

Birmingham City Council

Report to Cabinet

26 March 2019



Subject: BIRMINGHAM INDEPENDENT IMPROVEMENT PANEL
Report of: THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Relevant Cabinet Member: Councillor Ian Ward, Leader
Relevant O & S Chair(s): Councillor Josh Jones – Co-ordinating O&S Committee
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Are specific wards affected?	Yes	X No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference:		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" 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 The attached stocktake report (appendix 1) provides the final formal assessment of the Council's improvement journey prior to the Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel (BIIP) stepping down at the end of March 2019. It charts the progress made against the previous stocktake report, which was considered by Cabinet in June 2018. It is accompanied by the final in-year update to the Corporate Governance Improvement Plan 2018-19 (appendix 2); a narrative regarding service transformation and improvement (appendix 3); and a summary of the high level corporate governance improvement priorities for 2019/20 together with an outline of the scrutiny and peer-challenge framework for the future (appendix 4). These are the documents that are intended for publication in March

2019 for consideration by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

- 1.2 Key areas of progress since June 2018 include: improved financial planning, control and performance management; improved education, adults and children's social care regulatory assessments; a robust four year Financial Plan underpinned by a programme management office; and stronger governance and leadership arrangements with the introduction of four year elections with more transparent and timely decision-making.
- 1.3 The report is a candid assessment of where progress has been made and where there is still work to be done. These areas are outlined as 'critical issues and risks' with priorities then captured in the improvement priorities for 2019/20. In due course, this documentation will be accompanied by a final analysis and independent set of reflections from the Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel (BIIP). All such documentation will be published at point of submission to the Secretary of State.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to note the Council improvement paperwork intended for submission to the BIIP
- 2.2 Cabinet is asked to note that the full set of improvement documents will be published for full Council in April once the BIIP has circulated their final analysis and independent set of reflections.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Kerslake Report was published in December 2014 and the Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel (BIIP) was established in January 2015. Since then, the Council has undergone significant changes in the leadership of the organisation, and has provided regular update reports that have been published alongside the Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel's letters to the Secretary of State regarding Birmingham City Council's progress.
- 3.2 The Council wants to secure better outcomes for the citizens of Birmingham in a challenging and fast-moving financial, social and economic environment. The Council is therefore committed to addressing issues raised by the 2014 Kerslake Report and subsequently the Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel (BIIP).
- 3.3 The Council has delivered on the commitments made in the last stocktake report, namely to work in close collaboration with the Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel (BIIP) with an improved level of honesty and impetus around areas for improvement. Both the Council and BIIP have since the last report met on a regular basis with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to jointly drive progress against a clear set of improvement plans, review budget / performance standing items with minutes and plans published online and distributed to all BCC Elected Members.

3.4 At the heart of the improvement agenda are elements of sound organisational governance as reflected in the Local Government Association's criteria for an effective organization. These are:

- Effective political leadership and managerial leadership, working as a constructive partnership;
- A good understanding of the local context which informs a shared long-term vision and a clear set of priorities that is translated through a healthy organisational culture and understood by the workforce and partners;
- Effective governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to challenges and manage performance, change, transformation and disinvestment;
- Capacity and resources focused in the right areas in order to deliver the agreed priorities, supported by relevant organisational and workforce development; and
- A financial plan in place to ensure its long-term viability and evidence it is being implemented successfully

3.5 This stock-take report represents the Council's self-assessment of progress against these criteria, since the June 2018 stocktake report. It provides a précis of the Council's position up to March 2019 indicating some of the changes that are being made in this financial year and highlighting on-going priority areas for improvement as the Council maintains its focus and ownership of its improvement journey. The structure of the report seeks to be consistent with previous updates provided to the BIIP and Secretary of State to ensure comparability.

3.6 The Panel is expected to stand down on 31 March 2019. It will publish a final letter to the Secretary of State, giving its own assessment of the Council's improvements. This will be accompanied by the Council's self assessment and supporting documentation.

4 Options considered and Recommended Proposal

4.1 Do nothing - the Council has been monitored by the Birmingham Independent Improvement panel since the Kerslake report of 2014 and this stocktake report and associated appendices is the final assessment required to move on. Doing nothing is therefore not an option.

5 Consultation

5.1 The draft stocktake report and the supporting documents have been considered by the Council Management Team, the Executive Management Team, the Birmingham Independent Improvement Plan and MHCLG.

6 Risk Management

- 6.1 The stocktake report identifies a number of specific risks which the Council is actively managing. These include: industrial relations; equal pay; Commonwealth Games; Paradise Circus and the Amey contract.

7 Compliance Issues

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

7.1.1 The stocktake report and associated paperwork is consistent with the Council's policies, plans and strategies and will recommend improvements to ways of working.

7.2 Legal Implications

7.2.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report, however, a range of improvements to governance, transparency and decision-making that colleagues in legal services have overseen changes in-year and will continue to do so in line with 2019-20 priorities.

7.3 Financial Implications

7.3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report although the stocktake report and 2019/20 improvement plan should result in improvements to resource allocation and spending decisions in the future.

7.4 Procurement Implications (if required)

7.4.1 N/A

7.5 Human Resources Implications (if required)

7.5.1 There are no specific HR implications arising from this report, however, a range of improvements to member development, workforce strategy and HR function and system issues have been taken forward by colleagues in HR and will continue to do so in line with 2019-20 priorities.

7.6 Public Sector Equality Duty

7.6.1 This Stocktake report and Corporate governance improvement plan should reinforce the Council Plan 2018-22 commitment for the Council to act to ensure that every child, citizen and place matters, in addressing governance issues for the City Council to enable it to will address the many challenges the city of Birmingham faces, such as higher than average levels of employment, homelessness and child poverty

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 - the 2019 Stocktake Report
- 8.2 Appendix 2 – the Corporate Governance Improvement Plan 2018-19
- 8.3 Appendix 3 – Service Transformation and Improvement Timeline

8.4 Appendix 4 – Priorities for 2019/20

9 Background Documents

9.1 None