**Appendix 2**

**Community Cohesion in Birmingham: Forward Together**
4$^{th}$ December 2017, mac

**The Summit**

On 4$^{th}$ December 2017 Councillor Chatfield convened a conversation with 80+ partners from across the city to discuss and identify:

- The challenges facing the city and the opportunities in achieving community cohesion;
- The role each of our organisations can play and our commitment to improving cohesion;
- What the next steps might be to working together towards a shared vision of cohesion.

Key-note speaker, Nazir Afzal OBE, opened the event with reflections from his experience as Chief Crown Prosecutor for the North West (2011 – 2015) and from his involvement in the Manchester Commission on Cohesion. Born and brought up in Birmingham he was able to share some very personal insight on the challenges the city faces – including the need to have honest and difficult conversations about the reality of intolerance and discrimination in the city, while working to not further alienate or stigmatise any one community.

Partners from across the city were also invited to share their perspectives on the challenges facing the city, identify existing practice we can build on and what different sectors can do to contribute to cohesion in Birmingham. Joining our key-note speaker on the panel we had Kamal Hanif OBE, Head teacher, Waverley School, Paul Faulkner,CEO from the Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Ashley Bertie, Assistant Police and Crime Commissioner. The panel was chaired by Anita Bhalla OBE who is currently chair of the West Midland's Combined Authority Leadership Commission.

**1) What are the challenges facing the City in achieving community cohesion?**

*Living in a super-diverse city*

There was a sense in the room that the phrase 'super diverse' was not properly understood or used. We often discuss our 'diversity' or 'super diversity' implying that it is a good thing without understanding whether this sentiment is generally shared across our city. A challenge was identified in understanding the different opinions and ideas people had about diversity including:

- Self-segregation – there are many reasons why communities might prefer to live, study or work with 'people like them', we need to understand whether this is by choice or being reinforced by economic and social circumstances;

- Assimilation and integration – who needs to 'integrate' and on who's terms? Do we tackle historical inequalities and address the context on which we build?

- Are we talking about social engineering – what role or right does the state have to determine or make demands on how people live and interact in their private lives?

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*Negotiating Birmingham's Values*

In the 2016 Cross-party community cohesion statement the council committed to 'promoting shared British values' as one of our approaches for working towards community cohesion. The theme of 'shared values' asked participants to reflect on whether Birmingham has, or should have, its own shared values. Challenges identified under this theme included:

- A lack of shared identity and sense of belonging (a 'village' mentality rather than city-wide identity);

- A lack of spaces for people to interact with others (especially people of difference);

- A lack of 'safe spaces' to raise concerns and grievances without being shut-down – and a need to have challenging and difficult conversations;

- The challenge of having increasingly mobile and transient communities – how do we develop shared values and a sense of community or belonging when the people are always changing? How do we embed resilience and continuity in an environment of constant change?

- Do we want to share? Or are we better off embracing our village identities and allowing for self-segregation if this is what people want?

*Barriers to participation*

Not being able to participate in, feel connected to or have influence in the society we live in is sometimes considered to be detrimental to community cohesion. If we aren't able to get involved and feel that we have a stake in the success of our shared community we are more likely to feel isolated. Some of the barriers to participation that were identified include:

- Physical mobility and transport - not being able to connect with opportunities (either personal or professional) because of poor transport connections; communities feeling isolated and marooned;

- Attainment and Outcomes – cycles of poverty in parts of the city reflected in low attainment levels matched with a lack of opportunities and role models; a need for more creative and innovative solutions to employment problems – encouraging pragmatism and realism in responding to economic need (e.g. what jobs will there be?) without setting limitations and quashing entrepreneurial spirit;

   o Included in this a long with a range of other skills needs is the need for ESOL provision to enable all our citizens to fully participate in society and make a contribution.

- Poverty – negative impact of poverty can disrupt cohesion. Various types of poverty were discussed (e.g. health poverty) with a strong emphasis on access to employment, housing, health and homelessness as a growing issue (including ensuring adequate provision for GRT communities).

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*Intolerance and Extreme Voices*

Within our city, and indeed our own workforces and communities, there will be those who try to undermine the shared values we seek to espouse. Challenges were identified under the theme of 'intolerance and extreme voices' that included:

- Giving space for grievances and concerns to be aired (and not silenced or allowed to fester) without giving a platform for intolerant and hateful views;

- Utilising language that responds to these grievances in a way that lands with the intended audience without further stigmatising or perpetuating myths and stereotypes;

- Tackling inequalities and harmful practices that are predominant in particular communities without contributing to further stigma and problematizing those communities;

- Addressing both explicit discrimination and unconscious bias across all characteristics.

## 2) What are the key areas where you feel we need to make an impact collectively?

*Living in a super diverse city*

A consensus emerged from the room that this is an agenda that is not wholly owned by any one sector or group: we all have a responsibility for delivering on this as our contribution to living in a super-diverse city. A key aspect of this is about understanding 'what's in it for me' and some work might be necessary to illustrate the positive impact that improved cohesion would have on any individual or organisation in our city. Some key areas for consideration if we are to have a positive collective impact were:

- A responsibility of every individual, community and organisation that lives in and contributes to our city;

- A need for reflection, challenge and difficult conversations – how do you respond to intolerance or discrimination in your organisation, neighbourhood or community;

- How do we give more control to neighbourhoods and communities without creating or adding to tensions (e.g. a perception that a 'space' is just for one community or faith group?)

*Negotiating our shared values*

The challenge of establishing our own set of values as a city relies on how we relate and communicate with each other here. As a foundation for negotiating these shared values some behavioural challenges were identified:

- A need to share intelligence more easily – being less protective and risk adverse;

- A more positive narrative including celebrating our success stories and shining more light on the good work going on – it's not all bad here and being negative just makes things worse;

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- A need for continued dialogue on these issues and improved partnership working

*Barriers to Participation*

A number of barriers to participation were identified however; there was one key area where partners felt we could have a collective impact. Jobs and skills emerged as a key area where partners felt they could have an impact, suggested actions included:

- Extracting talent from our communities and challenging 'traditional' entry routes which might include barriers and unconscious bias;

- Encouraging aspiration and ambition through helping young people have access to role models and networks (e.g. through collaborating with schools; mentoring; apprenticeships);

- Improving careers advice and being more innovative and creative in thinking about the future of work

- Inclusive growth where disconnected communities benefit from the city economic growth.

*Responding to intolerance and extreme voices*

A challenge was identified in the need to differentiate between and balance opportunities for individuals to express grievances and communicate their feelings in an open environment whilst also ensuring that we firmly give no platform for the propagation of hate speech. In response to this, areas for collective impact include:

- Creating spaces for dialogue and difficult conversations;

- Not amplifying or promoting voices that incite hatred or discrimination;

- Recognising and protecting the enshrined rights of all individuals regardless of background or characteristics.

**Next Steps**

The reflections and recommendations emerging from the summit reflect that this is an agenda for which we each have responsibility, something that should not be viewed as being held by any one organisation. However, in order to turn these reflections into tangible actions each organisation and individual will need to consider how they can implement and respond to these issues in their own environment, as well as together. With this in mind, some of the actions the Council will be taking ahead from this summit are identified below in terms of longer term, medium term and immediate objectives.

*Immediate Actions*:

- **Blog post:** this is now available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/blog/birmingham-blog/post/20/birmingham-forward-together

- **Youth Summit:** Planning is underway for a youth summit on community cohesion on 7th March

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- **Assistant Chief Executive:** starting in January 2018, the Assistant Chief Executive will have a remit for partnerships and community cohesion and will be instrumental in taking forward the actions outlined below.

*Summer 2018:*

- **A Vision Statement/Commitment -** building on the cross-party community cohesion statement of 2016 we would like to develop a better, shared understanding of what cohesion means to Birmingham; what we stand for here and the values we aspire to;

- **A Strategic Framework -** developing a strategic and measurable approach that joins up the vast and varied work that will contribute to cohesion overall;

- **A citywide Network** – to keep an ongoing conversation and dialogue across all partners open, to build on our relationships and ensure we are achieving the best possible outcomes for the people of Birmingham.

*Ongoing:*

- **Female empowerment** – 2018 is the centenary of women finally having the right to vote and 100 years on there is still a lot of work to do. How can we use this anniversary as a springboard for improving gender equality in our city?

- **Perception of Birmingham** – How can we improve how people feel about the city – to instil a sense of pride and recognise an identity we all share in?

- **Aspiration for the city and young people** – Birmingham is seen as undergoing a rebirth of sorts. How do we ensure this 'renaissance buzz' is more inclusive and relevant to all citizens?

- **Difficult conversations** – Myth-busting on its own doesn't always work. How can we appeal to people's *real* concerns whilst also challenging further stigmatisation of communities?

- **Neighbourhoods** – How do we give people more control and autonomy without creating or adding to tensions (A good example being the perception that a community centre is just for one community or faith group)?

- **Employment and jobs** – Working with businesses and other major employers to ensure all levels of jobs and skills opportunities are widely accessible to all, irrespective of socio-economic background