

**HOUSING AND HOMES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TUESDAY 11
OCTOBER 2016**

**PRIORITY REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPARENCY, OPENNESS &
EQUALITY**

REPORT BY: COUNCILLOR WASEEM ZAFFAR

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report sets out my portfolio priorities for 2016/17.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

I have accountability for:

Social Cohesion and Inclusion	<p>Approaches to ensure that all Birmingham citizens have increasing access to opportunity across the social and economic life of the city.</p> <p>Holding to account other relevant Cabinet Members and officers for the delivery of those functions that impact on social cohesion and inclusion.</p>
Equalities within the Community	<p>Development and promotion of shared values and mutual respect across the diverse communities of Birmingham.</p> <p>Ensuring that community and cultural events promote social cohesion and inclusion.</p>
External Challenge	<p>Ensuring that partner agencies, private or third sector organisations are challenged on their contribution to improving social cohesion and inequalities.</p>
Safer Communities	<p>Strategic citywide leadership to community safety in Birmingham, including anti-social behaviour, fear of crime and road safety and ensuring effective support for victims of crime.</p> <p>Effective relationships and clear shared priorities with the Police and Crime Commissioner and West Midlands Police.</p> <p>Leadership on youth offending issues.</p> <p>CCTV and liaison with Police.</p>

3. PRIORITIES

Executive remains committed to working together towards the vision of a fair, prosperous and democratic city.

The challenge is to ensure that every Birmingham citizen has access to opportunity across the social and economic life of the city, within a safe city – including in education, employment, housing, health and social care, civil society and political participation – whether these are delivered by the City Council itself, partner agencies, or by private or third sector organisations.

My portfolio priorities for this year are to:

Priority	Progress to date
Develop a City of Birmingham Equality Strategy	<p>Our aim is to embed equalities in everything we do and assess the impacts of our decisions and services on communities.</p> <p>We are looking to provide as much useful demographic data and ward profiles to Elected Members and partners to help address some of the challenges and help shape services in local areas.</p>
Take forward recommendation of the Child Poverty Commission.	<p>A cross-party Birmingham Child Poverty Forum is being established to continue the city-wide dialogue and debate, building on the evidence and recommendations of the Child Poverty Commission. The first meeting is due to be held in October.</p> <p>Considerable work has taken place throughout the summer to draft an implementation plan that will take forward the Commission's recommendations. Positive progress has been made on some of the recommendations including the exemption of care leavers from Council Tax up to the age of 25. It is intended that this will be implemented as part of the Council's 2017/18 budget and will be effective from 1 April 2017.</p> <p>The Schools, Children and Families O&S Committee will track the progress of the Commission's recommendations, at their Committee meeting on 8 February 2017.</p>
Review how the City deals with Hate Crime	<p>New figures show that post Brexit hate crime has continued to surge with over 6,000 incidents reported across the country in the last month alone. The National Police Chiefs' Council have reported that figures in June 2016 represent a 42 percent rise on the same time last year.</p> <p>In Birmingham there is a need to review the approach to Hate Crime, and the contribution and challenges for key agencies, with a view to better support for victims and an improved joined-up approach. In November a seminar will be held, with support from Birmingham Race Action Partnership (BRAP), to address the challenges for Birmingham, bring forward key priorities and</p>

	establish an agreed framework for going forward
Develop a Birmingham model for tackling extremism, engaging with the Home Office and Birmingham communities	<p>Birmingham continues to have strong and robust mechanisms for Prevent and is considered as good practice. In December 2015 the London Assembly's Police and Crime Committee cited Birmingham as a model to follow in their report on Radicalisation and Extremism.</p> <p>Birmingham will be strengthening its engagement with communities and practitioners on extremism through the development of an independent community reference group that will further open up opportunities for increased transparency and scrutiny of the programme.</p>
Develop a community cohesion strategy for the city with partners	<p>A new cross-party statement on community cohesion has been published. Work is now underway to develop a community cohesion strategy under the oversight of a steering group of partners. The first meeting will be held on 18 October and the aim is to have a draft strategy out to consultation in the new year. There will be scope to align this work with the equality strategy. At the same time, the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership, chaired by Chief Superintendent Chris Johnson, is exploring the establishment of a community tension monitoring subgroup as a way of sharing intelligence and developing solutions jointly across partners. While the strategy is being developed, the Council will also be working with partners to tackle issues related to gender equality, hate crime and domestic violence.</p>
Undertake review of current services to Asylum Seekers and Refugees	<p>We have welcomed 50 refugees to start new lives here in Birmingham since December 2015, in line with the cross-party agreement that was reached last year.</p> <p>We are now in a period of reflection and review to look at what worked well and what may need improvement ahead of our aim to welcome a further 500 refugees to the city in the years ahead.</p> <p>We have also recently announced our support for the community sponsorship of Syrian refugees. The Methodist Network will be sponsoring a family of four – with the support of the City Council and the Home Office. This will be a pilot for Birmingham which will be monitored during the initial period, followed by an evaluation of learning before committing to further sponsorship applications.</p> <p>In response to recent communications from the Home Office, we have confirmed that we are signing up to the National Transfer Scheme and will manage up to a maximum of 130 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking and Refugee children (UASC) in the city and this number would be inclusive of those accommodated through the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) and arrivals via the Dubs amendment. Within this offer, we also accept the need to accommodate children and young people who come via the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme</p>

	<p>(VCRS).</p> <p>We aim to take a policy position statement to Cabinet later in the year that will honour our commitment to being a City of Sanctuary while balancing the needs of the many other vulnerable citizens living in Birmingham.</p> <p>A report to Cabinet is therefore to be prepared to clearly set out our offer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asylum seekers and refugees from the point of entry to the UK through determination of status and beyond. • The 550 Syrian refugees we have stated a commitment to providing a new home to, to include community sponsorship • Unaccompanied asylum seeking children. <p>This offer will be framed with reference to health, housing, education and community cohesion.</p>
Support for BCC staff networks	<p>The BCC Employee Networks were reviewed in 2011 and as a result, reduced from eight networks, and consolidated into the Corporate Black Workers, Disability Advisory and LGBT Network. The terms of reference were revised and agreed and a lead BCC officer was appointed to each Network respectively as a Champion in terms of direction and support</p> <p>There is a need to consider and refresh these arrangements so that they are fit for purpose and so that they continue to reflect the Council's developing equality agenda</p>
Develop an integration plan for new communities	<p>I would like to ask Scrutiny to look into the possibility of developing an integration plan for the city based on the Helsinki model which seeks to increase the participation and employment of immigrant, reduce the unemployment of immigrants and the social exclusion of young people with immigrant backgrounds.</p>
Support the development of early intervention and prevention activity which can create safer communities	<p>In addition to the Think Family programme, which is now embedding itself in the Council's approach to preventing children and young people from getting involved in crime and ASB, or reducing the opportunity for escalation of that involvement, there are other initiatives and activities in progress to develop this approach. In terms of children and young people, there are also youth activities and projects funded and coordinated via the Local Community Safety Partnerships to provide diversion and engagement opportunities for young people. Additionally work is now in progress to develop joint work on community safety outcomes within the Early Help strategy and agenda.</p> <p>In terms of adults there is the development of a Birmingham Street Population Tasking process to identify and engage with members of the street community to help them exit their current lifestyles and prevent harm to themselves and others. There is</p>

	<p>also joint work with other Council services and external partners to develop Supporting Adults Panels which support adults whose needs place them at risk of self-neglect, hoarding, victimisation or offending, as well as joint projects moving forward with mental health services on housing and mental health issues.</p> <p>Through the Small Grants Fund, which is administered through the Local Community Safety Partnerships there is also approximately £120,000 in grants being made to community organisations and groups to address community safety priorities and develop community capacity to responding to them.</p>
Support the strengthening of community safety partnership activity and relationships, particularly at a local level	<p>Through the existing relationships with partners such as West Midlands Police, as well as the local structures such as the Local Community Safety Partnerships and Safer Communities Groups, there is much work ongoing to develop and embed partnership approaches to using tools in the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. These include Community Protection Notices, Public Space Protection Orders and Community Triggers.</p> <p>There are also a number of joint operations with the Police and other partners which are ongoing or planned, such as Operation Wraithbane to address off-road biking concerns, as well as serious and high profile cases being managed via Birmingham's Tackling Families Undermining Neighbourhoods (TFUN) group.</p>

4. OTHER KEY PROGRAMMES

In addition to the priorities outlined above, there are a number of other key programmes that will be progressed during 2016/17 including:

- Celebrate and promote the City's achievements. Acknowledge that Birmingham has many strengths, with youthful and diverse communities.
- Create positive narratives of all our neighbourhoods and take away the negative stigmas labelled against inner and outer city neighbourhoods.
- Engage young people to re-imaging their city and neighbourhoods as positive cohesive places to live.
- Establish short task and finish groups (6 months) to look at needs of communities.
- Develop toolkit for incoming communities – what is our core offer. Provide similar link to isolated communities.
- Develop better grassroots engagement – champion good work and sharing of best practice.
- Ensure there is better use of Faith Map and Community Group Map.

5. KEY BUDGET ISSUES

Equalities and Community Safety

I am responsible as the Cabinet Member, for a net revenue budget of £0.7m in 2016/17 to deliver my services (this represents gross expenditure of £3.6m and is offset by income of £2.9m). These resources include the Community Safety Grant of £1.9m provided through the Police and Crime Commissioner and the resources are utilised to deliver services commissioned through partners, the Equalities & Community Safety Team, Public CCTV and the PVE Programme.

These services (excluding the Community Safety Fund) have historically provided a major contribution to the delivery of the overall Savings Programme of the Council in order to meet the medium term financial challenge that is facing the Council. The savings for these services totalled £0.6m in 2016/17 and at this stage there are no planned further step up savings for future years to 2019/20.

It is possible that there will be a modest overspend for these services in 2016/17 – estimated at £0.7m (this has been effectively managed to this level and is a reflection of the complex re-structuring and consultation that is underway on the future operating model for the Equalities Team).

Councillor Waseem Zaffar

Cabinet Member for Openness, Transparency and Equality