit.**

    *'Where Birmingham citizens understand it's no longer what they can do for us
    but what we can do for ourselves.'*

    'A city where local groups are active and not isolated'

    However, this required **citizens to be well informed**, an essential requirement for increasing engagement and engendering a sense of ownership of the city. As one statement put it:

    *'Citizens given far greater access to information – to enable better engagement, access
    to services and involvement in decision making.'*

    There were occasional references for the city to be:

    'European and welcoming.'

4. **Young people** were at the core of many other visions expressed. Birmingham needed to value and provide education, training, employment and other opportunities for its young people.

5. At the same time, reflecting the inclusivity theme, many said that Birmingham needed to be **a good place to grow old**.

6. **Economic and employment growth** was another frequent component of the visions of workshop participants. The need to be a city which attracts investment and retains its

firms was raised by many. Education and training were important here too. We needed a wealth creating city –

'A Birmingham that keeps moving'.

This required strong links with the proposed Combined Authority and there were requests for more information on what was happening on this front.

7. A related theme was that **investment** in the city **should benefit all parts of the city** and not just the city centre.

'A city that attracts inward investment and business growth and that opportunities arising from this permeate all parts of the city and population.'

'The rest of the city is brought up to the same standard as the city centre.'

8. An eighth theme brought together economic growth with inclusivity and equality: A city that links into the **digital economy where all can access the internet**.

9. The importance of arts and culture in any vision of the future was raised in some workshops by those who wanted a city which is **creative and adaptive** and at the *'cultural cutting edge.'*

'A creative and adaptive city. A city of 1,000 skills from a city of 1,000 trades.'

'A place where the highest quality arts are available to the citizens. Thriving arts are important to big, successful cities.'

'Birmingham is viewed as a modern, European city and a city which leads the world in culture and innovation and technology all the things which bring people into the city.'

Many linked this with a focus on the development of Birmingham's young citizens and the way that city centre cultural institutions could provide opportunities for young people in all the city's neighbourhoods. Reference was made to the 'family Concerts' at Symphony Hall and to CBSO's outreach work of performing in schools.

Similar points were made with regard to sport.

10. Economic growth and equality of access to economic and cultural opportunities were at the centre of the vision for the city to have an **excellent, integrated transport system** expressed at a number of workshops. Some stressed that the transport system should be greener and that it should include cycle routes.

11. A few of the discussion groups in some of the workshops stressed the importance of **social or affordable housing being available for all** and that this should feature in any vision for the city.

12. A very popular vision was for a city that was **safe and clean**. Some attendees at the workshops stressed the importance of a partnership with the police in all localities for achieving this vision.

13. Finally, many saw Birmingham in 2020 being a city that continues to improve its citizens' **health and wellbeing**.

'Happy and healthy. My needs are met.'

Roles

Less time was spent in the smaller groups discussing roles – who does what – to achieve these visions. Nevertheless a few key points were made. Key roles identified for the Council included:

- ✓ Providing **strong but accountable political leadership** and management at both a city-wide and local level.

- ✓ **Encouraging community activity** particularly in areas where community organisation is weaker. To do this the Council needed to be out in the community more and there should be more devolving of budgets to local people. There also had to be recognition (by all service providers, not just the Council) that neighbourhoods are different.

- ✓ **Co-ordinating volunteer work**. There is a lot of volunteer work going on already and the Council's role should be to co-ordinate it better, spot gaps and connect up voluntary groups.

    'There should be more structure to volunteering.'

- ✓ Doing **more enforcement** through its own tenancies and with the private sector. Some argued that staff have to be empowered to enforce without continual reference back to Councillors. It was recognised by some participants that this could be expensive and may be difficult to do in the context of cuts. However, a Cabinet Member did explain that the Council has increased its enforcement action in relation to businesses not cleaning up the areas they work in. At the same time it should not all be negativity and good news stories had to be promoted.

- ✓ **Communicating good quality information** using different communication methods for different groups in the city. Raising Birmingham's profile in the country was also seen as important.

- ✓ **Enabling** not necessarily delivering services. This was sometimes linked to the need to have better control of the costs and quality of contractors. The Council needed to:

    'Hold private contractors to account. Clever contracting. Market shaping.'

    'Taking accountability away from public bodies is dangerous – essential services must remain democratically accountable and run by the Council.'

- ✓ **Libraries working with local businesses** could ensure free internet access for everyone. Was there a role for planning permission clauses here?

- ✓ Concentrating **resources in areas where there was greatest need** in partnership with others.

- ✓ Providing **one stop shop/'one doorway** in' for related requests for services in partnership with others, and investing in buildings where community groups can meet.

Businesses needed to take responsibility for cleanliness and safety in the areas surrounding their workplace. Businesses also need to invest more in community organisations and share their skills and knowledge with them.

Residents need to be more engaged, take pride in their streets and act appropriately.

Communities should be more joined up, working to share services and facilities.

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Schools should be more engaged with their local communities.

Several participants suggested that **trust has to be built** amongst all partners and between the citizen and the Council to underpin new ways of working together.