

Public Report

Birmingham City Council
Report to Cabinet

13th November 2018



Subject: **Birmingham Community Cohesion Strategy**

Report of: **Jonathan Tew, Assistant Chief Executive**

Relevant Cabinet Member: **Cllr Tristan Chatfield, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equality**

Relevant O & S Chair(s): **Councillor Penny Holbrook , Chair of Housing and Neighbourhoods O&S Committee**

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Are specific wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Is this a key decision?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference: 005665/2018		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential :		

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 “Forward together to build a fair and inclusive city for everyone” is the first Community Cohesion Strategy for Birmingham, developed together with local partners and communities. It sets out a collaborative approach in which residents, local organisations, the Council and city partners draw on their resources, assets and expertise to ensure that Birmingham is a place where people from different

backgrounds can come together, improve things for themselves and their communities. It will be delivered by a partnership between the Council, local public and private and community organisations.

- 1.2 The Strategy has been developed from extensive engagement and consultation carried out over the last eighteen months, including a public consultation over summer 2018, inviting individuals, communities and organisations to share their views.
- 1.3 The Strategy will ensure that community cohesion is an ongoing process that develops in response to new ideas, research and examples of cohesion in action.

2 Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to: -

- 2.1 Consider and endorse the Community Cohesion Strategy for Birmingham as set out at Appendix 1, and forward it to Full Council to adopt;
- 2.2 Note that this Community Cohesion Strategy for Birmingham has been circulated to all city partners to seek approval for their respective organisations to adopt the strategy. Similarly, we will seek endorsement from the relevant strategic partnerships through their respective governance processes; and
- 2.3 Note the Council's organisational commitments towards building community cohesion as outlined in Appendix 2

3 Background

- 3.1 Birmingham City Council wants a fair and inclusive city for everyone, and the Community Cohesion Strategy sets out a collaborative, cross-party approach in which the Council works alongside residents, local organisations, and city partners to ensure that Birmingham is a place where people from different backgrounds can come together and improve things for themselves and their communities. Building community cohesion in our communities also supports the social and economic wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.
- 3.2 The Casey review (2016) highlighted the social and economic progress as an important indicator of successful integration. As such, the strategy sets an approach to address social and economic inequality by exploring new ways of working in partnership across public, private and community organisations. We will do this by aligning the city's resources, skills and expertise to work better to achieve the best outcomes for everyone.
- 3.3 The Government's response to the Casey review was set out in its Integrated Communities green paper (March 2018) which invited feedback on its policy proposals to improve integration. The Government's green paper outlined plans to achieve 'integration' through a programme of policy interventions and a long term action plan to tackle the root causes of societal segregation. Birmingham's Community Cohesion Strategy broadly aligns with the aims of Government's

approach to integration communities and the Council is working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to share learning and good practice. Equally, our work with Government will identify where additional resource/support can be provided to help Birmingham take forward its strategy.

Development of the strategy

- 3.4 In December 2017, the Cabinet Member for Social Cohesion, Community Safety and Equalities hosted a Community Cohesion Strategy Summit to discuss and identify how the Council, partners and communities can each play their part to improve and support community cohesion across the city. This partner event kick-started a city-wide discussion on cohesion and feedback from the session helped develop the Community Cohesion Strategy ‘green paper’ draft strategy.
- 3.5 In July 2018, the Council published Birmingham’s Community Cohesion Strategy green paper, to begin a process of consultation to seek views on the strategy and to identify the most effective ways we can come together as a city to celebrate success, overcome challenges and share learning.

Wider consultation and engagement

- 3.6 The extensive engagement and consultation carried out over summer 2018 has helped to shape the strategy. Communities and organisations told us what needs to happen to improve cohesion across Birmingham: unlocking untapped potential and community assets; events and spaces where people can come together to celebrate community cohesion, both at city and neighbourhood level; and more initiatives that provide local people from disadvantaged backgrounds with opportunities for employment, training, or work experience. These responses from communities, universities, and public and private sector organisations have developed a strategy for Birmingham.
- 3.7 Views of respondents overwhelmingly supported the need for a citywide approach to building cohesion that benefits everyone who lives, works and visits the city. There are no quick fixes, it has to be an ongoing process that responds and adapts to the changing needs of communities. Therefore, Birmingham’s Community Cohesion Strategy will be a living document that sets out the city’s longer-term ambition to deliver its shared vision.
- 3.8 The Strategy sets out a collective city vision: “*Birmingham is a welcoming city where everyone has an opportunity to contribute and benefit from the success of the city. The city and its neighbourhoods are safe and flourishing places to live, work and grow up in, they are well connected places where people from all backgrounds trust and support each other. People of all backgrounds realising their full potential and exercising their rights and responsibilities.*” There was general consensus amongst respondents in support of the vision underpinned by eight guiding principles. Embedding these guiding principles in policy and practice will require strong leadership and commitment from across city partners, the Council, community sector and communities. The Council will continue to play its role in embedding community cohesion in its strategies, policies and practices as

set out in Appendix 2. Similarly, Local Councillors in their community leadership role will promote community cohesion as part of their commitment to delivering the Council's localism agenda.

- 3.9 As a city, we will build our knowledge and understanding of the dynamic nature of our diverse communities through continual research and analysis that enabled evidence based policy and decision making.

4 Options considered and Recommended Proposal

- 4.1 The Council has no option other than to develop, with partners, a robust community cohesion strategy for the City. If the Council chooses not to endorse the strategy it faces a reputational risk of being seen not to be concerned with issues of supporting new and established communities to get on well together, but also allowing deepening social and economic inequality to undermine community cohesion. The Council would also risk legal challenge by potentially failing to meet the requirement of the Equality Duty to 'foster good relations' between different groups across the city. There is a risk of unmitigated community tensions.
- 4.2 The Council leading the strategy without partners would potentially ignore the valuable contributions to cohesion from the range of statutory, business and voluntary partners in the city. Similarly lose the opportunity for mainstreaming community cohesion as a partnership approach within the city.
- 4.3 The strategy enables partners and communities to agree a shared vision for cohesion in the city. It enables the Council to play its part in leading on cohesion, whilst delivering policy responses that will be met within existing budgets. The strategy will help mitigate the risk of community tensions in the city and deepening social and economic inequalities.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 The Strategy was discussed with Elected Members of the cross-party group for Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities. The Council's Corporate Management Team and directorate Senior Management Teams have been actively consulted and involved in the preparation of the Executive Management Team report.
- 5.2 A number of internal stakeholder meetings and briefings were also carried out during the development of the strategy
- 5.3 An external consultation on the Community Cohesion Strategy green paper was open from 9th July to 31st August 2018. It was important to engage widely to ensure the strategy accurately reflects the different views and needs of the people of Birmingham. The consultation was available online on the Council's consultation hub ([BeHeard](#)). Existing community networks and city partners were called upon to convene sessions across the city. This approach ensured 'seldom heard' groups' were given a chance to share their views and ideas. In total, more than 300 people participated in the consultation, including 90 respondents to the online

consultation, 10 collective responses from partners and organisations across the city, 5 additional individual responses, and 210 responses from 14 focus groups.

- 5.4 Consultation took place with people with a wide range of socio-economic characteristics and cultural backgrounds, including asylum seekers, gender specific community groups, ethnic minority community groups, and young people.

6 Risk Management

- 6.1 A key risk is the ownership and delivery of the Community Cohesion Strategy commitments, particularly in an increasingly difficult and changing operating environment. To manage this risk, all Council Directorates have been engaged and will continue to be engaged in mainstreaming community cohesion in its strategies, policies and services.
- 6.2 An additional risk is the expectations amongst the Council's partners, many of which would like the Council to take a more coordinating and facilitating role, rather than a lead delivery role of the strategy. To address this, we will ask partners to endorse and adopt the strategy as a citywide approach and set out their commitment to promoting cohesion. Additionally, city partners will hold annual local events and a summit. These events will bring partners and communities together to share learning and exchange ideas; forge new relationships and identify opportunities for joint working.

7 Compliance Issues:

7.1 How are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council's priorities, plans and strategies?

7.1.1 This Birmingham Community Cohesion Strategy supports all five of the Council's priority areas consistent with the council's vision and Council Plan 2018:

7.1.2 Birmingham is an entrepreneurial city to learn, work and invest in

7.1.3 A great place to succeed in: build on our assets, talents, and capacity for enterprise and innovation to shape the market and harness opportunity. The strategy's approach aligns with the Birmingham Skills Investment Plan (BSIP) which sets out how the Council will work with partners to create the right conditions for business, and our workforce that promotes cohesion.

7.1.4 Birmingham is an aspirational city to grow up in

7.1.5 A great place to grow up in: make the best of our diversity and create a safe and secure city for our children and young people to learn and grow. The strategy supports achieving the best outcomes in childhood that lead to good life chances of all children and young people. Furthermore, it promotes the rights and responsibilities of all children and young people, through the Council's work to utilise the UN Convention on the Rights of the

Child to promote equality in schools. Also, to improve employment opportunities through Birmingham's Youth Promise Plus programme

7.1.6 Birmingham is a fulfilling city to age well in

7.1.7 A great place to grow old in: help people become healthier and more independent with measurable improvement in physical activity and mental wellbeing. The strategy aligns to the Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which promotes community cohesion.

7.1.8 Birmingham is a great city to live in

7.1.9 A great place to live in: provide housing in a range of types and tenures to meet the housing needs of all the current and future citizens of Birmingham. The strategy supports access to decent and secure housing as a means to promote community cohesion. Birmingham Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017+ includes proposals that promote cohesion.

7.1.10 Birmingham residents gain the maximum benefit from hosting the Commonwealth Games

7.1.11 The Games allows the power of sport and physical activity to bring people together as well as encouraging our citizens to get active and feel healthy. There is significant investment in transport and associated infrastructure to make the city more connected between different areas and communities.

7.1.12 During Games approximately 12,000 volunteers will welcome people to Birmingham. A key ambition is to ensure that the volunteer cohort is reflective of the diversity found in Birmingham's citizens and that the volunteering opportunity is availed of by as many local people as possible.

7.2 Legal Implications

7.2.1 Work to promote community cohesion also directly supports the requirement of the Equality Act 2010 to "Foster good relations between people who share protected characteristic and those who don't".

7.2.2 The recommendations in this report are consistent with the Localism Act 2011. S1 of the Localism Act 2011 contains the Council's general competence power. Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 the City Council may incur expenditure in relation to anything which is incidental to the discharge of its functions.

7.3 Financial Implications

7.3.1 Adherence to the approach proposed by the Birmingham Community Cohesion Strategy will encourage the Council and all its service providers and public / private partners to work together to ensure that the available public resources are spent in the most effective and efficient way that promotes community cohesion that will benefit communities.

- 7.3.2 Through the ‘mainstreaming’ of cohesion outcomes through the Council’s core business, it is proposed that directorates would consider how they can address the themes within this strategy through use of existing resources.
- 7.3.3 Supporting the effective delivery of the strategy will require resources to innovate, upscale and test out new ideas. It is anticipated that strategic agencies, schools, higher and further education organisation and Voluntary Community Sector working in-kind or with project funds in a co-ordinated approach to shared actions will meet this need. Similarly, opportunities arising from Trusts and other funders can sponsor activity that promotes cohesion. Equally, we will work Government departments and the West Midlands Combined Authority to explore piloting activity and funding that promotes community cohesion

7.4 Procurement Implications (if required)

- 7.4.1 None

7.5 Human Resources Implications (if required)

- 7.5.1 None

7.6 Public Sector Equality Duty

- 7.6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed. The initial EIA concluded that a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required, as there are no adverse impacts on any protected groups.

8 Appendices

- Appendix 1: Community Cohesion Strategy white paper
- Appendix 2: Council’s commitments towards building community cohesion