

Report to the Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel



June 2015

Report to the Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel

June 2015

Preface

Birmingham City Council needs to adapt to meet the challenges it faces now and in the future. National and local policies, reduced financial resources, and a series of interventions from Government mean that how the city council does its business needs to change significantly.

We have recognised and committed to the need to change. We are working closely with our commissioners – Lord Warner and Sir Mike Tomlinson - to bring about a clear improvement in Children’s Services and Education, and we are working with the Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel to deliver the cross-organisational changes that are at the heart of the Improvement Plan and our own all-encompassing Future Council Programme.

Through the Future Council Programme we will deliver the new ways of working to ensure we are fit for purpose in the long-term; with a clear focus on delivering against our commitments of greater prosperity, fairness and democracy. We are determined not just to implement the changes we envisage for the council and for the city, but to ensure that they have an immediate and sustained impact on Birmingham’s citizens.



Sir Albert Bore
Leader of the Council



Mark Rogers
Chief Executive

Report to the Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel - June 2015

This is the Council's six-month report to the Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel. It sets out progress to date against each of the recommendations set out in Lord Kerslake's report "The way forward: an independent review of the governance and organisational capabilities of Birmingham City Council", published in December 2014.

We have recently launched a council-wide programme, called 'Future Council', that brings together all of the work that we are currently doing to change the way that we operate and create a council that is fit for the future. The recommendations from Lord Kerslake's report are an integral part of our activity, so we have built in our Improvement Plan as a core part of the Future Council Programme.

The Future Council Programme has six key parts which are referred to in the report. These are:

- **Whole Council** – this is the key building block for all of the work programmes and identifies the vision and values for the Council of the future – answering the "what are we here for?" and the "how will we change" questions
- **Council Operating Model** – this focuses on developing an approach for how the Council will work in the future
- **Forward the Birmingham Way** – this looks at the changes we need to make to the workforce, and how we can work together better, both internally and with our partners
- **Political Governance** - this focuses on the role of elected members in empowering communities and better connecting people to the design and delivery of local services
- **Partnerships** - this creates an outward looking, inclusive approach to the way we operate that concentrates on the best interests of the city and those who live and work here
- **Integrated Support Services** - this ensures that internal support services (eg HR, Finance, Performance, Policy etc) work in an integrated, efficient way that serves the rest of the organisation and our customers and partners

Cabinet Members and officers have been identified to give these individual work programmes appropriate leadership and governance oversight.

Addressing Risks Previously Identified by the Panel

The Panel signed off the Council's Improvement Plan in March but, in an accompanying letter, set out a number of key risks and issues that they had identified. Before addressing progress against each of the recommendations in turn, we wanted to specifically refer to these concerns.

Political Leadership for the Improvement Plan

The Panel was keen to emphasise the importance of political leadership and ownership of the Improvement Plan and associated activities, with particular reference to the council's relationship with partners.

The Future Council (with the Improvement Plan at its core) has been developed with the political and officer leadership of the council. The Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members have been actively involved in this first phase of improvement and development in the creation of the vision and values of the Whole Council programme. They also have individual responsibilities for each of the work programmes, with the Leader actively involved in Partnerships and the development of the City Partnership Group.

Involvement of all Councillors and all political parties

The Panel was keen to ensure that there was sufficient opportunity for all 120 councillors to be involved with the Improvement process, and that contributions from the opposition parties should be welcomed.

The Leader and Chief Executive have organised monthly group leader (including the Deputy Leader) and cross party all-councillor engagement sessions that have focused specifically on progress updates for the Improvement Plan, as well as briefing councillors on the development of the Future Council programme. The Chief Executive has offered to attend individual Group meetings to discuss any areas of concern relating to the programme, as and when required.

There have also been specific cross-party working groups on the Community Governance Review (which began in September 2014), the submission to the Boundary Commission and the review of Scrutiny arrangements. We are currently looking at appropriate Overview and Scrutiny arrangements for the Future Council programme, which will be cross-party and provide councillors with an additional opportunity to engage with the programme.

Senior Management Capacity

The Panel (and Lord Kerslake's report) were both very clear about the need to ensure that the Chief Executive has the support he needs to play his corporate leadership role

effectively, and for the council to have permanent senior managerial capacity appropriate to the size of the organisation for it to be able to deliver the Future Council Programme.

This concern is addressed specifically in the response to Recommendation 3. In brief, the Council has made a number of interim appointments with specific responsibilities around the delivery of the Future Council programme and to address some of the key issues within HR. The Chief Executive has brought forward proposals (in May) to strengthen and reshape strategic capacity at the top of the organisation and these have been presented to the Leader and Deputy Leader for their consideration. More detailed workforce planning will also be undertaken within the Forward the Birmingham Way work stream and within the Future Council Resources Plan, the latter due for Cabinet consideration at the end of June

The Interdependence of Elements of the Improvement Plan

The Panel was concerned that the necessary division of the Improvement Plan into different elements would mean that interdependencies would not be recognised.

Embedding the Improvement Plan into the Future Council programme means that it will be subject to formal programme governance arrangements. Part of the role of the Programme Office is to identify, manage and mitigate interdependencies within the programme, and so we are confident that this will ensure we can deliver the work streams in a coherent and integrated way.

Development of the Council's Long Term Financial Strategy

The Panel was interested in the development of the long term financial strategy, its links to the future role and operating model of the council, and how the council would achieve this against the backdrop of planned budget reductions this year and in the future.

This is addressed specifically in the response to Recommendation 5. In brief, the development of a long term financial strategy falls under the Council Operating Model work stream of the Future Council programme, and will have resonance in the work carried out as part of the Partnerships workstream.

Communications Strategy

The Panel was concerned that the necessary focus on improvement and change would mean that the Council would not communicate effectively with citizens and partners about the positive aspects of what is happening in the city.

A new communications and marketing strategy is being developed, underpinned by the desire to be open, honest and transparent. Although this sits initially within the Future Council programme, we are taking a council-wide approach - ie building this into everything that we do. The strategy is being developed around the key concepts of 'inform, engage, excite' – making sure that we inform people about what's going on, engage with them in a

way that is meaningful, and encourage people to be excited about the changes taking place. We know that our communications activity has to meet the “so what?” test – people need to be clear about the difference that any change will make to their lives. The importance of a strong communications function informs a key part of the thinking around the strategic capacity proposals being developed by the Chief Executive.

Part of the work of the City Partnership Group will involve the development of a compelling and positive narrative for the City as we move forward, and we will ensure that this feeds in appropriately to the council’s communications strategy.

How are the changes in culture the council is seeking being demonstrated in its day to day workings?

We feel that the changes we have made so far, as set out in the recommendations below, are beginning to impact throughout the organisation – changes to councillor roles, a new performance management system for staff, additional capacity around the Chief Executive and within the HR function have all provided a greater degree of clarity. The changes that we needed to make to our HR function were tackled in a way that might not have been done previously. The Big Conversation events have introduced the notion of putting values at the front of what people do and are supported and implemented through the new appraisal system. The introduction of 360 assessment for our most senior staff is a more challenging appraisal process than anything we have done previously. There have been consistent and more concerted efforts to ensure a more cross- party approach to certain issues. There is a greater level of engagement between officers and cabinet members, most recently with the design and development of the principles behind the Future Council.

Progress Against the Recommendations in the Kerslake Report

Recommendations 1 and 2 relate to the responsibility of the Secretary of State **to appoint the Independent Improvement Panel**, and the requirement that this panel **should present a report to the Secretary of State in December 2015**. This should assess the Council's progress in

- a) implementing the recommendations from Lord Kerslake's report
- b) setting a budget for the 2016/17 financial year

The Panel has been appointed, is working with the Council, and will formally report to the Secretary of State in July and again in December.

Recommendation 3

Birmingham City Council's governance needs to be reset in the following ways:

a. the council needs to clarify roles, responsibilities, behaviours and expected ways of working in relation to the Leader, Cabinet, councillors, Chief Executive and officers. The strategic, executive, independent scrutiny and community roles of members needs to be clearly defined and better supported including with appropriate training. The council also needs to ensure there are shared expectations of capacity, capability and how performance will be measured between members and the senior officer team

b. Birmingham City Council should develop a simplified planning framework, this should flow from the City Plan (see recommendation 8 below)

c. in order to achieve strong corporate governance and coordination of the council's required transformation, support services such as finance, performance management, Human Resources, IT and property should be managed corporately. The corporate centre should be strengthened to enable this to be done effectively and provide greater support to the Chief Executive and his team. A senior post to lead the economic work of the council should be re-established to effectively carry out this role and at the same time to provide the capacity needed for the Chief Executive to play his corporate leadership role

d. there should be a programme of culture change that is owned by both members and officers.

Through the Forward the Birmingham Way work stream, proposals for training and development programmes for both councillors and officers, are at the later stages of development and include support for design and delivery from the Local Government Association (LGA). Workshops will be held with the Executive Management Team (Cabinet

Members and Chief Officers) in June, and for all other councillors and JNC (senior management) officers by the end of September 2015. A specific programme has been created for Chairs of Scrutiny and District Committees, which reflect the constitutional changes that have been made (see recommendation 7), and this started on 1st June. A new performance and development review process ('My Appraisal') was launched across the Council on 1st May, which clarifies expectations and behaviours for staff. A '360 degree' review process for JNC officers began in May, and will be completed by the end of September 2015.

The Chief Executive has brought forward proposals to strengthen and reshape strategic capacity at the top of the organisation and these have been presented to the Leader and Deputy Leader and are under active consideration at the time of writing. Further work is underway to bring forward additional detail and costings. When finalised, these proposals will resolve the capacity issues relating to the Chief Executive both generally, and in respect of the director of economy aspect of the role.

Some immediate additional short term capacity has been put in place - notably, the appointment in January of the Interim Director, Service Delivery who has responsibilities for the shaping, resourcing and implementation of the Future Council programme *and* managing all corporate support services, with the exception of finance and legal. Interim Heads of HR and Organisational Development (OD) were also appointed in March and are working together on HR strategy (with a particular focus on children's services), culture change and new ways of working (see recommendation 6). The organisation has made some difficult decisions with regard to key posts, and this now gives us the opportunity to bring in new leadership and make changes.

The additional capacity required to deliver key programmes will be found from the corporate "invest to save" resource that is currently being consolidated, and through the realignment of existing resources (both staffing and financial).

The political and officer leadership have been working together on the design and methodology for a planning process, that is both simplified and properly aligned to our long term financial plans. An event was held with key partners on 21st April to look at our collective future plans, and to identify opportunities for joint planning and delivery. The dialogue will continue, with further events planned for 18th June and later in the year.

As part of the Future Council Programme, the Integrated Support Services work-stream is dedicated to looking at the way that internal support services (such as HR, finance, performance management etc) can be managed and delivered in the future, so that there is appropriate specialist support within directorates (guided by strong corporate policies and subject specialists), but more centralised 'transactional' processes. Final proposals will be

ready for consideration by the Leadership by the end of June, after which more detailed work will be carried out with Directorates on the impacts and benefits for them.

The Forward the Birmingham Way work stream incorporates a culture change programme, currently being developed by the Interim Head of Organisational Development, with support from the Local Government Association. During 2014, the council held a series of 'Big Conversation' events in which colleagues from all areas and grades of the council actively discussed the Council's purpose, values and future, and looked at how we could collectively reshape the workforce approach. The feedback from these events has been used to create new core values for the council, and year one of the culture change programme will focus on embedding these with officers and councillors, initially via 'My Appraisal' and through various training and development programmes, workshops and further 'Big Conversations'.

Recommendation 4

The Secretary of State should move Birmingham City Council to all out elections replacing the current election by thirds. In the interest of effective and convenient local government the Local Government Boundary Commission for England should conduct an Electoral Review, that reflects existing communities, to help the council produce an effective model for representative governance. It should aim to complete its work to enable elections by May 2017.

The Parliamentary order for the Council to move to all-out elections has been passed. The Secretary of State took the decision that the first all-out election should take place in 2018.

The Boundary Commission is in the process of conducting an Electoral Review. The first stage of the review process, where the Council submits a case to the Commission on the number of councillors (referred to as 'Council Size') has been completed, and the Boundary Commission will make a decision on this shortly. The second stage of the Review, which relates to ward boundaries, will take place over the summer. The Commission has the responsibility of consulting with the general public on this issue.

Recommendation 5

Birmingham City Council needs, as a matter of urgency, to develop a robust plan for how they are going to manage their finances up to 2018/19 without recourse to further additional funding from central Government. This should:

- a. evaluate current policy choice and propose significant further reductions in costs and measures to tackle levels of demand;**
- b. involve residents and partners;**

c. ensure that the council regularly reports on progress to the Independent Improvement Panel.

In recent years the Council has adopted a target driven approach to savings in order to reduce the size of the Council, by scaling back what services are currently provided. For the period 2016/17 to 2019/20 the Council intends to significantly alter this approach. Instead of reviewing and scaling back individual services the Council will adopt a “whole council” approach reviewing all of the services provided from the customer demand perspective, understanding if, or why the service is needed through a demand management analysis, the role that partners play and who is best placed to deliver this in the future.

The process that the Council intends to adopt in order to implement this new approach can be summarised as:

- Understand what is currently driving demand for our services
- Understand what this will mean if we don't change our approach
- Consider how demand for services can be prevented or changed in the future by influencing its drivers, in particular behaviours
- Consider the best approach to meet this future demand – e.g. working with partners differently, changing the way we deliver our services
- Identify any other general efficiencies that may be available

Our ability to embed within the council this new approach across the council will depend on a significant re-focusing of our current resources, both staffing and financial. As part of the Council Operating Model work stream, we have determined the approach that we intend to take (as outlined above). We have recruited internally to a team who will be working with service areas across the council to review the approach to delivering services . We have also appointed some bespoke external support and challenge to guide the review work and to ensure that our staff can continue to deliver our core business throughout periods of redesign.

This approach will also have an impact on our partners, as it could fundamentally alter the way that services are delivered in the future. As part of the partnerships work stream we are engaging with our partners on their future plans, identifying where we are aligned, and seeking to resolve areas where we are not. As the Operating Model methodology work develops, we will continue to talk to our partners and work through any difficulties as they arise.

Throughout the election period we monitored the resource implications of the different party manifestos. We will be carrying out an updated resource forecasting exercise following the Chancellor's summer budget announcement on 8th July 2015.

Recommendation 6

Birmingham City Council should strengthen their Human Resources (HR) function in the following ways:

a. the strategic role of workforce planning and HR should be vested in an existing Cabinet member. The Cabinet should not delegate this role. Members' role in workforce issues, beyond the Cabinet, should be limited to scrutiny, appeals and the appointment of the Chief Executive, Strategic Directors and Directors. The Cabinet should ensure strategic workforce planning supports the council's priorities;

b. the whistleblowing processes that are being put in place in the child safeguarding service should also be mirrored in the councils other services;

c. BCC should appoint a senior person to lead people change and workforce planning. This individual should be responsible for the development of the workforce plan the Leader has stated is needed, revising existing HR policies and, with the corporate leadership team, ensuring these are applied corporately. The workforce plan should be informed by the strategic plan for the future operation and size of the council;

d. as part of the simplification of the overall corporate planning framework, the responsible Cabinet Member, Chief Executive and the corporate leadership team should be responsible for delivering the council's priorities by ensuring a clear line of sight from the council's strategic priorities, annual business planning and the performance management system;

e. Lord Warner has highlighted the acute problem in frontline social care. BCC is still relying on too many expensive agency staff. The workforce plan needs to explore if there are similar gaps in other frontline areas and, if so, cover how they will recruit and retain permanent staff.

Human Resources now fall under the remit of the Deputy Leader's portfolio. The role of councillors in HR matters has been clarified, with their responsibilities now focusing on final dismissal appeals and the appointment of Chief Officers and Deputy Chief officers. Work is ongoing to develop a workforce plan that supports and aligns with the Future Operating Model for the Council to implement in 16/17 and 17/18.

The whistleblowing processes that were initially put into place in Children's Services have now been rolled out across the Council as a whole. It is proposed that there will be three-monthly reports to the Chief Executive / Chief Officers and six-monthly reports to the Deputy Leader in order to ensure consistent monitoring of the processes.

Interim leads for HR and Organisational Development are in place, whilst decisions are being made around the future operating models for support services.

The 'Forward the Birmingham Way' work-stream of the Future Council will look at what needs to be done to reshape and re-size our workforce so that we have the skills, capability and capacity required for the future. Early work has focused primarily on support to Children's Services to create and deliver its workforce strategy, resulting in a more stable workforce with a reduction in the number of temporary posts - a direction of travel that looks set to continue. Work continues, with the Directorate offering targeted support to resolve capability and performance management issues.

In addition to the work carried out by the political and officer leadership to design a simplified planning process (see recommendation 3), we have also undertaken a light-touch review of our performance management systems, with a view to a more comprehensive review being carried out later in the year. As a result of this work, we have actions in place to streamline monthly reporting arrangements, ensure a swifter escalation of key issues and ensure our systems and processes are designed to deliver timely "Right First Time" strategic performance management intelligence.

A more comprehensive assessment of the performance management can only take place when we have a more detailed view about our five year plans. In the meantime, the governance arrangements around the Future Council Programme will ensure that discipline is instilled into the process and there is a clear link between planning and performance.

Recommendation 7

Birmingham City Council should establish a new model for devolution:

a. the council needs to focus on getting basic services right, including getting on with improving children and education services. To do so, services should be organised in the way that is most efficient for that service, where appropriate these services should draw on the quadrant model to help align planning and resources with other agencies (see chapter 1, paragraphs 37-38);

b. the 10 District Committees should not be responsible for delivering services or managing them through Service Level Agreements. Instead, if they are to be retained, they should be refocused on shaping and leading their local areas through influence, representation and independent challenge of all public services located in the District, including those of the council;

c. the Districts should be provided with a modest commissioning budget to purchase additional services that help meet local priorities. Services commissioned will not necessarily need to be managed or provided by the council. They will need to effectively manage their own finances and meetings must be open to the public and outside of the town hall;

d. the number of city-wide Scrutiny Committees should be reviewed in the light of this and potentially reduced to no more than 3;

e. councillors should concentrate on regular, direct engagement with the people and organisations in their wards and role as community leaders.

Part of the Future Council Programme focusses specifically on the design, development and implementation of a new sustainable council operating model. The high level approach to achieving this has been shared with EMT and the Deputy Chair of the Independent Improvement Panel, and we are now progressing the development of the detailed methodology and implementation process that can be consistently applied to the decisions that we need to make about delivery of services in the future. The approach is based around key principles that look at how we manage the demand for council services in an holistic way, do not assume that the Council should be the direct provider of a service, ensure that we support those who are most in need or at risk, but empower citizens and communities to do as much as they can for themselves.

The role and remit of District Committees was amended at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Council on 21st May 2015, as the result of a cross-party Community Governance Review process launched in September 2014. District Committees now have responsibilities for developing and supporting the community leadership role of councillors and others in their area, working with partners and other stakeholders to meet the needs and priorities of local residents within their districts, promoting and influencing service improvement and integration for all public services across their district and promoting community empowerment, active citizenship and a diversity of local service provision, including community and voluntary organisations and social enterprises. They will continue to represent residents in responding to consultations, and taking local decisions in areas such as street cleansing.

Districts will also be responsible for administering a Local Innovation Fund (LIF), which will be in place by April 2016 at the latest. The LIF is intended to assist Districts in their community development role, and could be used to align or match-fund with other external funding sources eg. Big Lottery. A tailored training and development programme is being put into place to provide support to councillors as the new arrangements are implemented. Clearly, constitutional amendments are only the beginning of the change process, and work will continue with District Committees throughout the year as their role continues to develop as part of the Political Governance work-stream of the Future Council programme.

The number of city-wide Scrutiny Committees was reduced to five at the Council AGM on 21st May, following a review of Overview and Scrutiny arrangements by a cross-party councillor working group. The new committees are Neighbourhood and Community Services; Education and Vulnerable Children; Health and Social Care; Economy, Skills and Sustainability and Corporate Resources.

Recommendation 8

The council should facilitate the creation of a new independent Birmingham leadership group. The group should approve the new long-term City Plan and be used to hold all involved in delivery of the plan to account.

The Council has been in discussions with an initial group of partners about the development of a City Partnership Group (CPG) – the form that this group could take, and the function that it should fulfil within the City. Our partners are keen to build on existing partnership work and arrangements, and are supportive of the development of a simple narrative which helps the council, all partners and partnerships to focus their efforts in the same direction, rather than a complex plan with the accompanying bureaucracy.

The aim is not to reinvent a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), but to cultivate a self-sustaining and better networked city of partners and stakeholders – "a network of networks" - that results in a shared vision for the City and enables a shared approach to tackling big issues. There will need to be some formal structure, but this will be developed and agreed with partners, and will be as 'light touch' as is practicably possible. Unlike an LSP, the CPG has no formal budget to distribute and no formal, externally set targets to meet – so there is a real opportunity to create something that works for Birmingham, builds on and shouts about what is working well in the City, and tries to address wider issues.

The Council and partners will be holding a series of engagement events over the summer to gather views from a wider audience about how best to take forward the development of the City Partnership Group.

Recommendation 9

Birmingham City Council should redefine their partnership approach. They should do this by:

- a. producing with their partners a clear statement of their partnership values such as openness, transparency, learning, collaborating, safe and constructive challenge. These should be communicated and applied across the organisation and externally;**
- b. having a shared clarity about the mission, objectives and purpose of individual partnerships and how they will judge their performance;**
- c. monitoring, measuring and learning by seeking and acting on feedback on their performance from their partners and being transparent about the results.**

We have paid attention to the comments made in Lord Kerslake's report and the comments made to us by our partners in subsequent partnership events that we have held. The council's present assessment is that any formal definition of a partnership approach should

come through our work with the City Partnership Group, and the plan is to focus on the 'doing' i.e. working towards the change in approach and behaviour, rather than the development of a protocol at this stage.

We have also included key behaviours for the development of good partnership working within the values that are embedded within the culture change programme and 'My Appraisal' process referred to earlier. As part of the Future Council programme, the Partnerships work stream will continue to join together the various strands of partnership working from across the Council, including the City Partnership Group, and help us to focus our collective efforts for the benefit of the city and citizens.

Recommendation 10

A combined authority governance review based on an authority formed of at least in the initial stage the core functional economic area of Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall, Wolverhampton and Solihull should be completed by July 2015. Once this has happened the Government should begin to engage in a dialogue about further devolution. Based on the experience of other combined authorities we recommend that the following proposals should be adopted:

a. wherever possible decisions should be reached by consensus, if a vote is required each member should appoint a single representative and decisions should be taken on the basis of one member one vote;

b. the secretariat should be based outside of Birmingham City Council;

c. the Government wants to see seamless working between Local Enterprise Partnerships and combined authorities. To ensure enterprise retains a strong voice in economic strategy, the chairs of both the Black Country and Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnerships should be invited to join the board of the new combined authority.

In November 2014, Birmingham and Wolverhampton City Councils and Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall Metropolitan Borough Councils declared their "in principle" commitment to form a Combined Authority. On 18 May 2015, Cllr Ann Lucas (Leader at Coventry City Council) issued a statement saying that she would be bringing forward a report "recommending that Coventry City Council supports the principle of a West Midlands Combined Authority based on the three LEP areas". On 21 May 2015, Cllr Bob Sleigh (Leader at Solihull MBC) stated that he intended "to seek approval for taking forward detailed discussions in principle to support a Combined Authority for the West Midlands".

The seven Met councils are now engaging with partners and other stakeholders to undertake the relevant review and develop a "Prospectus" outlining the potential of the combined authority that has the potential to operate across the three Local Enterprise

Partnership areas of Coventry and Warwickshire, the Black Country and Greater Birmingham and Solihull - the Midlands Powerhouse. Further work is well underway to assess the value-added growth of the proposed economic area and recommend an appropriate structure, overall vision, set of guiding principles, key outcomes and early focus areas for further development. However, discussions about governance arrangements are clearly a matter for the relevant councils and local partners.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation within and beyond the local authorities involved, proposals would be submitted to Government in September. DCLG has indicated that Government would intend to reach a timely decision on these proposals, potentially leading to the new authority formally commencing operations from April 2016.

Recommendation 11

The Government should support the creation of a new locally-led high powered partnership vehicle focused on increasing employment and improving skills, starting in the most deprived parts of Birmingham. With an independent chair and involving the Cities and Local Growth Unit, the Department for Work and Pensions with Job Centre Plus, the Skills Funding Agency, Local Enterprise Partnership and Birmingham City Council and other partners, the first step should be to develop an agreed plan including proposals for Government by April 2015, looking at best practice and maximising resources already committed to Birmingham.

The East Birmingham Employment & Skills Board has been established to focus on increasing employment and improving skills, starting in the Hodge Hill Constituency area. The board is comprised of key local and national partners who are committed to adopting a multi-agency approach to tackle such issues. From the organisations involved, a working group has also been created to undertake and coordinate the necessary activities to deliver an effective and robust plan to Government.

A wide range of quantitative evidence has been submitted to the Board to propose the selection of the Hodge Hill Constituency area as the initial focus of the work. This includes a more concentrated effort in the Shard End and Washwood Heath wards. A vast array of detailed labour market and skills data has been drawn on to create a thorough understanding of the aforementioned areas. A consensus exists within the Board that the pilot areas for this work should come from within the East Birmingham area. The East Birmingham Prospectus for Growth (Feb 2015) highlights key issues which are limiting the potential for economic growth in this area. There are obvious synergies in basing the new approach to employment and skills in the same part of the city.

The East Birmingham Employment & Skills working group is currently consulting with local agencies and the community to understand the effectiveness of the current service provision in relation to employment and skills within Hodge Hill. From this information, the

aim is to develop a detailed action plan in partnership with key local agencies and members of the community.

The members of the Board and Working Group are comprised of representatives from the following organisations:

Birmingham City Council
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
Cities and Local Growth Unit
Department for Work and Pensions,
Skills Funding Agency
Department for Communities and Local Government
Ashram Moseley
South and City College
University College Birmingham
Waverley Secondary School

Future Council

birmingham.gov.uk/futurecouncil