

# Leader's Policy Statement 2015



June 2015

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## **Leader's introduction**

This is a year in which Birmingham and the wider region stands poised to grasp economic opportunities not seen for decades. The economy is already outperforming other parts of the country in terms of growth, exports and inward investment and healthy job creation is driving down unemployment. The region is well positioned to exploit its growing role as a global advanced manufacturing hub. It is also beginning to realise its potential as a service centre with close proximity to London and a natural home for entrepreneurs in the hi-tech and creative industries.

Last year I set out a vision for a "Greater Birmingham" which included working with our neighbouring councils to create a powerful force to drive economic growth – a grouping that could then seek devolved powers and funding to enable us to make an even greater regional economic impact. This year we are seeing that vision coming to fruition, with the councils working at great speed to set up the combined authority which I am confident will be in place by this time next year. Soon, together, we will set out the prospectus for the combined authority, its economic vision and priorities.

This administration will remain pro-business, pro-investment and committed to making Birmingham the enterprise capital of the UK.

But, alongside the economic opportunities there remain some difficult social problems and a major funding challenge to our local public services. So far, too few people in this city are benefitting from the recovery. Too many remain jobless and too many suffer from in work poverty through low wages and insecure work. The level of skills in the city remains too low and this is damaging to local growth and global competitiveness.

Our young people – one of the city's great assets – face particular pressures to succeed in education, gain skills and find work. Too many of our citizens live in poor quality housing and cannot find affordable homes. We face challenges to our social cohesion, the safety of our most vulnerable children and adults and the inclusivity of our communities. Following the national election we face the ongoing challenge of further spending cuts, and new policy changes in housing, education and benefits.

Since the beginning of this year we have been getting on with the improvements we must make to our corporate governance and change for the better is further ahead in children's services and education. We have invested an extra £31m in child safeguarding. We have a new approach to driving school improvement through our commission with the Birmingham Education Partnership. We have set up our Future Council programme that will drive change across the whole City Council and beyond, with early progress recognised by the Independent Improvement Panel. Seeing through those improvements will remain our top priorities in the years ahead.

These vital improvements have been the focus for much of our work in the last year. But there are many achievements to celebrate as well. These include the launch of the Birmingham Youth Promise, the almost 200 businesses that have now signed up to our Business Charter for Social Responsibility, the establishment of the Child Poverty Commission, the start of work on the Paradise redevelopment, the publication of the Curzon Masterplan and the launch of Birmingham Connected, the continued roll out of a modern refuse collection service and our skills offer, available to more schools from September.

I am proud that Birmingham City Council, its councillors and its staff achieve great things for the people of Birmingham every day – truly making a positive difference every day to people's lives.

But the weaknesses in parts of our City Council and some of our local services have been evident for some years – we have not shown sufficient boldness and radicalism in adapting to the changing world around us. Now is the time finally to take those big steps forward and to embrace a new future for public services.

We need to change to achieve the outcomes that matter to us all: decent homes and neighbourhoods, feeling safe and healthy, a connected city, joined-up health, care and early intervention, opportunities through excellent education and training and a city that celebrates and makes the most of its diversity and youthfulness.

People's homes and neighbourhoods are at the heart of their lives in our city. This Leader's Policy Statement announces that we will maintain and intensify the focus on housing in the years ahead, led by a Cabinet Member. It has been more than a decade since we took a real look at how we deliver social housing in the city and I am convinced that we can give all tenants a better deal and give them greater control over their lives and their housing, whether or not they are tenants of the council. Today we need to do that as part of our overall review of local services in the Future Council programme. We also need to take an integrated view which sees housing at the centre of a wider approach to place management and looks for linkages between different providers of housing at the local level.

The purpose of this statement is to provide a medium to long-term, high-level political vision and framework both for the council and the work we do in partnership with other public services, businesses, the voluntary sector and Birmingham's communities. It sets out the vision and values of the administration and the key outcomes we are working to improve, followed by a small number of medium-term priority programmes that have been identified in the Business Plan published in March.

This statement will continue to provide an important annual opportunity to focus on the longer term vision and the values that we want to guide all the work of the

council, ensuring democratic accountability for all our more detailed plans and programmes.

It reflects the changing context in which we are working, as we develop our new strategic planning process. It takes account of the Future Council programme, an emerging new City Partnership that will assist with a collective vision for the city, the agenda of the new UK government and the severe and still increasing financial pressures facing the council.

We remain committed to our mission of working together for a fair, prosperous and democratic city, enabling individuals and communities to be more independent, more resilient and more in control.

We have a renewed mandate from the people of Birmingham arising from the local elections, where our vote share increased to 46%. This document sets out a renewed vision for city government and the future of Birmingham, with a clear focus on priorities and the outcomes we want to see.

We want to change Birmingham for the better by working to achieve:

- Better protection for children and other vulnerable people
- Better chances for young people
- Better housing
- Better living standards
- Better investment and regeneration

So, we will grasp the great economic opportunities that lie ahead. But we will also keep our resolve to tackle the many challenges facing us and to ensure that economic recovery reaches into every community and every part of this city.

The whole city must benefit from the West Midlands engine for growth we are building and the Future Council we intend to create.

This is a time for change, a time for Birmingham.

**Albert Bore, Leader of the Council**

# **1. Our values and our vision for Birmingham**

## **Our values**

Our most basic belief is that we can achieve more through working together than we can alone. The public sector and our civic institutions are one important way we do that, alongside the communities, voluntary groups, organisations and families that we all belong to. So we see the City Council as much more than just an organisation that gets services delivered. It is the democratic government of Birmingham – with a wider responsibility for leadership and for making a difference to people in the city.

Our most important goal is to create together a more equal society. To do this we must create a fairer balance of power between different communities, but also strengthen personal freedom, mutual responsibility and accountability and build stronger communities.

A successful economy is vital to making progress on these goals. But a stronger economy needs a stronger society. A truly successful economy is one which improves the lives of all citizens, not just some. It is also a sustainable economy with long-term investment and an emphasis on using technology to protect the environment. Birmingham has always been a city where the public sector works closely with an enterprising and innovative private sector to promote economic success alongside social justice.

Our Business Charter for Social Responsibility captures those values and calls upon businesses across the city to commit to paying a Living Wage, training and development for their staff and a wider engagement with the city and its people.

We believe that the City Council must be an active force for good and for change, not just a deliverer of services. We will be active in bringing together new partnerships to achieve our goals, for example in forging links between businesses, voluntary groups, trade unions and schools to open up horizons for young people.

Together with our belief in collective action and mutual responsibility sits our belief in diversity and the spreading of power. Without the power and the freedom to act people cannot express their social responsibility. Diversity of background and culture is the source of our creativity as a city and valuing and respecting diversity amongst individuals and communities is therefore essential. Devolution of power leads to better outcomes because it means that more people can be involved in finding solutions to their own problems and challenges.

These political values are reflected in the values we have adopted to guide our behaviour as an organisation – put residents first, act courageously, be true to our word and achieve excellence.

## **Our vision for Birmingham: a fair, prosperous and democratic city**

A fair city is one in which everyone can make the most of their talents and abilities, regardless of their background. It is a place where all communities value and respect one another; are able to live in decent, affordable housing and enjoy good levels of health and life expectancy, where crime is low and where vulnerable people, from the youngest to the oldest, are protected and able to live full lives in the community. It is a city in which public services and strong communities are there to help when people need support.

A prosperous city is one in which everyone can share in economic success, through diverse employment routes, decent wages and high skill levels, with opportunities for entrepreneurs and young people to be fully active in the economy. The city's economy is growing, with high numbers of businesses starting up, strong inward investment and strong exports. It is a place where new businesses can thrive, new industries are created and innovation flourishes. It invests in new technologies and infrastructure, including modern integrated transport networks. It is a green and sustainable city, with low carbon emissions, high levels of recycling, efficient public transport and clean neighbourhoods. It is a creative city, where a diverse culture is reflected in a vibrant arts and entertainment scene and a high quality of life.

A democratic city is one in which every citizen has a voice and can influence the decisions that matter to them. It is a place where everyone can make a contribution to public life and there is a vibrant and diverse range of community organisations and social enterprises. It is a place that values public services and public service and in which citizens feel they own their local council. It has excellent public services that meet the needs of the city efficiently and effectively but are also accountable, open and delivered in ways that are consistent with the vision set out above.

## **Our vision for Birmingham City Council: a Future Council for the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

Birmingham City Council and the rest of the public sector in the city will change dramatically in the years ahead, not just because of reduced resources but because people's needs and expectations are changing and the technologies we can use to deliver what people want are also changing ever more rapidly.

We are determined that we will steer those changes towards a positive future for public services in the city. Birmingham has a proud heritage of municipal leadership and public sector innovation. Our vision for the Future Council is to restore that reputation in a modern age and to create a vibrant public sector and civil society with a diversity of organisations and individuals contributing to the common good of the city. We reject the alternative of decline which would leave citizens with only a threadbare safety net of services.

Some public services are for everyone in the city (refuse collection, street lights, roads and footpaths), or for all of us at particular times in our lives (schools, hospitals). Others are provided only to those with specific needs, but no services should be “one size fits all” – they must be responsive to the needs of individuals, communities and places if greater equality is to be achieved.

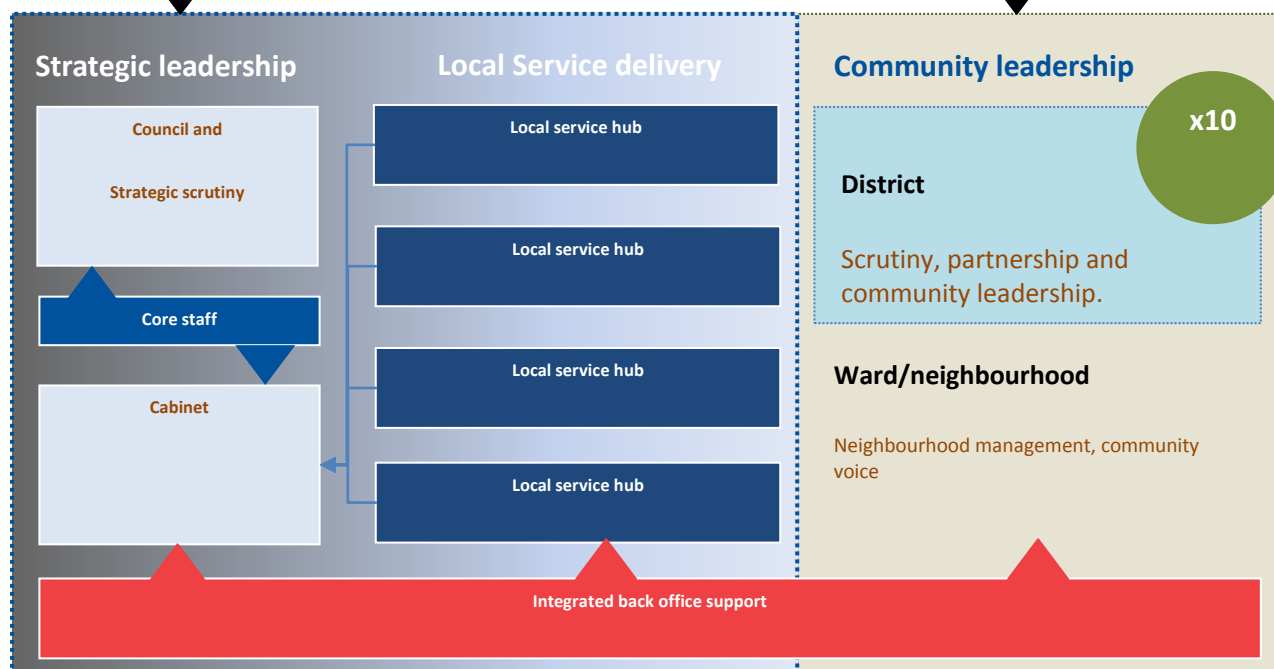
### **Triple devolution**

We have established a framework for the future of city government in Birmingham and the city region, known as triple devolution. This will guide the Future Council design work. In future our public services and political leadership will operate at three levels, characterised by three new ways of working:

- **The city region** – with fiscal and policy-making powers devolved from central government and exercised collectively by the member councils. The initial focus of the combined authority will be on economic development, transport, regeneration and skills. Support resources in the fields of economic intelligence, investment planning, skills and local regeneration will be pooled. The combined authority will also be part of future public service reforms, potentially including employment and skills, integration of health and social care around individual needs and further reducing elements of youth offending.
- **The city** – where a more strategic role will oversee the integration of local services and provide leadership to the city itself. We will work with government to develop a “whole place” budget for the city so that we can align spending priorities across the public sector. A core City Council resource will be needed to support strategic planning and leadership (policy, research, commissioning, performance management, financial planning) and the council’s regulatory functions (planning, licensing, consumer and environmental protection) and there will also be an integrated, efficient support services function (e.g. finance, human resources, legal advice, payment and revenue systems, contact centre).
- **The neighbourhood** – where elected representatives will work with others in the community to provide community leadership and where the most local services will be provided in new ways. New local service hubs will be developed to provide integrated neighbourhood services in a responsive, efficient way, focused on the needs of different local places in the city. We will develop an integrated place management approach, which brings together housing, environmental and other services. Housing will be central to this vision because it is the bedrock of people’s lives and their communities.

## The overall framework for change

### Delivery of integrated services for the city and city region



## Principles for the Future Council

In line with our overall vision and our values, we want the City Council, working at all three of these levels, to be an organisation that:

- **Champions equality, dignity and respect** in all it does and **empowers people and communities**, through raising their abilities and skills, supporting their organisations and listening to their needs and concerns. In order to build responsibility and empower people we must engage them in our planning and develop trust in what we are doing. This includes a commitment to **open data** and designing services together.
- **Prioritises those most in need, reduces need** through prevention and early intervention and **responds to the needs of individuals and places** rather than organisations or service silos. Staff will go beyond narrow roles and show that they care for all a person's needs or the whole neighbourhood and community. We will be an organisation that **collaborates**, creating joined-up services that can respond to needs and partnerships that enable a broad commitment to our plans.

- **Demonstrates honesty**, including clarity in what we are providing in each service, for example what are we offering to everyone and where are we prioritising or targeting our resources.
- **Builds social responsibility and a sense of shared ownership**, for example through changing attitudes to the environment and building sustainability into everything we do, promoting wide engagement in improved health, nurturing and protecting children and promoting the Business Charter for Social Responsibility. Services should feel like they are co-owned by staff and citizens. They must have an ability to adapt and to learn, to support the focus on people and place. We will **make ethical decisions about who delivers services**, with an emphasis on “collaborative commissioning”, social value, innovation and the values of inclusion, engagement and co-production. We are not agnostic about who delivers our services, but neither are we obsessed with organisational structures or in-house delivery.
- **Retains a strong strategic leadership function.** Because of our commitment to the wider leadership role of the City Council and to democratic accountability, we will retain in-house strategic leadership and regulatory functions – we will not out-source these roles or our commissioning functions. Instead we will open up this strategic leadership function and work with a wide network of partners and others with an interest in, and commitment to, the future of Birmingham. We will be an outward-looking, connected organisation.
- **Promotes devolution and localism**, with a preference for smaller over larger providers, rooted in the city and closer to its needs. We will have a presumption against outsourcing several services to a single provider.

### **Key areas for service improvement within the Future Council**

We recognise that some of our services are in need of a major transformation and that this requires a rethink of the way they are delivered. For example, we have already begun redesigning our leisure services, with a focus on health and wellbeing for the less well-off areas of the city. The most important of these are listed below and will be addressed within the Future Council programme (and more details on some of these are included in section 3 below):

- **Child protection** – delivering our three-year improvement plan.
- **Education** – delivering our five-year improvement plan and further development of the Birmingham Education Partnership.
- **Early years (childcare and support to families)** – developing and delivering a service change programme.
- **Early Help Strategy** – implementing the strategy to support troubled families.

- **Social Care and Health** – accelerating the path to an integrated health and social care service, enabling older and disabled people to remain in their homes and communities and make less use of acute services.
- **Housing** – developing a comprehensive “Housing Offer” setting out how we will meet the needs and aspirations of individuals and families who need affordable, decent homes.
- **Services for young people** – Implementing the Youth Promise that will ensure that every young person is in education, work or training. Birmingham will be a city that responds to the needs of young people with a youth service that empowers, supports and protects them.
- **Libraries** – Developing a new model library service as an integral part of our local service hubs.
- **Support services** – creating integrated and efficient “back office” functions.

## The outcomes we are working towards

The following outcomes, derived from our vision and goals, are set out in the Business Plan, published in March.

| Primary goal             | Key themes                            | Outcomes we seek                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>A Fair City</b>       | Safety                                | People are safe, especially the most vulnerable – from crime, violence and abuse                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                          | Health and wellbeing                  | Health and wellbeing, housing quality and life expectancy are at national levels for all. Older people are able to stay in their own homes and communities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                          | Children and young people             | Children are protected and young people are able to access opportunities regardless of background or special needs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                          | Tackling poverty                      | Poverty amongst children and families is down to national averages – Birmingham has an ethical approach as a “Living Wage City” and no social groups or local areas are blighted by extreme levels of unemployment and low incomes.                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>A Prosperous City</b> | Learning, skills and local employment | People have the qualifications they need for work, including school leavers and the working age population. Young people are exposed to the world of work and career options. Skill levels are high and all young people are in employment, education or training. Everyone has access to the digital economy. The city has amongst the lowest levels of youth unemployment of all the core cities. |
|                          | Enterprise City                       | The economy is growing, business start-ups are the highest in the country and good jobs are being created.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|                          | Infrastructure, development           | There is a sufficient, affordable and low energy use housing supply to meet needs,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

| Primary goal             | Key themes                              | Outcomes we seek                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                          | and Smart City                          | provision for employment land and high levels of investment in transport, including cycling and walking and other infrastructure such as digital technologies and district energy systems.                                                                                         |
|                          | A Green and Sustainable City            | Birmingham is more environmentally sustainable, with higher levels of recycling, lower energy use and cleaner neighbourhoods. There is a thriving green economy.                                                                                                                   |
|                          | Regional capital and reputation         | The city fulfils its role as the regional capital and provides a quality of life that attracts more investors, visitors and employees.                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>A Democratic City</b> | Engagement, influence and contribution  | Local people from all backgrounds are engaged in local democracy, and have more influence on local decisions and localised services. Communities and individuals are able to make their contribution to the life of the city and governance is based on openness and transparency. |
|                          | A New Model of City Government          | The government of the city will be transformed to match modern needs.                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|                          | Modern services that serve our citizens | Services work together, make use of new technologies and modern “hub” facilities and are focused on “whole people” and “whole places”. Citizens, businesses and agencies can co-create new services.                                                                               |

## **2. Our priorities: responding to the challenges, grasping the opportunities**

### **The economic opportunity**

Birmingham and the wider region is already one of the UK's most important economic centres, outstripping other regions on growth and inward investment and establishing a role as the nation's centre for advanced manufacturing and exports. Over the next few years, we have the opportunity to become the most important engine for UK economic growth and a manufacturing hub of global importance.

The opportunities arise from our history of manufacturing and skilled labour; from our location at the very heart of the country, with connections and access to markets; and from the attractive positioning of the city within the EU and close to London, made all the more significant by the arrival of HS2. This attracts investment and enables entrepreneurs and service industries to locate in a lower cost but accessible business environment.

This is a special year in Birmingham's journey back to prosperity. We will see the completion of the New Street Gateway project, including the Grand Central shopping centre with the John Lewis store, the opening of the Midland Metro extension from Snow Hill down Corporation Street to New Street Station, the new Park Regis Hotel at Five Ways and the phased re-opening of the Mailbox. Work has begun on the Paradise redevelopment and there are numerous other development projects across the city.

The City Council, our neighbour councils across the region, the Local Enterprise Partnerships and the government all have a key role to play in supporting this economic potential. We do this by investing in infrastructure and skills, supporting businesses to start up, to grow and to export, developing global networks and partnerships to promote investment and creating an overall framework of planning and housing policy that is pro-business and enables developers to invest with confidence.

We know we can deliver this support more effectively by working together as a city region, rather than relying on central government. That is why we are working hard to secure devolved powers and the localisation of more functions and budgets, through establishing a combined authority and setting out a vision and investment plans.

If we grasp these opportunities we can at last restore to Birmingham and the Midlands the relative prosperity we last enjoyed in the 1950s and 1960s. Our ambition is to be the enterprise capital of the UK with a level of growth second to none across the core cities and their city regions.

## Some important challenges

At the same time there are many challenges facing the city. Whilst some are already benefitting from the return of growth, others remain locked out of prosperity. Too many are in **low-skilled, low-paid and insecure jobs** and too many are still out of work. Whilst there are many skilled workers in the West Midlands, there are also **skill shortages** in key areas and the city region needs to raise its skill levels dramatically to be more globally competitive.

Birmingham is famously a young city, which gives us great dynamism and a huge resource of future skills and enterprise to draw on. But our **young people** are facing huge challenges in terms of education, skills, transport and housing. The overall performance of our **schools** is similar to the national average, but there remain too many schools, including a growing number of academies, not performing adequately. Youth unemployment and in particular long-term unemployment remains too high and many of the most vulnerable young people need more support to be able to access the labour market. The costs of housing and transport have become prohibitive for many young people, making it more difficult for them to live fulfilled and independent lives. The new government is planning to end housing benefits and Job Seekers Allowance for young people under 21 (to be replaced by a temporary allowance).

We also face a continuing challenge to ensure **the safety of the youngest of our citizens**. This remains our top priority in terms of improving the work of the City Council and its partners. Safe families provide the start in life that every child deserves. Tackling **domestic violence** and supporting **troubled families** with a range of other challenges through our Early Help Strategy is also a key priority.

There is a pressing need to increase the supply of new **homes** to meet forecast demand from the growth in jobs and population and this will need to be co-ordinated with our neighbouring councils. But we also need to step up the supply of new social housing and ensure that the quality and affordability of private rented housing is improved, tenants are better protected and poor landlords robustly challenged. This needs to be delivered in the context of changing central government policy on housing. Our own housing service also needs to improve, through better repairs services and giving tenants more control over their homes and neighbourhoods.

We also face the ongoing challenges and opportunities of our diverse communities. The city has for many years succeeded in welcoming newcomers and offering economic opportunities to people from a wide range of cultural backgrounds and this will continue for new generations ahead. But there are also threats to **social cohesion** in the city from those who oppose that diversity and the liberties we all enjoy. Of particular concern is the need to ensure that all children and young people are protected from extremism and are included in an open and liberal society. Above all we need to respond to the social exclusion and poverty that blights too

many families and communities and ensure that the inequalities and divisions in the city do not undermine social cohesion. Responding to the impact of cuts in benefits will continue to be an important part of this work.

Alongside all of these challenges and opportunities we are anticipating that we will face continued **sharp reductions in our central government funding** as the new government continues with its deficit reduction plan. This will inevitably reduce our ability to respond to the challenges and opportunities outlined above. But it will also give even greater urgency to the need for radical reshaping of our local services and the devolution and reforms we are urging the government to deliver.

## Our priority focus areas

Our priorities are steered by these economic and social challenges and by our values and our vision set out above. This statement reaffirms the priority focus areas that were set out in the Business Plan in March, based on the above challenges, opportunities and priorities (see table below). Section 3 shows how we will take these forward through a small number of medium-term priority programmes.

| Goal                          | Priority Focus Areas                 |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Fair                          | Protecting vulnerable people         |
|                               | Early years and family support       |
|                               | Early Help Strategy                  |
|                               | Tackling domestic violence           |
|                               | A living wage for more people        |
|                               | Housing                              |
|                               | Reducing inequality and disadvantage |
| Prosperous                    | School improvement                   |
|                               | Youth Promise for 14-25 year olds    |
|                               | Developing a skilled city workforce  |
|                               | Major physical regeneration          |
|                               | Arts and culture                     |
|                               | Waste strategy                       |
| Democratic and Future Council | The Future Council programme         |
|                               | Securing a devolution deal           |
|                               | Improving customer care and contact  |

### **3. Delivering our plans**

#### **A fair city**

Progress in the last year has included:

- Improving our safeguarding service (see box overleaf).
- Implementing priorities identified by the Community Safety, Police and Crime Board including actions on child sexual exploitation, domestic violence, youth violence, mobilising communities, vulnerable people and business-related crime.
- Health and Wellbeing Plans for each district, to ensure that services that enable older people to stay in their own homes are better planned and to recognise the importance of support from neighbours and the community.
- Creating a more effective and transparent housing allocation system, to ensure social housing is allocated fairly and that people get clear information about their housing options. This will be fully implemented over the course of this financial year.
- Establishing the Child Poverty Commission to ensure every child has the opportunity to fulfil their potential. The commission is made up of leaders in all spheres of influence including policy makers, politicians and practitioners who will help formulate a citywide approach.
- Launching the Birmingham Promise to provide fairness in public services. It sets out the service standards that Birmingham citizens can expect across a wide range of services including benefits, waste and recycling, housing repairs and schools admissions.

## **Improving Children's Safeguarding**

### **Progress:**

- Better assessment of children's needs – including the multi-agency Safeguarding Hub.
- A third more referrals due to improved access and tackling unidentified risk.
- Establishing a Children's Strategic Leaders' Forum.
- Speeding up decisions about children in care proceedings from 54 to 28 weeks on average.
- Agreeing a multi-agency Early Help Strategy with partners and an agreement on levels of need called Right Service, Right Time.

### **Key points in the Improvement Plan for 2015-17**

- Workforce strategy – to stabilise staffing and enable social workers to do a better job, including recruitment and retention, supporting staff development and high performing teams, regular reviews of workloads and stability in teams.
- Commissioning Plan – to deliver a consistent, common and collaborative approach to services for young children, improved outcomes for children and a reduction in the numbers in care homes by March 2016.
- Partnership – developing the Strategic Leaders' Forum, with schools to join.
- Independent review and challenge – improved arrangements being put in place from 2015.
- Creating a “future operating model” for the service, including joint assessment, area plans and the commissioning plan.

### **Our priority programmes are:**

- **Transformation of the Children's Safeguarding service** (see box above).
- **Early Years change programme** which focuses on the under-fives to ensure every child gets the best start in life through children's centre delivery of the core services
- **Early Help Strategy** – developing and implementing the strategy to provide the right services at the right time to support families in need.
- **Tackling domestic violence.** We are working with partner organisations to develop a citywide approach to preventing and tackling domestic violence.
- **Extending the living wage.** We will increase the number of companies paying the living wage, focusing particularly on those sectors where low pay is still widespread, for example care, retail and hospitality. We will also review and

strengthen the Birmingham Business Charter for Social Responsibility to tackle issues such as exploitative zero hour contracts.

- **A comprehensive new housing offer.** This will set out how we will work to ensure that all Birmingham residents have the opportunity to enjoy affordable, safe and good quality accommodation. We want to better understand the problems faced by private tenants and use our licensing powers and partnership arrangements, like the Social Lettings Agency, to develop options to address these. We will review the services we provide to council tenants (as part of the Future Council programme) but we will go further, by looking at how we can align and integrate housing association and council housing services within an overall approach to “place management”, how we can improve the responsiveness and quality of repairs and how we can give people more power over their local neighbourhood.
- **Reducing inequality and disadvantage.** We will work with partners to identify and then tackle the main priorities. We want all Birmingham residents to have a share of and benefit from the city’s resources and services.

## **A prosperous city**

Progress in the last year has included:

- Agreeing the funding and implementation of Birmingham’s Youth Promise presenting a number of initiatives to provide young people with the support they need to move into employment, develop their skills and access a range of opportunities. This includes the introduction of a new careers service, specialist mentoring and a digital access point through which young people can identify and access services.
- Awarding £355k to support the iCentrum development. Construction has now started on the high technology innovation centre which will provide highly flexible, environmentally sustainable workspaces for knowledge and technology-based businesses.
- Making significant progress with the City Centre Enterprise Zone, including the approval of Enterprise Zone funding for the Highways Pinch Points and One Station projects. Government approval for the extension of the zone has now been given.
- Launching Birmingham Connected, the council’s 20-year vision for the future of transport in the city. Green Route works are now substantially complete and significant elements of the Canal Routes package have been implemented.

- Starting work on the Paradise redevelopment, which will open up an important area of the city centre and link the civic core to Centenary Square and the Convention Centre
- Completing a City Council-commissioned report on Birmingham's Blueprint for Low Carbon Refuelling Infrastructure, installed vehicle charging points and taken forward a project to convert taxis to run on LPG.
- Continued to lead the Digbeth Social Enterprise Quarter Steering Group and the Digbeth, Cheapside and Highgate Social Enterprise Network, which are taking forward a range of programmes for environmental and economic improvement and social impact. The area now has over 50 social enterprises.
- Developed a new Women's Enterprise Hub at the Southside Enterprise Centre in Sparkbrook. The Enterprise Hubs encourage training and new business start-ups and support existing businesses owned by women.

#### **Our priority programmes are:**

- **Schools change programme.** This will continue to implement changes designed to improve the governance and leadership of some schools. Beyond this we are working with the **Birmingham Education Partnership** to establish more effective school improvement arrangements. We want every school to be rated at least 'good' and every child to experience high quality learning so that they can achieve their full potential.
- **Birmingham Youth Promise.** This includes initiatives to reduce youth unemployment, with the aim of having the lowest unemployment rate of all core cities. This will include measures to tackle travel to work problems and the delivery of work experience and pathways into work programmes at the council for the most disadvantaged young people.
- **Developing a skilled workforce.** We will work with partners to produce a Birmingham Skills Investment Plan, which will set out the key investment priorities to build skills, including detailed proposals for an Apprenticeship and Internship Agency.
- **Major physical regeneration.** We will focus on taking forward the many investment sites and regeneration opportunities across the city, including more detailed plans for the Curzon regeneration area around the site for the new HS2 station, the wholesale markets area, Icknield Port Loop in Ladywood and the continued regeneration in Selly Oak, to provide a Life Sciences Campus, and Longbridge.

- **Cultural Strategy.** We will work with partners to focus on developing new funding models for arts organisations, making culture and the arts sustainable by developing the “cultural pound” and ensuring the city retains a programme for major sports and cultural events, enhancing Birmingham’s reputation as a great place in which to live, work and visit.

## **A democratic city and Future Council**

Progress in the last year has included:

- Designing and starting the Future Council programme which will transform the way the City Council operates over the next five years. Key first steps have been to talk with a large selection of staff through “Big Conversations”, secure staff and management resources to lead the programme, to plan the work and to agree basic design principles for the organisation, as well as engaging with partner organisations about our shared vision for the city and how we will work together in the future. The Future Council also includes improvement areas to do with the corporate governance of the City Council (see box below).

### **Future Council – progress on Improvement Plan**

Within the Future Council programme we have already made progress on some key improvement areas to do with the corporate governance of the council, as follows:

- Leadership and strategy – developing a long-term approach to financial and service planning and performance management, established new leadership for the human resources function, put in place senior management for the programme.
- Council size and structure – worked with the Boundary Commission review on the size of the City Council, implemented initial constitutional changes through the Community Governance Review (see below), progressed work on the Combined Authority (see below).
- Partnership and communities – established the East Birmingham Employment and Skills Board, started discussions about the new city vision and support resources for a new City Partnership Group.

- Carrying out and consulting on a Community Governance Review which has addressed the proposal for a town council in Sutton Coldfield but also reviewed local governance across the city, including the council’s devolved district and ward structures. Work started on the new role of districts will be taken forward as part of the Future Council programme and aligned with the redesign of local services (see below).

### **A new role for district committees**

The council's revised constitution includes a new 'terms of reference' for the ten district committees. Their new role includes:

- Working with partners to produce a Community Plan for the area.
- Ensuring tenant engagement in social housing.
- Promoting safer neighbourhoods, working with the local police.
- Promoting cleaner neighbourhoods, better street cleaning and litter enforcement.
- A Neighbourhood Challenge function – holding to account all local public services on behalf of residents.
- Supporting neighbourhood management, active citizenship and community organisations.

Work has already started to support these new roles through training and development, new guidance and the design of new mechanisms for Neighbourhood Challenge.

- Developing the Standing up for Birmingham campaign, including several Community Conversations that have identified priorities such as cutting red tape and supporting time banking; bringing together good practice examples on active citizenship and awarding the first Standing up for Birmingham Chamberlain Award.
- Intensifying work with the Core Cities group, including developing our role as the Transport Policy Hub for the group and lobbying for greater freedoms and powers, culminating in the publication of the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill in May.
- Developing an innovative "Policy Community" of local and national community groups, think tanks, academics and consultants who will be able to collaborate more easily on our key policy priorities.

*The Future Council will transform the way the City Council operates*



**Our priority programmes are:**

- **The Future Council programme.** The overall programme will drive changes to the council's leadership and direction, its size and structure and its values which shape staff behaviour and performance, implementing the political vision for the City Council set out in section one. The main areas of work in the programme are shown in the diagram above and outlined below:
  - **Whole council** – this is the strategic framework for the programme that will run through everything we do and set the direction of travel for the organisation. The work is refining our ambition as a fair, prosperous and democratic city and our purpose and outcomes. It is identifying the design principles for the organisation (a set of ideas and standards) and the values and desired behaviours that will sit at the heart of the new organisational culture we want to create.
  - **Political governance** – looking at the democratic system within the city, our approach to devolution, the relationship between councillors and the community and the changes in ward boundaries being considered by the Boundary Commission. It will also look at how communities and active citizens can be supported to make a greater contribution, e.g. through the

Standing up for Birmingham campaign. It will include developing the new role for local arrangements such as district committees and the community leadership role of councillors, taking forward work started through the Community Governance Review in the last year. Districts will have a robust Neighbourhood Challenge role through which they can hold both the council and other service providers to account for the quality and effectiveness of those services. They will also continue to focus on improving the local environment. We will link this with the work on new local service delivery models.

- **The council operating model** – developing a new ‘need and demand’ focused methodology for changing the strategic planning approach deployed by the council to determine future service delivery models (including the priority areas for service transformation outlined in part one of this report) and also putting in place a new five-year Council Plan and performance management system. It will include the development of local service hubs and ensure that neighbourhood services are co-ordinated and reflect local needs and priorities.
- **Outward-looking partnerships** – creating the City Partnership Group. A critical task for this group will be to update the Vision for Birmingham and agree key priorities for the city. We are sharing intelligence with partners and co-ordinating our individual plans and strategies. This will help us to develop approaches to public service reform – for example introducing a more localised approach to employment support for the long-term unemployed. We will also consider how we can maximise the impact of public spending, working with the government to take forward an integrated approach to the “Birmingham Pound” – all public spending in the city.
- **Integrated support services** – a programme to create an integrated support services function to ensure services are more efficient and responsive both to internal users and the people of Birmingham. It will include functions such as human resources, finance, legal, property management, the contact centre and revenues and benefits.
- **Forward – the Birmingham Way** – this is our new strategic approach to managing, developing and deploying our people. It will ensure that we have the right people doing the right things in the right way and promote the values and behaviours we wish to see. The City Council’s workforce has reduced by a third since 2010 and it will inevitably be smaller still in the years ahead, so it is vital that we adopt a strategic approach that ensures we can operate effectively with fewer people and continue to be a good employer to those who stay with us or join us.

- **Securing a devolution deal** – we will continue to work with neighbouring authorities to create a Combined Authority to demonstrate that we have the governance in place to achieve greater collaboration and co-ordination across the region in key areas like transport, economic development, skills and regeneration. A thorough economic analysis of the region will identify the primary interventions necessary to drive economic growth. Proposals for public service reform are also being developed with partners.
- **Improving customer services** – we will establish a “one contact” approach, with ‘best in class’ customer services for the people of Birmingham.

## **Leader's Policy Statement 2015**

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