

## **Executive Commentary**

### **‘Something to Aim For’ Scrutiny Inquiry into Employment and Skills for Young People**

I would like to offer my thanks to the Chair and Members of the Economy & Skills Overview & Scrutiny Committee for carrying out this timely and important inquiry into the challenges faced by our young people today. I would also like to thank the many young people, front-line staff and stakeholders who gave their time and feedback to the inquiry.

Three years ago, as we entered the first Covid-19 lockdown, it was already clear that the pandemic would have a disproportionate economic and employment impact on some of the most vulnerable people in our city – our young people. In response, Birmingham City Council led the way in delivering ‘Breaking Down Barriers’, a vital piece of research exploring youth unemployment in Birmingham in the context of Covid-19. That report outlined not just the devastating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on children and young people, but also shone a light on the inequalities that continue to plague our society, and the need for the Council to come together with partners to do better for our young people.

I am proud of the progress that we have made so far in delivering the recommendations outlined in Breaking Down Barriers. This includes the delivery of a youth unemployment pilot in East Birmingham, the publication of a city-wide digital inclusion strategy, and our new Travel to Succeed programme, reducing the cost of travel for NEET and care experienced young people across Birmingham. However, as this report makes clear, too many young people in Birmingham still face barriers to finding fulfilling careers. As a city we can, and must, do more.

Going forward, the Council remains committed to delivering the recommendations of the Breaking Down Barriers report, alongside the additional recommendations of this inquiry. In so doing, we will need to adopt a whole Council approach, recognising the role that all our services have to play and bringing together all our shared experience and expertise. We will also need to continue to invest and build in our relationships, recognising the important role of key partners including the West Midlands Combined Authority, national government, and our business community. Finally – and most importantly – we must work with all our children and young people to co-produce solutions that recognise both the challenges and opportunities of building a career in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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Deputy Leader