

Members are reminded that they must declare all relevant pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests relating to any items of business to be discussed at this meeting

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES AND GOVERNANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 06 SEPTEMBER 2017 AT 10:30 HOURS
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 6, COUNCIL HOUSE, VICTORIA SQUARE,
BIRMINGHAM, B1 1BB

A G E N D A

1 NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chairman to advise/meeting to note that this meeting will be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.birminghamnewsroom.com) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.

2 APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies.

3 - 6

3 CORPORATE RESOURCES AND GOVERNANCE ACTION NOTES - 10 AUGUST 2017

To confirm the action notes from the meeting held on 10 August 2017

7 - 44

4 CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPARENCY, OPENNESS AND EQUALITY

Councillor Tristan Chatfield, Cabinet Member for Transparency, Openness and Equality, Priority Report

5 ASSISTANT LEADERS - UPDATE

To provide the Committee with an update

45 - 68

6 REVENUES SERVICE UPDATE

Report of the Service Director of Customer Services

7 **CORPORATE RESOURCES AND GOVERNANCE WORK PROGRAMME
SEPTEMBER 2017**

To note the work programme

8 **REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR
ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)**

To consider any request for call in/councillor call for action/petitions (if received).

9 **OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

To consider any items of business by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) that in the opinion of the Chairman are matters of urgency.

10 **AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS**

Chairman to move:-

'In an urgent situation between meetings, the Chair jointly with the relevant Chief Officer has authority to act on behalf of the Committee'.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES AND GOVERNANCE O&S

COMMITTEE – CALL-IN MEETING

1030 hours on 10th August 2017, Committee Room 2 – Action Notes

Present:

Councillor Waseem Zaffar (Chair)

Councillors Mohammed Afzal, Randal Brew, David Barrie, Yvonne Mosquito, Paul Tilsley, Rob Pocock, Sybil Spence,

Also Present:

Cllr Peter Griffiths, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes

Cllr Ansar Ali Khan, Assistant Leader

Cllr Marge Bridle, Assistant Leader

Cllr Narinder Kooner, Assistant Leader

Iram Choudry, Research & Policy Officer, Scrutiny Office

Chris Jordon, Assistant Director

Jacqui Kennedy, Corporate Director

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chairman advised the meeting to note that this meeting will be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.birminghamnewsroom.com) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Mohammed Aikhlaq, Cllr Changese Khan, Cllr Ewan Mackey and Cllr Valerie Seabright.

3. CORPORATE RESOURCES & GOVERNANCE – ACTION NOTES

RESOLVED

(See document No 1)

To note the action notes from July 2017

4. REQUEST FOR CALL-IN: TAKING FORWARD LOCAL LEADERSHIP

(See document No 2)

Cllr Waseem Zaffar outlined the process for the call-in and noted that, following legal advice, Cllr Randal Brew would not be able to vote in the call-in as he had participated in the decision being made (as a substitute for Cllr R Alden at the Cabinet Committee Local Leadership).

Cllr Randal Brew set out his reasons for requesting the call-in:

- The decision was a novel one as it was requesting a change to the constitution mid-way through the year.
- Concerns were raised about the lack of consultation on the proposals within the report. He acknowledged there had been consultation at the start of the process but there had been no consultation on the current proposals included within the report.
- There was a lack of clarity and detail on a number of different areas within the report including : insufficient financial information relating to the cost of establishing the Ward Action Co-ordinator (WACs) and Relationship Manager posts, confusion on whether Ward plans were to be produced on the existing or new boundaries, the impact of moving to one and two member wards.
- The abolition of District Committees part way through the municipal year was particularly concerning for a number of reasons: a number of Districts had produced work programmes that continue through to the end of year, what would happen to these? There was no clarity or detail on the replacement governance model and there were questions around the remuneration of District Chairs.
- In the light of the ward boundary changes and introduction of single/double member wards in 2018, the September deadline for Ward plans was wholly unrealistic.
- The role of the Assistant Leaders in relation to the geographical areas had not been set out.
- Cllr Brew stressed he was in favour of devolution but he wanted to see it done correctly and the Assistant leaders should consider introducing these changes in 2018, following the all-out elections.

Cllr Wood added the following points:

- He felt the whole process had been rushed and there was danger this would raise expectation within local communities. The proposals listed within the report would have very little influence or authority without any devolved spending powers attached to the model.
- There were no details within the report as to which partners had signed up to these proposals

The Cabinet Member Cllr Peter Griffiths and the Assistant Leaders responded with the following points

- The proposals within the report were consistent with the Leaders vision for devolution across the city.
- Consultation on these proposals has been widespread and the Assistant Leaders had met with the Leaders of the opposition, over 70 councillors and had been engaging with District Committees since last year.
- Ward planning for this year would be a high level planning process, using existing information; ward plans would then be rolled out via a “bottom up process” next year. The neighbourhoods at the heart of ward plans will not change.
- This model would empower local councillors to come up with solutions to localised issues as there was an acceptance that “one size” would not fit all areas across the city. Councillors would be provided with a basket of tools to help shape services based on the needs of individual areas.
- There was no budgetary information included within this report as this was more about setting out a direction of travel, a further report containing more detailed information would be presented to the Cabinet Committee for Local leadership in September and a report approving the constitutional changes would be presented to CBM and Full Council in September.

Members of the Committee raised the following points

- The abolition of District Committees in September would create both confusion and a power vacuum across the city especially as there was no mechanism in place to replace them.
- How would this affect partners, especially those who have aligned their services in line with existing District structures?
- Members were not consulted on the contents of the current report. There was an acknowledgment that members were part of discussions very early on in the development of this model but there was strong consensus that members should have been consulted on the contents of the current report prior to discussion at the Cabinet Committee for Local Leadership
- The Assistant Leaders were scheduled to attend the next Corporate Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee on September 6th, 2017. The members wanted to see the following information presented:

- Timeline and budget implications for appointing the Ward Actions Coordinators (WAC) and Relationship Managers;
- The numbers to be appointed and when that will happen;
- Further clarity on the job description for these posts both in terms of role capacity as well as the engagement and consultation element of the job;
- Ward Plans – guidelines and timescales;
- The number ward clusters and how they will be designed;
- Information on the transition plan as District Committees are abolished;
- Ward responsibilities for the individual Assistant Leaders.

The Cabinet Member, Assistant Leaders, Cllrs Brew and Wood then left the room.

Resolved:

That the decision taken by the Cabinet Committee Local Leadership should NOT be “called in” (five votes to two)

5. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)

None

6. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None

7. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

Agreed

The meeting finished at 1225 hours.

**CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 6 SEPTEMBER
2017**

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

REPORT BY: COUNCILLOR TRISTAN CHATFIELD

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report sets out my portfolio priorities for 2017/18.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

I have accountability for:

Smart City	<p>Provide strategic leadership and advising all Cabinet Members of initiatives that need to be taken in relation to the development of world class technological capability and connectivity in Birmingham.</p> <p>In particular extending use of intelligent transport systems and digital technologies for “open access” to support “green and smart” actions.</p>
The services provided to the citizens of Birmingham as the customer	To take a strategic lead in the provision of customer focused City services.
To take a lead on information law and data protection matters	Overall organisation for the Council including Corporate governance arrangements.
To challenge any lack of transparency in all work carried out by the Council	To ensure transparency in all areas of the Council’s work.
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>
Tackling Inequality	<p>Strategic approaches to reduce inequalities including around health, education and employment outcomes; ‘access to services’; and participation in civic life.</p> <p>Neighbourhood advice and information services.</p>

	Holding to account other relevant Cabinet Members and officers for the delivery of those functions that impact on inequalities and inclusion.
Bereavement Services	Strategic leadership for the development of Cemeteries, Crematoria and Mortuary and Coroners Court Services.
Equalities within the Community	Development and promotion of shared values and mutual respect across the diverse communities of Birmingham. Ensuring that community and cultural events promote social cohesion and inclusion.
External Challenge	Ensuring that partner agencies, private or third sector organisations are challenged on their contribution to improving social cohesion and inequalities.
Third Sector Partnership and Engagement	Working with and co-ordination of third sector and partner agencies around equalities, cohesion and inclusivity.

3. PRIORITIES

In May, Cabinet agreed the Council's vision for Birmingham 'A City of growth where every child, citizen and place matters' and set out four clear priorities:

- **Children – a great place to grow up in**
Make the best use of our diversity and create a safe and secure city for our children and young people to learn and grow.
- **Housing – a great place to live in**
Provide housing in a range of types and tenures to meet the housing needs of all the current and future citizens of Birmingham.
- **Jobs and Skills – a great place to succeed in**
Build on our assets, talents, and capacity for enterprise and innovation to shape the market and harness opportunity.
- **Health – a great place to grow old in**
Help people become healthier and more independent with measurable improvement in physical and mental wellbeing.

Birmingham's diversity of culture, faith and ethnicity means that the city will strive to be a place where all live, work and play together and value and respect difference.

3.1 There are a number of portfolio priorities that I will be progressing during 2017/18, including:

- Continue to work with partners through the Multi-Agency Welfare Reform Committee to mitigate the impact of welfare benefit changes to Birmingham residents, in

particular the impending roll out of Universal Credit due to commence in November 2017. Terms of Reference and Membership (Appendix 1)

- Continue to work with partners and the Child Poverty Action Forum to implement the recommendations of the Child Poverty Commission. Commission members are due to reconvene in October to share the progress made on taking forward the recommendations. The Child Poverty Action Forum website was launched in July 2017. A further update on the progress of the Commission's recommendations will be presented to the Schools, Children and Families O&S Committee in January 2018.
- Continue to work with partners to deliver the objectives of the Financial Inclusion Strategy, approved by Cabinet on 18 April 2017 (attached). We will work to ensure that the action plan, which is being developed, and outcomes are incorporated into services for Birmingham citizens.
- Evaluate the outcomes of the *Financially Healthy Neighbourhoods* project in the St George's area of Newtown to help rollout the work of the pilot to other financially vulnerable estates in the city. The project charter is attached (Appendix 2). St George's has a number of challenges, including barriers to accessing housing, a poor perception of safety and poor rankings when compared to other areas for income, employment, education, child poverty and health.
- Develop a Cohesion Strategy/Statement with partners which sets out our future vision for the city. Bilateral discussions have started with some partners and there is more of this to be done before a more collective partner discussion in the autumn. There is already some excellent work being carried out in schools and communities across the city on cohesion and we want to build on this.
- Implement the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy which has been developed and soft tested with a number of critical stakeholders, including employee network groups and elected members, as part of the Council's Member Development Programme. Further stakeholder events will be undertaken during the summer to ensure that the range of different perspectives help shape the final strategy and delivery plan.

The strategy seeks to drive the approach and decision making process to support elected members, managers, employees, job applicants and third sector parties providing services to BCC.

Progress on the wider work is as follows:

- Joint Network Group meetings have commenced with an aim to feed into and support the development of the strategy, review Terms of Reference to strengthen their position within the organisation and provide guidance and advice in the development of corporate policies, procedures and employee related issues. I will continue to support and champion the work of our Employee Networks.
- Demographic information for our communities is available and has been compared to our workforce diversity. However, work is on-going to encourage the workforce to disclose their personal data onto the SAP system, thus providing a robust and realistic data set.

- A talent management project is about to commence within HR and will look at ways of moving talented staff, including network group members across the organisation.
- The Council is preparing its Gender Equality Pay Gap Report which will be published in the autumn.
- A core development offer has been established to improve equality, diversity and inclusion within the organisation through targeted learning. E-learning modules are available to support learning across the organisation alongside the Member Development Programme which seeks to support members as community leaders.
- PwC have also offered to support the development and delivery of the strategy on a pro bono basis and discussions have commenced to agree how this support can provide the highest impact.

The Equality, Diversity & Inclusion strategy will be finalised and reported to Cabinet in October 2017.

- Work with partners, the Third Sector Champion and Assistant Leaders to develop a consistent, unified approach to our relationship with the “Third Sector” and make grant funding transparent and accessible. The Neighbourhood Development and Support Unit are currently facilitating PINCh (Partners in Neighbourhoods and Communities group) – this is a citywide partnership made up of key funders, public service partners including BCC and third sector representation with the main aim to improve and increase investment in the third sector, particularly in community and neighbourhood based organisations. The work is currently focusing both on places and on organisations across four strands of work in the south of the city:
 - investing in grass roots
 - developing access to grant funding
 - the role of community hubs
 - sustainable investment in organisations and places.

The approach taken has been developed in a way which can be scaled up and replicated elsewhere in the city and we will evaluate the outcomes of this pilot work for those purposes.

- Work with the WMCA to develop a regional Digital and Smart City approach which ensures that Birmingham’s local needs and challenges are addressed. The Council under its “Digital Birmingham” initiative will be working closely with the WMCA Digital Infrastructure Group, and has already prepared and submitted a “call to action” to the Mayor that covered digital investments, skills, data driven innovation and proposals to establish smart and digital governance proposals. Further discussions are now taking place to formalise the governance arrangements.

Birmingham City Council has already started to work on a number of initiatives through WMCA digital group and is working with the Coventry and Warwickshire and

Black Country LEPs to develop a 5G proposal and other activities to deliver digital investment into Birmingham.

- Better use of open data to deliver and improve services for citizens, by identifying what information people want and where they can obtain it.

I will continue to challenge the need for private reports and where required, challenge both the quality and amount of information contained within them, so as much information as possible is made available to Birmingham citizens.

- Develop a Policy Portal on the Council's Website to ensure that the Council's key policies and strategies are easily accessible to Birmingham citizens, to improve transparency. Work is already in progress with a plan to publicise in the autumn.
- Meet the Council's obligations in respect of Information Rights legislation, namely Freedom of Information (FOI), Data Protection Act (DPA), Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) and Re-use of Public Sector Information (RPSI), which all contain the right for individuals to make requests for information held by the Council within set timescales. All FOIs will be published online.
- Manage the implementation of the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that comes into effect in May 2018. The GDPR, like the DPA, applies to 'personal data'. The new Regulation sets out changes that organisations need to make in respect of communicating privacy information and individuals' rights, consent and children's data.
- Ensure that the appropriate information governance provisions are embedded into the new Children's Trust to ensure its effective operation.
- Continue to work with partners to improve services for Asylum Seekers and Refugees. We are working with the Home Office to agree minimum quality assurance standards and improve safeguarding and education provision for children in Initial Accommodation Centres.

4. OTHER KEY AREAS

4.1 Bereavement Services

Sutton New Hall Development phases 2 &3

The development of Sutton Newhall Cemetery commenced in January 2017. The scheme consists of two phases and will provide for approximately 12,000 burial plots at an estimated cost of £5m. This should provide sufficient space for a further 18 years for all denominations/communities. Phase 1b is due to be released this month with a scheduled completion for the remaining development in March 2018.

Currently a 7 day extended hours burial service operates at Handsworth Cemetery, the intention is that when the Muslim burial sections are full at Handsworth, the extended hours service will commence at Sutton Newhall.

The Contractor Balfour Beatty is committed to working with local communities and is fulfilling its duties under the Birmingham Business Charter for Social Responsibility by employing local people, offering apprenticeships and working with local charities.

4.2 Coroners & Mortuary Service

Computed Tomography Post Mortems (CTPM)

The Senior Coroner has continued to offer CTPM facilities to any bereaved family that requests a non-invasive post mortem where it is appropriate and likely to identify the cause of death. These are offered at the Igene facility in Sandwell and the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford. Both facilities are able to provide angiography and the Oxford facility is also able to offer a traditional, invasive post mortem, if the CTPM fails to identify the cause of death. The number of requests for CTPM is still small. The Senior Coroner is working with local hospitals and private business to establish the possibility of providing a CTPM facility with angiography in Birmingham. Currently the families are required to pay the costs of the CTPM and the transportation of the deceased to and from the facility undertaking the CTPM.'

Release of the deceased

There has been a significant reduction in the average time taken to release the deceased by the Senior Coroner. The average time to release a deceased where no post mortem is carried out has reduced from 2.6 days in the first 6 months of 2016 to 1.8 days in the first 6 months of 2017. Where a post mortem has been carried out the reduction over the same period has been from 4.4 days down to 3.7 days.

5. KEY BUDGET ISSUES

I am responsible for a net revenue budget of £1.2m in 2017/18 to deliver my services (this represents gross expenditure of £6.2m and is offset by income of £5m – the income relates mainly to grants from the PCC and Home Office and recharged income on the Neighbourhood Advice Service).

These resources are utilised to deliver a range of services including Neighbourhood Advice Services, the externally commissioned Legal Advice Services, Equalities, Community Safety and Public CCTV services). All these services provide a major contribution to the delivery of the overall Vision and Priorities of the Council.

I am continuing to ensure that these resources are managed effectively and efficiently but it is possible that there may be a modest overspend of £0.3m in 2017/18 (this due primarily to the delay in the full implementation of the new operating model for the Equalities Team and some one-off re-organisation costs for the Neighbourhood Advice Service).

The approved savings for these services total £0.22m in 2017/18 and will increase to £0.36m in 2018/19 – these all relate to the Equalities Team and will be fully delivered following the full implementation of the new operating model later this year. There are no further planned savings beyond 2018/19 although this will be subject to the current deliberations on the budget for 2018/19.

I also manage significant financial resources for my new responsibilities relating to Bereavement Services – this includes a capital budget of £6.2m (over this and next year) to complete the development of Sutton New Hall Cemetery and a net revenue budget of (£3.2m) – the latter representing expenditure of £7.4m offset by income £10.6m. In

addition, the approved savings programme for this service is £0.50m in 2017/18 and increasing to £0.75m in 2018/19 and future years (this relates mainly to the generation of additional income for services provided including mausoleums).

Again, the resources are being managed effectively and efficiently and it is likely that there will be a small underspend of £0.4m at the year end and the savings programme will be fully delivered.

Councillor Tristan Chatfield
Cabinet Member for Transparency, Openness and Equality

Terms of Reference for Multi-Agency Welfare Reform Task and Finish Group

Objective of the Team

To prepare Birmingham for the implementation of the full rollout of UC due to commence in November 2017

1. To work collaboratively across a number of agencies bringing together items of best practice, knowledge, capability, energy and enthusiasm to contribute to the objective.
2. To prepare a series of communications and briefings relevant to citizens, advice agencies, housing providers, landlords, Elected Members to inform of the changes associated with the introduction of Universal Credit
3. To arrange relevant training for affected parties in readiness for the introduction of Universal credit
4. To oversee the arrangements for both the personal budgeting and support and digital assistance services needed in preparation for the introduction of UC
5. Receive briefings from Job Centre Plus in relation to timelines, volumes and updates in relation to turnaround timescales for Birmingham.
6. Collaborating with the work of the Financial Inclusion Partnership and the Child Poverty Action Group in relation to Universal Credit
7. To promote the alignment of Birmingham City Council (and other) employment and skills support programmes/activities with support packages offered to Universal Credit claimants and those affected by the Benefit Cap .

Membership

Chaired by Councillor Chatfield, Cabinet for Transparency, Openness and Equality

Third Sector Agencies

Job Centre Plus

Housing Associations (BSHP)

Local Authority

- Housing
- Benefit Service
- Employment & Skills Service

Meeting Frequency

Monthly commencing June 2017 until March 2018

Meeting Support

Supplied by BCC Customer Services Division

Birmingham Financial Inclusion Partnership

Working together to tackle financial exclusion for a financially inclusive Birmingham



BIRMINGHAM FINANCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY 2017 - 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Financial Inclusion Partnership would like to thank all of our partners for their dedication to the partnership and the welfare of Birmingham citizens.

We are delighted with the wide range of individuals and partners that have participated in the process. Particular thanks go to:

Annette King

Christopher Connor

Helen Shervington

Jacqui Kennedy

Janice Nicholls

Jude Deakin

Karen Markall

Kyle Stott

Mona Soussi – Taфраouti

Stephen Whitehorn

Tony Raybould

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

FOREWORD



We are delighted to introduce the refreshed Birmingham Financial Inclusion Strategy. We are proud of the work we have completed so far, but too many of our citizens still cannot reach their full potential due to the poverty they experience and which they cannot escape. We are determined to open up life chances for our citizens, to help them overcome barriers and to reduce inequality, inequity, and increase resilience so they can take advantage of the many opportunities this great city provides.

We know that Birmingham citizens are facing the same financial pressures as other areas, such as welfare reforms, insecure jobs and low wages, but Birmingham also faces a set of unique challenges of

- Scale - with a population of over 1 million residents
- Youth - with more than 500K aged under 30 years old, but also
- Vulnerability - with many citizens facing multiple disadvantage through barriers such as low educational attainment, low skills, ethnicity, housing, health and disability

We need to adapt our support to meet all these needs.

Supporting financial inclusion and embedding it within service delivery, as business as usual, will deliver a range of benefits that could help reduce costs and improve organisational efficiency and effectiveness: potential benefits may include increased payment by direct debit, reduction in rent arrears, and more sustainable local centres. The costs of supporting financial inclusion are far outweighed by the costs of not supporting financial inclusion.

Fundamental to the delivery of the Financial Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan is the council supporting the essential networks and partnerships which link together businesses and third sector providers of support to the financially excluded.

It should be noted that this Strategy has been developed within the context of current resource availability within Birmingham City Council. It must be noted that this Strategy and supporting Action Plan is subject to financial constraints consistent with all other City Council services and may require adjustment to respond to budgetary constraints and reductions.

This Financial Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan have been developed, and will continue to be developed as a multi-agency approach, in consultation and with the involvement of partners and stakeholders through the City's Financial Inclusion partnership.

I am sure that this multi-agency approach will reduce inequalities and deliver the opportunities and support our citizens need to lead fulfilling lives in this great city.

OUR VISION

"To create opportunities for Birmingham citizens to improve their financial wellbeing and digital skills so they can lead healthy and fulfilling lives"

Signature

COUNCILLOR TRISTAN CHATFIELD – CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPARENCY, OPENNESS AND EQUALITY



AIMS AND PURPOSE OF STRATEGY

We are clear, as a partnership that we want to bring opportunities to citizens in Birmingham regardless of their start in life or situation. We will look to test and trial different approaches to meet the changing needs of citizens over a life time; addressing inequalities and building a set of common standards in our activities that will raise consistency and quality of service provision.

This strategy document describes the measures that will be taken by Birmingham City Council and partner organisations to enable people who live and work in Birmingham to:

- Manage their money on a day to day basis, effectively, securely and confidently.
- Plan for the future and cope with financial pressure, by managing their finances to protect against short-term variations in income and expenditure and to take advantage of longer term opportunities.
- Deal effectively with financial distress, should unexpected events lead to serious financial difficulty.
- To make the most of their money.
- Maximise their income through employment and other support/advice.
- Improve both their financial and overall health & wellbeing.

BACKGROUND

This strategy builds on the Birmingham City Council Financial Inclusion Strategy: Counting the Cost 2010-2012, which saw the creation of a multi-agency Financial Inclusion Partnership (BFIP) to deliver on its aims.

The Partnership has been making good progress on delivering on its action plan; however, it considered that it was time to refresh the strategy and action plan due to more challenges that are affecting Birmingham citizens. The landscape has changed greatly since the last strategy was written. Our new strategy has been refreshed to reflect these changes.

This refreshed plan has been developed through collaboration between Birmingham Financial Inclusion Partnership members drawn from the community and voluntary sector, registered housing providers, Department of Work and Pensions, financial institutions and officers of Birmingham City Council. (Please refer to Appendix 2)

SECTION 2 – FINANCIAL EXCLUSION EXPLAINED

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this strategy we have adopted the Financial Inclusion Commission description of Financial Inclusion. The Commission state financial inclusion is:

"... to manage money, to absorb financial shocks and to plan & provide for the future. A financially inclusive society is one in which financial services are accessible to all, easy to use and meet people's needs over a lifetime.

Financial Inclusion also means that people have the skills and motivation to use financial services, and to benefit meaningfully from them."

The Causes of Financial Exclusion can be broken down into three areas: Supply, Societal Factors and Demand.

SUPPLY

Supply refers to Financial Products & Services that do not meet the needs of consumers. These being, transactional bank accounts, savings products, credit/loan products, Insurance products, pension products, financial advice and the associated:

- Marketing,
- Eligibility criteria
- Location
- Digital access
- Fees & charges
- Quality of Advice & Information

The combination of the above factors can lead to exclusion in several sub areas. A person may be excluded in one or indeed all of these areas:

Access Exclusion

Many banks are reducing their presence on local high streets, with 1350 local branches closing nationally since 2013. This can impact disproportionately upon small businesses, older people and those with disabilities. Whilst the quality of public transport has improved in Birmingham, the cost of it has also increased, with bus fares rising by 28% since 2010; while wages and benefits, for many, have been frozen for much of the same period; increasing access issues for those on low incomes.

Condition Exclusion

The conditions attached to the financial products may make them inappropriate or inaccessible for some people. Examples of this include identification requirements, credit scoring and minimum loan values. Many financial institutions will only accept a drivers licence or passport which some low income families do not have. A credit score is now a requirement for access to many financial products - this can prove difficult for many households as even

those with the means to repay (at a competitive interest rate) are rated with a low credit score as they have never accessed mainstream credit before. Most high street lenders do not offer loan products of below £2000 and have significantly higher interest rates for loans of less than £6000. Smaller sums are only usually offered through an agreed overdraft which is normally not available to customers with a basic bank account or a low income. This can lead many low income households to access high interest 'payday loan' type companies or worse, illegal money lenders.

Marketing Exclusion

Low income consumers can often be deemed to be 'unprofitable' by Financial Institutions and are effectively excluded by targeted marketing and sales. This can mean that people are unaware of the products and services available. Conversely, payday loan companies specifically target their marketing at low income households with high interest products. More worryingly, illegal money lenders may target people directly by approaching them at home or through their local community/neighbourhood. Savings products are also generally marketed at those with larger lump sums or large regular payments, as opposed to, those only able to save a few pounds per week or make irregular deposits.

Price Exclusion

People on low incomes are greatly disadvantaged by the affordability of products such as insurance and penalty charges (overdraft/failed payment charges). 50% of the lowest income households do not have home contents insurance yet households without home contents insurance are three times more likely to be burgled than households with insurance. Insurance premiums also tend to be significantly higher in more deprived areas of the city. Financial Exclusion is both a symptom and cause of poverty; people on low incomes often pay higher prices for products and services. For example, households on very low incomes and living in social housing are much more likely to pay for gas and electricity via a pre-payment meter. Pre-payment is often the most expensive way to pay for such services. For this reason, utility companies also have a key part to play and can be included in the supply element of financial exclusion.

This price exclusion can also be described as a 'Poverty Premium'. The table below depicts how low income households pay higher costs because of the way they access goods and services or are deemed to be higher risk.

Figure 1: Examples of the Poverty Premium (Brent)

Service	Typical (average) costs	Costs to low income households
One expensive consumer good (e.g. a white good appliance)	£159.99	£405.00
One £500 loan	£539.00	£825.00
Three £200 cheques cashed	£0.00	£49.50
Annual gas bill	£609.70	£673.70
Annual electricity bill	£339.30	£368.20
One mobile phone	£315.96	£395.44
Home contents insurance	£465.85	£618.80
Car insurance	£475.48	£571.55
Total	£2,905.28	£3,907.19
Poverty premium		£1,001.91

SOCIETAL

Societal factors relate to forces external to the individual that influence culture & behaviours, impacting upon both supply and demand. For example:

- Demographics of an area
- Inequality
- Poverty
- Education
- Unemployment
- Regulation of financial services
- Government Policy such as Welfare & Pension Reforms
- Economy & pricing
- Digital Access

It is not surprising that ward profiles for worklessness and those that are financially vulnerable correlate quite closely. Within the overall category of 'workless' and 'unemployed' people, there are a number of priority sub-groups who are more likely to be financially excluded due to a range of societal factors, such as social exclusion or discrimination and disproportionate rates of worklessness, low paid work, social housing tenure and English language skills. These groups include:

- Women (particularly lone parents)
- People from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups
- Young people (under 25)
- Refugees and people from new & emerging communities (with language being a particular barrier)
- People with disabilities
- People with ongoing health problems
- Lone pensioners

A further example of how societal factors affect financial inclusion is government policy. Government policy can have unintended consequences, making it harder for people to provide for themselves. For example, The Financial Services (Banking reform) Act 2013 came into force in 2015 which, among other provisions, introduces an interest rate cap. Default fees were limited to £15 and default interest must not exceed 0.8% per day (1,270% APR); and a 100% repayment cap, meaning that the borrowers will never have to repay more than double the amount they borrowed. The changes are very much welcomed as they stop such loans spiralling out of control. However, the cap, along with requirement for increased affordability checks has seen many payday lenders exiting the market. The concern is that this potentially leaves thousands of consumers without a credit option but to approach illegal money lenders if no alternative is available.

Changes in our economy, for instance, the decline in the value of the pound which has fallen further since the UK European Union Referendum in June 2016 could have an impact upon the cost of essential goods and services. In the UK we import approximately 40% - 50% of our food supplies. Fuel is also purchased in dollars and euros. This could lead to price increases in food and utilities – combined with income freezes and cuts, food and fuel poverty have the potential to increase. It is also important to note, however, that a weaker pound also presents opportunity for growth and increased employment due to more attractive exports and tourism.

DEMAND

Demand or individual factors relates to Ability (Skills and knowledge) and mind-set (beliefs and motivations) of individuals. A person's own beliefs and motivations about money frame their financial priorities and views of the financial sector. Some examples include:

- Opting to save cash at home rather than in a bank.
- A consequence of Marketing Exclusion, people may Self Exclude deciding there is little or no point in applying for financial products as they believe they would be refused.

The Financial Capability Strategy for the UK (2014) recognises the ability to read and write in English is an essential outcome. There is an established link between literacy and financial wellbeing. There is clear link between low education skills and poverty & deprivation; an issue that blights Birmingham - where unemployment is significantly higher than national average.

Financial capability is key to financial inclusion; however, this doesn't just affect those on low incomes. Research by the Money Advice Service (MAS 2013) found that Approximately 17 million adults in the UK run out of money before payday, with roughly the same amount not making a budget. MAS also estimated that 84% of adults do not read the full terms & conditions when taking out financial products. This demonstrates how widespread an issue this is, meaning that an unexpected life event could place even moderate income households into financial crisis. Financial capability refers to a number of behaviours, namely:

- **Budgeting** - having an understanding of income and expenditure (living within means), paying bills on time, shopping around for good deals on utilities & applying for eligible benefits for example.
- **Saving** - to cover unexpected life events. The Financial Conduct Authority (2015) reported that almost half of UK adults do not have enough savings to cover an unexpected bill of £300 – so something as simple as car repair, boiler or washing machine breakdown could have the potential start a spiral of debt where there is lack of financial capability.
- **Accessing advice and support** - Knowing where to get help & having the motivation to do so.
- **Preparation for the future** - Such as savings, insurance, pensions, life goals (buying a house), retirement plans & health needs.

Where a person lacks the capability to demonstrate these four behaviours, they will be at increased risk of financial exclusion regardless of income.

IMPACTS OF FINANCIAL EXCLUSION

Financial exclusion is a concern because it creates a wide range of problems; examples include the following:

- Exclusion from affordable loans leaves people who need to borrow money with no option but to use high-interest or illegal credit.
- A lack of insurance and savings makes families vulnerable to financial crisis following unexpected events such as failure of white goods, burglary or flooding.
- A lack of appropriate pension planning or savings can lead to poverty in old age.
- Unclaimed benefits can lead to increased poverty.
- Lack of timely financial advice can result in people with money problems losing their job or their home.
- Debt and money problems can often impact on people's physical and mental health.
- Many employers will only pay wages into a bank account. Even those with bank accounts may barely use them, preferring to withdraw all their money each week and manage it as cash.
- Not having a bank account with a direct debit facility excludes people from this method of paying bills. Most utility suppliers charge more for using other methods of payment, such as pre-payment meters, pay-point cards in convenience stores, postal orders or cash. Increasingly insurance companies are doing the same.

For the Wider Community

- **Child poverty** - Child poverty in Birmingham is at unacceptable levels; there are over 100,000 children living in poverty, the equivalent of 37% of all children in the city. Nearly half of Birmingham's children live in the 10% most deprived areas in the country. A report by the Children's Society (et al) 'The Debt Trap' found that children from households with debt problems were twice as likely to be bullied at school. Adult financial capability is a direct consequence of what is seen, learned and experienced in childhood and adolescence (UK Financial Capability Strategy 2015). Raising levels of financial capability within our city can only improve outcomes for our children.
- **Public Health** – Financial exclusion has harmful consequences. It exacerbates poverty and can lead to serious debt problems, homelessness and mental health issues. Certain vulnerable groups are particularly likely to be financially excluded, as this is an issue that is closely linked with problems such as disability, offending and domestic violence.
- **Worklessness** – Money worries, personal cash flow problems, benefit issues, problem debt and lack of access to banking facilities are all recognised as barriers affecting people's progression to sustained employment.
- **Re-offending** – Ex-offenders are at increased risk of financial exclusion. Support with debt, money and employment advice are recognised pathways in the prevention of re-offending.
- **Public Purse** – Financial exclusion can contribute to mental health issues, family breakdown, homelessness and crime; placing additional demand and financial pressure on public services.
- **Local Economy** - Financial exclusion reinforces social exclusion. It is not just an individual problem: a whole community can suffer from under-investment in financial services. Conversely, financial inclusion significantly contributes to a route out of poverty. Furthermore, money households save in accessing affordable credit can be used in local shops, thus boosting the local economy.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Financial Inclusion is a key element of delivering on Birmingham City Council's vision and strategic outcomes:



The vision for 2020 is based around **four key outcomes**, as outlined above, based on the fundamental ideals of Prosperity, Fairness and Democracy. This strategy fits into all four of the key objectives. A full copy of the council plan (March 2016 version) can be found [here](#).

Financial Inclusion is cross cutting priority which impacts across all the City's services. It impacts also on staff employed by the city and, as such, employment policies need to have due regard to this.

This strategy aims to provide the framework for shaping policies which directly and indirectly support the financial inclusion agenda. One of the key priorities is to identify any key gaps in policy development and to 'financial inclusion proof' existing policy, procedures, protocols and action plans.

UNDERSTANDING THE LOCAL CONTEXT & POLICY

The Financial Inclusion Partnership commissioned the comprehensive Financial Inclusion Needs Analysis report, (Birmingham City Council October 2015) to underpin the development of this refreshed strategy and action plans. A copy can be obtained [here](#) for the data used. The report looks at the financial health of Birmingham residents; identifying the key issues that must be tackled to support the most vulnerable.



The Financial Inclusion Partnership has also considered the insight and recommendations from the following reports

- Birmingham Child Poverty Commission report (2016)
- Birmingham ICT and Digital strategy (2016)
- Birmingham Skills Investment Plan (2016)
- Birmingham Financial needs Assessment (2015)
- National Financial Capability strategy (2015)
- Financial Inclusion Commission Report (2015)
- Birmingham Health and Wellbeing strategy (2013)
- Birmingham Homelessness Strategy (2012)

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT POLICY CONTEXT

The political landscape has changed greatly since the launch of our 2010 strategy. A number of key reforms have been introduced that have particular relevance to financial inclusion:

- The Government has replaced the Office of Fair Trading with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) giving it new powers of regulation and enforcement to counteract the high cost, short term loan industry, for example, payday lenders. The Financial Services (Banking reform) Act 2013 came into force in 2015 which, among other provisions, introduces an interest rate cap, which includes:
 1. the initial cost of credit limited to 0.8% per day, with an annualised percentage rate of 1,270%;
 2. default fees limited to £15 and default interest must not exceed 0.8% per day; and
 3. A 100% repayment cap, meaning that the borrowers will never have to repay more than double the amount they borrowed (see FCA, 2014).
- In 2015, a new cross-party Financial Inclusion Commission was formed. The Commission was chaired, independently, by Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles and made wide ranging recommendations, including the need for a senior minister in government on financial inclusion with the title of 'Minister for Financial Health'.
- Welfare Reform Act 2012 which introduces Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Under Occupancy rules, the Benefit Cap, changes to the Social Fund and abolition of Council Tax Benefit.
- Local Government Finance Act 2012 legislates for the localisation of Council Tax Support schemes.
- The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, introduces a further reduction to the Benefit Cap, abolition of the work related activity component in Universal Credit (UC), two child limits on UC and Child Tax Credit, four year benefit freeze and replaces mortgage interest payments with loans. The act also introduces a reduction in social housing rents, of 1% year-on-year, for those in social housing until 2021. Whilst this change lowers the housing benefit bill, the impact upon Birmingham City Council alone is a loss of £42 million and sees all Social Housing providers having significant financial losses. This may ultimately impact upon the services available to tenants.
- Care Act 2014 sets out the responsibilities of the local authority to make sure that people who live in their areas:
 1. receive services that prevent, reduce and delay their care needs from becoming more serious
 2. can get the information they need to make good decisions about care and support
 3. have a good range of providers to choose from
- The amendments to the Children and Families Act 2014 extend the same rights to parent carers (caring for a disabled child/young person under 18). The Care act is significant, not only, due to the safeguarding responsibilities it addresses but also the focus upon disabled people and carers as our disabled citizens can be at increased risk of financial exclusion.

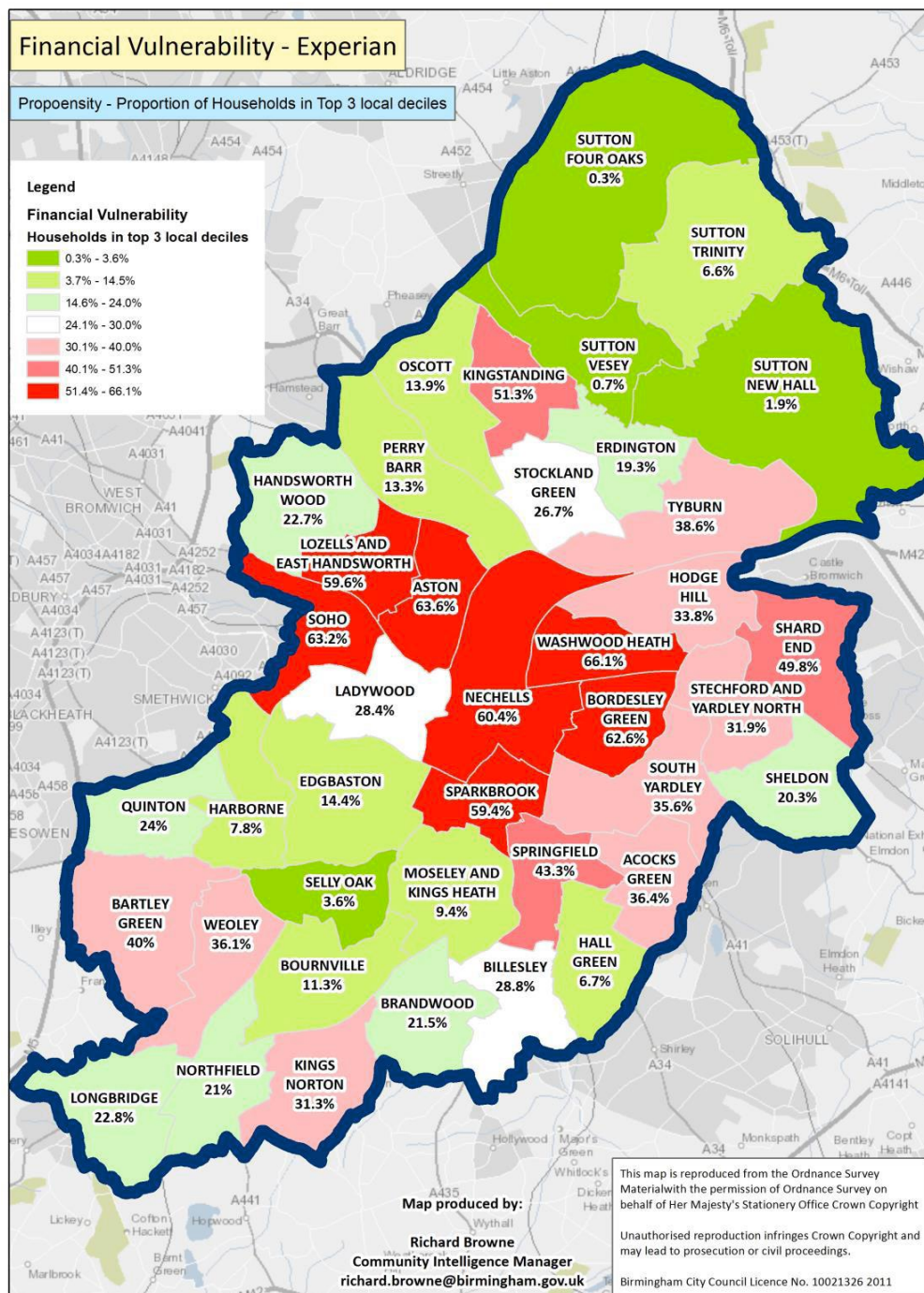
*The climate has changed significantly in Birmingham since the publication of our 2010 Financial Inclusion Strategy. The benefit changes as imposed by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, by nature of our demographics, disproportionately impact cities like Birmingham. **Please note:** Further detail on the impact of welfare reform changes in Birmingham can be found in the Financial Needs Assessment (link can be found on page 10).*

SECTION 4 – FINANCIAL VULNERABILITY IN BIRMINGHAM

OVERALL PICTURE IN BIRMINGHAM

The map below shows the proportion of households in each ward in Birmingham which are in the top 3 most financially vulnerable deciles. As expected the most vulnerable wards correlate extensively with the most deprived inner-city wards. The wards with the highest proportion of households in the top 3 deciles are:

1. Washwood Heath – 66%
2. Aston – 64%
3. Soho – 63%
4. Bordesley Green – 63%
5. Nechells – 60%
6. Lozells & East Handsworth – 60%



SECTION 5 – BIRMINGHAM APPROACH

OUR APPROACH TO DELIVERING FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Working with our partners, housing providers, voluntary organisations and community groups will ensure that local services are properly joined up and coordinated; with a 'whole place' approach to neighbourhoods, where collaboration and shared resources deliver the best outcomes for local people.

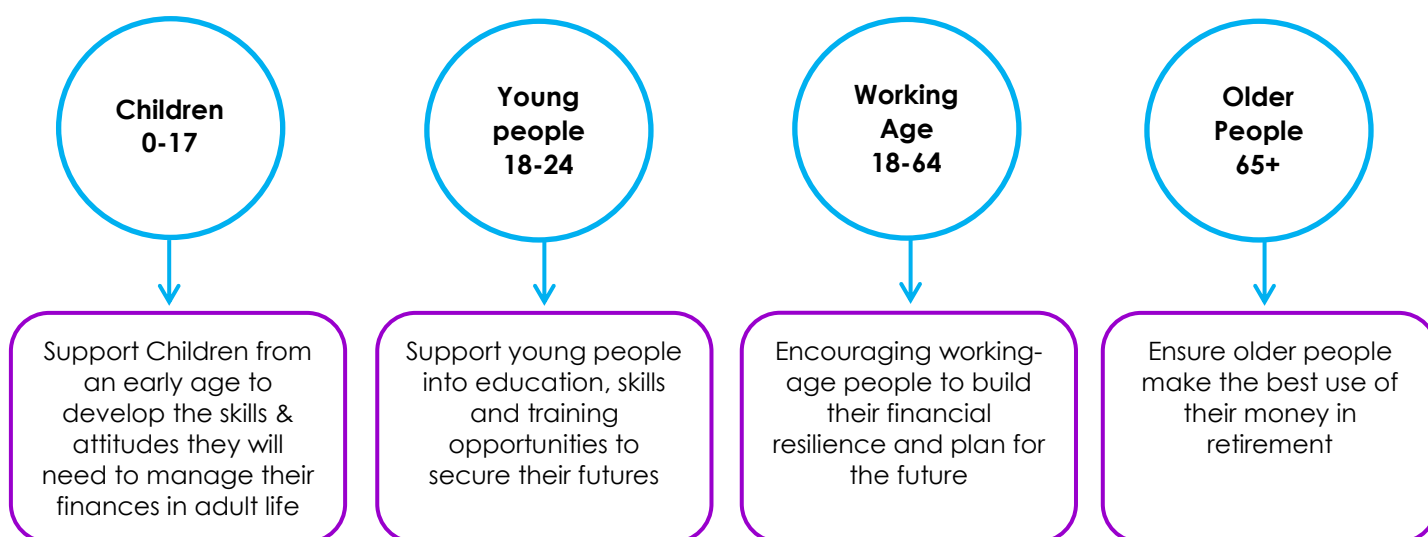
Our strategy is underpinned by 3 principles:

PREVENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify & Tackle the root causes• Increase financial capability	Enabled by Policy, Strategy, collaboration & Action
SURVIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When difficulty or disaster strikes, ensure that there is appropriate crisis support• Citizens know how and are motivated to access support	
RECOVER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information, advice, education & support to enable long term change (healthy behaviours) and resilience i.e. Sustainability.	

LIFE STAGES

Whilst those on low incomes (along with groups discussed within the societal factors of financial exclusion section) are less likely to be financially included, financial exclusion can affect anyone. There are events that occur during the course of a person's lifetime, such as, retirement but there are also unexpected events that can impact us all at different stages of our lives; illness, bereavement, job loss, relationship breakdown and birth of a child are some examples. Some of these events are more likely to happen at certain stages in our lives than others and so to more realistically reflect the needs of our citizens this strategy has incorporated the UK Financial Capability Strategy approach to life stages.

Our approach is to focus on the financial needs of all key life stages to ensure we can influence and shape activities to meet the changing needs of citizens. This will be reflected in the actions and activity that arise out of this strategy, thus ensuring that we meet the needs of the Birmingham community.



COLLABORATION

CHILD POVERTY

Child poverty in Birmingham is at unacceptable levels; there are over 100,000 children living in poverty, the equivalent of 37% of all children in the city. Nearly half of Birmingham's children live in the 10% most deprived areas in the country.

Birmingham City Council has made a commitment to work with partners to combat child poverty as one of its key priorities towards a fairer city. To examine the extent and impact of poverty and inequality across the city the Council established an independent commission on child poverty. In summer 2016 the Commission published its findings and made a series of recommendations aimed at reducing child poverty in Birmingham and focusing upon the drivers of poverty including the economy, unemployment, low wages, education and health. These recommendations are being taken forward by the Council, working closely with the Birmingham Financial Inclusion Partnership to align activities that will help reduce family poverty and mitigate its effects.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Since 2013 Birmingham City Council, alongside all other Local Authorities in England became a 'Public Health Local Authority', taking on the Public Health function from NHS control. This relatively new function of the Local Authority will assist the Financial Inclusion Partnership to better identify and tackle the wider and social determinants of health, which can often precede or complement the indicators associated with financial exclusion.

It is the intention of this strategy to develop opportunities to work innovatively and to develop stronger relationships with the NHS, including Clinical Commissioning Groups, Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust and other organisations who deliver mental health services. Some of our most vulnerable groups include those with co-morbidities and those on disease risk registers, for example it is well documented that fuel poverty and cold homes can have a very real effect on cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, whilst those people with chronic mental health conditions are more susceptible to premature mortality during the winter months. It is also important that there is a focus on lone parents as this is another high risk group.

There is opportunity to work in partnership with our NHS and Mental Health colleagues with reference to adopted and emerging plans such as the NHS Sustainability Transformation Plans (STPs), and West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), including the WMCA Mental Health Commission.

Overall, it is important that we use strategies like this to bring together multiple agencies to ensure that our most vulnerable residents and those with the most complex needs have an equitable and equal opportunity to give them a better start in life and to ensure that they have good chances throughout the life course.



Complimentary to this strategy, the Financial Inclusion action plans will reflect opportunities to close the gap with reference to health inequity and inequality, and contribute to increasing the wellbeing our residents, especially the most vulnerable and the hardest to reach.

As reflected in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, there is an emphasis on prioritising actions and outcomes for ensuring that our children have a better start in life, and that those people who are the most vulnerable are ensured equal and equitable opportunities that assist them in improving their outcomes.

HOUSING BIRMINGHAM

The Housing Birmingham multi- agency committee was set up in January 2016 to bring together partners and stakeholders who had a direct interest in the issues facing housing provision in Birmingham. The committee's focus is to frame the city's response to the housing agenda in Birmingham with the key aim of meeting housing need now and in the future in the city, consider key legislative changes and develop a lobbying strategy with Government and implement and oversee a range of task and finish work streams to deliver required actions resulting from emerging welfare and housing policy.

The Financial Inclusion Partnership and its strategy are considered to be an integral part of the Housing Birmingham delivery plan and close links exist between both partnerships with reciprocal representation on the partnership committees. FIP involvement with Housing Birmingham greatly assists in the development of a comprehensive housing offer for the citizens of Birmingham.

INTRODUCING OUR VISION, PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

VISION

“TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR BIRMINGHAM CITIZENS TO IMPROVE THEIR FINANCIAL WELLBEING & DIGITAL SKILLS SO THEY CAN LEAD HEALTHY AND FULFILLING LIVES”



OBJECTIVE 1

FINANCIAL PRODUCTS & SERVICES



OBJECTIVE 2

**ADVICE,
INFORMATION &
FINANCIAL EDUCATION**



OBJECTIVE 3

FOOD & FUEL



OBJECTIVE 4

STRATEGIC INFLUENCE



OBJECTIVE 5

**EMPLOYMENT,
EDUCATION, SKILLS &
TRAINING**



OBJECTIVE 6

DIGITAL INCLUSION

10000%

Is the average Annual Percentage Rate of most pay day lenders

33%

Almost a third of CAB customers reported they face a daily battle to make ends meet, 40 per cent are concerned about having enough money saved for a rainy day

14.1%

of Birmingham residents live in fuel poverty, compared to a 10.6% UK average

4568

households will be impacted by the Benefit Cap, some 52% higher than any other local authority area

15.6%

Of working age citizens have no qualifications compared to the UK average of 8.8%


24%

of Birmingham's Residents lack the 5 basic digital skills

SECTION 6 – STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES


OBJECTIVE 1

Our first objective very much relates to the supply strand of financial exclusion. As discussed earlier, products and services that do not meet the needs of citizens can both cause and exacerbate financial exclusion. The financial products and services objective takes on a preventative approach to financial exclusion – promoting a savings culture to build resilience to financial shocks, helping residents to avoid unaffordable credit agreements, and illegal money lenders and are protected through accessible and appropriate insurance cover.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY OUTCOMES
 FINANCIAL PRODUCTS & SERVICES “Improve access to financial products including affordable and responsible credit, an appropriate bank account, basic home contents insurance and savings facilities”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More residents should be aware of illegal money lenders and the impact of high risk borrowing• Dissuade use of illegal loan sharks• More citizens saving regularly• Launch a savings and loan hub in Birmingham• ILMT education packs delivered across Birmingham Schools• More residents will have access to basic bank accounts• More residents will have access to affordable credit options• Increase credit union membership• Low income and vulnerable households to have access to low cost insurance• Establish a partnership with mainstream finance services• To raise awareness of the cost of credit and high risk loans

OBJECTIVE 2

Our Advice, Information and Financial Education objective incorporates all three elements of our Prevent, Survive & Recover approach to financial inclusion. Focusing upon the demand or individual aspects of exclusion this objective aims to prevent through increasing the financial capability of our citizens, ensuring those in financial difficulty/debt survive their crisis via the provision of quality advice & information and are able to recover by managing their finances, ultimately living healthy and fulfilling lives.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY OUTCOMES
 ADVICE, INFORMATION & FINANCIAL EDUCATION “Build financial resilience by ensuring citizens can access appropriate advice, information and financial education”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More residents will have access to full range of advice and guidance• Improve financial capabilities and literacy (including young people) of residents• Reduce impact of benefit cap• Fewer residents with multiple or problem debt• More residents will get the benefits and credits they are entitled to claim• Greater integration of advice on benefit, housing and employment options• More residents will become aware of the health and mental health issues related to debt• Residents feel/are confident in managing their money


OBJECTIVE 3

A Household that spend more than 10% of its income on fuel can be defined as living in fuel poverty (Gov.uk). This is driven by three factors, household income, energy efficiency (of property) and energy costs. The latest figures released in summer 2016 indicate that fuel poverty has decreased in Birmingham yet levels remain significantly higher than the UK average. Fuel poverty statistics are collated retrospectively, meaning that figures released in 2016 relate to fuel poverty levels in 2014. Single parents are consistently the highest proportion of households in fuel poverty (22.3%). Evidence suggests the cold conditions associated with fuel poverty have a significant effect on the mental health of adults and young people, children's respiratory health, as well as, infant weight gain and susceptibility to illness. These poor health outcomes contribute to inequalities in health (Public Health England report 2014) and poor outcomes for children.

Food poverty can be defined as 'the inability to afford or have reasonable access to food which provides a healthy diet' (Public Health NI). Food poverty not only refers to a lack of food but absence of nutritious food.

The climate has changed immensely in Birmingham since the publication of our 2010 Financial Inclusion Strategy. The Trussell Trust, a national food bank network, opened their first food bank in Birmingham in 2011 in response to an increase in food poverty in the city. Since opening the number of people fed by Trussell trust food banks has increased by a massive **1175%** in Birmingham. This is only part of the picture as a large number of independent and faith group food banks are also distributing emergency food parcels to our citizens.

Our objectives in relation to Food and Fuel seek to tackle the root causes of poverty by reducing inequality, inequity and increasing resilience – Whilst ensuring there is adequate crisis response for those experiencing extreme hardship.


STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY OUTCOMES
 FOOD & FUEL "Tackle inequalities by reducing the number of citizens living in food poverty; tackle inequalities that cause citizens to be living in fuel and food poverty whilst ensuring we are addressing the crisis"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A new task group is being formed to specifically look at this area of exclusion. As such the priority outcomes for this objective are still being determined.• Reduce food bank referrals• Improve wellbeing of tenants- minimise health risk• Minimise impact of Fuel Poverty for low income and vulnerable households• Reduce food waste (48% of Birmingham's residual waste is food costing Birmingham Households an average of £700 per year)• Increase the number of people who switch energy suppliers to save money• Increase the number of people receiving direct debit discounts

OBJECTIVE 4

Birmingham's Financial Inclusion Partnership is not guided by organisational or team boundaries, rather a focus upon delivering positive outcomes for the citizens of Birmingham. This demonstrates Birmingham City Councils commitment to partnership with others "with the purpose of empowering communities" (Cllr John Clancy – Progress Report on Kerslake recommendations Dec 2015). Working together, our aim is for local services to be properly joined up and coordinated, with a 'whole place' approach to neighbourhoods; where collaboration and shared resources deliver the best outcomes for local people.

Our strategic influence aims to provide a framework for shaping policies that, directly and indirectly, support the financial inclusion agenda. This influence intends not only to extend to the policy, procedures, protocols and action plans of Birmingham City council but also to positively influence our partners, citizens, the private & financial sectors and central government.

Adopting a proactive and preventative position to Financial Inclusion the partnership is collaborating closely with Child Poverty and Public Health on shared priorities that develop solutions to address inequality, and thus the root causes of exclusion.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY OUTCOMES
 STRATEGIC INFLUENCE “Coordinate and embed standard financial inclusion , to improve strategic coordination of city led financial inclusion targets “	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrated financial inclusion services-all directorates, departments and teams develop individual action plans to contribute towards the overarching action plan.• Ensure Financial Inclusion Partnership influences and aligns with other strategies and work plans.• Improved coordination of financial inclusion activities• Staff ,customers and stakeholders are aware of financial inclusion services in Birmingham• Staff, customers and stakeholders are involved in shaping Financial Inclusion Strategy and action plan• Ensure key Birmingham City Council Strategies, policies, protocols and action plans are financial inclusion 'proofed', for example, debt collection policies.


OBJECTIVE 5

Employment is the surest route out of poverty; however, this strategy recognises that employment itself is not an automatic solution to financial exclusion. This is highlighted by increases in in-work poverty, with 66% of children in poverty now coming from working families. (Parliament Briefing paper - Poverty in UK 2016)

It is recognised that insecure employment increases the risk of financial exclusion (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2008). The number of 'zero hour' contracts (where hours of work are not guaranteed) has been rising significantly since 2013 and are particularly prevalent in the West Midlands (ONS). Women, part-time workers and students are most likely to have zero hour contracts. Workers with such contracts may also be disadvantaged when it comes to employment rights and may not be legally entitled to Statutory Maternity/Paternity Pay and redundancy pay for example. This can leave households particularly vulnerable to financial difficulty.

The local economic assessment for Birmingham 2014 predicts a changing occupational structure in the city, estimating a growth (13.5%) in the need for more high skilled jobs by 2025; whilst demand for intermediate and lower skilled professions decline. Birmingham has a skills gap within the resident population - In order to tackle high levels of unemployment and address the associated inequalities that low income and educational attainment perpetuate, it is imperative that education underpins the exclusion agenda.

Helping people enter, stay and progress in the labour market is a key means of maximising their income and maintaining financial inclusion.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY OUTCOMES
 EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, SKILLS & TRAINING "To provide support with education, skills and training to help people into sustainable, meaningful employment in order to achieve financial security"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve pathways to employment• Improve employment skills and qualifications• More residents in low skilled and low paid work will move into better paid and more fulfilling employment• Reduce in work poverty• Increase number of residents on a Birmingham living wage• Reduce child poverty within working households• Help young people into further education, training and apprenticeships• Business Charter sign up.


OBJECTIVE 6

With ever increasing digital by default service provision, it is more important than ever that our citizens possess sufficient digital skills to enable them to fully and meaningfully participate in modern life. In a digital society almost every aspect of life now requires digital inclusion in some form or another.

- If a family starts to shop and pay bills online a potential of £560 can be saved each year.
- 72% of employers say they would not interview an entry level candidate without basic IT skills, with an estimated 90% of jobs require digital skills to some degree (Digital Birmingham).
- Getting online could really benefit the 75,000 jobseekers allowance claimants who currently have never been online. People with good IT skills earn between 3% and 10% more than those without.

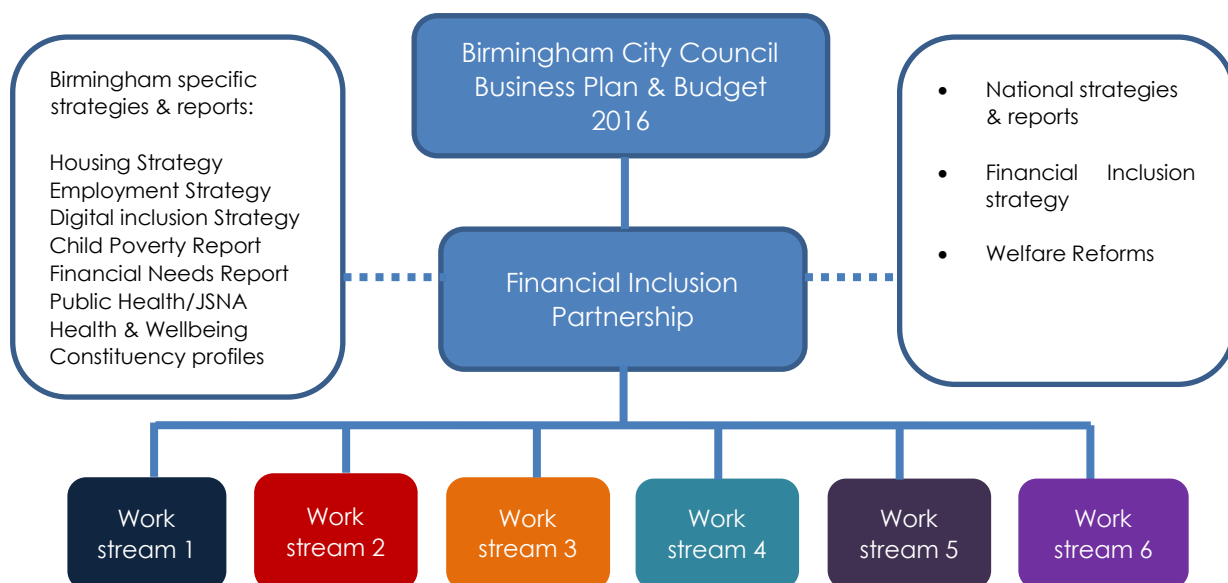
Summary of the Digital by Default 2016 survey found:

- *Measuring digitally-included tenants:* Only a quarter of tenants are 'fully included' and almost 50 per cent of tenants are not digitally included in any way.
- *Budgets & resources:* Most digital inclusion budgets and resources are directed towards IT training for tenants. Only a third of housing providers offer tenants specially-priced hardware and software and/or broadband connectivity packages.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY OUTCOMES
 DIGITAL INCLUSION "Increase digital access through the development of digital skills, confidence whilst ensuring that digital products and services meet the needs of residents"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More residents will be able to manage their money and bills online, reduced poverty premium• More residents will be able to search for employment on line• Improve residents digital skills and financial literacy• Increase number of residents accessing online services from Birmingham City Council, private tenants and Registered Social Landlords• More residents will pay their rent by Direct debit• More citizens digitally competent to access discounts on goods and services, for example, direct debit discount and special offers via online voucher codes.

GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCES

The Financial Inclusion Partnership is a key element of the Birmingham Business Plan and links to other multi-agency working partnership. Terms of Reference can be found in Appendix 2



FINANCIAL INCLUSION PARTNERSHIP WORK STREAM AND LEADS

In order to deliver on the outcomes of the objectives, the Financial Inclusion Partnership has six themed work streams, each is jointly led by a Partner representative and a City Council officer working with the following objectives

WORKING GROUP	LEAD PARTNER	LEAD OFFICER
1 Financial Products & Services	Tony Raybould	Chris Connor
2 Advice, Information & Financial Education	Janice Nichols, Citizens Advice Birmingham Vicky Hines, Shelter Birmingham	Chris Jordan
3 Food & Fuel	Juanita Murray, Birmingham City Church Sophie Hall, Birmingham Social Housing Partnership	Kyle Stott
4. Strategic Influence	Leads of objectives	Karen Markall
5 Employment, Education, Skills & Training	Steve Whitehorn, DWP	
6 Digital Inclusion	Craig Taylor, BHSP/Friendship	Annette King

Additional members of the partnership can be found in Appendix 2

Terms of Reference
Birmingham Financial Inclusion Partnership

Overall Aim of Birmingham Financial Inclusion Partnership

The overarching aim of the Financial Inclusion partnership is to deliver the vision and outcomes of the financial inclusion strategy:

"To create opportunities for Birmingham citizens to improve their financial wellbeing and digital skills so they can lead healthy and fulfilling lives"

The partnership will ensure that the financial inclusion strategy aligns with all other strategies and will recommend that all directorates, departments and teams develop individual action plans to contribute towards the overarching action plan. It will support the coordinated and integrated approach of the child poverty commission to mitigate the effects of child poverty

Roles and Responsibilities of the Financial Inclusion Partnership

1. Produce a Birmingham Financial Inclusion Strategy and action plan
2. Publish a financial inclusion needs assessment to understand the national and local context
3. The financial Inclusion partnership will coordinate the activities of partners and will ensure that:
 - The strategy is implemented in partnership with City Council Partners and other partners of the Birmingham Financial Inclusion Partnership
 - The financial inclusion action plan, which accompanies the financial inclusion strategy. The action plan will be delivered, monitored and reviewed through the Financial Inclusion Partnership under the Chairmanship of the Cabinet Member for Transparency, Openness and Equality
 - Influence and shape good practice for all frontline services
 - The partnership will coordinate the delivery of six main streams of work which will form the focus of the financial inclusion strategy by ensuring:
 - The terms of reference for the work streams groups are clear
 - The action plans for the work streams are appropriate for the delivery of the strategy and include appropriate outcomes
 - New approaches are tested

The six work streams are:

1. Improve access to financial products including affordable and responsible credit, an appropriate bank account and basic home contents insurance and savings facilitates
2. Build financial resilience by ensuring citizens can access appropriate advice, information and financial education
3. Tackle inequalities by reducing the number of citizens living in food and fuel poverty – tackle inequalities that cause citizens to be living in fuel and food poverty whilst ensuring we are addressing the crisis
4. Coordinate and embed standard financial inclusion , to improve strategic coordination of city led financial inclusion targets
5. To provide support with education, skills and training to help people into sustainable, meaningful employment in order to achieve financial security
6. Increase digital access through the development of digital skills, confidence whilst ensuring that digital products and services meet the needs of residents

Consultation, Engagement, Diversity and Equality

The development of all six work strands will need to include consultation and engagement with residents and will address diversity and equality considerations by including provision for those working directly with group vulnerable to financial exclusion

Economic Impacts

In addition to the social impact, the partnership will prioritise consideration of issues which can impact on disadvantaged neighbourhoods . The partnership will work with and coordinate the efforts of partners in securing funding for initiatives which will assist in taking forward the aims of the strategy

Accountabilities

The work of the partnership will be reported to the Strategic Director Place and the Cabinet Member for Transparency, Openness, and Equality.

The overall Cabinet will be responsible for The Financial Inclusion Strategy

Meetings

The financial inclusion partnership will meet quarterly and the work stream groups covering the 6 work strands will meet as appropriate to assist in the development of initiatives within the work strand.

Partnership membership

Members of the partnership are described in the appendix attached

APPENDIX 2 FINANCIAL INCLUSION PARTNERSHIP- KEY PARTNERS

ORGANISATION
Accord Housing Group
Adullam Homes
Advance Credit Union
Age UK Birmingham
Barclays Bank PLC
Barclays Bank PLC
Birmingham Central Food Bank
Birmingham Social Housing Partnership
BITA Pathways
Bournville Village Trust
British Gas
Cabinet Member for Openness, Transparency and Equality
Castle Vale Tenant and Residents Alliance
Change and Support Services (Birmingham City Council)
Citizens Advice Birmingham
Citysave Credit Union Ltd
Department of Work and Pensions
Digital Birmingham
England Illegal Money Lending Team
Friendship Care and Housing
Gateway to Birmingham Advice Services
Halifax
Housing Birmingham
Karis Neighbourhood Scheme
Ladywood Community Advice
Landlord Services (Birmingham City Council)
Moneyline
Neighbourhoods and Communities (Birmingham City Council)
Public Health (Birmingham City Council)
Rent/Debt Advice Service (Birmingham City Council)
Revenues and Benefits (Birmingham City Council)
Severn Trent Water
Shelter Birmingham

PROJECT NAME	FINANCIALLY HEALTHY NEIGHBOURHOODS
VISION	"To create opportunities for Birmingham citizens to improve their financial wellbeing and digital skills so they can lead healthy and fulfilling lives"
BACKGROUND	Birmingham's Financial Inclusion Partnership has recently refreshed its strategy and action plan to reflect the challenges our citizens face. Ahead of launch of the 2017 – 2020 strategy in April 2017, the partnership will be undertaking a pilot, testing the impact and effectiveness of our aims in the St. Georges neighbourhood within the Aston Ward of Ladywood.
AIMS	The St. Georges pilot aims to improve the financial health and general wellbeing of citizens in the St. Georges area of Birmingham by undertaking targeted/coordinated activity with partner organisations and the local community in a community hub approach. The project will have a face to face element across the six FIP themes. Digital inclusion underpins all of these themes and allows the project to become sustainable through use of a digital platform, creation of local digital champions and increase in access to WiFi connectivity/IT equipment.

CHALLENGES:

- Densely populated area that includes 9 high rise blocks and a number of maisonettes – approx. 1000 properties.
- Gun violence and drug related crime an issue within the area, impacting perception of safety.
- Significant number of previously homeless households housed in the neighbourhood.
- Predominately social housing tenants
- High youth population – number of 0 -24 higher than the Birmingham average (>50%)
- Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks neighbourhood as number 1 (most deprived 10%). Ranked no. 1 in income, employment, barriers to Housing & Services – Also scoring poorly in education and health.
- The claimant count (Unemployment) is well above the city average for both 18-24 and 16-64.
- Worklessness rates are significantly higher than the Birmingham average, with 21.4% in receipt of out of work benefits (B'ham average 14%) and higher proportion of lone parents.
- High rates of child poverty within the ward at 47.1%, significantly higher than the Birmingham average).
- Reduction in local services i.e. libraries & neighbourhood offices (advice agency)

Due to the above factors St Georges is deemed to be a financially vulnerable neighbourhood and therefore, selected to pilot the objectives of the financial Inclusion Strategy in a targeted project.

ASSETS:

- Richly diverse
- Wide range of languages spoken
- Voluntary organisations engaged and working with the local community
- ST Georges Hub
- Large youth population
- Block Champions
- Park/open green space at the located at centre of the neighbourhood
- Sure Start Centre
- Faith network
- Mothers Group

ACTIVITIES

OBJECTIVE 1 FINANCIAL PRODUCTS & SERVICES	OBJECTIVE 2 ADVICE, INFORMATION & FINANCIAL EDUCATION	OBJECTIVE 3 FOOD & FUEL	OBJECTIVE 4 STRATEGIC INFLUENCE	OBJECTIVE 5 EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, SKILLS & TRAINING	OBJECTIVE 6 DIGITAL INCLUSION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote affordable credit options (Birmingham Money Hub) • ILMT education packs & training within local schools • Increase uptake of home insurance products • Increase numbers of residents holding Credit Union accounts/savings via incentivised membership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit Cap Offer • UC Awareness • Capacity building – Training for 3rd sector/voluntary & Faith organisations • Promote Severn Trent social tariffs with more residents saving money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy efficiency & supplier switch advice/campaign • Smart meter campaign & funding application • Food bank/crisis support awareness • Healthy eating messages (affordable) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Hub approach • Residents forum • Identifying/accessing funding streams • Community event increasing levels of engagement and awareness • St Georges Community Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DWP employment/training advice surgeries • Adult education promotion • Direct Referral route into digital training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase Wifi access • IT equipment from partners • Training digital champions • Digital training to residents • Promote BCC online services • Online budgeting tools, money saving options, online shopping.
PROJECT LEAD:	Helen Shervington				
KEY STAKEHOLDERS:	Birmingham City Council Welfare Reform Team, BCC Place Management Team (Ladywood), BCC Anti-Social Behaviour Team, Catalyst Mutual Enterprise, Gateway Family Services, England Illegal Money Lending Team, Citysave Credit Union, Money Line, Severn Trent Water, WAITS, Digital Birmingham, Public Health, Department of Work & Pensions, West Midlands Fire Service, West				

	Midlands Police, St Georges Community Hub.
BUDGET:	Phase 2 "Digital and Financial Literacy Birmingham" has secured DCLG funding of £70k. Additional funds to be sought.
TIMELINE:	February 2017 to March 2018
REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS:	Fortnightly Progress reporting to Karen Markall

Report of the Service Director of Customer Services
Corporate Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee
6th September 2017

Revenues Service

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an update to the Committee following the previous Overview and Scrutiny Revenues report in March 2017.
- 1.2 To report progress on the operation of the Revenues Service following the decision to bring the service for the billing, collection, recovery and enforcement of council tax and business rates in-house from 1st February 2017.

2. Background

- 2.1 The revenues contract was let in 2011 before the introduction of a number of national welfare reforms in 2013 and the local retention of business rates. These changes have resulted in the council wishing to deal with revenues matters differently. By delivering the Revenues Service 'in house', the Council is able to react to both existing reforms and any future reforms with greater flexibility. There are also no constraints of formal change control processes which operate within contractual arrangements.
- 2.2 The termination of the Revenues Service contract element of the Service Birmingham contract and bringing this service in-house enables the Council to maintain the collection rates agreed as part of the Council's budget setting process. For council tax and business rates going forward (and in addition), prioritisation will be given to the maximisation of the tax base for both business rates and council tax. This can be achieved by identifying properties currently not on the valuation office listing and identifying changes in use within existing properties which may lead to increases in rateable value.
- 2.3 The Revenues contract was let over a ten year term (2011 to 2021) on a fixed price per annum reducing on a yearly basis over the term. The contract was structured so that investment was made in the initial years with payments reducing over time to deliver long-term savings benefit for the Council. In light of the mutually agreed earlier exit from the contract, the Council will not now achieve this benefit. The Council and Service Birmingham discussed the total costs and benefits for each party as a result of the earlier exit from the contract (including the long-term savings benefit). Both parties agreed an equitable adjustment to the charges being £1.2m which will be afforded to the Council via the ICT invoice being reduced. This reduction forms part of the council's financial position for 2017/18 and 2018/19.
- 2.4 An internal review of the Revenues Service was undertaken by the Service Director of Customer Services Division in June 2016. This identified the Council would be able to secure a saving of £0.45m per annum against the costs that the Council would have incurred during the remaining term of the contract. This is as a result of reduced overhead costs. These savings have formed part of the council budget setting process for 2017/18. The Revenues Service Plan (attached as Appendix 1) provides details of the actions in place to move the Service further forward.

- 2.6 The Revenues element of the Service Birmingham service, therefore, transferred to the Council with effect from 1st February 2017, with 106 employees of Service Birmingham Limited transferring to the Council under TUPE, which included only one Operational Manager.
- 2.7 Service Birmingham and the City Council formed a joint team to ensure a smooth transfer through the TUPE process of the Service back to the Council. However, a number of staff did not transfer back leaving significant gaps at managerial level. The Council has moved swiftly to fill these positions; a new Head of Service has been appointed and is about to commence his role; together with an additional Operations Manager, three Section Managers and two additional Team Managers.
- 2.8 The non-TUPE transfer of officers from the Capita Mendip and Bromley resource created a large number of vacancies within the Service. As a result 27 additional Revenues Officers have also been recruited and trained and are now employed in the Birmingham Revenues Service. During the transition period Capita continued to work with the Council to deliver elements of the Revenues Service due to the vacancies. This is now due to cease at the end of September 2017.

3. Current Position

- 3.1 A new operating model for the Revenues Service has been implemented. The model was created in line with the City Council's future operating model principles with support and direction provided by Ember Consultancy Services together with officers from the revenues client team, finance and legal services. The model was implemented following a formal consultation process involving the recognised trade union representatives and was progressed in an extremely positive industrial relations manner. This created a new operational and management structure (which is attached at Appendix 2) and offers clear levels of accountability and responsibility. Some of the key areas of activity that are now being taken forward highlighted below:

Customer Service

- The transfer back represents a significant opportunity to alter the approach of what has been a heavily transactional operation into a customer centric service. Initially this will be on a single customer view of Council Tax and Business Rates liability. Initial analysis has identified that a significant proportion of Council Tax debt (£30m) is due from only 2% of the customer base. Each of these customers has five or more liabilities spanning a number of years. A debt consolidation proposal is in the process of being devised and implemented. Details include reviewing the IT system functionality in order to align a citizen's outstanding debt, collecting from the oldest debt first and distinguishing between those who won't pay and can't pay. Together with reviewing and considering external data sources we will be able to create a full customer profile. From this full data set we are working to progress the proposal to both support citizens but also to maximise the collection of the debt.
- As part of the response to the Child Poverty Commission report in Birmingham, all Council Tax Support cases have been withdrawn from the enforcement agents (previously known as Bailiffs). Associated fees and charges for these cases have been written off by the agents and no further cases where the citizen is in receipt of Council Tax Support will be sent to them. Recovery action will follow the route of deductions from ongoing entitlements to welfare benefits once a liability order has been obtained from the Magistrates Court.

- A joint review of payment guidance took place as part of our renegotiated terms of reference with our Enforcement Agents (previously known as bailiffs), Equita. They have issued updated guidelines to their collection teams regarding the rules governing arrangements to pay for council tax payers.
 - where contact is made and the customer is unable to clear their arrears in one payment they are asked to provide income and expenditure details. This helps to determine what payment parameters may be agreed. An initial period of up to 6 months will be sought. However where the customer is unable to commit to this level, payment may be agreed up to (and in some cases over) 12 months from the date of contact. Every effort is made to an agreement that is affordable and most importantly maintainable.
- Payment arrangements are monitored and where a mobile telephone number is held SMS reminders are issued prior to the payment date. Where a payment is missed two reminders by SMS are sent before the arrangement is cancelled.

Business Rates

- Improve the business rates customer service by creating a larger team which is capable of self-sufficient management of the tax base by October 2017. A plan has been compiled which will enable the termination of the current additional Capita resource by the end of September. A number of current employees have been identified to work on the Business Rates team. The first stage of the transition included reviewing all the procedures to ensure they were relevant. Overview training was delivered to new staff in July and further in-depth procedural training was delivered during the beginning of August. A work plan is being compiled to confirm the volumes and timelines for activities moving forward.
- Support for businesses – as a result of business rates reliefs announced in the Spring budget the Business Rates team has already awarded up to £1,000 relief (per account) to 224 public houses in the City. This fulfilled the qualifying conditions announced in the budget. In addition, approximately 380 ratepayers have been identified who may qualify for the support for Small Business Relief. It is anticipated that bills with this relief included will be issued in early September. In respect of the discretionary relief, to support businesses which have seen an increase due to the 2017 revaluation, we have undertaken the required consultation. The local scheme is scheduled to be presented to Members in September for approval. The relief will be applied and amended bills will be issued to around 1,700 ratepayers. It is anticipated these changes will result in an additional £3m of relief awarded to businesses in 2017/18.
- Maximisation of the tax base for both council tax and business rates – improvements in our business rate property inspections regime. This will ensure that liabilities are correctly and promptly identified and new properties are entered onto the rating list as well as maximising the debt on existing ones. A proactive approach to finding changes in business use is vital – especially as there is little legislative ground for businesses to report changes.
- During June 2017 a pilot was undertaken by the Inspection Team of 589 businesses in Erdington High Street and surrounding areas. This area was chosen as it is a typical example of a high street and the surrounding area where changes may have taken place over the years but not all of these changes may be reflected in the rating list or on the Revenue records. The focus of the pilot was to:

- identify hereditaments missing from the rating list;
 - identify changes in use, extensions, mergers and other required reviews of existing rateable values;
 - verify the liable taxpayer details held on the NDR database; and
 - verify any Reliefs or Exemptions .
- A summary of the findings is shown below:
 - New properties identified and reported to the VOA – 19
 - Change in business use identified and reported to the VOA – 14
 - Extensions and mergers identified and reported to the VOA – 28
 - Incorrect Reliefs/exemptions awarded – 45
 - Incorrect liable party – 39
 - The Revenues Service entered into a 4 month pilot with Inform CPI Limited in August. A forecasting and rateable value finder web based product is used to identify properties which are either missing or undervalued on the rating list. This information will allow the council to maximise the rateable value for the City as a whole and increase the level of income through retained business rates. During the first week of the pilot Inform CPI Limited identified nine properties with a potential rateable value increase (2010 list) of £292,500. This will provide total additional business rates income of up to £558,000.

Single person discount reviews

- A review of Single Person Discounts (SPD) was undertaken as part of the annual billing process in order to improve the accuracy of the Council Tax base. The exercise concluded:
 - 17,799 review forms were issued in March along with the citizen's annual bill and 9,905 Reminders were issued between the 8th June 2017 and 22nd June 2017.
 - 11,228 citizens have confirmed that entitlement to the award should continue.
 - 2,780 citizens had their entitlement ended.
 - 3,657 accounts were automatically cancelled on 17th July 2017 effective from 1st April 2017.
 - The remaining 134 accounts are being investigated.

Staff development and performance management

- Development of staff and skills ensuring the “right people, with the right skills, at the right place, doing the right work, at the right time” is vital to make further improvements. Following a training needs analysis across the Revenues Service an effective Training Plan has now been developed. A Management Development Programme is also to be conducted for all managers within the Service.
- Measurement of all employees' performance across the Service has been introduced through the 'my appraisal' process; encouraging performance improvement, behaviours, and setting daily performance targets to achieve monthly targets based on performance levels.
- Production of accurate and meaningful management information – key performance indicators will be redefined which are relevant to the operation and reflect the balance between serving our citizens and the requirements of the

Council. A new set of management information is being developed and created, to include the development of a dashboard to easily monitor progress and performance. This will be reported regularly and disseminated to all staff.

4. Collection outcomes to date

- 4.1 In year collection rates for both Council Tax and Business Rates continue to perform well (as at the end of July 2017 Council Tax is 0.48% is above target, and Business Rates 1.09% above target).

5. Future Plans for the Service

- 5.1 It is intended to operate the Service to provide both an excellent customer experience together with ensuring we meet our key priority of maximising the hugely important resource of both council tax and business rates for the Council. A Revenues Service Improvement Plan for 2017/18 has been produced detailing the service, its objectives and purpose, together with operational issues and expected outcomes.

Chris Gibbs
Service Director Customer Services
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The Revenues Service Service Plan 2017/2018



Revenues Service Business Plan

Revenues Service Improvement Plan 2017/18

Introduction.

The Revenues Service transferred back under Birmingham City Council direct control on the 1st February 2017. This move represents a significant opportunity to deliver a change program within the Service.

The detail being developed below the initiatives within this plan will incorporate the significant benefits of improved communication and cross functional working that has arisen from the service working holistically within BCC and to joint objectives and values.

Key Priorities for 2017/18

Objectives

The Revenues Service Improvement Plan aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To summarise the key activities that the Service will undertake during the year that will be the focus of our attention.
- To deliver significantly enhanced performance and quality outputs, through improved collections and reduction in inefficient processing.
- To design and agree a new operating and service model for an efficient, integrated Revenues Service to achieve a step change in performance and deliver the revenue collection targets expected for BCC.
- To design and execute a comprehensive set of improvement initiatives that will address performance issues and provide a clear operational focus on the key outcomes of increasing the net collectable debt and maximising collection. These initiatives will contribute to the successful implementation of the new operating model
- To re-align the service Key Performance Indicators to reflect BCC's objectives.
- To deliver an improved service to the citizens and businesses within Birmingham

Purpose

The Plan will deliver the following capabilities and outcomes:-

- A new Operating Model and Organisation Structure that will reflect the view of the Council to treat our citizens and businesses fairly, to collect tax due to the City in a robust and ethical manner and to do so using methods appropriate with due regard to indebtedness.
- Additional jobs in Birmingham replacing those that were out sourced by Service Birmingham to Bromley and Mendip Capita offices.
- Revenues Service will improve collection in absolute cash terms against a 3 year target of 97.1% (currently £355.1m 17/18 billing year)

- Following the Service being brought back in house Key Performance Indicators will be redefined. These will be relevant to the operation and reflect the balance between serving our citizens and community. Management information will be improved to provide performance metrics that inform the effectiveness of processes. This will be done through the strengthened team structure which will increase the technical capability of the service.

There will be an increased focus on quality metrics that look at the customer journey and impact.

We will continue to develop working practices that focus on customer outcomes and away from transactional processing. Initially this will be on a single customer view of Council Tax and Business Rates liability and developing to look at all indebtedness to BCC.

Key Performance Indicators

KPI	Target	Current position
In-year collection of Council Tax	94.80%	30.11% actual v 28.82% target 06/17
In-year collection of Business Rates	95.52%	35.11% actual v 34.72% target 06/17

The activities that will support the achievement of these performance indicators and the Key Priorities are outlined in the following table.

Behaviours – We put Citizens First, We are true to our word, Acts Courageously, We achieve excellence

INITIATIVE	OUTCOME	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER(S)	Outcome / Target	TIMEFRAME	How does this look	QTR Update	Corporate Behaviour				
Implement new structure	Staff in place to meet service needs and improve collection	Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits	New management structure and associated staff resources in place	30/09/2017	Revenues Officers in post GR5s in post GR2 positions resolved, Operations Managers in post, Head of Service starting 11/09/2017						
New Policy for Discretionary relief for businesses	Support businesses with highest rate increase following revaluation	Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits	New policy in place with up to £2.6 million of relief available in 2017/18	13/09/2017 for Cabinet approval	Consultation completed. Report drafted. Member meetings in place						

INITIATIVE	OUTCOME	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER(S)	Outcome / Target	TIMEFRAME	How does this look	QTR Update	Corporate Behaviour			
Localise NDR Resource	Increase local resource to undertake NDR work in the City	Head of Revenues	Work moved from external sites run by Capita to the Council's Revenues service	01/10/2017	Recruit and train staff Decommission arrangements with Capita					
Maximise Council Tax Base	Single Person Discount Reviews	Head of Revenues	Improve tax base accuracy Increase collection rates (£s)	Completed	To utilise data from SB highlighting high risk cases and carry out mailing in Annual Billing 17/18					
		Operations Managers	Maintain statutory obligations		To report response rates. Update Latest					
		Operations Managers	(SPD volumes are 158k (146k in May 2016) valued at	February 2018	To report ongoing responses / cancellations subject to cancellation schedule					

INITIATIVE	OUTCOME	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER(S)	Outcome / Target	TIMEFRAME	How does this look	QTR Update	Corporate Behaviour			
		Operations Managers	<p>£40.9m).</p> <p>Review procedures and monitoring, evaluate changes to Annual Billing going forward to provide improvements</p> <p>Consider opportunity to capture review information as part of inbound call process</p> <p>Cancelations done from 4/17 review</p> <p>Next review scheduled 09/17 expected to consider 27k further accounts</p>	01/11/17	To refine the review process as part of future AB cycle, to incorporate all review types as necessary.					

INITIATIVE	OUTCOME	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER(S)	Outcome / Target	TIMEFRAME	How does this look	QTR Update	Corporate Behaviour			
Maximise Council Tax Base	Complete a review of suppressed account reviews	Operations Managers	Improve tax base accuracy	Completed	Files for suppressions re run to identify volumes.					
		Operations Managers	Increase collection rates (£s)	Completed for Deceased cases with class F 01/09/2017	Experian batch file preparation. Agree size with operation.					
		Operations Managers	To ensure that all suppressed accounts are dealt with in a timely manner according to policies and procedures in place. (for example traces within 6 months of "gone away" notification.)	01/07/2017	As part of revised MI pack need to report value/volume & movements					
		Operations Managers		01/09/2017	Revise procedures for suppressions					
Maximise Business Rates tax base	NDR Tax base audit (pilot)	Operations Managers	Improve tax base accuracy.(Property reconciliation, occupations) having assessed overall accuracy of the current base	Completed	Identify initial pilot area and produce initial business and property details.					
		Head of Revenues		Completed	Initial meeting with supplier to discuss outline data capture and potential.					
		Head of Revenues	Identify	Completed	Sample data file provided to supplier for analysis					

INITIATIVE	OUTCOME	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER(S)	Outcome / Target	TIMEFRAME	How does this look	QTR Update	Corporate Behaviour			
		Head of Revenues	opportunities to increase collection rates (£s)	Completed	Arrange review meeting with Analyse Local.					
		Head of Revenues	Inform review processes (eg SBRR) impacting income Experian Review	01/09/2017	Procurement exercise needed; 4 month extension in place					
Increase collection of NDR Debt	NNDR Repeat Defaulters	Head of Revenues	Increase collection rates through the use of appropriate recovery action Identify liability issues Improve tax base accuracy Identify potential tax avoidance cases	Completed	Repeat offenders identified through model. £30m across 1400 accounts					
		Operations Managers		Completed	Sample of cases intercepted 2/5/17 for investigation.					

INITIATIVE	OUTCOME	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER(S)	Outcome / Target	TIMEFRAME	How does this look	QTR Update	Corporate Behaviour				
		Operations Managers	Reduce the numbers of NDR customers progressing through the recovery process without resolution	Ongoing through case reviews	<p>Review alternative enforcement strategies</p> <p>Prepare project template if not BAU.</p> <p>Target to reduce the volume of repeat offender cases being processed through the Magistrates Court by 20% during 17/18.</p> <p>Subject to the outcome of the sampling exercise</p> <p>Now investigating alternative enforcement processes with Legal Services (either County Court or CPR 70 transfers)</p>						

INITIATIVE	OUTCOME	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER(S)	Outcome / Target	TIMEFRAME	How does this look	QTR Update	Corporate Behaviour				
Maximise arrangements with Enforcement Agents	Improve use of Enforcement Agents	Operations Managers	<p>Increase effectiveness of the EA.s</p> <p>Improve reporting and measures</p> <p>Leverage relationship to build improved committal / enforcement processes</p> <p>Corporate early warning systems</p>	Completed	Review MI produced by agents. First reports received; Early stage of new arrangements						
		Operations Managers	Review of submitted cases to identify cases where	Provisional dates provided by Court	Revise committal processes (inc Clinics)						
		Operations Managers	reinstruction will enable recovery or to identify cases earlier where EA activity is	Ongoing	Review early warning systems in place, discussions with Experian commenced and Greenall Kerr overview given.						

INITIATIVE	OUTCOME	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER(S)	Outcome / Target	TIMEFRAME	How does this look	QTR Update	Corporate Behaviour			
		Operations Managers	unlikely to lead to recovery and where alternative action is appropriate	Completed	Sample accounts provided to Equita to review repeat offenders. With a view to identifying cases to refer back to Equita or not referring cases at all where no recovery prospects.					
		Operations Managers		01.09.17	Review response to above.					
Increase the capacity of our staff to meet challenges	Training & Development	Head of Revenues	Improve effectiveness of Officers / Managers	Ongoing	TNA issued to all staff; Initial NDR training provided					
			Succession planning							
			Risk mitigation							
			Process improvement							
		Head of Revenues	Quality	Completed	Experian (Train the trainers)					
	Head of Revenues	Measurement through the mechanisms to be agreed but	Completed	Financial Impacts /collection fund D&E etc						
	Head of Revenues		01/08/2017	TNA						

INITIATIVE	OUTCOME	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER(S)	Outcome / Target	TIMEFRAME	How does this look	QTR Update	Corporate Behaviour			
		Head of Revenues	may include adherence to arrangements, instances of 1ndone, i&e and citizen assessments Complaint reduction (where due to error)	01/09/2017	Develop training plan					
	Workflow Management	Operations Managers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement replacement for EG system 2. Maximise resource utilisation 3. Prioritisation of activity in customer centric way 4. Promote single customer views. 5. Improve database quality 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completed 2. -5 ongoing 	New DMS system in place. Provisional performance management system in place and being monitored.					

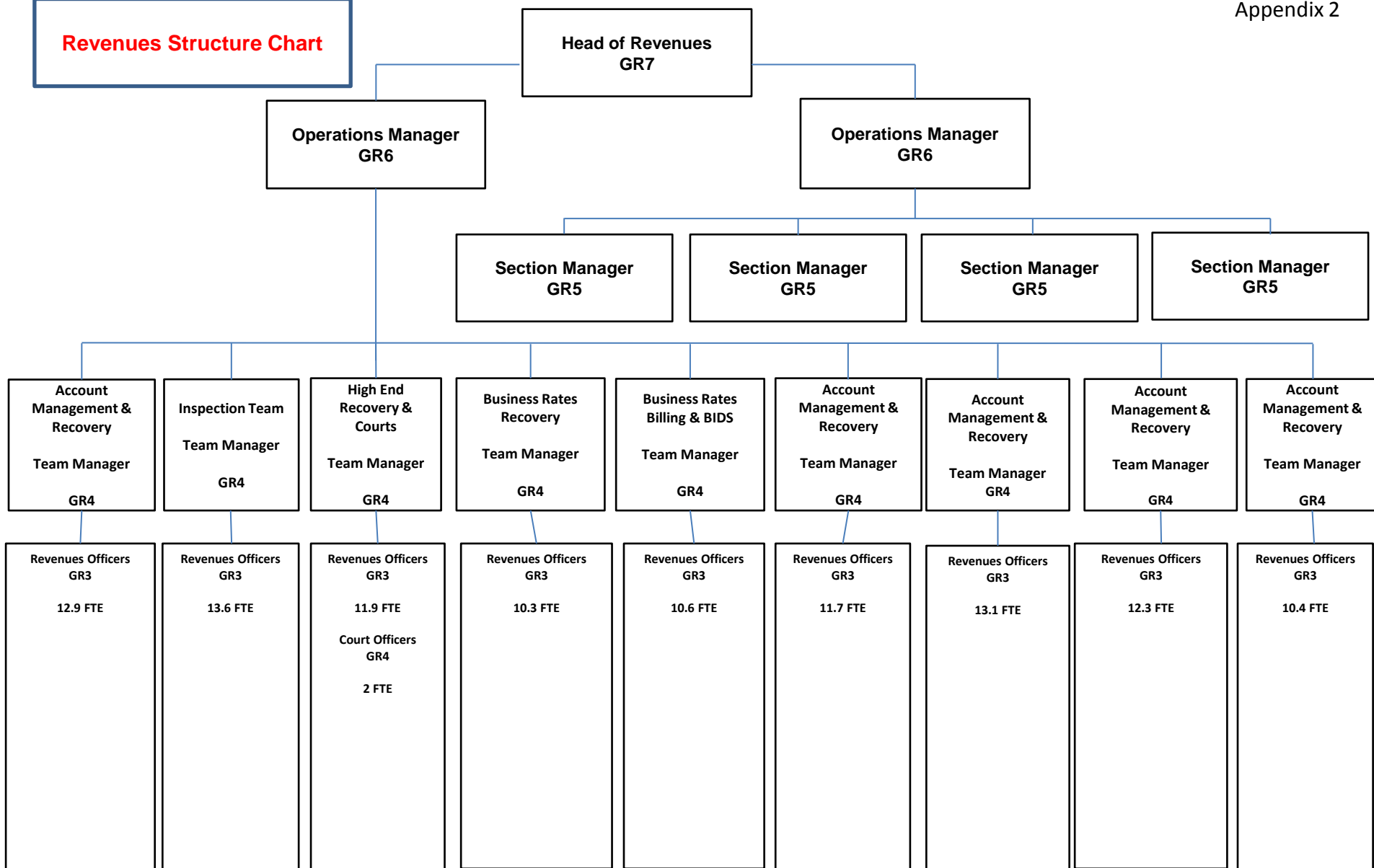
INITIATIVE	OUTCOME	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER(S)	Outcome / Target	TIMEFRAME	How does this look	QTR Update	Corporate Behaviour			
Improve our management of performance	Performance & Effectiveness Measures	Operations Managers	Increased ability to measure effectiveness and outcomes of processes & people Implement review mechanism for performance improvements	Completed	Revise approach to QA measurement within service.					
		Head of Revenues		Ongoing	Identify upskilling for TM's together with coaching / mentoring development					
		Operations Managers		01/03/2018	Development of joined up customer journey modelling to show touch points and constraints. Linking to Brum Account development – awaiting procurement					

INITIATIVE	OUTCOME	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER(S)	Outcome / Target	TIMEFRAME	How does this look		QTR Update	Corporate Behaviour			
Improve our management of performance	KPI development	Head of Revenues	KPIs focused on performance Reflecting BCC budget expectations Delivery of service levels Recognise flexibility	01/09/2017	Awaiting input from new Head of Service						

INITIATIVE	OUTCOME	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER(S)	Outcome / Target	TIMEFRAME	How does this look	QTR Update	Corporate Behaviour				
Proactive debt recovery	Recovery Profile Review	Head of Revenues	<p>Improve collection performance through the reduction of inbound call volumes and redirection of resources. This initiative has potential to release significant resources and drive down citizen contact</p> <p>Reduce back office activity on "paying cases"</p> <p>Provide transparency on cost recovery</p> <p>Reduce citizen indebtedness, through reductions to EA cases</p>	01/09/2017	The initiative is to model citizen payments and behaviours through the recovery cycle and propose changes. This may include the "reset" of customer reminders once an account is brought up to date. This will significantly reduce call volumes.						

INITIATIVE	OUTCOME	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER(S)	Outcome / Target	TIMEFRAME	How does this look	QTR Update	Corporate Behaviour			
Proactive debt recovery	NDR Telephony	Revenues Operations Managers	<p>To provide increased levels of response on NDR inbound telephony</p> <p>Reduce inbound Vectus/DMS actions</p>	Completed	Developed MI reporting to track performance and comparisons to last year					

INITIATIVE	OUTCOME	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER(S)	Outcome / Target	TIMEFRAME	How does this look	QTR Update	Corporate Behaviour			
Review our reports	Maximise collection	Revenues Operations Managers	<p>Rationalise report activity following transition to DMS and loss of EG. Move to customer Centric activity</p> <p>Developed “event date” reporting for the action of accounts at appropriate points</p> <p>Remove duplication</p> <p>Develop consolidated monitoring and reporting capabilities.</p> <p>Move to citizen centric views</p>	1/10/2017	To create simple transparent workflow processes that maximise outcomes and resource utilisation					

Revenues Structure Chart



Corporate Resources and Governance O&S Committee: Work Programme 2017/18

Chair	Cllr Mohammed Aikhlaq
Deputy Chair	Cllr Randal Brew
Committee Members:	Cllrs Muhammad Afzal, David Barrie, Changese Khan, Ewan Mackay, Yvonne Mosquito, Rob Pocock, Valerie Seabright, Sybil Spence, Paul Tilsley, Waseem Zaffar
Committee Support:	Scrutiny Team: Emma Williamson (464 6870), Iram Choudry (303 8263) Committee Manager: Victoria Williams (303 7037)

1 Meeting Schedule

Date	Item	Officer contact
28 June 2017 10.30am Committee Room 6	<i>Informal:</i> Work Programme Discussion <i>Outcome:</i> to determine the work programme priorities for the year	Emma Williamson/Iram Choudry, Scrutiny Office
26 July 2017 10.30am Committee Room 2	1) Report of the Leader of the Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priorities for the year in relation to corporate leadership; BIIP Feedback; Council of the Future; Partnership working Evolution of Devolution: Cabinet Committee Local Leadership and Local Innovation Fund; West Midlands Combined Authority and Mayor update; 	Geoff Coleman, Cabinet Office
6th September 2017 10.30am Committee Room 6	1. Cabinet Member for Transparency, Openness and Equality – update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priorities for the year in relation to transparency and openness (to include an update Bereavement Services) 2. Assistant Leaders – update 3. Revenue Services update	Marcia Wynter, Cabinet Support Officer Chris Gibbs



Date	Item	Officer contact
4th October 2017 10.30am Committee Room 6	1. Deputy Leader update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key performance Indicators • Member Development • Service Birmingham 2. Cabinet Member for Value for Money and Efficiency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities for the year (to include an update on the work of the Commercialism Board and BCC strategies for income generation) 3. Welfare Reform Update	Rebecca Grant Jon Lawton, Cabinet Support Officer Chris Gibbs
1st November 2017 10.30am Committee Room 6		
13 th December 2018 10.30am Committee Room 6		
3 January 2018, Committee Room 6	1. Leader – Update on priorities 2. Update on the BRUM account	Geoff Coleman, Leader's Office Paula Buckley, Assistant Director Customer Service
7 February 2018, Committee Room 6	1. Deputy Leader Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Engagement Tracking, • Customer Satisfaction update 	Rebecca Grant, Cabinet Support Officer Paula Buckley Chris Gibbs/ Paula Buckley
7 March 2018	1) Cabinet Member for Value for Money and Efficiency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on Priorities 	Jon Lawton, Cabinet Support Officer
	2) Cabinet Member for Transparency, Openness and Equality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on Priorities 	Marcia Wynter, Cabinet Support Officer
4th or 11th April 2018 (TBC) 10.30am Committee Room 6		

2 Other Meetings / Working Groups

Partnership Working-BCC Parish/Town Councils: (Membership: Cllrs Aikhlaq, Brew, Barrie, Pocock)



3 Other Suggested Work Areas

- Inquiry Work – Consultation and the Democratic reporting process
- BCC and Partnerships across Birmingham
- Visit to Citiserve

4 Other Meetings

Call in

10th August 2017 Taking Forward Local Leadership Request for Call In

Petitions

None scheduled

Councillor Call for Action requests

None scheduled

Informal meetings

18th September Evidence gathering for overview of the procurement strategy for the provision of Design, Construction and Facilities Management Services (DCFM)

5 Forward Plan

Deputy Leader		
003701/2017	Update on the ICT and Digital Future Operating Model	27 Jun 17
000288/2015	ICT Investment and Strategy	15 Aug 17
003674/2017	Corporate Revenue Monitoring Report 3 and 4	19 Sep 17
003698/2017	Capital and Treasury Monitoring Quarter 1 (April to June 2017)	19 Sep 17
003661/2017	Performance Monitoring - April to June 2017	13 Sep 17
004016/2017	Non Domestic Rates Support for businesses following 2017 Re-evaluation	13 Sep 17
003675/2017	Corporate Revenue Monitoring Report Months 5 and 6	14 Nov 17
003662/2017	Performance Monitoring - April to September 2017	12 Dec 17
004112/2017	ICT & Digital Strategy - Annual Update Report	05 Oct 17
003704/2017	Capital and Treasury Monitoring Quarter 2 (July to September 2017)	14 Nov 17
Leader		
003668/2017	HS2 Curzon Station Public Realm Programme	13 Sep 17
003888/2017	Vision Document for Birmingham Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Design and Conservation Review Panel	13 Sep 17
003690/2017	Phoenix Business Park, Brickfield Road, Tyseley – Proposed Compulsory Purchase Order	03 Oct 17
004101/2017	Enterprise Zone Investment Plan 2017	24 Oct 17
000318/2015	Discharge of Accountable Body Arrangements for AMSCI - Standing Item	24 Oct 17
000812/2015	Winning Resources for Birmingham City Council Priorities -Standing Item	24 Oct 17
001429/2016	Disposal of Surplus Properties	24 Oct 17



002536/2016	Former Curzon Street Station Refurbishment	24 Oct 17
002864/2017	Snow Hill Square Improvement Scheme (Tranche 1)	24 Oct 17
003203/2017	Enterprise Zone – Skills and Employment Investment Programme	12 Dec 17
Cabinet Member, Value For Money		
004073/2017	Supply and distribution of Grocery and Frozen Food	13 Sep 17
004083/2017	Commissioning Strategy for Social Care	13 Sep 17
003629/2017	Commissioning Security for Council Premises	03 Oct 17
003712/2017	Grounds Maintenance - Contract Overrun (F066)	03 Oct 17