

Meeting Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel and Birmingham City Council

Monday 23 August 2018 11am to 1pm

Attendees

Panel: John Crabtree, Chair of BIIP and the meeting; Councillor Keith Wakefield, Panel member; Steve Robinson, Panel member; Sally Hammond, adviser to the Panel

BCC: Councillor Ian Ward, Leader of the Council; Councillor Brigid Jones, Deputy Leader of the Council; Dawn Baxendale, Chief Executive; Clive Heaphy, Corporate Director Finance and Governance; Kate Charlton, City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer; Cllr Tristan Chatfield (part of meeting); Louise Collett, Assistant Director for Strategy and Development (part of meeting); Suwinder Bains, Cohesion and Partnerships Manager (part of meeting)

MHCLG: Joanne Allison, Lead – Local Government Intervention and Conduct; and Mary Stallebrass, Local Government Intervention Engagement

1. **Welcome and apologies:** John welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies received from Frances Done, BIIP Vice-chair; Professor Graeme Betts, Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health; and Jonathan Tew, BCC Assistant Chief Executive.
2. **Minutes:** The minutes of the last meeting were agreed. ***These can now be finalised and made available to all Council elected members and published on the Council's website.***
3. **Matters arising not on the agenda:** Cllr Keith Wakefield raised a question about whether BCC was now addressing the registration and better use of all its properties and assets. BCC said that it was actively attending to this, as part of its financial management strategies, and that it would be producing a single property strategy that would be fully integrated with relevant programmes.
4. **Adult social care and CQC action plan update:** Referring to Professor Graeme Betts' update paper Louise Collett explained further the significant improvement work that is underway across all the Adult services directorates and with health partners. Louise said that everyone in the Directorate now recognised that they were working from a position of poor performance, poor value for money, poor partnership working until recently and poor practice and outcomes in a number of areas. Louise explained that there was no part of the directorate where radical change is not happening, and that responsibilities were being devolved to local teams in a changed model of delivery.
5. Key points covered by Louise also included:
 - a) Birmingham's approach to day care is 20-30 years out of date and reports went to Cabinet in June and July to explain the type of modernisation that was needed;
 - b) The Directorate was now underpinning the transformation with an Organisational Development approach to ensure a proper focus on having

challenging conversations, focusing on behaviours and ensuring the effective management of performance, programmes and projects;

- c) BCC are learning from a model developed in Leeds to update their approaches to commissioning and investing. The changes will mean re-setting the Council's relationship with the market that has problems relating to saturation. Over-supply and inappropriate price competition is driving down quality in delivery. BCC's new approach will entail setting prices and quality thresholds to avoid the evident problems;
 - d) Domiciliary care is being transformed to fit with the wider system of health and social care;
 - e) The enablement service is being modernised and improved;
 - f) There have been changes to the Health and Wellbeing Board and a step-change in the quality of relationships between the Council and other system leaders over the last year. Each system Chief executive has agreed to take on leadership roles and responsibilities for each element of a revised programme of work that will focus more strongly on Children and Young People. Dawn Baxendale said that she had agreed to take a leadership role for programme elements concerned the ICT, HR, data and other such functions. Graeme Betts is leading on the Ageing Well programme. Dawn continued to explain that there will be a September consultation and launch in early November, entailing a tighter focus on performance aided by a stronger understanding of the data. The analyses being developed she said, were of a different order to that which BCC had undertaken before;
 - g) The directorate was now working constructively with colleagues in Place and Housing to drive a huge culture change in joint working and develop a strength-based approach in social work practice;
 - h) The LGA were due to facilitate a session with the Health and Wellbeing Board in November;
 - i) CQC's review findings, which BCC had anticipated and already begun to work on, reinforced the need for BCC to accelerate delivery of BCC's improvement programmes related to, for example:
 - Community and neighbourhood networks; and
 - Early interventions and intermediate care that were being re-designed to help people remain or become independent as soon as possible – a prototype of the new model is due to go live in September/October;
 - j) BCC had developed an action plan to directly address all the findings and recommendations of CQC. CQC, who had visited BCC again recently, has been positive about the Council's direction of travel; and
 - k) BCC would be bringing in specialist external support in the next couple of weeks to help it accelerate improvement through particular work programmes.
6. Cllr Keith Wakefield asked if BCC was getting the messaging right in explaining effectively to all stakeholders the benefits that will flow from the changes and how outcomes will improve for users. Cllr Ian Ward replied that Cabinet sessions were being held to ensure that decision-makers fully understood the current unacceptable performance levels and the improved outcomes that the changes would bring. These briefing sessions, he said,

would soon be extended to the wider Labour Group. He said that there had been a form of call-in at the 18 September Cabinet meeting to further explain and reconfirm the decision taken on 17 September.

7. Steve Robinson asked about the impact of any potential overspends on the Directorate's plans and investment strategies. Louise answered that the changes would enable quality to improve while also enabling the Directorate to delivery a balanced budget. Louise emphasised the importance of the Better Care Fund in enabling the Council to work constructively with partners.
8. Steve Robinson asked about the timetables BCC is working to and by when it expected changes in outcomes to be evident. Dawn Baxendale replied that she expected to see a continuing upward trend in performance but didn't expect to see improvement in outcome performance indicators quickly as it would take a time for the improvements to impact on those.
9. **Community cohesion (CC):** Cllr Tristran Chatfield set out the approach the Council had taken to develop its CC Strategy and consult on it. He said that the Council had held focus group sessions and enabled conversations with a wide range of stakeholders. Consultation about the Strategy will end on 31 August 2018. He said that the Council had received positive feedback from partners, including West Midlands Police and the Clinical Commissioning Group, and that the Council was committed to working with others in a facilitating role. He said that questions had been raised about whether the Strategy and approach was dealing well enough with the hard and difficult issues, such as discussing the role of women in society and aspects of segregation. But, he said, the Council was working on ensuring it continued to have ongoing meaningful dialogue, not just at times of crisis. He said the guiding principles of the Strategy were helping to inform new initiatives and funding bids by reinforcing a Birmingham vision of cohesion and this was giving all groups across the city a unifying sense of purpose and a better understanding about the underpinning issues.
10. Cllr Keith Wakefield asked about the actions that would flow from the conversations. He said that it would be good to see as part of BCC's next steps for the CC agenda what resources were committed to taking the actions needed to bring about any changes required. He asked what precisely would be the Council's own commitment to making changes across its services and ways of working to reflect the CC principles. He said that the Strategy should influence other Council policies and practice such as the Council's own Workforce Strategy by ensuring that the Council set a good example by being a dynamic employer. Council representatives agreed that the Council should consider how it might ensure churn in its workforce and achieve better representation of the city not only in terms of its overall employee profile, but also for its management and leadership tiers. Dawn Baxendale said that the Council's age-profiling was an issue and that the Council was working on apprenticeship programmes with partners, for example with the Housing Trust. She said also that the Council had received positive feedback about its CC approach from MHCLG and the Prevent teams. Cllr Ward said that wider developments such as the Commonwealth Games and HS2 opportunities would be used to promote joint working and unity across the city. Cllr Chatfield said that BCC would set out its commitments and next steps in a White Paper due to be published in October 2018, and would be holding a CC Summit in November that he hoped would become an annual event. He continued to say that developing the Strategy in an organic 'bottom-up' way, rather than the top-down way that had been used before, was helping organisations across the city to work more strategically and some organisations had been twinned. He

said that knowledge and understanding of the city was key and that the Council was now using intelligence more effectively.

- 11. Budget position and financial management update:** Clive Heaphy outlined the Council's most up to date budget position and the steps that the Council is taking to address its financial risks and improve its financial management. He said that the tone of the conversations with Directors had changed because they now understand that they will be held to account for delivering on the actions needed to balance their budgets. He said that staff knew that the leadership team was getting a grip, expecting honesty and taking financial management seriously. He said that officers were finding the new environment challenging but were working hard to continue to get the numbers down and business plans would be available by Christmas to support any figures and assumptions in the Council's finance plans. He said that by 17 September options for achieving the following year's savings would need to be available to inform Cabinet conversations on 1 October. In answer to questions from Steve Robinson about how radical the service re-design thinking and performance ambitions were and whether BCC's staff had the capability and capacity to deliver the plans agreed, Clive agreed that it was a cultural journey to move people away from thinking in silos and being defensive. He said that CMT conversations were now different and the starting point was an acceptance that reserves could no longer be called upon to shore up outdated and inefficient practices. Clive said that he was confident that the Council would be able to deliver £120m savings on top of the £640m already taken. He said that a Medium Term Financial Strategy would be in place for 2019/20 onwards.
- 12. Statutory Partnership Review:** Dawn Baxendale outlined that the Council was taking a very different approach to partnership working than had historically been the case. She said that partners had fed back to her that the engagement was now better. She said the Council would be convening spaces to facilitate meaningful conversations that led to action and would not be seeking to dominate events. Dawn spoke about the need to completely revisit the Council's approach to producing and using the city's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to influence place and economy agendas as well as public health agendas.
- 13.** Cllr Ward outlined the Council's collaborative approach to working with the West Midlands Combined Authority. He said that he had continued to meet with the Mayor, Andy Street.
- 14.** John Crabtree noted that BCC would need to continue to put emphasis on explaining to local partners what working with them would mean in practice in the future. He said that it was vital that the Council truly listened to others and continued to be honest about its own performance and re-think what its contributions should be. Cllr Ward and Dawn Baxendale concurred and said that they understood that the Council needed to be clear and honest about what it could and could not do and would and would not do and therein re-set others' and its own expectations. Dawn agreed that the Council was at the beginning of re-setting its relationships with partners. Cllr Ward said that at the meeting in September the Council wanted to discuss with partners possible solutions to any city issues and not just facilitate the tabling of problems. He said that next year would be the 130th anniversary of the city and there would be opportunities to consider how partners could jointly celebrate that. Dawn agreed and said that she wanted the meetings to be action-oriented, for example, to agree how partners might work together to take action to improve Birmingham's street scene. **It was agreed that we would discuss the Partnership Board at our September meeting.**

15. **Corporate Governance Improvement Plan update:** Cllr Brigid Jones and Dawn Baxendale confirmed that early actions had been taken as planned and that the Group Company Governance Committee had met twice. Cllr Wakefield asked whether the LGA had yet secured mentors for the Cabinet and committee chairs. Cllr Ward said that he had discussed this again with the LGA at the time of the LGA conference and was waiting for a pre-election list that the LGA had provided him with in January/February to be updated.
16. **BCC staff survey results:** The meeting noted the various return rates and the numerical results from the survey. The meeting noted that the results echoed previous findings and were very poor, for example circa 79% of staff had expressed for many years their belief that BCC is not managed well. Panel members expressed their disappointment in the results and that noted improvements in the results had not been evidenced over the four years since the Kerslake review despite BCC assuring the Panel during that time that it was taking improvement action. Dawn Baxendale said CMT had received 2.5k free text comments and the Council was currently analysing these and other results to extract key messages to inform CMT action plans. In answer to questions from Cllr Wakefield and Steve Robinson about the messages that she was giving to staff and how the survey might be used as a tool to drive change Dawn Baxendale spoke about a video that she had featured in that had gone out to all staff. Dawn said that CMT needed to address any disconnects from front-line staff through to middle managers and the top team and to members. Dawn said she was initiating regular 2-monthly meetings with groups of staff across the Council so that all representatives from all levels of staff would have a chance to talk with her. Steve Robinson suggested that it would be useful to speak in more detail outside the meeting about what CMT's tangible responses would be to address the survey findings.
17. **Trade Union conversations update:** Council representatives updated the meeting about recent developments including that the Waste Memorandum Of Understanding implementation had been subject to a one-off deferral from 1 September to 17 September 2018. The meeting agreed to discuss the position relating to Equal Pay matters at the September meeting.
18. **Commonwealth Games update:** BCC set out key matters relating to the progress the Council is making in preparing for the Games.
19. **Waste inquiry update:** Dawn Baxendale provided an update about the position relating to the Waste Inquiry. The meeting discussed a draft press release that BCC had prepared about the matter.
20. **Meeting close:** there was no AOB. John Crabtree closed the meeting.
21. **Next meeting: 24 September 2018 11am to 1pm.** To include discussions about the Partnership Board and Equal Pay.