

**Meeting Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel and
Birmingham City Council**

**Friday 19 December 2018
11.30am to 1.30pm**

Gowling WLG offices, Snow Hill, Birmingham

Attendees

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

Birmingham City Council (BCC): Councillor Ian Ward, Leader of the Council; Councillor Brigid Jones, Deputy Leader of the Council; Dawn Baxendale, Chief Executive; Jonathan Tew, Assistant Chief Executive; Clive Heaphy, Corporate Director Finance

Guests from local partner organisations: Paul Jennings, CEO Birmingham and Solihull CCG; Brian Carr, CEO BVSC; Penny Thompson, Independent Chair of Birmingham Children's Safeguarding Board; and David Rosser, Chief Executive University Hospital, Birmingham

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Alex Powell, Deputy Director, Local Government Stewardship; Clare Clark, Lead Local Government Intervention and conduct

1. **Welcome and apologies:** John welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies received from Frances Done, BIIP Vice-chair; and Kate Charlton, City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer.
2. John Crabtree opened the meeting by thanking the four guests for attending the meeting to update the Panel about how local partners were working together and share their views about BCC's progress.
3. **Partner contributions**
4. Steve Robinson asked three questions: What are the top priorities for partnership working currently? What are the partners already working on together? How are they working together?
5. The partners' contributions included mention of the following themes:

Past observations and findings

- a) All the inspections and assessments of the Council and city previously told a similar story about partnership working. Namely, that local partners had not understood the collective city ambition, didn't have a clear strategy written down, and generally were not doing partnership working at all or not doing it well. Also it had been found that learning, for example from serious case reviews, was not being managed well. In addition, there wasn't a 'live' and useful Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Also not enough people in the city understood what 'good' looked like and partnership working was very transactional. Historically, there was no clearly articulated view from the Council about what it thought of the voluntary and community sector and its role. Due

to poor engagement about 2016-17 budget reductions the conversation between the Council and the community sector had become adversarial.

The current situation and recent history:

- b) Partners are now comfortable with senior relationships with the Council. Partners see now a cadre of people in BCC and the city who are really committed to making things work and to deliver improvement. There has been a turnaround in the interface with the Council and how partners assist people on the health pathway. A positive change in how the Council engages with the voluntary and community sector has restarted. A turning point came when Stella Manzie and then Graeme Betts arrived, especially with the latter speaking about the needs of service users and the need for transformation and investment, rather than just salami-slicing budget cuts. Comparing the Council's connections with the voluntary and community sector now to late 2016 it's been a ride across bumpy ground, but there have been significant improvements recently – notably with the Council's maintenance of preventative investments in the sector through the former 'Supporting People' funds.
- c) Local partners are in the foothills of their improvement journey and need to release the city's potential and address the city's culture. Partners have started to build a new relationship through the city partnership board and have had fruitful conversations and a good summit meeting.
- d) In light of the CQC inspection, and a little time before that, local partners had begun some system re-design for continuing healthcare services and this has been echoed in the partnership response to the SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) Ofsted report. This had been informed by the intensive Newton Europe (health and social care consultancy) analysis of demand pressures and financial flows across the system. Partners are now redesigning the whole customer journey process from end to end and are working in completely different ways around the 'one version of the truth'. Already we can see outcome improvement in delayed transfer of care and associated measures across the NHS-social care system.
- e) The strategic partnership models that are needed have now been put in place, such as the new children's partnership, re-energised community safety and City Board. The Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) has set out 3 priorities that partners are working on together through clear and supported programmes of change. Namely, children and maternity, adulthood and work, and later life (ageing well). This is all underpinned by an 'enablers' work stream focused on taking the opportunity to integrate commissioning, assets and digital strategy across BCC and Solihull Councils and the range of NHS agencies in the STP footprint.
- f) The Children's Trust is an emerging success story. Colleagues absolutely want to make a difference, they are learning from elsewhere and getting to where they need to be, and the Council clearly has played a strong role in change management in creating the Trust and in statutory and performance challenge since.

Future developments planned

- g) The partners' top priority is financial stability. To achieve this, the partners are looking at consolidating and integrating our services. Working with the Council, they have produced a roadmap, for joint commissioning. Partners are mapping community services, mental health services and social care services onto the GP service maps, to enable integrated and locality based working.
- h) The delivery of an IT-based health care model is expected to be achievable within 5 years.

- i) Partners are at a point of discussing how to connect with schools to take forward, for example, childhood obesity work
- j) There's a difference now in how members and officers deal with the voluntary and community sector. The sector is saying that they are seeing opportunities now to have useful conversations with the Council.

Improvement issues to consider and/or address

- k) Birmingham has a tendency to focus on process too much. To be successful partners must continue to strengthen their focus on outcomes and impacts for residents and service users – building on the positive example of the STP analysis and new delivery models across Adult Social Care.
 - l) The community sector is not where it wants to be yet in terms of joint working. Much of the current engagement is based on work being done in localities. There's still a way to go for the Council to consistently see the sector as a strategic partner. One that can offer policy advice on key agendas such as homelessness, as well as being able to assist with delivery. Steps forward have been taken. The next step is about how we can bring people from the community and voluntary sector into spaces more often to have strategic conversations with the people at the top of the Council. BVSC have undertaken a strategic review in-year where a range of senior politicians and officers have contributed, while also supporting a sector-wide event, so this represents a positive start.
 - m) There's a need to develop a learning culture for the whole city. There's work to be done too about the culture of Birmingham with its citizens to enable bold ambitions to be set and to promote greater pride in the city.
 - n) Two partners spoke of their nervousness about the possibility of key senior people leaving and the need to consistently embed good partnership working more widely at the 'layer below' with change needing to permeate down the organisation.
 - o) To enable continued improvements in partnership working everyone will need to let go a little bit, and get on the same page with the ambition of what we are all trying to achieve. The City Board represents a very positive change in this regard, with a distributed approach to leadership and the Council deliberately not seeking to chair the partnership.
6. Cllr Keith Wakefield said that he was glad to hear about the focus on outcomes, rather than processes. He said all these things about improving the city and being ambitious and bold all matter. He said too that he'd like to know more about asset-based community development.
 7. Dawn Baxendale said that how the partners' ambition is being operationalised should be noted. The partnership meetings, she said, were action-based with the partners working together on practical issues.
 8. Cllr Keith Wakefield asked: How many buildings do you currently share? Dawn Baxendale answered that the community hubs programme will be about schools, the acute NHS estate, GPs and other services, not just the Council's, operating from single locations. The move on this through the STP enablers programme, she said, was from a standing start of nothing and so represented significant progress.

At this point, at 12.30pm the partner guests left the meeting.

9. John Crabtree invited BCC to raise the key points that they wished to for the rest of the agenda items.
10. **Ofsted assessment:** It was noted that an Ofsted inspection team was on site undertaking a full assessment. Dawn Baxendale said that the team had fed back that BCC had produced the best self-assessment it had ever seen. It was noted that the person who led on writing BCC's self-assessment had recently been recruited from Ofsted and had a strong incentive to make sure that the self-assessment was very clear about BCC's true performance levels. Ofsted is due to write to BCC with the agreed assessment result on 3 January 2019. Its report is due to be published on 17 January 2019.
11. Dawn Baxendale said that the Children's Strategic Partnership was due to have a third board meeting the next day and that was proving to be a crucial forum.
12. **Industrial relations:** Dawn Baxendale, Clive Heaphy, Cllr Ian Ward and Cllr Brigid Jones provided an update about the two disputes with the trade unions that the Council was dealing with. Specifically the waste services dispute with Unite and the enablement service dispute with Unison.
13. BCC representatives asked the Panel to take account of their view that the governance arrangements for managing the disputes are now entirely different compared to 2017. Discussions, they said, have involved all the Cabinet and all senior officers, and all legal advice has been shared collectively.
14. John Crabtree said that the important issue for him was about whether BCC were learning from whatever has led to the latest waste service dispute. Did BCC fully understand, he asked, that the Council caused itself difficulties when it agreed matters in private that are about the use of public money and which should therefore be transparent and open to public reporting and scrutiny?
15. Dawn Baxendale said that the Council understood the lessons to be taken from the experience. Also, she said, the Council senior officers and members in their meetings were being asked by her to sign fresh confidentiality agreements when needed to ensure that things were kept private where necessary.
16. **Month 8 budget update and 2019-23 forward planning:** Dawn Baxendale and Clive Heaphy set out the current financial position, which they said, was more positive than month 7. Forecast overspend, Clive Heaphy said, had reduced from £27m to £3m. He conceded that BCC were, in-part, using one-off savings to help achieve this, but said it was good news that the Council had exerted financial grip for the first time in many years. He was now seeing, he said, a 'sea-change' in how people were responding to the need to deliver agreed savings.
17. Steve Robinson said that he and Frances would wish to meet with Clive Heaphy in the new year to discuss in more detail the budget for this and next year.
18. Clive Heaphy set out again the Council's intention to get the ACIVICO model back on track.
19. Steve Robinson said he was keen to see the report from BCC about the lessons it had learned from the ACIVICO problems. Dawn Baxendale said that a report would soon be available and the Council had already set out 'a journey tree' to track the decisions that had led to the problems and their proposed resolution.

20. Cllr Brigid Jones said that the progress the Council was making on the agenda for the Council-owned companies was significant. We are now at least aware, she said, how many companies we own, namely around 150 trading entities.
21. Clive Heaphy said that urgent activity is underway regarding the Paradise project with the developer, the LEP and others to find solutions. It has been confirmed, he said, that the proposals are green book compliant and there is no public funding issue. These lessons will also be written down, he said. The Council will consider the additional capital spend requirement in the new year. The LEP is considering it this week.
22. **Corporate Governance Improvement Plan:** Dawn Baxendale said that she thought this was looking in good shape.
23. **Monthly performance update:** Jonathan Tew set out the key findings in the month 7 report. He said that the quarter 3 report would be fuller and BCC was aiming for a detailed March update. He said that the impacts of the change in culture in adult social care could be seen in the improvements in BCC's performance against key indicators. Some improvements in the performance data, he said, was remarkable, with much faster turn-around in cases and improvements in outcomes for vulnerable people. Jonathan Tew suggested that BCC and Steve Robinson and Sally Hammond should work through the shifts in performance reporting and the results together in a performance management workshop in the New Year. He was keen, he said, to share the evidence to show how performance management changes were filtering through to enable achievement of higher performance results.
24. Jonathan Tew continued to say that sickness levels and workforce spending were coming down due to improved vacancy management and better overall management of people.
25. **Recruitment and senior posts:** Dawn Baxendale confirmed that a new Director of Public Health had been recruited, with the involvement of partners. Also that the new Director of Children's Services, a new Assistant Director of Organisational Development (from Homes England) would all take up their new roles in January. Candidates for the AD for Property Services are being interviewed in January 2019 and a new Director of Public Health and an Assistant Director of Legal are due to start in February.
26. John Crabtree asked if Dawn would have all the capacity and capability that she needed in the senior team when those new people arrived? Dawn Baxendale stressed the need for ongoing top-team development, but commented that she had received superb backing from the cross-party JNC panel in the Council.
27. John Crabtree said that in his dealings with the Council he felt people were currently overstretched. He suggested that this could prove a false economy if the Council didn't have enough people to deliver all the changes they needed to deliver. Dawn Baxendale said that she thought BCC now had the right CMT posts and next needed to ensure they had experienced people at the next layer, for example, for Finance.
28. Dawn Baxendale and Cllr Brigid Jones said that the way the Council was making the new appointments was very different and much improved. Decisions have been unanimous, Dawn said, at the JNC Panel. Cllr Brigid Jones said that elected members now have access to better information and advice when making appointments, and interview panels are more representative with the practice of all-male panels ended at JNC level.

29. **Noting any formal advice of the Panel:** The Panel reiterated previous advice about BCC needing to learn the lessons from each of the issues and past problems it was dealing with. Including that the Council should be as transparent as it could be about each of its decisions and all aspects of public spending.
30. **Meeting close:** John Crabtree closed the meeting at 1.35pm.
31. **Next meeting:** 29 January 2019 12.15pm to 2.15pm.