

East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy

23rd September 2020

1. Introduction

1.1 This note is to:

- i. update the Economy & Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress with respect to the East Birmingham and North Solihull Inclusive Growth agenda following a previous report in April 2020
- ii. to report on the consultation activities relating to the draft East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy (attached as Appendix 1) which commenced in March 2020 and which have been extended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- iii. to set out the proposed next steps which will begin the transition of the East Birmingham work from the strategy-making into the delivery phase.

2 Background

2.1 East Birmingham and North Solihull has been designated as an Inclusive Growth Corridor where Birmingham City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and the West Midlands Combined Authority are working with partners to maximise the benefits of the opportunities created by HS2 and the Metro extension, to address the area's significant and sustained disadvantages, deliver growth, and to develop ways of working that will ensure that this growth is inclusive.

2.2 The East Birmingham Board was established in late 2018, bringing together senior officers from multiple service areas within the City Council alongside external partners including Solihull Council, the NHS, emergency services, Department of Work and Pensions, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the West Midlands Combined Authority. The Board is responsible for the Birmingham section of the East Birmingham/North Solihull Inclusive Growth Corridor and has two key objectives: to deliver growth; and to bring forward the key interventions to enable local residents to benefit from the jobs and opportunities created.

2.3 In March 2020 the City Council published an Inclusive Growth Strategy for East Birmingham which sets out a vision for the regeneration of East Birmingham over the next 20 years. The Strategy is the City Council's first growth strategy built around Inclusive Growth principles and takes a comprehensive multi-agency approach incorporating Total Place principles alongside major infrastructure and grassroots community development.

3 Public Consultation and Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

- 3.1 Following Cabinet approval on 11th February 2020, public consultation on the Strategy commenced on 17th February for a planned period of 12 weeks, ending on 11th May. This formal consultation was intended to be the beginning of a continuous process of collaborative engagement through which local communities will shape and influence the projects emerging from the Strategy, in line with the City Council's principles of localism and community cohesion. The original engagement strategy was developed in light of the particular demographic character of East Birmingham and was designed to reach the widest possible range of stakeholders and community groups in order to effectively engage with residents, particularly in "hard to reach" groups. There was a strong emphasis on face-to-face meetings in the community.
- 3.2 Due to the emerging Major Incident caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, from the week commencing 16th March consultation activities were modified to exclude face-to-face meetings and public events. Unfortunately, all eleven public events were due to take place after this date and had to be cancelled. All consultees who had been contacted previously were re-contacted and informed of the cancellation of the planned public events. A leaflet explaining the cancellation was sent to all planned venues and provided to partners to circulate. The website and Be Heard were also updated accordingly.
- 3.3 In light of these changes the consultation deadline was extended indefinitely, and consultation activities have since continued using email, telephone and video conferencing. In addition, some outdoor meetings on site have also taken place where circumstances have allowed. Despite the constraints imposed by the pandemic, officers have been able to engage with a large number of local stakeholders and information about the Strategy has been circulated and shared widely by email and online. The extended duration of the consultation has also allowed the team to enter into detailed discussions with a diverse range of organisations and local community groups, and in many cases this has developed into an ongoing relationship with initial discussions about the Strategy leading to wider conversations around issues, opportunities and projects.
- 3.4 When the consultation was originally extended it was hoped that replacement public events and face-to-face stakeholder meetings would be possible later in the year. Due to the continued impact of the pandemic, this will unfortunately not be possible. It is now proposed that the consultation will close during early October 2020. In advance of this:

- Officers will work with stakeholders such as the Neighbourhood Networks partners and smaller local groups to set up online stakeholder meetings with as many people as possible.
- There will also be a further wave of publicity and distribution of updated consultation materials via partners (mailing lists etc.)
- A simple online poll will be used via both of these channels to gather as many representations as possible on the principles of the Strategy.

3.5 As a consequence of the pandemic, it is recognised that the engagement will have been skewed towards elements of the population who are accessible via digital channels. However, following this final wave of activity it is anticipated that the consultation will have reached at least a similar proportion of the East Birmingham population as would have been expected to be engaged by the original 12-week programme, and that the responses on the Strategy will be generally reflective of the views of the public.

3.6 Power, Influence and Participation are key objective themes for the Strategy and community engagement will continue throughout the delivery phase, building on the links and contacts established through this initial consultation to involve an ever-greater number of people. With this in mind it is proposed to establish an extensive community and stakeholder interface at programme level, and also to undertake thorough detailed engagement at an appropriate scale as a part of each specific project.

4 Next Steps

4.1 Following the closure of the consultation the Strategy will be amended, taking account both the representations received and the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for the overall vision and approach, and it will be brought back to Cabinet to seek approval for its adoption by the City Council.

4.2 In addition, preparations will begin for the delivery of the Strategy. This will require the establishment of the necessary governance structures, and the agreement of a delivery plan comprising details of the projects to be undertaken, initially with a focus on short-medium term priorities and closely linked with the COVID-19 response. A Ward Members' Forum will be established to guide the development of the Programme, which in due course will be brought to Cabinet for approval.

4.3 Milestones:

- Initial consultation completed October 2020
- Ward Members' Forum established October 2020
- Adoption of Strategy January 2021
- Agreement of Programme including Delivery Plan Spring 2021