

# Executive Business Report

## Birmingham City Council

### City Council

11<sup>th</sup> January 2022



**Subject:** Executive Business Report  
**Report of:** Cabinet  
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Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? ☐ Yes ☒ No

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

#### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. On 10<sup>th</sup> September 2019, Full Council accepted the recommendations of the Coordinating O&S Committee review in respect of changes to the Full Council agenda.
- 1.2. 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.
- 1.3. Following the outbreak of Covid-19 in March 2020, previous EBRs (from June 2020 to July 2021) have been used to provide an update on the whole Council's response to the pandemic, including emergency planning, impact on services and plans for recovery. As the Council has now stepped down the emergency response to Covid-19, a decision has been taken to revert to the original purpose and format of EBRs.
- 1.4. This EBR provides an update on two Cabinet Member portfolios:
  - Transport and Environment; pages 2 - 15

- Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities; pages 15 - 35

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1.** That the report be noted.

## **3. Transport & Environment Portfolio**

### **3.1. Transport**

#### **Transport Planning**

- 3.1.1. The Birmingham Transport Plan (BTP) was adopted by full Council on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021. This ambitious plan is fully aligned to the Council's Route to Zero (R20) objectives and sets out the strategic approach to tackle a range of transport and accessibility issues, including the need for rapid decarbonisation and improving equity of access and opportunity. Commissioning has begun to progress the BTP Delivery Plan, a large and complex piece of work which will set out the schemes, projects and investments required to deliver the vision set out in the plan.
- 3.1.2. Working alongside Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), the Council has been successful in bidding for funding from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) scheme. The Department for Transport invited TfWM and partners to submit a five-year CRSTS bid into Government to support capital transport investment within the region (April 2022 to March 2027), with both Highway Maintenance and Integrated Transport Block being subsumed within this new fund. Birmingham City Council worked closely with TfWM and partners to prepare and develop a prospectus of pipeline transport investment. This was approved at the September WMCA Board and subsequently submitted to Government, who awarded an indicative allocation of £1.05bn. Further refinement of the investment pipeline programme is underway, with a final business case to be submitted to Government by mid-January 2022.
- 3.1.3. A successful bid to the Levelling Up Fund also saw the Council awarded nearly £20 million by Government to invest in improving Dudley Road corridor.
- 3.1.4. Birmingham City Council (BCC) is working in partnership with TfWM and Sutton Coldfield Town Council to progress a transport strategy to support the Sutton Town Centre Masterplan. In close partnership with BCC, TfWM is currently developing a brief to commission an Outline Business Case for Sutton Gateway (Interchange) scheme, seeking to identify a preferred option for developing a bus interchange, which forms the first phase of investment.

- 3.1.5. Business case development work is underway to support the Snow Hill Growth Strategy, developing options to support extensive redevelopment of Snow Hill Station and the surrounding area. This includes consideration of measures to limit through traffic, further improve air quality, reduce severance, and support increased modal shift to active travel and public transport modes.
- 3.1.6. The TfWM team are working with BCC and other partners to advance the development of High Speed 2 (HS2) in the city. This work has included undertaking a virtual Ministerial visit around the wider impacts of HS2 to make the case for further (non-fiscal) Government support to enhance the benefits achieved. There is alignment of communication and engagement in respect of the construction programme and ensuring that local businesses take full advantage of the opportunities to bid for contracts to work on HS2 projects. A significant area of work, with partners, is the ongoing need to coordinate, manage and mitigate the significant impact of HS2 construction on the city's transport network – this is based on the cross-partner mitigations approach used successfully on other schemes including Perry Barr Highways scheme.

### **Public Transport**

#### Rail

- 3.1.7. BCC is an active member of regional rail fora and has supported regional lobbying for investment in the Midlands Rail Hub proposals. The recent Government publication of the Integrated Rail Plan for the Midlands and the North has included some potential setbacks for Birmingham including the potential not to progress the northern Bordesley Chord, which is needed to enable new and improved services to the north of the city, via the Sutton Park Line including potential new stations at Castle Vale, Fort Parkway, Walmley/Minworth and Sutton Park.
- 3.1.8. The Council have been working in close partnership with West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) to pursue the reopening of the Camp Hill Line with stations at Hazelwell, Moseley and Kings Heath. Detailed design work and land assembly is currently underway for the stations, and delivery of the reopened line is forecast for 2023.
- 3.1.9. Works to upgrade Perry Barr and University Stations are ongoing and due for completion in time for the Commonwealth Games.

#### Bus and Sprint

- 3.1.10. The National Bus Strategy (NBS) was published in 2021, setting out the requirements for Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to access the £3bn transformational bus funding from April 2022. BCC has worked in partnership with TfWM to prepare and agree a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for the region, which builds upon the existing 'Vision for Bus Strategy' and

Enhanced Partnership. The agreed BSIP was submitted to the Department for Transport at the end of October 2021 and initially covers the A34 (north), A45 and B425 corridors, pending response. This aligns with the vision of the BTP which sees the bus as the backbone of the city's transport network, being the mode best placed to respond to changes in demand for sustainable transport in the short to medium term and recognising that investment in bus networks, including reallocation of road space, represents excellent value for money.

- 3.1.11. The Sprint A45 programme is progressing, with works accelerating at pace and programme recovery well advanced. Currently 31 out of 75 shelters have been installed, with site preparation taking place for remaining new shelters. The programme has an expected completion date for Summer 2022.
- 3.1.12. Reviews of the Sprint A34 programme indicate delays in completion for all work packages, compared to original programme dates. On Package D (Perry Barr to Digbeth) the introduction of the Trinity Road cycle-link signals upgrade is likely to push planned completion to March 2022, with an additional potential time risk associated with the Digbeth works.
- 3.1.13. Atkins are carrying out a 'Future SPRINT - Hagley Road Re-Imagined' study on behalf of TfWM and have been asked to consider improvements to bus priorities and walking and cycling. BCC officers are engaging closely with the development of this study, including the development of a VISSIM microsimulation model to test concept designs as they emerge.
- 3.1.14. Phase 1 of the Cross City Bus programme consists of schemes in Birmingham City Centre (Margaret Street, Snow Hill and Newhall Street) and Balsall Heath (Alcester Road). The public consultation process has now been completed, and the Full Business Case approved by BCC. These projects are currently awaiting Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) consultation to enable delivery. Construction is anticipated to commence in 2022 and will be completed prior to the Commonwealth Games.
- 3.1.15. Phase 2 of the Cross City Bus programme consists of the individual schemes including Kings Heath (Alcester Road South) and Inner City (Dudley Road, Summer Hill and Suffolk Street). The proposals are currently at the feasibility stages of development.
- 3.1.16. Work is progressing on Cross City Bus Route 4 (formerly Sutton Coldfield to Birmingham and Birmingham to Longbridge SPRINT Corridors), with Arcadis leading a study to evaluate opportunities for bus priority and bus stop locations for potential future articulated vehicle stops. The study will also specifically consider the need to preserve opportunities to enhance conditions and infrastructure for cyclists.

- 3.1.17. Aecom (on behalf of TfWM) have developed a series of future proposals for cross city bus schemes in the Birmingham area, including initial concept designs and modelling to support bus priority measures. This study was presented to BCC on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

#### Metro

- 3.1.18. Track replacement works were completed by Midland Metro Alliance (MMA) on Corporation Street at the end of October 2021. Further public realm works on Corporate Street remain outstanding, pending securing materials.
- 3.1.19. The extension of Metro to Hagley Road in Birmingham Westside is progressing well and close to testing and completion.
- 3.1.20. With regards to the Birmingham Eastside Extension, work at Bull Street has progressed well, including the installation of the delta junction. Work has commenced in Digbeth to deliver public realm improvements and Metro extension.

#### **Active Travel**

- 3.1.21. The Birmingham Walking and Cycling Strategy and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan was approved by Cabinet in January 2020. Further funding has since been secured to provide additional detail to this plan and to reflect network changes that have taken place recently, especially outside of the City Centre.
- 3.1.22. BCC continues to deliver improvements to city infrastructure through the Active Travel Fund, supporting the wider Birmingham recovery from Covid-19. This includes delivery of four pilot Places for People schemes, five pop-up cycle routes, city centre segments measures and various smaller interventions to support walking and cycling across the city. Work is underway to enhance and make permanent some of the more successful schemes, and to create new ones.
- 3.1.23. Proposals are being developed for the following, with initial consultation complete on most schemes:
- Places for People in Kings Heath & Moseley, Lozells and Bournville;
  - Cycle routes between the city centre and City Hospital (linking to the Dudley Road scheme), on Bradford Street and then linked on to Small Heath Park and between Cannon Hill Park and Moseley (linking to the A38 blue route, and Rea Valley route);
  - City centre segments;
  - Local centre improvements, including cycle parking.
- 3.1.24. Birmingham City Council is working in partnership with TfWM to roll out the West Midlands Cycle Hire scheme across the city. So far, 449 pedal bikes

and 66 docking stations have been launched across Birmingham City Centre, Edgbaston and Sutton Coldfield, with E-bikes to be launched in November 2021. Further scheme expansion is proposed in 2022 with the potential to introduce cargo bikes and trikes.

- 3.1.25. The E-scooter (Voi) hire trial has been extended until the end of March 2022, with plans to also extend the geographical area of the scheme.
- 3.1.26. The E-cargo bike trial is ongoing with a number of organisations, including BCC, using the bikes.
- 3.1.27. BCC is working with TfWM and partner authorities on HS2 sustainable (active) travel routes to ensure that the proposed HS2 'active travel spine' is fully integrated into local active travel networks.
- 3.1.28. On the A45 Coventry Road, a scheme to provide a fully separated active travel route between the City Centre to the city boundary with Solihull (Wheatsheaf) has been prepared to Outline Business Case stage. Further funding has been sought through CRSTS to enable further scheme progression and delivery.
- 3.1.29. An extension of the separated active travel route from Selly Oak to Longbridge is in progress on the A38 Bristol Road. The scheme design and funding package are in development, pending future award.
- 3.1.30. A scheme is being delivered to provide a cycle route between the A38 and Cannon Hill Park, and to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists at the junction of Pershore Road and Priory Road. Completion is expected in Summer 2022.

### **School and Business Travel Planning**

- 3.1.31. A number of critical initiatives are underway to deliver significant investment in infrastructure across the city, encouraging long-term behavioural change to support social, environmental and economic priorities.
- 3.1.32. Around 250 schools in Birmingham are now signed up to Modeshift STARS, with many boasting active School Travel Plans.
- 3.1.33. The over-arching School Streets programme for Birmingham includes 'Slow Down' and 'Switch Off' and 'Keep Clear' campaign resources, the Living Streets Walk to School Programme and 'Car Free Schools Streets'. The Car Free School Streets scheme (School Exclusion Zone) now covers twelve schools, with six more due to be added in 2022.
- 3.1.34. Over 100 workplaces are now signed up to use the Modeshift STARS travel planning scheme. Twelve Birmingham based workplaces, including major employers across the city, have so far achieved Modeshift STARS accreditation with more preparing to apply. BCC and National Express West Midlands (NXWM) were recently awarded a Modeshift National Sustainable

Travel Award for contribution to sustainable travel, for work towards making NXWM the UK's most sustainable bus company.

### **Road Safety**

- 3.1.35. The Council continues to develop and deliver a programme of road safety schemes, to support gradual improvement of road safety across the city.
- 3.1.36. BCC officers are working with West Midlands Police to renegotiate a new agreement to operate Average Speed Enforcement Cameras across the city.
- 3.1.37. Business case development is currently underway for an extension of area-wide 20 mph limits in the B3 area (North Edgbaston/Handsworth).

### **Major Schemes**

- 3.1.38. The Perry Barr Highway Improvements scheme continues, ahead of the Commonwealth Games. The Perry Barr Flyover removal was successfully completed in February 2021, forming part of a wider £27.1 million investment in infrastructure and services in the Perry Barr area which is forecast to complete in 2022.
- 3.1.39. Works to deliver a comprehensive renewal of the public realm within the city centre core are progressing. The repair and reinstatement of the River Fountain in Victoria Square began in July 2021 and is due to be completed in Spring 2022. Victoria Square, Colmore and Waterloo public realm improvements have now been postponed to January 2023.
- 3.1.40. Working with Argent as lead developer, BCC is helping to deliver one of the UK's most prominent city centre redevelopments through the Paradise scheme. Phase 1 is complete, including construction of numbers One and Two Chamberlain Square and associated public realm improvements. Phase 2 is underway now, including the delivery of One Centenary Way, Three Chamberlain Square, Ratcliff Square and a new hotel.
- 3.1.41. Phase 1 of the Snow Hill Public Realm programme is nearing completion but has been delayed as a result of the pandemic. Further phases are programmed for future delivery.
- 3.1.42. Remediation work in the Southside Public Realm is ongoing, including appointment of a new contractor after the previous contractor went into administration. The scheme has been reprofiled and further developments will be communicated in early 2022.

### **Commonwealth Games Preparation**

- 3.1.43. The completed Games Transport Plan is currently progressing through BCC, Organising Committee (OC) and West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) governance. Final approval will be sought from WMCA Board on

14<sup>th</sup> January 2022. Operational planning for the Games, including readiness and testing exercises, commences in January 2022.

- 3.1.44. The Games Transport Strategy for Birmingham City Centre has now been published. It includes a thematic delivery plan of key actions to take forward, recommending further work around traffic modelling, pedestrian modelling, managing development and freight and logistics. A dedicated cross-partner group has now been established to take forward the actions from the delivery plan.
- 3.1.45. Surveys have been undertaken of all traffic signals on the Games Route Network within Birmingham to confirm the operational status of the sites and identify any equipment faults. The list of equipment faults required to be repaired for the Commonwealth Games has been passed to BCC for rectification. BCC is considering a £5m upgrade to its traffic signals, however it is not yet known what can be delivered in time for Birmingham 2022.

### **Highway Maintenance and Management**

- 3.1.46. Activity is progressing towards long-term restructuring of its Highway Maintenance and Management PFI contract. This restructuring remains subject to approval by Government in the form of a revised business case, which will be required to confirm retention of the Council's £50.311m per annum PFI grant.
- 3.1.47. As requested by Department for Transport (DfT), a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) was submitted on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2021, which was approved on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2021. An Outline Business Case (OBC) was submitted on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021 and remains under consideration by DfT. The formal procurement process is planned to commence in January 2022, with contract award planned for April 2023.
- 3.1.48. While the long-term restructuring of the contract progresses, the Council continues to invest in highway infrastructure across Birmingham, with a £50.75m programme of improvements planned for 2022-3. This programme is in addition to ongoing safety maintenance works delivered through an interim services contract with Kier Highways Ltd. The contract with Kier has been extended to August 2023 to cover the period until the long-term contract is introduced.

## **3.2. Environment**

### **Route to Zero (R20) Programme**

- 3.2.1. Birmingham City Council declared a climate emergency on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2019, committing to take action to reduce the city's carbon emissions and limit its part in the climate crisis. The ambition was set for the Council and city to

become net zero carbon by 2030, or as soon as possible thereafter as a 'just transition' allows. A 'Call to Action' action plan, approved by Full Council in January 2021, set out an initial set of actions the Council would take on its path to achieving its 'Route to Zero' (R20).

- 3.2.2. The first annual report on the progress made against the action plan is due to go to City Council in January 2022.
- 3.2.3. Locally, Birmingham is making steady progress – the city's CO2 emissions decreased by 40.6% in 2019 and are at an all-time low since 1990.
- 3.2.4. Over the last year, the initial R20 Taskforce has been transitioned into a R20 Community Assembly as part of a refresh of wider governance arrangements. Two meetings of the Community Assembly have already taken place, with the next meeting planned for February 2022.
- 3.2.5. A BCC Assistant Director for R20 has been recruited with a team to follow.
- 3.2.6. Subsequent sections of this report set out the highlights and major achievements from the 41 currently active 'Wave 1' projects, being delivered as part of the wider R20 programme. These are structured by theme.

### **Transport**

- 3.2.7. Thirteen hydrogen buses have been delivered as part of the Hydrogen Bus Pilot, with seven more buses to follow. The training of drivers and maintenance staff has commenced.
- 3.2.8. The Electric Vehicles (EV) Charging Strategy was approved by Cabinet in November 2021. Twelve EV charging sites are now fully operational and ESB Energy continue to roll out nearly 200 'fast and rapid' chargers (comprising 394 individual charge points) by Autumn 2022.
- 3.2.9. Whilst focused on air quality rather than climate change, the Clean Air Zone (CAZ) aims to restrain car use and encourage modal shift towards cleaner vehicles, active travel or public transport, supporting the wider decarbonisation agenda. The Birmingham CAZ went live in June 2021 and continues to help decrease the number of non-compliant vehicles entering the city centre.
- 3.2.10. The percentage of non-compliant vehicles entering the zone has steadily reduced since the introduction of the scheme. At the beginning of the scheme, 18.7% of vehicles were subject to the daily fee. By the end of October this had reduced to 10.2%.
- 3.2.11. Work has commenced on projects as part of the Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 programme.

## **Air Quality**

### Air Quality Action Plan

- 3.2.12. In April 2021 the Council published a new Air Quality Action Plan covering the period 2021-2026. The primary focus of the new action plan is on reducing road transport, developing a physical and policy environment to promote modal shift from single occupant vehicles to public transport and alternative means of travel, as well as incentivising the use of alternatively fuelled vehicles.
- 3.2.13. The importance of the Clean Air Zone (CAZ) as a landmark scheme in controlling emissions into and through the City Centre area is recognised within the action plan, with a similar scheme having been initially proposed in the previous version of the action plan (2011).
- 3.2.14. The action plan also recognises the continued importance of reducing emissions locally through the proactive and reactive regulation of industry and nuisance emissions. This is delivered through the Environmental Health service and involves the regulation of over 200 industrial processes and responding to complaints from citizens about smoke, dust, fumes and gas emissions. The service also assist Planning Management by assessing around 3,000 planning applications per annum to ensure any air quality impact is mitigated.
- 3.2.15. In order to track the quality of the air in Birmingham, Environmental Health maintain an extensive monitoring network, expanded from eight to fourteen monitoring locations in November 2021 to assist with monitoring of the CAZ. This data is available at [www.birminghamairquality.co.uk](http://www.birminghamairquality.co.uk)
- 3.2.16. Officers undertake non-continuous monitoring of nitrogen dioxide using diffusion tubes at around 90 sites around the city. This is done on a monthly basis to give an annual average of the concentration. It is proposed to extend this network into outer wards as part of the new programme for assessing air quality outside the city centre now that the CAZ has gone live.
- 3.2.17. Birmingham continues to support the national polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon and Black Carbon monitoring networks, for which the Council receives payment.

### CAZ Monitoring and Evaluation

- 3.2.18. Following the launch of the CAZ, the shift is now to an operating model incorporating the monitoring of the CAZ and the evaluation of the measures. A monitoring and evaluation plan has been established, with an initial baseline report published and future reports scheduled at six monthly intervals. The service also produces factsheets on the outputs from the CAZ

on a monthly basis, providing a link to key performance indicators reported to the Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU) through the Zonal Reports.

#### Clean Air Strategy

- 3.2.19. The Clean Air Strategy (CAS) has been reviewed and revised following formal consultation in 2019 and has incorporated key comments. A final version of the strategy will be published in early 2022.

#### **Energy**

- 3.2.20. An agreement has been reached to develop a East Birmingham Low Carbon Innovation Zone. Partners are developing a proposal for a Net Zero Neighbourhood.
- 3.2.21. The Council House rewire programme is on track and anticipated to be complete by March 2022, reducing the organisation's carbon footprint.

#### **New Build Homes**

- 3.2.22. European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) has been secured to help fund energy saving technology on the Gressel Lane site. Planning permission has been secured for 36 houses to be built, trialling innovative energy efficiency technologies.
- 3.2.23. A new build specification for BMHT homes has been in use since July 2021. Each home built to the new standard will save an average of over one tonne of carbon when compared to the old specification.
- 3.2.24. The Council's first Passivhaus trial is underway. A design team has been set up and draft plans are currently being designed for the scheme. The intention is to obtain planning permission and go out to tender for a contractor in 2022, aiming to be on site in 2023.

#### **Retrofit**

- 3.2.25. As of November 2021, an Enhanced Business Case is in place to secure the Council's commitment of £3.6 towards the East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Programme (EBISG) over 2021-25.
- 3.2.26. The approval of the enhanced business case enables the establishment of a programme team, as well as opening up the budget required to develop and deliver a comprehensive package of projects to address the full scope of the Strategy vision. This includes the development of further business cases, funding bids, and the commissioning of delivery through appropriate routes. The programme currently includes eight projects, which are progressing according to plan.
- 3.2.27. Work continues against ECO agreements, including the publication of a Statement of Intent, the signing of legal agreements, and contacting of utility companies. Tracking of measures has commenced – with 185 homes

identified and 344 measures to be installed. This includes 136 boiler replacements.

### **Flood Risk Management and Drainage**

- 3.2.28. As Lead Local Flood Authority, the Council is responsible for delivery of the Grant in Aid and Local Levy Programmes, which includes flood alleviation for 50 properties (in construction and ongoing throughout 2022).
- 3.2.29. The team have had another busy year and have been assisting colleagues in Leisure for reservoir on-site plans and for 'works in the interest of safety' at Alexander Stadium in advance of the Commonwealth Games.
- 3.2.30. On-Site Plans are now required for all 11 reservoirs where the City Council is an 'Undertaker' such as Powells Pool, Bracebridge Pool, Witton Lakes, Swanshurst Pool, Perry Pool and Trittiford Mill Pool.
- 3.2.31. We have also been informing the Planning Process as Lead Local Flood Authority for all major developments across Birmingham, and helping to drive forward the realisation of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter Supplementary Planning Document to ensure that surface water drainage and flooding considerations are taken into account at all stages of the Planning Process.
- 3.2.32. Flood alleviation works have been completed at Eastern Avenue (Selly Park), and good progress is being made at Craythorne Avenue/Sunningdale Close in Handsworth to provide watercourse improvement works including a flood defence wall, culvert flow improvements and providing large areas of online storage on the Hilltop Brook to decrease flood risk to numerous properties.
- 3.2.33. Drainage improvement works are scheduled at Chanston Avenue/Brandwood End Cemetery.
- 3.2.34. Hydraulic modelling has been undertaken of the Druids Heath catchment and the Chinn Brook, to find possible alleviation options to decrease flood risk to people and property.
- 3.2.35. The service has also stepped in on behalf of Severn Trent Water to attract funding to replace missing flood guards at Ripple Road, Stirchley.
- 3.2.36. BCC is working alongside the Environment Agency to use BCC contractors for Weir Removals at First Avenue, Selly Park with works scheduled for 2022–2024. This, in tandem with the Selly Park North overflow culvert and additional surface water drainage on the Pershore Road, will all help minimise the impacts of flooding in a densely populated, high flood risk area of Birmingham.

### **Trees**

- 3.2.37. Birmingham is a city of one million trees, but we will need significantly more to mitigate the impacts of climate change. At present, Birmingham currently

has 18.6% average canopy cover, but 25% or greater is required to make towns and cities liveable in future. At least a further 176,000 more trees are needed to reach the city's canopy cover target.

- 3.2.38. A number of initiatives are being rolled out to meet this ambitious target, further details of which are given in this section of the report.
- 3.2.39. Work is underway to develop the Birmingham Urban Forest Master Plan 2021-51, which sets out the long-term vision for all trees in the city over the next thirty years. The plan is structured into three key areas: Trees and Urban Forest Structure, Community Framework and Sustainable Resource Management Approach. Each section will contain a set of key performance indicators (KPIs), with an overview of the current status and an action plan of what is needed to achieve improvement for each. The creation of this plan – the UK's first full urban forest master plan - has drawn UK, European and global attention, with officers being invited to present at a number of high-profile webinars.
- 3.2.40. A Tree Equity and Priority Planting Platform has been developed to aid in identifying priority locations for tree planting across the city. The web-based platform uses a range of environmental datasets and socio-economic factors to create priority 'heat maps', as well as drawing on data on land type and existing canopy cover to calculate what levels of planting and establishment are required to achieve tree equity.
- 3.2.41. Over the last six months we have seen a huge growth in interest in trees and tree planting in Birmingham. This has required significant management to ensure that the right trees are being planted in the right locations, as part of a coordinated programme of tree planting activity across Winter 2021/22. Between existing tree planting partners, Severn Trent (as part of the CWG Legacy) and contributions to the Queen's Green Canopy (Platinum Jubilee) we should see in the region of 31,000 new trees planted by March 2022. Of note among these plantings, there will be expansion of woodland along the River Cole/East Birmingham Corridor and a 70 oak tree avenue planted to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee (one for each year of HRH reign) in Perry Park.
- 3.2.42. The Environment Bill gained royal assent in November 2021, accompanied by an amendment to the Highways Act. This amendment requires specific consultation with the public on the felling of street trees. This will not impact the day to day regular management of our street trees for health and safety reasons, but it will impact highways changes and new transport schemes where healthy trees might be impacted by such schemes.
- 3.2.43. The Development Management in Birmingham Document now contains an updated policy requiring greater consideration to be given to all trees impacted by development, assigning a financial value to affected trees. Where replacement planting is not delivering the same or greater 'tree

benefits', this policy allows the City Council to lever in planning gain by way of S106 to fund additional tree planting within the city. Greater detail on the assessment of trees in relation to development is contained within the new design guide (to be published shortly). It also sets out in detail the types and quality of planting we expect so that the city and its citizens benefit from long term sustainable urban forest trees.

### **Biodiversity and Natural Capital**

- 3.2.44. With the enactment of the Environment Bill comes a new mandate for all developments to deliver a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain - a positive move from the current 'no net loss position'. This should primarily be delivered on-site but where this is not possible then off-site provision can be considered. This has the potential to offer benefits for the city as we can promote the use of our existing green assets as a location for such off-site provision. Any off-site provision of this kind will require the developer to foot the cost of habitat creation or enhancement, in addition to at least 30 years of maintenance costs.
- 3.2.45. The Environment Act also requires the city to produce a Local Nature Recovery Network Strategy. This should set out the areas of the city that are most valuable to biodiversity, as well as those areas that should be protected and enhanced to increase the reliance of natural biodiverse networks to climate change and other threats. This will form the basis of identifying sites for biodiversity net gain. Local authorities are now required to report on a 5-yearly cycle on how networks are being improved and managed.
- 3.2.46. 'Our Future City Plan 2040', the new vision document for Birmingham, contains a chapter setting out our vision to become a 'City of Nature'. We want to see Birmingham develop into a place where nature and nature-based solutions play a key role in our city's adaption to the challenges of climate change. Creating a more biophilic city is essential for increasing the resilience of citizens and communities, with the Covid-19 pandemic proving the vital importance that a green environment (and access to green spaces) plays in safeguarding the mental health and wellbeing of people in urban environments.
- 3.2.47. The 'City of Nature' vision includes a proposal to introduce an 'Urban Greening Factor' (UGF) to Birmingham, requiring a minimum threshold of urban greening to be delivered on every new development or redevelopment. This ties into the Birmingham Transport Plan, where reallocation of road space will open up opportunities to deliver greater multifunctional urban greening that will increase the city's ability to adapt to the threats of climate change.
- 3.2.48. The River Rea and its tributaries can and do contribute to a number of flood events in southwest Birmingham. Work is underway in conjunction with the

Environment Agency and other stakeholders to devise a Rea Valley Catchment Vision Plan that will help identify what actions can be taken to increase flood and storm water attenuation and improve resilience to such events. The City Council, being a major landowner, will be able to play a significant role through the adaption and utilisation of its green spaces to provide that increased water storage capacity. A twofold benefit will be that this use of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) will provide biodiversity increases.

### **Future Parks Accelerator**

- 3.2.49. Birmingham's Future Parks Accelerator initiative is producing a 25-year Delivery Framework for Birmingham's City of Nature ambition, as stated in 'Our Future City Plan 2040'.
- 3.2.50. It represents a corporate transformation programme that seeks to put nature and environmental justice at the centre of the city's decision-making for the next 25 years. It will achieve this through the adoption of a new governance and finance model for the city's natural and green environment, including all parks and green spaces. This will provide a new delivery and funding mechanism for the sustainable future of the city's green and natural environment.

### **Council Behaviour**

- 3.2.51. A Climate Change e-Learning module for staff was launched in November 2021, aiming to raise awareness on climate change across the Council workforce. The module covers topics such as what climate change is, what its future effects may be and how individuals and organisations can reduce their carbon footprint. The possibility of making the module mandatory for all staff in 2022-23 is being explored.
- 3.2.52. An Environmental and Sustainability Assessment (ESA) template was introduced in April 2021. This is now in use for Council Leadership Team (CLT) and Cabinet reports to assess any environmental or sustainability impacts of decisions, and will be expanded to other areas in due course.
- 3.2.53. Good progress and positive engagement has been made by procurement across four key target areas: construction, highways, repairs and maintenance, and adult social care.

## **4. Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities Portfolio**

### **4.1. Community Safety and Inclusion**

#### **Community Safety Partnership**

- 4.1.1. Having adopted a Gold/Silver/Bronze operating model during the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure a clear focus on key priorities, the Council's Community

Safety and Prevent Team have now transitioned back to mainly 'business as usual' activity, while working remotely and continuing to support the Council's response to Covid-19 as required.

- 4.1.2. Working alongside West Midlands Police (WMP), we have established new partnership consequence management meetings to ensure rapid, robust and coordinated responses to serious incidents with community safety implications.

#### **Birmingham Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) Core Group**

- 4.1.3. The Birmingham Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) Core Group, consisting of key members of the wider Partnership Executive Board, continues to meet fortnightly to oversee key priorities. This facilitates a quicker strategic response to emerging community safety issues from partners. It has been agreed to keep the Core Group running as we continue to move into business as usual and wider recovery from the pandemic.

- 4.1.4. The priorities of the BCSP Core Group include domestic abuse, domestic homicide reviews, hate crime, modern slavery, serious organised crime, tension monitoring, and reducing anti-social behaviour.

- 4.1.5. Work has begun on developing a Reducing Violence Strategy, which will address serious youth violence, violence during a transitional age and adult violence with a focus on early intervention, supporting vulnerable individuals, place-based vulnerabilities and solutions, as well as offender management.

- 4.1.6. **Birmingham Community Safety Partnership Executive Board**

- 4.1.7. The full Executive Board meets on a bi-monthly basis, and oversees three key thematic priorities:

#### Victims and Vulnerabilities

- 4.1.8. The Hate Crime Partnership sits within this thematic priority and has over 80 members taking forward a comprehensive delivery and action plan. Following recent homophobic attacks and incidents in the Gay Village, the partnership led on the development of a ten-point plan focused on supporting the city's LGBTQ+ community and the Southside Bid district.

- 4.1.9. Through our Modern Slavery work, twenty new Modern Slavery champions have been recruited across the Council, taking the total to 75 staff. The Modern Slavery coordinator has facilitated training, information and input sessions to over 270 members of staff and partners. This includes inputs to Adult Social Care, the multi-systemic therapy team, Community Safety Local Partnership Delivery Groups, Birmingham Social Housing Partnership, and the regional Violence Reduction Unit.

- 4.1.10. A modern slavery pathway, toolkit, and casework process for homeless adults presenting at the Homeless Hub is also being developed and the

Modern Slavery Transparency Statement for 2021/22 has been revised in line with forthcoming government guidelines. The statement sets some particularly ambitious commitments for the Council, including a pledge to only use ethical imagery and language around modern slavery, and involving survivors of exploitation in the development of our work.

- 4.1.11. To support our wider work on tackling domestic abuse and the emerging Violence Against Women and Girls strategy, we have now recruited 24 community champions on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The champions have been trained to offer support, advice and sign posting within in their neighbourhoods. Online training has been delivered to schoolteachers who can both share their knowledge and respond to issues and concerns raised by students. The training focuses on the many different aspects of gendered abuse including forced marriage, FGM and honour-based violence. Since April 2021, support has been provided to 138 women. Some 30 training events have been delivered and 52 schools have also received training and attended awareness events.
- 4.1.12. Officers have also established a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) core group to support the turnaround of DHRs and ensure we deliver the learning from these reviews. We will be commissioning learning events to deliver sessions on early assessment, having the right conversation at the right time, suicide awareness and the increase in child on parent abuse.

#### Place

- 4.1.13. We have worked with other Community Safety Partnership (CSP) partners to develop a new Community Trigger policy for Birmingham in light of updated national guidance and a marked increase in Community Trigger requests from residents. This is scheduled to be approved in January 2022, with implementation to be completed by the end of February 2022.
- 4.1.14. Community Triggers are formal anti-social behaviour case reviews and are a statutory requirement for all NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), police forces, local authorities and social housing providers. Birmingham City Council manages and facilitates these reviews on behalf of other statutory partners within the city. In the period 2019-2020, the annual number of cases increased from just four to 47. We are projecting receipt of a similarly high number of cases for the 2020-2021 period.
- 4.1.15. Some improvements have already been made to the Community Triggers process. These include developing a better understanding of how partners can use the key findings and recommendations from case reviews to deliver better services to residents and businesses experiencing anti-social behaviour.

- 4.1.16. In a drive to deliver better partnership working in neighbourhoods, while tackling the issues which matter to communities, a number of place-based pilots have been established. These are focused on the six impact areas in Birmingham identified by WMP as experiencing the highest levels of demand for support and the highest risks of harm for crime and anti-social behaviour. Examples of pilots are given below.
- 4.1.17. In Lozells and Sparkbrook, locality-based approaches are being co-developed with West Midlands Police. In Lozells, this will focus on reducing youth violence and will be led by the police. In Sparkbrook, this will have an emphasis instead on clean streets and open spaces and will be led by Birmingham City Council. Both locality approaches are planned to go live in early 2022.
- 4.1.18. £432,000 of Safer Streets Round 2 funding has been secured for Stockland Green to reduce neighbourhood crime through physical measures. Our proposal was developed in partnership with WMP and the Office of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner (WMPCC) and included a particular emphasis on the impact of exempt accommodation. As a result of this investment street lighting will be improved, redeployable CCTV introduced, alleyways and service roads will be upgraded with clean ups, lighting and gating, and all homes will be visited in the area and provided with practical crime prevention advice. A tasking model with a strong emphasis on community engagement has also been introduced, which builds upon the significant strides local community groups have made in recent years. The Community Safety Partnership is also focusing on how to sustain the impact of this project beyond the lifetime of the funding.
- 4.1.19. As part of a co-ordinated partnership response towards anti-social behaviour, the Community Safety Partnership has secured funding from WMPCC to continue to deploy two Community Safety Intervention Officers in the City Centre. Their role is to provide a visible presence at key City Centre locations to deter anti-social behaviour as well as to provide evidence for civil enforcement measures, where appropriate. As part of this role, they engage with a wide range of partners including West Midlands Police, Business Improvement Districts and specialist outreach services working to support vulnerable individuals. In the past 12 months, the officers have made 2,555 contacts/engagements. Between July and October 2021 there have been 430 contacts, which is an increase of 13.8% compared to the first quarter of the year (April – July 2021). In the last 12 months 968 referrals have been made to outreach services including Shelter, Trident Reach and Change Grow Live.

### Gangs, Violence and Serious Organised Crime

- 4.1.20. The group is developing a new Reducing Violence strategy, and also has oversight of the Reducing Re-offending Strategy, the new statutory serious violence duty offensive weapons homicide reviews, and the serious organised crime operational group.
- 4.1.21. Working with partners, new provisions have been introduced to redirect young people away from gangs and violence. Together with the regional Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), we are overseeing projects focused on tackling the complex issues around violence reduction.
- 4.1.22. The Youth Endowment Fund is being utilised to develop specific programmes for young people. These will include a focus on families who have lost young people to violence and the development of community-based solutions. This work will also include a specific programme targeted at the re-engagement of gang members.

### **Community Safety Partnership Operations Group**

- 4.1.23. The Community Safety Partnership Operations Group now meets monthly, identifying and acting upon community safety concerns that impact on the city as a whole. Recent work has included the introduction of a fortnightly Street Partnership Tasking Group (SPTG), which is covered separately in a later section of this report.
- 4.1.24. The Community Safety Youth Focus Group meets weekly with partners, sharing information with regards to supporting young people and working in partnership to reduce youth crime.
- 4.1.25. The Operations Group also has oversight of the process for Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs). The results of the City Centre PSPO will be presented to Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021, and the Erdington PSPO will be concluded in December 2020. Six other PSPOs are being considered at Local Partnership Delivery Group level. The Operations Group also continues to act as an escalation point, review and support for all LPDGs.

### **Local Partnership Delivery Groups (LPDGs)**

- 4.1.26. Local Partnership Delivery Groups (LDGPs) have a place and people based focus. With regards to place, LPDGs focus on key neighbourhoods in their geographical area where there are higher levels of crime or anti-social behaviour. They develop operational multi-agency plans to deliver and monitor targeted activity on key trends and drivers of crime.
- 4.1.27. For the people agenda, LPDGs provide a forum for case management discussions about complex anti-social behaviour cases in their local area and cases causing a significant impact upon the community. This part of the meeting is a closed meeting with statutory partners and is governed by our

information sharing agreement with West Midlands Police and partners. It develops multi-agency case plans, tracks enforcement action and monitors impact.

- 4.1.28. All six LPDGs are now working on a 'business as usual' basis, whilst continuing to respond to Covid-related concerns. This has included supporting the production of local recovery plans for schools and businesses emerging from lockdown.
- 4.1.29. LPDGs have access to the Community Safety Partnership's eleven redeployable CCTV cameras, with deployments based on evidence of crime and anti-social behaviour. In addition, they can access two Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras which have been funded through the WMPCC to specifically support the injunction against car cruising (Op Hercules).

#### **Street Partnership Tasking Group (SPTG)**

- 4.1.30. The Street Partnership Tasking Group (SPTG) was introduced in October 2020 to address issues and concerns relating to street-based anti-social behaviour. It meets on a fortnightly basis.
- 4.1.31. Partners work together to first ensure all support services are fully engaged with individuals and will only move to any enforcement action with the permission of these support services.
- 4.1.32. Birmingham City Council Community Safety Team officers have completed 2,721 recorded interactions with the street community in the last 12 months. 241 of these have escalated into some form of enforcement action and 184 of which have been referred to support services. 21 of these were engaged in begging at traffic lights. To date there have been 161 cases escalated to the STPG for enforcement action. Currently there have been 42 Community Protection Warnings (CPW) issued, 18 Community Protection Notices (CPN), and we have assisted West Midlands Police with three Injunctions/Criminal Behaviour Orders. There are currently 76 active cases within the STPG of street beggars, of which 44 are known to have accommodation.

#### **Prevent**

- 4.1.33. Birmingham City Council's Prevent Team works closely with the West Midlands Counter Terrorism Unit to ensure that effective processes are in place for Prevent and that Home Office supported programmes continue to run effectively. The Prevent Team have transitioned well into the online space, ensuring support can now also be offered online as well as in-person.
- 4.1.34. The Contest Board oversees the delivery of the Prevent Programme in Birmingham, with an independent review of delivery ready to conclude and

report its findings. Preliminary findings from the review team were reported at a November 2021 meeting of the Board.

- 4.1.35. In December 2021, Birmingham hosted the new Minister for Security at the Home Office, at the request of the Department for Homeland Security within the Home Office, to provide the Minister with an overview of a mature programme.

#### **Domestic Abuse (DA) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV)**

- 4.1.36. The Council works with Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid (BSWAID) to provide support for those at risk of domestic abuse. The Community Safety Team, alongside Housing colleagues, secured extra funding through the emergency Covid-19 fund to support the additional capacity needed to respond to increases in domestic abuse enquiries.
- 4.1.37. Work continues within the Community Safety Team to support the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process. We have also introduced a Domestic Abuse and Criminal Justice working group, which is working with victims of domestic abuse to assess and understand their journey and experience through the criminal justice system. This work will identify why some victims do not continue with their complaints and why positive outcomes are low in comparison to the number of reports made. The team are also working with Birmingham Children's Trust, West Midlands Police and local schools to support families impacted by domestic abuse.
- 4.1.38. The BCC Community Safety Team are developing a Violence Against Women and Girls' Strategy, which will support the existing Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy. It will also support partnership work to protect women within the night-time economy in the City Centre, and the project work being delivered as a result of the successful funding application within Safer Streets 3.
- 4.1.39. Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a new statutory duty on Tier One authorities, to appoint a multi-agency Local Partnership Board to support them in performing certain specified functions. These include:
- Assessing the need for accommodation-based support for all victims and their children, including those who require cross border support.
  - Preparing and publishing strategies for the provision of support to cover the locality and diverse groups of victims.
  - Giving effect to strategies by making commissioning/de-commissioning decisions to meet the support needs of victims and their children.

- 4.1.40. Birmingham established shadow board arrangements a year in advance of the Act coming into force, and this has now transitioned into a formal Local Partnership Board with oversight of the delivery of the new duty.
- 4.1.41. In April 2021 the Council received £3.2m to discharge its new statutory duty, deploying this one-year funding to initially address pressure on existing services. The approach seeks to enhance the support provision for victims in commissioned safe accommodation and enhance delivery within Housing and Birmingham Children's Trust.
- 4.1.42. Further to Cabinet approval of this approach in October 2021, contract variations have now been issued to our commissioned services to provide support including Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs), children's workers, and refuge workers in newly acquired bed spaces.
- 4.1.43. A full needs assessment that considers the prevalence of and response to domestic abuse (DA), assesses the need for accommodation-based support, and maps services across key areas such as the criminal justice system, education, and health, was undertaken by BVSC. A final report was produced at the end of November 2020.
- 4.1.44. Following this needs assessment, a grants prospectus will be issued to give opportunities to smaller specialist organisations to bid for monies to address gaps and considers equality and diversity.

#### Respite Room pilot

- 4.1.45. On 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021, the Chancellor announced £4.2m to trial a number of Respite Rooms across the country. The programme trials an approach to providing a safe, single gender space for a short period of time with intensive, trauma informed support to make choices and decisions around next steps for recovery. Birmingham City Council successfully bid to be one of 11 areas taking part in the national trial. We will be working with Trident Reach to help women with complex domestic abuse needs who find themselves sleeping rough away from the streets and into accommodation. The pilot will be fully mobilised in January 2022.

#### 16 Days of Action

- 4.1.46. The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign that is launched on 25th November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until 10<sup>th</sup> December.
- 4.1.47. This year, BCC officers worked with the corporate communications team and other councils in the West Midlands to create a campaign that looked at violence globally, and then focussed on the landscape in Birmingham, to

spread awareness about abuse and the support services available within the city.

### **Exempt Accommodation**

- 4.1.48. Birmingham's Exempt Accommodation pilot, which includes a specific community safety focus, continues to make positive progress. The community safety work started in January 2021 and a small team is now in place. To date the team has carried out 412 joint visits with internal and external partners within the pilot, including housing, adult social care, planning, WMP, and West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS).
- 4.1.49. The team has undertaken 430 investigations, which have resulted in the identification of individuals vulnerable to exploitation by organised crime groups and referrals into appropriate support agencies, as well as engagement with landlords to help support individuals move into more suitable accommodation.
- 4.1.50. Work continues with West Midlands Probation Service (WMPS) to further tighten the referrals processes for individuals from outside of Birmingham. Following a joint operation with WMP, there is now a closure order in place against Saif Lodge, an exempt accommodation in Edgbaston, which also included a referral to the Housing Ombudsman.
- 4.1.51. The pilot is bringing additional attention to those providers who are not operating correctly and as a result they are removing themselves from this line of business.

## **4.2. Equalities and Cohesion**

### **Equalities and Cohesion (E&C) Division**

- 4.2.1. Recruitment to the Equalities and Cohesion (E&C) division team is near completion, pending the appointment of two Grade 4 Equalities and Inclusion Officers, budget for whom is in the forecast spend due to a transfer from HR. It is anticipated that these remaining positions will be recruited by February 2022.
- 4.2.2. The following posts have been successfully recruited to so far:
  - Head of Service
  - Two Service Leads (one for Equalities and one for Cohesion). The Cohesion Service Lead is on secondment until March 2022.
  - Two Equalities and Cohesion Apprentices
  - Two Equalities and Inclusion Officers (one position is on secondment until March 2022)

- Project Officer
- Business Support Manager

4.2.3. Recruitment to the outstanding positions during 2021/22 Q4 will support achievement of the Everyone's Battle, Everyone's Business (EBEB) Strategic Action Plan and further compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

### **Workforce Equality**

4.2.4. The Equalities and Cohesion division are preparing an extensive review of (and update on) the delivery of actions within EBEB Strategic Action Plan, to come to Cabinet by March 2022.

4.2.5. Birmingham City Council has become an 'early adopter' of the RACE Equality Code and has taken receipt of the Quality Mark, having committed to deliver against the following four RACE (Reporting, Action, Composition and Education) Code principles. We are now in the process of communicating and delivering on the actions with our staff networks, Directorate Management teams, Human Resources function and trade unions.

4.2.6. Through our annual Workforce Equity reviews, we are one of only a handful of local authorities to publish our Race Pay Gap Review. Latest figures show that staff from marginalised ethnic groups continue to be paid less on average than their white colleagues, because of the larger numbers who continue to be employed in frontline and operational roles. This is a gap that we are committed to closing and will continue to work hard in order to do so.

4.2.7. We are now looking at age, disability and gender and how these protected characteristics also impact upon the economic wellbeing of our staff.

4.2.8. The latest Gender Pay Gap Report continues to show a reduction in the mean pay between male and female employees. The published mean pay gap now stands at 4.8%, a reduction from 6.4% in 2019 and 9.3% in 2018. We expect to see the gap reduce further when the data is produced for 2021.

4.2.9. Equalities and Cohesion officers worked in partnership with the Council's LGBT+ Allies staff network to make a Workplace Equality Index (WEI) submission to Stonewall. Results and feedback are due in February 2022, with benchmarking of results anticipated to begin late February/early March 2022. In the interim, a LGBT+ Strategic Action Plan is being developed, initially from the missed points from the WEI. This will form part of the Everyone's Battle, Everyone's Business revised strategy and action plan and will include:

- Being more explicit in our inclusion.
- Finishing the development of a Trans Inclusion Policy and necessary guidance.

- Education on Trans and Gender Non-Binary inclusion.
- Working with Procurement to include equalities in the Birmingham Business Charter.
- Ensuring that our leadership team and Cabinet are equipped with the knowledge and skills to be Champions of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion within the Council.
- Improving allyship across the Council.

4.2.10. Staff are also liaising with the Diversity Alliance Network to discuss a communications strategy to improve period awareness across the council. There will be an overall informational piece, including cultural and religious shame, and how different protected characteristics can be affected by menstruation, e.g. disability, pregnancy and post-birth, LGBT+.

#### **Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review (BLACHIR)**

4.2.11. Birmingham and Lewisham Councils have begun working together following participation in the national Childhood Obesity Trailblazers programme, developing a partnership to share knowledge and resources through a collaborative review process. Both Birmingham and Lewisham experience high levels of deprivation and poor health that disproportionately affect vulnerable communities.

4.2.12. The Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review aims to jointly undertake a series of systematic evidence reviews to explore in-depth the inequalities experienced by Black African and Black Caribbean groups and their drivers.

4.2.13. Review topics include:

1. The role of racism and discrimination in health inequalities
2. Early years, pregnancy & parenthood
3. Children and young people
4. Ageing well
5. Mental health & wellbeing
6. Behavioural (lifestyle) factors
7. Wider determinants of health
8. Long term physical health conditions (previously named 'chronic disease')
9. Emergency care and preventable mortality (previously named 'acute disease and death')

- 4.2.14. The review will produce a joint final report bringing together the findings from the advisory board, stakeholder events, online forum and all research, reviews, and data analysis conducted by the review group over the eighteen month period.
- 4.2.15. Seven of nine themes of the review have now been completed (1-7 as above).
- 4.2.16. A series of engagement events for BLACHIR themes 1, 2 and 3 (The role of racism and discrimination in health inequalities, Early years, pregnancy & parenthood, and Children and young people) have been completed and a BeHeard survey was carried out.
- 4.2.17. Future themes will include two engagement events: one specialised for children and young people, and another for the general population. Engagement will continue into early January 2022. All results from the engagement events will be reported through Public Health.
- 4.2.18. In addition, we have developed a business case for new accessibility roles within the E&C division. These roles would address a gap in the Council's strategic capacity with regards to accessibility and disability.

#### **Armed Forces Covenant**

- 4.2.19. During the pandemic, the council's Armed Forces Partnership has continued to take forward actions to support Birmingham's Armed Forces community, including veterans and their families.
- 4.2.20. Birmingham is the first City Council to establish a cross-partner group providing wraparound support to individuals and families connected to the Armed Forces through a coordinated approach to welfare. The Birmingham Armed Forces Operations Group reports directly into the Armed Forces Covenant partnership group.
- 4.2.21. In April 2021, the Council secured the Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award. The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) encourages employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same. The scheme encompasses Bronze, Silver and Gold awards for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.
- 4.2.22. The Equalities and Cohesion Division is now part of a task and finish group with HR, the Health and Wellbeing Team, and other stakeholders to work towards achieving the Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award.

#### **Living Wage**

- 4.2.23. In response to a public consultation on improving citizens' economic chances, we have worked to make Birmingham a Living Wage City as well as establishing a new Birmingham Poverty Truth Commission.
- 4.2.24. The Birmingham Living Wage Partnership led by the Equalities and Cohesion Division has been successful in its application to make Birmingham an accredited Living Wage place and city. A three-year action plan was developed by the partnership and approved by the Foundation which sets out targets to increase the number of Living Wage employers with headquarters in the city by 50% and to increase the number of employees covered by the Living Wage to 80,000 by November 2024.
- 4.2.25. In collaboration with the Birmingham Voluntary Services Council (BVSC), an event was held to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Living Wage movement and to celebrate Birmingham's accreditation.
- 4.2.26. A 'Make Birmingham a Living Wage City' phased communications campaign is currently being rolled out across the Council's social media and marketing platforms. Phase 1, a series of 60 second promotional interviews with major employers from the city is being shared across the council's social media platforms to raise awareness of the cause to businesses in Birmingham. Phase 2, a targeted LinkedIn Campaign to identify SMEs (Small to Medium Sized Enterprise) to engage with in support of the Living Wage will begin in January 2022.

### **Commonwealth Games**

- 4.2.27. Birmingham's ambition is for an inclusive Commonwealth Games where everyone can participate and benefit from the success of the Games, regardless of where they live or grow up.
- 4.2.28. As part of the Games Legacy programme, the Stronger Communities project will utilise an allocation of £500,000 from the council's £6million Commonwealth Games Community Fund.
- 4.2.29. Local voluntary and community organisations are asked to submit applications to support three of the five workstreams that will make up the Stronger Communities scheme:

- **A city connected by inclusive heritage trails**

Applicants are being asked to provide ideas/photos/videos for potential trails, in addition to supplying volunteers to act as navigators around the trail.

- **We made Birmingham**

A search for organisations that will work with local communities to gather narratives about living and working in Birmingham, as well as

identifying people from their localities who have interesting stories to tell.

- **Getting communities talking**

A search for organisations that can demonstrate their ability to recruit and work with women from diverse backgrounds who have been marginalised and have difficulty engaging with others.

- 4.2.30. The deadline for submissions is 5pm on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

**Migration**

- 4.2.31. Birmingham continues to welcome new arrivals to the city, as part of our ongoing commitment to a range of refugee settlement schemes.
- 4.2.32. Having welcomed 516 Syrian refugees under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme between 2015 and 2020, the Council has now also supported 68 refugees under the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), out of an overall pledge of 110, and 58 arrivals under the Afghan Relocation & Assistance Policy (ARAP), out of an overall pledge of 80.
- 4.2.33. On 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021, Cabinet also agreed to welcome more than 200 Afghan refugees under two Home Office schemes until 2024.
- 4.2.34. The number of refugees arriving in Birmingham increased over 2021, following Covid-19 disruption to the UKRS and the introduction of the ARAP scheme. The Council has responded accordingly, ensuring its commissioned services continue to meet the needs of refugees arriving in Birmingham. From the second year of resettlement onwards, refugees are able to access a mix of services including employability support, welfare and tenancy support, mental health awareness, and Birmingham Navigators. These services have been opened up to all newly arriving resettled refugees, regardless of Government scheme.
- 4.2.35. Fourteen awards have now been made under the Refugee Grants Programme, administered by BCC to allow innovative, community-led ideas to access funding in order to complement the main commissioned services.
- 4.2.36. These range from family learning programmes, to the development of a web app to support English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners in mainstream schools, to music and dance-based activities.
- 4.2.37. In November 2021, BCC was issued an award by the Bosnia & Herzegovina UK Network, for its support of their grant-funded Community Development project, which has employed two Community Development workers from among resettled Syrian refugees in order to help establish community infrastructure and representation. The Bosnia & Herzegovina UK Network were keen to use their Birmingham base to offer a physical home to Birmingham's relatively new Syrian community, and to use their collective

experience of rebuilding lives over the last 30 years to help more refugee families do the same.

- 4.2.38. Birmingham continues to be home to in the region of 1,300-1,500 dispersed asylum seekers at any one time. The Council continues to support Home Office centrally funded contracts with Serco, Migrant Help, and Reed in Partnership, to ensure asylum seekers are securely and safely housed in Birmingham during the period of their asylum claim.
- 4.2.39. Since shortly before the onset of Covid-19, the city has also been home to a growing population of asylum seekers accommodated by Home Office providers in hotel contingency accommodation. The Refugees and Migration commissioning team work in partnership to support newly granted refugees who are exiting the asylum process. The Council's Local Authority Asylum Seeker Liaison or 'move-on' project continues to operate through access to European funding. Over August to October 2021, 50 cases were offered support to access housing advice, welfare and benefits advice, employment support, access to education and healthcare, and more.
- 4.2.40. Birmingham has recently been successful as part of a regional bid to the Refugee Transitions Outcomes Fund. This programme will further enhance the asylum 'move-on' offer for newly granted refugees in the city by strengthening the service offer around achieving employment, housing and longer-term integration outcomes.
- 4.2.41. Birmingham City Council is currently involved in a joint legal challenge to the Home Office's policy of dispersing asylum seekers only to local authorities which are either voluntary asylum dispersal areas or have, like the local authorities bringing the challenge, previously been volunteers. This is with the objective of bringing about better collaboration and consultation with local government on the topic of asylum.
- 4.2.42. The Foundation for Integration project, funded through the EU and led by the BCC Refugees and Migration team, continues to work with partners including the BCC Neighbourhood Advice & Information Services to ensure that people from a migrant or refugee background are able to access free, accredited advice and information. The project specifically focuses on challenges caused where immigration status impacts on eligibility for other rights and entitlements.
- 4.2.43. As of November 2021, the BCC Refugees and Migration Commissioning team is in the process of awarding a contract for web development to build an online portal to strengthen access to signposting, referrals, and information for people working in this area, including those in statutory services who are often faced with complex casework related to immigration issues.

- 4.2.44. Birmingham City Council continues to uphold its commitments as a City of Sanctuary. In September 2021, Cllr John Cotton (as responsible Cabinet Member) provided an update on progress against the Council's City of Sanctuary commitments to Overview & Scrutiny.
- 4.2.45. 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.
- 4.2.46. 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.
- 4.2.47. BCC's Refugees 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.
- 4.2.48. As part of the ongoing City of Sanctuary agenda, BCC works in partnership to commission and develop new activity to improve opportunities for integration in the city. The Refugees and Migration commissioning team recently commissioned Birmingham Adult Education Services (BAES) to develop an 'ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Hub'. This hub will offer an online, one-stop shop for ESOL learners across the city, backed by a range of both grassroots and formal ESOL providers, offering a holistic and fully complementary pathway.
- 4.2.49. The Commissioning team also continues to work across the council, as well as with key external partners, to develop pathways into employment for the city's refugees.
- 4.2.50. To support this work, a 'Strategic Assessment of Migration in Birmingham' has been commissioned from the University of Wolverhampton, to be published in early 2022.

#### **Neighbourhood Advice and Information (NAIS)**

- 4.2.51. During the first six months of 2021/22, the Neighbourhood Advice and Information (NAIS) service successfully reopened its two principal advice centres in Erdington and Northfield to the public, reinstating walk-in services. We continue to abide by all Covid-19 safety measures and applicable risk assessments.
- 4.2.52. Following the easing of lockdown, and as public confidence has increased, so the number of visits to our centres has steadily grown. The end of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme ('furlough scheme'), the withdrawal of the Universal Credit uplift of £20 a week, and the increase in energy costs

have led to a significant increase in enquiries around benefits entitlements, rent-related queries and personal debt concerns.

- 4.2.53. Birmingham's allocation of the national Household Support Fund is being partly utilised to top up the Local Welfare Provision (LWP) fund. While welcomed, this will generate additional work for NAIS over the remainder of the financial year as the service handles LWP enquiries and the issuing of payment cards on behalf of the Benefit Service.
- 4.2.54. NAIS performance outputs at 2021/22 M6 for interviews and enquiries are up compared to the same point in 2020/21, when centres were closed and work was being carried out by telephone. Performance outputs are still down compared to the same point in 2019/20, but due to the significant increase in enquiries in recent months we expect to outstrip 2019/20 overall performance by the end of this financial year.
- 4.2.55. Our key income maximisation performance measure for 2021/22 M6 is positive, and the service is on track to exceed its performance for the past two financial years. One of the growth areas in NAIS activity relates to requests for foodbank vouchers, which at M6 are already at 92% of the 2020/21 overall total, and 66% of 2019/20 total. Every applicant is strongly encouraged to take up an income maximisation/free benefit check interview and this is one of the contributing factors to our strong income maximisation figures at the half year.

#### **Third Sector Advice Service**

- 4.2.56. Since the easing of lockdown, partners have started to review face to face delivery arrangements. Two of the Council's three contracted providers now provide some element of face-to-face activity, with the third actively keeping the situation under review.
- 4.2.57. As at September 2021, the vast majority of contractual targets have still been met despite Covid-19 related limitations on face-to-face activity during at least part of this financial year.
- 4.2.58. As with NAIS, third sector providers are also experiencing high levels of demand for welfare benefit and debt advice at this time and this is set to continue given the end of the furlough scheme, the withdrawal of Universal Credit uplift, and the rise in energy prices.
- 4.2.59. The current LEAS contract is due to end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and so work has been underway over recent months to re-tender the opportunity to ensure new contracts are in place for the period 2022-2025.

#### **Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) Strategy**

- 4.2.60. The Council has commissioned Spitfire Advice Services and the Pioneer Group to develop a comprehensive strategic framework document to help

determine how to provide effective and joined up information, advice and guidance services that more fully meet the needs of all Birmingham citizens right across the city.

- 4.2.61. This IAG Strategy has been informed by extensive engagement with stakeholders and by the mapping of advice provision and referral pathways across the city and its ten constituencies.
- 4.2.62. The document has outlined eleven main recommendations and 41 specific actions designed to improve the advice offer in Birmingham. A task and finish group will be assembled to progress these recommendations throughout 2022.

#### **4.3. Register Office and Bereavement Services**

##### **Register Office and Bereavement Services**

- 4.3.1. The working arrangements in the Register Office remain under review to ensure compliance with changes to Covid-19 guidelines. This ensures greater safety for staff and the public when undertaking face-to-face registrations as required under the legislation. The service has maintained a requirement for face coverings to be worn unless an individual has an exemption under the legislation. Staff are also encouraged to wear face coverings if moving about the office or in situations where social distancing is potentially unachievable.

##### **Birth Registrations**

- 4.3.2. Following the first national lockdown, there was a backlog of approximately 6,200 births to be registered. As at 26<sup>th</sup> November 2021, there are 2,747 applications in the system. This has increased due to increases in demand on other parts of the Register Office services and issues relating to staff sickness. Recovery arrangements are in place to provide a service to both reduce this backlog and deal with new births, but prioritisation of registrations will be in chronological order generally with urgent circumstances, such as the need for a passport application, taken into account.

##### **Citizenship Ceremonies, Marriage/Civil Partnerships**

- 4.3.3. Following the lifting of national restrictions, the Birmingham Registration Service has resumed citizen ceremonies, marriages and civil partnerships.
- 4.3.4. Registrar General Licence requests for marriage and civil partnerships are being risk assessed and considered on a case by case basis. Staff safety is paramount and ceremonies for customers diagnosed with Covid-19 will not take place.

- 4.3.5. Applications to reduce the waiting period for marriages or civil partnerships are now being processed. Any notices of marriage or civil partnership cancelled due to lockdown have been refunded or rebooked.
- 4.3.6. Approved premise licences cannot be suspended during this period. However, Birmingham City Council's Registrar Service is considering extensions to existing licences where appropriate and if it is allowable legally.

#### **Deaths/Still-Births**

- 4.3.7. The Coronavirus Act 2020 changed the death registration process, with electronic or telephone registration permissible. Demand was high and changes were made to the initial process, which increased operational efficiency. This, along with additional resources allocated, did reduce waiting times for registrations - but with continued increase in the number of deaths and a reduction in staff due to sickness, there have been delays in recent months.
- 4.3.8. Due to the success of temporary Covid-19 legislation around death registrations, Government is currently undertaking a review to establish if changes can be made permanent. However, difficulties in accessing Parliament time pose a risk to this process.

#### **Bereavement Services (Burials and Cremations)**

- 4.3.9. Services in chapels will normally be a maximum of 30 minutes at this time and funeral directors have been asked to assist with the rules around an enhanced cleaning regime. The number of services provided each week varies in line with demand, and there are no delays at present with burial slots widely available.
- 4.3.10. The Government's Plan B measures now require that all mourners wear face coverings within chapels, which can be removed to enable singing. People attending burials are encouraged to wear face coverings.
- 4.3.11. Despite the ongoing challenges posed by Covid-19, the service is pressing forward with a number of improvement projects and pilots, which are outlined in this section of the report.
- 4.3.12. We are continuing work to become a Centre for Excellence, a project to provide state of the art mortuary and pathology services across the region. The proposal of shared arrangements with other West Midlands local authorities has been examined and deemed a viable proposition. The scope of the project originally covered the Birmingham and Solihull and Black Coventry coronial areas, but during the pandemic the Coventry and Warwickshire coronial area also decided to participate. A consultant's report is expected in the next few weeks which will look at potential sites for the facility or a number of facilities, before a final business case is put forward.

- 4.3.13. The Birmingham and Solihull Coroner's Court moved into a new facility in late November 2021. The building was extensively refurbished over the course of 2021 and now provides excellent new facilities with three courts available. This obviates the necessity to hire external facilities except on exceptional occasions. The first jury inquest took place the week beginning 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021. The final elements of work for the sound system are to be finalised but a temporary arrangement is in place until the final system is installed. The New Year will see the official opening of the building, which is designed to provide a home to the Coroner's Court for over 25 years.
- 4.3.14. The City Council introduced a pilot service for digital autopsy in July 2019. The Coroner is the sole arbiter as to whether a body can receive a digital autopsy. The pilot was for an initial year, covering a minimum of 250 Computerised Topography Post Mortems (CTPMs) paid for by the Council. Subsequently it was agreed to extend the CTPM service on a rolling year basis of a minimum of 500 CTPM referrals per annum. The contract only requires payment for the service where the cause of death is determined. A formal assessment of the service has yet to be finalised due to the impact of the pandemic, however the service has been contracted to continue until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022. Long-term, it is envisaged that the service will be included in the centre of excellence.
- 4.3.15. Another initiative during Covid-19 has been the development of a service charter. This has now completed consultation with stakeholders, and is shortly to be taken to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their views. This initiative is one of many being taken towards making the City Council's services an example of best practice.

#### **4.4. Community Recovery**

- 4.4.1. The Covid-19 recovery landscape for Birmingham requires new ways of working and thinking, both internal and external to the local authority. Birmingham City Council has developed a broad framework for responding to and recovering from Covid-19, which looks at three key pillars: economic, employment and community. Each of these has their own governance aimed at defining the outcomes that will be achieved and the work that will be needed to deliver them.
- 4.4.2. The Community Recovery Board is a non-statutory task and finish group chaired by Councillor Cotton, established in August 2021 to set out and scope a programme of community recovery work that seeks to build the voluntary and community sector capacity in the areas most impacted by Covid-19. By early 2022, the Board will set out a defined set of priority actions that will be delivered in context of Covid community recovery.

- 4.4.3. The Board has met to agree a Terms of Reference, and undertaken a piece of work to identify the places in Birmingham most impacted by Covid. This work is now being progressed to look at the capacity available within these places and how this can be strengthened to address any gaps or additional support that will be required as Birmingham continues to respond to and recover from Covid-19.