

30th March 2007

Review and update of the Community Strategy – Birmingham 2026

Key issues for discussion

- This report outlines the process for the reviewing and updating the current Birmingham Community Strategy. This will provide partners with considerable opportunities to be directly involved in the preparation of the Community Strategy (CS) for publication in April 2008.
- The BSP Programme Board at their meeting on 13th February agreed outline proposals for the review and update of the Birmingham Community Strategy – working title, Birmingham 2026. A detailed project schedule has been prepared and is included with this report.
- Lead partners have been agreed for the broad areas of the review – detailed later in this report. The lead project officer is meeting with these people to discuss their role in the review and update.
- It is recommended that Partnership adopts a working title, **Birmingham in 2026**, consistent with the recently published Growth Prospectus, and that, with an agreed rolling programme of revision, this becomes the agreed timeframe for the Strategy.

Evolving policy context and evidence base

The Local Government White Paper proposes that, in future, the Community Strategy (CS) will be delivered through the Local Area Agreement. The delivery of the CS through the Local Area Agreement will be central to the success of Birmingham in this and the proposed April 2008 publication date for the CS coincides with the start of the phase 2 LAA.

The Local Government White Paper also requires that the Community Strategy incorporates the Local Development Framework and the Housing and Homelessness Strategies – though detailed guidance on this is not due until towards the end of 2007.

The review provides an opportunity to raise the profile within the Partnership's strategic planning of priority areas such as cohesion, diversity, growth, sustainability (referred to in an earlier item on your agenda) and other matters coming through from the chapter review work undertaken by the Board over the last year – including your review of the Clean and Safe agenda elsewhere on today's agenda. We also have the benefit of the results of the Local Area Agreement baseline survey, which provides a rich source of data on local peoples' priorities and opinions which will influence the future shape of the CS. There are also the Neighbourhood Profiles, which provide a great deal of information on areas of the City and can indicate priorities for action.

The review and update will also take account of any comments made by the Audit Commission and other sector inspectors. Initial challenges include the need to be much clearer that the CS is long-term and that the CS more obviously deals with Birmingham specific issues. The Local Government White Paper and recently published Bill reinforces this “place making” challenge for Local Strategic Partnerships. In future there will be a Comprehensive Area Assessment, focussing on this.

Preparing the CS – contributions from Partners

The LGWP confirms that there will continue to be a duty for the local authority to prepare the CS in consultation with named partners - reinforced by the Local Government Bill. In parallel to this, there is a requirement that named partners have a duty to co-operate in determining outcomes to the Local Area Agreement. To embed this work fully into the Partnership effort, it is proposed that board members from a variety of partners sponsor parts of the CS – providing much more direct influence on the shape of the CS – and that people from partner organisations join with officers of the City Council as part of the Team producing the CS.

Nominated people from partner organisations could work / lead - on parts of the review for agreed periods of time as well as being directly involved in the design and content of the CS. This requires that those nominated to work on the project set aside dedicated time to do so; it should be seen as core work for them.

Suggested Sponsors

For the purposes of initial work on the scoping of the Community Strategy and so on, it is proposed that the LAA themes framework be adopted. This immediately makes the line required between the CS and the LAA, as the delivery vehicle. This is a simpler framework than that of the existing Community Strategy – though will almost certainly change as the work progresses and the LAA structure changes, as trailed in the Local Government White Paper. The leads agreed at Programme Board are outlined below.

Safer and stronger communities - Anil Patani and Elaine Elkington
Healthier communities and older people - Sophia Christie and Peter Hay
Economy and environment - David Cragg and Michael Clark
Children and young people - Tony Howell and Gill Howland

The City Council will continue to take its lead responsibility through project managing the process as well as contributing to practical support. Programme Board agreed a budget of £30K to pay for consultation activity venues, facilitation, partnership research, etc. The lead officer will be Kevin D Hubery who is contactable on 303 4821 or kevin.d.hubery@birmingham.gov.uk.

Jason Lowther
23rd March 2007