

BIRMINGHAM

a global city with a local heart



COUNCIL PLAN 2008-2013

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The Vision for Birmingham

"It's 2026...

Birmingham is a globally competitive city contributing fully to the thriving, prosperous and sustainable city-region. Birmingham people have high aspirations, and the skills and opportunities they need to succeed. Birmingham is a safe, clean and friendly city that is tackling climate change and protecting the local environment. People are healthy and economically successful, and enjoy living together. The city is truly 'a global city with a local heart'."

This is the vision that Birmingham City Council has signed up to with its community, private- and public-sector partners – a vision of Birmingham in 18 years time. The Council Plan 2008-2013 sets out what the Council needs to do in the next five years to help make this vision a reality in the next two decades.

We have listened to what residents have told us is important and will be working with our partners so that they can:

Succeed Economically

– benefiting from education, training jobs and investment

Stay Safe in a Clean, Green City

– living in clean, green and safe communities

Be Healthy

– enjoy long and healthy lives

Enjoy a High Quality of Life

– benefiting from good housing and renowned cultural and leisure opportunities

Make a Contribution

– valuing one another and playing an active part in the community

This is an ambitious vision for the people of Birmingham and we will ensure that we are equipped to achieve this by:

- transforming the way we manage our business and work with partners
- radically improving our approach to customer service
- achieving excellence in our 10 constituencies
- putting sustainability at the heart of everything we do
- taking a preventative and targeted approach.



Introduction from Councillor Mike Whitby

Birmingham is a successful, confident, growing city, with a diverse culture and strong, productive links to global and European cities. It is an attractive city, with over a million residents and a further 30 million people visiting in 2006.

Birmingham is also the regional capital at the heart of the West Midlands conurbation – stretching from Coventry to Wolverhampton. We have worked closely with our neighbouring authority leaders to form the 'city-region' partnership to ensure a strong and integrated approach to the growth and prosperity of the West Midlands as a whole.

In this Council Plan, the Progressive Partnership has focused on five strategic outcomes to create a city where everyone can: succeed economically; stay safe in a clean and green city; be healthy; enjoy a high quality of life; and make a contribution. Our new Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement (LAA) set out how our shared vision will be achieved. The Audit Commission has assessed us as a 'three star', 'improving well' authority, praising us for improved management and successes in adult care, education and value for money. This will better equip us to achieve this vision.

In the Birmingham Prospectus we stated our 25-year vision to create a prosperous, welcoming and sustainable city. It outlines planned improvements to New Street Station (New Street Gateway) and Birmingham International Airport, and details continued city centre regeneration – including a city centre park – all of which are key factors in increasing jobs and investment. The New Street Gateway Steering Group has secured nearly £400m to fund the redevelopment of New Street Station.

Our Area Investment Prospectuses will also create local development opportunities and thousands of new jobs in a number of local areas, which will allow us to continue our drive towards being a city of vibrant urban villages.

Improving education and skill levels is a key factor in generating a strong knowledge economy and creating a city where innovation and enterprise are encouraged. Being the most youthful city in Europe, it is essential that our educational aspirations meet the challenges ahead and our ambitions for the future. Our GCSE performance improved again last year, retaining our position as the best performing core city at GCSE.

Birmingham is recognised as the 55th best city in the world to live in for quality of life. We were awarded the Cleanest City and Cleanest Place in the UK last year and are committed to continuing weekly rubbish collections.

Working closely with the police and making people feel safer has resulted in the overall crime rate falling by 20 per cent since 2003. Our cultural diversity makes us an exciting city which is friendly and welcoming to all, where people value each other and can get on well together.

I believe that decent, warm homes; caring and competent social services; and excellent education are what our citizens value. Two thirds of our housing now meets the Decent Homes Standard and further investment will ensure a decent home for every council tenant by 2010.

I am confident that this Plan, and the partnership working that underpins it, will enable us to continue to drive forward the dramatic improvement of a city that we can all be proud of. Birmingham is a global city with a local heart, celebrating its cultural diversity and the economic links that enable both the city and the region to prosper.

INTRODUCTION FROM
COUNCILLOR MIKE WHITBY



Introduction from Councillor Paul Tilsley

We have made good progress on the journey towards becoming an excellent authority, and as Deputy Leader I am unwavering in my ambition to achieve the highest possible standards for this fantastic city. I am proud of our overall comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) score of 3 stars, which demonstrates that we are 'improving well'. This shows we have firm foundations in our drive for excellence and it is reassuring that our hard work is paying off. Adult care has achieved a 2-star rating and the Supporting People housing programme has moved from a 0-star to a 1-star rating.

We are continuing to make improvements to a range of services. For example, we are ensuring people get their rightful welfare benefits by improving take-up and minimising fraud, a challenge that we are continuing to excel at, achieving 4 out of 4 in our CPA for the fourth year running.

We understand how highly citizens value good customer services, so we are prioritising improvements to allow us to provide them to a world-class standard. Birmingham people are feeling more and more able to influence decisions.

We want to continue to give outstanding value for money. The savings we will reap from transforming how we do business and using our resources more efficiently will help fund the changes we need to continue improving. After four years of low increases, our Council Tax is among the lowest of all cities.

Promoting our city and striving for further improvements are vital to achieving our aims of attracting key industries to generate prosperity for all. By 2010 we want to become Europe's leading digital city. The City Council, in partnership with BT, recently launched 'Birmingham FIZ', the UK's first publicly accessible free information zone, giving access to Birmingham-specific information.

I am proud that Birmingham has been voted the most prepared city in the UK to deal with an emergency. This is an achievement we can all gain confidence from and it shows the rest of the UK how firmly we stand together as a city.

Partnership working continues to be crucial in building on our achievements. 'Be Birmingham' – the city's Strategic Partnership – has set out our shared 20-year vision to create a better Birmingham in its Community Strategy document. We will achieve this vision by using the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

We must not forget Birmingham's place globally. Climate change is today's most pressing global issue. I want sustainability in all its forms to be a theme that cuts across all our activities. This will ensure that we can deliver a better future for both current and future residents of Birmingham. We will make better use of resources by encouraging growth and prosperity, while containing and reducing our global footprint.

This Plan sets out how, as a Progressive Partnership, we will achieve these ambitions. The diagram overleaf shows how the Council Plan fits into the overall plans for the city and how it informs other planning strategies. This is followed by a brief description of how constituencies are delivering locally. The Plan then goes on to set out our vision for Birmingham in more detail, broken down into the outcomes that Birmingham people tell us they most want to see. Finally, an accompanying document illustrates in detail the contribution of each of the City Council's political portfolios to these five outcomes.



The Planning Framework

Community Strategy Birmingham 2026 and Local Area Agreement

The Community Strategy is the long-term partnership vision for the city.
The Local Area Agreement is the plan for implementing the Community Strategy.

The Council Plan

Translates the Community Strategy into strategic outcomes and priorities for the Council.

Financial planning and budgeting

Sets out the financial resources available to achieve the strategic outcomes and priorities.

Directorate delivery plans

Explain how each directorate will contribute to achieving our strategic outcomes and priorities.

Performance management framework

Sets targets and allocates responsibilities, with measures and indicators to monitor progress and hold us to account.

Work plans and performance development reviews (PDRs)

Provide detailed plans for all teams and employees to ensure that everyone knows what is expected of them and how their work contributes to achieving the Council's strategic outcomes and priorities.

Achieving Excellence with Communities

Birmingham is divided into 10 constituencies with about 100,000 residents living in each. They are responsible for a range of local services. Some are managed directly, such as libraries, neighbourhood offices, leisure facilities, community development and play. Other services are managed through Service Level Agreements with a corporate or external service provider. As with all council services there is a strong drive to ensure that they achieve excellence and provide value for money.

The constituencies are:

Edgbaston
Erdington
Hall Green
Hodge Hill
Ladywood

Northfield
Perry Barr
Selly Oak
Sutton Coldfield
Yardley

Each constituency is made up of four wards, with a constituency committee comprising the 12 councillors from the four wards. These have delegated powers from the Council that give them responsibility for local services and budgets.

Constituency Strategic Partnerships (CSPs) have also been set up in each of the ten constituencies. These bring together the Council, other public agencies, the business sector, and voluntary and community organizations. They develop a shared vision for the area, and plan services for local people in a more co-ordinated way. Each CSP has produced a Constituency Community Plan for the area.

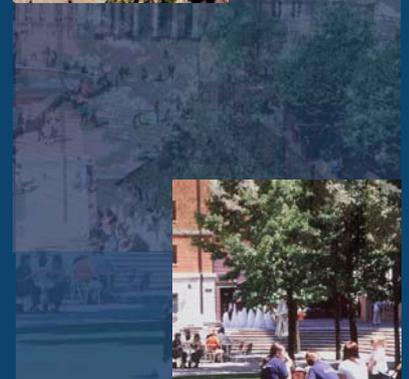
Many CSPs have also set up sub-groups to focus on specific themes – like community safety – and are working with representative groups such as young people, the elderly, or local resident groups.

Constituencies aim to provide high-quality, cost-effective local services, which meet the needs of the diverse neighbourhoods and communities they serve. Locally based, they enable local residents to influence the shape and quality of the services they receive, and participate fully in running their local community. Constituencies play an important part in creating the ‘local heart’ of this global city.

Birmingham Constituencies



ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE
WITH COMMUNITIES



Succeed Economically

benefiting from education, training, jobs and investment

Birmingham's economy has grown significantly over the last decade. The city generates over £18 billion annually for the UK, putting it in the top 80 global cities. We are continuing to promote this growth, encouraging new enterprise and attracting new business investment so that local businesses can acquire the knowledge, technology and skills they need to compete effectively in global markets.

We will work to exploit the full potential of Birmingham's Science City designation and the world-class knowledge and expertise of our universities, colleges and businesses. We will do this through greater innovation and collaboration; strengthening the city's competitiveness in key growth sectors; and helping companies understand and act on the challenges and economic opportunities coming from climate change.

We are determined to work with partners to increase and retain investment in the city and capture every possible new job. At the same time, we want to work with people from the most disadvantaged groups and areas to improve their skills, employability and access to work. We will help and encourage people from all communities and in all parts of the city to take advantage of new opportunities for jobs, education, training and enterprise. We will work with people with disabilities to help them find and keep jobs, while supporting people who cannot work because of serious disability or illness to claim the benefits they are entitled to.

We will encourage young people to stay in education beyond 16, offering relevant, exciting and rewarding education, and supporting high-quality vocational training. We will strive to retain graduates from the city's universities and FE colleges, and attract graduates from elsewhere so that the city can compete in the global economy.

Connecting Birmingham – both physically and digitally – to the rest of the world is essential for the continuing growth of our city. We are forging ahead with our plans for redeveloping New Street Station and extending the runway at Birmingham International Airport. Locally, we will continue making improvements to our roads to help reduce traffic congestion; provide high-quality pavements and pedestrian crossings; and improve information about public transport. We will continue to build an infrastructure to support our ambitious digital vision, helping citizens and the business community reap the rewards of being part of a cutting-edge global community.

An economically successful city will mean that:

- more people will be in work – unemployment and worklessness will be reduced significantly
- more companies and employers will locate to, prosper and remain in Birmingham
- economic inequalities between communities will reduce and disadvantaged people will have more opportunities
- educational performance and adult skills will continue to improve
- more young people will be in education, training and employment
- road, rail and air access to the city will improve. Congestion in the city will be reduced
- environmental impact will be minimised, by controlling CO² emissions, increasing resource efficiency and recycling.

Achievements

- Birmingham has hosted and secured for the future a number of prestige international sporting events, including hosting and co-organising the European Athletics Indoor Championships.
- Businesses have been supported through a range of activities, including the creative industries programme. For example, in the last nine months the Central Library has helped 304 new businesses to start up in the city.
- A Financial Inclusion Partnership has been set up to tackle problem debt in the city.
- The proportion of pupils gaining good GCSEs and A-levels increased again in 2007. 62 per cent of pupils gained 5 or more A* – C grades at GCSE and 82 per cent gained one or more A – C grades at A-level. Both are higher than the national average.
- Trading Standards has successfully helped over 2,500 victims of loan sharks and has recovered £2.5 million for consumers.

Challenges

- Securing and retaining investment for the city in the face of increasing international competition.
- Raising aspirations for going into business and helping local people overcome real or perceived barriers to self-employment.
- Creating locations to attract new high-value, knowledge-based activity.
- Ensuring the right skills are available to support business growth and diversification.
- Connecting the unemployed to job opportunities: increasing the employment rate across all communities and reducing inequalities between the best and worst areas.
- Increasing adult basic skills.

Priority actions

- Continuing with projects that produce significant change in the city centre and local neighbourhoods.
- Delivering key transport projects including New Street Station and the Birmingham International Airport runway extension.
- Working with partners in the city-region to improve economic prosperity.
- Encouraging people and businesses to live, work, invest in and visit Birmingham.
- Reducing worklessness and increasing the city's employment rate.
- Raising skill levels and job chances of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.
- Increasing the proportion of new and affordable homes in Birmingham.



Stay Safe in a Clean, Green City

living in safe and clean neighbourhoods

Birmingham's 2007 Annual Opinion Survey – in line with previous surveys – shows that Birmingham residents placed a high priority on living in a clean city with low levels of crime. But they also identified these same things as needing the most improvement. Making our city a cleaner, greener and safer place to live will be a key priority over the next five years and beyond.

Eighty eight per cent of Birmingham's streets meet nationally accepted quality standards for litter. And we already have one of the lowest levels of fly-tipping in major cities. We will build on this to achieve continuous improvement in the cleanliness of our streets, developing clean and attractive local centres.

Recycling in Birmingham has leapt ahead in just two years. We are now recycling more than we landfill. We understand the importance of regular refuse collection and will continue to provide a first-class weekly collection. We will also extend and improve doorstep recycling and bulk waste collections.

We have already substantially increased the number of park keepers – making our parks safer for all. And implementing the new Heritage Strategy 2007 – 12 will improve parks and public spaces and refurbish our historic buildings.

Birmingham has the lowest overall crime rate of the major English cities with a 25 per cent reduction in crime since 2004. We will be working with West Midlands Police and other partners to make our neighbourhoods even safer and reduce the fear of crime. This will include continuing our efforts to reduce violent crime, such as domestic violence, public-place wounding, and tackling the impact of guns and gangs. We will also be working with partners to protect and safeguard vulnerable children, young people and adults in the city.

Our innovative and award-winning City Centre Bus Patrols are cutting street crime and antisocial behaviour around city-centre bus stops. We will continue building on these achievements and supporting those who are most vulnerable to crime, to make sure Birmingham is a safe place to live.

A clean, green and safe Birmingham will mean that:

- more people will judge their neighbourhood and city to be clean and safe; crime rates will continue to fall, especially in wards where rates are highest
- satisfaction with, and cost-effectiveness of, recycling and waste-management services will improve
- facilities for children and young people will improve
- crimes of particular concern will be reduced, including violent crime such as public-place wounding and incidents involving, alcohol, drugs, guns and gangs
- fear of crime will be reduced, including tackling issues that people perceive as threatening, such as graffiti
- fewer children and young people will be victims of crime, or will offend or become persistent offenders
- concern about hate crime will remain low or decrease further
- Vulnerable people are effectively safeguarded – including children, young people, older people, people with mental health problems or a learning disability and victims of domestic violence.

Achievements

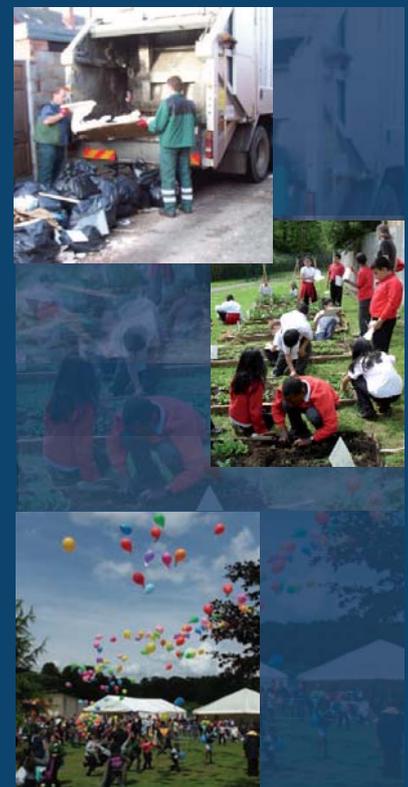
- Numbers of domestic burglaries and personal robberies are continuing to fall and are well below the number reported last year.
- Youth offending in the city is decreasing.
- Green waste collections have been expanded, so waste recycling has risen significantly from last year. Paper and card collections also rose by 26 per cent and landfill has been reduced.
- Unsatisfactory levels of litter and debris across the city have fallen by 14 per cent over the past 12 months.
- Birmingham City Council and its partners won national awards – the ‘Cleanest City’ and the ‘Cleanest Place in Britain’.
- We have substantially increased the number of park keepers in 2007. Birmingham’s latest Annual Opinion Survey shows that 74 per cent of residents feel safe in the city’s parks.

Challenges

- Tackling key areas of concern such as robbery, burglary and violent crime.
- Reducing fear of crime, especially outside at night, in parks and on public transport.
- Reducing crimes in ‘hot spot’ areas.
- Safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults.
- Maintaining high standards of cleanliness and preserving our green open spaces. Keeping all parts of the city free of litter and debris.
- Encouraging all residents to use recycling services.

Priority actions

- Working with the police and our other partners to improve feelings of safety, tackling antisocial behaviour and neighbourhood nuisance and reducing gang violence.
- Implementing a Hate Crime Reduction Strategy and a national pathfinder geared to promoting cohesion and tackling extremism.
- Improving waste and recycling services.
- Improving the environment on council estates and introducing the neighbourhood caretaker scheme.
- Working with partners to improve road and transport safety.
- Safeguarding vulnerable children, young people and vulnerable adults in Birmingham.



Be Healthy

enjoying long and healthy lives

Good health for you and your family is one of the biggest concerns of local people. There are still inequalities in the health of Birmingham residents – particularly in the most disadvantaged areas where men can expect to live about 8 years less than in the better-off neighbourhoods. Teenage conception rates are also higher in these areas and babies are less likely to survive beyond their first year compared to the England average. We are committed to turning this around and improving the health of those in most need by targeting interventions in the city.

We will be working closely with the Birmingham Health and Well-Being Partnership to help people 'be healthy'. We will work with other partners and service providers to encourage people to take responsibility for their own well-being. A wide range of services, including leisure and cultural services delivered by the Council and the private sector can help people adopt healthier, more active lifestyles. We will work to make them accessible to all, particularly communities with the poorest health outcomes.

We will help people help themselves, encouraging them to improve their health by making the best lifestyle choices through the Be Healthy programme – stopping smoking, taking more exercise and eating a healthier diet.

We will offer targeted support to help families where there is thought to be a high risk that a baby under 12 months old in their care may die. We are also planning an ambitious programme to develop a series of extra-care villages and care centres. This will provide another quality choice for older people who wish to remain living independently, in an environment that encourages activity and promotes well-being.

A healthy Birmingham will mean that we will:

- improve health for people who belong to the least healthy groups – narrow the gap in life expectancy between the least healthy wards and the city average
- have more people choosing healthy lifestyles – lower levels of obesity and encourage healthy eating
- enable more people to live independently for longer;
- have more people living in warm homes with modern facilities
- improve people's mental, physical and emotional well-being.

Achievements

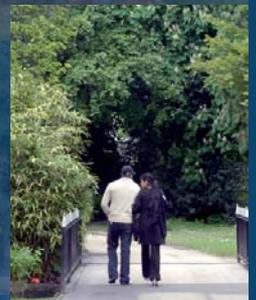
- Premature deaths from circulatory diseases and cancer have fallen by nearly 30 per cent and 9 per cent respectively in the last six years.
- Life expectancy continues to increase for men and women in Birmingham.
- The number of teenage pregnancies is falling faster than the national rate.
- ‘Swim 4 Free’ has about 90,000 children on the scheme.

Challenges

- Increasing male life expectancy – more than half of men live in parts of the city where life expectancy is well below the national average.
- Reducing circulatory diseases, particularly coronary heart disease.
- Reducing rates of infant death, especially among some black and minority ethnic groups, teenage mothers and ‘new-arrival communities’.
- Reducing teenage conception rates.

Priority actions

- Promoting healthy lifestyles across all council services and through locally targeted programmes in constituencies and schools.
- Working with the Health and Well-Being Partnership to reduce coronary heart disease, levels of obesity and smoking.
- Developing and piloting social and emotional literacy programmes in schools.
- Developing extra-care housing and care centres for older people.
- Applying a range of schemes to help people live independently.
- Continuing to work in partnership with the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) via the Health and Well-Being Partnership to better understand and address teenage conception in Birmingham and to deliver the Floor Target Action Plan for infant deaths.



Enjoy a High Quality of Life

benefiting from good housing and renowned cultural and leisure opportunities

A city where residents enjoy a 'high quality of life' has a range of quality housing to meet the needs of a diverse and ever-changing population; good schools, hospitals and local health centres; good local shops, parks and leisure centres; and the opportunity to access the very best cultural and sporting activities and events, locally and city-wide. We are working closely with many public and private-sector partners to enable Birmingham's citizens to enjoy a high quality of life.

We are modernising the city's social housing stock through the Decent Homes programme, providing modern kitchens and bathrooms, and are on track to reach the Decent Homes Standard for all our housing by 2010. We will be working with private landlords and registered social landlords to make sure their properties also meet the standards.

Through our work with partners, homelessness applications have fallen significantly. We will continue working to reduce the number further and cut the number of households living in temporary accommodation.

People are living longer and we need to meet the needs and aspirations of our ageing population, helping them play an active part in the community. We will make sure people can make the right choices to maintain their independence and quality of life into old age. For people who need more support, we will work in partnership with other agencies to offer the highest standards of care.

Through the Birmingham Cultural Partnership and Birmingham Sports Partnership, we will continue to improve and expand the City's leisure and cultural opportunities. We will continue building on the City's reputation at home and abroad for staging first-class sporting and cultural events, ensuring that people have access to them and feel the benefits of them locally.

Although we are all rightly proud of our regenerated city centre, Birmingham residents have told us that their local area is equally important. We will continue to develop a city of vibrant local centres with first-class amenities. We will continue to work to provide safe, clean and more attractive local parks and make sure our leisure and sports facilities meet their expectations.

A high quality of life for people in Birmingham will mean that:

- more people will be satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live and have a better quality of life
- more residents (current and future) will have their choice of housing
- the City's housing stock will be modernised to meet people's aspirations for decent homes
- more older people will remain active and involved in the community
- people providing informal care to relatives and dependants will receive better support
- local centres will be thriving, clean and attractive
- more people will be satisfied with our parks and open spaces and will take part in cultural activities (such as libraries, museums) and enjoy our leisure facilities at a time and place that suits them.

Achievements

- With our partners we have reduced homelessness to 50 per cent of the 2002 – 03 levels. We have also won three prestige UK Housing Awards in 2006 for our work in preventing homelessness and supporting vulnerable home owners to improve their homes.
- New extra-care accommodation for older people has opened in three areas of the city.
- Birmingham residents have planted over 250 semi-mature trees and 700 saplings across the city. Plus, we have planted an extra 1,200 trees across the city.
- 81 per cent of residents use their local park, five of which have been awarded the coveted Green Flag Award.
- Satisfaction with Neighbourhood Offices has increased – this has risen to 88 per cent this year.
- Visits to the Gas Hall Exhibitions at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery have risen by 23 per cent since last year and Birmingham Libraries have won lottery money to create new informal and flexible learning spaces in libraries across the city.

Challenges

- Addressing the shortage of larger family homes and affordable homes.
- Providing new housing that meets the technological requirements of the 21st century; addressing residents' information and communication needs as well as their physical needs.
- Improving the condition of our leisure facilities.
- Meeting the needs of the huge number of unpaid carers in the city. There are thought to be almost 100,000 of these 'hidden carers' (10 per cent of our population).

Priority actions

- Developing local neighbourhoods that will thrive, be clean and attractive.
- Ensuring all council housing meets the Decent Homes Standard.
- Bringing empty properties back into use.
- Preventing homelessness through a range of targeted measures.
- Improving our cultural, sporting and leisure facilities and parks and increasing satisfaction with these services.
- Improving care services.
- Developing services for carers and ensuring that the most vulnerable carers get those services.



Make a Contribution

valuing one another and playing an active part in the community

Birmingham is a diverse city with residents of many nationalities and faiths from many ethnic groups. It is important that communities of all kinds value one another, understand what unites them and recognise how they can all contribute to ensuring Birmingham remains a welcoming, fair and successful city.

The city benefits from an enormous number of active and involved citizens. We will encourage and develop this, consulting and engaging residents as widely as we can. We will make sure we use consultation methods that enable everyone to be involved, if they choose.

We will work to support communities in overcoming barriers to active participation and engagement. We will empower people to build and develop communities of strength, resilience and character. We will encourage citizens to contribute to and influence decisions and priorities affecting their area. Communities should feel they play an active role in shaping Birmingham's prosperity and that their voices are heard and acted upon. We will focus on continuing to work with partners and stakeholders in communities to promote cohesion, tolerance, capacity and understanding.

All schools in Birmingham now have a duty to promote community cohesion and have practical action plans for this. We are also developing a framework for informal and formal involvement of young people in volunteering and actively contributing to their community, locally and city-wide.

Third Sector organisations, including the many faith communities, are a vital asset to the city and its future. The voluntary and community sector is uniquely placed to guide us in improving the lives of local residents. Effective working relationships with the Third Sector and partnership working are paramount in helping us achieve our ambitions for Birmingham people. We are already making great strides in this area – Birmingham City Council's work with the Third Sector has achieved Beacon Status, making us leaders in this field.

People valuing one another and playing an active part in the community will mean that:

- more people in general (and hard-to-reach groups in particular) will feel that they can influence local decisions and have a say in their services
- people will have a range of ways to communicate, interact and take part in local decision-making and influence their neighbourhoods and service delivery
- people will celebrate the city's diversity, culture and history and be proud of its achievements
- the community and voluntary sector will increase the scope of their activities so that they feel they are full partners in the life of the city and are making a particular contribution
- new-arrival and established communities will have the tools to communicate, share experiences and exchange information, wherever they are.

Achievements

- The Council has been awarded Beacon Status for our work with the Third Sector in increasing voluntary and community-sector service. We have also won further awards for our work on commissioning and buying goods and services with the Third Sector.
- The Annual Opinion Survey 2007 showed 80 per cent of Birmingham residents believe that people from different backgrounds get along well together. It also showed that 78 per cent feel that by working together they can influence decisions affecting their local area.
- Over 600 volunteers helped out at the European Indoor Athletics Championships.

Challenges

- Providing new and effective ways of engaging with hard-to-reach and disengaged groups.
- Encouraging greater community cohesion and tackling the causes of community dissatisfaction.
- Providing ways and opportunities for citizens to influence local decision-making.
- Enabling and encouraging groups who don't already take part in community activities, such as some elderly, young and disabled people, to do so.
- Removing barriers so that the voluntary and community sector can be more effectively involved in delivering services.

Priority actions

- Implementing the Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy, thus improving ways for people to communicate with and influence the Council, particularly hard-to-reach and disengaged groups.
- Strengthening the voluntary and community sector. Promoting volunteering and increasing the number of young people involved in volunteer activity.
- Promoting greater understanding between communities, faiths and generations.
- Continuing to implement our agreement with the voluntary and community sector (the Birmingham Compact).
- Developing a service-user and carer-engagement strategy.



Achieving Excellence

linking resources to priorities

The comprehensive performance assessment published in February 2008 awarded the Council three stars and assessed us as 'improving well'.

This recognises improvements achieved over the past 12 months which has seen our Use of Resources assessment getting a score of 3 stars; star ratings for Supporting People and Housing services, and 2 stars for Adult Social Care Services.

Our ambition is for all of our services to be rated as excellent by the people of Birmingham as well as by inspectors.

Achieving excellence means:

- **transforming our business and providing value for money**

We have been transforming the way we manage our business – redesigning our approach to finance and the way we buy our products and services. By the end of this financial year, we will have achieved efficiency savings in excess of £190m and we are set to deliver further savings of £850m over the next 10 years.

We will pursue further transformation programmes to improve services. We will continue to apply tight control over budgets to ensure we manage our spending within the resources available. We will adopt a rigorous approach to driving out waste and inefficiency and direct resources to frontline services.

- **being customer focussed**

Understanding the needs of our customers and providing accessible, flexible and responsive customer services. Our Customer First programme is improving customer care, so that services are based on the needs of the customer.

- **having a first-class workforce**

We are investing in our staff through our Excellence in People Management programme, so that they are skilled, engaged in their work, work flexibly and are properly rewarded. Every team in the council is taking part in the BEST (Belief, Excellence, Success and Trust) programme to celebrate the hard work and commitment our staff show daily and motivate them further instilling a sense of pride in working for the organisation.

- **equality and diversity**

This is a high priority for everything the Council does; how we operate our internal systems and the way we deliver our services to the people of Birmingham.

- **putting sustainability at the heart of everything we do**

We will reduce the City's carbon footprint in line with our targets – becoming a low-carbon economy and safeguarding the City's environment.

- **becoming Europe's leading digital city.**

We have been working with partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors to establish Birmingham as the leading European digital city. This year we have created a Wi-Fi network across the square mile of the city centre and launched the Birmingham FIZ – a 'free information zone' providing free useful information in the Wi-Fi zone. We have also launched the Birmingham Bulletin, a subscription e-mail service which has over 100,000 subscriptions.

Achieving excellence locally, nationally and globally, we will also:

- Consult on a framework for neighbourhood working, with the aim of involving local people and building a city of vibrant urban villages.
- Achieve excellence with communities through local and responsive services.
- Continue to respond to the opportunities in the Local Government and Public Involvement Health Act 2007, and The Government's comprehensive spending review.
- Implement the recommendations of the Review of sub-national economic development and regeneration.
- Strengthen our partnership working at a regional, city-wide, constituency and neighbourhood level.
- Build a strong city-region that delivers increased prosperity and environmental sustainability for all.
- Provide better information to the public about how Birmingham is meeting challenges and realising opportunities.
- Improve the results from external assessments of the Council, for example through the Audit Commission's comprehensive area assessment.
- Continue to adopt a medium-term approach to our financial planning, now extended to 10 years.
- Seek to extend our existing record of below-inflation rates of Council Tax increases.



Glossary

Area Investment Prospectus	A plan that targets investment and regeneration in the north-west, east and south of Birmingham.
Audit Commission	An independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively to achieve high-quality local services.
Beacon Status	An award given to local authorities for outstanding work in a particular field or service area.
Be Birmingham	Formerly the Birmingham Strategic Partnership, an organisation made up of Birmingham's main public-sector agencies, plus representatives of the private, voluntary and community sectors, which work together to bring about improvements in the local community.
BEST (Belief, Excellence, Success, Trust) programme	The set of core behaviours that Birmingham City Council and its employees seek to demonstrate in delivering council services.
Birmingham Compact	An agreement signed by Be Birmingham (formerly Birmingham Strategic Partnership) in 2005, which aims to improve partnerships between public-sector agencies and the third sector.
Birmingham Cultural Partnership	A partnership of city council and representatives of the key cultural agencies and non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs).
Birmingham FIZ (Free Information Zone)	Publicity accessible free information zone, giving access to Birmingham-specific information.
Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Partnership (BHWP)	A partnership of the three Birmingham Primary Care Trusts (South Birmingham, Birmingham East and North and Heart of Birmingham), Birmingham City Council and other partners from the voluntary and community sector. It aims to address health issues in Birmingham.
Birmingham Prospectus	A 25-year master plan for Birmingham.
Birmingham's Science City Designation	The designation of Birmingham as a city at the forefront of scientific and technological development, focused around the east side of the city centre.
Birmingham Sports Partnership	A partnership of private and public-sector organisations working towards raising the profile of Birmingham in staging first-class sporting events.
Business transformation programmes	Programmes to change the ways the Council buys products and services.
Community cohesion	People working together to improve their neighbourhoods.
Community Strategy	A long-term partnership vision for the city, implemented by the LAA.
Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)	To replace the CPA. An independent assessment by the Audit Commission of the prospects for local areas and the quality of life for its residents.
Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)	An independent assessment by the Audit Commission of the performance of local authorities.
Comprehensive Spending Review	A review that identifies what investments and reforms are needed to equip Birmingham for global challenges.

Consultation and Engagement Strategy	A framework showing how the Council aims to involve Birmingham residents in the decision-making process, especially hard-to-reach and disengaged groups.
Conurbation	An extended urban area, typically consisting of several areas that merge.
Constituencies	An area for which a councillor is elected as a parliamentary representative. Birmingham is divided into 10 constituencies. Each constituency has four wards with three councillors who sit on the constituency committee. Constituencies aim to provide high-quality, cost-effective local services that meet the needs of the diverse communities they serve. They enable local residents to influence the shape and quality of the services they receive, and participate fully in running their local community.
Constituency Committee	A committee made of 12 councillors who represent either ward in the constituency. They have delegated powers from the Council that give them responsibility for local services and budgets.
Constituency Strategic Partnerships (CSPs)	Council and other public agencies, the business sector and voluntary community organisations that develop a shared vision for the area, and plan for local people in a coordinated way.
Constituency Community Plan	The shared vision and implementation of local constituencies. (see also CSPs)
Core Cities	A group representing England's eight largest cities outside London – Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield. The group works together and with the Government to develop policies to strengthen their economies.
Customer First Programme	The programme of projects that will improve customer service, from the point of first contact through to delivery.
Decent Homes Programme	A plan for achieving a certain quality in homes in Birmingham. This involves modernising housing by providing new kitchens and bathrooms for the properties of council tenants, registered social landlords and private landlords.
Decent Homes Standard	A legal minimum standard for social housing. 95per cent of all social housing will need to meet this standard by 2010.
Excellence in People Management (EPM)	A programme that aims to transform the way the Council manages its employees, by investing in staff so that they are skilled, engaged in their work, can work flexibly and are rewarded appropriately.
Extra-care villages/centres	Places that enable older adults to live independently, but with assistance.
Faith Strategy	The City Council's strategy that takes account of the requirements of legislation on religion and belief.
Floor target action plan	Floor target is a general term to describe government targets that set a minimum standard of service for disadvantaged groups or areas, or a narrowing of the gap between them and the rest of the country. The action plan is what we will do to try to achieve these standards.
Green Flag Award	A national award for recreational facilities, presented to an organisation and given publicity.
Hate Crime Reduction Strategy	Working with partners to implement a framework to reduce hate crime in Birmingham.
Heritage Strategy 2007–2010	A plan to improve parks and public spaces, and refurbish historic buildings.

Independent Living	A programme of support to enable people to overcome problems in daily living and live independently at home. It includes information and advice, plus practical solutions such as aids and adaptations in their home.
Local Area Agreement	A set of targets agreed with local partners and central government, giving the Council greater local flexibility and freedom to innovate to achieve the city's vision. It is a three-year plan of how it aims to implement the Community Strategy.
Local Government and Public Involvement Act 2007	The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, introduced to Parliament in December 2006. It introduces various measures relating to local government as well as involvement of local communities.
Local services	Running services like libraries and neighbourhood offices from a constituency level.
Low-carbon economy	The basis for a new industrial revolution – implementing new technologies such as renewable sources of electricity, replacing coal and oil with lower-carbon fuels such as gas, and using hydrogen as a fuel.
Neighbourhood Caretaker scheme	An estate-based scheme that undertakes caretaking and cleaning services.
New Street Gateway Project	The project led by Network Rail that will see the regeneration of New Street Station. The Steering Group consists of Birmingham City Council, Network Rail, Centro, West Midlands Transport Authority and Advantage West Midlands.
Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF)	A pot of money given to each constituency to improve and renew their areas. From April 2008, this fund will cease and be replaced by the Working Neighbourhoods Fund.
Overview and Scrutiny Committee(s)	Overview and scrutiny is an important part of the 'checks and balances' necessary to ensure that the Cabinet is accountable to the City Council's 120 members. The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees is to review and scrutinise the decision-making and performance of the Council's Executives to ensure they are fair, practical and represent the best interests of the public.
Partnership working	Working with different organisations towards a given cause.
Performance measures	Specific targets that we work towards and assess using strict criteria, as a way of reviewing what we do.
Progressive Partnership	The arrangement by which the Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups on Birmingham City Council work together to lead the City Council.
Primary Care Trusts (PCTs)	Bodies responsible for commissioning all health care in their community.
Procurement	The process of acquiring goods works and services from suppliers or service providers.
Resources assessment	Monitoring and evaluating how we manage our time, money and people.
Registered social landlords (RSL)	Not-for-profit housing providers approved and regulated by government through the Housing Corporation.
Safeguarding	The Council and its partners have safeguarding arrangements in place. These protect vulnerable people and ensure quality and dignity of care.



Service User Engagement Strategy	This strategy outlines a plan for achieving success in the way the Council engages with service users.
Service-level agreements	Agreements between Birmingham City Council and external organisations or in-house providers to provide specific services.
Supporting People	A programme for housing-related services that helps people live independently. It aims to do this by helping vulnerable people improve their quality of life by providing a stable environment.
Street Champions	An opportunity for residents to become volunteers in their area to ensure it is free from rubbish, litter and graffiti. Street Champions organises training, street clean-ups and planting.
Strategic outcomes	A framework showing priorities and desired outcomes. It is different from a plan, which sets out the practical steps needed to implement a strategy. The bigger picture of the specific things we aim to achieve.
Swim 4 Free	An opportunity for under-16s to swim for free at any swimming baths in Birmingham.
Third sector	Charities, voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises.
UK Housing Awards	National awards that recognise the work organisations have done towards specific housing-related issues.
Wi-fi network	A square-mile zone around Birmingham city centre that enables high-speed wireless technology to be used.
Working Neighbourhoods Fund	This will replace the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.
Worklessness	Defined by the Department for Work and Pensions as 'people of working age who are not in formal employment but who are looking for a job (the unemployed), together with people of working age who are neither formally employed nor looking for formal employment (the economically inactive)'.
WMP	West Midlands Police.
Strong knowledge economy	Using knowledge to produce economic benefits.

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