

Report
from:

Cllr John Clancy, Leader of the Council

Date:

18 July 2016

Report to:

Corporate Resources and Governance
Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The Leader's Portfolio Update July 2016

1. SUMMARY

1.1. This report provides an update on key areas of my portfolio for the year ahead as background for the meeting on 18 July.

1.2. This report covers:

- Delivering the priorities for the year approved at Full Council in March 2016.
- Improvement Panel and next phase of Future Council.
- Evolution of Devolution: Cabinet Committee Local Leadership.
- West Midlands Combined Authority – including lead on economy brief.
- Bereavement Services.

2. VISION PRIORITIES AND APPROACH FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

2.1 Council in March 2016 approved the vision, priorities and approach, set out in the Council Business Plan 2016+ (<http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/councilplan>), based around six key outcomes. These are:

- A strong economy
- Safety and opportunity for all children
- A great future for young people
- Thriving local communities
- A healthy happy population
- A modern council

I am currently working with the Cabinet to reflect on these and will update Overview and Scrutiny on progress at the meeting.

2.2 There are some key priorities for the City set out in the Plan.

- Decent homes. We will set out bold new plans to provide more affordable new homes and support everyone in the city to secure a decent place to live.

- A focus on investment and assets. In the future we will need to make better use of our own assets and secure resources from local economic growth. This will include exploring ideas such as “Brummie Bonds” and working with the West Midlands Pension Fund (WMPF) to use its assets to support the West Midlands Strategic Economic Plan.
- A City for Young People, Learning and Skills. We will continue to renew our focus on the “young city” and our offer to children and young people. We will begin a campaign to make Birmingham a Free School Meal city – through business sponsorship and forms of investment such as social enterprise and social impact bonds.
- Transforming public transport and reducing congestion. Transport is a vital part of our investment plans because it enables businesses to connect to markets and skills and people to connect to jobs. The long term vision for Birmingham Connected will be integrated with plans for the whole metropolitan area and, through Midlands Connect the wider Midlands region. We will put in place detailed plans and funding for the High Speed Two Growth Strategy which will regenerate areas around the new stations and connect HS2 to the whole region.

2.3 Key Immediate organisational priorities are:

- Keeping the Children’s and Education Improvement Plans on track. This remains our number one priority. We will also ensure that these plans are part of a longer term vision for these services within the overall Future Council agenda.
- Successfully concluding the work of the Independent Improvement Panel. To achieve our vision we must restore independence and pride to our municipal governance, for example through our devolution deal. To do that, we must be free of government intervention and in charge of our own destiny.
- Creating strong strategic partnerships. There are many excellent examples of partnerships between the City Council and others that are delivering services and projects, but at a corporate level we need to do much more to put in place effective new partnership arrangements in line with the vision and strategic principles.
- Holding to a realistic budget and planning framework for the next four years. This is essential to give us the security to move forward with confidence and the credibility to deliver on improvement.

3. IMPROVEMENT PANEL AND PHASE 2 FUTURE COUNCIL

- ### 3.1
- Over the last year, we have made significant progress in addressing the recommendations of the Kerslake review and the Improvement Panel has recognised this as a solid foundation from which we will continue to deliver change. The Panel paused their regular meetings over the summer and will return in the autumn to

assess our further progress. Further detail is available at <http://birminghamnewsroom.com/biip-documents/>

- 3.2 We will need to maintain the pace of improvement and change against the activities set out in our 'gap analysis' shared with the Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel in March 2016. This analysis responds to the latest observations of the Panel:

3.2.1 *Political leadership* - *members should lead the council, while officers should focus on the running of it. His open and collaborative approach to partnership has been received very positively by partners citywide. This approach is starting to bed in across the political leadership of the council, including enhanced cross-party working and more cross-cutting work by cabinet members.*

This new leadership approach will see cabinet members focused on a collective vision and shared priorities with partners, while all three group leaders will be seen together frequently at key events and platforms, adopting a more systematic approach to cross-party working. Partners will feel words have translated into action.

To achieve this, we must ensure our systems can support and embed a new way of working – for example, we are reviewing and changing the way members are involved in internal and external structures. Monthly meetings between the Chief Executive and three group leaders started in March 2016. Members will be supported through a new member induction programme, peer mentoring and bespoke training.

3.2.2 *Managerial leadership* - *The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) now has the right people in place and a clear sense of purpose, urgency, focus and direction needed to drive forward the required improvement. However, while there has been progress in breaking down silos, there is still room for improvement in operating as a strategic corporate unit. Staff feedback suggests the wider workforce does not yet see CLT as a unified team.*

CLT will have a clear vision to guide the workforce, and a grip on performance across all service areas. Reducing red tape will help staff feel it is easier for them to work effectively and efficiently. CLT and senior officers will be working together as an extended leadership team. CLT members will consistently and visibly demonstrate the organisation's values and behaviours.

The team will use its time together effectively to focus on key strategic and corporate issues. It will also work on improving its visibility and work collaboratively with the wider senior leadership group, including sharing best practice. CLT has taken collective ownership of monitoring the council's performance.

3.2.3 Strategic planning, performance and financial management - *For the first time, the council has prepared and consulted on a four-year business and financial plan, agreeing a 2020 vision that informs the plan. Our proposed plan for 2016/17 has a much sharper focus on a targeted set of priorities and measures agreed with portfolio holders. Business cases have been developed for savings proposed.*

By the summer, a new operating model will be agreed and staff will understand how it operates, what their roles are and how they can help amend it to improve how we work. CLT will monitor and manage performance, with accountability to portfolio holders. The council will be on track to achieve its 2016/17 savings, while sound planning for 2017/18 savings will be in place.

To achieve this, we will focus on developing our new operating model, identified as a top priority by CLT, which will hold monthly performance meetings. A more radical overhaul of the business plan will take place in 2017/18, with portfolio holders, service areas and key stakeholders engaged throughout the spring and summer.

3.2.4 City partnerships - *The Leader's open approach to partnerships and recognition of their role in the success of the city has been positively received, although there is still a perception that there has not been a significant shift in the wider council's behaviour and approach to partnering. However, a recent LGA peer review found growing confidence in council leadership of the education system and evidence of improving relationships with schools, while there has also been positive feedback from key public sector partners such as acute health trusts and police. The council also showed leadership without being the lead in establishing the West Midlands Combined Authority. There is evidence that more effective partnership working is leading to better outcomes for the city, including a two per cent reduction in the number of young people not in education, employment or training.*

We aim for the majority of our partners to confirm a positive change in the way council members and officers engage with them.

To achieve this, we need to address behaviour and our approach to partners, which in turn links in with the way we promote and implement our values and behaviours throughout the council. The council is committed to being an active and supportive partner, engaging with them to develop a city vision which is more resident and community driven.

3.2.5 Local leadership - *The council is actively working on a sustainable new model for local leadership at ward level, with councillors responding very positively to the opportunity to further develop their role in relation to the communities they represent. Sutton Coldfield Town Council was established on March 1. The*

Neighbourhood Challenge approaches have resulted in innovative new ways of holding public services to account.

More councillors will feel able to play an enhanced community leadership role, including engaging with other community leaders to shape effective public service delivery and all public spending in their areas. More cross-party working will take place at local level. We will also have a model for devolution which focuses on getting basic services right, while a community cohesion strategy for the city will have been agreed with partners.

A clear plan has been agreed for local leadership up to 2022, working across neighbourhood, city and regional levels, identifying key milestones along the way and how these will be delivered. This new approach to local leadership has been one of our early successes.

3.2.6 Organisational culture - *Cultural change is not a stand-alone work programme for the council and fits into several other strands of what we are doing, including political and managerial leadership, partnerships and local leadership. We recognise we have not yet made the progress in organisational development that we need to, with staff and partner feedback revealing a perception that this change has been slow. There is also a need for members and officers to develop more effective ways of working together. On a positive note, the council placed 28th on Stonewall's 2016 Index of the Top 100 Most Inclusive Employers, up from 59th place in 2015.*

The council's values and behaviours will be visible and referenced as part of its core business, experienced across the organisation at all levels and by partners. We will pursue greater clarity about the roles of members and officers and the most effective ways of interaction. Positive behaviours will be recognised and negative ones challenged promptly, while staff will feel more trusted and better empowered.

The first phase of a campaign promoting the council's values and behaviours was launched across the organisation in February 2016. Recommendations from the wider senior leaders' group on 'quick wins' that would allow them to work more effectively are now being implemented, including cutting red tape and making changes to delegations.

3.2.7 Communications and transparency - *Some good progress has been made in improving corporate communications over the past year, including LGA support for an independent communications review. A new internal communications strategy is now in place with new channels being set up to ensure better staff engagement and have been well received. There is a shared ambition from the Leader and Chief Executive for the council to be 'transparent by default'.*

The council will have a new, improved website soon. Priorities set out in the business plan will be used to drive a new communications and campaigns plan for 2016/17. All social media and digital communications channels will have been reviewed and a new strategy put in place. There will be greater control and consistency across all communications channels and resources, resulting in increased reach and focusing on two-way engagement, internally and externally.

4. EVOLUTION OF DEVOLUTION: CABINET COMMITTEE LOCAL LEADERSHIP

- 4.1 Cabinet approved the establishment of the Cabinet committee and the appointment of four Councillors as Assistant Leaders on 28th June 2016.
- 4.2 The establishment of the Cabinet Committee and the Assistant Leader posts and the initiation of this work programme for the next phase of devolution provide an opportunity to develop a genuinely radical agenda for change.
- 4.3 Our ambition is to put Birmingham at the vanguard of reform and new ideas on local governance and community leadership, building on the tremendous diversity and vibrancy of our civil society and its social enterprises, community and voluntary organisations and restoring the reputation for good governance that once characterised the city.
- 4.4 It is a vision based on the idea of dispersed leadership in which everyone in the city can aspire to make a difference. It is a vision based on a new sense of pride and purpose and the unique character of Birmingham's public life expressed through innovation, invention and true leadership. It is a vision based on devolution from central government with new powers to act along with our West Midlands partners but also the empowerment of local communities and individuals in the city.
- 4.5 An early part of the work programme of the Committee will be to set out a clear scheme of outcomes that will guide the Committee's work. This will also be used to assess the progress with this way of working, including the effectiveness of the Assistant Leader role. Outcomes will be drawn from existing service improvement targets for local services, public priorities in terms of how they can influence and get involved in local democracy and objectives for specific policy areas within the Policy Review (see below). More details on this will be reported to an early meeting of the Committee.
- 4.6 Both the Cabinet Committee and the Assistant Leaders will play a central, leading role in taking this agenda forward. This will divide into two areas of work: the ongoing functions of the committee and a policy review designed to take forward the next stages of the evolution of devolution, starting in 2016-18 but continuing beyond 2018.

4.7 The Policy Review will be taken forward throughout the next phase and we will not put an artificial deadline on its completion. However work on specific areas of policy within the Review will be completed within the current municipal year or the year after. All significant policy proposals will be reported to Cabinet for approval. The review will be in three parts:

- Area working – looking at what will replace the districts model
- A Better Deal for Neighbourhoods – looking at how we can improve local services and enable stronger community engagement
- Every Place Matters – looking at how we can spread the benefits of devolution and economic growth to the whole city and regenerate areas of the city in need of change.

5. COMBINED AUTHORITY UPDATE

5.1 Following the formal Parliamentary approval of the Combined Authority on 17 June 2016, the AGM of the Combined Authority took place on 29 June 2016 (<https://westmidlandscombinedauthority.org.uk/media/1223/wmca-agm-docpackpublic1.pdf>). The AGM received the annual 2016/17 budget and the constitution for approval. The draft Mayoral (elections) order and the draft Mayoral WMCA (functions) Scheme were also considered by the AGM for consent and approval. The key statutory post holders are in place and consultation on the Mayoral West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Functions Scheme (<https://westmidlandscombinedauthority.org.uk/mayoral-wmca-consultation/>) started on 4th July as part of the process of implementing the devolution deal and providing for a Mayor in May 2017.

5.2 The WMCA has also launched an Investment Prospectus <https://westmidlandscombinedauthority.org.uk/media/1227/wmca-forum-for-growth-prospectus.pdf>.

5.3 I have the Economic Growth portfolio on the WMCA, which covers the delivery of the strategic economic plans, access to finance for business, the collective investment fund, the combined authority growth company, international trade and exports, digital strategy, arts and cultural activity.

5.4 The next steps for the WMCA are set out below:

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| July - Aug 2016 | Consultation on the Scheme proposals (27 June - 22 Aug 2016) |
| Sept 2016 | The consultation responses are collated and submitted to the Secretary of State and DCLG. |

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| Sept - Oct 2016 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mayoral Combined Authority 'functions' Order is drafted based on the Mayoral Combined Authority 'functions' Scheme 2. The Mayoral Combined Authority 'functions' Order is presented to Constituent Councils for consent to lay the Mayoral Combined Authority 'functions' Order in Parliament. |
| Nov 2016 | The Mayoral (elections) Order is in place at least six months before the election of an Mayor |
| Nov 2016 - Feb 2017 | Any further Orders required (Buses Bill etc.) are required to be in place by February 2017 to allow sufficient time for Mayoral candidates to be fully aware of the powers of the elected Mayor and to prepare a Manifesto |
| May 2017 | First Mayoral election |

6. BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

6.1 Various initiatives and projects are underway in Bereavement Services which will drive the Service forward and meet community needs as follows:

- To ensure that the burial needs of residents on the North of the city, there are two projects in progress. The development of phases 2 and 3 of Sutton New Hall cemetery is due to commence in mid -July. Phase 2 will accommodate graves for the Muslim Community and Phase 3 will accommodate other communities. This is an 18 month project which will provide an additional 1,200 graves to serve the burial needs of residents in the north of the city for 18 years. In conjunction with this development a project is currently underway to provide new burial sections for Muslim and other communities in Handsworth Cemetery.
- Following requests from community leaders un-coffined burials will be introduced at Handsworth Cemetery from 11th July.
- Officers are working with representatives of various communities including Chinese, Jewish and Hindu. Initiatives include the provision of above ground mausolia, a separate burial section for the Jewish community and facilities for mourners to pay their respects to Hindu families in private.

6.2 Coroner's and Mortuary Update:

- The service is recruiting to three new posts. Post holders are expected to take up their positions by late summer.
- A feasibility exercise into the provision of a portal system that will enable hospitals and GPs to enter details of death notifications direct onto the Coroner's Civica IT system is currently taking place. This will prevent duplication and free up time for officers to carry out other essential tasks.
- Officers are working on securing prudential borrowing to replace the ventilation system in the Mortuary that is required to be replaced.

- Workload continues to increase – to date this year the number of death referrals received by the Coroner is close to 10% up on last year and 25% ahead of the same date in 2014.
- The performance of the Service when compared against other Coroner's Areas in the 2015 Ministry of Justice returns was excellent with the average time to inquest nationally taking 20 weeks against 12 weeks for Birmingham and Solihull.

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