

Birmingham City Council

Report to City Council

3 December 2024



Title:	EXECUTIVE BUSINESS REPORT
Lead Member:	Councillor John Cotton, Leader of the Council Councillor Nicky Brennan, Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities
Relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee:	Not Applicable
Has this report been shared with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair?	Not Applicable
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Authorised by:	Joanne Roney, Managing Director
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Reason(s) why not included on the Forward Plan and confirm who has authorised it to be considered:	Not Applicable
Is this a Late Report?	No
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Is this decision eligible for 'call in?'	Not Applicable
If 'call-in' has been dis-applied, please provide reason(s) and confirm who has authorised:	Not Applicable

Wards:

Not Applicable

Does this report contain exempt or confidential information?

No

Has this decision been included on the Notification of Intention to consider Matters in Private?

Not Applicable

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

Not Applicable

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This Executive Business Report will provide an update on the ongoing work in two Cabinet Member portfolios over the past year:

1.1.1 Leader (pp. 3-13)

1.1.2 Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities (pp. 14-27)

2 COMMISSIONERS' REVIEW

2.1 Commissioners have no observations on this report.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 That the report be noted by the City Council.

4 KEY INFORMATION

Context

4.1 On 10th September 2019, Full Council accepted the recommendations of the Coordinating O&S Committee review in respect of changes to the Full Council agenda.

4.2 Recommendation 3 of the review requested that the Executive provide an update to Full Council on its work via the provision of an Executive Business Report ('EBR'). EBRs will be provided to Full Council four times per municipal year and will include details of progress made in relation to Council strategic outcomes and priorities linked to two Cabinet Member portfolios.

5 Leader's Portfolio

5.1 This report focuses on the Leader's Portfolio and covers key parts of his remit:

- Leadership of the Council and Cabinet, strategic liaison with the Corporate Leadership Team and with Best Value Commissioners
- Strategic Policies
- Localisation, including Shaping Birmingham's Future Together
- Financial Strategy
- Strategic Partnerships, External Affairs and Policy
- Communications
- West Midlands Combined Authority

6 Leadership of the City Council and Cabinet

- 6.1 The primary focus for the political and corporate leadership has been working with Commissioners to address the areas laid out in the Intervention, including delivering financial sustainability. This has seen the Improvement and Recovery Plan agreed in April 2024, with more detail outlined further in this report. Further implementation stages will take place over the coming year.
- 6.2 Commissioners wrote to the Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) on 22 October 2024 regarding the progress being made and areas they want to see have focus ahead. The letter identifies that the Council must make financial savings and transform at a faster pace, with a firmer grip on how it operates and achieves best value. This will continue to be the focus for the leadership teams and officers across the Council going forward.
- 6.2.1 The Minister replied on 22 October 2024, acknowledging the progress made to date and outlining his commitment to resetting the relationship between local and central government and establishing partnerships built on mutual respect, genuine collaboration, and meaningful engagement.
- 6.3 While the primary focus is on the Council's recovery, work continues on promoting the City, developing partnerships with key stakeholders, shaping public policy, and seeking to secure further investment.
- 6.4 The leadership has engaged closely with the new West Midlands Mayor, Richard Parker, and have established excellent working relationships. The Deputy Leader, Cllr Sharon Thompson, was appointed the Deputy Mayor of the West Midlands in June 2024.
- 6.5 Similarly, the leadership has been responding to the election of the new Labour government and has had wide engagement with Ministers regarding Birmingham's challenges and opportunities.
- 6.6 In September, the corporate leadership team was strengthened with the arrival of the new Managing Director, Joanne Roney, as head of paid service. The new Managing Director comes with a huge range of local experience, including extensive service as a Chief Executive at Wakefield and Manchester. The new Managing Director is moving to strengthen the corporate leadership team through a restructure of remits and making permanent appointments to senior roles.

7 Strategic Priorities

7.1 Improvement and Recovery Plan

- 7.1.1 An Improvement and Recovery Plan was agreed in April 2024 by Cabinet and the Corporate Leadership Team. This sets out the overarching direction to support the Council to address the issues identified in the Statutory Intervention. This includes delivering a Council that:

7.1.2 Achieves financial sustainability to deliver a balanced budget, a sustainable medium-term financial plan, a resilient capital assets programme, and robust financial management. This includes the delivery of agreed savings, including asset sales and actions to resolve the Council's Equal Pay liability.

- Is well-run, by resetting the organisational culture at the Council to support the current and future workforce. This includes reducing the levels of duplication across operational functions, embedding effective governance and decision-making processes, and supporting the reimplementation and optimisation of Oracle.
- Has a workforce that feels valued and listened to.

7.1.3 Delivers good services, with a programme of service reviews to secure consistency, continuous improvement, value for money, and better outcomes for citizens.

7.1.4 Since April 2024, the Council has made progress on its improvement journey in notable areas such as:

- Approving a budget for FY24/25, with identified savings totalling £149.8m. This action is ensuring that the Council remains on track to balance its budget.
- Approving the Improvement and Recovery Plan in April 2024.
- Ensuring that the reimplementation of the Oracle programme is underway.
- Taking actions that seek to resolve the Council's Equal Pay liability. This includes making progress with a revised Job Evaluation Scheme, and settlement of the litigation. The target date for completion is April 2025.
- Developing a plan to improve the Procurement Operating Model, with a focus on strategic contract management to achieve best value.
- Developing a 'Birmingham Vision' to support the Council to deliver better outcomes for citizens.

7.1.5 Further stages of the Improvement and Recovery Plan will take place over the coming months, including the development of a refreshed Corporate Plan.

7.2 Birmingham Vision

7.2.1 The Birmingham Vision is under development as an outcome of the Improvement and Recovery Plan. This will set the direction for the City and the Council's work with partners, such as the West Midlands Combined Authority.

7.2.2 The development of the Birmingham Vision has included a broad stakeholder engagement process, involving over 1,500 citizens, 30 in-person meetings, and substantial discussions with some of the Council's key partners. The

Vision is intended to be shared and delivered with a range of partners across the City.

- 7.2.3 As a result of this activity, it is intended that The City Partnership Board will be refreshed and reinstated as an action-focused partnership to deliver this shared vision in collaboration with partners.

7.3 Corporate Plan

- 7.3.1 A refreshed Corporate Plan is currently being developed and is due to be agreed in the coming months. The Birmingham Vision is supporting the creation of the refreshed Corporate Plan, enabling the Council to take citizen and partner feedback into consideration.

- 7.3.2 The Corporate Plan will outline what the Council is seeking to achieve over the next three years, to ensure that appropriate action is taken to guide the Council out of the Best Value Intervention. Intervention.

8 Localisation, including Shaping Birmingham's Future Together (SBFT)

- 8.1 In March 2024, the Leader set a new direction for the Authority to involve citizens and partners in decision-making activities at the Council, through the creation of Shaping Birmingham's Future Together.

- 8.2 This forum is intended to embed greater transparency and coproduction in decision-making processes, to support citizens in feeling heard and develop an understanding of how the Council operates to deliver services.

- 8.3 Shaping Birmingham's Future Together will also inform how the Council engages with citizens through the Birmingham Promise. The Birmingham Promise has been developed to help the Council achieve consistency within our approaches to partnership working, to strengthen our relationships with citizens and partners.

- 8.4 As a Council, it is crucial that we work with our partners and citizens to tackle ongoing challenges across the City. The Birmingham Promise intends to support the Council to establish a new civic relationship in the City, in order to ensure that citizen's voices are heard, and actions are taken to deliver improved outcomes for residents.

9 Financial Strategy

- 9.1 The Leader's portfolio is responsible for the Financial Strategy for the Council. This includes the Council's strategic approach to the use of financial resources and budget.

- 9.2 For the 2025/26 to 2028/29 Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) period, Cabinet has been clear in its intention to present a balanced budget for 2025/26 and 2026/27 for final approval in February 2025, as directed by Commissioners.

- 9.3 In order to set an MTFP and provide a stable and sustainable financial footing for the Council, a series of Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Principles were agreed by Cabinet on 23 July 2024, to cover the period of 2025/26 to 2028/29.

Further details around the MTFFS Principles can be found in the report presented to Cabinet on 23 July 2024, titled 'Section 151 Officer Update on the Financial Position of the Council – July 2024 & General Fund Medium Term Financial Plan Update.

- 9.4 These principles guide the Council in setting realistic budgets, identifying potential risks, and implementing necessary adjustments to maintain financial health over a multi-year period. By adhering to MTFFS principles, the Council can align its financial resources with its strategic priorities, ensuring that long-term goals are achievable within the available means.
- 9.5 Tracking the MTFFS principles through to delivery is essential for maintaining financial discipline and accountability. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of financial performance against the MTFP enables timely identification of variances and prompts corrective actions, mitigating against potential financial risks.
- 9.6 This process ensures that savings targets and budgetary commitments are met, contributing to the overall financial stability and resilience of the Council. Effective tracking also fosters transparency, demonstrating to stakeholders that the Council is managing public funds responsibly and is committed to delivering value for money.
- 9.7 To ensure the MTFFS principles are effectively communicated and embedded within the Council, it is essential to adopt a structured and strategic approach. This begins with clear and consistent messaging from senior leadership, including the Managing Director and Section 151 Officer, emphasising the importance of the MTFFS principles in guiding all financial and operational decisions. These principles should be disseminated via regular S151 Updates to CLT and ECLT, and then through to DMTs, helping people to fully understand and adhere to these principles. Utilising internal communication channels such as the intranet, newsletters, and staff meetings will reinforce these messages.
- 9.8 Incorporating the MTFFS principles into the Council's performance management frameworks and decision-making processes will further embed them into daily operations. Providing regular updates and progress reports on the financial position of the Council and these principles will maintain transparency and accountability, ensuring all employees are aware of their role in achieving financial sustainability. By fostering a culture of collective responsibility, the Council can ensure that the MTFFS principles are not only understood but are actively applied in the pursuit of long-term financial health and strategic objectives.

10 Strategic Partnerships, External Affairs and Policy

- 10.1 While the Council faces financial challenges, it nevertheless continues to build partnerships and engage with national policy networks. This activity seeks to influence policy and provide peer support to the benefit of the City and its citizens and provide learning opportunities to inform the Council's improvement journey.

10.2 The new Labour Government

10.2.1 The Council has established a positive and constructive working relationship with the new Government and will continue to work with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government ministers and officials. Cabinet Members are building relationships with Ministers to re-establish Birmingham as a key player in the Local Government sector.

10.2.2 Minister for Local Government and English Devolution Jim McMahon MP has acknowledged the progress made at the Council, while stressing his keenness that the intervention moves as quickly as possible to a model based around a more equal partnership with the Council, so that it is increasingly able to lead its own recovery.

10.3 Think Tanks and Policy Networks

10.3.1 The Council seeks opportunities to work with think tanks to develop policy solutions and data analytics that can both influence the national debate and directly support service improvement. Recent examples include work with Nesta on early years services, work with Reform on devolution proposals, and work with Demos to map out the provision of employment support services in East Birmingham.

10.4 Core Cities Group

10.4.1 The Core Cities group (the eight largest English cities outside London plus Glasgow, Cardiff, and Belfast) is an influential network which pools resources to commission research and policy development, partner with policy experts in the public and the private sector and engage with government to provide the evidence base for policy on cities. The group was instrumental in driving the evolving policy of successive governments on devolution to the city regions and is currently engaging the new government on both economic growth and public service reform. The Council engages fully with the group at Leader, Chief Executive, and Policy Advisor levels. Birmingham hosted the Core Cities Cabinet in October 2024.

10.5 Local Government Association

10.5.1 The Council continues to engage in important national conferences such as the Local Government Association (LGA) conference and both the Labour Party and Conservative Party conferences, albeit with a much-reduced officer participation to limit costs. These conferences provide an opportunity to engage directly with government ministers, influential figures, and leaders within the Local Government sector. There was extensive engagement with the new Government front bench at the LGA and Labour Party conferences in September 2024 and October 2024, as well as valuable peer support for the Council's improvement challenges at the LGA event.

10.5.2 The Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition both sit on the LGA's City Regions Board which focuses on the interests of urban areas. The

Council engages with the LGA on the improvement agenda and a range of policy priorities, where they can add to the sector's influence on government.

10.6 Partnership Working

10.6.1 Enabling effective partnerships with key stakeholders in the City is essential to the delivery of services, economic growth, and ability to make progress on wider ambitions for the City. This is integral to the Council's improvement journey and driven directly by the Leader of the Council.

10.6.2 Guidance on improving partnership working and the development of supportive infrastructure is underway to improve the Council's approach to partnership working.

10.6.3 In addition, mapping of the Council's Strategic Partnerships is underway alongside the development of a Stakeholder Relationship Management system. This should improve the Council's information on partner relationships, in order to strengthen partnerships and help the Council to be a better partner.

10.6.4 Examples of closer working relationships with individual organisations include the City's Universities, the Chambers of Commerce, and the Voluntary Sector. It is also recognised that the Council needs to strengthen its strategic relationships with developers and other businesses to ensure that the Council is fully supporting its mission to drive economic growth.

10.7 International Interactions

10.7.1 Birmingham is a global city and has the second largest city economy in the UK. The Council has 10 formal city relationships to support this status and global future of the City, and it is a member of city networks such as Eurocities which develops policy thinking across global cities.

10.7.2 An alliance of local partners including universities, Chamber of Commerce and WMCA supports work to position the city, engage with the UK Mission in Brussels and EU officials, and corral opportunities such as Horizon funding. The partnership, led by Birmingham City Council, helped the City to be shortlisted for the European Capital of Innovation.

10.7.3 The Council's international activity supports the success of the City's business community. An export support programme (and linked to the Department of Business and Trade) helps local small and medium sized enterprise (SMEs) on their trade and export path. It has seen a joint civic-business mission focused on the creative sector in Leipzig, Germany, on 7-9 November 2024. There is also international collaboration working with our universities, Chamber of Commerce and Connected Places Catapult, on innovation projects such as DIATOMIC (digital expertise) and 'innovation twins,' underpinned with a relationship with Ulsan, South Korea on these projects to support industrial symbiosis. There are also other international

projects with European partners, on policy on sustainable food systems and urban innovation

10.7.4 The City Council has welcomed international delegations to the City, with a number involving diplomatic connections and engagement with embassies and consuls to showcase Birmingham.

11 Communications

11.1 The Corporate Communications team support the delivery of planned and proactive strategic internal and external communications activity, focused on key Corporate Plan priorities, and evidenced through high-quality insight. To deliver clear, consistent, and creative communications as one organisation.

11.2 Reset, Reshape, Restart

11.2.1 Throughout communications, the team have noted that financial challenges are a Birmingham City Council issue rather than a Birmingham issue in order to remind people that the City is still open for business.

11.2.2 A social campaign was put together focused on milestones in the budget setting process, promoting the budget engagement survey and the fact that difficult decisions are being made, the way the council delivers services will change and the need for Reset, Reshape, Restart.

11.2.3 Following the budget proposals which were published on 19 February 2024, the Council began a series of consultations on Home to School Transport, Libraries, Day Centres, Flood Risk Strategy and Car Parking. These were promoted by comms throughout 2024.

11.3 Improvement and Recovery Plan

11.3.1 The Internal Communications team focused on communicating the Improvement and Recovery Plan to colleagues across the Council. The team created a dedicated intranet pages for colleagues to find all IRP information in one central place on the City Council Portal.

11.3.2 The Internal Communications team have also worked with IRP colleagues to set up the Colleague Community and supported 16 priority projects including linking the strategic narrative linked to the IRP. Colleagues have worked closely with the Leaders office on joint internal communications as part of this process.

11.3.3 In addition to this, the team has supported the promotion of public consultations for areas such as Libraries.

11.4 Next 12 Months

11.4.1 In the next 12 months, we are aware of three gold-level campaigns which the team will be supporting. However, the Corporate Communications team often react to events in the Council or within the City where needed.

- 11.4.2 Starting from December 2024 (STC), the communications team will start to communicate the next year's budget (25/26). This will include support on any consultation, if required, and also educating residents, and staff, on how the budget is set and what goes on behind the scenes. This will include videos explaining the process, infographics and updated information on the council's website, social media, and other channels. From learnings from last year and previous ones, the communications team will also ensure plain English is used to inform and educate residents better. Where required the team will also use translations.
- 11.4.3 The same will be replicated across internal communications, in addition to a Managing Director roadshow which will visit colleagues across Birmingham to build trust and inform colleagues on the future budget and what implications this may mean, setting the scene for further challenges to come.

12 West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)

- 12.1 A key partner for the Council is the WMCA and Mayor of the West Midlands. The City Council worked with the previous Mayor, Andy Street on a range of areas and is continuing to do so with the recently elected Mayor, Richard Parker. Main areas of activities that have taken place to date, and are looking ahead, include the following points below.
- 12.2 WMCA devolution deal and integrated settlement
- 12.2.1 The Council has been working closely with the WMCA and other local authorities on the development of the integrated settlement (formerly known as the single settlement) for the WMCA and is playing a full role in developing how it will operate.
- 12.2.2 The new funding arrangements were outlined in the Trailblazer Deeper Devolution deal published in March 2023 and were confirmed in the Budget 2024.
- 12.2.3 The integrated settlement fundamentally changes how money from government flows to the WMCA. Instead of many separate funds with different conditions and often competitive bidding arrangements, the WMCA will receive an allocation of funding to be deployed across a set of functions.
- 12.2.4 It should mean the ability to be able to advance local authority priorities more readily, including in Birmingham, and covers place-based approaches to support economic growth. The first year of the integrated settlement begins in April 2025 with further funding years due to be announced in the Spending Review.
- 12.2.5 Other elements of the devolution deal are also being progressed including developing plans for the Birmingham Knowledge Quarter (BKQ) part of the West Midlands Investment Zone and the East Birmingham North Solihull (EBNS) programme supported through a business rate retention growth zone

secured through the deal. The aim to deliver the best outcomes for the city and to influence the development of future regional and national policy.

12.3 West Midlands Partnership Plan

12.3.1 The City Council has been playing its role in the development of the partnership plan which sets out how WMCA and local authorities will work together, including the WMCA and reflects the changed circumstances including to deliver to the integrated settlement. The plan also involves developing a series of missions for the region to outline what the WMCA and local authorities are collectively seeking to achieve.

12.4 West Midlands Growth Plan

12.4.1 The Council is working with the WMCA in the development of the West Midlands growth plan. Government has asked Mayoral Combined Authorities to produce these plans. The growth plan will set out how the region supports economic growth and key industries and will build on strengths in the city and tools such as the investment zone and EBNS growth zone sites.

12.5 Further devolution

12.5.1 The Council is also working with the WMCA and other local authorities on a programme to engage the government on the next phase of devolution that will come through the Devolution White Paper and subsequent English Devolution Bill due to be taken forward in 2025.

12.5.2 The devolution programme is an opportunity to build on the integrated settlement to bring more powers and funding to the region as well as local authorities to support the pace of change and delivery of local priorities including reducing demand on public services. The work on devolution propositions also dovetails preparing for the coming Spending Review, also due early next year.

12.6 WMCA Programmes

12.6.1 The City Council is working with the WMCA on wider areas such as the Mayor's youth plan, housing, and bus reform plans.

13 Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities Portfolio

13.1 This report will break down the work undertaken within the Social Justice, Community Safety, and Equalities portfolio. This is outlined under the following headings to represent the following strategic priorities:

- Domestic Abuse
- Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)
- Serious Violence Duty
- Modern Slavery
- Criminal Exploitation of Young People
- Hate Crime Reduction
- Neighbourhood Safety Initiatives
- CCTV and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)
- Community Cohesion
- Refugees, Migration and City of Sanctuary 2024
- Bereavement Services and Register Office
- Equalities

14 Domestic Abuse

14.1 Birmingham's Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2024+

14.1.1 The Council's Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy officially launched on 19th November 2024. Shared strategic priorities and values, as reported in 2023, were strongly endorsed by partners, providers, citizens, and survivors in two extensive public consultations. Workshops were held at the launch event to embed the key partnership values from the strategy, to reinforce the robust partnership response required to take a whole-system approach.

14.1.2 The strategy is underpinned by a live action plan, and work is underway to reshape the partnership governance to drive its delivery. This will involve an executive Board who maintain oversight of the implementation of the strategy, a cross-partnership Operational group who report to the Board and focus on whole system actions, and delivery groups focused on specific priorities.

14.2 Commissioned services and Part 4 Duty

14.2.1 Commissioned services have continued to see high levels of demand throughout 2024. The Domestic Abuse Hub received over 24,000 calls, as well as nearly 300 webchats and over 600 drop-ins over the past year. Across other commissioned services, 1,261 referrals were made, and of these 649 households received support.

14.2.2 Prior to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Council used Part 4 grant from the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government to enhance support in safe accommodation. Due to financial challenges and the need to make savings, funding from Adult Social Care for safe accommodation has been replaced by fully utilising the Part 4 grant. Proposals for the use of the remaining part of the grant were taken to the market in October. Feedback on current needs and feasibility has helped to reshape the proposed models.

14.2.3 The aim will be to provide additional support for children and young people, support within non-commissioned safe accommodation, including our strong local “by and for” sector, and early intervention and prevention support in the community.

14.3 Staff Policy

14.3.1 The Council’s Human Resources policy and guidance on domestic abuse for employees is being updated to reflect our strategic values and improve support to survivors amongst our own staff.

14.3.2 The new policy and guidance includes:

- Up to date definitions of DA, in line with the DA Act 2021
- A survivor-centred organisational approach to DA, in line with Birmingham’s Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2024+
- Examples of workplace adjustments managers must consider when an employee has disclosed DA, reflecting the range of working arrangements in use
- Clearer wording on safeguarding and record keeping procedures
- A zero-tolerance approach to perpetrators
- Guidance on why we take a gendered approach, and being aware of intersectional barriers colleagues may face
- Updated information on support options

14.3.3 Once approved by the Corporate Leadership Team and consulted on with the trade unions, the new policy and guidance will be formally launched in 2025.

14.4 Inform Women Transform Lives

14.4.1 The Inform Women Transform Lives campaign has so far reached over 4.7 million people across Birmingham. Throughout the campaign period, we have seen increased contact to our Domestic Abuse Hub compared to previous years. It has been extremely well-received, with recognition from the Information Commissioner’s Office and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

14.4.2 UNESCO invited and paid for Cllr Brennan to speak at their conference in Ghana, celebrating the Universal Day of Information at the beginning of

October 2024. This was a brilliant opportunity to showcase Birmingham's work and to make connections with other cities tackling this issue.

15 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

- 15.1 The VAWG Strategy was presented to the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership, aligning with the Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy. A set of recommendations will be implemented by the Community Safety VAWG working group to further the strategy.

16 Serious Violence Duty

- 16.1 Following the Serious Violence Duty (SVD) introduced in January 2023, the Birmingham Violence Reduction Board (BVRB) was established. The BVRB oversees the Birmingham Reducing Serious Violence Strategy, and the Birmingham Delivery Plan (2023-2026) aligns with the Regional Reducing Violence Strategy. The BVRB launched the Circle of Friends project, targeting peer influence and helping young people choose non-violent paths, distancing them from gang involvement.

17 Modern Slavery

- 17.1 The Council's first Modern Slavery Strategy for the period 2025-2030 has been developed. The strategy focuses on 5 main areas of work, Prepare, Prevent, Protect, Pursue and Partnership. Our strategy will be supplemented by a yearly delivery plan, which will highlight priorities for each year to ensure clear objectives, continuous progress, and accountability.
- 17.2 A Modern Slavery Champion model has been reviewed and will be reintroduced, in a new, more sustainable form, as a part of the work under the strategy. This will happen as soon as the decision on how the council discharges its First Responder duty to the National Referral Mechanism System is made.

18 Criminal Exploitation of Young People

- 18.1 The Youth Inspector Programme, funded by the Community Safety team, empowers young people in Newtown, Lozells, and Handsworth to share experiences of serious youth violence and exploitation. Similar programmes are planned for other city areas. Partnerships continue to support prosecution efforts against criminal activities like county lines.

19 Hate Crime Reduction

- 19.1 The Birmingham Hate Crime Partnership continues to develop and work on implementing a delivery plan, with neighbourhood-specific actions. Following the success of a 10-point safety plan in the city's Gay Quarter, similar frameworks are being expanded. Collaborations with national bodies (e.g., Community Security Trust, TellMAMA) support efforts to combat antisemitism and Islamophobia.

- 19.2 Together, CSP & Cohesion have drafted a localised Hate Crime Awareness leaflet that can be distributed amongst members of the public and professionals to increase Hate Crime Awareness and support organisations available. This leaflet is currently being finalised by Design and Print and will be ready to distribute early December 2024.
- 19.3 Community Safety & Cohesion colleagues have been actively disseminating information and promoting Hate Crime reporting centres, working closely with the West Midlands Police Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Crime officers via the Proud Rainbow City Partnership (PRCP) and the Faith Covenant membership. This consists of Voluntary, Community, Faith & Statutory sector partners, including the Crown Prosecution Service and West Midlands Police, to work together to further shape and influence approaches towards reduction.
- 19.4 The Community Safety and Cohesion Team are working on developing a Birmingham-specific Active Bystander Training Programme, to roll out across the City to those with a wider reach into our communities.
- 19.5 Work is underway locally amongst partners to increase hate crime reporting centres across Birmingham and to increase awareness on identifying and reporting Hate Crime. Community Safety Intervention Officers (CSIO's) regularly check in with third party hate crime reporting centres, engaging with staff to ensure they and the public feel safe and supported when accessing reporting centres from a safety standpoint. Cohesion colleagues also remain in regular contact with centres as part of their engagement work, as some centres are members of the various partnerships that Cohesion support and oversee.
- 19.6 Local Hate Crime reporting centres in Birmingham are:
- Aston University Students' Union
 - BID Services, Deaf Cultural Centre
 - Birmingham Chinese Community Centre
 - Birmingham LGBT Wellbeing Centre
 - Bournville Village Trust
- 19.7 Cerebral Palsy Midlands
- Disability Resource Centre
 - Family Action
 - Khidmat Centre
 - Loft Birmingham
 - Weoley Castle Community Centre (Midland Mencap)
 - South and City College (all campuses)
 - Sufi Abdullah Foundation, Sparkhill

20 Neighbourhood Safety Initiatives

- 20.1 The Operation Eternity initiative addresses anti-social behaviour (ASB) in high-incidence areas, in partnership with West Midlands Police. The Council's Community Safety team has deployed intervention officers across hotspots, including Welsh House Farm, Fox Hollies Park, and the city centre.
- 20.2 Local Community Safety Partnerships (LCSPs) have been consolidated from six to five as a result of savings proposals, with each developing a crime reduction-focused delivery plan monitored in monthly meetings.

21 CCTV and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Measures

- 21.1 CCTV resources continue to be shared with other City Council departments. Relocation of the CCTV control room to Priestly Wharf provides opportunities to improve monitoring capabilities and wider partnership working.
- 21.2 An integrated ASB provides a coordinated response. A city-wide operational group, in partnership with West Midlands Police, addresses organised crime with a focus on reducing ASB in affected neighbourhoods. These efforts reflect Birmingham's commitment to safety, equality, and cohesive community development across the city.

22 Community Cohesion

- 22.1 In February 2024, the Cohesion Team moved from the Strategy, Equality & Partnerships (SEP) to Community Safety & Resilience (CS&R) within City Operations to strengthen alignment with community safety efforts.

22.2 Birmingham Armed Forces Covenant Partnership

22.2.1 The Cohesion Team collaborates with the Armed Forces Covenant, which includes representatives from tri-services, cadets, and reservists, to support veterans by improving access to services and raising the profile of covenant work. The updated Covenant Guide, currently being distributed in libraries and veteran support venues, will soon have a second edition. The partnership is also, career support, and healthcare access for veterans, guided by a recent "Veterans Deep Dive" health and wellbeing report. Plans include the development of Active Bystander training and fostering connections between cadets and local businesses, alongside opportunities such as the 2027 Invictus Games.

22.3 Proud Rainbow City Partnership (PRCP)

22.3.1 The PRCP works to make Birmingham an inclusive and thriving city for LGBTQ+ residents. Building on the success of a 10-point action plan, the partnership focuses on areas such as employment equality, inclusive health services, and safety measures. Initiatives have included new bystander training, expanded third-party reporting centres, and events during LGBTQ+ History Month, with contributions from members such as Mind Mental Health

and the University of Birmingham. The PRCP continues to support key projects, including cross-partner initiatives with Birmingham Pride and Birmingham Mela.

22.4 Birmingham Faith Covenant Partnership (BCFP)

22.4.1 The BFCP collaborates with various faith organisations, statutory bodies, and the voluntary sector to address city-wide priorities through an inclusive approach. Current projects include a Faith Directory for accessible services and the Birmingham Faith Climate Action Partnership (BiFCAP), which secured funding for community-led climate work. A Faith Safety & Justice subgroup has also been created, with an upcoming Crown Prosecution Service seminar on issues such as hate crime, domestic abuse, and community safety.

22.5 Cross-Partnership Initiatives

22.5.1 These partnerships work together on key issues, such as providing support for LGBTQ+ veterans in the Armed Forces Guide, promoting the Faith Safety & Justice seminar locally tailored Active Bystander training. Shared resources are mobilised quickly during incidents; for example, the Faith Directory facilitated rapid communication with mosques during recent city unrest.

22.6 Recent Events and Community Response

22.6.1 During the summer 2024 riots, the team conducted extensive outreach with Muslim community leaders, holding reassurance visits, disseminating security resources, and working with partners to restore calm. The government's Community Recovery Fund will soon support further initiatives aimed at rebuilding social trust.

22.6.2 The team successfully organised large community events, including the Windrush Festival 2024, a milestone celebration of Black communities, and the Remembering Srebrenica memorial attended by over 500 community members.

22.7 Next Steps

22.7.1 Cohesion will continue supporting these partnerships and will coordinate with CS&R on upcoming projects, including training and recovery fund initiatives, to promote cohesion and resilience city-wide.

22.8 Prevent

22.8.1 In the past 12 months the Home Office has moved towards a regional Prevent delivery model and the number of local authority areas that receive funding has significantly reduced. Funding continues to be provided to the areas where the threat from terrorism and radicalisation is highest. Birmingham City Council is within the 20 areas facing a higher relative threat and has continued to receive dedicated Prevent funding for posts, projects, and

engagement to help go above and beyond the statutory requirements of the Prevent Duty.

22.8.2 In 23/24 the Home Office undertook an annual benchmark assessment to help ensure that local authorities are delivering their statutory Prevent Duty. Birmingham City Council was assessed to be exceeding its delivery in seven of the right benchmarks:

- Multi-agency partnership group
- Local risk assessment process
- Partnership plan
- Referral pathway
- Channel panel
- Training programme
- Reducing permissive environments

22.8.3 We are meeting our obligations in the eighth benchmark for Communications and Engagement.

22.8.4 During 23/24 the Prevent team managed eight Home Office-funded projects that delivered a range of activities in high-priority parts of the City in order to build resilience against radicalisation. In total, 508 workshops were delivered, reaching 10,002 participants:

- KIKIT Pathways: engagement in faith settings, mentoring, digital resilience workshops;
- Small Steps: Awareness raising of extreme right-wing threats;
- Sociological: workshops and mentoring for young people on extremism, radicalisation, gangs;
- Aston Villa Foundation: sports engagement in high-risk settings and locations;
- Dolphin: workshops and events for women;
- Himaya Haven: workshops and support for families impacted by radicalisation;
- Connect Futures: educational workshops around managing impact of international conflicts;
- Groundswell: educational workshops on Islamist and Right-wing extremism.

22.8.5 Despite concerns in local communities around the escalation of the Middle East conflict following the Hamas Terrorist attack on 7th October 2023, there has not been a local spike in Prevent referrals linked to the Middle East conflict, nor has there been a raised local terrorist threat. The Prevent team

have worked tirelessly to help ensure that citizen's rights to peaceful protest and freedom of expression are maintained, whilst extremist influences and support for proscribed groups like Hamas are challenged. Activity has included but is not limited to:

- Regular formal engagement with representatives from all communities;
- Community engagement, focus groups, coffee mornings with marginalised groups;
- Support and proactive guidance for all educational settings in the city;

22.8.6 Partnership approach to reducing permissive environments (e.g. conducting due diligence and tackling sensitive issues around venue hire, speakers, fundraising).

22.9 Next 12 Months

22.9.1 Threat and performance outcomes will be communicated to the highest threat local authorities by the end of November, with bids for posts and projects commencing in January 2025. It is anticipated that Birmingham City Council will receive a similar amount of funding as 24/25. Therefore, there should not be any additional budgetary risks. Plans are in place to embed resilience in BCT in the event that the Home Office no longer fund the BCT Prevent Lead Post. Going forward, all Prevent referrals will be sent simultaneously to CT Police and BCT, rather than BCT in the first instance.

23 **Refugees, Migration and City of Sanctuary 2024**

23.1 Arrivals

23.1.1 Birmingham continues to welcome new arrivals to the city as part of our ongoing commitment to the following resettlement schemes:

- Homes 4 Ukraine – c.1177 individuals (more than 685 families) have been displaced to Birmingham since the beginning of the scheme in 2022. To date, 462 families remain in Birmingham.
- Afghan Resettlement (includes the Afghan Relocation & Assistance Policy, the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme and the Afghan Find Your Own Pathway) – c. 625 individuals since the scheme began in 2021.

23.2 Asylum Dispersal and newly granted refugees: The supported asylum-seeking population in the City over the past year has remained at circa 2100. Towards the end of 2024 we have seen a significant rise in exits from the asylum system with a positive decision and we expect this trajectory to continue. From January to October 2024, a total of 710 cases (898 individuals) have been granted refugee status, many of whom chose to remain in Birmingham.

23.2.1 A new Communities for Afghans (CfA) project was launched by MHCLG in January 2024 as a six-month pilot to resettle 100 families nationally via a

community sponsorship scheme. At this stage, we are unsure of the number of families that will settle in Birmingham via this scheme.

23.3 Integration

23.3.1 Refugees who arrived in Birmingham via the Afghan, Syrian (2015-2020 arrivals period) or UKRS (2021 arrivals period) schemes can access four integration support services: tenancy sustainment, employability, participation, and mental health. These services will be recommissioned in 2025 using external grant funding. Those still within their first 12 months of settlement also receive dedicated support via the Arrivals, Accommodation and Orientation service. The Council also commissions 8 active grant-funded projects, providing further integration support for all people who arrived through a resettlement programme.

23.3.2 Support for Ukrainian guests continues through two contracts: one offering arrival orientation and accommodation support, and another offering tenancy and family support. In summer 2024, a review of the small grants programme identified new areas of need, which resulted in a change of focus for additional activity. This included services that offer ESOL specifically for employment, dedicated services for young people, and an intergenerational cultural project. Evidence is showing more and better cohesion and integration between communities, particularly noticeable in ESOL activities.

23.3.3 Birmingham uses external grant funding to offer its Ukraine guests a financial 'move on' package of support to exit from their hosted arrangements. Since January 2023, 173 families have secured accommodation in the private rented sector, receiving support to pay for rent deposits, guarantor insurances, and purchase of essential furniture. Of these, 75 families moved into private rented properties during 2024. The package has also supported 27 families to move into one of the 40 Homes for Ukraine LAHF allocated temporary properties during 2024.

23.3.4 Asylum seekers with a positive refugee decision in Birmingham can access support via a Move-on Service delivered by the Refugee & Migrant Centre which assists with benefits, registration with GPs, education, and housing support. Home Office supported asylum seekers living in Birmingham who are still waiting for an asylum decision can access specialised support via commissioned Sanctuary Grant activities. From January 24 the sanctuary grant scheme has enabled voluntary and community sector groups to enhance and/or extend their reach into these groups by providing health & wellbeing, education and activities based on identified needs across the City.

23.3.5 Birmingham launched the first ever Migrant Advice Portal and this year has extended this service into an accessible APP for mobile phones. This AI powered digital platform assists sanctuary seekers to access language specific information, advice and guidance about universal and targeted

support services close to where they live – ensuring that help and advice is easily accessible.

23.3.6 The ESOL Hub (Birmingham Adult Education Service) and the Migrant Advice Portal are two portals commissioned by Resettlement & Migration team to provide a one-stop-shop for ESOL and Advice in the city to improve access to, and quality of services. Over the last year the ESOL hub has been enhanced to include a volunteer portal that encourages individuals who are interested in teaching ESOL to register their interest.

23.4 Partnerships, Strategy and Policy

23.4.1 The City of Sanctuary Partnership Board meets on a quarterly basis with a focus on the strategic work and priorities of the Council and its key stakeholders, and how these meet the City of Sanctuary objectives. The City of Sanctuary Policy and Strategy was updated and approved in October 2024 following a wide consultation and will be implemented and monitored through the Partnership Board.

23.4.2 The Council supports the work of the City of Sanctuary Voluntary Committee, assisting the Committee to embed and expand successful schemes such as Schools of Sanctuary, and to help establish new ‘streams of sanctuary’ such as Universities of Sanctuary. During 2024, we supported University of Birmingham to become University of Sanctuary.

23.4.3 The Council’s Resettlement and Migration commissioning team continues to host the Birmingham Migration Forum (BMF) on a quarterly basis, providing a space to present and discuss key issues facing commissioners and the voluntary sector, and to inform the direction of future work. We have also we have established a number of new partnership forums via our commissioned grant activities across resettlement Homes for Ukraine and asylum workstreams, which continue to inform and shape our strategies going forward.

24 Bereavement Services and Register Office

24.1 Improving Cemeteries and Crematoria

24.1.1 The project to replace the cremators and refurbish the chapel at Yardley Crematorium was completed in December 2023. The feedback from Funeral Directors and families has been very positive.

24.1.2 The project to extend Kings Norton Cemetery has commenced and is in the investigation and design phase. The initial ecological surveys have indicated that there are a number of habitats that are likely to support protected species and additional habitat surveys have been requested, which has delayed progress. It is anticipated that works will commence in 2025.

24.2 Improving Customer Satisfaction with the Services

24.2.1 Bereavement Services monitors the percentage of short notice burials carried out within 1 day after booking (excluding funerals delayed through family or funeral director choice) and consistently achieves over 98% of short notice burials within this timescale and feedback from stakeholders is very positive.

24.2.2 Due to additional drainage that was installed last year and following discussion with the Church of England Diocesan office, Bereavement Services have been able to develop additional grave areas at Handsworth Cemetery which will be available to purchase in reserve from November 2024 onwards.

24.2.3 Improvements to Lodge Hill Crematorium chapel have commenced, with roofing and flooring works recently completed. Further improvement works are scheduled, including redecoration of the chapel once all roofing work is complete.

24.3 Ensuring the workforce better represents the make-up of Birmingham's communities

24.3.1 Bereavement Services are introducing new posts within the structure as part of their future operating model. This includes four new Cemetery Maintenance Operative posts, to prioritise maintenance and improvement tasks across cemeteries and crematoria. Continuous reviewal of job descriptions is taking place when vacancies arise to ensure diversity and inclusion across the applicant pool as much as possible.

24.4 Engaging Community Groups

24.4.1 Regular engagement is ongoing with community groups including Friends of Brandwood End Cemetery, Friends of Handsworth Cemetery and the Friends of Key Hill and Warstone Lane Cemeteries. Recent engagement has taken place with community members seeking to set up a new Friends of Yardley Cemetery group, and they are being supported in developing this proposal.

24.4.2 The Cabinet Member for Social Justice Community Safety and Equalities chairs the Muslim Bereavement Steering Group which meets regularly to ensure issues of concern to Muslim communities are raised and addressed as appropriate. This group is crucial in maintaining a positive relationship with a main user of our burial services.

24.5 Extend the partnership working with the Bereavement Roundtable

24.5.1 The Bereavement Roundtable meets regularly to discuss matters to improve the bereavement process for all sectors of the community.

24.5.2 In addition, due to the changes in Death Certification Legislation in September 2024, representatives from Bereavement and Registration Services have been working with the NHS University Hospitals of Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust and the Birmingham and Solihull Coroner's Service to ease the transition following the reforms which require

all non-coronial deaths to be investigated by the Medical Examiner prior to registration.

24.6 Ensuring there are better long-term plans in place for Bereavement Services

24.6.1 The future operating model for Bereavement Services has been reviewed and a formal consultation process is due to commence in November 2024. A future Capital agenda 2023 – 2027 is also in place, and a planned programme of general maintenance works to be carried out across the city cemeteries that will improve the overall presentation of sites has also been developed.

24.6.2 A future travel plan is due to be carried out for Sutton New Hall Cemetery and the surrounding area. This will look at potential options for increasing public transport to the area and for the effective management of traffic, not just for the cemetery but also with various planned future developments in the local area.

24.6.3 Bereavement Services will also be considering more efficient use of technology and IT systems to better serve staff and customers in providing services. One of the options that is to be introduced over the coming months is to provide a view of availability of appointments directly to families, which will enable them to plan services that suit their personal requirements when liaising with funeral directors.

25 Equalities

25.1 Staffing and Equality Impact Assessments

25.1.1 Two Grade 5 Equality Impact Officers are being recruited to lead on the completion of EIAs. These posts were originally due to sit within Insight, Policy, and Strategy, but will now sit within the Governance Team in Public Health. Temporary resource is in place to assist colleagues in completing EIAs until the end of January 2025.

25.1.2 A new EIA portal has been created with colleagues in the Digital Foundry, building on improvements made since December 2023 to the temporary platform. This was launched on 23 September 2024. The new portal offers opportunities for collaboration and offers further detail in relation to seeking impact on people from certain protected characteristics and explores further the mitigation elements.

25.1.3 Eight online briefing sessions are in place between the Council and Birmingham Children's Trust to support colleagues in completing EIAs. These have been well received with positive feedback.

25.2 Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDI&B) Achievements

25.2.1 The Council has been awarded Level 2(Employer) and Level 3 (Leader) of the Government's flagship Disability Confident Framework. The Council has improved the support given to disabled existing and potential employees requiring reasonable adjustments, including mandatory disability training

delivered to all People Services staff involved in case work and recruitment, ensuring reasonable adjustments are part of the monthly 'Beyond Disability' and consciously inclusive recruitment training programmes, and delivering a cross-council user group set up with staff with People Services and Trade Union representation.

25.2.2 People Services have trained over 2,900 staff on a range of EDI&B topics as well as refreshing the suite of EDI&B eLearning modules available, to make them more relevant to our statutory public duty and workforce challenges. This includes training on disability and intersectionality

25.2.3 Colleagues have focused upon improving the relationships with our Staff Networks, including activities such as a CLT engagement and collaboration event.

25.2.4 2022 and 2023 pay gap reports have been produced, with 2023 covering gender and race for the first time. This demonstrated a significant reduction in the pay gap since 2018, when statutory reporting was first introduced.

25.2.5 Work has been ongoing with the resourcing team to review and revise the recruitment process to support more inclusivity and fairness in recruitment. This has included the introduction of Consciously Inclusive Recruitment training, which has been delivered to CLT, ECLT, members, and Grade 7 officers. This is now part of the Learning and Development core offer. New job description and person specification templates have been designed that meet the Government's Disability Confident Standard and remove other biases in place. The template was reviewed by an external subject matter expert to ensure that this is bias free.

25.2.6 The Council has also created the Global Majority Apprenticeship. This is delivered as a cohort of individuals with management responsibility from Grade 4 and above, which was advertised and targeted to employees that have identified from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. 16 people were enrolled on the first cohort commencing in late 2023, several of whom have secured promotions since commencing this apprenticeship. Colleagues are in the process of reviewing the approach for a second cohort.

25.2.7 Colleagues have also designed a comprehensive workforce diversity and inclusion dashboard to capture and support monitoring reports of workforce data to identify progress against Workforce Equality Indicators. The team have worked with staff networks to ensure that this captures accurate data. This activity has increased disclosure rates for staff disability from 2% to 8.35, and LGNTQ+ disclosure by 0.3%.

26 RISK MANAGEMENT

26.1 Not Applicable

27 CONSULTATION

27.1 Not Applicable

28 MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Ward Councillor(s)

28.1 Not Applicable

Overview and Scrutiny

28.2 Not Applicable

Other

28.3 Not Applicable

29 IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS

Finance and Best Value

29.1 Not Applicable

Legal

29.2 Not Applicable

Equalities

29.3 Not Applicable

Procurement

29.4 Not Applicable

People Services

29.5 Not Applicable

Climate Change, Nature, and Net Zero

29.6 Not Applicable

Corporate Parenting

29.7 Not Applicable

Other

29.8 Not Applicable

30 APPENDICES

30.1 Not Applicable

31 BACKGROUND PAPERS

31.1 Not Applicable