

Strengthening the foundations:

Progress report for the Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel

November 2016

PROGRESS REPORT TO THE BIRMINGHAM INDEPENDENT IMPROVEMENT PANEL

Year 2: Strengthening the foundations

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Birmingham is a young, creative and diverse city, experiencing what many have described as a quiet renaissance. Its potential is limitless, with all the key elements of a world-class city in place, including a dynamic cultural offer, many excellent schools and universities, strong civil society organisations, and beautiful green spaces. To achieve its potential, Birmingham needs a forward-looking and ambitious council working in true partnership with a wide range of organisations and individuals dedicated to the common good of the city. The council itself has to be an organisation that residents have confidence in and are proud of; that partners feel enables them to make things happen; and that staff feel gets the best out of them.
- 1.2. The council's political and managerial leadership share an uncompromising and increasingly aligned commitment to achieving the fundamental transformation that will make Birmingham a leading edge in local government once again. The scale of change and consensus involved means that the process will be neither quick nor linear. For change to be embedded, sustainable, and genuinely owned by all, there has to be time built in for forging common purpose, enabling experimentation, taking stock, and refining. The experience of other organisations that have successfully transformed themselves indicates that it takes at least five years to secure their regeneration. Whilst the end-goal has to be excellence rather than "good enough", it is also clear that focusing on getting the basic early steps right is critical to future success.
- 1.3. When the council reported on progress one year into its improvement journey in December 2015, we said that we had turned a corner and were laying a new foundation. In year two, we are focusing on building up and strengthening that foundation to ensure that it will hold as we pick up the pace of change. We are striving for residents and partners to have a growing sense of confidence that their council will become a genuinely different organisation to what it was in 2014, and this is elaborated on in section 3. Although setbacks are to be expected, there will be no turning back. We are acutely conscious of the scale of the challenge still ahead of us to get to where we ultimately want to be - excellent across the board and an example to others.
- 1.4. The rest of this progress report recaps where we have come from, summarises our current position and sets out the key steps we will be taking to continue our transformation to become the kind of council our city, residents and staff deserve.

2. Where we have come from

2.1. Over the past two years, the council has been coordinating three significant improvement journeys related to children's social care, education and the corporate health of the organisation. This report will primarily focus on corporate governance, but as all three action plans are linked and reinforce each other, a brief summary of progress on safeguarding and education is offered to provide a more complete picture of the improvement work that has been underway.

Safeguarding

2.2. Following a history of chronic underperformance and a Department for Education review that found children's social care at the council to be in a fragile and unsafe state, Professor Julian LeGrand was asked to review the structure and governance of the service in November 2013. The Le Grand report highlighted a number of serious practice and structural issues which reflected a lack of focus on the long term nature of the problems, as well as a corporate/political centre that appeared not to attach sufficient priority to children and young people and the improvement of services to them. The review was followed by an Ofsted inspection in May 2014 which found the Council Inadequate in all areas on Children's Services.

2.3. Under the oversight of two Commissioners (Lord Norman Warner until May 2015 and Andrew Christie from December 2015), the service is now calm and more stable. A number of issues in relation to workforce and leadership have been improved within a three-year improvement plan which runs from July 2014 to July 2017. This included a three-year programme of significant additional investment through to March 2017-18, which the Council is sticking to despite very significant financial challenge in its overall budget position. It is also intended to mainstream this additional investment as children's social care operations move towards a trust delivery model.

2.4. Whilst progress against the plan agreed with Lord Warner has been made broadly in line with expectations, recent assessments by ourselves, our new Commissioner, our improvement partner (Essex County Council) and Ofsted indicate that significant further progress is still needed and at greater pace. Consequently, earlier this year, the council started to explore alternative models of governance, organisation and innovation that could help to further sharpen the focus on and prioritisation of children and young people, accelerate improvement and secure the long-term sustainability of services. We commenced a programme of work in early April 2016 to explore the potential for a children's trust to deliver the improvements in social work practice most needed by children and families.

2.5. The council-led process by which the children's trust work is being developed is indicative of the organisation's improved self-awareness and its strengthened strategic planning capability and governance arrangements. The 2013 LeGrand report pointed to the isolation of the children's services department and failure to prioritise social care as key factors in the chronic failure of the service. Those lessons have been learned and fully absorbed at the most senior political and managerial leadership levels. The development of the children's trust is now very much a cross-cutting initiative overseen by the Chief Executive and governed by a programme board composed of officers from

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a range of departments and drawing on external expertise, including partners. As the trust work proceeds, active consideration is equally being given to how the rest of the council needs to be shaped in tandem with it.

Education

- 2.6. In September 2014, the emergence of evidence of vulnerability to adverse influences relating to the narrowing of the curriculum and skewing of governance in a small but significant number of schools in East Birmingham, along with concerns about the council's relationship with schools more widely, resulted in the appointment of Sir Mike Tomlinson as Education Commissioner. With a mandate to oversee improvements to the standards of education in the Birmingham, Sir Mike's main responsibilities were to make sure that the council drove immediate improvements in the small number of schools deemed to be vulnerable and embedded wider improvements into the council's structures to build a credible and effective role for the council in supporting the city's schools.
- 2.7. The reports of the Education Commissioner indicate that original issues of vulnerability have been addressed and that there are early signs of broader improvements in education, notwithstanding the ongoing challenge of raising attainment in all underperforming schools in the city. We have also taken swift action to address the concerns raised during a monitoring visit by Ofsted in May 2016 about oversight of some vulnerable children within the education system, as well as cohorts of children who find themselves outside the school system and not receiving education. Actions include the establishment of a new leadership structure at the Assistant Director level to provide greater oversight of and accountability for safeguarding and performance, with a more effective data and performance monitoring system that informs a weekly action plan. Although we have managed to resolve the high priority cases, the numbers have not yet dropped dramatically, as new pupils have been added to the list. This is partly due to the start of the new school year bringing new pupils into the system, particularly those who are at a point of transition in their education. Unprecedented numbers of in-year admissions continue to create pressure within the system. Alongside sustained effort to ensure that all of the city's children are in receipt of education, the council is working with partners and parents to undertake a 'no holds barred' look at arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Birmingham.
- 2.8. The Commissioner has spoken positively of the improved leadership that the council is demonstrating with respect to education, with much stronger relationships with schools both individually and through the Birmingham Education Partnership. These positive reports were corroborated by a Local Government Association peer challenge that the council commissioned in November 2015. The peer challenge found that the council had made good progress in putting the basics in place for a strong and city-wide system of school improvement. It noted, in particular, that there was a growing sense of confidence in Birmingham of the leadership of the education system.
- 2.9. Plans are being developed to build on the progress to date to accelerate the pace of change. In September, the Improvement Quartet agreed that the council should work even more closely with the Birmingham Education Partnership and Services for Education, as well as a wider range of partners, to strengthen the city-wide oversight and

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governance of education and safeguarding. The council will now be discussing a proposed new partnership model that would play to each organisation's skill set to support schools to improve educational progress and attainment radically and keep children safe.

2.10. The LGA report and the Education Commissioner both signalled the need for the council to set out an ambition for the future of children and young people in the context of a shared vision for Birmingham. Linked to the city vision, Sir Mike has also emphasised the urgent need for the council to set out a clear expectation for the role that schools have to play in promoting community cohesion within a wider framework. It cannot be denied that it is taking more time than expected for a city vision and community cohesion strategy to be delivered. However, for both to mean more than words on paper, time has had to be invested by the council in repairing relationships with a good number of city partners, along with allowing new political and managerial leadership to restore wider confidence in the council's sincerity about operating as an equal within the city. A new cross-party statement on community cohesion has now been published along with a set of resources for schools and revised curriculum statement in September. Plans for the development of a city-wide community cohesion strategy are set out at 9.7.

Corporate governance

2.11. Recognising that there were persistent concerns about the council's ability to adapt to a changing environment including a much more difficult financial climate, the council and the Department for Communities and Local Government jointly commissioned Sir (now Lord) Bob Kerslake to assess the corporate leadership and management of the organisation. The Kerslake Review reported in December 2014 and its findings could not be described as comfortable reading, concluding that there was an urgent need for the council to change fundamentally its corporate culture and *modus operandi* in order to play the effective leadership role needed to enable the city to realise its full potential.

2.12. The Kerslake Review found that:

- Birmingham City Council's size acts as both a badge and a barrier: it has led to a not invented here, silo based and council knows best culture. These characteristics are not an inescapable feature of Birmingham City Council's size but they need to be acknowledged and addressed. There is much to learn here from other large authorities;
- The narrative within Birmingham and the council needs to become more positive. Birmingham City Council too often sees itself as a victim. Whilst the financial and other challenges are considerable and must be tackled, the public and businesses are calling for a more positive vision;
- 30 years ago Birmingham City Council was at the cutting edge of innovation in local government but has lost ground. To return it needs to start with getting the basics right;
- There is a blurring of roles between members and officers. The relationship needs to be reset and officers given the space to manage;

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- The current devolution arrangements within the city are confused and very few people understand them. They have also not been reconciled with the council's financial position;
 - The council's vision for the future of the city is neither broadly shared nor understood by the council's officers, partners or residents;
 - Instead there is a multiplicity of strategies, plans and performance management processes which lead to unnecessary complexity and confusion and are not followed through to delivery;
 - The Chief Executive and corporate leadership team lack the corporate support and capacity that is needed to undertake their role effectively;
 - Neither the savings nor the staff reductions the council has made have been underpinned by a long-term strategic plan for the nature and shape of the future council and the people it needs;
 - The council faces very significant budget difficulties in the next few years and does not yet have credible plans to meet these;
 - Performance management is ineffective and not up to the scale of the task;
 - The council, members and officers, have too often failed to tackle difficult issues. They need to be more open about what the most important issues are and focus on addressing them; partnership working needs fixing. While there are some good partnerships, particularly operationally, many external partners feel the culture is dominant and over-controlling and that the council is complex, impenetrable and too narrowly focused on its own agenda;
 - The council needs to engage in across the whole city, including the outer areas, and all the communities within it; and
 - Regeneration must take place beyond the physical transformation of the city centre. There is a particularly urgent challenge in central and east Birmingham.
- 2.13. One of the major recommendations of the Review was for an independent panel to be appointed to provide both support and challenge to the council to help ensure and assure improvement. Accordingly, the Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel was put in place in January 2015 and, with its support and advice, the council developed an improvement action plan to respond to the Kerslake findings. The Department for Communities and Local Government also provided financial support to the council to enable delivery of some important elements of the plan. Implementation was overseen by the Future Council programme, as part of its role in the operational management of the council's overall transformation.
- 2.14. By early 2016, 80 per cent of the commitments in the action plan had been delivered, including some key building blocks for the next phase of our improvement plan such as the establishment of values and behaviours with clear links into the employee appraisal system, enhancing corporate capacity around the Chief Executive, clarity on district and committee functions, and a strengthened performance management system.

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Nevertheless, overall progress in Year 1 was not as substantial as hoped and we have reflected on why that was the case. One significant factor is that a change programme can only succeed if the people leading it truly believe that there is a need to change. It is fair to say that this was not universally the case across the council.

- 2.15. This reluctance to recognise the need to change on the part of some may to some degree be because there were also examples of excellence in partnership and performance at the council. For example, the council has rightly been proud of its contribution to the redevelopment of New Street Station, which has generated very positive mood music both within and about the city. A tendency to focus more on the good is understandable, but we know that instances of good practice do not in themselves demonstrate good corporate health. One of our key reflections has been that we need to do more to extract the learning from what has worked well so that we can spread good practice more consistently across the council. This understanding is one of the critical differences in the council leadership's mindset now as opposed to when we started this process.
- 2.16. The election of a new Leader in December 2015 was seen as an important and significant step on the path towards achieving authentic and sustainable change by enabling a fundamental reset of the relationship between members and officers as well as a fresh start for the council's relationship with city partners. Appointments at the beginning of 2016 to the Corporate Leadership Team, both from within and outside the council, have further contributed to this shift in mindset, resulting in greater recognition and acceptance that the council still needs to go much further in order to be able, and seen as able, to operate as a modern and agile organisation. Key appointments to the senior leadership team in the spring 2016 also brought greater expertise and capability to drive change. Nonetheless, the sufficiency of strategic capacity, especially in the light of a number of key appointments remaining interim whilst workforce savings are consulted on, needs to be kept under review. Since the Kerslake Review and the (eventual) subsequent strengthening of the leadership group, there have been further significant developments - notably the Sustainability and Transformation planning agenda, the inception of the development of a children's trust, and a commitment to a new community cohesion strategy - which give rise to reassessing the adequacy of the present capacity levels.
- 2.17. It is noted that the Panel expected the chief executive and corporate leadership team to do more to "seize the moment" at the point of change of the Leader of the council. The Panel's view that there should have been greater alacrity following the election to take opportunities immediately to reset radically the member-officer space needs to be seen in the light of a CLT that was still significantly under capacity at that time, along with some different views within CLT about the best way to drive improvement in this space with the changed political leadership.
- 2.18. The strengthened commitment across the political and management leadership of the council, as well as the additional corporate capacity to drive change, are particularly critical as we strive to complete delivery of the remaining 20 per cent of the Kerslake action plan. We recognise that these actions, including the establishment of a new operating model, embedding a new approach to partnerships and ensuring that our budget plans to 2019/20 are achievable, are amongst the most challenging yet vital to

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the future stability of our organisation. We are committed to completing these actions in the next six months.

2.19. We also took on board the Panel's feedback that our progress reports last year did not sufficiently convey the scale and extent of the challenges facing us or demonstrate as much self-awareness as we ought to have done. Accordingly, we set out to produce a more candid and considered self-assessment in March 2016.¹ Our "gap analysis" summarised what we had achieved to that point; where further progress was needed; what we intended to do over the next six months; the key priorities that we would focus on and the risks we were prepared to address. It also proposed measures by which we could assess our own progress along the way.

2.20. We were encouraged that the Panel felt that we had provided a credible analysis and that, on its recommendation, the Secretary of State agreed for the Panel to take a step back at the end of March 2016 to enable us to demonstrate that we could deliver the commitments in our gap analysis without the current level of intervention. We have since been mindful of the clear expectations for further progress that Panel set out in its letter:

- A full and sustainable resetting of member-officer roles and more effective working relationships between members and officers
- CLT operating as a unified team with a clear vision for organisation and a good grip on performance across all services
- Tough decisions taken to deliver our ambitious budget savings
- A sense on the part of more city partners that there is a real difference in our behaviour and approach to them
- Staff feeling that we have stripped out bureaucracy and made it easier for them to do their jobs effectively
- Key challenges with our organisational culture well on their way to being tackled, e.g. less working in silos, more open to learning from other
- More members being outward-facing and playing a community leadership role
- A clear vision for the city and the council's role within that being communicated externally and internally
- A community cohesion strategy in place

The next section sets out our progress since March.

¹ <http://birminghamnewsroom.com/biip-documents/>

3. Where are we now

Overview

3.1 We are now 18 months on from the publication of the Kerslake Review and the council is on the way to becoming a very different organisation to what we were in 2014, which Lord Kerslake himself has confirmed.² Some of our key achievements include:

- The distinction between member and officer roles is now much better understood and more consistently observed at the most senior levels of the council
- This reset is being driven across the wider body of members and officers, reinforced through workshops and the adoption of a new member-officer protocol, whose adherence will be actively monitored
- A cross party Council vision has been agreed and plans are in place for working with partners to develop a shared vision for the city
- The ruling group has also worked on its politically-framed ambition and vision for Birmingham and the attendant priorities and priority outcomes will inform the next business planning cycle
- Through monthly performance boards, the Corporate Leadership Team has an increasingly clear understanding and rapidly developing grip on performance across all services and has taken swift corrective action where necessary (viz the instigation of fortnightly adult social care budget delivery monitoring sessions)
- Tough political decisions on workforce savings proposals have been agreed
- The Chief Executive is holding regular meetings with Strategic Directors to monitor the delivery of savings for 2016/17 and revise the plans for 2017/18 to ensure that they are achievable
- City partners report feeling that we are becoming more inclusive and are keen to collaborate on the development of a city vision
- Unnecessary bureaucracy has started to be stripped out, including changes to property delegations and the standing down of committees not adding value
- Members and officers are more actively seeking to learn from others, including participation in LGA training and visits to other councils
- Professional networks also report renewed engagement from BCC officers
- A new cross-party statement on community cohesion has been published, alongside a new toolkit and operational plan for schools
- The Curzon Investment Plan and extension of the Metro through East Birmingham and out to North Solihull provides the opportunity to transform connectivity to deprived communities within those areas, creating a step-change in access to employment, educational and other opportunities

3.2 The above actions are starting to reinforce each other and translate in tangible ways:

² <http://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/praise-birmingham-council-troubleshooter-who-10494901>

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- **Our political leadership unites for the good of the city:** Our three political leaders have set out to demonstrate that they can put the city's and council's wider interests ahead of party considerations. This has most recently been evidenced through the agreement of a cross-party statement that sets out the council's vision for the city, which is not only a major achievement for this council but a rare initiative in local or central government. They have demonstrated similar collective leadership on major issues such as refugee settlement, community cohesion and the waste strategy. Equally, the leaders have agreed that there are issues on which debate and challenge along party political lines is both desirable and valuable in a healthy democracy. There is now much more open discussion about where that line should sit.
- **We recognise when others have something to teach us:** We are not just willing, but increasingly eager, to learn from other organisations that are seen as experts in areas where we want improve. For example, even though the council has a good reputation at the national level on the smart cities agenda, we are pushing ourselves to be more ambitious by learning from what other councils are doing, working closely with local experts and engaging with organisations such as NESTA and the Future Cities Catapult. Similarly, the West Midlands Police's transformation programme has been running about as long as the council's but in a number of ways its progress is more advanced. CLT members have now started to meet regularly with their leadership to learn from what is working effectively for them, help us benchmark our progress and share our own learning. A similar approach is being taken across a number of service areas from waste management and air quality to commercialisation. All works-in-progress but, crucially, underway.
- **We invite partners to shape how we think and work:** Becoming a more effective partner in the city is not just about making individual projects and relationships work better, important as those are. We have started to make a more fundamental shift in inviting partners to help shape the policy and strategy that will frame the council's operating model and service delivery plans in future. We have seen the benefits of this more open and inclusive approach in the development of our new website, which engaged a wide range of people and perspectives from the earliest stages and has had a very positive reception from the public. We are also engaging our partners in the development of our strategies on procurement, ICT&D and housing, which we believe will help us become more innovative by challenging old orthodoxies and enable us to amplify the good work already happening across the city.
- **We admit when we get things wrong and learn from our mistakes:** We are striving to deliver the highest quality service to every citizen every time. On those occasions where we fall short of that standard, we are much more open about accepting responsibility and taking swift action. For example, we initially mishandled changes to Travel Assist, the service that works with eligible families to develop travel solutions that enable children and young people to access educational provision, which regrettably caused distress and worry to many families. We have

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since done a complete overhaul of the system, engaging parents in the process. The Executive Director of Education has spoken openly to local media about what we did wrong and how we are setting it right,³ which some feedback on social media indicates is helping to build back the confidence of parents. A less acute example was our first draft of the waste strategy consultation, which was criticised for using too much technical jargon that made it hard to understand. Recognising that it was not going to generate the meaningful engagement we were seeking, we withdrew the original and subsequently launched a revised consultation paper that is seen as being much more accessible. We are also applying the lessons to other council documents to avoid repeating that mistake.

3.3 We do not want to overstate the extent of our transformation so far as that would be disingenuous. Many of the achievements listed above are initial steps that need to be followed up quickly and repeatedly with more action, refinement and discernible impact. Nevertheless, it is hopefully apparent that they are not just “one-offs” either, limited to one or two parts of the council or individuals. We are not, as we may have been seen to do in the past, trying to hold up one or two instances of activity as evidence that all our issues are resolved. Rather, we are trying to show that there are credible reasons for our confidence that we can drive our own improvement in future.

3.4 The ultimate test for us is whether citizens feel that there has been a difference, both in the quality of the services they receive and in their experience of interacting with the council. Our last citizen survey was conducted in late 2015 and found that satisfaction with the council’s performance increased slightly from 64 per cent between 2014/15 to 65 per cent 2015/16, but was still significantly down from the 78 per cent reported in 2012/13. It should be noted that this is broadly in line with the trend across local government during that same period.⁴ There is a high level of consistency over time in terms of the proportion that would trust the council, currently at 68%. Again, this is in line with the national pattern. Our next city-wide resident survey will be conducted in a few months’ time and will provide invaluable feedback on how residents feel about our performance and progress over the past 12 months.

3.6 In recent months, we have also demonstrated our resilience and leadership capability through some very challenging situations. For example, although our intention to look into the establishment of a voluntary children’s trust was precipitated prematurely, we had already started considering future options well before the circumstances that prompted the announcement arose. As a result, we were in a much stronger position to respond in a thoughtful, considered and proactive way. We also engaged our staff and partners in a

³ <http://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/disabled-children-were-down-over-11850756>

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<http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/11981/LGA+June+2016+Resident+Satisfaction+Polling.pdf/165ed85b-309b-4a50-bb63-5579ff0aeba1>

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transparent and open manner, and their supportive response demonstrates how much our relationships have improved.

3.7 Similarly, after the European Union referendum, we swiftly reached out to partners to establish an advisory group to take stock of the risks and opportunities facing Birmingham as well as the wider West Midlands and help the city secure its position as the post-referendum landscape unfolds. As a result, we were in a good position to feed in when the Department for Communities and Local Government sought local government input at two days' notice to four workshops intended to provide advice to the new Department for Exiting the European Union in August. Birmingham City Council fed into all but one workshop and indeed was the only council to participate in the session on community cohesion.

3.8 We recognise that we are still in the early stages of a much longer journey. Whilst an ever-increasing number of our policies, structures and relationships are reset, it will take more time for a comprehensive result and for those changes to become embedded and translate into consistent behaviour throughout the organisation. We have focused on making sure that each step we take is sustainable and joined up with the rest of our improvement programme. This approach has involved taking the time needed to do things the right way and in the right sequence, which has in turn meant regulating pace to secure depth and reach. As a result, we believe that the changes that we have already secured will propel us to go further and faster in the year ahead.

3.9 The next sections provide more detail about the current position, next steps and future risks and issues under each of themes of the March gap analysis.

4. Political leadership

4.1 *Where were we aiming to be by October?*

- The new approach to leadership in the civic arena will be embedded across the Cabinet, with members focused on a collective vision and shared priorities.
- All three Leaders will be seen together frequently at key events, on platforms, etc.
- A more systematic approach to cross-party working will have been adopted.
- Partners will feel that words have translated into action.
- There will have been a further (and still ongoing) resetting of member-officer relations.

Actions taken

4.2 The Executive Management Team has worked effectively together to develop a new vision and priorities for the council, which will shortly be published. Each of the four priority areas that have been identified through this work have been developed in more detail by working groups comprised of Cabinet portfolio holders, Assistant Leaders, Strategic Directors, officers from across the council and external partners. The drafts have also been shared at a formative stage with the Opposition Leaders to help secure agreement of a cross-party statement to sit over top of the priorities of the ruling party.⁵ As a result, we expect much wider ownership of the council vision than ever before.

4.3 Monthly cross-party Leaders' meetings have been taking place since March, which have been an opportunity to establish common ground and has helped to distinguish areas where political disagreement is not only legitimate but beneficial from issues where the effective leadership would best be demonstrated through consensus. For example, the Leaders are united in their belief that a good future for children and young people should be at the heart of the council's ambitions for the city, but agree that specific proposals for the future education policy are entirely within the scope of party political debate. Two members of opposition parties have also been appointed Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Committees and the monthly Scrutiny Chairs' meetings, where decisions on scrutiny matters are taken, include an opposition observer member.

4.4 All three Group Leaders demonstrated true civic leadership by agreeing a cross-party statement on community cohesion, which sets out a clear message about the values and behaviours that will not be tolerated. All of this activity is in stark contrast to the situation a year ago, when there was limited interaction between the Leader of the Council and his political counterparts. Other elected members are also participating in cross-party working. All 3 political groups supported the city partnership "Love Your Neighbour" campaign, with members from all parties visible at the launch in July. There is also a cross-party project to develop the City's Waste Strategy. Recognising that implementation and key decisions will come after the all-out elections of 2018, a cross-party Steering group meets every 2 to 3 months and attended by other cabinet members and the Leader or DL from both opposition parties. The first of 4 workshops took place in July to test the strategy and the potential delivery options with a cross party group including scrutiny members.

⁵ <http://birminghamnewsroom.com/birmingham-a-city-that-works-for-all-of-us/>

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4.5 The Leader and Chief Executive have continued to articulate clearly and maintain the distinction in their roles, whilst developing an even stronger working relationship that enables candour and constructive challenge. This resetting of member-officer relationships is being carried through between Cabinet portfolio holders and senior officers, and reinforced more widely through:

- member-officer workshops held throughout August and September
- a revised member-officer protocol following wide consultation with members and officers
- new Cabinet member induction
- member role profiles developed and issued via new member induction and workshops
- a new programme of member development in consultation with the three Group Leaders, other elected members and with the support of the Local Government Association, member role profiles developed and issued via new member induction and workshops.

Next steps

4.6 Cross-party leaders' meetings will continue to take place on a monthly basis and will focus on key issues on which a common understanding will be vital, e.g. the medium-term financial strategy, plans regarding the children's trust, community cohesion.

4.7 The statement setting out a cross-party vision for the city will be included in the marketing packs for the Conservative Party Conference to be held in Birmingham between early October. The three leaders, with the Chief Executive, also participated in a symposium with partners on October 13th to start the work towards establishing a city vision.

4.8 There has been a good response to the member-officer workshops, with many ideas offered for further development of more effective workshops and relationships. These ideas will inform the development of a programme of activities throughout the year, including a programme of work being developed with the Centre for Public Scrutiny on the role of effective scrutiny arrangements in managing the council's performance and driving improvement in the autumn.

4.9 All three group leaders have had and will continue to have discussions with the Assistant Director of Organisational Development and Change about training and development for members. There is now a member steering group in place to drive and oversee the member development strategy.

4.10 Conversations have continued with colleagues from INLOGOV and we are keen to grow our knowledge around the 21st Century Councillor and Public Servant, including what skills members and officers will need in future. Each Group Leader has received a copy of the booklet and will be leading discussions within their parties.

4.11 All three political groups have launched "Be a Councillor" campaigns to help them to develop and refresh their talent pools, with the support of the Local Government Associations.

Risks and issues

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- 4.12 Working relationships take time to change, whether between members and members; officers and officers; or member and officers. It would be premature to determine that there has been a permanent or comprehensive change in the way that members and officers at the council interact with each other. However, there is a consistent distinction in roles and respect shown between members and officers at the senior levels of the council that sets the right example for the rest of the council.
- 4.13 In the pulse survey conducted in spring 2016, there was a small decline in the number of staff agreeing with the statement that there is an effective relationship between members and officers at the council. The recent member-officer workshops provided an opportunity to explore a range of perspectives on what is currently inhibiting better working relationships and how we could improve. For instance, we learned that members have concerns about the level of information they receive both on strategic matters and on operational changes, as well as the quality and level of support they get from officers. Officers, in turn, reported feeling that the real impacts of workforce reductions on their ability to provide the level of service of previous years has not been grasped. Both members and officers indicated that, with ongoing restructuring of services, it is often difficult to work out who to speak to at the council on a given issue, exacerbating frustrations. There was strong consensus across the workshops of the need for more opportunities to develop mutual trust and empathy, including better information-sharing and the need for more shared space to discuss issues informally in advance of decisions being taken.
- 4.14 This is an area where it is difficult to get data to benchmark performance against other authorities, which the LGA confirmed when we sought their assistance. The LGA's view is that the action that we have taken is similar to that taken by other councils in a similar position, but in the past our approach to member development may have been too ad hoc and lacking follow-up in terms of spreading the learning more widely. They are encouraged that we are taking a more comprehensive approach aimed at embedding a new way of working across the council. We also feel that there is more scope for us to learn from and share our learning with our peers in Doncaster, Rotherham and Tower Hamlets, whose corporate governance challenges have similarities to ours.
- 4.15 It is not clear yet if partners and residents have changed perceptions of elected members or of the way that members and officers interact with each other. Whilst the INLOGOV report from November 2015 provides a qualitative baseline, group leaders have identified the need for a quantitative baseline against which future performance could be measured. The LGA have offered to facilitate some independent focus groups, one year on from the Inlogov findings. These groups would be designed to reach a much wider cross-section of cabinet members, backbench members, senior officers, middle managers and more junior officers than the Inlogov sample and as such provide a representative check on how members and officers now feel about the relationships. This will be the subject of future discussions at cross-party leaders' meetings.
- 4.16 Finally, we recognise that the move to all-out elections in 2018 represents both a risk and opportunity for the council. The Local Boundary Commission for England published its final recommendations for electoral arrangements across Birmingham on 6 September. They propose that Birmingham should be represented by 101 councillors, nineteen fewer than we have now. They also propose that those councillors should represent 37 single-member wards and 32 two-member wards across the city, a significant change from our current 40 ward/3 member-per-ward arrangements. It is to be expected that these changes will have a range of impacts at ward, council and city level. We will need to be attuned to the dynamics whilst staying focused on ensuring that our new corporate governance systems and policies are firmly embedded over the next 18

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months, with induction and development programmes for members and officers of the highest quality. Whatever the outcome of the 2018 elections, they will represent a new chapter of sorts for the council and an important opportunity for us to demonstrate the resilience of the transformation we are undertaking.

5. Managerial leadership

5.1 *Where were we aiming to be by October?*

- CLT will have set out a clear coherent vision to guide our workforce and help them understand how they fit into the bigger picture.
- CLT will have a grip on performance across all services and key indicators of operational health.
- There will have been a significant streamlining of bureaucracy that staff will feel makes it easier for them to do their jobs effectively and efficiently.
- CLT and the wider cadre of senior officers will be operating as an extended leadership team.
- Staff will feel that all CLT members are more visible and accessible.
- The organisation's values and behaviours will be demonstrated consistently and visibly by CLT.

Actions taken

5.2 The development of a coherent vision and set of priorities to guide our workforce and help staff understand how they fit into the bigger picture took longer to develop than originally expected. This work was completed in September and because the process was inclusive and involved a wider range of members and officers than ever before, we believe that there is likely to be greater shared understanding and buy-in as a result. Regular updates were provided to staff through a series of engagement activities. A corporate narrative has been developed around the vision and priorities, and is currently being disseminated across the organisation.

5.3 CLT now has a much firmer a grip on performance across all services and key indicators of operational health, with regular performance management happening through monthly performance boards since March. Key hot spot areas are looked into in more depth with the relevant officers being invited to the sessions to answer queries from the team. The Directorates then take a deeper dive at their management team meetings and feed this back. For example, we recently looked more closely at whether workforce reductions are being implemented at a rate that will allow the budget savings associated with them to be realised. The initial probe exposed weaknesses in our tracking of the numbers of employees leaving the organisation, which has resulted in much more concerted focus on this area. Similarly, a much stronger programme management approach is being taken to ensure that the future savings predicated on rationalising the council's estate can be realised through planned workforce changes and policies such as more flexible working arrangements.

5.4 Our strengthened arrangements for managing performance across the council is an important sign that CLT is now operating more effectively as a team, although we recognise that we have more work to do in order for us to be seen as doing so. CLT is now more visible at Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Managers Voice and Forward Champions fora. CLT has also started to hold meetings at different locations instead of always being at the Council House, which is providing more opportunities to interact with staff as a team. We have also published the objectives from our appraisals to demonstrate how we will be living our organisational values and behaviours to set an example for the rest of the organisation.

5.5 Strategic directors have also been enhancing their visibility within their own directorates by spending more time at different team sites and visiting frontline services more frequently. However, we recognise that this is an area where we need to do much more,

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particularly to encourage cross-directorate working. A good start was made when most of CLT attended an Economy Directorate Leadership Team meeting together earlier this year. Similarly, Strategic Directors have made a visible effort to jointly lead work on cross-cutting issues, e.g. housing, the follow-up to the Child Poverty Commission.

5.6 We have also become more effective at operating as a wider leadership group with SLT and tapping into its expertise to shape the future of the organisation. When the announcement of the children's trust was made, in addition to intensive communications with children's social care teams, we arranged a same-day telekit with senior managers from across the organisation to set out key messages for them to share with their teams and disseminate more widely. This was followed up by further discussion at the next SLT forum. SLT members have also played a key role in refining our design principles and mapping out the "Big Moves" for our Future Council programme. Feedback from SLT colleagues indicates that meetings are now felt to be much more two-way engagement and thus a more effective use of their time.

5.7 We acknowledge that our early attempts to reduce bureaucracy across the council have yielded less progress than we hoped for. In the spring, we consulted staff on the changes that would make it easier for them to do their jobs, known more colloquially as our "decluttering" programme. The changes that they put forward primarily fell into 5 broad categories: HR, finance, report-writing, procurement and member involvement in operational activity. There has been progress; for example, changes to the constitution and procurement governance arrangements were approved by full council in March 2016 that substantially increased delegation to officers from £2.5m contract value to £10m. Also, alongside the removal of the performance star chamber, the Effectively Managed Corporate Business group (EMCB) has now been disbanded with organisational wide improvement being routed through the CLT performance board and Improvement Hub. Nevertheless, we know from having sought staff feedback that there are critical areas such as report-writing where there has not been a discernible impact from our early efforts to simplify the processes involved. These issues go to the heart of the deeper culture change work needed, as discussed in section 8.

Next steps

5.8 With the vision and priorities now set, our focus is on setting performance measures through the business planning process so that we can assess whether we are achieving our intended outcomes. This approach will result in there genuinely being a golden thread between the council's vision, business plan and budget all the way through individual performance objectives for the first time.

5.9 CLT will be stepping up its focus on team development. At our away-day on 8 August, the Assistant Director of Organisational Development and Change was commissioned to develop a programme of activity building on the 360 session we had in March.

5.10 More work will also be done to continue to improve CLT's visibility across the organisation, including a regular programme of visits to different council locations and team meetings and communication through blogs and social media. Our new Assistant Director for Communications has recently come into post and is expected to have an enhanced focus on improving our internal communications.

5.11 We recognise that we will have to be bolder about stripping out bureaucracy, starting with report-writing. The council still has a risk-averse culture that is learned behavior from years of staff not feeling trusted and empowered to show initiative. In order to ensure that colleagues feel backed up by policy with the same messages going to all staff, we have set out a new decision-making protocol that addresses some of the key

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issues that currently make producing reports at the council so cumbersome. Our focus in the coming months will be on making sure the protocol is actually adhered to and colleagues feel that there has been a difference to their working lives.

Risks and issues

- 5.12 The 2016 pulse survey findings show a very modest increase in the proportion of staff indicating that they understand the council's vision and how the Future Council programme will affect them and their team since the 2015 Staff Survey. We would not wish to exaggerate the significance of this result, but it does reflect a positive direction of travel. Given that we have stepped up our communications and engagement activities significantly over the summer, a key test for the effectiveness of our leadership will be whether there is a further increase in the 2016 Staff Survey due to be launched in October.
- 5.13 The 2016 Staff Survey will also help us understand whether our efforts to get out and about around the council both as a team and individually are genuinely leading to greater visibility. The pulse survey showed no discernible change on this question, but in more targeted surveying of waste management staff over the summer, lack of senior management staff visibility was identified as a key concern. Within waste management, there is now an intensive programme of communications and engagement between senior managers and frontline staff underway. We know that we still have much work to do to enhance our visibility across the organisations.
- 5.14 Overall staff satisfaction at the council appears to be broadly in line with the national picture, with the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development Employee Outlook reporting that scores for senior managers' clarity of vision, treating employees with respect and confidence in senior managers' ability are areas of major concern in the spring 2016 survey.⁶ However, we know that as the leadership team of a council seeking to achieve a major transformation, the onus is on us to buck the trend and perform better than the national average when it comes to employee confidence.
- 5.15 The combined pressures and time demands of keeping three substantial improvement programmes on track, playing key roles in the West Midlands Combined Authority and Sustainability and Transformation Plan process, along with delivering all the routine functions of a council, have made it a challenge to set aside time for CLT development. We have agreed to prioritise time for team development in future, recognising how important it is for us to spend more time developing our bond as a team and a shared understanding of each other as individuals.
- 5.16 In a big council, it will invariably take longer for corporate messages to cascade throughout the organisation and require more effort to ensure that those messages are fully absorbed. Our communications strategies have an enhanced focus on using multiple channels to deliver messages, whilst building in more opportunity for two-way engagement.
- 5.17 The addition of an Assistant Chief Executive has bolstered corporate leadership capacity that is over and above that offered by strategic directors, but it will be a few more months until the composition of CLT is completely settled. At present, the Strategic

⁶ <https://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/employee-outlook-spring-2016.pdf>

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Directors for the Place and Economy Directorates have been appointed on an acting basis. Permanent recruitment to these posts will only commence once the changes to JNC workforce terms and conditions have been finalised. Additionally, the Strategic Director for Major Projects no longer sits on CLT in order to focus more heavily on providing strategic support to the West Midlands Combined Authority. As a result, the team's "forming" stage has been extended and there needs to be a sustained attention to team-building. We had some early misunderstandings, for example on the way forward with our operating model, but demonstrated that we could rise above them by discussing them with openness and sensitivity. More opportunities to develop empathy and understand each other's working styles will help build our resilience and strength as a team. To that end, the Assistant Director of Organisational Development and Change is helping us build a programme of team development.

- 5.18 As indicated at paragraph 2.14, we will be keeping the sufficiency of strategic capacity under review in light of the Sustainability and Transformation planning agenda, the inception of the development of a children's trust, and a commitment to a new community cohesion strategy.

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6. Strategic planning, financial and performance management

6.1 *Where were we aiming to be by October?*

- The council has agreed a 2020 vision that informs the business plan.
- For the first time, then council has prepared and extensively consulted on a four-year business and financial plan.
- The appointment of a senior lead for people change and workforce planning has accelerated the alignment of our workforce planning and financial and performance measurement.
- Our proposed business plan for 2016/17 has a much sharper focus on a targeted set of priorities and measures agreed with portfolio holders.
- Business cases have been developed for savings proposed to be delivered using a demand management methodology (with a pipeline process to be established).
- A robust planning approval is being deployed to achieve workforce savings.

Actions taken

6.2 Setting, sticking to and delivering an achievable four-year budget plan is our top priority. This is proving to be even harder than anticipated, not least because some elements of the 16/17 budget are proving nigh on impossible to achieve - notably, but not exclusively, those that require a risk-sharing agreement with the NHS either via the BCF or, latterly, the STP process. The Panel will rightly feel that we were over-optimistic in our readiness, capacity and capability to deliver savings through measures such as demand management and service redesign in the ambitious timescale we originally set out. We now recognise that this was indeed the case. Over the summer, CLT has undertaken a further thorough stress test of all of our savings proposals for 2016/17 and 2017/18, which has crystallised the potential for a significant overspend in this year's budget, driven primarily by shortfalls in the People Directorate.

6.3 At present, we are projecting a potential £49m overspend in 2016/17. For planning purposes we have now removed the assumption that £13m will be received from Health (to mitigate BCC care costs) as a result of NHS bodies collectively being able to operate within their control totals and release the 1% non-recurrent contingency CCGs are required to hold. The Chief Executive and Cabinet member for Health and Social Care are holding fortnightly meetings with key officers from the People Directorate to maintain the focus on delivering this year's budget as close to the target as possible. Work will continue to further reduce this position, with a strong management emphasis on controlling and avoiding spend. We expect to draw on the Organisational Transition Reserve, which currently contains an unallocated balance of £60m, to address the 2016/17 overspend. The potential impact on this reserve will be taken into account in the preparation of the 2017+ Business Plan, as we will need to build up the reserve again in future years.

6.5 We are committed not to putting ourselves in this situation again, which means planning on the worst case basis to be ready for any outcome. The STP process is a key determinant in our financial outlook and we are preparing for a range of scenarios based on whether and to what extent local partners are able to come to an arrangement that helps the council to mitigate its pressures in adult social care (and are supported by a national policy framework that enables them to do so). To bottom out the full scale of the gap we could be facing, we have also stress-tested all of our future savings proposals across the council to 2020/21 to check that they are realistic and achievable. These discussions have surfaced a number of proposals for future years that are underpinned by assumptions we no longer have confidence in so we have revised the amount of the expecting saving or taken them out of the budget plan altogether. Although this will add to the financial gap we need to

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address, it does demonstrate that we are approaching our budget setting with a ruthless realism that the Panel have observed was missing in the past.

6.6 Our current assumptions are that we will need to identify a further £78m of savings in the 2017/18 budget, on top of the savings proposals that have already been agreed for next year. The Executive Management Team is engaged in a series of intensive discussion designed to enable the Cabinet to set out proposals for how that gap could be met, subject to the appropriate staff and public consultations.

6.7 We are in the process of co-commissioning with the Panel, with the support of the Local Government Association and possibly CIPFA, an independent review of our budget strategy that will include stress-testing delivery plans for savings proposals. The review is intended to commence in early December and will provide the council and the Panel real time feedback on our budget strategy.

6.8 Detailed business cases for demand management proposals have been developed. All the revenue savings activity within the budget included an implementation plan and these were refined and verified as part of the budget preparation process. Of the big budget programmes, adults transformation and Reduce-Reuse-Recycle (RRR) are examples of where demand management is a key driver. All have senior responsible officers (SRO) and a sponsor from CLT. Significant support was provided for health and social care, adults, RRR, SEND resilience around the opportunities for demand shift through iMPower and early programme output was created through this work. This has been taken further now by each SRO. The adults programme for instance has a detailed programme, which has now been signed off by the People Directorate management team and the relevant portfolio holder.

6.9 A two-staged approach to ISS savings has been agreed, in recognition that meeting the original ambitious target for next year's savings represented a significant risk to the organisation's wider effectiveness. Utilising one-off solutions to augment the first year's ISS savings achieved will provide more time to design a new ISS model in a manner that balances affordability with efficiency and effectiveness.

6.10 Following extensive consultation and engagement with our employees and consultation and negotiation with our trade unions, we have reached a collective agreement on a final set of proposals for our workforce contract. These proposals will achieve a significant proportion of the £34 million of savings we need to make on our workforce costs over the next two financial years.⁷

6.11 Work on the council's new operating model is now advancing, after what we recognise may be perceived as a series of false starts earlier in the year. Although we were ready to begin the design process in April, when we learned that the Leader intended to review the vision and priorities of the council after the local elections in May, we determined that it would be more sensible to design the operating model after that work was complete. In preparation, we refined the design principles that had been agreed last year. The development of our new operating model will be aligned with our revised budget strategy.

6.12 Although not ideal, we are using the delay to the council's advantage by taking into account the new children's trust in the process of designing our new operating model. There

⁷ https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20011/your_council/928/birmingham_workforce_contract

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are effectively now two additional strands to our work on the future operating model: the design of the trust itself as well the identification of the commissioning capability the council will need in future.

6.13 Detail on CLT's monthly performance meetings was set out at 5.3. These meetings are supported by the production of monthly scorecards and linked to quarterly EMT performance meetings, the first of which was held in September. This arrangement is intended to give portfolio holders more assurance that CLT is across all aspects of performance, which will, in turn, help to maintain the distinction of member-officer spaces.

6.14 In March 2016, Cabinet approved a revised version of the Whistleblowing & Serious Misconduct policy. Quarterly reports on whistleblowing are now sent to each directorate, as well as to CLT. Six monthly reports are presented to and discussed with the Council's Deputy Leader, as well as to the Chief Executive and Assistant Chief Executive at the same time. Already this year there has been a report on whistleblowing to the Council's Audit Committee, which is likely to be invited for annual return.

6.15 We have since elaborated on our policy with a new internal whistleblowing framework that will be implemented in September, comprising

- A named Directorate Champion at AD level,
- Summary of the role and responsibilities of the Champion, to include co-ordination and ensuring implementation of appropriate investigations within their directorate,
- Guidance on commissioning an investigation together with an overarching framework connecting the various responsibilities of Legal Services and the Directorates in investigating and monitoring outcomes for whistleblowing concerns; collectively known as the Whistleblowing Framework.

This represents a step change over our approach last year, when the gap between our policy and practice was a serious concern, especially with respect to reporting to all directorates and not just schools.

Next steps

6.16 Ensuring the deliverability of the budget for 2017/18 and beyond is our top priority. To that end, we are in the process of securing external expertise to provide a level of additional assurance over and above CLT's own enhanced budget monitoring processes. We will be commissioning a comprehensive external review of the council's budget strategy as well strategic planning and financial management capability.

6.17 Proposals for the design of a new ISS model are currently under development and will be brought to CLT for review later this year.

6.18 Once the design of our new operating model is finalised, emphasis will shift to ensuring that staff have a good grasp of their roles fit within it.

6.19 We will continue to refine our performance management system, as we get a better handle on the information we need to see in order to understand what outcomes are being delivered.

Risks and issues

6.20 Each year's budget savings depend on what is delivered the preceding year. We recognise that any shortfalls in 2016/17 savings will make delivering on target in future years

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even more difficult to achieve. We are now revisiting and updating a menu of all the options we may need to consider, setting out the extremely difficult political choices that may have to be made.

6.21 It is clear from the 2016 Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) Budget Survey that only a minority of councils are not struggling to deliver planned savings in social care.⁸ In last year's ADASS survey, slightly under one-half of all Directors were fully confident planned savings would be met. This year, the number is just under one-third. Confidence falls to only 6% when thinking about making savings in 2017/18. We do not cite these figures to imply that we are letting up the pressure on ourselves in the slightest. However, they do starkly illustrate the scale of the challenge that we all face. The backloading of the Better Care Fund towards the end of the Spending Review has meant that local government has an even bigger gap to bridge this year and next than was being forecast a year ago.

6.22 It is no exaggeration to say that these pressures and those in the wider health system are threatening to have an acute impact on all partners' financial stability as well as the wider well-being of residents. It is precisely for that reason that we are providing leadership to the Sustainability and Transformation Plan process to put the entire health and social care system in Birmingham and Solihull on more sustainable financial footing for the long term. As we indicated in the March gap analysis, we know that the council is taking something of a calculated risk by investing so much time and faith in a process in which we are one of the smaller players. It is our best shot at closing the gap without having to make painful and damaging cuts to council services including social care.

6.23 The delays to the design and implementation of our new operating model mean that the lack of clarity that many staff members feel about their role within the organisation will have been prolonged, with the potential to exacerbate low staff morale. It will be vital to ensure that regular updates are provided to staff alongside a good engagement strategy, particularly during the implementation phase.

6.24 In the past, concerns that CLT did not have an adequate grip on performance may have encouraged elected members to feel that they needed to move in that space. We will need to provide assurance that we are on top of all areas of performance in order to maintain the reliable distinction of responsibilities that we have only recently secured.

⁸ <https://www.adass.org.uk/media/5379/adass-budget-survey-report-2016.pdf>

7. City partnerships

7.1 Where were we aiming to be by October?

- Partners, in the majority, will confirm that there is a discernible change in the way that members and officers of the council engage with them.
- The political leadership across the party spectrum will be at the forefront of a process for developing a common understanding of shared priorities and objectives with partners, in collaboration with residents, which will be evident from a tangible initiative underway to facilitate a city-wide conversation on the future of Birmingham.
- All political leaders, often together, will be actively involved in representing the council in the civic arena and engaging with partners.

Actions taken

7.2. We recognise that this was one of the areas where we made the least progress over the last year, despite a high volume of activity. As a result, we reviewed the way that we were approaching partnerships and decided to take a new approach. Our previous approach had something of an over-reliance on structural solutions such as activity mapping all of the council's partnerships, which did not seem to be securing wide buy-in from colleagues and thus had limited, if any, impact on behaviour.

7.3. When the partnership lead was transferred to the Assistant Chief Executive in March, the primary focus was on continuing to rebuild trust and credibility that had started to be established with partners. Given the size of and multiplicity of partners in the city, it inevitably took a bit of time to establish ongoing links to the council's key partners, and even longer to develop relationships of trust and candour. The investment of time has been tremendously worthwhile, though, as it has provided partners reassurance about the council's direction of travel, at least at the most senior levels.

7.4. Work is now underway with partners on the development of a shared vision for Birmingham. Given the Kerslake Review's assessment of the council's relationship with partners in 2014, it was perhaps not unrealistic to expect a certain amount of time to be needed for relationships to recover to a point where a sense of shared endeavour could truly emerge. The leaders of the major anchor institutions participated in a symposium on 13 October to start the work on a city vision, which citizens and communities will then be invited to shape further. A working group of partners steering the city vision will be meeting again on 10 November to discuss next steps.

7.5. As set out at 6.18, the council continues to play a key role in driving the development of the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) for Birmingham and Solihull, with the Chief Executive one of only four system leads in the country from local government.

7.6. The West Midlands Combined Authority, of which the council is a constituent member, has officially come into existence in June. The council plays a lead role on the Devolution Steering Group and the council Leader holds the economic growth portfolio for the WMCA.

7.7. The council is also working in partnership with the Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, Arts Council of England, Culture Central and Aston University to hold an enquiry to come up with new ways of developing new models of sustainable investment to support a vibrant arts and culture sector in the city.

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- 7.8. We have also decided to take a more targeted approach within teams to encourage more effective partnership working. To that end, a new organisational development specialist has been recruited to help specific teams and their partners develop more effective ways of working.
- 7.9. The improved leadership that the LGA peer review found that we had been showing in the schools arena was further corroborated when Stonewall named Birmingham City Council as one of the best local authorities in Britain for tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and celebrating difference in its schools.⁹
- 7.10. Officers have made an increased effort to provide partners more of a meaningful opportunity to shape the council's work and future direction, including
- inviting partners to participate in appointment panels and Member development;
 - seeking their advice and expertise on innovation and organisational agility.
 - consulting with them from the earliest stages of developing a new commissioning and procurement strategy
 - co-designing a programme of activity on open data and transparency
 - developing our new ICT and Digital Strategy

Next steps

- 7.11 Once the new OD specialist is in post, we will be developing a work programme that prioritises areas where partnership working is considered to be challenging, based on feedback from elected and members partners and through a more systematic analysis of citizen feedback such as complaints.
- 7.12 At its meeting in September, the Strategic Leadership Forum (SLF) of the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board (BCSB) agreed to expand its remit to cover cross-cutting issues rather than continuing to focus exclusively on children's safeguarding starting in January 2017. Unlike most of the core cities, Birmingham has lacked a forum that brought together civic partners at a strategic level, partly because the council lacked the confidence and credibility to employ its convening power. The relationships and quality of discussion at the SLF have matured to such an extent that it is now in a position to play that role. It is envisaged that the SLF will help to hold partners to account on the city vision once it has been agreed and convene an assembly at least once a year to consider the progress that has made and identify areas where more focus is needed. We are grateful to Penny Thompson for the role she is playing beyond her chairmanship of the BSCB in acting as the driving force for the expansion of the SLF mandate: she has also been tasked to bring forward ideas about how to strengthen partnership working in the city.
- 7.13 Birmingham Partners, which was initially established to play the strategic role that the SLF is now assuming, has determined that its primary strength and value lies in acting as a "network of networks", particularly in helping grassroots organisations to connect to each other. The council will continue to be an enthusiastic member of Birmingham Partners.

⁹ https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/education_equality_index_2016.pdf

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7.14 A significant overhaul of the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership is being undertaken to improve its effectiveness and strategic focus, under the very capable leadership of its Chair, Chief Superintendent Chris Johnson, with full support from the council. This is particularly important as our citizen survey results from 2015 certainly point to perceptions of community safety as an issue that need to be addressed: 67 per cent of Birmingham residents surveyed reported feeling safe after dark, compared to 79 per cent nationally. As the factors that influence feelings of safety are numerous and varied, tackling this issue invariably needs a partnership approach.

7.15 In March, we had been considering whether to establish of a new voluntary and community sector strategy, but feedback from umbrella groups such as the BVSC and local charities was that a new strategy would offer little value. Instead, the council was encouraged to focus on tangible measures that could help VCS organisations work with us more effectively and help them to become more sustainable. Accordingly, we are engaged in a number of initiatives with those goals in mind, including:

- A series of meetings with all eight of the third sector assembly champions to inform the development of the council's new procurement strategy
- The establishment of a public sector funders' forum to support the development of a more joined-up approach to the VCS across major funding organisations
- A pilot initiative to match smaller charities needing capacity building, business development or other support with companies that have signed up to the Birmingham Business Charter for Social Responsibility

Risks and issues

7.16 In research that we commissioned from PWC in March 2016, partners reported feeling that the Chief Executive and his team acted with humility, though they wanted this to operate at all levels of the Council. PWC describe this as a "permafrost layer" view this had not filtered to all levels. Similarly in the Sounding Board we established to provide advice and feedback to the Leader after he took office, the view has been that his repeated insistence that he is one civic leader among many is seen as genuine and welcome. It is not clear yet if this view extends to the elected membership more widely, although individual Cabinet members have received positive feedback on how they are engaging with partners.

7.17 We know that seeing a real change in approach from the senior leadership is necessary but not sufficient to build partners' confidence that a new way of working will be embedded throughout the organisation. It is vital that the pace of behavioural change is accelerated, including through removing barriers and perverse incentives; more training/development opportunities and more effective performance management.

7.18 Cultural sector partners such as the Arts Council England and Culture Central have fed back that they felt that the establishment of the investment enquiry was a refreshing change of approach from the council, albeit one that still needs further embedding in our ongoing operational relationships. The enquiry reported in July 2016 and the steering group chaired by the Chief Executive of the Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce sees such value in the collaboration that we have elected to continue to work together to develop more specific propositions.

7.19 It is vital that we address the council's tendency to operate in silos in order to improve our relationships with partners. A perceived lack of coordination and collaboration between departments and officers certainly came out in the evaluations of community planning initiatives in Yardley and Erdington, in the recent member-officer

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workshops and in meetings with partner organisations. The pulse survey showed that one-third of our workforce did not have a clear understanding of the council's vision and 60 per cent did not understand how the Future Council programme will impact them or their team. It is clear that our colleagues are struggling to understand where they fit into the big picture – and, by extension, where their colleagues fit in as well. Part of the aim of “Making a positive difference” workshops that we have been holding is to make clear the golden thread between the council's vision and priorities and how each of us operates with each other and with partners. Initial feedback from the workshops has been very positive and we intend to keep building on them.

8. Local leadership

8.1 Where were we aiming to be by October?

- More councillors will feel able to play a refreshed community leadership role, which includes engaging other community leaders in shaping and challenging effective public service delivery and all public spending in their areas.
- A model for devolution which focuses on getting basic services right will be in place.
- More cross-party working at local level will be taking place.
- A community cohesion strategy for the city will have been agreed with partners.

Actions taken

1.2. Further constitutional changes were made in May which mean that district committees meet at their discretion rather than on a standard schedule (this is a step toward their phasing out); ward committees are now Ward Forums (reflecting a Kerslake Review recommendation) and the Cabinet Committee Local Leadership and four Assistant Leader (AL) posts were set up to take forward the local leadership agenda. The ALs work with the Executive, local communities and ward councilors and feed into decisions only through the committee and in consultation with cabinet members. The Committee is chaired by the leader and includes the opposition leaders and the district chairs.

8.1. The four ALs have begun working as a team reporting to the Leader and have developed a work programme which they intend to publish and report to the Cabinet Committee on a quarterly basis. A workshop was held with the Labour Group to discuss the most important things that can be done to support local leadership and a “better deal for neighbourhoods”. The ALs adopted a real leadership role in the session (not attended by the Leader) encouraging members to adopt a positive approach despite lack of resources and perceived removal of opportunities for local action.

8.2. In September, the council launched the £2m Local Innovation Fund (LIF), another Kerslake Review recommendation. The emphasis will be on working with communities to find new ways of delivering local priorities. Proposals will be put together by wards working with the community but the committee will formally make decisions on allocation of the money. A sum of money has been made available to strengthen the local infrastructure for locality working. All political parties have welcomed the approach to the LIF and other changes such as districts not having to meet in the city centre and the intention of focusing back on wards.

8.3. Additionally as part of their workplan the ALs have also been conducting a series of listening meetings with a wide range of stakeholders and this included meetings with the councillors from all 40 wards, this is shaping the next steps in terms of local delivery, and introduction of a “you said we did” tracking process.

8.4. A cross-party statement on promoting community cohesion across the city has been agreed. The curriculum statement for schools is now being amended to provide more emphasis on the role of schools in promoting cohesion and was launched at the Birmingham Education Partnership conference on September 29th, along with an operational plan and toolkit for schools.

8.5. We have now started to lay the groundwork for developing a broader community cohesion strategy that will have wider ownership across city partners. We are aware of concern expressed in certain quarters that the council has not moved more quickly to put a strategy in place. Similar to the city vision – not surprisingly, since the two are related –

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we have needed to invest substantial time to repair relationships and help build a sense of common purpose with partners. The council has had a lot of ground to make up, having engaged actively in the city-wide 2012 Social Inclusion Commission and then being perceived to have completely dropped out of the frame on implementation. The Cabinet member for equalities, openness and transparency and Assistant Chief Executive have been meeting with a range of partners including the Bishop of Birmingham, the Amirah Foundation, brap and the West Midlands Police to demonstrate our sincerity in wanting to work in partnership on community cohesion. We are now in a much stronger position to proceed with this work and indeed the Community Safety Partnership is also better-positioned now as a result of recent changes to help us lead the development of a strategy. A working group had its first meeting on 18 October to set out and oversee the workplan.

8.6. Although there has been a gap in the form of a strategic framework for community cohesion in this city, there is strong partnership work taking place on the ground to bring communities together and combat radicalisation and extremism. The council's approach to Prevent is seen as good practice by the Home Office; indeed, our leadership in this arena was remarked upon in a visit by the new Director-General of the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism in late August. The strength of partnership working and governance was cited as a model to follow by the Police and Crime Committee of the London Assembly in their report 'Preventing Extremism in London', in December 2015. Birmingham has well respected civil society groups working to prevent extremism and radicalisation that are considered national best practice and encouraged by the Home Office to roll out their work into other areas nationally. The work of one of our key partners, KIKIT, is one such programme asked to roll out its service model in Coventry, Walsall, Leicester and Stoke-on-Trent. In KIKIT's own words, they are "proud to work with Birmingham City Council".¹⁰

8.7. We reached out directly to the Department for Communities and Local Government cohesion team three times this summer to see if they had any immediate concerns that they felt we should be addressing and to check if there was good practice at other councils we should be learning from. To date, we have had a very helpful exchange with the official leading Faith Engagement but we remain keen to pick up on any wider issues. Our relationship with the Home Office on counter-terrorism and counter-extremism has been positive and constructive, and we have maintained a positive dialogue with officials throughout the summer.

Next steps

8.8. A cross-directorate policy team is being put together to support the research, policy development and engagement that will be needed to take the rest of their agenda forward over the next stage of the "evolution of devolution" to April 2018.

8.9. The Leader and ALs will be attending the annual conference of National Association of Local Councils in October to reinforce the message about developing more parish councils and "local devolution deals" in the city.

¹⁰ <http://www.kikitproject.org/news/kikit-pathwayz-and-prevent-programme/>

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- 8.10. In addition to the development of a community cohesion strategy, the Chair of the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership is also looking to explore the potential for a formal subgroup to examine Community Cohesion and Tension Monitoring, the aim being to pick up all levels of intelligence and information from schools, police teams, housing officers, fire etc to draw inferences and drive action across the partners.
- 8.11. A number of activities related to community cohesion will also be delivered over the coming weeks:
- We are part of a wider working group of partners that is starting to meet regularly to promote the Love Your Neighbour campaign
 - We are intending to establish a community reference group to provide the council independent advice and challenge around Prevent. At present, we are in the process of securing an independent chair for the group who would also help to determine its composition.
 - A women's equality summit is being planned for end of November, intended to coincide with the International Day for Eliminating Violence against Women.
 - The partnership for monitoring hate crime is being restructured and BRAP will be helping to shape its future direction.
 - In collaboration with a local charity called the Amirah Foundation, we have launched two new initiatives to tackle domestic violence: BRAVE initiative - Brothers Against Violence and a training programme for Birmingham mosques on how to deal with domestic violence queries.

Risks and issues

- 8.14. Managing expectations of the level of resourcing, both staff and financial, to help deliver local priorities will be critical. This risk is being partly managed by making the Local Innovation Fund available to be put toward local priorities. In the longer-term, the council may need to consider greater join-up with organisations such as the police and housing associations to maintain a sustainable local presence on the staffing side.
- 8.15. ALs are being mindful not to step into the territory of Cabinet portfolio holders. They have made valuable contributions to the Executive's discussions about vision and priorities by bringing a hyper-local lens to them, but we know that with the role still in its very early stage of development, it will be important to keep an eye on those boundaries.
- 8.16. As members explore what a greater community leadership role might mean for them in practice, we also need to give greater thought to how officers can support them to play that role, including practical issues such as how information can be shared more widely and access to data.

9. Organisational culture

9.1 Where were we aiming to be by October?

- BCC's values and behaviours will be a conscious touchstone for all members and officers. They are visible and referenced as part of core business; and are experienced across the organisation at all levels, and by our partners.
- There will be then ongoing pursuit of greater clarity about the respective roles of members and officers, as well as appropriate ways for us to interact with each other.
- Positive behaviours will be recognised and negative ones challenged promptly.
- Staff will feel more trusted and better empowered to do their jobs.

Actions taken

9.2. The appointment of a senior lead for people change and workforce planning accelerated the alignment of our workforce planning and financial and performance measurement. Further key appointments in Human Resources and Organisational Development have since been made to drive changes in culture, engagement and transformation.

9.3. A corporate Programme Management Office is being established to enable CLT to manage the Future Council programme more effectively. It will focus on leading and managing:

- Key change activity (the 'big moves' principally) that will enable the Council to deliver its objectives as set out in the Council Business Plan
- The key outcomes and benefits being achieved by the change activity (financial and non-financial)
- High level risks and issues that could substantially impact on the organisation's ability to achieve its objectives or provide a strategic or reputational threat to Birmingham City Council

9.4. The organisation is now more active about fostering a culture of learning and exchange, particularly through staff development and engagement. This is being achieved through activities such as encouraging staff to participate more fully in regional and national networks; being speakers at national events; bringing in speakers from other organisations and sectors in the city to events such as Future Think Talk, senior leadership team and Managers' Voice sessions, etc

9.5. The Leader created a new Cabinet portfolio called "efficiency and value for money" to throw additional weight behind the decluttering agenda. The primary objective of this role is to identify how the council can simplify its processes and be easier to operate within/work with, without losing the rigour expected of any public body. One of the achievements that has already been secured is a significant reduction in late reports to Cabinet. Late reports now have to be authorised by the portfolio holder, which is encouraging more forward planning and consideration of the purpose of reports. The last two Cabinet meetings had no late reports at all, which may be a modest change for some councils but addresses a persistent issue that members had flagged up.

9.6. As indicated at 5.7, we have taken some modest steps towards making staff feel more empowered but we would not wish to overplay our achievements as this is clearly an area where more concerted efforts will need to be made in future and will only become embedded change if it is delivered with care over time. A new policy on report-writing has been established that a) encourages more careful consideration of whether a Cabinet report is needed in the first place, b) streamlines the input of corporate advisers

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(finance, legal, HR, etc) and shifts the onus quality assurance on to Strategic Directors, The policy has only recently been introduced, so it too early to tell if it has had an impact but we will be monitoring the situation to determine if a more radical and directive approach is needed.

9.7. We have also made some strides towards less silo-based working, e.g. the establishment of the Internal Policy Community, the open data reference group drawing together data and digital experts from inside and outside the council.

9.8. As an organisation, we have not always valued our scrutiny function highly enough as our “early warning system”. We are currently working with the Centre for Public Scrutiny to look at how we can bolster our overview and scrutiny arrangements to help us assess and manage performance, not only against service areas but of our transformation programme more broadly.

Next steps

9.9. We are pushing forward initiatives such as the creation of a workforce Improvement Hub which will provide us with the professional learning and development, support and capacity to harness all of the great ideas and innovation around the council and bend them to delivering the council's vision, etc.

9.10. The Hub has four key elements: a ‘change academy’ (for example, providing learning and training in demand analysis, lean systems thinking, etc), an innovation lab, an ideas exchange forum and an improvement team.

9.11. In addition we are strengthening the internal OD resource to deliver the capability and capacity of change we need to as an organisation. We are putting in place roles to support ongoing cultural change, for example learning designers and Recognition and engagement roles to ensure that the culture of the organization evolves with the workforce. We have recognized that completing these roles as part of a one off programme or within a separate team does not provide stability or sustainability to the organisation.

9.12. The focus of the OD activity will be on Managers – ensuring we have the right structures, style, skills and number of Managers in the organisation will be key to our success in driving change. In addition, our first look at talent management programmes for internal staff will focus on Aspiring Managers to ensure we are clear on the expectations we have of Managers at BCC.

Risks and issues

9.13. With the best will in the world, organisational culture takes time to change. We do have the will; both the 2015 staff and 2016 pulse surveys show that there is a strong recognition amongst staff of the need to change. However, confidence levels about our ability to change in ways that staff believe will be helpful remain low. This pattern is corroborated in more targeted surveys directed at waste management staff over the summer.

9.14. Additionally, a long history of staff at the council not feeling trusted and empowered has led to entrenched behaviours that will not be “unlearned” overnight. The member-officer workshops surfaced a number of factors that are holding us back from working as

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effectively as we could be, including poor communication, a fear of blame and confusion over roles and boundaries. These themes are already in the process of being addressed more generally through the Future Council programme, and the workshops have yielded a wealth of practical ideas that we can and will implement quickly to tackle our underlying cultural challenges and build confidence that as an organisation we are capable of change.

- 9.15. We know that the next 18 months are likely to be the most challenging when it comes to achieving significant and substantial change in our organisational culture. Staff morale, which is already low, is certain to be adversely affected by the changes to terms and conditions that are set to come in starting next year. Our colleagues have had to adapt to a lot of change already and fatigue is completely understandable. The workforce reductions of the past few years have taken a toll that is felt at all levels, from the frontline to senior leadership. Only a slim majority of staff who responded to the pulse survey felt that they had good work-life balance. We know from feedback at staff engagement groups such as Managers Voice and Forward Champions that colleagues feel that they are being constantly asked to work harder, and in future, for less pay and worse conditions. The focus of the next phase of Future Council is on enabling the organisation to work smarter rather than harder; to focus on core priorities rather than stretching ourselves too thin; and on recognising and developing talent.
- 9.16. As CLT, we will have to demonstrate consistently through our own behaviour that we ourselves are prepared to take risks to innovate and trust our staff to do so. The pulse survey showed a modest increase in staff confidence that CLT embraces new ways of working, which is a positive direction of travel that we would hope to see build even more in the next staff survey. We also intend to foster a culture that rewards problem-solving, which begins with bringing challenges and issues to light in the first place. For example, we are encouraging the team leading the overhaul of the Travel Assist programme to make it a real-time case study for the whole council to learn from.
- 9.17. The confidence of our staff and partners that we are truly on the road to becoming an organisation that is easy to operate within or do business with also depends on making faster and deeper progress on the decluttering agenda. With new staff with expertise in lean systems thinking and agile working coming into post, we will have extra capability to take a ruthless cut at unnecessary bureaucracy.

10. Communications and transparency

10.1 *Where were we aiming to be by October?*

- There will be an agreed a core narrative flowing from the priorities set out in our business plan and this will drive a new communications and campaigns plan for 2016/17. It will be consistently communicated through internal and external channels.
- The council will have launched the council's new website, with much-improved content and navigation.
- We will have reviewed all of our social media and digital communications channels and a new strategy will be agreed and in place.
- Members and council staff will be able to articulate and promote clearly the council's vision and priorities. Partners will be appropriately aware and signed up.
- CLT will have agreed the direction of travel for all council communications and engagement resources – incorporating the principles of an integrated “hub-and-spoke” communications structure to use our resources most effectively.
- There will be greater control, complementarity and consistency across all communications channels and resources, resulting in increased reach and focus on two-way engagement internally and externally.

Actions taken

10.2 The expectations for progress that we set out in March were ambitious given that we had only at that stage gone out to recruitment for a permanent Assistant Director of Communications. A new AD, Eleri Roberts, was appointed in May and joined the council in September. She is now in the process now of working with her team to take stock of the council's current position and future needs. She has already instituted fortnightly meetings with Cabinet and regular meetings with CLT, which will help us to ensure that there is a more joined-up approach to communications and more systematic information-sharing across the Executive Management Team as well as the council.

10.3 Some key steps have already been taken. A new framework structure for the communications function was agreed by CLT in June, as follow-up to the recommendations of the LGA peer review. This is a critical step to address the fragmentation in our service and approach that the LGA highlighted as one of our critical weaknesses.

10.4 The council also launched the first phase of the new corporate website in late August. The development of the website involved an intensive “user testing” process engaging the public, elected members and staff, as well as research on best practice. Feedback on the website has been very positive¹¹, with the next phase planning further improvements.

¹¹ <http://www.thechamberlainfiles.com/no-game-changer-but-new-council-website-is-job-well-done/>

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- 10.5 New monthly communications highlight reports are now being prepared, setting out a range of information including key areas of media coverage, tone and type of media coverage, campaign activity and a digest of the council's digital and social media activities. These reports are enabling us to get a better handle on what communications approaches are proving most effective and if our messages are "landing". They will in turn help us to refine our overall strategy.
- 10.6 We are starting to become more effective at taking a proactive forward-looking approach to communications. For example, we worked jointly with Marketing Birmingham, the GBSLEP and the Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce to develop a communications strategy to promote the city when it hosted the Conservative Party Conference in October. We have also scoped out a campaign plan that would allow us to be more tactical about how we promote the council's priorities. For example, in support of the "Cleaner Streets" campaign, we invited the Birmingham Mail to shadow our waste enforcement unit for a day, which elicited coverage that illustrated the challenges faced by the council in tackling flytipping.
- 10.7 The Leader has created a new Cabinet portfolio for transparency, openness and equality, with the portfolio holder supported by a reference group of data and digital experts from inside and outside the council. The reference group met for the first time in August and scoped out a potential work programme. The constitution has also been amended to require a justifiable reason to make a report private, which must also be authorised by the portfolio holder. The volume of private reports at the council was a frequent complaint of opposition group members and stakeholders so this is an important step.

Next steps

- 10.8 A review of what skills are required to deliver a new way of communicating and engaging through strategic campaigns will be undertaken, and changes made accordingly.
- 10.9 A corporate narrative will be built around the new council vision and priorities for wide dissemination across residents, staff and partners. This will be backed up by a co-ordinated strategic communications plan to integrate the narrative into the all the communication activity the council delivers, and to ensure that the priorities are central drivers to the work undertaken. Governance will be introduced to ensure that all communications activity is thoroughly evaluated and supports the narrative and is strengthens the councils' messages.
- 10.10 A new corporate grid will be developed to give greater oversight on all activity within the council to ensure all communication activity compliments what is happening and to ensure planning is core to what is being delivered by the corporate communications team.
- 10.11 The closer working that has developed between Organisational Development and Communications teams will be built upon even further, linking the OD strategy into internal comms and working together to ensure the branding of the organisation is clear and linked to a recognisable Council narrative. For example the recent Summer of

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Engagement campaign has been jointly designed and ran by Comms and OD in order to spread the reach of the messages and has directly targeted managers.

- 10.12 The open data reference group will be developing a programme of activities to build on and complement existing initiatives being undertaken by the council and partners. The group has helped us identify a number of “quick wins” that we will be implementing, including making our monthly performance scorecards and all responses to FOI requests available on our website.

Risks and issues

- 10.13 Birmingham, both the city and the council, will invariably be the subject of heightened media, public and political scrutiny. It is critical that the council get on the front foot with a proactive communications strategy so that it is telling its own story, rather than having stories told about it by third parties. Under the leadership of our new AD, we will be taking a much more strategic and disciplined approach to external communications.
- 10.14 We also need to improve how we communicate with residents. In our last citizen survey, only 50 per cent were satisfied that the council communicates issues and news which is of importance to residents. Indeed, in the 2016 pulse survey, only a third of staff surveyed felt that the council was good at communicating to citizens why changes must be made. We expect our new website to make a positive difference in making it easier for residents to get information about council services, but we know that there is much more for us to do in order for them to feel that the council is truly open.
- 10.15 There is also an urgent need for us to improve internal communications, with both members and staff. Poor communications was one of the top barriers to effective working relationships identified in the member-officer workshops. As evidenced by the Summer of Engagement and Making a Positive difference initiatives, we are focusing a lot more on helping staff to identify the golden thread in all of our work and equipping them to articulate our vision and priorities, as well as how they fit into the bigger picture.

Section 11: Council of the future

11.1 When Birmingham City Council started this transformation process 18 months ago, there were question marks over the degree to which the council's political and leadership teams genuinely recognised the scale of change that was needed and the level of commitment to see the process through to the end. We hope that this report makes clear that we are committed to change for the good of the city that we serve. That is why the end-goal is nothing less than excellence, as that is what our residents deserve. We are under no illusions about the challenges we face to get to where we want to be, but equally we would hope that there is no longer any doubt about our determination or capacity to drive change.

11.2 We believe that we are now firmly on the right track on our improvement journey and thinking more ambitiously about what it will take to go from good to great. The Future Council programme sets out the key planks for that journey, including:

- The use of our design principles to inform our overall operating model, future decisions and service design
- The creation of an improvement hub: providing the capacity for innovation and change
- A strategy framework to include:
 - People strategy : ensuring we have the organisational agility, skills and leadership needed for the council of the future
 - ITC and digital strategy: ensuring citizens and colleagues are empowered and enabled by technology
 - Citizen access strategy: ensuring citizens can access services and information in a timely and appropriate way to meet their needs
 - Commissioning strategy: ensuring we drive innovation and value to deliver the right outcomes for citizens through commissioning

11.3 Nevertheless, we also realise that we must not leave behind:

- Getting the basics right – notably securing a stronger position with the budget
- Keeping a focus on our values and behaviours.
- Building confidence in our ability to drive transformation with our partners through shared ownership, accountability and endeavor
- Having a collaborative city wide approach and seeing transformation in the round
- Stitching agendas together within overarching performance framework to deliver our Council Vision and a Council of the Future
- Our golden thread – linking our vision and our priorities with day to day activity

11.4 As indicated at 6.7, we are co-commissioning with the Panel a review of our savings proposals and delivery plans to provide independent assurance about our budget strategy. We would also welcome the chair of the Panel to return in a further 12 months to reflect on our progress. We will be discussing opportunities with the Local Government Association to have independent peer validation on a regular basis that would help us to ensure that we are picking up on any gaps or new issues that are emerging.