Birmingham City Council

Report to Council

17 June 2025

Title:	**CORPORATE PLAN 2025-28**
Lead Member:	Councillor John Cotton, Leader, and Councillor Rob Pocock, Transformation, Governance and HR.
Relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee:	Corporate and Finance
Has this report been shared with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair?	Yes
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Authorised by:	Rishi Shori, Deputy Chief Executive Strategy, Insight and Governance Directorate
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Forward Plan Reference: Refer to Guidance	013613/2025
Reason(s) why not included on the Forward Plan and confirm who has authorised it to be considered:	
Is this a Late Report?	No
Reason(s) why Late and confirm who has authorised it to be considered:	Not applicable
Is this decision eligible for 'call in?'	No
If 'call-in' has been dis-applied, please provide reason(s) and confirm who has authorised:	Not applicable
Wards:	All
Does this report contain exempt or confidential information?	No
Has this decision been included on the Notification of Intention to consider Matters in Private?	Not applicable

Reasons why not included on the Notification and confirm who has authorised it to be considered:	Not applicable

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 At its 3rd June 2025 meeting, Cabinet discussed and recommended this suite of documents for approval by Full Council. Cabinet welcomed the comments from Commissioners relating to capacity and capability to deliver the plan; the need for a robust performance management framework and clear accountability for performance throughout the organisation; and the expectation of robust governance with effective reporting and escalation arrangements. Cabinet also noted the comment relating to the City Vision and the importance of addressing the key challenges facing the city, working in partnership to respond to these.

1.2 The Cabinet response to the comments from Commissioners is summarised below:

"Going forwards, the Council will need to ensure that they have the right capacity and capability to deliver their commitments and the improvements promised to residents, regulators and partners"

1.2.1 The Corporate Plan, and component Improvement and Recovery Plan (both at appendix 2), are a composite of existing plans and strategies and therefore capacity is available and built in, to ensure delivery. Key priorities within the Improvement and Recovery mission include further development of the workforce, a culture of accountability and trust and a new Target Operating Model to ensure strong delivery of priorities and continuous improvement become the norm.

"It will be vital going forwards to ensure that the Improvement and Recovery Plan is underpinned by clear targets to measure success and drive progress against defined outcomes, to enable a culture of accountability. Targets should be informed by benchmarking and previous performance, and feed into wider performance management frameworks and appraisals to create a 'golden thread' throughout the organisation"

1.2.2 The Performance Management Framework (appendix 4) is the mechanism through which the Council will ensure clear targets and accountability for performance throughout the organisation. The State of the City report provides a baseline dataset against the City Vision and will be refreshed annually to provide the latest available performance. The Performance Management Framework stresses the importance of using data to set targets, and to review progress throughout the year to shape improvement plans. It ensures the cascade of corporate outcomes through the refreshed approach to business planning. Targets will be regularly reviewed as part of the annual planning cycle.

"The Improvement and Recovery Plan must be overseen by a strong governance structure that establishes clear and strong principles to communicate the importance of the Plan throughout the organisation. This governance structure should enable the plan to balance the need to remain dynamic and responsive to change, with the need to retain close control of slippage and drift against agreed targets and outputs. There must be effective reporting and escalation mechanisms in place to ensure early mitigating actions are taken where this is required."

1.2.3 Stronger governance has been implemented through a strengthened Corporate Portfolio Management Office (CPMO) to ensure that Members have greater visibility of delivery against the Corporate Plan and Improvement and Recovery Plan. An integrated quarterly report against the Corporate Plan will be produced, covering performance, portfolio and savings delivery. The timeline for reporting will be streamlined and Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny as key audiences will receive the products up to a month earlier than has been the case historically. This process will run alongside a streamlined monthly reporting process on portfolio delivery to EMT and the Improvement and Recovery Board.

Also appended to this report is the new City Vision. Commissioners are happy to note this paper but believe that it could have better tailored the Vision to the unique features and challenges of the City of Birmingham, setting out clearly how the Council and its partners will work together to build on and meet these needs.

1.2.4 The City Vision has been developed and shaped with partners and communities following an extensive period of engagement over the summer. It is council-led but partner owned. This is the first time in several years that the council has carried out engagement of this type. It contains aspirations of these key stakeholders, but Cabinet recognise that this is a vision that will evolve as we develop our approach to partnership working. A revamped city partnership board will help to further strengthen and deepen relationships with partners.

1.3 Council is asked to consider the City Vision, the City Council's Corporate Plan (2025-28), the Annual Business Plan (2025-26), and the Performance Management Framework. Together, these key documents provide the direction for the organisation, and mechanisms for monitoring and ensuring strategic accountability for progress.

1.4 The City Vision (Appendix 1) sets out the long-term, shared vision and missions for the city. The Birmingham Promise outlines a new way of working across the partnership in the best interests of the city and citizens, to support achievement of the vision. This is a shared vision, intended to be owned and delivered across

the city partnership, with the Council's specific contributions documented within the Corporate Plan.

1.5 **The Corporate Plan (Appendix 2)** brings together, for the first time in a single document, two interrelated agendas: the council's contribution to the City Vision Missions and its own Improvement and Recovery Plan (IRP). The IRP forms the foundation of this Plan, acting as its engine room - providing the essential reforms and capabilities that will enable the Council to deliver on its wider ambitions.

1.6 **The Annual Business Plan (Appendix 3)** is a one-year delivery plan that details key metrics and milestones for 2025/26 to demonstrate progress towards the Corporate Plan priorities. It will form the basis of the Council's corporate performance and delivery reporting and will be refreshed each year.

1.7 **The Performance Management Framework (PMF) (Appendix 4)** is designed to ensure that everyone in the organisation is working towards shared priorities, as set out in the Corporate Plan. The PMF provides clear expectations for how and when performance management should happen across the organisation.

2 COMMISSIONERS' REVIEW

Commissioners have noted the Cabinet response to their review when these documents were considered at their June meeting and recommended to Council.

Council will be aware that the Improvement and Recovery Plan, which will be subject to a separate report to full Council, is effectively incorporated into the Corporate Plan being considered as part of this report. Progress against the Improvement and Recovery Plan, a document required by the Statutory Directions, and therefore the Corporate Plan itself is the core mechanism by which the Council will be judged on its journey out of intervention. Commissioners will report on this in October as instructed by Ministers and this report, together with the Minister's response will be published thereafter.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

City Council is recommended to approve the City Vision and Corporate Plan, and to note the Annual Business Plan and the Performance Management Framework:

3.1 **Approve** the City Vision (attached at Appendix 1) as the shared, partnership-wide, framework for strategic planning. The baseline data for the City Vision is available here in the first State of the City report.

3.2 **Approve** the Corporate Plan (attached at Appendix 2) as the overarching document that summarises the key priorities to drive improvement and contribute to the City Vision.

3.3 **Note** the Annual Business Plan (attached at Appendix 3) and the key metrics and milestones within.

3.4 **Note** the Performance Management Framework (attached at Appendix 4) as a key mechanism for ensuring accountability for performance throughout the organisation.

KEY INFORMATION

Context

4 City Vision 2025-2035 (Appendix 1)

4.1 The City Vision sets out the long-term aims and missions for the city to be shared by the Council and its partners, and a way of working across the partnership in the best interests of the city and its residents. It is a shared vision, intended to be owned and delivered across the city partnership.

4.2 The City Vision was produced through extensive citizen and partner engagement over the past year through Shaping Birmingham's Future Together.

4.3 **The overarching Vision is as follows:**

Our vision for Birmingham is a city that has a thriving economy, tackles inequality, where all communities can enjoy greater opportunities and the wellbeing that brings.

4.4 **Section 5** of the document sets out the key Missions of the Vision, linked to the key challenges facing the city. The Missions are:

- Growth and prosperity in Birmingham.
- Knowledge and opportunity in Birmingham.
- Safety and sustainability in Birmingham.
- Health, equity and inclusion in Birmingham.
- Connected Birmingham.

4.5 **Section 6** of the Vision sets out the 'Birmingham Promise', developed with citizens and partners to capture a new way of working. Through the Corporate Plan, the Council commits to this promise in the way that we will work to deliver our priorities.

5 Corporate Plan 2025-28 (Appendix 2)

5.1 This is the first Corporate Plan since the Government's statutory intervention in October 2023 and supersedes both the Corporate Plan 2022-26 and the April 2024 Improvement and Recovery Plan (IRP). While progress has been made in addressing the deep-rooted governance, service quality, and financial challenges that triggered intervention, work remains to deliver lasting improvement and restore trust in the Council.

5.2 The Corporate Plan brings together, for the first time in a single document, two interrelated agendas: the council's contribution to the new City Vision and its own IRP. The IRP forms the foundation of this Plan, acting as its

engine room - providing the essential reforms and capabilities that will enable the Council to deliver upon its wider ambitions.

5.3 Rather than covering every area of activity, this plan focuses on the most critical issues where the Council can make a tangible difference. It aims to set out a clear and achievable path to becoming a more effective, financially sustainable, and citizen-centred organisation.

5.4 **The Plan's contents** include:

- The council's contribution to the partnership-wide City Vision and five core Missions as highlighted in section 2.4 above, and an additional council-specific Mission focused on securing Improvement and Recovery;
- Strategic priorities for the next three years, aligned to each Mission;
- An overview of how these priorities will be delivered, including links to key strategies and delivery partnerships.

5.5 Good partnership working is fundamental to the delivery of the Corporate Plan. **Section 3** of the plan sets out how the *Shaping Birmingham's Future Together* partnership has defined a set of key behaviours and values that should underpin how organisations work together in service of the city - known as the Birmingham Promise. Effective collaboration will be essential to achieving the scale of change required over the course of the plan.

5.6 **Section 4** of the plan outlines the Council's cultural intervention, The Way We Work, with a set of guiding principles to support the council's transformation by embedding the behaviours and values required to become a high-performing, values-led organisation. This aligns to the Birmingham Promise set out within the City Vision.

5.7 **Section 5** of the plan provides detail on the **Missions and Priorities for 2025-28.** These are summarised in the table below.

Table 1. Headline Priorities for 2025-28

1. Growth and Prosperity	**Birmingham is a vibrant and inclusive city, where:**
	1. Investment and economic growth benefit all people and places in the city
	2. There is equal opportunity for people to get, and keep, good jobs
	3. Birmingham is promoted as a great place to live, visit and do business
	4. Businesses are supported to succeed; and illegal or unsafe business practices are addressed through effective regulation and enforcement
2. Knowledge and Opportunity	**Birmingham is a city where every person can learn and develop the skills they need to thrive, where:**
	1. Children and young people have a good start in life and a great education
	2. Lifelong learning is accessible to all
	3. Skills shortages in key sectors are addressed

3. Safety and Sustainability	**Birmingham is a safe, clean and green place to live, where:**
	1. More affordable homes are built
	2. Housing standards are improved, and homelessness prevented wherever possible
	3. People are safeguarded and protected from harm
	4. Street cleanliness and waste services are improved
	5. Everyone benefits from reduced carbon emissions, cleaner air, and a greener city prepared for climate change
4. Health, Equity and Inclusion	**Birmingham is a place where everyone can live, work, and age well, where:**
	1. Children and young people have a healthy start in life
	2. People are empowered to make healthy choices to improve wellbeing
	3. Everyone can live and age well
	4. Council services are citizen-focussed and inclusive
	5. Everyone feels safe, heard and can grow
5. Connected City	**Birmingham is a well-connected city, with:**
	1. A safe and sustainable transport network
	2. Good access to online services and support to develop digital skills
6. Improvement and Recovery	**Birmingham City Council is financially sustainable and operates effectively as a smaller, leaner and more efficient council**
	1. Strengthen and stabilise the Council's financial position
	2. Develop our workforce and build a culture of trust and learning
	3. Foster a better performing organisation with stronger governance
	4. Enhance the quality and accessibility of our services
	5. Transform the way we operate

5.8 **Section 5** also provides key contextual information for each Mission and a summary of the council's response to this. It then breaks down each priority further into a series of deliverables. Key partnerships and strategies which support the delivery of the priorities are also listed.

Governance of the Corporate Plan

5.9 **Section 6** summarises the strengthened governance and monitoring arrangements for the plan. Steps are being taken to transition the intervention governance arrangements to a partnership approach, where the council takes a stronger leadership role in driving its recovery. This marks an important shift towards embedding sustainable improvements and ensuring that the council is fully equipped to meet the challenges ahead with confidence and accountability.

5.10 Changes to the Improvement and Recovery Board (IRB) have started to be enacted, with plans to move to a bimonthly cycle to enable the council to more effectively drive discussions and decisions aligned to the rest of the council's governance processes. This approach will empower the council's leadership

team to proactively steer the recovery process, while continuing to draw on the invaluable insight and guidance provided by the commissioners.

5.11 With the IRP now embedded as part of the Corporate Plan, a unified quarterly performance report will track progress against the defined priorities across all mission priorities including improvement and recovery priorities within the IRP Framework. A single reporting product will combine previously separate data sets and ensure that a rounded picture of performance and delivery is provided, against shared priorities, in a single report.

6 Annual Business Plan 2025-26 (Appendix 3)

6.1 The Annual Business Plan is the delivery plan for the Corporate Plan and provides specific detail on the ambitions for the 2025-2026 financial year. Together, the Corporate Plan and Annual Business Plan provide the overall direction for the Council and link directly to the City Vision.

6.2 The Annual Business Plan provides a detailed view of specifically what will be done, and how we will measure progress, during the year to evidence delivery of the Corporate Plan priorities. It sets out a series of metrics that will be used to monitor progress towards the Corporate Plan throughout the year. For the IRP mission, it sets out both the overarching framework of council priorities as well as specific milestones related to IRP programmes delivering against the council objectives.

6.3 Corporate Plan priorities are shared, corporate, ambitions and are therefore not “owned” by a single Directorate and have been agreed through extensive engagement and cross council collaboration. The Annual Business Plan set out at Appendix 2, is arranged by priority, rather than Directorate, to highlight all contributions towards the corporate ambitions. To ensure accountability for delivery is clear, each metric has a Directorate owner.

6.4 The Annual Business Plan cannot and should not capture everything that the council does. As part of the Performance Management Framework, Directorates and Service areas will produce and monitor business plans that capture the measures within this plan alongside a broader range of delivery and metrics. These will in turn form the basis for prioritisation and objective setting at all levels of the organisation, through to individual performance management via the appraisal process.

6.5 Each item listed in the plan has a “lead” directorate, to highlight where accountability for performance and delivery lies. However, in many instances, successful delivery will be contingent on good cross-council and partnership working.

6.6 The Annual Business Plan will be reviewed and refreshed annually to ensure that the council prioritises action and targets resources appropriately towards corporately agreed priorities.

Monitoring and reporting

6.7 Each quarter, the Corporate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), highlighted throughout the Annual Business Plan, will be reported corporately, along with progress towards the key Improvement and Recovery Plan programmes.

On an annual basis, an impact report will be produced that provides a progress update across the full breadth of all Corporate Plan milestones and metrics listed.

7 Performance Management Framework (Appendix 4)

7.1 The Performance Management Framework (PMF) is designed to ensure that everyone in the organisation is working towards shared goals as set out in the Corporate Plan. It provides a baseline level of expectation relating to performance management for the entire organisation.

7.2 Performance management is an integral part of the council's wider corporate governance and assurance arrangements, which comprise the systems and processes, culture and values the council operates within as a public sector organisation.

7.3 Key features of the PMF

- **Business Planning**. On an annual basis, the Corporate Annual Business Plan will be refreshed to reflect progress made and ensure it remains relevant. This will help to ensure that resources are used most effectively and that progress towards our corporate objectives can be evidenced. All Directorates and service areas will produce their own business plan, setting out their contributions to the delivery of the Corporate Plan. Although the planning cycle is annual, planning should not be a standalone annual event. Instead, it should form part of an ongoing process of continuous improvement that can be adjusted based on the latest data and insights.

- **Annual appraisals and supervision**. This is where individual objectives and development plans are agreed and monitored. There should be a clear link between individual objectives, service / directorate business plans and the Corporate Plan.

- **Monitoring and reporting**. Quarterly reporting takes place against the Corporate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and an annual impact report showing progress towards the Corporate Plan priorities produced. Directorates and services will monitor a broader set of indicators and report these regularly at local management team meetings.

7.4 **Section 5** of the PMF sets out the expectations and accountabilities for each level of the framework.

7.5 Producing and publishing a PMF will not lead to the improvements required in this space, although it is a step forward. The Performance Management programme within the IRP will begin to embed the organisational arrangements set out in the PMF across the council during 2025/26. There is also a key dependency with the Culture IRP programme, to ensure that the individual appraisals aspect of the framework is well embedded.

Proposal and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 It is proposed that Council agree the City Vision 2025-2035, Corporate Plan 2025-28, Annual Business Plan 2025-26, and Performance Management Framework. The Corporate Plan is one of the key components of the policy framework for which Council holds responsibility

7.6 This suite of documents is intended to provide assurance to our citizens, partners, Government and Commissioners that the council understands, and has a robust plan to address, the scale of the challenges faced. Together, they provide a strong and achievable plan to deliver what is needed, that emphasise accountability.

Other Options Considered

7.7 Do nothing. This is not an option. The Best Value Statutory Guidance (May 2024) requires authorities to have an evidence based, current and realistic Corporate Plan that enables the whole organisation's performance to be measured and held to account. The last Corporate Plan was published before the council entered intervention and does not reflect the current context. The Improvement and Recovery Plan, published in April 2024, does not comprehensively cover the delivery of the organisation.

3.2 Further, Commissioners' latest letter to Government on the council's progress highlighted the absence of an embedded, effective performance management framework, leading to a lack of corporate grip on the scale of the issues faced. The council must urgently address this and use the Corporate Plan to mark the shift towards fully owning the scale of the challenges faced and embedding sustainable improvements.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 In accordance with the BCC Risk Management Policy & Strategy, the critical first step in risk-based decision-making is to understand the context within which we are working, and to define the objectives fundamental to driving the best outcomes for citizens.

8.2 Following BCC's overarching objectives being identified and agreed via this Corporate Plan, the detailed work of assessing the risks via identification, analysis and evaluation can begin, leading to the formulation of a risk and control environment which, alongside strengthened escalation mechanisms across (programme) delivery, will continuously inform decision making on the deliverability of these objectives.

8.3 This is the work of all BCC Leaders, both Officers and Members, but primary accountability for this work rests with Cabinet and Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).

8.4 Regular monitoring reports will be provided to CLT and Cabinet for the purposes of assurance, risk response strategy decisions, and subsequent resourcing/prioritisation actions or escalations required to ensure that the

objectives remain achievable considering the threats and opportunities faced, and the Council's ability to manage them.

9 CONSULTATION

9.1 The City Vision, which provides the guiding missions for the Corporate Plan, was produced through extensive engagement with citizens and partners during 2024, as part of Shaping Birmingham's Future Together. The council's "Colleague Community" also contributed to this work.

9.2 Subsequently, engagement with the Corporate Leadership Team, Extended Corporate Leadership Team, Executive Management Team, Directorate Management Teams and Commissioners has developed the Corporate Plan and Annual Business Plan. Cross-directorate workshops took place to foster collaboration in the agreement of key deliverables.

9.3 An online citizen engagement session took place on 14 April 2025, with 80 people attending to provide feedback on the draft priorities and how they would like to be kept informed on progress. Feedback has been used to shape the approach to monitoring and reporting of the plan.

10 MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Ward Councillor(s)

10.1 Not applicable.

Overview and Scrutiny

10.2 Councillor Albert Bore, Chair of the Corporate and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committee, has received and been briefed on the content of the report.

Other

10.3 Not applicable.

11 IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS

Finance and Best Value

11.1 The Best Value duty under the Local Government Act 1999, requires local authorities to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Best Value Statutory Guidance (May 2024) requires authorities to have an evidence based, current and realistic Corporate Plan that enables the whole organisation's performance to be measured and held to account. The suite of documents presented here are the basis for these duties.

11.2 The Corporate Plan and Annual Business Plan are summary plans, drawing on existing and fully budgeted strategies and delivery plans. The Integrated

Settlement funding, devolved via the West Midlands Combined Authority, provides additional growth and investment opportunities for the city and these are reflected within the “Growth and Prosperity” and “Knowledge and Opportunity” missions. The Integrated Settlement also supports the Connected Birmingham mission (devolved active travel fund and electric vehicle funds, bus funding spent via the WMCA and in future years from 26/27 a likely wider range of devolved transport funding) and the Safety and Sustainability mission (funding over three years which links with the Decent Homes programme). Funding for retrofit is a substantial amount, c£10m for 25/26 and c£46m over three years 2025/26-2028/29.

11.3 Delivering financial sustainability is a key overarching aim for the council as set out in the IRP mission. The delivery of budget savings and balancing the budget remain a key priority for the council. These will require transformational change that improves the way the council operates and how services are delivered as set out in the appended plans.

Legal

12.1 The IRP is a requirement of the Intervention Directions issued to the Council under Section 15(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999.

12.2 The Corporate Plan sets out the City Council’s priorities, which as well as aiming to improve how we operate and delivering better outcomes, focuses on meeting statutory obligations. The Corporate Plan outlines the specific areas in which statutory directions have been issued to the Council for critical improvement to take place. The City Council is required to meet these obligations by law, failure to do so could result in further intervention, legal action being taken against the Council and poor outcomes for citizens.

Equalities

12.3 Directors and Senior Accountable Officers are responsible for ensuring Equality Impact Assessments are completed for the strategies and delivery activities listed in the Annual Business Plan, as required.

Procurement

12.4 There are no procurement implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

People Services

12.5 Some programmes included within the IRP mission focus on the HR function and our approach to people management and employee relations.

Climate Change, Nature and Net Zero

12.6 Climate change and Net Zero remain important priorities for the council and are reflected within the Corporate Plan and Annual Business Plan.

Corporate Parenting

12.7 The Corporate Plan and Annual Business Plan set out some key corporate metrics relating to Corporate Parenting.

Other

12.8 Not applicable

13 APPENDICES

13.1 1. Birmingham City Vision 2025-2035.
13.2 2. Corporate Plan 2025-2028.
13.3 3. Annual Business Plan 2025-26
13.4 4. Performance Management Framework