

TAKING BIRMINGHAM FORWARD

**Community Strategy for
Birmingham**

2005-2010

Final

October 2005

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Taking Birmingham Forward, the city's Community Strategy 2001-10, was approved by Birmingham City Council on 11th October 2005.

Foreword

by Councillor Mike Whitby, Leader of Birmingham City Council

People in Birmingham have much to be proud of. Twenty years ago, our city's economic and social fabric was threatened by the worldwide changes that led to massive job losses in manufacturing industries. Since then, the city centre has been transformed. New jobs have been created. Educational achievement in the city's schools has been rising rapidly. Levels of recorded crime across the city are down.

Birmingham has turned a corner, and we can look to the future with confidence – using the energy and ability that has transformed parts of our city to tackle the new challenges that face us. *Taking Birmingham Forward* is our vision for that future.

There are three elements to our approach. First, we want to continue the improvement and modernisation of our city, attracting and generating investment and jobs. Second, we aim to make Birmingham a city where people desire to live and work. Third, Birmingham's prosperity must be shared and enjoyed citywide – in all its diverse communities, urban villages and neighbourhoods.

A number of key themes underpin our detailed proposals.

- Our public services need to do things well, on time and every time, and in all parts of the city. They need to listen in order to understand what citizens and service users want. Where necessary, services will change in order to meet needs more effectively.
- Public services cannot improve the quality of life in Birmingham without the active support of the people who live and work in the city. We want to encourage people to look after themselves, to look after each other and to look after their communities.
- The city needs everyone to realise their full potential. We want to raise ambitions and increase opportunities, particularly in more deprived areas and communities.
- We want to involve people more in improving their city. Voluntary, community and faith organisations in Birmingham – and the people who give their time voluntarily to them – all make valuable contributions, which we must encourage and support.
- We should involve Birmingham's businesses more in taking the city forward. Their active involvement already produces benefits for business and the city as a whole, but we can do more to harness this commitment.

These themes received broad support when we consulted with people and businesses in the city. Birmingham's public services, private businesses and voluntary, community and faith organisations want to work together to achieve a better future for our city.

Taking Birmingham Forward sets out how we will go about achieving our goals. It identifies the city's priorities for the next five years. The Birmingham Strategic Partnership has drawn up a framework of key activities and accountabilities to ensure delivery.

This is a time for great optimism for Birmingham and we must not be faint hearted in meeting challenges across the city. It is vital that our city has strong decisive leadership. I am confident we will take Birmingham forward.

1 INTRODUCTION

Taking Birmingham Forward, Birmingham's Community Strategy, explains how we want to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the city over the period 2005-2010. It is a short document that sets a long-term vision for Birmingham. It identifies a limited number of issues, and key actions for tackling them, that are critical for achieving that vision. A separate implementation framework will set out how agencies and partnerships in the city are planning to take forward the key actions.

Revising the Community Strategy

Birmingham City Council and the Birmingham Strategic Partnership published the city's first Community Strategy in 2002 after extensive consultation with people in Birmingham. The Birmingham Strategic Partnership is made up of major public sector agencies in the city, together with representatives of the business, voluntary and community sectors.

In 2004 the Council and the Partnership launched a review to check that the Community Strategy was up to date. A consultation paper, setting out a range of issues and ideas, was published in May 2004. As well as seeking views on this document, the review included:

- an assessment of new and up-to-date statistics about major trends affecting the city (a summary of this Strategic Assessment is available separately)
- a review of changes in the external environment and in the strategies and plans of major organisations working in Birmingham.

A draft of the revised Community Strategy, based on this work, was published for consultation in January 2005. This final version of *Taking Birmingham Forward* is based on the responses made to that draft.

What you have told us

In preparing this revised Community Strategy, the City Council and the Birmingham Strategic Partnership have organised two rounds of consultation to get people's views about key issues and actions for the city.

Consultation has shown broad support for the main aims and themes of *Taking Birmingham Forward*. People have also told us about some of their priorities.

- People are positive about the achievements in redeveloping the city centre, but want to see more done in the future for other parts of Birmingham.
- People have stressed the importance of learning for the city – in the city's schools, colleges and universities. Equally important are opportunities for adults to improve their skills or acquire new ones.
- Getting around the city is a negative experience for many. Roads are seen as congested, while public transport – especially buses – is seen as unattractive.
- Crime and safety remain major concerns. Crime rates may be falling rapidly, but more needs to be done to reassure people about the safety of the city.

- Birmingham needs a sustainable future – one that promotes jobs and well-being while recognising the need to protect the environment and use resources wisely.
- People want to see the Community Strategy result in action that tackles problems and improves the quality of life in Birmingham.

This final version of *Taking Birmingham Forward* incorporates valuable contributions from all who have responded to consultation on the draft Strategy.

Our vision for Birmingham

Birmingham's first Community Strategy set out two key objectives for the city. These remain our aims.

We want Birmingham to be

- a city of national and international significance which has a successful and sustainable place in the world economy
- a city whose local neighbourhoods and vibrant urban villages are flourishing and whose people benefit from its prosperity.

Underpinning these two objectives are nine strategic themes that encompass key aspects of the city. *Taking Birmingham Forward* uses these themes to set out the challenges we face and how we will meet them. In doing so, we seek to be clear about what we can and cannot do.

What's in this Community Strategy

The next section in this draft Community Strategy sets out some key facts about Birmingham. It is followed by a brief description of important external changes that will affect the development of the city.

Sections 4 -14 then set out the key issues facing Birmingham for each of the key objectives and strategic themes. The order of the sections does not mean that the earlier are more important than the later: all identify and address key issues for the city and support our overall vision for Birmingham.

Each section sets out

- Where we are – the key issues we currently face in Birmingham
- Where we want to be – our aims and aspirations for the city
- What we will do – proposals for action over the next five years.
- How we will get there - implementing actions and monitoring progress

Some of the proposed actions are new, but many are developments from existing plans and activity. All are about taking long-term action to improve the quality of life for people in Birmingham. We know that they will not realise all our ambitions in the next five years. But these key actions will take us in the right direction.

Many of the challenges faced by the city are inter-linked. For example, a successful city-wide economy is essential if we are to tackle the problems of deprived parts of the city – but failure to improve the health, education and career prospects of people living

in the more deprived parts of Birmingham will ultimately limit the prosperity of the whole city. Throughout this Community Strategy, we indicate how different proposals and activities can work together.

Section 15 explains in more detail how *Taking Birmingham Forward* will be implemented and how progress in achieving our goals will be monitored. A separate implementation framework will link proposals for action to the plans and activities of agencies and partnerships.

Links to other plans

Taking Birmingham Forward is the overarching plan for Birmingham. It sets the context and direction for other plans. One key linkage is to the city's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. Reducing inequalities between different communities and different parts of the city is a major theme of *Taking Birmingham Forward* – the city's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy sets out in detail how we are going about this.

In April 2004 the City Council formally devolved certain services to eleven districts. During 2004-05 each district established a District Strategic Partnership of local agencies and communities, and these are developing District Community Plans for the period up to 2010. *Taking Birmingham Forward* forms the starting point for District Community Plans, which in turn offer people opportunities to contribute to developments in their local area.

Links to other plans are described in the separate implementation framework.

Sustainable development

Economic growth has traditionally been seen as the main way to improve our quality of life. But we know that in the past economic development has often imposed high costs on the environment and on local communities. Economic growth can also mean using natural resources more rapidly than they can be replaced.

Community strategies are about improving the economic, environmental and social well-being of an area. Their proposals must be sustainable if they are to create an area where people want to live and work, both now and in the future.

In March 2005 the Government published a revised UK Sustainable Development Strategy. The aim of sustainable development is to enable people to enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations by

- sustaining an innovative and productive economy with high levels of employment
- developing a just society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal well-being
- protecting and enhancing the physical and natural environment
- using resources and energy as efficiently as possible.

The UK Sustainable Development Strategy also makes clear the importance of enabling people to make choices that will lead to a more sustainable future by providing them with information and opportunities for action. This reflects responses made to the draft of this Community Strategy. We have therefore sought to ensure that principles of sustainability underpin the proposals in *Taking Birmingham Forward*, which aims to enhance the long-term quality of life throughout the city.

2 BIRMINGHAM - THE CITY

Birmingham people

Birmingham is Britain's second largest city with a population of around one million. Another two million people live in the surrounding travel-to-work area – making the city the heart of one of the largest conurbations in Europe. Birmingham provides over 20 per cent of the jobs in the West Midlands, and every day over 160,000 people commute to their work in Birmingham from outside the city.

Birmingham people are positive about their city. Opinion polls show that three quarters think it is a good place to live. Shopping, universities and schools are all well regarded. An overwhelming majority see Birmingham as a place where people from a range of backgrounds get on together – they welcome its diversity.

Nearly 30 per cent of Birmingham's residents are from black and minority ethnic communities, and the proportion is steadily rising. Birmingham's black and minority ethnic population is younger than the white population: people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds make up nearly 50 per cent of the pupils in Birmingham's schools, but fewer than 10 per cent of elderly people over 75. The diversity of the city is increasing with new arrivals from different countries – these emerging communities present new opportunities and new challenges to our city.

Like other cities, Birmingham has seen its population declining for many years. But that decline now seems to have stopped. Birmingham is a young city – 44 per cent of the population are aged under 30 – and demographic changes will increase the proportion of the population from black and minority ethnic communities. This will have many implications - not only for public services, such as children's services, schools and social care for the elderly, but also for businesses, as they seek to recruit young staff, and for the provision of housing.

The city's economy

Birmingham's economic prosperity was originally built on manufacturing. But economic changes in the 1970s and 1980s led to a massive loss of manufacturing businesses and jobs. Manufacturing – increasingly focused on highly skilled, specialised work – remains important to the city. But Birmingham has also developed a substantial business and financial services sector through the transformation and growth of the city centre. Birmingham is a major centre for business conferences and is internationally known for sports and exhibitions. City centre expansion continues through the recent completion of the Bullring shopping centre and the redevelopment of Eastside. Eastside is a focus for the city's growing creative industries, which not only create jobs but contribute to Birmingham's image as a city transformed.

Developments in arts, sports and leisure have been a key part of Birmingham's renaissance over the last twenty years, and play a significant role in creating and sustaining Birmingham's national and international image. Birmingham has many strengths, including world-class performance, arts, sports and exhibition facilities, and internationally recognised companies of cultural excellence.

Looking ahead, the number of jobs in the city and surrounding areas is projected to continue to rise, with much of the increased demand for highly skilled staff educated to degree level or above. The city has a substantial higher education sector with over 60,000 students. Over the past ten years, the pupils and students of the city's schools and colleges have made major improvements in educational achievement, closing the gap on national averages. Yet a large number of people living in Birmingham have few or no educational qualifications, while the proportion of the population educated to degree level is below the national average. As a result, nearly half the high-skilled jobs in Birmingham are currently taken by people who live outside the city.

Life in Birmingham

Birmingham has many areas that offer a range and choice of high quality housing. Some housing estates have been imaginatively modernised and re-designed. The city has extensive green space and valuable natural habitats. Many local parks and libraries are well-used. The city has highly rated modern hospitals, with major re-development planned at University Hospital Birmingham.

But like many urban areas, Birmingham needs to improve elements of its buildings and infrastructure. Most council housing is in need of modernisation, and in some parts of the city there are substantial numbers of privately owned homes in need of renovation. The range and quality of housing could be extended in parts of the city. Investment in transport is needed at important gateways to the city, such as New Street Station and Birmingham International Airport. Improvements to public transport and action to ease traffic congestion are also high priorities for people in Birmingham.

Rates of unemployment and economic inactivity are higher in Birmingham than in many other parts of the country. A significant proportion of the city's children and young people are growing up in low income households. A third of the city's population lives in deprived areas, which face multiple problems, such as high unemployment, ill health and poor housing. People in such areas often have difficulties gaining access to services or taking advantage of modern developments, such as the Internet. Safeguarding and caring for the vulnerable – whether children, older people or those with disabilities or mental health problems – is a responsibility in Birmingham on a scale rarely seen in other parts of the country.

Surveys show that crime and safety are the immediate concern of residents and businesses. People also want improvements in street cleaning, to the state of roads and pavements, and to the range and quality of public transport – especially buses. In a city where a quarter of the population is under 19, people want more activities for young people.

Looking to the future

Modern Birmingham is a dynamic and can-do city. It has made enormous improvements and changes in the last twenty years. From its designation as a Science City to the rising skills and aspirations of its youthful population, it is a city looking to the future. *Taking Birmingham Forward* sets out how we will continue with change and improvement.

3 OUR CHANGING WORLD

The development of Birmingham takes place in a world that is itself changing. It is important to take account of external trends and influences when framing a vision for the future of the city.

Economic changes

The shift from manufacturing to service industries that has taken place in Birmingham is common to developed economies across the world. Successful management of this change requires attention to a number of factors.

Both manufacturing and service industries need to focus on innovation and the use of high-level skills in order to remain competitive. The creation and commercial exploitation of knowledge is key to this. Investment in research and development – both by private businesses and by public sector agencies – is important to the creation of knowledge; equally important is the transfer of this knowledge to those who can apply it commercially. This is a challenge to businesses and agencies across the West Midlands where Birmingham needs to play its full part.

The importance of knowledge to modern jobs means more workers must be highly educated and qualified. Education and training systems need to give young people access to appropriate vocational and academic courses. All adults need access to opportunities for learning, so they can update their skills or learn new ones.

International trade is increasing in importance. For Birmingham, Europe is the biggest single market for traded goods and services, making language skills an important contribution to exporting businesses. But developing countries such as India and China are becoming increasingly important as trading partners.

Much economic change is driven by technological change. Changes in information and communications technology will continue to have major implications for private businesses and public services. These changes will enable organisations to offer new services and to provide old services in different and more effective ways. The ability to use information and communication technology will be increasingly important for individuals if they are to gain access to services, training and jobs.

The environment

Birmingham faces similar environmental challenges to the rest of the developed world.

We are increasingly aware that traditional attitudes to production and consumption are not sustainable. Current approaches, where too much is created only to be thrown away, put pressure on our environment as well as wasting scarce resources. This challenges to both businesses and consumers to change their thinking and behaviour.

Climate change is being brought about by the release of greenhouse gases. The way we generate and use energy is one of the key drivers of global warming. We need to reduce the release of greenhouse gases, while preparing for the effects of climate change that cannot now be avoided.

Across the world, key resources such as oil are becoming increasingly scarce. Developed economies, such as Britain's, find it difficult to dispose safely of the waste they generate. To provide sustainable ways of life, societies need to harness new technologies to reduce energy consumption, to provide energy from renewable sources, to reduce waste – technologies that also make changes to the way we live.

Human activity has been degrading natural resources and environments for a long time. But the scale of recent degradation requires a better understanding of environmental limits and how degraded environments can be helped to recover.

Social changes

People in Birmingham, like people in Britain generally, are living longer, in smaller households and in changing family arrangements.

Increasing longevity raises questions of care when people become disabled or affected by some form of chronic disease. Traditional approaches, including hospital and residential care, will need to be supplemented by new ways to help people maintain themselves at home. This in turn requires new thinking about staff skills, accommodation, and the ways support is provided.

Often elderly people live on their own – but so do an increasing number of other adults. This has implications for the type of housing they need and how they maintain it. As most people continue to aspire to owning their own home, this raises questions for private providers as well as public services.

Families have been changing and becoming more complex. More children are being brought up in families that have gone through separation, divorce, and re-marriage. Many children grow up in a family with just one parent. Extended families are common in some communities.

Changes in the types of food we eat, and in the amount of exercise we get through travel or work, have led to increasing levels of obesity. Of particular concern is the impact of obesity on the long-term health of our children.

Many developed countries have seen declining participation in political systems. This is most obviously illustrated by falling turn-outs in elections. People's links to their local communities – their involvement in faith, voluntary or community organisations – are often weaker than a generation ago.

Public services

A number of long-term trends affect public services, irrespective of party politics.

There is an increasing emphasis on choice in public services. In the future, public services will need to be more customised to the needs and preferences of service users. Users of public services will have higher expectations of services and want better information about standards and performance.

Partnerships, both within the public sector and between the public sector and private and voluntary organisations, are increasingly important. Public services will increasingly be delivered by partner arrangements.

In important areas, problems cannot be solved by public services alone – the engagement of the public is also required. For example, aspects of health can be improved more effectively through action by individuals – such as taking more exercise – than through medical intervention. There is increased emphasis on preventing problems before they arise.

Although there has been substantial increase in spending on public services in recent years, significant further rises are unlikely. Public services will need to be clear about their priorities for spending and focus on ensuring they deliver services efficiently.

Facing the future

Birmingham is a forward-looking city that recognises the need to change to meet new challenges. We have always valued innovation and creative thinking. *Taking Birmingham Forward* sets out how we will look ahead, adapting existing initiatives and taking new ones, to ensure that Birmingham remains at the forefront of urban renaissance.

4 NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CITY

Where we are

Birmingham must have a sustainable economy to provide prosperity and opportunities for its citizens today and in the future. Birmingham's role as a regional capital, second city of Britain and major international centre is key to its future.

Birmingham is a major European city with a strong international reputation. It is an important centre for business conferences and well known for sports and exhibitions, making visitors important to the city's economy. These strengths need to be maintained. The redevelopment of the city centre has given Birmingham a strong cultural profile, and the city is the base for the highest number of media employees outside London. Birmingham is also becoming the leading financial and professional services centre outside London.

Birmingham is the core of a city-region which includes the Black Country, Solihull and Coventry, and which is itself part of the wider West Midlands region. There are strong economic links between Birmingham and surrounding areas: Birmingham offers jobs and city centre lifestyle, while the surrounding areas offer a wide range of housing and recreational opportunities. For many years, there has been an outflow of population from the city to other parts of the West Midlands, but this has slowed, and increasing numbers are choosing to live in Birmingham's city centre.

The renaissance of the city centre is not the whole story. Birmingham, like most other British cities, is less prosperous than many of its European competitors. Investment in the city, and in critical research and development activity in the wider region, has been falling. The city's rating as a European centre of innovation is only average. Transport links to the rest of Britain are theoretically good, but undermined by congestion on both roads and railways. Travel within the city can also be restricted by congestion. The city's international connections through the airport need improvement.

The economies of cities are increasingly dominated by knowledge-based industries that require well-educated and highly skilled employees. At present, too few Birmingham residents have higher educational qualifications, and many skilled employees commute to their work in Birmingham from outside the city. Birmingham needs to be able to produce, attract and retain highly skilled workers, offering a suitable range of high-quality housing, schools and local services.

A large and thriving higher education sector is essential to the success of a big city like Birmingham. Nearly 60,000 students currently attend the three universities in the city. The universities enhance Birmingham's international standing through links with overseas students and through their academic reputation abroad. Research by universities can provide local businesses with innovative ideas that enhance their competitive edge, but universities and businesses in Birmingham recognise that this transfer of expertise could be improved. Birmingham's recent designation as a Science City offers new opportunities here.

Where we want to be

We see Birmingham as a city that is known nationally and internationally as a place to invest, visit and work. We see Birmingham as a growing city, where people of all ages and backgrounds want to live, and where people have pride in their city. We see Birmingham as a smart city that values knowledge and uses it creatively.

What we will do – Key Actions

N & I 1 - Promoting Birmingham

We will vigorously promote Birmingham to the world, ensuring the city remains internationally competitive as a centre for conferences and exhibitions and as a venue for sport. We will develop Birmingham's offer as a centre for culture and for retail. We will continue to develop the city centre, including its extension through Eastside, with an emphasis on high-quality and sustainable design.

N & I 2 - A prosperous city-region

We will work with our partners in the conurbation and the wider West Midlands to tackle common issues, such as transport planning, and to promote joint approaches to problems that cross boundaries, such as housing market renewal. We will seek to increase investment in the city and the region, including encouraging the relocation of key elements of the civil service.

N & I 3 - Birmingham – the place to be

We will plan for growth in the city's population by making Birmingham an attractive place to live and work, especially for people with key skills, such as graduates. We will develop the range and quality of housing in welcoming neighbourhoods and vibrant urban villages with good access to well-regarded local services.

N & I 4 - Improving international connections

Birmingham must be an outward-facing city that makes the most of its international links. To support exporting businesses in the city we will encourage more people to learn and use foreign languages. We will strengthen business connections with overseas markets, especially with the major economies of China and the Indian sub-continent. We will promote Birmingham to overseas students as a place for study and research in further and higher education.

N & I 5 - Exploiting our knowledge

We will improve arrangements for the commercial exploitation of knowledge through closer working between the city's universities and businesses, supporting regional arrangements. We will also increase collaboration between the universities and Birmingham's public sector agencies – in particular we will support developments in the areas of medicine, health and social care (see *A centre for health*, page 27). We will use Birmingham's designation as a Science City to give further impetus to the knowledge economy.

How we will get there

The separate implementation framework for this Community Strategy will set out how we will take these actions forward. Main responsibilities lie with Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the city's higher

education sector, led here by the University of Birmingham. The support of Birmingham's business community will be essential to success.

5 FLOURISHING NEIGHBOURHOODS

Where we are

A successful city is one where communities are diverse, but each locality offers a good quality of life to its residents. To date, Birmingham's success in redeveloping its city centre has not been mirrored in many parts of the city. Thirteen wards – which are home to nearly a third of the city's residents – are rated among the most deprived areas in the country. A city of sustainable communities needs to tackle these problems and inequalities.

People living in different parts of the city experience differences in quality of life. For example, domestic burglary is three times more likely in some parts of the city than in others. Many deprived parts of the city suffer multiple problems: higher unemployment, poorer health, worse crime, a low quality environment. The city has succeeded in reducing differences in crime and education, but has been less successful with unemployment and health.

Proposals for tackling these problems will be found in other sections of this document. This section looks at how neighbourhoods can be helped to flourish. It focuses on differences in access to services, and the standards of service provided; how local people can engage with and influence services and developments; and the role of faith, community and voluntary organisations in sustaining communities.

Some areas have better access to services than others. Some suffer from poor transport links, limiting their access to shops and jobs, to leisure opportunities and open space. Local centres, where people have ready access to a range of shops and services, are important, but some are thriving while others seem in decline. In parts of the city the population is relatively stable, but in others changes are taking place in age and ethnicity. This means rethinking how services are provided in such areas.

There are many examples in Birmingham of good co-operation between different services, but public agencies accept that these need to be extended - co-operating more closely when planning services and putting together the services run by different agencies so that they can respond better to people's needs. Children's services are a priority for such developments.

The City Council's devolution to eleven districts is an opportunity to make services more responsive to localities and to engage local people and businesses in planning local improvements. District Strategic Partnerships are beginning to provide a framework for co-operation at a local level, where other public services are also looking at devolution. These developments offer opportunities to increase people's influence in the management of local services.

Active community groups, voluntary organisations and faith networks provide major benefits to individuals, families and localities. They offer opportunities to individuals for involvement and learning, support to communities, and the chance to influence local public services. In many parts of the city, people would like to see more of this sort of activity, to make where they live more neighbourly. Faith communities are important in Birmingham, where the proportion of the population who subscribe to a religious faith is above average.

Where we want to be

We see Birmingham as a city where people are not disadvantaged by where they live, where the various neighbourhoods and urban villages that make up the city have access to good public and private services. We see Birmingham as a place where people are active citizens, where they can organise to help each other and contribute to improvements in services and the quality of life.

What we will do – Key Actions

FN 1 - Neighbourhood renewal

We will set out in Birmingham's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy how inequalities between different parts of the city will be reduced by improving outcomes and achieving minimum standards – "floor targets" - below which no area should fall. This strategy will focus on long-term initiatives to reduce inequalities that involve local people in planning improvements for their community.

FN 2 – Better access to local services and centres

We will assess the current patterns of service delivery across the city by public sector agencies and plan improvements to access. Transport planning – in particular, public transport - will support improved access to local services and to opportunities across the city. We will continue to support the development of local centres that provide people with access to shops and other services.

FN 3 - Public service standards

Public services in Birmingham will publish the standards of service that users can expect - and how services perform against these standards in all parts of the city. Standards will be set using information about performance in other parts of the country, so increasingly they match the best nationally. Users will be consulted in setting standards, and users' satisfaction with services regularly measured and used to assess performance.

FN 4 – Civil renewal

Birmingham was the first city to join the national Civic Pioneers scheme. Through this we will promote active citizenship, helping people to become involved actively in their local community. We will strengthen communities, helping them to form organisations to deal with common concerns. We will promote positive engagement with public agencies, engaging people and communities in the planning and delivery of services. Faith communities will be part of this important development, as will young people.

FN 5 - Developing local governance

The City Council's devolution of services to districts will make services more responsive to local people, their needs and preferences. We will explore opportunities to link together public services that are devolved to local areas and to develop the involvement of local people and businesses in the management of neighbourhood services.

FN 6 - Developing the voluntary sector

We will build on the Voluntary Sector Compact to develop the thriving voluntary sector in the city. We will develop the skills of those managing voluntary organisations, both as volunteers and as professionals. We will improve arrangements for commissioning

services from the voluntary sector and for funding its long-term development. We will support efforts to increase the number of people in Birmingham who undertake voluntary work.

FN7 – Business engagement

We will support the engagement of local businesses in the development of neighbourhoods through promoting business development and commercial investment, sustaining local businesses and jobs, and tackling shared concerns, such as crime and the local environment. We will encourage businesses to work with others to support improvements in deprived communities.

How we will get there

The separate implementation framework for this Community Strategy will set out how we will take these actions forward. Main responsibilities lie with Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Voluntary Service Council, and Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry, though all public agencies have a role in improving access to and standards of service in deprived areas.

6 DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE CITY

Where we are

Most cities are diverse and multi-cultural, and this is particularly true of Birmingham. Thirty per cent of the city's population has a black or minority ethnic background, and the proportion is rising. In parts of the city, people from black, minority ethnic and emerging communities make up the majority of the local population. The range of different communities is also increasing, with newcomers from different countries attracted to the city by its very diversity. Birmingham's ethnic diversity is a strength, particularly for younger people, where the proportion from a black and minority ethnic community rises to nearly 50 per cent.

Ethnicity is not the only source of diversity. Age, gender, sexuality, disability, faith – all provide other ways in which people see themselves and others. No one fits into a neat category. But in a thriving city, people respect each other's differences and value each other's contributions. Over 70 per cent of people in Birmingham think their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get along well together. Roughly two-thirds of the population feel the city has strong communities – only half thought this four years ago.

But such community cohesion cannot be taken for granted. Differences can cause tensions between people and communities. Racial attacks and "hate crime" – whoever it is directed against – is a priority for agencies concerned with community safety. Differences between older and younger people continue to be a source of friction from time to time – yet both groups could contribute much to each other's welfare.

There are also major differences in the opportunities and outcomes experienced by different parts of the population. For example, there are significant differences in the educational achievements of young people from different ethnic groups. People from some black and minority ethnic communities are more likely to be unemployed, economically inactive, or in less skilled jobs. People with some long-term medical conditions, mental health problems and disabilities can still want to work but are less likely to be employed. They can also have difficulties gaining access to services that have not been designed to meet their needs – for example, because of their age or ethnicity.

Some people in Birmingham can face barriers that prevent them from realising their potential and making a full contribution – low educational attainment, unemployment, mental or physical ill-health. Low income is still a problem: for example, those of the city's children growing up in low income households often do less well at school. In parts of the city, a significant proportion of the population is out of work or living on low incomes. *Neighbourhood renewal* (page 14) aims to address key inequalities, as do initiatives such as children's centres and extended schools.

Increasing diversity presents opportunities and challenges to everyone in the city – for businesses as much as for public services. For businesses, increasing diversity is creating new markets and bringing new perspectives; as employers recognise, it also presents challenges – for example, for recruitment and employment practices. A range of initiatives, such as DiverCity, shows how employers are recognising these benefits and tackling these challenges.

Public services face long-standing problems, as well as new and changing needs. But meeting these needs can lead to better service for all. Inclusive services are those that are in touch with people and sensitive to individual needs: they understand differences in needs and expectations, and do not base responses on assumptions or stereotypes. Improving organisation and staff skills in these ways will benefit everyone.

Where we want to be

We see Birmingham as a city whose diversity is a strength, where people value each other and get on well together. We see Birmingham as a place that welcomes the contribution of everyone and that enables everyone to make a contribution. We see Birmingham as a city that provides equal opportunities for all and excludes no one. We see Birmingham as a city committed to social justice and reducing inequalities.

What we will do – Key Actions

D & I 1 - A diverse future

We will make Birmingham a city that welcomes and encourages everyone's contribution. We will promote dialogue about the city's diverse future, so that people and business understand its benefits and challenges, and we will support positive responses to Birmingham's increasing diversity.

D & I 2 - Community cohesion

We will seek to foster understanding between generations, and work with local communities and organisations to promote a better and shared understanding among the many groups that make up our city.

D & I 3 - Reducing poverty

We will reduce the number of people for whom poverty limits opportunities by improving access to work and welfare. We will work with parents, early years providers and schools to reduce the influence of poverty on the education and life chances of children and young people. We will encourage the take up of benefits and direct payments by older people and vulnerable adults in order to enhance their choices and quality of life.

D & I 4 - Services that listen and respond

Public agencies in Birmingham will actively seek to understand the needs and expectations of those who use – and those who might use – their services. This includes children and young people as well as adults from Birmingham's diverse communities and those with special needs. Services will be designed to meet these needs and expectations.

How we will get there

The separate implementation framework for this Community Strategy will set out how we will take these actions forward. Main responsibilities lie with Birmingham City Council and Jobcentre Plus, though the engagement of businesses, other public services, and voluntary, community and faith groups are essential to making Birmingham a truly inclusive city.

7 PROSPEROUS CITY

Where we are

If Birmingham is to be a prosperous and sustainable city, it has to be able to compete and succeed internationally. Lack of competitive strength led to the decline of many of Birmingham's manufacturing businesses in the 1980s. Since then, the city has grown successful financial and professional services, while manufacturing has modernised and moved into new markets. Diversification, and the strengthening of growth industries, must continue in both manufacturing and traded services.

We have already highlighted the need to promote Birmingham nationally and internationally and to encourage investment in the city (see *Promoting Birmingham*, page 11). Birmingham needs to be known for its innovation and enterprise – for this reason, we will encourage investment in research and we will improve the way we exploit our knowledge commercially, with a key role for the city's universities (see *Exploiting our knowledge*, page 11). We need to ensure that new and existing businesses get good information and advice. Support should focus on improving the long-term competitiveness of business in Birmingham – particularly in high value-added sectors such as manufacturing and IT.

Birmingham wants sustainable businesses that can offer a long-term future for the city's economy. Shifts towards sustainable consumption and production will put pressure on some key sectors: for example, retail, tourism and transport. The city needs to recognise the challenges – and opportunities from anticipating them. Public procurement practices can help here by stimulating innovation and by helping local enterprises to become more competitive through sustainable business practices.

Growing businesses need land and buildings in the right locations, with transport connections that minimise the adverse impacts of travel, such as congestion and pollution. The city's long-term plans for land and transport therefore need to support sustainable business development. The city centre continues to offer the greatest potential for growth in service industries, but Birmingham also needs a supply of suitable industrial land – such as the Central Technology Belt - for new or growing businesses that need industrial estate or business park premises.

Growing businesses also need skilled people. Here, Birmingham faces two challenges. The first is to ensure there are enough highly skilled people to support business growth. Forecasts show strong demand for graduates in both manufacturing and services, so the city must produce, attract and retain key graduate skills. There is also a need to expand vocational training in certain key sectors of the city's economy, such as construction. Further education colleges have a key role here.

The second challenge is to tackle unemployment in Birmingham by connecting those who are not working to jobs - and to the training that equips them to develop skills for sustainable employment. An increasing proportion of the people out of work in the city need specialised advice and support to help them to overcome barriers to employment and to develop the skills that businesses need.

Birmingham already has a good track record here. Innovative work in this area, such as recruitment of unemployed people to jobs in the new Bullring shopping centre, has led

to Birmingham being one of three pilots for the new Fair Cities initiative. Public sector agencies in the city have recently set up the Public Service Compact to pilot new thinking about recruitment, training and career development. Both initiatives are looking at how improved recruitment by employers can lower barriers to jobs.

Self-employment and the formation and growth of small businesses are a vital part of an enterprising city. Birmingham's rate of business formation is in line with national averages, but fewer small businesses survive and thrive in Birmingham than nationally. Here, the development of sustainable local enterprise will require better targeted advice, incubation and access to finance.

Where we want to be

We see Birmingham as a city with a strong and diversified economy, where sustainable enterprise and growth are valued and supported. We see Birmingham as a city that fosters and rewards skills and where everyone can find long-term employment.

What we will do – Key Actions

P 1 – Developing sustainable business

We will support businesses in responding to shifts towards sustainable consumption and production. Public procurement will set an example by making more efficient use of resources and by reducing waste and adverse environmental impacts. We will seek to help local enterprises become more competitive through adopting sustainable business practices

P 2 - Planning for growth

Land use planning will support appropriate and sustainable business development. We will continue to support key developments such as Eastside and the Central Technology Belt, and we will promote other developments in appropriate locations, based on business needs and planning for transport. Growth will also be supported by improvements to housing and neighbourhoods (see *Birmingham – the place to be*, page 11).

P 3 - Intelligence and skills

We will develop more systematic industry-level intelligence about business development and use it to inform education and training. The city's universities, further education colleges and employers will work together to improve the retention and development of key graduate skills (see *Aiming higher*, page 24).

P 4 – Tackling worklessness

We will increase the proportion of people in the city with sustainable jobs by improving access to job opportunities, training and support in employment. We will increase the role of employers in developing new approaches to help people into work and training through the Fair Cities initiative and the work of the Public Service Compact.

P 5 - Supporting business and enterprise

We will improve the co-ordination of services to and support for small businesses in Birmingham, with a focus on entrepreneurship, setting up and sustaining new businesses, and the growth of jobs in local centres of employment. We will ensure that the public sector, including its regulatory functions, promotes competitiveness while protecting consumers, workers and legitimate businesses. The city's higher and further education sectors will improve access to their offerings of support for business, working with businesses to tailor support to business needs.

How we will get there

The separate implementation framework for this Community Strategy will set out how we will take these actions forward. Main responsibilities lie with Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council and Jobcentre Plus, with support from the higher education sector, led by the University of Birmingham. The support of Birmingham's business community will be essential to success.

8 CONNECTED CITY

Where we are

Connections are important to a modern city: they give people and communities access to opportunities and services. Transport links are one aspect of connections – just as important nowadays is access to information and advice.

Birmingham is the centre of many important transport networks. Strategic transport links are vital to the modern city, but important gateways to Birmingham, such as Birmingham International Airport, New Street Station and the city's coach station need expanding and upgrading.

Within the city, most people find it easy to get around. But a sizeable minority find transport difficult, and an increasing number of people say congestion is getting worse. Congestion, whether on the city's streets or on the local motorways, can disrupt businesses and make them less competitive. Problems with transport can limit people's access to facilities, services and jobs – that is why we have identified improvements in access, including better transport links, as part of a new approach to improving *Access to local services and centres* (page 14).

Roads are important to business for the movement of goods and services. Cars are important to many people, making it easy for them to travel, whether for work or pleasure. But people in the city also recognise the drawbacks of increasing traffic: air and noise pollution, road accidents, streets where it feels unpleasant or unsafe to walk or cycle. More opportunities to walk or cycle in the city would improve people's health. Policies need to strike a balance between different needs.

Public transport in Birmingham is important to many people: those living in the 40 per cent of households without a car, young people, those who because of age or disability cannot drive. Public transport is increasingly important for those working in or visiting the city centre. In Birmingham buses are the main form of public transport. While 70 per cent of bus users are satisfied with services, many non-users see buses as unreliable and inconvenient. Personal safety is a concern for some using public transport. It is important to make buses more attractive as a step towards reducing congestion. The capacity of Birmingham's rail network needs expanding to meet increasing demand. Birmingham also needs a Metro network to serve busy traffic corridors not served by heavy rail.

Transport is just one aspect of a connected city. Physical access to buildings and facilities can be difficult for some people, so they cannot take advantage of services or opportunities. Access to information and advice is also important in today's society. Many public agencies acknowledge that they could improve the way they provide information and advice, including better co-ordination with each other.

Easy access to good information can help people to improve the quality of their life and reduce demands on scarce public services. Birmingham has a network of local libraries and neighbourhood offices that could provide local points of contact, which people could visit without needing to make long journeys. Birmingham's libraries have won a number of awards for providing IT-based information, but local buildings and equipment need upgrading.

The Internet is a key development in gaining access to information and services. But use of the Internet by people in Birmingham is below average. Nowadays, lack of skills in the use of information and communication technologies will be a major constraint on individuals seeking higher skilled jobs – and ultimately on businesses seeking to innovate and be competitive.

Where we want to be

We see Birmingham as a city that has effective connections to the outside world. We see Birmingham as a city where people can get about easily and safely. We see Birmingham as a place where people are well-informed and know how to access the services and information they need.

What we will do – Key Actions

C 1 - Improving strategic connections

Responsibility for many of Birmingham's strategic transport links lies outside the city. But we will work to improve the city's key gateways: the redevelopment of New Street Station, construction of a new coach station, the appropriate expansion of Birmingham International Airport, and main highway improvements. We will take forward the development of the Metro in the light of the findings of the current study of city centre tunnels.

C 2 - Getting about in the city

We will improve the condition of Birmingham's roads to ensure the efficient movement of people and goods. Improvements will focus on reducing congestion, making public transport more reliable, and making streets safer and more pleasant for walking and cycling. We will improve the quality and safety of public transport, including better information and ticketing. We will work to ensure that buildings and facilities are open and accessible to everyone.

C 3 - Improving advice and information services

We will improve access to and co-ordination of advice and information services, making it simpler for people to contact public services and to get information and advice.

C 4 - Digital city

We will develop a strategic approach to exploit new information technologies for the benefit of the city. We will bring together private, public and voluntary sector organisations in a coalition to meet the digital challenges facing the city.

How we will get there

The separate implementation framework for this Community Strategy will set out how we will take these actions forward. Main responsibilities lie with Birmingham City Council and Centro.

9 LEARNING CITY

Where we are

Learning and skills are key to Birmingham's prosperity; they are also important to the well-being of individual people in Birmingham.

A child's early years are key to its development. Important aptitudes and attitudes are formed before a child reaches school, so it is vital that children get a good start in life. Birmingham already has extensive early years provision, including twelve Sure Start programmes. This provision needs to be extended to provide all children and their families with an integrated service.

The educational achievements of pupils in Birmingham's schools have increased significantly over the last ten years, rising at a faster rate than the national average. Continuing these improvements remains a priority. To do this, the relative under-performance of certain groups of pupils needs to be tackled. Children and young people from some black and minority ethnic backgrounds are currently less academically successful than the city average – though those from Bangladeshi and Pakistani backgrounds have recently made rapid advances, showing that under-attainment can be overcome. Priorities for the future include children from specific black, minority ethnic and emerging communities, children in care and those eligible for free school meals, where the effect of poverty seems greatest for white children.

Developments in the city's economy will increase the demand for graduates and others with high levels of skill in both manufacturing and services. Young people in Birmingham must be able to gain the qualifications and experience that will secure them such jobs. They must achieve good standards in core skills, such as English, mathematics and information technology. All further education colleges have established collaborative arrangements with local secondary schools to provide a greater choice of courses, particularly vocational options, and significant investment is being made to support this. City-wide reviews of 14-19 courses have helped to improve specialist provision, such as the new Construction Centre at Bordesley.

Consultation has identified the need to promote further and higher education more vigorously to young people in the city so that more gain higher qualifications, including through vocational training and modern apprenticeships. Too few young people are taking advantage of opportunities for education and training, and students from black and minority ethnic backgrounds are under-represented on some courses. Young people need good information about the range of careers and the pathways open to them. Some employers are already engaged with schools through programmes such as Workwise, but the current range of employers' activities with schools must be expanded. *Intelligence and skills* (page 19) proposes closer working between businesses and the city's universities to improve the development of key graduate skills.

Support from parents and carers is vital for young people's achievement. Parents themselves can need information and advice in understanding how to help their children. This is especially important when children have special needs or are excluded from or failing to attend school. The City Council has established a Children and Young People's Board to take forward children's trusts arrangements: these will bring together

its services that support children, young people and their families, as well as those of other agencies. Schools are working together in clusters to extend the ways in which they work outside school hours with pupils, their families and the wider community, offering opportunities to extend learning and access to services.

Too many adults in Birmingham have no educational qualifications. The percentage lacking basic skills, especially in handling numbers, remains high. The Learning and Skills Council aims to offer all adults the opportunity to gain qualifications up to Level 2. It has developed inclusion plans for all parts of the city to improve participation and attainment for learners from the age of 14. Its "train2gain" programme has been encouraging workforce development. Community-based learning has successfully raised aspirations and provided pathways to further education: informal learning can re-engage adults with education, as well as providing new skills in its own right. Libraries can play an important part here. But more needs to be done, especially in developing vocational skills, and employers need to recognise workforce development as an investment in their business as a whole.

Where we want to be

We see Birmingham as a city where all children and young people are inspired to learn, develop and achieve, and where education gives young people a solid foundation for future life. We see Birmingham as a place where learning and development is fostered from an early age, with the support of parents and carers. We see Birmingham as a city where people are encouraged to go on learning throughout their lives and where they have the opportunities to do so.

What we will do – Key Actions

L 1 - A sure start

We will build on Birmingham's existing early years and Sure Start provision to ensure the number of childcare places in the city meets demand, with a focus on improving access to those in greatest need. We will develop integrated early years education, health and care services, so children are at a good stage of development when they start school.

L 2 - Closing the gap

We will continue to close the gap in attainment between Birmingham and the national average at all levels up to age 19. We will focus on improving the achievements and life chances of children and young people from specific black, minority ethnic and emerging communities, those in the care of the Council, and those from low income homes.

L 3 - Aiming higher

We will promote further and higher education through improving links between the universities, schools and colleges in Birmingham. Improved links between schools and employers in the private, public and voluntary sectors will give young people broader vocational and work experience and expand their aspirations. We will improve advice and information about careers and paths for progression through further and higher education for young people and adult learners.

L 4 - Support for children and parents

We will improve the information and advice for parents that enables them to support their children's education. We will bring together where appropriate the services that support children and young people to achieve, make a positive contribution and become economically secure as adults (see also *A healthy start*, page 27). We will improve schools' links with parents and communities through the extended use of schools to offer support beyond school hours and to provide a base for partnership working with other professional services.

L 5 - Improving adult skills

Community-based learning has successfully helped many adults lacking basic skills. We will continue to develop this approach, supporting access with high-quality information and advice. We will increase provision of vocational training and modern apprenticeships for both young people and adults, with an emphasis on improving the quality of provision. We will improve access to work-based learning through better engagement of employers in the skills agenda, based on good understanding of their needs (see *Intelligence and skills*, page 19).

How we will get there

The separate implementation framework for this Community Strategy will set out how we will take these actions forward. Main responsibilities lie with Birmingham City Council, Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council and Connexions, with support from the higher education sector, led by Newman College. The Children and Young People's Board will lead on children's trust arrangements. Working with schools, colleges and other learning providers will be important to success, as will the support of employers in the city.

10 HEALTHY CITY

Where we are

Birmingham aspires to be a healthy city, but for many residents poor health is a daily problem, with 20 per cent of the population suffering from a limiting long-term illness. Life expectancy for the city as a whole is below the national average – for women the gap is a year, for men more than two years. Birmingham is one of just seven places in England with significantly high infant mortality.

Health inequalities within Birmingham are even more stark. There is a difference of eight years in life expectancy between the best and worst wards in the city. Death rates for some diseases are higher for certain minority ethnic groups. There are concerns that rising levels of obesity, especially among children and young people, will make worse the general health and health inequalities of the city. There are strong links between poverty and physical and mental ill-health.

Birmingham's acute hospitals are of a high standard – four out of the six hospital trusts serving the city have the highest performance ratings. Most are based in modern and up-to-date buildings – while University Hospital Birmingham is about to undergo major re-development. But improvements in health in the city require a stronger focus on community-based services and on initiatives in public health – for example, action to reduce smoking. This new approach requires changes. People can live healthier lives if helped and encouraged to adopt new lifestyles. Opportunities for healthier living will come through schools and leisure services as well as the NHS. Investment is needed in community-based services to ensure they are up to date and people have good access to services in all parts of the city.

In Birmingham, as elsewhere in the country, approaches to the care of adults need to be modernised, and for those with chronic illnesses, services need to focus on better support and care in their home – not emergency treatment in hospital. Older people and adults with special needs, such as those with mental health problems, need opportunities to stay active and healthy. Assessments of need, when these are required, should enable to people to have more say in their care. To provide more choice, the city needs a wider range of options - from extra support in the home through to specialist services for those needing complex care – than currently exists. More must be done to help the many people – in particular older people – who provide unpaid care for others, and greater recognition given to the role for voluntary organisations in providing support within communities.

Birmingham is an important centre for health and social care. The city has major dental and medical schools, and is the location of the new Institute of Biological Research and the National Medical Research facility. The new University Hospital Birmingham will be the centre of the largest academic and medical complex in Europe, and Birmingham has advantages in medical trials. Research, health service practice and industry can work together to develop new technologies and new business opportunities.

Health and care services in Birmingham also face long-term challenges. Thirty per cent of those working in health and care are over 45, and over the next ten years many will retire. People expect those working in health and care to have up-to-date professional skills, but employers find it difficult to recruit and retain well-qualified staff. A number of

initiatives are piloting new ways to recruit and train staff, helping them develop high-level skills.

Where we want to be

We see Birmingham as a city where people live longer and enjoy healthy, active and fulfilling lives. We see Birmingham as a place where everyone has a choice and can receive appropriate and up-to-date care in hospital or close to home from well-trained staff. We see Birmingham as a place where health and care services make major contributions to prosperity and employment.

What we will do – Key Actions

H 1 - Promoting healthy lifestyles

We will reduce smoking by actions to make Birmingham a smoke-free city. We will encourage people to become more active by making it easier to take exercise. We will encourage healthy eating by promoting better access to balanced diets. Schools in the city will provide healthy meals and structured exercise for all pupils.

H 2 - Reducing health inequalities

Reducing inequalities in health will be a key strand of *Neighbourhood renewal* (see page 14). We will ensure that deprived communities benefit from the promotion of healthy living by customising our approach to their needs. We will extend programmes aimed at tackling specific problems, building on successful community-based models for improving local health.

H 3 - A healthy start

We will reduce infant mortality and improve children's early development by helping parents during and after pregnancy. We will improve access to services across the city for parents and young children and bring together where appropriate the different services that support children and young people to make these more effective in meeting needs (see also *Support for children and parents*, page 25). An early priority will be child and adolescent mental health services. We will continue to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies and to improve support for teenage mothers.

H 4 - Modernising adult care and the management of long-term illness

We will modernise approaches to the care of adults and the management of long-term illnesses. We will ensure that older people and adults with special needs can access the mainstream services that enable them to stay active and healthy. Health and social care services will make joined-up assessments of need based on national good practice. We will enable people to make choices about their care by providing a choice of options - from informed self-management through extra support in the home to integrated services for those with complex needs. There will be help in local communities through voluntary groups to promote the well-being of those with special needs and those who care for them. We will expand the range of suitably designed housing for those needing specific support in their home (see *Supporting vulnerable people*, page 30).

H 5 - A centre for health

We will develop new approaches to recruiting and training health and social care staff, especially among the unemployed. Service providers will work with the city's universities and colleges to modernise working practices and to raise levels of skill in health and social care. Higher education and other research establishments, health

service providers and industry will work together to develop new medical technologies and new business opportunities (*Exploiting our knowledge*, page 11).

How we will get there

The separate implementation framework for this Community Strategy will set out how we will take these actions forward. The Birmingham Health Partnership, which includes all the major health service providers in the city and Birmingham City Council, will oversee the implementation of all aspects of this programme, except aspects of children's health and development which fall within the responsibilities of the Children and Young People's Board. Support from the higher education sector will be led by the University of Birmingham.

11 A WELL-HOUSED CITY

Where we are

Like many urban areas, Birmingham has a substantial number of older homes that are in need of repair and modernisation. Over 100,000 privately-owned homes were estimated to be below the national Decent Homes Standard in 2000, while just under 50,000 council homes were estimated to be below the Standard in April 2004. A further 4,000 homes owned by housing associations also need modernisation. Responsibility for the renovation of private homes lies with the owner, but about a third of these properties are believed to be occupied by vulnerable, low income households who would find it difficult to make substantial investments in their home.

For both council-owned and privately-owned homes, thermal comfort is a significant problem. Research in the mid-1990s estimated that nearly a third of households in Birmingham suffered in some degree from fuel poverty. The most severe problems were in the private rented sector and among elderly people. Improving the energy efficiency of homes is also an important action in responding to *Climate change* (see page 37)

The condition of homes is one element affecting the operation of housing markets in Birmingham. While there are many areas of attractive and popular housing, other parts of the city have problems such as low demand or a concentration of low-income households. The range and quality of housing available in the city has not stemmed an outward migration of more affluent households – though some movement back to the city centre has been seen in recent years. A good range of quality housing in attractive, vibrant neighbourhoods is important to the future growth and prosperity of Birmingham (see *Birmingham – an area for growth*, page 11).

Securing a range of housing that will attract and retain highly skilled and affluent workers is one element in the effective functioning of housing markets in the city. There is also a lack of affordable housing – both to rent and to buy – and this is a major problem in some parts of Birmingham. Homelessness in Birmingham is twice the national average. Significant numbers of households, especially from some black and minority ethnic communities, are living in overcrowded conditions. Homelessness and overcrowding can affect children's health and education.

Many people in Birmingham require some form of support to help them live in their home. The largest single group is elderly people, though others with special needs include people with physical or learning disabilities or with mental health problems. A recent review of services for older people has found that traditional sheltered housing and residential homes no longer meet the needs of many, and there is a need to invest in a new range of specialist accommodation and support. There is also a need to improve the way disabled people are helped – for example, through encouraging the use of loans to adapt their home.

A priority for the City Council is improvement of its housing services. In recent years the Council has also supported a number of innovative developments in the way council tenants can be involved in the management of their own homes. The Council is committed to extending such arrangements to all tenants.

Where we want to be

We see Birmingham as a city whose neighbourhoods and urban villages contain modern, well-maintained and energy efficient homes. We see Birmingham as a place where people can find a home that suits them and meets their needs at a price they can afford.

What we will do – Key Actions

WH 1 - Decent homes

We will bring all social housing up to the Decent Homes Standard by 2010, moving beyond the basic Standard where we can. In the private sector, property owners are responsible for the upkeep of their homes, but we will seek to stimulate repair and improvement through assistance focused on low income and vulnerable households. We will continue work to reduce fuel poverty, improving the energy efficiency of homes and establishing affordable warmth programmes across the city.

WH 2 - Restructuring housing markets

North West Birmingham is already a nationally funded Housing Market Renewal Area. We will use experience in this area to develop appropriate interventions in other parts of the city that are experiencing changing demand for housing.

WH 3 – Affordable homes

We will adopt a range of initiatives to increase the supply of affordable housing, both to rent and to buy, that will meet needs in the city, especially those of households with children. We will bring empty properties back into use, in particular reducing the number of properties in the private sector that have stood empty for a long time.

WH 4 - Supporting vulnerable people

We will increase the opportunities for vulnerable people, such as the elderly and those with disabilities, to live independently by providing a range of accommodation that meets their needs better than current arrangements with sheltered housing and residential homes. We will review Supporting People programmes to improve specialist support for those who need help within their home. We will help people with disabilities to live independently through grants and loans for adapting properties to meet their needs. We will continue to prevent homelessness by providing advice and support to people at risk of losing their home.

WH 5 – Improved housing services

We will continue to improve housing services in the city, with a focus on better repairs and maintenance. We will continue to work to resolve disputes between neighbours and to reduce levels of anti-social behaviour. We will extend initiatives to increase tenants' involvement in the management of their own homes.

How we will get there

The separate implementation framework for this Community Strategy will set out how we will take these actions forward. Main responsibility will lie with Birmingham City Council, working with registered social landlords, house builders and other specialist housing agencies in the city.

12 CITY FOR CULTURE, SPORT AND LEISURE

Where we are

Developments in the arts, sport and leisure have been a key part of Birmingham's renaissance over the last twenty years, helping to establish and sustain Birmingham's image as a modern and creative city. Birmingham has many strengths, including world-class performance, arts, sports and exhibition facilities, and internationally recognised companies of cultural excellence, such as the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the Birmingham Royal Ballet. The city is the home of internationally significant art and cultural collections.

Culture, sport and leisure make substantial contributions to the local economy, bringing many visitors to the city each year. Birmingham is an important centre for creative and cultural businesses, with particular strengths in media and jewellery. Boundaries between voluntary activity and the commercial sector are often fluid, creating business and employment opportunities, so the informal aspects of much cultural and leisure activity can support regeneration.

Arts, sport and leisure activities can also engage the interest and draw out the talent of people who have not responded well to more traditional approaches to education and training. Disaffected young people can discover new abilities and a new sense of purpose. Arts and sport can provide new ways to encourage people to adopt healthy lifestyles. People can get a better understanding of their own culture and heritage – and of other people's cultural backgrounds.

Culture and leisure facilities not only attract people to Birmingham – they also serve people living in the city. Surveys show that 45 per cent of Birmingham residents had been to the theatre or a concert in the city in the last year, while 36 per cent had visited a museum or gallery. One third of the population visit a local library at least once a month, and a similar proportion visit a sports or leisure centre. Satisfaction with culture, library and sports facilities in the city is high, though there has been a slight decline in satisfaction with sports and leisure in recent years. A number of leisure facilities require improvement and modernisation.

Culture, sports and other leisure activities provide many opportunities for informal contacts and voluntary activity. Sports clubs, amateur arts and other recreational organisations bring people together and support social cohesion. They also often depend on the willingness of many people to commit their time to organising activities for others. Support for this voluntary activity is important (see *Developing the voluntary sector*, page 14).

It is some time since the city took a view on the best ways to foster and promote culture, sport and leisure. In part this is about maintaining Birmingham's international role and reputation. But it is equally important to celebrate and promote the contributions of the cultures of Birmingham's many diverse communities, providing new opportunities and outlets for talent in all parts of the city.

In addition, access to opportunities and facilities are better in some parts of the city than in others, and some facilities need modernisation or refurbishment. Consultation has identified the wider use of facilities in schools and other public buildings as a way

forward; extended use of schools (see *Support for children and parents*, page 25) offers new opportunities here, while *Better access to local services and centres* (page 14) aims to address barriers, such as poor transport, that might prevent people using existing facilities.

Birmingham residents have identified facilities for children and young people as a priority for development. Play and leisure are important to the way children and young people develop – from their creativity to social skills. The range of facilities available across the city is generally good, but more could be done to engage young people in their use.

Where we want to be

We see Birmingham as a city that is known nationally and internationally for the quality of its arts, sports and leisure. We see Birmingham as a place where people have access to leisure, sport and culture wherever they live, and where such opportunities enrich people's lives.

What we will do – Key Actions

CSL 1 – New visions for sport and culture

We will prepare and implement a new strategy for the development of sport and physical activity in Birmingham. We will prepare a new cultural strategy for the city, which will include promotion of the arts and culture of all Birmingham's communities. These strategies will support the development of Birmingham's creative, cultural, sports and leisure industries.

CSL 2 – Local sport, leisure and culture

We will improve access to and opportunities for cultural, sport and leisure activities outside the city centre. Local plans will address questions of access – and how to encourage people to take advantage of opportunities. A particular focus will be play and leisure opportunities for children and young people. These plans will also cover improvements to local facilities.

CSL 3 – Enriching our heritage

We will promote opportunities for people to enrich their understanding of Birmingham's heritage and of the heritage and cultures of Birmingham's many diverse communities.

How we will get there

The separate implementation framework for this Community Strategy will set out how we will take these actions forward. Main responsibility will lie with Birmingham City Council, working with sports, arts and leisure organisations in the city.

13 SAFE CITY

Where we are

Reducing crime is a high priority for people and businesses in Birmingham – more than half the city's residents think it the most important improvement needed in the city. Crime is also a major concern for businesses, which want to see a safe environment for their employees and customers.

Anti-social behaviour is a concern in parts of the city; environmental degradation and environmental crime, such as fly-tipping and graffiti, also undermine people's sense of security. Violent crime undermines everyone's feelings of safety. Gun crime, though on a small scale, contributes to fears and harms the city's reputation. Hate crime, which is often directed against black and minority ethnic communities, is a problem in certain parts of the city. Domestic violence has a major impact on families and must be tackled.

Levels of crime in Birmingham are generally falling – and at a faster rate than nationally. Birmingham's Safer Neighbourhoods Project is internationally recognised for its success in crime prevention. But overall levels of crime remain above average, and rates are worse in more deprived parts of the city. As elsewhere, falling crime rates have not reduced people's fear of crime. Improving perceptions of personal safety and security – providing reassurance - remains a priority.

Young people are particularly at risk of getting involved in crime, though many quickly stop offending. The city's Youth Offending Service organises a range of activities to engage young people in purposeful activity and divert them from offending. Work with those who offend shows positive results and has reduced the risk of re-offending. A range of general activity for young people is one way in which the risk of offending can be reduced (see *Local sport, leisure and culture*, page 32).

Young people are also at greater risk of harm. They are more likely to be victims of crime and to suffer from bullying. The Youth Offending Service has taken the lead in initiatives to promote personal safety for young people, and inter-agency arrangements are in place to protect children from abuse or neglect. Keeping children and young people safe must remain a priority for the city, where the city is establishing a new Safeguarding Board in line with statutory requirements.

Drug misuse is a major factor in criminal activity; it also wrecks the lives of addicts and their families. Treatment to reduce use of and dependency on drugs is vital, and is a key opportunity to reduce the likelihood of re-offending. There has been a considerable expansion in capacity for drug treatment in Birmingham in the past few years, but further expansion is needed – especially through shared care services from GPs – to meet the demand for treatment.

Death rates from accidents in Birmingham are above the national average. However, the city has been successful in reducing deaths and injuries from road accidents and fires. This needs to be continued.

Where we want to be

We see Birmingham as a city where people feel safe, whoever they are, wherever they are, whatever their age. We see Birmingham as a city that recognises the problems of crime and acts promptly to tackle problems at source. We see Birmingham as a place where drug misuse is minimised and people receive prompt and effective treatment.

What we will do – Key Actions

SA 1 – Safer and cleaner neighbourhoods

We will provide reassurance to people and businesses through a co-ordinated approach to crime, safety and environmental improvements, so that neighbourhoods look and feel safe. New Local Delivery Groups will co-ordinate multi-agency activity and work with communities to prevent crime, to catch and convict offenders, and to tackle anti-social behaviour. We will work with local communities to develop new ideas to help keep localities clean and safe. Environmental professionals and the police will work together to tackle environmental crime, such as fly-tipping.

SA 2 - Reduce re-offending

We will tackle criminal activity at its roots by reducing the risk of further offences by those already convicted of crime. We will identify priority offenders and focus our work on them, improving their access to drug treatment and to opportunities for education, training and employment, and housing.

SA 3 - Cutting violent crime

We will work with local communities to reduce levels of violent crime. Our priorities will be gun crime and gangs, domestic violence and hate crime.

SA 4 - Safeguarding children

Children and young people are entitled to safety and security. We will work to reduce the likelihood of young people being the victims of crime. We will continue to improve systems for safeguarding children and young people and supporting their families. We will work with schools to reduce the incidence of bullying and poor behaviour, making schools safe environments in which to learn.

SA 5 - Work with young people

We will work with young people at risk of offending to offer them constructive alternatives to crime. We will modernise youth work to improve young people's opportunities for purposeful activity – for example, through leisure, sport and culture – and we will encourage voluntary activity by young people. We will also work with young people to improve understanding between generations.

SA 6 - Reducing drug and alcohol misuse

We will tackle drug abuse through targeted interventions to reduce the supply and availability of drugs in the city and through expansion of treatment for those dependent on drugs. We will work with young people to discourage them from experimenting with drugs and alcohol. We will reduce the problems and damage of excessive drinking.

SA 7 - Accident prevention

We will continue to reduce deaths, injuries and losses from accidents in the city. Our approach will be based on preventing accidents occurring, better protection to reduce the impact of accidents, and rapid response to incidents. Our priorities will be fire safety and road safety.

How we will get there

The separate implementation framework for this Community Strategy will set out how we will take these actions forward. Most key actions in this section reflect the Community Safety Strategy for Birmingham 2005-08, for which the city's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) is responsible. Members of the CDRP include West Midlands Police, Birmingham City Council and West Midlands Fire Service. Responsibility for safeguarding children will be co-ordinated through the new children's trust arrangements for the city and the Children's Safeguarding Board, led by the City Council.

14 A GREEN CITY

Where we are

A sustainable city is has a high-quality environment and manages its resources effectively. Birmingham has much to offer, including extensive parks and valuable natural habitats. Recent developments, such as the Birmingham High Performance Centre at the Alexander Stadium, have innovative, energy-efficient design. But the city also faces environmental challenges.

Birmingham has over 3,000 hectares of parks and open spaces, and measures of access to open space are above the national average. Nearly three in five people visit a park or open space at least once a month. There is, however, scope to improve access to public open space in some parts of the city, and in some areas, biodiversity and wildlife habitats are under pressure.

At street level, there is less satisfaction with the quality of the environment. Street cleaning – in particular, tackling rubbish - is a concern across about a third of the city. As in many cities, fly-tipping is a major problem in Birmingham, where thousands of tonnes of waste are illegally dumped in the city each year. A cleaner environment and better maintained streets are priorities for many people and businesses.

Levels of air and noise pollution are problems in some parts of the city. Vehicles are one of the principal sources of both air and noise pollution, so improvements to Birmingham's roads and public transport should aim to reduce the effects of pollution (see *Getting about in the city*, page 22). Birmingham has pioneered "noise mapping", and is leading the exchange of good practice with other European cities. Air pollution has been monitored, and the key problem identified as emissions of oxides of nitrogen. The whole city has been declared an Air Quality Management Zone, and a management plan has been prepared.

Birmingham, like the rest of the world, faces the challenge of global warming. Carbon dioxide emissions are a major contributor to climate change, and the City Council has pledged to meet the national government's target for a reduction in these emissions. The Council has a two-part strategy: to reduce its overall use of energy and to increase the proportion coming from renewable sources. The energy efficiency of homes in the city will be improved as part of work to reduce fuel poverty (see *Decent homes*, page 30). There are also opportunities to draw on good practice in the public and commercial sectors to improve the energy efficiency of buildings throughout Birmingham. But there is at present no city-wide approach to global warming.

Another pressing problem is disposing safely and economically of waste. All those disposing of waste – commercial operators as well as the City Council – are facing higher costs and increasing technical difficulties. Increased fly-tipping is one result of these pressures. The volume of Birmingham's domestic waste going into landfill has been falling recently, but recycling rates are below average.

Where we want to be

We see Birmingham as a city where the ways we meet the needs of the present do not compromise our ability to meet needs in the future. We see Birmingham as a city where people can enjoy a clean and green environment. We see Birmingham as a place where natural resources are managed wisely.

What we will do – Key Actions

G 1 - Greening the city

We will improve people's access to and enjoyment of green and open space. We will involve local communities in the planning and management of this land. We will also work with communities to preserve, protect, promote and enhance local biodiversity across Birmingham.

G 2 – Improving streets and public space

We will get the city clean and keep it clean through better street cleaning and clearing rubbish promptly. We will work with local communities to develop new ideas to help keep localities clean. We will improve the design and maintenance of streets and public spaces.

G 3 - Cutting pollution

Pollution damages people's health and well-being. We will prepare plans to reduce air and noise pollution in the city, focusing on those areas that are worst affected.

G 4 – Climate change

We will prepare a strategy setting out how Birmingham can respond positively to climate change. This will focus on improving the efficiency with which we use energy both in buildings and transport. It will also encourage the use of energy from renewable sources.

G 5 - Cutting waste

We will manage waste effectively to reduce the amount of commercial and domestic waste sent to landfill and to increase the recycling and reuse of materials.

How we will get there

The separate implementation framework for this Community Strategy will set out how we will take these actions forward. The Birmingham Environmental Partnership, which includes representatives of Birmingham City Council and major environmental organisations, is co-ordinating plans for actions in this section.

15 IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

From strategy to action

Taking Birmingham Forward sets out a wide range of proposals for improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of Birmingham and the people who live and work in the city. It states the challenges facing the city and how we plan to tackle them during the period 2005-2010. But to have an impact, these broad statements need to be translated into action. This section sets out our approach.

We are preparing an implementation framework that shows how each key action will be taken forward. This framework will be published as a separate document. It will show responsibility for actions, how progress will be measured and what critical tasks need to be undertaken during the next few years.

Many of the proposals in *Taking Birmingham Forward* build on existing actions and good practice. Organisations are already acting or are planning activities. But in preparing this Community Strategy, the city has also identified some challenges where it has yet to work out its response in detail. Preparing more detailed proposals for action will be the priority for these initiatives. The implementation framework will show who is responsible for this and when work on more detailed proposals will be completed.

The implementation framework will help the Birmingham Strategic Partnership and partner organisations to plan activities and to keep track of progress. It will be a working document that is regularly reviewed and updated to take account of changing circumstances.

To ensure that the city moves forward, an annual Community Strategy Action Plan will be prepared. This will be derived from the implementation framework and it will set out the key activities that need to take place during the coming year. The Birmingham Strategic Partnership will monitor overall progress on the Action Plan and review it publicly each year.

Measures of success

Taking Birmingham Forward is about making a difference to the quality of life in Birmingham. We are therefore identifying a number of key performance measures that will show what progress we are making for people in Birmingham. These measures will be set out in the relevant section of the implementation framework, and we intend to refine these measures and develop targets over time. The Birmingham Strategic Partnership will publish an annual report on progress against key performance measures, starting in 2006. Together with the report on progress on the previous year's Action Plan, these measures will tell people in Birmingham about progress in implementing *Taking Birmingham Forward*.

The next review

Taking Birmingham Forward has been prepared following initial revision of Birmingham's original Community Strategy, which was published in 2002. This revised Community Strategy will cover the period April 2005 to March 2010.

It is important to start a review of progress in implementing *Taking Birmingham Forward*, and an assessment of the new challenges facing the city, so that a new Community Strategy can be in place for April 2010.

We propose to start the process of review in autumn 2008, with an assessment of progress in the first three years of *Taking Birmingham Forward*, 2005-2008. By 2008, we expect progress on projects such as *Civil renewal* and *Developing local governance* (page 14) to enable us to carry out extensive community consultation in order to get people's views about priorities for the future. We intend a new Community Strategy to be ready for agreement by the end of 2009.