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Further information regarding this report can be obtained from:

Lead Review Officer: Benita Wishart

tel: 0121464 6871

e-mail: [benita.wishart@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:benita.wishart@birmingham.gov.uk)

Reports that have been submitted to Council can be downloaded from [www.birmingham.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/scrutiny).



# Preface

## By Councillor Lisa Trickett, Chair Districts and Public Engagement Overview and Scrutiny Committee



In May 2012 the Labour administration gained control of the Council with a commitment to see through the approach to localisation and devolution started a decade earlier. To facilitate that a “big bang” approach was taken with constitutional and some structural changes in place by July. The challenge now is for the Council to deliver on our key objective local services which are responsive to local needs.

There have been suggestions that there has been a sudden shift but, in fact, devolution is a journey that has been over a decade in the making. The key issue, that Birmingham is too big to govern at a single tier, remains as then widely accepted and understood. Problems are masked and opportunities are lost at that level. However, the 2013 context is very different in terms of public sector cuts and the impact of government policy which is a major challenge to both the future of local government and public services as we know them.

Our citizens are increasingly informed and look for much more responsive, open and accountable flexible services than we have traditionally offered – the digital age has had a role to play in this.

In moving forward on devolution there is an opportunity to redefine and refine the public service offer in Birmingham reflecting the diversity of place and people.

Over the last few months tensions have arisen and anomalies have been identified both in terms of policy and practice, but such tensions are inevitable in a period of transition and need to be embraced and reconciled, not avoided. Since the start of this journey we have referred to the need for culture to change. In this report the Committee has tried to define that change culture as the need to develop common understanding of the purpose of devolution, the importance of having in place a coherent system and the need for collaborative leadership.

This city back in the eighties redefined itself – devolution is potentially the opportunity for us to come together and find ways of doing things differently, yes with less but with a shared objective of improving outcomes and opportunities for all citizens.

Engagement with citizens will be necessary to achieve the required understanding of place and to deliver efficient and effective services.

Such an inquiry is only as good as those who give evidence and support the process and I would like to thank all concerned for their openness, integrity and time they took to get involved in the process.



## Summary of Recommendations

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R01	The Leader in association with Executive Members for Local Services to develop a common understanding of the purpose of devolution and the districts' contribution to the key priorities of the city and their locality.	Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	April 2013
R02	The Leader to discuss with Executive Members for Local Services what further constitutional powers they need to strengthen their governance when the constitution is next reviewed.	Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	July 2013
R03	<p>The Leader and Executive Members for Local Services:</p> <p>Work together to support the functional geography of the city that helps draw out the individual identities and differences of localities to enable district plans to be based upon a robust analysis of place in terms of combined assets, functionality, opportunity and key risk.</p> <p>Ensure learning occurs from the first year of the district planning process to ensure decision-making is robust enough to underpin locality commissioning. To draw on this to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop guidance and advisory timetables for developing district plans; and</li> <li>• Guidance to help ensure District Conventions are fit for purpose.</li> </ul>	Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	July 2013
R04	<p>The Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The procurement of services is a collaborative endeavour between the districts and corporate centre;</li> <li>• Opportunities in any procurement reflect the differential requirements of place;</li> <li>• Opportunities are identified to engage with third sector and citizens earlier in the process to establish needs and requirements and explore ways of delivering this; and</li> <li>• Support is in place for locality commissioning.</li> </ul>	Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement	<p>To be in place by March 2014</p> <p>Progress reports will be requested by the Committee.</p>



	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R05</b>	The Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement to agree with Executive Members for Local Services where each client function sits to ensure it is best able to monitor and manage the impact and delivery on the locality.	Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement and Executive Members for Local Services	To be in place by March 2014
<b>R06</b>	<p>The Leader in collaboration with Executive Members for Local Services to carry out an early review of the protocol within the Meeting Arrangements for District Committees (30 July 2012) and associated frameworks to ensure they reflect the differential requirement of place enabling districts to adapt and work in different ways to reflect the diversity of place and people.</p> <p>Ensures that any future protocols and strategic frameworks provide enough flexibility to reflect the differential requirements of place.</p>	Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	<p>March 2013</p> <p>This is an ongoing measure against which the Committee will benchmark and measure ongoing performance and changing culture.</p>
<b>R07</b>	<p>In order to ensure that structures are fit to deliver excellent services, with services being located in the right place (whether that be within districts, Local Services Directorate or the other directorates) the Leader to work with the Executive and Executive Members for Local Services in partnership to develop a rigorous functional re-alignment test for services to be devolved.</p> <p>This needs to assess services on whether they impact more on places and communities or on individuals and families. It also needs to consider value for money and financial sustainability. This process needs to be transparent and accountable and to put the outcome for the citizen first.</p> <p>In refining the test the Leader to subject the following services to examination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult education;</li> <li>• Some housing functions;</li> <li>• Highways; and</li> <li>• Enterprising Communities.</li> </ul> <p>Following the application of such a test there also needs to be a mechanism developed of agreeing the way forward with the appropriate Cabinet Member and Executive Members for Local Services.</p>	Leader, Cabinet Members and Executive Members for Local Services	April 2014



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	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R08</b>	<p>That the Leader works with officers to develop ward champions at JNC and Grade 7 level (excluding Service Integration Heads) to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add management support into wards and constituencies;</li> <li>Help wards avoid and navigate blockages and identify opportunities and ensure wards are better able to feed into the development of strategy; and</li> <li>Ensure that directorates have a mechanism for better understanding of local issues.</li> </ol> <p>This should be embedded through performance and development reviews (PDRs) and a six monthly seminar with the Chief Executive to identify common issues and trends.</p>	Leader	April 2013
<b>R09</b>	<p>The Leader and Executive Members for Local Services to improve information and knowledge flows, ensuring ward and district information can be shared with the corporate centre and the centre provides appropriate information broken down to localities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing a "whole system whole place approach" with a common vision and clarity about decision-making;</li> <li>Developing an information platform to ensure better sharing of and access to data; and</li> <li>Investigating opportunities to share data with key stakeholders – building on community based budgeting and total place pilots.</li> </ul>	Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	<p>Action plan April 2013</p> <p>Implementation April 2014</p>
<b>R10</b>	<p>The Leader and Executive Members for Local Services to ensure learning is embedded within the devolution process through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing a learning and development plan for devolution. This should provide opportunities for Members and officers to learn, innovate, positively accept the risks that are intrinsic to innovation, and challenge and draw upon Birmingham's Public Service Academy; and</li> <li>Ensuring the reflections of previous scrutiny reports inform the recommendations as set out in this</li> </ul>	Leader, Executive Members for Local Services and Chair of Governance, Resources and Member Development.	<p>Progress report April 2013</p> <p>This is an ongoing measure against which the Committee will benchmark and measure ongoing performance and changing culture.</p>



	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
	inquiry.		
<b>R11</b>	<p>The Leader to establish and work with a cross party councillor group (to include councillors representing inner and outer city wards) and Executive Members for Local Services to develop an approach to zero based budgeting to be rolled out for localities in 2014/15 and in place for 2015/16.</p> <p>Based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core standards;</li> <li>• Differential locality standards; and</li> <li>• City entitlement.</li> </ul>	Leader	<p>March 2015</p> <p>Committee will require regular reports on this.</p>
<b>R12</b>	The Leader to work with Executive Members for Local Services to develop a performance management framework for existing service level agreements (SLAs) so that districts can gain better influence and operational control over the delivery of services operated through SLAs; to also include a transparent reward and review system.	Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	July 2013
<b>R13</b>	Executive Members for Local Services to develop an action plan for how they will ensure improvements along the services and strategic continuum (from safe and deliverable services to our ultimate destination of service excellence).	Executive Members for Local Services	<p>To be integrated into the district planning process for 2013/14.</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring by Districts and Public Engagement O&amp;S</p>
<b>R14</b>	Executive Members for Local Services to work with the Deputy Leader to ensure that interface with citizens for service delivery (i.e. the first point of contact for a service) is fit for purpose, e.g. neighbourhood offices, call centre and web site, and reflect differential needs of people and place, taking into account the outcomes of the Governance, Resources and Member Development O&S customer services inquiry.	Deputy Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	<p>Assessment of key changes required to deliver integrated local interface</p> <p>May 2013.</p> <p>Cross cutting improvement plan – September 2013</p>



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	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R15</b>	<p>The Leader and Executive Members for Local Services to develop the following standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core standards to include the meeting of statutory requirements such as health and safety standards and a citizen entitlement to universal services such as refuse collection and street cleansing.</li> <li>• Core standards need to relate to 'outcomes', where possible, as the offer or 'inputs' then should differ according to the needs and requirements of a locality. E.g. the characteristics of a built environment impact on cleansing and the characteristics of local worklessness and health inequalities will require different interventions.</li> </ul> <p>In addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop differential locality standards (reflecting the specific needs of people and place) can be set by districts – to meet local priorities within available resources.</li> <li>• To develop an agreed city-wide civic entitlement setting out a minimum level of access to city-wide provision within available resources.</li> </ul>	Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	<p>April 2013</p> <p>To be incorporated into the district planning process</p> <p>Subject to annual review</p> <p>Committee will require regular reports on this.</p>
<b>R16</b>	<p>Executive Members for Local Services supported by the Cabinet Member for Social Cohesion and Equalities to:</p> <p>a) Develop opportunities for citizens to shape service delivery: Work with ward committees, Local Services Directorate and the corporate centre to develop citizen engagement opportunities, making the best use of existing networks (including natural community hubs e.g. school gates, local markets and places of worship), the City Council's own website and other websites and social media (within available resources) and encourage the development of improvement plans where necessary and ensure engagement outcomes feed into annual district governance reviews.</p> <p>b) Develop Partnership engagement as part of delivering "different for less": Map current partnerships and stakeholders, reflecting which are fit for purpose, and agree principles for partnership working. We would</p>	Executive Members for Local Services supported by the Cabinet Member for Social Cohesion and Equalities	<p>May 2013</p> <p>To be available for every district planning cycle.</p>



	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
	hope that districts take account of the changing policy context e.g. the Police and Crime Commissioner and Clinical Commissioning Groups.		
<b>R17</b>	<p>In order to ensure that assets are used effectively for the benefit of citizens the Deputy Leader:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To support the districts to build on the asset plans previously developed for constituencies at ward and district levels (those both locally and centrally held);</li> <li>• Agree a joint protocol between the local and central executive regarding governance, management, disposal, and the future use of all assets that fall within the sphere of responsibility of a locality to enshrine the influence of districts; and</li> <li>• Agree a mechanism for reconciling different views.</li> </ul>	Deputy Leader	Jan 2014
<b>R18</b>	Progress towards achievement of these recommendations should be reported to the Districts and Public Engagement Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2013. Subsequent progress reports will be scheduled by the Committee thereafter, until all recommendations are implemented.	Leader	June 2013



## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Devolution

- 1.1.1 In May 2012 the Labour administration gained control of the Council with a commitment to see through the approach to localisation and devolution started a decade earlier. To facilitate that a “big bang” approach was taken with constitutional and some structural changes in place by July. There are many challenges facing devolution, many of which have been in place for some time. Some, such as public sector cuts are new.
- 1.1.2 Whilst the environment for devolution is very different to a decade ago, as then, a key determinant is that Birmingham is too big and too complex to manage at a single tier.

### 1.2 Districts and Public Engagement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 1.2.1 The Districts and Public Engagement Overview and Scrutiny Committee chose to focus its first inquiry on this area in order to support the transition to a new set of structures, outcomes and relationships. The key questions we sought to answer were:
  - What is the purpose of devolution, how do we measure success and what actions are required to achieve that success?
- 1.2.2 The inquiry was chaired by Councillor Lisa Trickett and the Committee consisted of Councillors Gurdial Singh Atwal, Mick Brown, Jerry Evans, Tim Evans, Ziaul Islam, David Pears, Rob Pocock, and Sybil Spence. Cllr Bruce Lines was a committee member until October when he was replaced by Cllr Margaret Waddington.
- 1.2.3 The Committee held four formal meetings which were run as a series of iterative conversations and two workshops with officers and partners (See Appendix 1). In addition, a small cross party working group convened three times to examine housing issues. Whilst some of that has informed this report, the working group aims to undertake some further work.



## 2 Context

### 2.1 Birmingham Context

2.1.1 Devolution and Localisation has a long history in Birmingham, going back to the development of ward committees, ward advisory boards and neighbourhood forums and the Local Involvement Local Action programme of the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> Arguably the debate began even earlier with Sir Richard Knowles' enthusiasm for parishing the city in the 1980s. There has long been a widespread feeling that the city and the City Council is too large to be managed as a single entity and that services have been too centralised to respond to local needs and preferences or to engage communities and individuals effectively in decision making. The key local and national policy influences upon devolution and localisation can be seen to be:

- The Democracy Commission - chaired by Sir Adrian Cadbury and originally intended to provide a response to the Local Government Act 2000, the Commission rapidly came to the conclusion that the City Council was too remote and unresponsive and that it should "devolve decisions wherever possible to the local level".
- The Green Paper: A New Partnership for Governance. This was the City Council's first attempt to consult on how to move forward with further devolution and to respond to the Commission. The paper proposed a framework of Ward Strategic Partnerships to replace ward committees, with constituency level localisation of specific services overseen by occasional meetings of all the ward partnerships. It also proposed strengthening the role of neighbourhood forums and investing in the capacity of communities through Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.
- The "Highbury 3" conference of February 2001. The conference established the theme of "flourishing neighbourhoods" which would be taken forward within the Going Local programme.
- The Constitutional Convention and Declaration of Intent, December 2001. Following the green paper consultation there remained uncertainty about the structure for devolution to constituency or ward levels and a tension between the political focus of the wards and the practicalities of service localisation. The idea of the convention was to bring together the key stakeholders, including a range of political parties, community groups, the voluntary sector and public services. The Convention crafted a Declaration which set out the framework of constituency committees and partnerships, but maintained the consultative role for ward committees and referenced the importance of neighbourhood renewal.
- The process of policy development was overseen by a Cabinet Committee chaired by the Leader of the Council. An officer led working group undertook a detailed analysis of services to

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<sup>1</sup> We have drawn heavily upon a paper provided by Tony Smith, Senior Policy Officer



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decide which would be localised and the different models of localisation to be applied to each. It produced two reports to full Council in November 2002 and April 2003. The first of these set out the framework and principles and the second presented an outline project plan for implementation. In the final year before implementation a full project planning process was created, overseen by the Director of Resources, culminating in the launch of Going Local in April 2004. During this process the constituencies conducted their own local conventions and made proposals for how they would engage the community at the more local (ward and neighbourhood) levels. The decision was also taken at this point to withhold housing from the process, on the basis that the service then required significant improvement before it went through a radical transformation. This included delaying consideration of the proposals for community based housing associations made in the report by Anne Power<sup>2</sup> and originally included in the April 2003 City Council report.

## 2.2 Core Messages

2.2.1 The aims of the devolution and localisation programme have often been boiled down to a simple transfer of decision making, resources and service management to a district level. However it is arguable that the plans approved by the City Council in 2003 and discussed at the Convention and the Highbury 3 conference represented a much wider vision for the transformation of the City Council and its relationships with the people of Birmingham and other public services. Two key points need to be re-emphasised:

- Firstly, the reports took on board the emerging partnership agenda and included a vision of how different local public services would work together at the city wide and the local level. This was based on staff working in flexible networks focused on projects and outcomes and the gradual breaking down of the barriers and distinctions between service silos. They made it clear that a radical change to the centre of the City Council was essential to making devolution work.
- Secondly, the district/constituency structures were always seen as a means to support work at the neighbourhood/local level – where the truly radical cultural and political change would occur.

2.2.2 The following quote from the 2003 Council report illustrate this:

“The overall development of a new pattern of city governance will not occur through a single blueprint or central plan. The governance of a city like Birmingham is a complex, multi-layered and multi-dimensional process which brings together a great diversity of interests and objectives. This diversity, and

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<sup>2</sup> Power, A (ed.), *One Size Doesn't Fit All: Community housing and flourishing neighbourhoods*, Independent Commission of Inquiry into the Future of Council Housing in Birmingham (2002).



the need to support contributions “from the bottom up”, amongst council employees, local communities, voluntary organisations, other agencies and local councillors, means that change will occur in a non-linear way and according to a number of different drivers. Above all this must be seen as a process of cultural change, rather than one which is dominated by the planning of new structures of management and accountability.

2.2.3 And this quote from the November 2002 Council report could easily support wider considerations within the current context:

“The proposals set out in this report are part of a wider transformation taking place in the role and structure of local government, which will see all services operating in a more locally focused and joined-up way. For example, the Social Services Department is establishing closer links and joint commissioning with the NHS and its operations will be increasingly aligned with the devolved NHS management through Primary Care Trusts. The City Council, through its Overview and Scrutiny Committees, will also shortly be taking on a formal scrutiny role in relation to local NHS services. Schools have operated under local management for more than a decade. The next stage in the evolution of education services will see the development of “extended schools” which bring together a variety of family and community services, such as child care, study support, health and social services (delivered through multi-agency teams), adult education and family learning, sports, leisure and arts facilities.”

2.2.4 In addition to the housing reforms included in the 2003 proposals, two other service areas were also taken out of the process at an earlier stage. These were:

- Local development control - where the professional drive to retain a centralised system on the grounds of consistency and equity can conflict with the clear local interest in engagement and a new context of neighbourhood planning; and
- The youth service.

2.2.5 As one of the witnesses to our inquiry suggested *“it’s been a bit of a muddled journey.”*

2.2.6 To govern a city successfully it is necessary to set out a clear strategy and investment plans for economic development, skills and infrastructure across the whole of the city region and ensure that the city is linked into the opportunities provided by today’s global economic networks. But it is also necessary to provide a sustainable framework of public services at the city and the neighbourhood level, to empower communities to address their own challenges and to defend them from the negative impact of rapid economic change. Designing strong city governance is



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partly about deciding which functions should happen at which level and partly about designing the appropriate vehicles at each level for delivering them.

## 2.3 National Context

- 2.3.1 The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal contained the new concept of neighbourhood management which involved bringing local public services together to address the needs of a neighbourhood and appointing a neighbourhood manager as a single point of contact to support community organisations. The Council created a significant programme of neighbourhood management across 30 priority areas towards the end of this funding stream, but despite making important progress in many neighbourhoods this was not embedded in mainstream budgets.
- 2.3.2 Since 2000 regional structures (the Regional Development Agencies and the Government Offices) have been set up and then dismantled and now focus on the core cities and their city regions. Business led Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) have been created to lead on local economic development and in the core cities these tend to be based on city region areas. Through the city deals process the core cities are now moving towards a Combined Authority model of governance (an option legislated for by the previous government and retained by the current one). The Government is also preparing to devolve local transport funding and decision making and this will be based on LEP areas.
- 2.3.3 The Localism Act 2011 is possibly the most significant piece of local government legislation since the 2000 Local Government Act. The Act includes new community powers such as rights to challenge (to take over a service from the public sector) and to buy (a local asset from any owner). The Act also formalises the role of the neighbourhood forums for the first time and includes a new neighbourhood planning system. This has been piloted in Balsall Heath in Birmingham. There are challenges within this system, not least in terms of the capacity of communities and the resources available to support it, and there are also clear tensions between this localist vision and the more centralised approach being taken to the rest of the planning process. However there is a need for the new system to be considered as part of how localisation and devolution is taken forward.
- 2.3.4 The Government has taken forward the idea of Total Place from the previous administration and four pilots of “whole place community budgeting” are ongoing across the country. They have also introduced the idea of neighbourhood community budgets and this is being piloted in 12 neighbourhoods, including three in Birmingham at Castle Vale, Shard End and Balsall Heath. The aim at both levels is to bring agencies together and pool budgets in order to redesign services to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness. At the neighbourhood level this can be based on community engagement and much greater participation in budget and service design decisions.
- 2.3.5 The Government has published a white paper on “open public services” which seeks to establish an overall framework for their reforms of the public services. It classifies services as “individual”, “neighbourhood” or “commissioned”, implying a commissioning rather than direct delivery role for



councils and a much stronger focus on the role of voluntary organisations and communities themselves in delivering neighbourhood services. Service reform also includes changes to the welfare system and to health and social care, with the new GP commissioning approach and the Council's new leadership role in public health being particularly significant to devolution and localisation. The increasing independence for schools and the shift of resources from councils to individual schools are also factors that might point the way for a different landscape for devolution and localisation. The paper also promotes the role of parish councils and suggests that the government may legislate to make them easier to set up and to give them more powers to run services. They have now issued a consultation paper on how to do this.

- 2.3.6 There are now many more ways in which the City Council and other local public services can become more responsive to local communities or empower them to make a contribution to local outcomes than back in 2000. Smart phones and social media have spread exponentially through the population and the public sector now uses these tools widely and provides access to many more services on-line. Birmingham's flourishing social media entrepreneurs and online political activists and journalists provide new opportunities to think differently about what localisation means. At the same time the economic crisis, the continued downward pressure on wages and benefits but upward pressure on the cost of living including rents, has left many excluded from the full benefits of the communications and information age and created a pressing need for support services. Birmingham is a very young city, due in part to its tremendous diversity and the constant arrival and settling of new communities, but at the same time it is also feeling the effects of the increased longevity across society with growing pressures on resources to support older people. These factors and many more will all influence the pattern of services in the future and the role of local services.
- 2.3.7 Spending cuts impact on this agenda. The reduction of the City Council's grant income by around 30% between 2011 and 2016 (with service pressures and other financial changes taking this to an effective 50% reduction), has to be part of the context within which this inquiry draws its conclusions on the way ahead. Angus Kennedy, of the Community Regeneration Partnership, set out the context for where we are today, clearly suggesting councils have gone from a time of achieving efficiency savings to delivering less for less and we are now having to deliver things differently for less.
- 2.3.8 Any viable strategy for Birmingham's devolution and localisation will need to be based on a broader understanding of how the role of the City Council will change in the years ahead. The Making it Real inquiry aims to act as a catalyst for the development of common understanding on the part that devolution and localisation plays in that. Furthermore, whilst councillors and officers will often focus on the structure of committees and services and how they are commissioned and funded, real devolution and localisation for the people and communities of the city is likely to be neighbourhood centred and focused on the outcomes that matter most to them. The structures and processes put in place will need to be seen as a framework for achieving that focus and not as ends in themselves. This is the fifth time scrutiny has considered the issue of devolution and



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localisation. The scrutiny report<sup>3</sup> in 2010 responding to the Future Shape of Localisation consultation set out five principles for achieving excellence. We suggest they are still relevant today. They related to:

- Local councillors being able to control, not just influence services;
- Budget savings should not be at the expense of local decision making as efficiencies can be made locally;
- The Total Place / Community based budgeting approach can help the wider public sector use budgets better;
- Local engagement is important and welcomed where residents can see the impact and feel valued; and
- District Committees are a good size for enabling local partnership working.

2.3.9 It also called for a review of governance, in term of number and purpose of meetings and who is engaged, which is still outstanding.

## 2.4 Definitions

### What is Devolution? A Perspective from the Chamberlain Forum

The word is derived from 'devolutus' the past participle of the Latin verb 'devolvere' meaning 'to roll down'.

In practice, devolution is an approach to enabling systems intelligence by increasing the number of decision making points within it on a geographic basis. It is the opposite to centralisation (reducing the number of decision points) and professional specialisation (organising decisions according to skills needed to address them, rather than to geography). Devolution is not the same as:

- Delegation – which is about assigning authority and responsibility to another to carry out specific tasks or functions within set parameters.
- Differentiation – which is about creating advantage through variety and distinctiveness in what you produce.
- Divestment – which is about letting go of assets and functions and the responsibility for them.
- Diversification – which is about doing new things in new ways.

Though, in time, it might lead to or involve all four of the above.

Devolution, however, is not - and is not intended to lead to:

- Disintegration – which is about breaking something up into independent pieces.

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<sup>3</sup> Local Services and Community Safety O&S Committee (November 2010) *Localisation: Response to the Consultation on the Future Shape of Localisation 2010*.



## 2.5 The 2012 Vision

2.5.1 The Leader's Statement<sup>4</sup> of June 2012 set out three key priorities going forward:

- Tackle inequality and deprivation;
- Laying the foundations of a prosperous city; and
- Involving people and communities in the future of their localities and public services. "A city with local services for local people."

2.5.2 Articulating his vision for localisation at full Council the Leader referred to:

"creating a city with local services that respond to the needs of local people – wherever they live in the city."

2.5.3 The statement also says "devolution and localisation is at the heart of our vision for Birmingham." He explained the different concepts as:

- Devolution is about the governance of functions and involves elected councillors; whilst
- Localisation focuses on the delivery of services and involves City Council officers.

2.5.4 The Leader, giving evidence, suggested that devolution gives councillors responsibility for their own area in a more tangible way than they can when services are delivered from the centre. This recognises that services should not be delivered in a homogenous way across Birmingham as the needs may be different. We know that one solution does not fit all and so, for a city of one million devolution makes sense.

2.5.5 It is very easy when discussing devolution to concentrate on structures and governance. But it is necessary to concentrate on the outcomes – what does it mean for citizens of our city? What is the impact on the services they want or need and the places in which they live, learn and play? Devolution needs to be about making places where people choose to carry out those activities and providing opportunities for them. An outcome of a ten district approach is that places will look different, and develop in different ways, prioritising different issues. At the same time, some common priorities are likely, such as strengthening the resilience of residents to the challenges ahead and helping people to help themselves.

2.5.6 In particular devolution can lead to promotion of well-being and the need to ensure opportunities for the "five ways" for residents to improve their well being through:

- Connection: with the people around them;
- Being active: keeping moving;
- Taking notice: environmental and emotional awareness;

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<sup>4</sup> Birmingham City Council , June 2012



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- Keeping learning: trying something new at any age; and
- Giving: helping others and build reciprocity and trust.<sup>5</sup>

2.5.7 A set of outcomes the Districts and Public Engagement O&S Committee suggested were:

- Services being different, better suited to the area, and more efficient;
- Officers work for their locality first, not their service or directorate, and work together more;
- Local councillors can have more influence on the services that are delivered; and
- Residents believe they are more in control of their services and their local area.

2.5.8 Devolution in 2012 is part of a journey and the intention is to refresh the route, but not to disregard all that has gone before. The previous aims set out in 2004 are still relevant. The aims for localisation then included:

- Local delivery of high quality key public services;
- Greater involvement of the community;
- Provision of locally run access points for local services;
- Integrated local working;
- Local partnership working; and
- Culture change to ensure officers work for the community.

2.5.9 The aims for devolution included:

- Delegation of decisions to all councillors from the Cabinet Members to enable local priorities to be met and local agreement on how to best deliver services to meet the needs of local people, subject to overarching policy frameworks;
- Enhancement of local democracy and community leadership through opportunities for the electorate to be able to influence service decisions; and
- Enabling some differences in local governance arrangements.

2.5.10 The approach taken in 2012 has been to build on existing local structures meaning there are now ten district committees holding responsibility for a wider number of services than previously. In the longer term the ambition is that 80% of the Council's services will be accountable to (if not controllable by) district committees.

2.5.11 The starting point for achieving the culture change set out later in this report is clarity of vision at a city-wide level and a district level for all involved.

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<sup>5</sup> New Economics Foundation (2010) *The Role of Government in Promoting Well-being*. At: <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/the-role-of-local-government-in-promoting-well-being>



2.5.12 The report sets out some requirements for action plans. Alongside setting out the vision it would be helpful to provide a 'road map' for transition, setting out the progressive steps to be taken over a longer, possibly four-year term, to get from where we are to where we want to go.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R01</b>	The Leader in association with Executive Members for Local Services to develop a common understanding of the purpose of devolution and the districts' contribution to the key priorities of the city and their locality.	Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	April 2013

## Place Shaping

2.5.13 People shape space to make place; and different places and people relate to different spatial scales, therefore there is not necessarily one correct spatial scale for a given policy intervention. There needs to be a place based focus, with some things delivered at a neighbourhood level, some at a ward, some at a district and others city-wide.

2.5.14 There needs to be a localised focus for developing place based strategies. The Leader's statement indicated that a new Neighbourhood Strategy will be developed to be:

“One of the most ambitious programmes for social cohesion and regeneration and a neighbourhood level that will build on the present neighbourhood budgets pilots, and will develop ideas on social investment and prevention – including work with troubled families.”

2.5.15 The Neighbourhood Strategy should not be a standard, centralised model imposed from the centre and should reflect the differential of localities. We would wish to see the process for developing neighbourhood strategies to enable the character of local neighbourhood management to reflect the rich diversity of the city. There is a concern that the largest concentration of resources available are within the housing service and so the capacity for neighbourhood working may be limited to certain areas of the city, due to the historical development of the city.

2.5.16 We recommend that the City Council's Neighbourhood Strategy should be a composite of district and neighbourhood based approaches and have as an integral part the active engagement of citizens, key stakeholders and existing neighbourhood groups. Districts need to be empowered to develop local neighbourhood strategies that reflect local cultures and priorities aligned to the long term objectives of the city's different districts.

2.5.17 We need to develop a functional geography that helps us to understand challenges and opportunities and what is distinct about each locality and the differences between places and people.



# Devolution: Making it Real

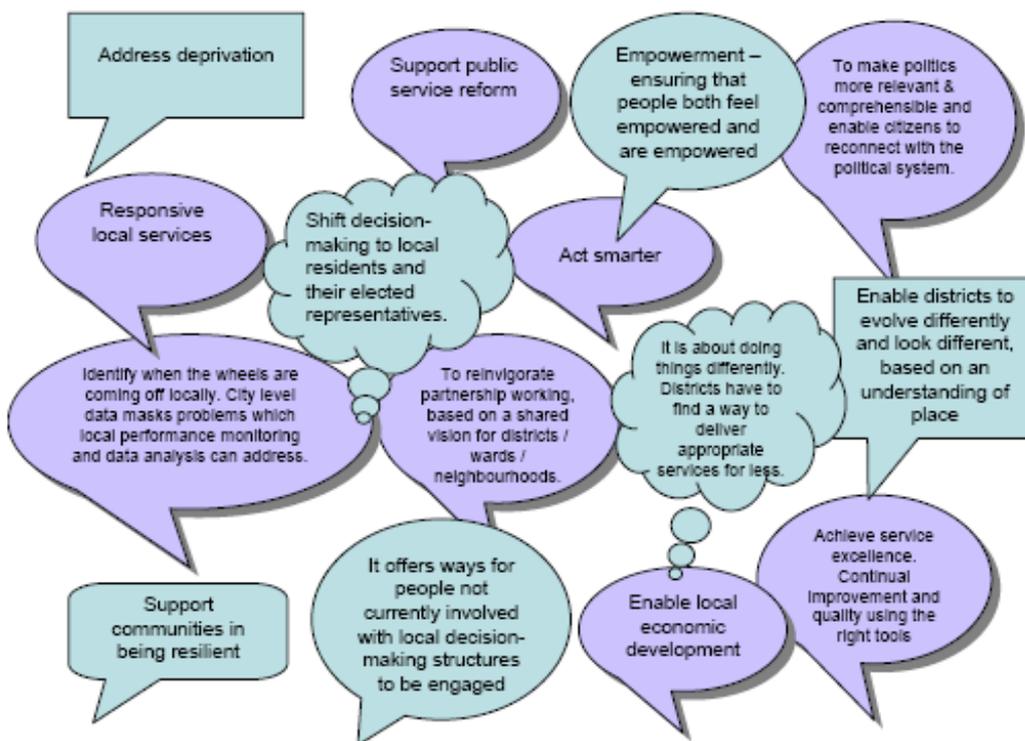
2.5.18 A recent commission into the future of local government concluded:

“Local government must seize the day!

Rather than waiting for central government to tell it what to do, now is the time for local government to seize the opportunity to shape its own future. The unequivocal message the Commission heard was that only local government has the mandate to lead cities and towns, and the public trust it to do so. Councils are becoming increasingly innovative and effective at producing good quality services and value for the taxpayer and they now need to look ahead positively. In planning ahead, local government must rediscover the spirit of the original civic entrepreneurs, such as Joseph Chamberlain.”<sup>6</sup>

2.5.19 We heard and suggested many aims for the devolution agenda – see Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Reasons for Devolution**



2.5.20 The message of this inquiry is that “districts must seize the day.” However, to enable this, an equally important message is that “the centre must let go.” This means to trust and empower districts, be confident in letting go, and willing for districts to experiment, take risks, be

<sup>6</sup> Leeds Commission into the Future of Local Government



entrepreneurial, learn from mistakes, and allow districts to evolve their own distinctive character and ways of working.

## 2.6 Big Bang and “How do you know when you’ve succeeded”?

2.6.1 When the Leader gave evidence he talked about the journey and the length of time it had taken to grow the devolution agenda. He suggested that devolution could not work until all the structures were put in place. This belief underpinned the decision to take a “Big Bang” approach and put the structures in place by the end of Summer 2012 to allow devolution to grow.

2.6.2 We were told that in order for others (residents, partners and officers) to understand and believe that real change was being made there was no choice other than the “Big Bang” and it was considered the right strategic approach for such a major transformation in the way our city is run. However, this is inevitably throwing up tensions which require resolving in the interim and reflect some of the ongoing anomalies from devolution over the past decade.

2.6.3 But it was suggested that success can not happen if the status quo continues:

“We can measure success when we cause interruptions and change the way we now work. Nothing is going to work if we do not pull and fix.”

2.6.4 We welcome the tensions coming to the fore, inevitably in a period of scarce resources and competing priorities tensions and conflict will arise. Reconciling these early on will assist delivery of key objectives down the line. This is why there has to be a new honesty and contract with the citizens of Birmingham.

2.6.5 Governance and structures have been put in place to devolve extra services to districts during 2012. This has re-emphasised the role of ward committees, changed constituency committees to district committees with more responsibilities and powers, created the role of Executive Members for Local Services who chair the districts and created the Local Services Directorate. It is important to note that power has been delegated to the committees collectively, and no delegations have been given to the Executive Members for Local Services. However, the attendance of Executive Members for Local Services at Cabinet is aimed at achieving an interface between the central and the devolved executives.

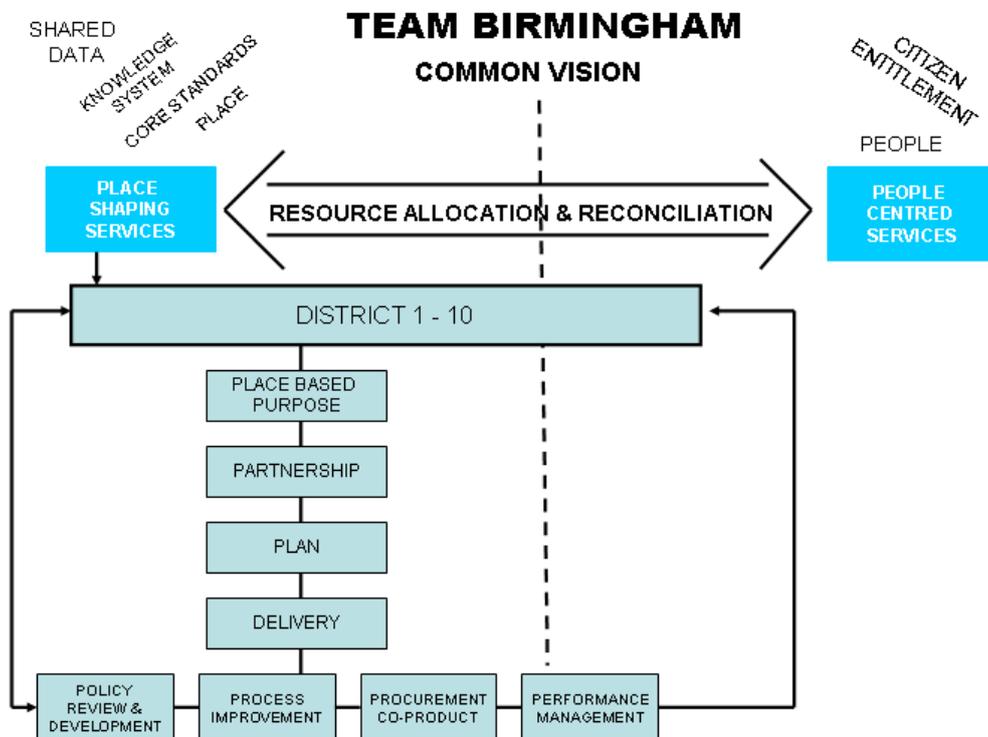
	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R02</b>	The Leader to discuss with Executive Members for Local Services what further constitutional powers they need to strengthen their governance when the constitution is next reviewed.	Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	July 2013



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- 2.6.6 A structure that is introduced not in the constitution but in one of the Cabinet reports is the quadrants covering two or three districts. We have clarified that the role of 'quadrants' is to provide an internal operational management arrangement, a shared-services facility to support the primary functions of district and neighbourhood services. There is little commonality or strategic intent between some districts within quadrants, but they do provide further opportunities for sharing staff which need to be considered due to the flexibility offered.
- 2.6.7 With this refreshed vision and a changing context it would be wrong to see devolution as a debate about structures and governance. Fundamentally, it relates to the reform of local government and public services in the 21st century. It is about creating conditions for leadership to make and shape sustainable inclusive places at a neighbourhood, ward, district, city and regional level.
- 2.6.8 Success has a number of building blocks which include policy (are the right plans in place?), process improvement (are we doing things the right way?), performance management, partnership (are we working with the right ones and is the relationship productive?) and procurement (are the right things being commissioned at the right level and also bringing added value?) (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: The Building Blocks for Devolution



- 2.6.9 The key test of success is the outcomes for Birmingham's citizens. What real and measurable change has come about? Alongside that does it look and feel sensible? Do citizens know where to go for what services and who to hold accountable, or do they see the Council passing the buck



and people ducking responsibility? The focus on the citizen experience could be captured in ways like:

- “Instead of services being like A, we get a better deal because they are now like B”
- “I get a real say on how the local money is spent. This means now they spend it on a, b, c whereas before they just spent it on x, y, z”

2.6.10 The litmus test of devolution overall and for each service for which districts have responsibility has to be sustainable service excellence.

2.6.11 We suggest that a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators are agreed. It is expected that these are built up to a set of SMART indicators whereby the overview of devolution could be measured across the city as a whole, as well as for individual districts. At a district level it will be appropriate for each district to develop a set of indicators to reflect local circumstances, but they should work together to develop shared indicators too. The core standards (see paragraph 3.8) need to be measurable at district and city level with both qualitative and quantitative indicators.

2.6.12 The Chamberlain Forum suggested using indicators such as:

- Number of people and organisations who feel that they have been successfully involved in Council decision making;
- Perceived quality of the neighbourhood according to residents; and
- Levels of understanding of what practical change devolution has enabled amongst residents, councillors, officers and other bodies serving the area.

2.6.13 Success will need to be measured differently over time. We suggest, that success in five years could be that the way we think, act and engage is very different. And that within the next decade Birmingham is recognised for its integrated, citizen shaped local services as part of the city's ambition for social cohesion and regeneration. Integral to delivery of this objective will be the key objective of the Council developing sound budget management and financial sustainability which would have probity and accountability at its core.

2.6.14 Success will require a whole system whole place approach where accountabilities are clear, and everyone is working towards the shared objectives and locally agreed outcomes that combine to deliver on key priorities for the city and region.



## 3 Transition Tensions

### 3.1 Challenges

- 3.1.1 Some challenges have been around for some time, such as the resource allocation to districts, and difficulties of making a surplus with the sports, leisure and culture services. Some are old challenges in a new context. For example, housing management still requires significant service improvement, regardless of the new structures now being put in place.
- 3.1.2 Other challenges include the slow speed of cultural change; assets (many of which are outdated, in the wrong place, with the wrong offer and with high upkeep costs); the inevitable tensions of a central / local split; complicated geographies; engagement and service delivery not being uniform across the city; plus challenges relating to specific services.
- 3.1.3 It would be inappropriate, however, to ignore the challenge of cynicism and disbelief, whether it be over a single issue or about the whole devolution agenda. The introduction of new policies have been marred by discussion of where meetings should be held. One person suggested that at both a national and local level devolution might just be "*a theoretical exercise for politicians to appear to be taking action without actually doing anything*" and that success might be measured by some as devolving accountability for cuts to districts, whilst retaining power centrally. Working with the cynics, and not merely dismissing their concerns will be necessary to really make this work. We need to be able to negotiate conflict.
- 3.1.4 Care, however, needs to be taken to ensure that devolution is not held responsible for failure to deliver change to services where change was unlikely to be achieved regardless of the delivery model.

### 3.2 District Planning Process

- 3.2.1 All districts are required to produce a district plan and these should be the bedrock of districts going forward. Currently there is a lack of understanding about what is required and what intelligence is required. The plans need to be able to articulate the differential requirement of place – to draw out the differences of places and the needs within them. They need to be robust enough to be able to be the basis of commissioning. It will be an iterative process as partnership capacity and relationships develop.
- 3.2.2 The plans should set out the distinctiveness of place including hard and soft data setting out the issues for the area, including analysis which pulls out key concerns and also captures the physical and institutional assets and the social capital of the area (an asset based approach).
- 3.2.3 If a district plan is an annual document there will probably be benefit to also creating a four year business plan.



- 3.2.4 The drawing up of a commissioning plan can support locality commissioning and which can be focused on plugging the gap between the core standards and the differential locality standards. This can enable internal commissioning, negotiations over SLAs or external commissioning and procurement.
- 3.2.5 One activity which is expected to support the above is the annual district convention. They were being held at the time of writing and it is important to ensure lessons are learnt so they are an effective part of the conversation.
- 3.2.6 The annual District Convention is a key element of the new administration's community empowerment approach, allowing active citizens for the first time to become major play-makers in how districts evolve and produce better services. Yet there are early signs that some conventions are being planned as largely working-weekday events, accessible to paid professionals and the retired, but excluding the majority of the working population who are already under-represented in the existing engagement processes. A rapid review should be undertaken on the first round of conventions, to share best practice.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R03</b>	<p>The Leader and Executive Members for Local Services:</p> <p>Work together to support the functional geography of the city that helps draw out the individual identities and differences of localities to enable district plans to be based upon a robust analysis of place in terms of combined assets, functionality, opportunity and key risk.</p> <p>Ensure learning occurs from the first year of the district planning process to ensure decision-making is robust enough to underpin locality commissioning. To draw on this to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop guidance and advisory timetables for developing district plans; and</li> <li>• Guidance to help ensure District Conventions are fit for purpose.</li> </ul>	Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	July 2013

### 3.3 Procurement

- 3.3.1 As noted, locality procurement should be one of the outcomes from district planning. But it is important to ensure that districts also can influence the procurement process for services they do not have direct responsibility for. Table 1 indicates that there will be some services where a district (or number of districts) should have control over the specification of contracts and the



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procurement process. There will be others where they may be able to influence, and some where the greatest impact is on the city as a whole and so district views may not be needed.

**Table 1: Procurement Roles**

Districts Role in Procurement	Type of Service
Control	Impact mainly upon locality and control of delivery
Strongly influence	Place assessed - Impact mainly upon locality but functional re-alignment determines it is not the responsibility of district
Marginal influence	Impact mainly on city – or people rather than place
Accept	Where impact greatest on city / region as a whole

3.3.2 There is agreement that procuring services ten times over would be costly, so for some services it will make sense to pursue collaborative engagement. The ability of districts to also be able to monitor and have influence over contract management is also important. The options being explored with Corporate Procurement were:

- Fully devolved to districts with commissioning done vertically across all ten districts – with a district procuring a bundle of services;
- Cluster services and link horizontally across districts, building in efficiencies and requiring collaboration. Districts working together, across the city, quadrant or with areas with similar needs; or
- Co-commissioning with districts clustering together but all making decisions individually.

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
<b>R04</b>	<p>The Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The procurement of services is a collaborative endeavour between the districts and corporate centre;</li> <li>• Opportunities in any procurement reflect the differential requirements of place;</li> <li>• Opportunities are identified to engage with third sector and citizens earlier in the process to establish needs and requirements and explore ways of delivering this; and</li> <li>• Support is in place for locality commissioning.</li> </ul>	Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement	<p>To be in place by March 2014</p> <p>Progress reports will be requested by the Committee.</p>



	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R05</b>	The Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement to agree with Executive Members for Local Services where each client function sits to ensure it is best able to monitor and manage the impact and delivery on the locality.	Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement and Executive Members for Local Services	To be in place by March 2014

## 3.4 Central Local Relations

### The Role of the Centre

3.4.1 The reports since May 2012, as well as being enabling documents have also set out expectations, for example, for how district committees should look and behave. To some extent, and certainly for some people, these have felt like diktats from the centre creating a standardisation for districts, which is rather contrary to the intention above of districts being able to look different. We fully understand the need for checks and balances in place and know that failure in a district will reflect upon the city as a whole and its leadership.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R06</b>	The Leader in collaboration with Executive Members for Local Services to carry out an early review of the protocol within the Meeting Arrangements for District Committees (30 July 2012) and associated frameworks to ensure they reflect the differential requirement of place enabling districts to adapt and work in different ways to reflect the diversity of place and people.  Ensures that any future protocols and strategic frameworks provide enough flexibility to reflect the differential requirements of place.	Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	March 2013  This is an ongoing measure against which the Committee will benchmark and measure ongoing performance and changing culture.

## 3.5 Functional Alignments

3.5.1 Clearly some services sit best at a city-wide or regional level, while others sit best supporting districts as a whole within Local Services Directorate, shared by two or three districts (within a quadrant) or within a single district. Although constitutional changes were made there remain anomalies in the functional alignment of services – where services sit. The Cabinet report of 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012 set out an intention to:



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“review these initial functional placements and then make any necessary adjustments ....”

- 3.5.2 A key change has been the development of the new Local Services Directorate. This has aligned many front facing services to districts or within the directorates. Staff need to be grouped in ways that make sense to the public, councillors and partners. Have the right services been devolved and have the right management structures been put in place? We need to ensure there is clarity and coherence in the structure and functional alignment. For example:
- Where does governance for the housing revenue account sit and how can we ensure cross accountability for performance and budget decision making?
  - We have District Engineers within districts, but a highways special projects team within Development Directorate; both can be engaged upon one small local project, does such a split make sense to the community or best use of officer time?
  - Local planning and regeneration are at the heart of local communities yet sit in a directorate that faces out beyond the city to the region and beyond. Can inclusive growth be secured within such a split?
- 3.5.3 The building blocks to coherence of structure and functional alignment would take account of the key drivers for allocation of a service and its impact.
- Is the policy place assessed and accountable or people assessed and accountable? Those impacting on place should be assessed again to determine whether they have a greater impact on the city or locality with those having greater impact on the locality having functional alignment with the district and those where the balance of interest lie at the city or city region potentially within development directorate.
  - Cognisance needs to be given to economies of scale and professional development. Whilst a function may impact significantly upon a locality it may be better to align a grouping of technical/expert staff across districts to support more generalist crosscutting service delivery and accountability.
- 3.5.4 An example of how this might work is Regulatory Services, where technical and support remains as a professional grouping within the new directorate. Service plans could reflect a reactive enforcement function cross directorates, but proactive engagement would depend upon where issues arise such as areas of high private renting. This would provide capacity for districts to be able to define their needs and, via locality commissioning, be able to pull down services that an area may need.
- 3.5.5 What we do as a Council, whether as Team Birmingham or Team Local, needs to have a citizen focus. The average person does not care what the structure looks like. They do need, however, to be able to easily find the right person to talk to, to know how they can make their views heard and to be able to see who is accountable.



	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R07</b>	<p>In order to ensure that structures are fit to deliver excellent services, with services being located in the right place (whether that be within districts, Local Services Directorate or the other directorates) the Leader to work with the Executive and Executive Members for Local Services in partnership to develop a rigorous functional re-alignment test for services to be devolved.</p> <p>This needs to assess services on whether they impact more on places and communities or on individuals and families. It also needs to consider value for money and financial sustainability. This process needs to be transparent and accountable and to put the outcome for the citizen first.</p> <p>In refining the test the Leader to subject the following services to examination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult education;</li> <li>• Some housing functions;</li> <li>• Highways; and</li> <li>• Enterprising Communities.</li> </ul> <p>Following the application of such a test there also needs to be a mechanism developed of agreeing the way forward with the appropriate Cabinet Member and Executive Members for Local Services.</p>	Leader, Cabinet Members and Executive Members for Local Services	April 2014

## 3.6 Golden Thread

- 3.6.1 The strength of Birmingham is building on the diversity of people and distinctiveness of place. However, it still feels like there is a disconnect between the centre and the districts. Listening to some evidence it was clear that this is about building a new set of relationships and that currently there is inadequate level of accountability of some services and staff to districts.
- 3.6.2 What needs to be developed is a golden thread of accountability: districts need to have capacity to shape all services not just those delivered from within districts or even the Local Services Directorate. It has to be a principle that applies universally across all directorates. In effect what is required is turning current structures on their head so that the centre services and supports districts. But at its most basic this can entail better communication.



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3.6.3 To enable cross directorate understanding of the challenges in the city and help support the process the previous review *Resourcing Devolution* recommended developing ward champions. The principle of JNC ward champions has been agreed by the Strategic Director for Local Services, but further discussion about the role and capacity of those senior officers should be held.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R08</b>	<p>That the Leader works with officers to develop ward champions at JNC and Grade 7 level (excluding Service Integration Heads) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Add management support into wards and constituencies;</li> <li>b. Help wards avoid and navigate blockages and identify opportunities and ensure wards are better able to feed into the development of strategy; and</li> <li>c. Ensure that directorates have a mechanism for better understanding of local issues.</li> </ul> <p>This should be embedded through performance and development reviews (PDRs) and a six monthly seminar with the Chief Executive to identify common issues and trends.</p>	Leader	April 2013

## Communications and Knowledge Flows

3.6.4 Data is key to understanding people and place and districts need to be able to articulate their differences based on this. Hard factual data on outcomes is required, plus perception data (such as the Council's quarterly resident perception tracker). Such data needs to be triangulated with what citizens, officers and partners are telling us about what is happening on the ground so that we are better able to comprehend reality and perception. Councillors generally have a very keen understanding of the neighbourhoods in their ward through campaigning and leafleting. How systematically is this captured, shared and used to develop a real understanding of place or understand the impact of policy?

3.6.5 A read through of recent decision-making reports would indicate that information is flowing just one way - from the centre. For devolution to be successful a two-way approach to knowledge and information flows, top-down and bottom-up needs to be developed and used.

3.6.6 Two way communications has to extend to contractors too. In Housing for example, a contracted in service personnel (dealing with e.g. repairs, gas servicing, supporting people) is probably more likely to go inside a tenant's home than a member of the Council. Through that visit they may



notice alterations, changes to occupation and family makeup or identify additional needs. To make better use of this knowledge there needs to be:

- An expectation through the contracts of reporting back to the Council (issues of confidentiality can of course be discussed as relevant to a service). This can be incorporated into the Business Charter for Social Responsibility;
- An ability of officers to be able to handle that information; and
- An improved knowledge hub to make the data easier to capture, sitting on a smaller range of data platforms which interact with each other better.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R09</b>	<p>The Leader and Executive Members for Local Services to improve information and knowledge flows, ensuring ward and district information can be shared with the corporate centre and the centre provides appropriate information broken down to localities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a “whole system whole place approach” with a common vision and clarity about decision-making;</li> <li>• Developing an information platform to ensure better sharing of and access to data; and</li> <li>• Investigating opportunities to share data with key stakeholders – building on community based budgeting and total place pilots.</li> </ul>	Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	<p>Action plan April 2013</p> <p>Implementation April 2014</p>

## 3.7 Beyond Cultural Change

3.7.1 It has long been understood and articulated both in Scrutiny and early Commissions that devolution and localisation will require significant cultural change. This inquiry sought to unpack what officers, councillors and partners saw as the key components to delivery of that cultural change, as there is also a perception that cultural change had become the blanket excuse for no change or past failure to deliver that change. Figure 3 sets out what we believe to be the key components of securing cultural change – commonality of purpose or coherence of vision is key and without that the system/process improvements will not be driven.

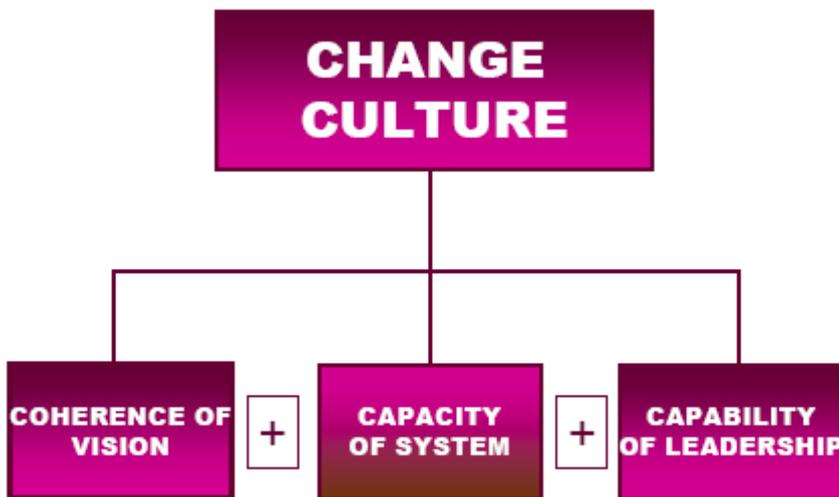
3.7.2 The changing context in terms of the drive for devolution and localisation and the inherent uncertainties of the current resource and policy environment requires a whole system review. Tinkering at the edges will only add to the current complexity and lack of accountability inhibiting ownership and delivery of change. For example, the lack of transparency and basic sense in the resource allocation and budgetary planning for districts does not incentivise ownership of change or performance improvement. Resources constraints and differential capacity in the districts needs



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to be better understood, with allocations in terms of staff and support better reflecting local need and requirement.

**Figure 3: Underpinning Culture Change**



- 3.7.3 Devolution and localisation, with the corresponding reforms to public services and real outcomes for citizens, will not be delivered by process or structural change alone. The collaborative leadership capacity and capability of the Council, stakeholders, partners and citizens needs to be developed and aligned to the delivery of the common vision for the City and locality. Elected councillors have a unique role to play as local representatives. They can bring together an understanding of the place they represent through conversations, and keeping their eyes open to complement the available data. They can also shape localities through influence and brokerage, in partnership with other stakeholders and residents.
- 3.7.4 Management and professional development will be needed to support staff through changes. The performance development review is completed annually by over 95% of staff and is an opportunity to reward the correct behaviours, but it could still focus more on creativity, change and leadership.
- 3.7.5 There needs to be appropriate professional review in place for officers managed within districts in order to maintain specialisms e.g. district engineers, youth officers etc. It is important working with a district does not block opportunities and that career paths can be mapped out.
- 3.7.6 It was also noted that much closer working between officers and councillors will be required within districts. The Member Officer protocol sets out the expected behavioural framework and needs to be revised to allow for some of the possible tensions within localities.
- 3.7.7 Another challenge to this agenda is language. There needs to be a common understanding of key terms. Neighbourhood management, for example, was used in evidence gathering to describe effective estate management and wards referenced as neighbourhoods. The neighbourhood



management programme in the priority areas was somewhat different to that and many wards contain two or three identifiable neighbourhoods. Lack of common language will undermine the development of coherent vision and ultimately lead to distrust and confusion where different parties believe they have signed up to the same outcome but individual interpretation means something quite different.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R10</b>	<p>The Leader and Executive Members for Local Services to ensure learning is embedded within the devolution process through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a learning and development plan for devolution. This should provide opportunities for Members and officers to learn, innovate, positively accept the risks that are intrinsic to innovation, and challenge and draw upon Birmingham's Public Service Academy; and</li> <li>• Ensuring the reflections of previous scrutiny reports inform the recommendations as set out in this inquiry.</li> </ul>	<p>Leader, Executive Members for Local Services and Chair of Governance, Resources and Member Development.</p>	<p>Progress report April 2013</p> <p>This is an ongoing measure against which the Committee will benchmark and measure ongoing performance and changing culture.</p>

## 3.8 Resources

### Overview of District Services Finances

- 3.8.1 The district committees are responsible for the financial management of £118m of expenditure and £20m of income in the delivery of local services. These resources are utilised on delivering a range of directly managed community services including Libraries, Sport & Leisure Centres, Neighbourhood Offices, School Crossing Patrols, Engineering Services, Community & Play and a range of services delivered through Service Level Agreements (Refuse Collections, Street Cleaning, Parks and Highways).
- 3.8.2 The proportion of expenditure on directly managed community services is estimated at 36% and the remainder is delivered through Service Level Agreements. The major components of the directly managed services include Sport & Leisure (30%), Libraries (20%) and Neighbourhood Offices (14%) and the majority of the expenditure (almost 51%) relates to employees.
- 3.8.3 The financial pressure on district services has been increasing given the major public sector finance challenges and the cumulative overspend balances across all districts totalled £8.4m at the end of 2011/12.



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## Cuts

3.8.4 The national Comprehensive Spending Review of 2010 signalled major public expenditure reductions for local government and district services are expected to deliver cumulative reductions of 28% by 2015/16 and it is likely that there will be a reduction of 48% of controllable budgets by 2016/17. This will present a major challenge and a drive for a need to deliver services differently.

## Budget Allocation

3.8.5 Budget setting is not fit for purpose. The district services budgets were originally allocated on the basis of the historical location of services (for directly managed services) and on a number of principles for SLA Services including the number of households and length of roads. This approach has not incorporated local change, such as a growth in numbers of young people. Too many anomalies are now in place. For example, we heard of how income is still attributed to swimming pools that have closed. Complexity and uncertainty of the current context requires root and branch change.

3.8.6 As noted, Scrutiny has examined devolution before and the issue of resource allocation has been an ongoing issue. A recommendation in 2006<sup>7</sup> was:

That, within extant budget constraints and without reducing service levels, the Executive set timescales for introducing revised means of allocating annual revenue budgets between districts, so that allocations are related more clearly and equitably to need.

3.8.7 This was discharged with a report to Cabinet Committee Achieving Excellence with Communities in July 2009 (some 2½ years after the agreed completion date.) It set out the rationale for budgets and some discussion about the difficulties of change, for example noting:

It would be possible to develop a number of alternative models of resource allocation depending on how the concepts of “need” and “equity” are defined – e.g. population, deprivation, demand for services, statutory requirements or performance imperatives associated with National Indicators or LAA targets etc. However, whenever an alternative model is considered, it raises the immediate issue of how to manage the implications if it results in any significant movement of resources between Constituencies.

3.8.8 In spite of that warning, which is noted, at a time of “different for less” and public service reform there has to be transparency and clear accountability both in terms of resource allocation and budgetary management. A zero based budget needs to be constructed and this needs to be fully in place for 2015/16. It should be built up starting with the resources to meet the agreed core

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<sup>7</sup> Co-ordinating O&S Committee (2006) *Localisation and Devolution*, Chaired – Michael Wilkes



standards. And then based on the evidenced locality needs. Alongside that resources may need to follow to meet any agreed city-wide standards based on accessibility rather than administrative boundaries.

3.8.9 Within this it is recommended that districts' budgets are revisited and constructed around:

- Costs of providing a service to agreed core and shared standards in each district;
- The evidence base of need and distinctiveness of an area; and
- Costs of running services which are historically situated in a district – general e.g. Neighbourhood Offices and unique e.g. Storchley Indoor Bows Centre, Alexander Stadium.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R11</b>	<p>The Leader to establish and work with a cross party councillor group (to include councillors representing inner and outer city wards) and Executive Members for Local Services to develop an approach to zero based budgeting to be rolled out for localities in 2014/15 and in place for 2015/16.</p> <p>Based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core standards;</li> <li>• Differential locality standards; and</li> <li>• City entitlement.</li> </ul>	Leader	<p>March 2015</p> <p>Committee will require regular reports on this.</p>

### **Direction: What is the End Point?**

3.8.10 Districts (and constituencies before them) have made considerable savings and proven that they can do so. They also elected to work collectively, recognising that many issues could not be resolved through unilateral action, and led on the new operating models of a range of services, in particular, Community Libraries, Neighbourhood Offices, Car Parks, Business and Management Support. Other programmes are well developed including Sport & Leisure and Community Play and Development.

3.8.11 We heard evidence of the relatively limited scope districts have had to make savings. In the last financial year some of the savings districts failed to make were due to delays in implementing future operating models across the city and some related to SLA costs and additional pension strain. What is particularly worrying are the income targets which are set by the centre. How much are they informed by discussions with locality officers? Added to that as referenced above we heard of ongoing income assumptions based on swimming pools or car parks, for example, that had been closed, often from before the budget planning process. The evidence suggests that more work needs to be done with regard to income targets for local facilitates and resolving any residual anomalies relating to some existing income assumptions.



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- 3.8.12 Without accurate income and expenditure lines being in the budget, the budget itself can not be transparent and it can be a challenge to feel ownership of it. This needs to change as without accountability and transparency it will be difficult to make the step changes required to make it work this time.
- 3.8.13 An aim outlined in the Leader's evidence to Committee is that 80% of functions will be managed by or accountable "in some way" to district committees within the next four years. That was interpreted by many as 80% of the total budget, but a recent analysis of the City Council's budget indicated that only 36.5% of the overall budget is controllable.<sup>8</sup> An additional 8% is housing revenue account which, as we know is ring fenced, but we would expect the revenue budget to be influenceable at a district level.
- 3.8.14 So what does this broad ambition of 80% really mean – is it that proportion of the controllable budget or around a third of the Council's total budget? Whilst those involved in the budget setting process understand the concept of controllable and non-controllable it is probably not something that occurs to residents and partners and so care needs to be taken as to what is being promised. Then we can be clearer about where we are going.
- 3.8.15 Districts need to know what they can control, or influence and what they are not able to have influence over. Understanding the budgets fully may take some time and councillors may need to work with Service Integration Heads and finance officers to come to an agreed position.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R12</b>	The Leader to work with Executive Members for Local Services to develop a performance management framework for existing service level agreements (SLAs) so that districts can gain better influence and operational control over the delivery of services operated through SLAs; to also include a transparent reward and review system.	Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	July 2013

## 3.9 Sustainable Service Excellence

- 3.9.1 Districts need to drive service improvements, which in a time of "different for less" poses some challenges including:
- Officers provided evidence of significant reductions in staffing levels within districts. When pressed they admitted that this could have an impact on service delivery.

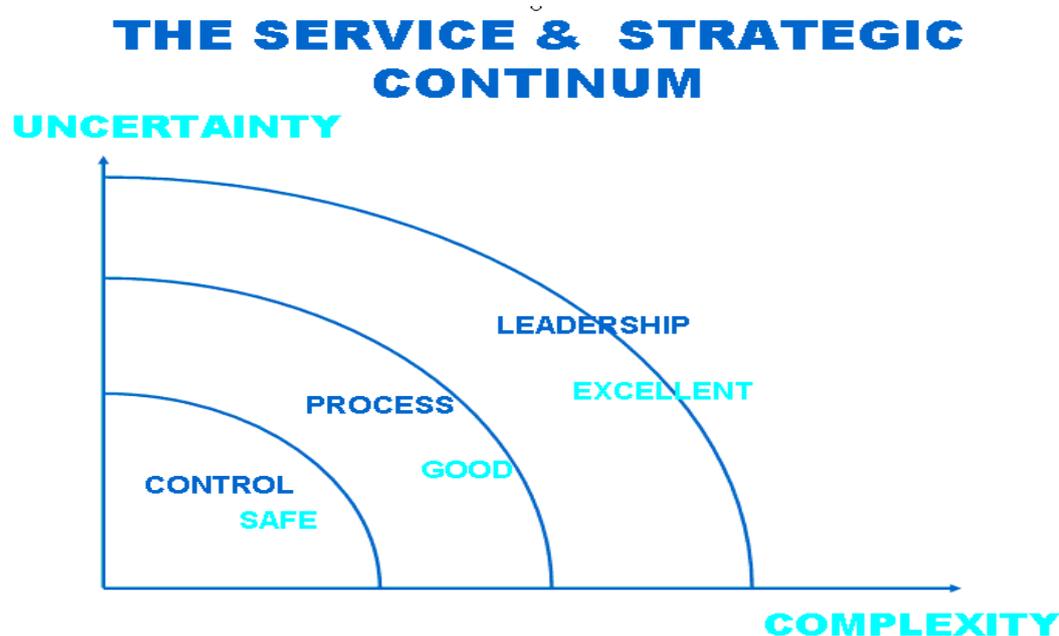
<sup>8</sup> Presentation to Managers Voice, October 2012



- Services are currently delivered on historical basis of provision, largely on the basis of where buildings are located. This will have to be re-examined in order to make necessary changes to services and due to the significant investment some buildings require.
- Capacity, competition and cuts would suggest that keeping every service open as currently configured would potentially hinder the development of services that could optimise outcomes for citizens – issues such as quality and accessibility should have greater legitimacy than quantity.

3.9.2 Figure 4 shows the service continuum and recognises that there are a range of activities the Council is involved with – some of which the outcomes are reasonably certain and simple, whilst others may be much more complex, or much more risky. Leadership has to adapt to these different challenges. In our view the priority in the short to medium term is ensuring services are safe and secure ultimately working towards service excellence. In the medium to longer term the Executive Members for Local Services can look to focus on much more influence in the broader issues affecting the district.

Figure 4: Service Improvement



	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R13	Executive Members for Local Services to develop an action plan for how they will ensure improvements along the services and strategic continuum (from safe and deliverable services to our ultimate destination of service excellence).	Executive Members for Local Services	To be integrated into the district planning process for 2013/14. Ongoing monitoring by Districts and Public Engagement O&S



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3.9.3 One of the concerns about current services relates to how residents access services and assessments or make complaints when there has been service failure. There was some uncertainty as to how the front facing elements of services, including, but not only, the Customer First call centre have adapted to the devolution agenda.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R14</b>	Executive Members for Local Services to work with the Deputy Leader to ensure that interface with citizens for service delivery (i.e. the first point of contact for a service) is fit for purpose, e.g. neighbourhood offices, call centre and web site, and reflect differential needs of people and place, taking into account the outcomes of the Governance, Resources and Member Development O&S customer services inquiry.	Deputy Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	Assessment of key changes required to deliver integrated local interface May 2013.  Cross cutting improvement plan – September 2013

3.9.4 Agreeing standards provides transparency to the citizen and will aid budget allocation. The first element needs to be core standards which as a minimum include the requirements of statutory provision and health and safety. Above that they include the citizen entitlement to universal services such as street services and other key locality services.

3.9.5 In addition are differential locality standards set by districts to meet local priorities and reflect the specific needs of people and place. For example, relating to the local environment such as density and layout or relating to specific local pressures such as skills and worklessness and health inequalities. This is where local commissioning may help in bridging gaps.

3.9.6 One concern about devolution may be about different services standards across the city. It can be seen that the proposal is a shared expectation of many services whether someone lives in Kingstanding, Billesley or Lozells and East Handsworth with local differences then having been agreed in a transparent manner.

3.9.7 In addition, there is a need to develop an agreed city entitlement setting out a minimum level of city-wide provision, particularly as budgetary pressures grow. E.g. ensuring all citizens are within a 20 minute walk / bus ride of a library opening at least x hours a week. To do this a wide range of available data and expertise needs to be used.



	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R15</b>	<p>The Leader and Executive Members for Local Services to develop the following standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core standards to include the meeting of statutory requirements such as health and safety standards and a citizen entitlement to universal services such as refuse collection and street cleansing.</li> <li>• Core standards need to relate to 'outcomes', where possible, as the offer or 'inputs' then should differ according to the needs and requirements of a locality. E.g. the characteristics of a built environment impact on cleansing and the characteristics of local worklessness and health inequalities will require different interventions.</li> </ul> <p>In addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop differential locality standards (reflecting the specific needs of people and place) can be set by districts – to meet local priorities within available resources.</li> <li>• To develop an agreed city-wide civic entitlement setting out a minimum level of access to city-wide provision within available resources.</li> </ul>	Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	<p>April 2013</p> <p>To be incorporated into the district planning process</p> <p>Subject to annual review</p> <p>Committee will require regular reports on this.</p>

## 3.10 Stakeholder and Partnership Working

### Partnerships

- 3.10.1 "We're not good at partnership working," we were told. We only do partnership working on our terms to achieve our vision and priorities. The role of partners in district decision-making is a transition tension. In terms of making decisions it is not about who sits at the table, but their impact and capacity to make an impact on the area and support change.
- 3.10.2 We are sure that every Member can point to a partnership they believe works, but it is clear that our general approach to partnership working probably needs reshaping. In this new context we need to be working with partners to ensure Birmingham and its localities are great places and citizens get the services and opportunities they need and deserve and partners can help bring in more resources to localities. Businesses, statutory agencies, and the community and voluntary sector all have a role to play.
- 3.10.3 As part of the evidence gathering a workshop to discuss partnership working was held and some key messages came out of this:
- Purpose: If you don't know why you're doing it don't do it;



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- Successful partnership working requires a common vision and understanding of where you are going. To achieve this a common language is important which can, be difficult to achieve;
- There's a need to understand the journey. The process also needs to be transparent with all parties understanding what outcomes are desirable and where they sit in partners' priorities. Hidden agendas get in the way;
- Partnership working is inevitably about relationships and having the right people, in the right place at the right time with the power to act. It also requires the right set of behaviours to influence, question, learn, reconcile and challenge partners;
- Within localities it can be held back by lack of trust, capacity, withdrawal and consultation fatigue; and
- Fit for purpose knowledge and information flows are crucial.

## 3.10.4 Elements of successful partnership working included:

- Shared responsibility for the solution;
- Understanding of each others roles/remits;
- Information sharing;
- Sharing of good practice;
- All partners bringing something to the table; and
- Adequate support for enabling the development of social capital.

## 3.10.5 As an example, Friendship Care and Housing cited some of the positive outcomes of involvement in partnership structures and noted:

“Much of this partnership working has taken place in a devolved environment and has been successful where there is clarity of purpose between partners and sufficient resources to make things happen. However it is not just about financial resources and if long term sustainable change is to be achieved it is as much about having a high level of shared commitment from the partners to affect change or deliver the *outcomes*.”

## 3.10.6 For the partnership between the Birmingham Open Space Forum and the City Council a turning point was the shift from seeing each other as “the enemy” to being partners. This was affirmed by a respondent to the resident survey who said:

“Birmingham Open Spaces Forum – they do a really useful networking coffee morning – here council officers, community reps etc can meet, swap ideas, get to know each other, offer help and support, look at different ways of solving issues/doing improvements. Brilliant.”



3.10.7 Barriers to partnership included, of course the opposite of successful attributes, but also:

- Inflexibility of solutions – “our way or no way”;
- Previous failure to deliver or work in partnership;
- Bureaucracy getting in the way;
- An interest in protecting the status quo;
- Competition for resources working against sharing and collaboration; and
- Time and capacity of volunteers and officers.

3.10.8 Structures are only one element of partnership working, however, we consistently heard of the importance of developing relationships and that the more these were built upon trust and reciprocity the more robust they can become. Under the new approach to devolution the importance of partnerships was picked up in the district protocol with a suggestion of co-option onto the district committee of specific bodies. Given the complexity of partnership working, as set out above, we suggest that each district needs to be able to grow its own approach to partnership without being constrained by a city wide approach that may not meet local needs. Friendship Care and Housing suggested another barrier:

“Partners that stay involved out of habit or because they feel they ought to but have no clear purpose for attending will reduce the effectiveness of partnership working.”

3.10.9 This would suggest that a key issue for districts is to have the right people at the table at the right time and that representation co-option or engagement should not be about the organisation you represent or respective status but the difference the contribution can make to the delivery of real and measurable outcomes for citizens.

3.10.10 The key opportunity identified by members of Birmingham Council for Voluntary Services (BVSC) was that the devolution agenda could and should provide a platform for locally-based cross-sector discussions and debates about which local issues are a priority, and how best they should be addressed. In particular, councillors feel strongly that the voluntary and community sector should be engaged in the commissioning process at the earliest possible stage so that services can be truly co-designed (not just with voluntary groups, but with service users).

3.10.11 Conflict is frequently an unintended outcome of partnership working and it was suggested that we have to be more creative about using this for good and developing ways to embrace it not avoid it. When engaging the third sector on, for example, discussions about funding cuts they need to be able to see how their input has made a difference and so ensuring feedback is part of the process is important.



## Neighbourhood Management

3.10.12 Another approach taken to working with stakeholders was the neighbourhood management programme in the 31 priority neighbourhoods which covered a third of the city. This was

“An approach that enables local communities and service providers to work together at a neighbourhood level to improve services and quality of life. It does this by joining up local services and making them more responsive to local needs.”

3.10.13 It is perceived that the removal of glue and the local challenge that the neighbourhood manager offered has impacted and upon localities. For one resident who responded to the survey:

“It means that officers and contractors who don't want to work with residents are able to avoid us. For example, Planning and Highways officers seems to have gone into hiding, we don't see them anymore. Attempts to involve Amey are totally useless. Many Council tenants report very poor workmanship from Wilmot Dickson staff, are they any better than Morrisons? West Midlands Police keep changing the local team before they can get to know us or the area. We are on our third Inspector in 3 years. So much for neighbourhood policing!  
Neighbourhood Management – when it was in place – was making a difference locally.”

3.10.14 We note the suggested actions from a previous Local Services and Community Safety O&S overview into *Neighbourhood Management* and are still keen for this approach to be re-invigorated in localities where it is agreed it might achieve positive change. We recognise that only genuine partnership working with the voluntary sector and statutory agencies will enable this to happen.



	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R16</b>	<p>Executive Members for Local Services supported by the Cabinet Member for Social Cohesion and Equalities to:</p> <p>a) Develop opportunities for citizens to shape service delivery:</p> <p>Work with ward committees, Local Services Directorate and the corporate centre to develop citizen engagement opportunities, making the best use of existing networks (including natural community hubs e.g. school gates, local markets and places of worship), the City Council's own website and other websites and social media (within available resources) and encourage the development of improvement plans where necessary and ensure engagement outcomes feed into annual district governance reviews.</p> <p>b) Develop Partnership engagement as part of delivering "different for less":</p> <p>Map current partnerships and stakeholders, reflecting which are fit for purpose, and agree principles for partnership working. We would hope that districts take account of the changing policy context e.g. the Police and Crime Commissioner and Clinical Commissioning Groups.</p>	<p>Executive Members for Local Services supported by the Cabinet Member for Social Cohesion and Equalities</p>	<p>May 2013</p> <p>To be available for every district planning cycle.</p>



## 4 Principles and Processes Going Forward

### 4.1 Functionality of Place

- 4.1.1 A collective understanding of the distinctiveness and purpose of place needs to be developed at a range of spatial scales (neighbourhoods, wards, districts).
- 4.1.2 The articulation of distinctiveness and identification of the positive drivers for change within localities can be confused with arguments around deprivation, with some commentators suggesting that areas within the city have often vied for the place of the most deprived and the resources that come with that. Have we done enough to identify social and institutional assets within communities to identify opportunities? The asset approach values the capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential in a community. In an asset approach, the glass is half-full rather than half-empty.<sup>9</sup>
- 4.1.3 Buildings and land enable or hinder localities from meeting local needs. The physical assets located within districts can be key drivers for change and positive engagement with citizens and stakeholders – and they must be able to influence decisions and benefit from them. However, it is also recognised that much in the district portfolio is not in the best condition and falls short of like for like within the market or modern day requirement. It is acknowledged that libraries, swimming pools, parks, adult education centres are fixed and based on historical decisions and are in effect a “corporate” as well as a “community” asset. Strategic consideration and decisions over such assets needs to be a shared process and that gives power and influence to communities. A key test of devolution and our willingness to let go will be our capacity to entrust communities, constructively engaging and not just consulting over change.

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R17	<p>In order to ensure that assets are used effectively for the benefit of citizens the Deputy Leader:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To support the districts to build on the asset plans previously developed for constituencies at ward and district levels (those both locally and centrally held);</li> <li>• Agree a joint protocol between the local and central executive regarding governance, management, disposal, and the future use of all assets that fall within the sphere of responsibility of a locality to enshrine the influence of districts; and</li> <li>• Agree a mechanism for reconciling different views.</li> </ul>	Deputy Leader	Jan 2014

<sup>9</sup> I&Dea (2010) *A Glass Half-full: How an asset approach can improve community health and well being*. At: [www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/18410498](http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/18410498)



## 4.2 Delivering Different for Less

- 4.2.1 What different for less really points to is the need for fundamental reform of public services combined with local democratic accountability. The definition of a public service, taken from the Birmingham Policy Commission<sup>10</sup> relating to the provision of helpful acts to meet the needs of citizens and, at least part-funded by the public purse. But this does not mean that the Council or another public body necessarily delivers the service or intervention. The reform of public services is therefore both the challenge and the objective for districts.

## 4.3 The Role of Citizens

### Rights and Responsibilities

- 4.3.1 A recent commission on Local Government suggested a new social contract had to be developed:

“Society faces big challenges that cannot be solved by the state alone, but require the state to orchestrate action. Polls suggest that the public know that they need to do more, with many willing to do so, but equally they cannot do so without well-functioning public services. The challenge is to change the nature of the relationship between the citizen and the state, rebuild trust and ensure good local integration between health, social care and other services.”<sup>11</sup>

- 4.3.2 We suggest that this relates to citizen’s rights and responsibilities. Just to take one example, waste. The right is about the frequency of standard rubbish and recycling collections, the quality expected after rubbish has been collected, the opportunity for bulky collections, the offer of special collections and access to the household recycling centres. The responsibilities might include putting bags out on the right day, securely, sorting and using recycling boxes where practicable and keeping gardens and drives clean and helping to keep immediate environment clean. It could also include prohibitions around litter, fly tipping and even cigarette butts.

### Citizen Involvement

- 4.3.3 To achieve radical reform will require close engagement with citizens to understand needs and set priorities and also to have the legitimacy to make some of the tough decisions that will be required. Engagement with citizens will be necessary to achieve the required understanding of place and to deliver efficient and effective services. Working “different for less” has to be about understanding the differential needs of areas, and part of that understanding comes from listening

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<sup>10</sup> University of Birmingham Policy Commission (2011) *When Tomorrow Comes*

<sup>11</sup> Commission on the Future of Local Government (2012). At:

<http://civicenterpriseuk.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/final-commission-on-the-future-of-local-government-electronic2.pdf>



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to residents formally and informally. Sounding out citizens at a particular point in time may not provide the intelligence and understanding now required. Consultation, therefore, needs to be part of an ongoing discussion with citizens about needs, priorities and quality of place and services.

4.3.4 We used placemats to capture ideas during sessions. One of the members of the Committee said that for them the purpose of devolution :

“is to empower people by engaging them, working in partnership and listening to the people’s agenda”

4.3.5 More creative working with citizens can directly improve services. An UpRising participant at the Social Inclusion Process summit (November 2012) suggested that participation and engagement had to become a social norm for young people in this city for the city as a whole to achieve transformational change. The challenge is for it to be a social norm for everyone and for all services. But however much we support engagement it is meaningless without it both influencing the activity of the Council and our partners. It also fails to be embedded long term if citizens do not know how they have made a difference so effective feedback needs to be developed. This leads back to the importance of effective district web sites.

4.3.6 However useful conversation is we know that citizens value action even more. There is clearly an opportunity for wider public engagement for example through participatory budgeting, co-commissioning and co-production where community-led approaches could be used.

4.3.7 As we are in the first formative year of the new arrangements, this is an excellent time for resident input in shaping the future for devolution, and we therefore suggest the Executive Members for Local Services lay out a ‘citizen challenge’ to their wider public - to get involved, and say what decisions they want to influence more, at local, neighbourhood and city level.

## Ward Committees

4.3.8 The 40 ward committees (which meet in the localities) have been tasked with engagement and under the constitution now are required to:

- Identify the needs of the Ward;
- Relate these to key decision-makers; and
- Maximise the influence of local people.

4.3.9 Other than that little guidance has been provided to wards. We heard ways different areas were developing the ward role. In Erdington to ensure public engagement is undertaken the Executive Member for Local Services ensures all key reports from budget savings, tenant participation and any major service changes go to all four ward committees, it is also important to ensure people in a wider context feel part of the decisions the district are making. The Executive Member for Local Services noted that:



“Some thought needs to be given to how we narrow the gap of engagement and redress the balance of those that shout loudest get the best provision.”<sup>12</sup>

- 4.3.10 There has to be a formal link between districts and wards so issues from one area level can feed into the other when appropriate. In Selly Oak the meeting schedule has been changed to ensure that they can feed into each other. The Executive Member for Local Services has agreed to have a ward items on the District Committee agenda and has asked for a reciprocal arrangement.
- 4.3.11 We also heard from Service Integration Heads about the challenges of servicing up to 12 ward committees, let alone the challenges of officers working in quadrants. This would indicate an area where councillors themselves are going to have to take more of a lead. Agenda setting may have to be more sensitive to the needs of wards, even if in the past issues could have been resolved at a ward level.

## Co-production

- 4.3.12 Co-production needs to be an underlying principle of the way districts work in order to ensure the right things are delivered to the right people at the right time. It can be defined as:

“Delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change.”<sup>13</sup>

- 4.3.13 This concept brings together the idea of citizens, the third sector, professionals and the relevant bodies and structures working together to define needs and shape outcomes recognising the contribution that each can make to this process.
- 4.3.14 A challenge with co-production is about scaling up from the small scale approaches which have been common. We suggest that district approaches can provide an ideal stepping stone for this. There is a useful co-production checklist in a Chamberlain Forum publication which could be used by district committees in considering how they are going to work differently.<sup>14</sup>

## Accountability

- 4.3.15 Accountability is part of this contract. As noted previously citizens need to know how to scrutinise and where decisions are made. When talking to officers and councillors residents need to be clear where decisions rest. One place where those discussions can occur publicly is ward committees.

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<sup>12</sup>Cllr Holbrook, written submission 19 September 2012

<sup>13</sup> NESTA (2009) *The Challenge of Co-production*. At: <http://www.nesta.org.uk/library/documents/Co-production-report.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Chamberlain Forum (2011) *Coproduction in Practice*



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- 4.3.16 There is a diverse pattern of community, voluntary and interest groups across the city and they are important community anchors. Councillors generally have experience of engaging with a wide range of such groups. Given the diversity of provision across the city and the intent of devolution to grow difference, it is not sensible to lay out the organisations with which districts or wards are required to work with, rather they should “work with the grain” and the organisations and capacity that already exists. Officers and councillors need to understand where linkages can be made which will require ongoing mapping.
- 4.3.17 Whilst some community and voluntary organisations spring up themselves and function with little external support there is a need for skilled support to bring communities together and enable capacity building. The future operating model for community development workers has been challenging and the aspiration from Resourcing Devolution of a community development worker in each district may not be achievable. With a whole system whole place approach we need to look at resources overall, including tenant participation officers and ward support officers – see if any capacity for developing and supporting groups.

## Communications

- 4.3.18 Without good communication with the public devolution will struggle. One concern we have relates to the Council website. It looks no different overall to how it did in April 2012. In addition the district web pages, having to work with the vagaries of the fatwire system are unwieldy. If you put ‘devolution’ onto the search engine you get nothing setting out the transformation; the top three relate to scrutiny reports of 2004, 2006 and 2012! But ‘districts’ does lead to a page with key information.
- 4.3.19 The web site should enable residents to find the services they need and also understand who is accountable for them. If an agreed aim of devolution relates to accountability and engagement on those grounds the web site currently is not fit for purpose.
- 4.3.20 Social media should also be developed further and Selly Oak and Hodge Hill, for example, have an active twitter accounts.

## 4.4 Next Steps for the Committee

- 4.4.1 The intention was never to solve all the challenges of devolution with this report, but to clarify the overarching direction of the Council’s policy and confirm the intended citizen benefit through ‘making it real’. We also aimed to focus attention on some areas of concern and make recommendations for the executive, districts and wards. It was also intended to develop the Committee’s work programme in the light of the inquiry.
- 4.4.2 Some areas of work are still required:
- To complete the work of the housing working group; and



- To work with Corporate Finance, Local Services Directorate officers and Executive Members for Local Services to examine delegated budgets to ensure budgets now being delegated are fit for purpose.

4.4.3 The Committee is keen to provide support to districts and wards as well as having its scrutiny role. We would welcome discussion with the Executive Members for Local Services as to how they influence the Committee's work programme and how the Committee could support the development of good practice through enabling sharing and learning.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R18</b>	Progress towards achievement of these recommendations should be reported to the Districts and Public Engagement Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2013. Subsequent progress reports will be scheduled by the Committee thereafter, until all recommendations are implemented.	Leader	June 2013



## Appendix 1: Evidence

Name	Organisation	Witness	Written Evidence
Sir Albert Bore, Leader	Birmingham City Council	Y	-
Steve Ashton	New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council	Y	N
Mark Barrow	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Steve Bentley	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Haydn Brown	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Prof John Bryson	University of Birmingham	Y	Y
Brian Carr	BVSC	N	Y
Bev Carroll	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Gemma Cartwright	Rover Community Action Trust	Y	N
Guy Chaundy	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Karen Cheney	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Tony Clabby	The Digbeth Trust	Y	N
Ness Cole	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Jan Collymore	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Cllr John Cotton, Cabinet Member for Social Cohesion & Equalities	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Jim Crawshaw	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Karen Creavin	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Paul Dransfield	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Mike Davis	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Elaine Elkington	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Tony Fox	Cannon Hill Park Friends	Y	Y
Sharon Freedman	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Ellie Gabbay	Resident	Y	N
Page Getfield	Tenant Representative	Y	N
Joan Goodwin	Chair, City HLB	Y	N
Phil Grainger	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Catherine Griffiths	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Cllr Gareth Griffiths	New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council	Y	N
Cllr Peter Griffiths, Executive Member for Local Services	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Roger Griffiths	New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council	Y	N
Dale Guest	Birmingham City Council	Y	Y
Steve Harding	Moseley CDT	Y	N
Pete Hobbs	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Cllr Penny Holbrook, Executive Member for Local Services	Birmingham City Council	Y	Y
Oliver Humpidge	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Cllr Mahmood Hussain	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
John Jamieson	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Talbinder Kaur	Birmingham City Council	Y	N



Name	Organisation	Witness	Written Evidence
Cllr Tony Kennedy	Birmingham City Council	Y	Y
Sue Knottenbelt	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Rob James	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Ifor Jones	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Chris Jordan	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Sukvinder Kalsi	Birmingham City Council	Y	Y
Angus Kennedy	Community Regeneration	Y	Y
Jacqui Kennedy	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Jan Kimber	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Sharon Lea	Birmingham City Council	Y	Y
Karen Leach	Localise West Midlands	Y	Y
John Lewis	Merlin Venture	Y	N
Alan Lontinga	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Masood Ajaib	Commcompact Training	Y	N
Claire Hardwick	Family Housing	Y	N
Cllr Karen McCarthy, Executive Member for Local Services	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Jackie Mould	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Richard Parker	PWC	Y	N
Natalie Potter	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Lesley Poulton	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Tracey Radford	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Nick Reynolds	Tenant Representative	Y	N
Cllr Carl Rice, Chair of the Governance, Resources and Member Development O&S Committee	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Austin Rodriguez	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Sarah Royal	Birmingham Open Space Forum	Y	N
Sister Helen Ryan	Citizens UK Birmingham & Lozells	Y	N
Steve Salt	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Darren Share	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Mohammed Safique	Local Leagues Limited	N	Y
Clive Skidmore	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Paul Slatter	Chamberlain Forum	Y	Y
Tony Smith	Birmingham City Council	N	Y
Superintendent Manjit Thandi	West Midlands Police	Y	N
Tommy Wallace	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Mike Walsh	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Matt Wilkinson	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Emma Woolf	Friends of Cotteridge Park	Y	N
Hannah Worth	Chamberlain Forum	Y	Y