

# **Beyond Constitutional Change – “Making it Real” Birmingham Councillors Look to Provide the Road Map to Successful Devolution**

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A decade after it began its radical journey of taking service development and delivery to where it belongs – in the communities it serves - Birmingham’s new administration adopted a new constitution in May.

This delegates services including housing management, youth services, adult education and key regulatory responsibilities such as fly tipping to newly formed District Committees, alongside existing devolved services such as libraries and leisure that were delegated to the previous Constituency arrangements.

Over the next twelve months these Committees will take increasing responsibility for most community-facing services of importance to local communities. In addition, it is intended that District Committees will have a performance overview role and say in the delivery of 80% of Council services and have an influencing role on what other agencies deliver locally, such as community safety, public health and local employment.

Recognising constitutional change is one thing, but securing the necessary cultural change and power shift is another. The new Districts and Public Engagement Committee will initiate a Select Committee style inquiry to provide the framework and overview for the delivery of the Council’s agenda for devolution.

The Committee aims to develop a common understanding of what can be achieved by devolution, what needs to happen and change on the way, and how it can be real and relevant for residents in terms of the quality of services and local opportunity.

Cllr Lisa Trickett Chair of this Committee said: “Birmingham is the largest local authority in Europe, the size of many equivalent UN states – the one size fits all approach cannot work given our size and complexity. We are in a hugely challenging time for local government and the communities we serve, much of what we have taken for granted in terms of services and basic rights are now under threat, from this Coalition Government. We have to build a new settlement with local communities where we together understand the strengths and opportunities in our localities, and establish how we can best work together to protect and improve key services and secure opportunity. Our devolution programme is not a paper exercise; it is about a fundamental shift in power and cultural change. I want to ensure that through the work of this committee we are all clear on the challenges before us and have in place the collective capacity and confidence to make it happen this time around.”

The new Districts and Public Engagement Overview and Scrutiny Committee met for the first time on 18<sup>th</sup> July. At this meeting they agreed their “Making it Real” programme of work focusing on this key policy.

Councillor Sir Albert Bore, Leader of Birmingham City Council, added:  
“I welcome this inquiry and the opportunity it will provide to review our progress and generate new thinking and opportunities for delivering the UK’s most ambitious devolution programme for local government.”

End

<http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/scrutinycttes>

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