

# Birmingham City Council

## City Council

14 July 2020



**Subject:** Membership of the Co-operative Council's Innovation Network

**Report of:** Council Business Management Committee

**Report author:** Jonathan Tew, Assistant Chief Executive

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:

### 1 Recommendations:

- 1.1 That Council agrees to make an application to join the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network in July 2020; and, if the application is successful, to review the outcomes after 12 months to inform any decision as to the renewal of membership for future years;

### 2 Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides the rationale for the Council to join the Co-operative Council's Innovation Network ('CCIN').
- 2.2 It sets out the benefits to the organisation and wider community of doing so, how membership will align with the Council's existing policy framework and the financial implications of joining the CCIN.

### 3 Background

- 3.1 The CCIN is a Local Government Association (LGA) Special Interest Group and is open to all UK Councils. Its stated aim is to drive innovation and reform within the framework of Co-operative values and principles, building an equal partnership with local people.
- 3.2 These values and principles are as follows:-

**Values:** *self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity.*

**Principles:** *voluntary and open membership, democratic control, member economic participation, autonomy and independence (of Co-op organisations), education training and information, Co-operation among Co-operatives and concern for community.*

- 3.3 The Network operates to improve knowledge and practice in a wide variety of areas from working to tackle climate change at a local level to finding community based solutions to improve outcomes in the arena of Health and Social Care. The premise is that members of the CCIN share best practice and ideas within the network, to find solutions to common problems.
- 3.4 The practical definition of 'co-operative' is fluid which provides an element of flexibility. Some Local Authorities refer to themselves as being Co-operative Councils [such as Oldham in Greater Manchester] which is based on the set of values adopted by the organisation as opposed to being wedded to a particular model of service delivery.

#### **4 How would membership align with the Council's existing policy objectives?**

- 4.1 In recent times we have been faced with challenges both *new* and *old*.
- 4.2 Covid-19 is a human tragedy, new to the world. The scale of its impact is unprecedented. The economic damage caused may take years to fully repair. In recent weeks, simmering tensions brought about by deep-rooted, generational inequalities, bubbled to the surface following the death of George Floyd.
- 4.3 Whilst they may seem very different issues, how we recover, rebuild and renew from both will depend on our communities. They will help define the problem; they will shape the answer and they will deliver the solution – but only with our support.
- 4.4 The Council is committed to promoting the principles of localisation as identified in the policy paper approved by Cabinet - *Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhood Policy White Paper (Birmingham City Council January 2019)*. The essence of this policy commits the Council to supporting communities to become more sustainable by empowering them to develop local assets and build capacity. The objective is to enable citizens to improve the quality of their own lives.
- 4.5 Sitting under this umbrella of localisation the Council is currently engaged in two significant pieces of work around climate change and community wealth building. In June 2019 the Council declared a Climate Emergency with the stated aim of reducing the City's carbon emissions to 'net-zero' by 2030. The Council has also embarked on an ambitious journey with partners across the city to promote 'community wealth building'. This will involve the Council and partners changing their procurement behaviours to ensure that as much spend as possible remains within the City with opportunities captured by local businesses. This agenda also requires work to build skills/capacity within our communities to allow them to capture the opportunities that changes in procurement behaviour will bring.

- 4.6 For real progress to be made substantial change is required. This will be in the areas of democratic participation, the structure of our local economy [e.g. the shift in emphasis from simply valuing financial reward to prioritising social outcome], the way current public services are delivered, and the responsibility that individual citizens/businesses assume in contributing to resolving macro problems such as climate change or poor air quality [e.g. reducing personal carbon footprints].
- 4.7 This is entirely consistent with the Co-operative values referred to above and specifically around self-help, self-responsibility, democracy and equality. Membership of the CCIN can assist in providing the ‘tools’ to make further progress in delivering the localisation agenda and shaping the post-Covid world.

## 5 What are the benefits of joining the CCIN?

- 5.1 These are as set out below:

BENEFITS:	COSTS:
The principles and values of the CCIN align with current Birmingham City Council policy context around localisation. <sup>1</sup> This work is being influenced by the New Local Government Network (Chaired by Donna Hall CBE, a current Non-Executive Adviser to the Council) and its policy paper the “The Community Paradigm” <sup>2</sup>	There is a resource implication of £7,900 for one year’s membership and there will be an ongoing resource implication for future years should a decision be made to continue membership on an ongoing basis.
Membership will allow for best practice and innovative ideas to be shared with Birmingham City Council and communities from across the country	
Limited cost of membership	
Provides a focus and means of joining up existing agendas that require the Council to think differently in terms of how it engages with communities e.g. Community Wealth Building, Covid Recovery and the work around Climate Change which will require significant ‘grassroots’ participation;	

<sup>1</sup> *Working Together in Birmingham’s Neighbourhood Policy White Paper* (Birmingham City Council January 2019)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/2019/the-community-paradigm-why-public-services-need-radical-change-and-how-it-can-be-achieved/>

There is potential to bid for funding (up to £10,000) from CCIN to support innovative practice.	
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- 5.2 Joining the CCIN will provide a useful insight into best practice from other areas relating to community engagement and empowerment. It will provide resources to both elected members and Council Officers which will be particularly useful in supporting the existing policy direction around localisation and help support the development of innovative policy solutions.

## 6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The cost of a full-year membership is £7,900. It is proposed that this would be funded from the Corporate Subscriptions Budget which sits within the Partnership, Insight and Performance Directorate. The Assistant Chief Executive has approved this spend.

### Background Papers/Information:

- Co-op Council's Innovation Network Strategy 2018-2020 - [CCIN Strategy 2018-20](#)
- Centre for Local Economic Strategies - Community Wealth Building – Birmingham Anchor Network Update [21 March 2019] <https://cles.org.uk/news/birmingham-anchor-network/>
- *Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhood Policy White Paper* (Birmingham City Council January 2019) – can be viewed [here](#).
- Climate Change Emergency – All Party Notice of Motion 11 June 2019 – can be viewed [here](#).
- The Community Paradigm [New Local Government Network – 17 March 2019] – can be viewed [here](#).