

BIRMINGHAM 2026

A Global City with a Local Heart



20/11/07

Plain English accreditation pending

***Be Birmingham* – Birmingham Strategic Partnership**

Be Birmingham is the local strategic partnership for our city, which brings together partners from the business, public, community, voluntary and faith sectors, to deliver a better quality of life in Birmingham.

Be Birmingham is committed to:

- uniting Birmingham’s family of partnerships to provide a collective response to improving the social, and economic wellbeing of the city
- involving our citizens to help develop Birmingham 2026, the city’s sustainable community strategy
- developing and applying the way we make Birmingham 2026 happen – the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

For further information visit www.bebirmingham.org.uk.



Frontpiece **Uniquely Birmingham**

Birmingham is amazing...

Britain's biggest city outside London, with over a million residents.

Europe's youngest city, with the highest percentage of young people.

The safest big city, with levels of crime lower than any other major city in Britain.

The best- educated big city, with our young people achieving higher GCSE grades than any other major city in Britain.

A welcoming home to the world, with a proud history and future of beneficial immigration and people living comfortably together.

A caring city, with a rich heritage of innovative and pioneering voluntary and community action.

A city of faith, with more people saying they follow a faith than most other cities, and the founding city of many faith traditions.

A city with a 'world-class' economy, in the top 80 global cities.

The city of a thousand trades, now a city of over 42,000 businesses and a national centre of business and professional services.

An inventive and creative city, whose credits and legacy include gas lighting, the use of radiography in operations, hole-in-the-heart operations, James Watt's steam engine, and Tolkien's Lord of the Rings. Today a national research centre with three universities and Science City status.

A leading 'digital city' and 'science city', inspiring innovation, attracting business and keeping our diverse community informed and together.

National 'cleanest city' award winner 2007/08 (from the British Cleaning Council).

An attractive city, with more miles of canals than Venice, attractive parkland throughout the city and internationally famous arts and cultural assets, such as the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

A city of sport, with an unprecedented fantastic range of sporting and other events, as well as home to two Premier League football clubs. Birmingham has held more world and European championships than any other UK city and has staged internationally renowned athletics as well as grass-roots sport and entertainments.

Britain's meeting place, with over 30 million visitors each year for business and pleasure.

... making Birmingham a great place to live, work and visit!

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BIRMINGHAM 2026

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Vision for Birmingham

It's 2026...

Birmingham is a globally competitive city contributing fully to the thriving, prosperous and sustainable city-region.

Birmingham people have high aspirations, and the skills and opportunities they need to succeed.

Birmingham is a safe, clean and friendly city that is tackling climate change and protecting the local environment.

People are healthy and economically successful, and enjoy living together.

The city is truly 'a global city with a local heart'.

Like all great cities Birmingham has a story to tell: a proud history and a clear vision for the future. Birmingham's story is constantly being rewritten and re-imagined through the stories of the million and more people who live and work in the city.

There is much to inspire us in Birmingham's history: tremendous inventiveness and entrepreneurial spirit, a thirst for scientific discovery and a world reputation for civic leadership and municipal improvement. Birmingham has a name for independence, pride and non-conformism, in part through our strong faith traditions, which have been enriched by the new communities we have welcomed through the years. Above all, our history gives us a belief in our ability to determine our own destiny and to respond to the world as it is today, as summed up in our motto: 'Forward'.

This spirit has stood us in good stead through the turbulent economic changes of recent decades, when we lost many traditional manufacturing jobs, but emerged strengthened as a dynamic new service- based economy.

However, in the modern world change does not stop. We must now take this spirit forward to help create the city of tomorrow. As this document shows, this will require us to be better educated, with excellent schools, colleges and universities for all. It will require the city to grow significantly, with more homes and jobs. And it will require sustained investment in new workplaces, retail and cultural facilities and transport. Birmingham was a key player in the industrial revolution - we must now take our place leading the low carbon revolution creating jobs and prosperity by tackling climate change. These are the challenges we face, but they are also tremendous opportunities.

Birmingham 2026 aims to capture the spirit of the future city we all want to live in and to share that story with the people of the city who will make it a reality.

The story of Birmingham 2026 has been created by the people and businesses of the city. We want this to be your story and we want everyone in the city to share the opportunities of the next two decades.

Five clear outcomes

We want to **enable Birmingham people to...**

succeed economically – benefit from education, training, jobs and investment

stay safe in a clean, green city – live in communities that people want to belong to

be healthy – enjoy long and healthy lives

enjoy a high quality of life – benefit from good housing and renowned cultural and leisure opportunities

make a contribution – value one another and play an active part in the community.

Birmingham 2026 is based on a long-term vision for the future of the city. It sets out a vision of the kind of city that we all want to develop over the next 15-20 years.

Public services for the 21st century

The public services of the city, brought together in the Birmingham Strategic Partnership (which has published this draft strategy), recognise that we need to change if we are to help the city meet these objectives. We have adopted **four principles to guide our actions** in working for the outcomes above:

- **a preventative approach**
re-directing our energies and resources into working with communities to stop problems developing and reducing dependency.
- **a targeted approach**
protecting and nurturing vulnerable people, and addressing disadvantaged communities in the city. We call this “narrowing the gap” between parts of the city, in terms of prosperity, safety, health, education and so on.
- **a sustainable approach**
improving the quality of life of our citizens whilst living within environmental limits
- **a personalised and inclusive approach**
ensuring we tailor our services to people’s needs.

Using these principles we will progressively transform the public services of the city so that they better meet the needs of citizens and businesses. Our public services will focus on:

- supporting businesses to create new employment and improve the city
- reaching out to support those most in need, for example to help people get into the labour market or improve their quality of life in other ways
- tailoring services to the needs of individual users, for example in health and social care, ensuring that each receives the service they need rather than merely what the system wants to give them
- working locally with residents to identify issues and address them together – helping to prevent problems such as crime, litter and fly-tipping
- working with a greater range of service providers, including expanding and supporting our voluntary and community organisations who are often well placed to deliver what local people need

The vision in this document will be achieved through the efforts of individuals, organisations and companies. So the overall aim is to create local public services that support the people and businesses of the city in achieving their aspirations.

How people have contributed

Birmingham 2026 is based on what Birmingham residents and businesses think of the city.

In developing this strategy we have listened hard to what thousands of **local people** have told us over the last two years about what is important to them, what needs to be improved, and what they want to do to improve the city.

We listened through...

- over 14,000 detailed interviews with adult residents in their homes across the city. By talking with people in their homes we ensured that respondents included:
 - older people (aged 65 or over)
 - people of all faiths and none
 - black and minority ethnic people
 - people with a disability
 - lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people
- surveys completed by over 17,000 children and young people (aged 6-18) and by over 500 parents and carers of young children (aged 0-6).
- a two-day Birmingham 2026 conference with residents selected from a representative 'People's Panel' of over 2,000 Birmingham residents from all parts of the city.

- a series of detailed focus groups with other members of the People's Panel, looking at their key issues and how life in Birmingham can be improved.
- the City Shapers event in Victoria Square in the city centre in March 2007, where over 1,600 people considered the challenges facing the city and told us their wishes for the future.
- a 'Planning for the Future of Birmingham' conference to take place in February 2008. This will link further consultation on the community strategy with early consultation on our Local Development Framework, which will show how different parts of the city contribute to the community strategy.

The **business community** has made a considerable contribution to the development of this strategy, including work on the **Birmingham Prospectus**, which was produced after consultation with many of Birmingham's stakeholders from the public, private and third sector at and after two conferences in 2006. The Prospectus sets out a shared vision and priorities for the city's long-term development, in particular focusing on major development and infrastructure opportunities.

We have also held discussions with the One Voice group, which brings together major business organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce.

We consult the third sector through the new assembly established by Birmingham Voluntary Sector Council (BVSC).

Local people told us the things that are vitally important to life in Birmingham. These include the levels of crime, clean streets, parks and open spaces, health service, shopping and facilities for young children. People are already satisfied with many of these topics. However, some important issues are identified by many people as in need of further improvement: the level of crime and street cleanliness in particular.

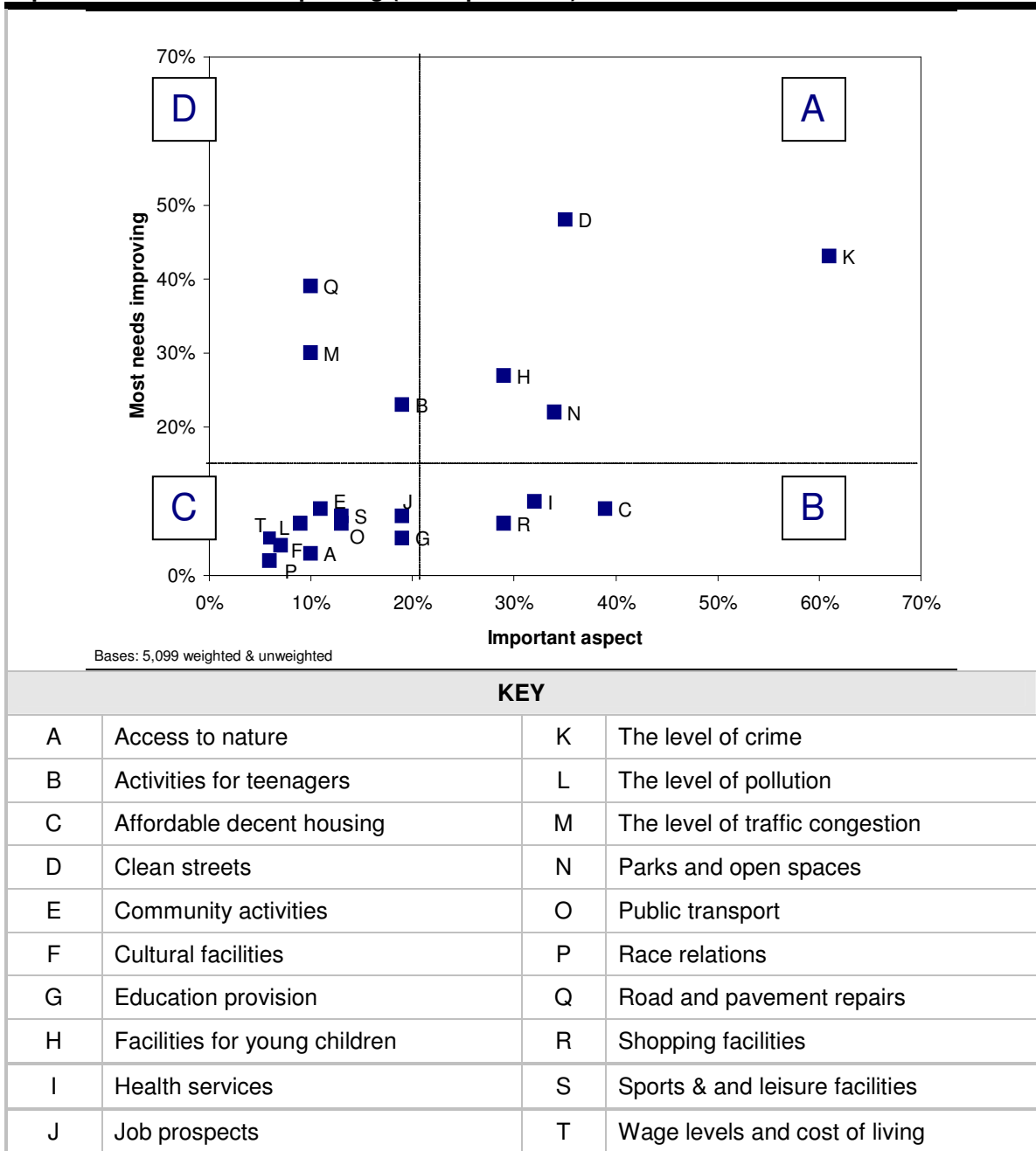
Climate change and terrorism have been identified as the two most important *global* issues by a recent people's panel survey in October 2007. In that survey, 63% of residents stated climate change was their main global concern and 15% cited terrorism.

The diagram below shows the most important aspects in making a place good to live, and those which need improving in Birmingham. The segment labelled "A" shows those important aspects of life which people feel most need improving. Segment "B" shows important aspects of life which on the whole people feel are already satisfactory. Segment "D" shows less important areas in need of improvement, and segment "C" less important areas which people feel are already satisfactory. Public priorities for improvement are issues in segment "A" (important and needing improvement).

The top priorities identified from this part of our public consultation (segment "A" above) included the level of crime and clean streets (see outcome 1 below); and facilities for young children, including parks and open spaces (see outcome 2 below).

A detailed summary of the messages from residents' involvement in developing BIRMINGHAM 2026 is available in a separate paper. [[hyperlink to website](#)]

Importance of specified aspects in making a place good to live in, compared against those aspects that most need improving (all respondents)



Source: LAA survey of 6,000 local residents, 2006

Birmingham today... Birmingham in 2026

Rising to the challenge- grasping the opportunity

As Birmingham has always done, we will rise to the challenges ahead by being realistic about the world we live in and what the city needs to do to be a leader in this new world. It will require us all to make some tough choices. But each of these is also an opportunity to improve the lives of the city's residents.

- **A big boost to skills** – with more Birmingham people gaining the knowledge and skills to support the growth in medical and environmental technologies and the new information and hi-tech jobs, faster improvement in some of our schools, and world-class universities for teaching, research and job creation.
- **A significant growth in the city's population** through more people staying in the city and more people moving here to take up some of the job opportunities created. Birmingham can make a major contribution to the region, creating sustainable low carbon communities. As a global city, we can take pressure off the surrounding rural areas so that we help protect the balance between town and country across the region.
- **An extensive new home-building programme** to accommodate this growth and to provide decent and affordable homes for all – transforming some of our run-down areas into high-quality, sustainable, low carbon, mixed-tenure communities, fully provided with schools and local facilities.
- **Continued high levels of investment** in the city centre and key outer-city development sites – exploiting their potential to the full and providing the new workplaces, retail and cultural facilities that the new economy demands.
- **A major upgrading of our public transport** networks to reduce congestion and CO₂ emissions; the development of a high speed rail link between Birmingham and London, and the airport extension to support business and growth and.
- **Continued expansion of our cultural and tourism resources**, to make the city an even more attractive place to live.
- **Expand our existing industries** by developing our growing business services sector, creative industries, the public sector, contact centres and transport and logistics.
- **Investment in new industries** based on science and new technology. Key new industries that we aim to attract to Birmingham include medical technology manufacture, high-technology manufacturing sectors, including environmental technologies, medical technologies, advanced materials and nanotechnology showing our potential as a Science City and a Digital City.

- **Birmingham will become a global leader in tackling climate change** thus creating the opportunity to rapidly grow the new products and services required to create a low carbon economy.
- **A bold programme of modernisation and reform** in all our local public services, particularly so that we can cost-effectively meet people's needs throughout longer, healthier and more independent lives.
- **We will use our procurement processes** to support outcomes such as local economic development.

As in the past, working together with a clear vision of where we are going, Birmingham will be able to rise to these challenges and grasp these opportunities.

Growing the city of tomorrow

After a decade of very slow population growth, Birmingham now needs to prepare for significant increase – up to 100,000 people over the next 20 years on top of our existing one million. As well as growing, our population is becoming increasingly diverse – by 2026 no single ethnic group will form more than half the total. The number of children (aged 0-14) in Birmingham is projected to increase to about 230,000 by 2026, compared with 208,000 in 2006. Our population of older people is also growing as people live longer.

Birmingham will meet the environmental challenge of growth, while reducing per capita the average emission of greenhouse gases and waste, and will lead the way in demonstrating the economic and social benefits of the efficient use of natural resources.

In addition to continuing development of the city centre, the main areas of change are likely to be east Birmingham, southwest Birmingham and parts of the north. These areas are attracting specific government funding through New Growth Points – where the city is taking an increased share of population growth, which contributes towards national sustainable growth needs.

Structure of the following sections

Birmingham 2026 first sets out the agenda for a growing city and how we will work together at the regional, city-regional and neighbourhood level. The agenda is structured around five key outcomes for the people of Birmingham. We present them in detail below.

Each is introduced with a vision for where we want to be in 2026, based on what Birmingham people and businesses have said is important. This is followed by an assessment of our current position and then a summary of how we intend to move from where we are now to where we need to be.

Outcome 1: Succeed economically ... benefiting from education, training, jobs and investment

<h1>The Birmingham Prospectus</h1>	<p>The Prospectus seeks to galvanise the Community Strategy's long-term ambitions, identifying the key actions that will make Birmingham a globally competitive city, a dynamic regional capital and the generator of growth and prosperity for its people over the next 20 years.</p>
	<p>Hyperlink to Prospectus full document</p>
	

Succeeding economically will mean that...

- more people will be in work – unemployment and worklessness will be reduced significantly
- more companies and employers will locate, prosper and remain in Birmingham
- economic inequalities between communities and groups get smaller and disadvantaged people have more opportunities
- educational performance and adult skills continue to improve
- more young people will be in education, training and employment
- road, rail and air access to the city improve
- the opportunities of 21st- century technologies inspire our entrepreneurs, businesses and communities
- environmental impact is minimised, including controlling CO₂ emissions and increasing resource efficiency and recycling

In future even more of our jobs will come from knowledge- based or hi-tech industries, and becoming a centre for these industries, with a reputation for innovation and creativity, will make Birmingham and its citizens wealthier. As a leading Science City and Digital City, we are well placed to achieve significant growth in these key sectors.

The key to economic prosperity and reduced inequality in the 21st century is a **workforce with the highest levels of skills, education and training**. We will increase access to accredited learning and training.

At the same time we need to maintain a high level of **investment in new workplaces** (corporate headquarters, offices, studios, design centres, research centres and hi-tech manufacturing sites) and in the retail, cultural and leisure facilities of the new economy. This must continue alongside our plans for housing growth.

We want the city to be increasingly attractive to companies and employers, so we are committed to working with every company in the city to help it prosper. We will assist new businesses by helping them get established, and by offering support and encouragement. We will minimise unnecessary regulatory burdens on business to make Birmingham a city in which it is easy to set up and grow a business.

As the city's economy develops, we will encourage and enable people in all parts of the city to prepare for and grasp the opportunities available to them. Sustained employment is usually the best answer to poverty, and we will work hard to help people in the most disadvantaged groups and areas to find jobs. In some parts of the city, far too many people who could work are jobless, relying on benefit payments.

Successful cities need **excellent 'connectivity'** – transport and communication networks into, out of and within the city. Birmingham has some of the highest rates of commuting by car in Europe, so congestion poses great challenges, with more car trips, more freight movement and more air travel expected. We will work with city-region partners to improve connectivity, promote and provide more reliable public transport such as a high speed rail link between London and Birmingham and tackle traffic congestion. We will improve the condition of the city's roads and work with our partners to develop key gateways to the city. Improving the availability of housing can help to reduce levels of commuting by encouraging more people to work and live in the city. We have some of the most attractive places to live in the country; offering more of them across the city will be an extra attraction for investors. We will understand and invest in the future of housing in the city and create places with a high quality, sustainable physical environment where people want to live and work.

'Connectivity' goes beyond physical transport: interactive communication and collaboration with on-line access to information will be the backbone of a successfully connected city in the next 20 years. The digital infrastructure will enable people to work more flexibly, reducing the need to travel. It will enable communities and businesses to access information instantly, whenever and wherever, giving them access to the global market; personalised information for travel, learning and public services; and inclusion in all aspects of the city's culture and events. As a digital city, we are committed to developing excellent digital facilities for Birmingham people and businesses, starting with WiFi access across the city centre from 2007.

Birmingham's renaissance in the last two decades has focused on the city centre. Building on this, future investment will create a strong network of vibrant urban villages across Birmingham. To begin this process we have identified three extra centres that will act as a focus for new investment, with more jobs and improved infrastructure. Birmingham is home to over 42,000 businesses, including big-name companies such as Jaguar, Royal Bank of Scotland, Goodyear Dunlop and Cadbury Trebor Bassett. We have the largest professional service sector in the UK outside London.

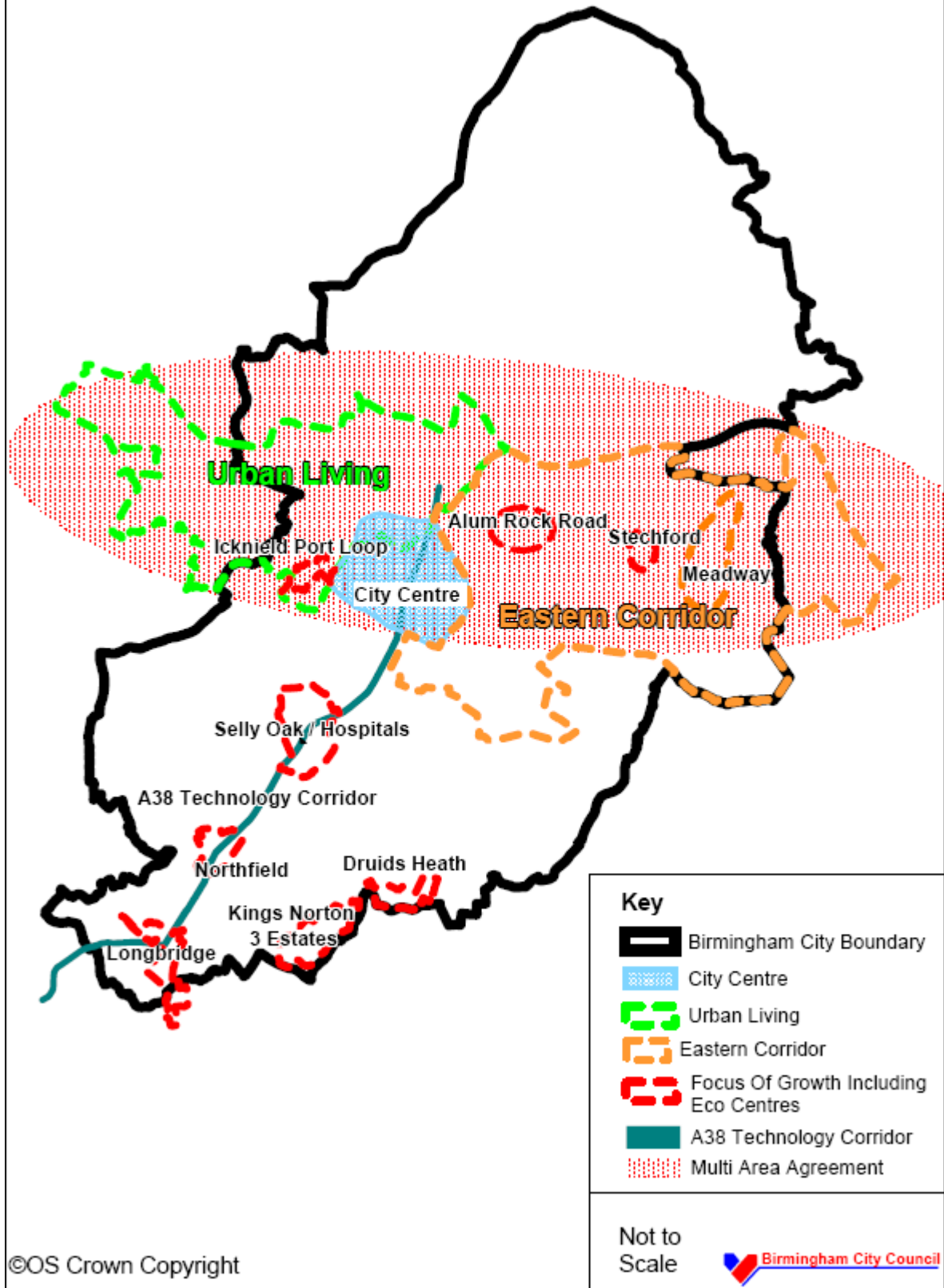
We want to make the city increasingly attractive to companies and employers, and are committed to working with all businesses to promote economic success. We will provide a high quality, attractive environment and create thriving local areas.

Birmingham is travelling towards a sustainable and carbon-neutral future. We must meet the environmental challenge of growing the city while reducing the average emission of greenhouse gases, and will lead the way in demonstrating the economic and social benefits of using natural resources efficiently. We are particularly eager to attract businesses that will help the city to fully exploit the economic opportunities of climate change and to position itself as a carbon-neutral centre of excellence.

In working towards **a greener and more sustainable city**, we must reduce the amount of waste that residents and businesses produce, and we will reuse and recycle more. We will minimise our impact on the environment, the amount of refuse sent to landfill and explore new technologies for processing recyclable materials in the most effective, economic and sustainable way. Technologies play a crucial role in reducing carbon emissions, for example through the use of intelligent transport systems.

Having transformed the city centre, we now also need to further improve the outlying parts of the city. The main areas of change are likely to be east Birmingham, southwest Birmingham and parts of the north west, as shown on the map below. This has been recognised in Birmingham and Solihull's designation as a national New Growth Point.

Growth Agenda



Where we want to be

By 2026 Birmingham will achieve:

- Increased ratings in international comparisons such as the Mercer Report on quality of life in international cities
- Economic competitiveness in line with the best UK core cities
- Wealth generation to match the best UK core cities (Gross Value Added per head)
- Employment rates of the best UK cities with significantly reduced unemployment and worklessness for disadvantaged groups
- Increased levels of innovation, investment in research and development, entrepreneurship and productivity
- Levels of adult skills that are ready for the new 'knowledge' economy and in line with the best UK cities
- Level of 16-24 year olds in education, employment or training in line with best core cities
- Planned growth for the projected population increase of up to 100,000.
- A connected city with 21st century physical and technology infrastructure including an extended runway at Birmingham International Airport and a high-speed rail link to London.
- Significantly reduced environmental impact including 60% reduction in CO₂ emissions from 1990 levels
- At least 40% of household waste recycled

Where we are now

Birmingham is a premier international business location and the key driver for the West Midlands economy. The city generates over £17.6 billion each year for the British economy, putting Birmingham in the top 80 global cities (in terms of Gross Value Added).

Birmingham's economy has grown over the last decade, but not as fast as the national average. Although productivity has increased substantially, employment growth has been slow, at less than a third of the UK average rate.

Employment in business services and the public sector has increased significantly, with increases also in the construction and retail/ hospitality sectors. But Birmingham's traditional manufacturing base has continued to decline over the last decade, averaging over 4% loss, per year, in employment. Financial services in the city have also shed some jobs.

Total employment in traditional manufacturing is expected to continue to fall, while **jobs in financial and business services, and in the creative and cultural industry, are forecast to increase**. We need to modernise and diversify our manufacturing base, capitalising on our skills and expertise to develop modern manufacturing technologies. We aim to increase innovation, entrepreneurship, research and development activities.

Worklessness remains a significant problem for many people in the city, and our employment rate for residents remains well below the regional average. We are determined to help people who have particular problems in finding work. These include people in certain parts of the city and certain groups (including people on incapacity benefit, older people, people with learning disabilities or mental health problems, lone parents, those with poor qualifications and BME people). We need to build on our excellent educational results at age 16. We need to further develop vocational training for young people, as well as improving more rapidly the skills of adults aged over 16 which are currently poor compared to the workforce of other major cities.

Skills and education are key to our future success. Our children are achieving high educational outcomes relative to other big cities, giving us good reason to be optimistic about the long-term future of the city. Nevertheless, we can still do better; even in Birmingham, almost two in five young people leave school without the five good GCSEs that businesses say will be essential to getting good jobs in the future. Adult skills are below the national average. We need to encourage greater learning of the foreign languages needed in modern global business and greater provision of English language training.

Education services for pre-school support and achievements for children and young people are continuing to improve, particularly for disadvantaged groups, although some groups still under-achieve: children in the care of the city council, those from African Caribbean communities, and white socio-economically disadvantaged boys. Birmingham has made excellent progress in reducing the number of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET). The fall in Birmingham's NEET figure is greater than in any similar city, but we still need to do much more.

The city's location at the heart of the UK's motorway network gives businesses a strategic advantage and contributes to Birmingham's success as the regional capital. Our transport network is under strain, with overall demand increasing beyond capacity, particularly in the peak commuting periods. However, use of public transport into the city centre is significant and rail use is rising rapidly. Birmingham's transport infrastructure faces great challenges, which partners are working to tackle. Rates of commuting to work by car remain high and bus use continues to fall. It is hoped that proposals to transform New Street Station into a modern national and international gateway to Birmingham and the West Midlands are due to be approved shortly, and plans have been announced for an extension to Birmingham International Airport's runway. We are pressing for the introduction of a high-speed rail link to London. We will improve the condition of the city's roads and the recently agreed Private Finance Initiative should enable investment in improvements of our road, lighting and environmental network condition. We will create more off-street parking and modernise enforcement arrangements.

Birmingham was designated the '**European City of the Future**' in 2005. In 2007 it has established itself as the first wireless city that provides citizens and businesses with the free information service '*Birmingham fiz*' over a city centre-wide wifi connection. We need to continue this good work to address issues such as the digital divide between those people who have access to the internet and related IT equipment and those who do not. Birmingham now has 42% of households connected to the Internet – we need to continue improving this connectivity.

Birmingham is at the forefront of **tackling climate change**. We have already established an Energy Services Company to deliver low carbon, reliable and cheap energy via a combined heat, power and cooling system. The Broad St scheme alone is saving 2,800 tonnes of CO₂ per annum and providing energy at 5% below market rates. We are on track to save 70,000 tonnes of CO₂ from Birmingham's households in 2007-8. However without further actions Birmingham's emissions are set to rise from 6.8 to 8 million tonnes per annum by 2026.

Recycling in Birmingham has substantially increased over the past couple of years. From a position below the national average, the city's recycling rate will now be around 25% in 2007/08 – in line with the national average and with targets to achieve 40% by 2026.

Our aim is to be amongst the best recyclers of all major Cities and to ensure that all households are covered by a doorstep recycling collection service. Through the 5 Household Recycling Centres we are already collecting and processing over 20 different types of recyclable materials and we will explore new technologies to recycle even more. Through investment in an 'Energy from Waste' Plant, our landfill rates continue to be amongst the lowest in the UK and we will need to maintain this position by seeking to ensure that volumes of household waste are reduced over the term of this strategy in the face of rises in the standard of living, and the consequent increased demand for more consumer goods.

Moving forward

Lead responsibility for ensuring Birmingham succeeds economically rests with the Birmingham Prospectus Steering Group and Birmingham Economic Development Partnership. Birmingham has already developed some clear approaches to securing its economic success. These provide the detailed plans to achieve our vision. In terms of physical development and investment, key approaches include:

- the **Birmingham Prospectus**, developed last year by Birmingham private, public, voluntary and community sectors
- the **Local Development Framework (LDF)**, which sets out how to bring about physical change in the city and is the 'spatial expression' of the Community Strategy. The core strategy of the LDF is being consulted on alongside Birmingham 2026 [hyperlink]
- the **City Centre Masterplan**, which will guide physical development of the central area and will eventually form part of the LDF
- **Area investment prospectuses**, which identify market development opportunities across the city
- the **Local Transport Plan**, setting out the key transport policies and programmes for Birmingham and the wider conurbation
- the Inward Investment strategy
- Science City prospectus.

We need to tackle the significant differences in outcomes between some groups and communities in terms of employment, enterprise, educational success, health, and levels of crime and disorder, including those differences that disadvantage our businesses. The Community Cohesion Strategy outlines our commitment to tackling these issues (which we call 'narrowing the gap') and the Local Area Agreement tracks our rate of improvement.

The Birmingham Environment Partnership will lead the delivery of reducing waste and CO₂ priorities; key strategies include:

- The **Birmingham Climate Change Strategy** and Action Plan;
- **Waste Management Strategy**.

Key actions include the following:

- Create the economic conditions for growth by:
 - improving the physical infrastructure of the city centre, local centres and corridors
 - bringing forward major development sites by grouping sites in a way that will transform different parts of the city.
- Encourage young people to remain in education beyond school-leaving age by offering exciting and rewarding education and vocational pathways. We aim to raise the academic success of young people through schools and colleges and remote learning technologies, and extend this to high-quality vocational training including foreign language skills.
- Increase access to accredited adult learning and training related to employment.
- Tackle unemployment and worklessness by ensuring we engage with employers, develop and invest in the city to increase recruitment from disadvantaged groups.
- Work to retain graduates from Birmingham's universities and attract graduates from elsewhere to enable the city to compete in the global economy.
- Foster a lifelong interest in learning, with local employers supporting the process, to enrich the lives of our citizens and improve what we offer investors. This is critical in increasing employees' skills and improving job opportunities for people with poor qualifications in an increasingly knowledge-based economy.
- Working towards increased innovation, enterprise and productivity.
- Encourage and support increased inward investment into the city by businesses.
- Develop clusters of companies in growth sectors such as medical, advanced materials, environmental and digital technologies and in the creative and cultural industries.
- Promote financial inclusion, ensuring that Birmingham people receive the benefits and grants they are entitled to, and that those who are able to work are in meaningful employment. Improve the financial wellbeing of those entitled to benefits and build capacity to tackle financial exclusion in Birmingham.
- Encourage joint working between business and local regulators to make Birmingham a place where it is easy to start and continue doing business. Assist new businesses by helping them get established, and by offering support and encouragement with no unnecessary regulatory burdens. Develop a strong enterprise culture across the city's communities, reflected by higher levels of business start-ups and business growth.
- Focus major residential growth on the four identified areas in Birmingham (city-centre, South, North West and East Birmingham), with associated infrastructure and service improvements. Understand and invest in the future of housing in the city.
- Delivering a low carbon energy infrastructure with localised and renewable power generation.
- Improving recycling rates and resource efficiency.
- Improve the condition of the City's roads and highways through the PFI programme.
- Redevelop New Street Station, develop a high speed rail link to London and extend Birmingham International Airport's runway.

- Improve metro and bus infrastructure.
- High-quality footways and pedestrian crossings with provision for wheelchair users will enable easier access to local shops, schools, health centres, stations, leisure facilities and places of work.
- Improve the provision of and information about public transport; promote flexible working and virtual meetings; and reduce levels of traffic congestion and CO₂ emissions.
- Actively work towards reducing environmental impacts.
- Develop innovative, intelligent and interactive signage in the city centre.
- Put in place an infrastructure that supports digital advance, enabling citizens and the business community to benefit from being part of a modern technological society working in a global context.
- Establish high-quality and affordable childcare to meet demand.
- Raise the profile of our world-class cultural attractions, to draw in more people, events and opportunities and to help external investors recognise what the city offers. Enhance our reputation as a national, and international, centre for sport and culture.
- Development of new central library and potential to develop a new museum as part of the city-centre masterplanning exercise.

Particular programmes of development outside the city centre include:

- **South Birmingham:** the redevelopment of the Longbridge site, as proposed in the area action plan, following the closure of MG Rover; Selly Oak with the new 'super hospital', University Science Park, the Battery site canal-side development of a housing and mixed-use scheme, and the Dingle landmark development opportunity; Kings Norton 3 Estates NDC and housing transformation programme; Druids Heath housing transformation.
- **North West Birmingham:** Icknield Port Loop mixed-use development site around a canal setting; Aston East, a regional economic investment and potential large employment site; the IMI Hub large industrial and distribution development site; Urban Living Programme, a 10-15 year housing transformational programme; Serpentine mixed used development site and the former HP factory site being developed as a prominent business park; and the development of the Aston, Lozells and Newtown Area Action Plan to provide a Planning Framework for regeneration and renewal for the area over the next 10-15 years.
- **East Birmingham:** 'Alstom', a major employment investment opportunity on a 21-hectare site; the Eastern Corridor housing market area, which will increase choice, affordability and mix and will be a catalyst for change in the area; the A34 and A45 growth corridors which have potential for future investment; Alum Rock Road and Washwood Heath Rd corridor, which offers scope for improvement and expansion of a key local centre, thus driving forward the growth potential of local centres; Birmingham Wheels, a significant site with potential as a regional iconic leisure development; increasing the growth potential of local centres; the Meadway mixed development; and Tyseley and Greet Industrial areas which hold significant potential for new investment and jobs through the development of vacant sites and occupation of premises.

Outcome 2: Stay safe in a clean, green city *living in safe and clean neighbourhoods*

A clean, green and safe Birmingham will mean that:

- We will make neighbourhoods safer – crime rates will continue to fall, especially in wards where rates are highest
- crimes of particular concern will be significantly reduced, including violent crime such as public-place woundings and incidents involving alcohol, drugs, guns and gangs
- fear of crime will be reduced, including tackling issues that people perceive as threatening, such as graffiti
- more people will judge their neighbourhood, parks, public spaces and the city to be clean and safe
- there will be less anti-social behaviour, including irresponsible drinking and drug misuse
- fewer children and young people will be victims of crime, offend or become persistent offenders
- concern about hate crime will remain low or decrease further
- violent extremism, radicalisation and the threat of terrorism will decrease
- vulnerable people are effectively safeguarded - including children, young people, older people, people with mental health problems or a learning disability, and victims of domestic violence
- people will be more satisfied with the parks and green spaces across the city
- facilities for children and young people, including parks, will improve
- satisfaction with, and the cost-effectiveness of, recycling and waste-management services will improve

Public consultation has clearly identified that priorities for public sector service delivery should include the provision of safe and clean neighbourhoods. The inter-relationship between a safe neighbourhood, where crime is low and where the fear of crime is also low, is closely linked to perception of cleanliness of that neighbourhood.

Where we want to be

By 2026, Birmingham will achieve:

- The highest levels of feelings of safety for residents in any UK core city.
- Levels of crime the lowest of all core cities.
- Safe and inclusive neighbourhoods for all, where people are empowered to resist radicalisation and gang culture.
- Clean streets and public spaces. Public satisfaction with the reduced incidence of litter, graffiti, fly-posting and insecure and fly-tipping sites will be in line with the best UK Cities.

Where we are now

Birmingham has enjoyed a good deal less crime, arson and accidental fires over the last six years. In the 12 months until the end of June 2007, overall recorded crime was cut by 20% compared to 2003/04 – giving Birmingham the lowest overall crime rate of England's core cities.

Fear of crime differs significantly in neighbourhoods across the city and often does not always reflect the reality of crime levels.

Vulnerable people need better protection. Each year an estimated 49,000 Birmingham women and men suffer from domestic violence – we are committed to supporting the survivors of domestic violence and to dealing with perpetrators. Bullying is a problem for too many children – 40% of primary and 30% of secondary-age pupils say they have been bullied.

In some neighbourhoods and communities, young people are more likely to be involved in crime and anti-social behaviour, both as victims and as perpetrators. The population of children in care is growing, as is the level of referrals to children's social services.

The number of people killed or seriously injured in traffic accidents has fallen by a third in the last decade but remains a major cause for concern.

Although there has been a strong reduction in accidental fires, safety within and around the home remains a significant concern especially for older people and vulnerable adults.

There is a recent history of a developing guns and gangs culture which is both damaging for those neighbourhoods where this occurs and for the national and international reputation of the city to tourism and investment.

There is evidence of disaffection which in some areas of the city is leading to radicalisation of some people and presents a significant future challenge for the city.

In 2007/08 some 88% of all Birmingham streets will meet nationally acceptable quality standards for litter. However graffiti is a significant problem that needs to be effectively addressed.

Although significant improvements have been made, particularly relating to levels of litter and fly-tipping, almost half the people surveyed identified the physical environment as in need of further improvement.

Birmingham has a strong infrastructure of parks, open spaces and attractive canals and waterways. We must continue to protect and develop these assets to the benefit of all residents and visitors.

Moving forward

Lead responsibility to make sure Birmingham people 'stay safe' rests with the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership.

Lead responsibility to ensure that the city is clean and green rests with the Birmingham Environmental Partnership. This includes work around reducing waste and CO₂.

The Birmingham Children and Young People's Plan 2008-2011 sets out the key approaches to improving outcomes for children and young people.

Key actions include:

- Reducing levels of crime and, in particular, the fear of crime is a major priority for people across the city. Rates of crime are highest in a number of clearly identified neighbourhoods and we will work to reduce crime in these areas as quickly as possible. Some types of crime (particularly violent crime and crime linked to guns and gangs) are a major concern in specific parts of the city and we will continue to address these vigorously. Much violent crime is fuelled by alcohol and drug misuse, so Birmingham must become a city where the harm caused by misuse of drugs and alcohol is minimised.
- Anti-social behaviour can blight people's lives and neighbourhoods – we will be clear about the responsibilities attached to the right to live in Birmingham and work to reduce behaviour which ruins other people's lives. We will be robust in our dealings with those irresponsible citizens and employ all the available powers to us in an effective and proportionate manner.
- We will support young people to avoid being drawn into criminality and actively support those already involved to establish new lives outside of criminality. Patterns in victimisation of young people will be identified and action will be taken to reduce the risk to young people.
- The further reduction in hate crime requires action by everyone in the city, supported by clear frameworks in schools and other organisations. We will encourage every incident of hate crime to be reported and further action to be taken against the perpetrators. People will continue to be referred to mediation and/or legal remedies. Tackling racial and homophobic bullying in schools is an important element of this work.
- Ensuring vulnerable people are safe is a priority. The protection of vulnerable adults will further improve, including strengthening the multi-agency partnership Safeguarding Board. We will ensure effective and timely multi-agency assessments with full involvement from relevant agencies. We will develop better and more targeted ways to protect young people, including reducing the number of young people experiencing bullying, either at school or in the community.
- We are committed to improve safety in the home (for example through the Safeside Project), improve personal safety on public transport and reduce serious road traffic collisions and their impact on society.

- Birmingham people demand a clean city. Whilst the cleanliness of the city centre has won a national award as the 'Cleanest City in Britain 2007/09', there is no room for complacency. Residents will not tolerate litter and graffiti; the BSP will work to change attitudes and behaviour to prevent this problem from arising. Cleanliness standards outside of the city centre vary and must be brought up to a consistently high standard across all neighbourhoods. Environmental degradation is important in influencing people's perceptions of an area's safety and tackling this is integral to efforts to reduce the fear of crime.
- We are committed to providing cost-effective local street cleansing teams, responsible and accountable for the provision of unified cleansing services tackling litter, graffiti, fly-posting and fly-tipping. We will develop an Environmental Quality Strategy to deliver a clean city.
- Crime and the fear of crime also have strong links to our other ambitions – to “succeed economically” we need a city where people feel confident to invest and build businesses; to “be healthy” we need a city where people both feel safe and are protected from harm. We need to improve people's feelings of safety by reducing crime and the fear of crime.

Outcome 3: Be healthy ... *enjoying long and healthy lives*

A healthy Birmingham will mean that we will:

- improve health for those who belong to the least healthy groups
 - narrow the gap in life expectancy between the least healthy wards and the city average
 - lower levels of infant mortality
 - lower levels of teenage pregnancy
- have more people choosing healthy lifestyles
 - lower levels of obesity and raise levels of healthy eating
 - lower levels of smoking
 - raise levels of physical activity (including walking and cycling)
 - better quality and choice of leisure and sports opportunities
 - aim for fewer problems with irresponsible drinking
- enable more people to live independently for longer
 - have more people living in homes that are warm and have modern facilities
 - reduce disability caused by ill health
 - lower levels of accidents and injuries at home and at work
 - promote the health benefits of employment for all residents
 - ensure safe and healthy work environments
- improve people's mental health as well as their physical health
 - improve children's emotional wellbeing
- have accessible health and care services – we will ensure people are confident in the system and meet their demand for high-quality care in a cost-effective way.

Good health is arguably the most important outcome for individuals.

Health and social care services provide crucial service to our vulnerable citizens and those experiencing difficulties, but we need to re-focus these and other public services on encouraging and enabling people to play an active role in improving their own wellbeing. Assistive technologies and other support in the home can help people to continue to live independently. Through direct payments, older people have the choice about deciding which services they need as well as how often they need it.

A wide range of services, including leisure and cultural services delivered by the council and the private sector can help people adopt healthier, more active lifestyles. They need to be accessible to all, particularly those communities with the poorest health outcomes at present. We will further develop community facilities to encourage healthy lifestyle choices and find ways of reducing health inequalities.

Where we want to be

By 2026, Birmingham will achieve:

- life expectancy at or above the national average across all wards
- Infant mortality will be the lowest amongst UK cities
- teenage pregnancy rates below the national average
- active lifestyles in line with the best UK cities
- people living independently and more actively as long as possible
- adult care packages being made available, when required, within four weeks of assessment and an increase in the of choice and control of the care they receive by service users
- accessible health and care services – meeting high standards in all parts of the city
- decent standards for virtually all housing, with efficient heating systems and insulation in line with the best UK cities
- Improved quality and choice of housing

Where we are now

Health in Birmingham is in need of improvement, particularly in the most disadvantaged parts of the city – where men can expect to live about eight fewer years than in the most affluent parts and where babies are almost twice as likely to die in their first year of life compared to the England average. Life expectancy in Birmingham is up to 3 years below the national average. These are entrenched problems that require long-term commitments and investment.

Short-term achievements include improving access to community-based support for mums-to-be, better support for vulnerable mothers, easier access to health tests for men over 40 and a single stop-smoking service for Birmingham. Work to prevent ill health has included the installation of effective heating systems, adaptations to people's homes, and other support to help people live comfortably and independently.

The infant death rate is one of the highest in the country – on average, a baby born in Birmingham is eight times more likely to die before his/her first birthday than a baby born in Surrey. This varies considerably across the city, with three wards having particularly high rates.

Birmingham has historically had a rate of teenage conceptions well above the national average. Again, the rate varies across the city, with two wards having particularly high rates.

Mental health issues are important in Birmingham. Many children and young people show evidence of conduct disorders or depression. Employers report issues around stress and managing work/life balance amongst their staff. We will ensure effective access to community and specific mental health services.

Some older people often feel isolated, but it is very important to their wellbeing to ensure they feel part of the community. In 2006, the number of residents aged 75 or older was estimated to be about 68,000 (7% of the total population). Numbers are projected to grow to about 78,000 by 2026, and could increase further if life expectancy were to improve more rapidly. The challenge is to increase health and wellbeing, maximise independence and reduce dependency on care by refocusing on providing preventative wellbeing services.

Obesity is a significant public-health issue in Birmingham. It is estimated that about 25% of children aged 5 to 15 in the city are overweight and a further 12.5% are clinically obese. The highest levels are among black children, followed by Asian heritage children, with Asian boys having significantly higher levels than Asian girls. It is estimated that more than half of the adult population is overweight and 18% are clinically obese. There are clear lifestyle factors behind this; for example, over 24% of the population in three wards are obese.

Moving forward

Lead responsibility to help Birmingham people 'be healthy' rests with the Birmingham Health and Well-Being Partnership. The partnership has developed an action plan to address health inequalities. They intend to develop a strategic approach to improving wellbeing (initially focusing on older people) over the next year.

Key actions include:

- informing and engaging residents in improving their own and others' health (for example through stopping smoking, taking more exercise and eating a healthier diet) through the *Be Healthy* programme
- employers encouraging their staff to go for regular health check-ups, quit smoking, exercise and eat healthily
- targeting support to help parents of babies who are at most risk of mortality in their first year of their life
- an ambitious programme to develop a series of extra-care villages to provide another high-quality choice for older people who wish to remain living independently in an environment that encourages activity and promotes wellbeing
- getting more timely assessments for adult care packages and making a wider range of support available more quickly to older people
- ensuring health and care services are accessible
- investing in social housing to meet and exceed the Decent Homes Standard
- using technology to enhance people's lives and their ability to understand and manage their own health
- reducing levels of irresponsible drinking and drug misuse
- promoting active lifestyles (including for older people) – for example, through local community work such as good neighbour schemes; faith communities' work with older people; improved safety; and more affordable, accessible and relevant activities and enabling people to direct their own care
- improving the use of leisure facilities by people in groups and areas with poor health outcomes, for example through links with schools and targeted programmes
- healthier travelling through higher levels of walking and cycling – reducing car use will also help improve air quality which in turn will have an impact on the number of people diagnosed with respiratory diseases

Outcome 4: Enjoy a high quality of life benefiting from good housing renowned cultural and leisure opportunities

By a high quality of life we mean:

- more people will be better satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live and have a better quality of life
- more residents (existing and prospective) will be able to find their choice of housing, whether owned or rented
- the city's housing stock will be modernised to meet people's aspirations for decent homes
- more older people will remain active and involved in the community, and choose to stay in the city
- people providing informal care to relatives and dependants will receive better support
- local centres will be thriving, clean and attractive
- better access to nature and the preservation, protection and enhancement of important natural sites around the city
- congestion in the city will be reduced by improved connectivity, better public transport and reducing the need to travel
- more people will be satisfied with our parks and open spaces and will enjoy our leisure sport and cultural facilities such as libraries, arts venues and museums.
- more residents will share the benefits of the internet and online services to access learning, education and leisure and cultural experiences at a time and place that suits them

Housing is basic to people's quality of life. Warm, secure, modern homes are strongly linked to better health, safety and jobs. As the city grows, we need a range of good properties, including housing to meet the needs of new arrivals, people on low incomes, growing families and older people. We will prevent and reduce homelessness.

The city's social housing stock is being modernised with the delivery of the decent homes programme, which will be expanded into *decent homes plus*, with modern kitchens and bathrooms. We will provide services to tenants at an excellent level, and set a national example of cost-effective delivery.

Our growing older population deserves high-quality services and activities relevant to them – and support and care when they need it. People want to continue living in their own homes, and services need to be shaped around this preference and planned in partnership with older people themselves. We also want to encourage more affluent older people to choose to remain living in the city.

Birmingham residents feel strongly about the quality of their local services – including schools; health services; police; access to parks and open spaces; and thriving local centres. An important aspect of being a 'global city with a local heart' is the quality of local areas outside the city centre. This is a major area of focus for the city in coming years, as set out in our recent Green Paper on neighbourhoods. Providing cultural facilities and programmes at a local level is key to creating a sense of community where neighbours interact and feel at ease with each other. We will create mixed and sustainable communities.

Culture, leisure and sports facilities are important in all areas – but particularly in vibrant urban areas like Birmingham. Top-class cultural attractions can draw in visitors, raising the city's external reputation and attracting more inward investment, as well as encouraging people to live here. Tourism is already a £2.5 billion-a-year business for the city, and we are working with private-sector partners to thoroughly understand the needs of the various types of visitors and fully meet them. We will ensure more people will be satisfied with leisure, sport and cultural facilities in the city.

Where we want to be

By 2026, Birmingham will achieve:

- at least 50,600 new homes to meet the needs of up to 100,000 new residents over the next 20 years, including new affordable homes in the next five years
- a 60% reduction in global-warming emissions (CO₂) compared to 1990 levels
- an international reputation as a centre of world-class culture, with residents as satisfied with cultural facilities here as in the best-performing UK cities
- new and regenerated urban centres with low carbon emissions
- resident satisfaction with the local neighbourhood in line with the best UK cities

Where we are now

Resident satisfaction with their local neighbourhood has increased. In 2006, 81% of residents were satisfied with their local area as a place to live, up from 78% in 2004.

Birmingham has over 3,200 hectares of parks and open spaces, including 5 Green Flag Parks. Our canals and waterways are a major asset to the city's attractiveness. Birmingham will be creating the first new city centre park in 100 years in Eastside. The city currently has seven Local Nature Reserves and one National Nature Reserve.

The city has outstanding cultural facilities, including some internationally famous ensembles such as the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the Birmingham Royal Ballet and venues including Symphony Hall and the newly re-opened Town Hall. There is a wide range of private-sector and public-sector leisure facilities, although many of these need modernising. Local cultural programmes that engage residents 'on their doorstep' are being developed.

A wide range of housing is available, although there is a shortage of larger family homes and in some areas a shortage of affordable homes. The city's social housing is on track to reach 'decent homes' standards by 2010. Currently 53,000 households are estimated to live in 'fuel poverty', where a household cannot afford enough warmth for health and comfort.

A shared preventative approach between the public and third sector has reduced homelessness applications significantly. In 2004/05 we received around 1,000 a month. We now receive around 500 a month.

More affordable housing is needed to reduce the current high levels of overcrowding. Currently, almost 20% of children in Birmingham live in households that are overcrowded.

Care services in the city are improving from a low base and are now considered to be serving people well. We need to make sure that in future they serve all people well. In particular, we need to improve information available to self-funders i.e. those who need support to make informed choices about buying care directly.

Informal carers provide vital support to people across the city. Support for carers has improved through the development of the Carers Strategy, use of the carers' grant and effective partnership working with carers and carers' organisations, and through setting up a dedicated carers centre in a prime location in the city centre. The Commissioning Strategy for Carers estimates the numbers of unpaid carers amount to almost 100,000 people (10% of Birmingham's population). We need to improve our understanding of who is providing informal care in the city, and the support they get in this vital role.

Moving forward

The Local Development Framework explains how the community strategy will be taken forward in different parts of the city. For example, it shows where new housing will be developed.

Lead responsibility for improving housing in the city rests with the Birmingham City Housing Partnership. The outcomes will be achieved through existing strategies including the:

- Housing Strategy
- Homelessness Strategy
- Supporting People Strategy
- Empty Homes Strategy

Birmingham Cultural Partnership leads the improvement of the city's leisure and cultural attractions through the Birmingham Cultural Strategy. Birmingham Sports Partnership leads work to enhance the city's sport and physical activity offerings through the Birmingham Sports and Physical Activity Strategy.

Birmingham Environment Partnership leading on creating quality parks and open spaces and promoting and protecting biodiversity.

Local Constituency Strategic Partnerships lead work in improving local neighbourhoods and ensuring that local centres thrive.

Support for carers is provided by Birmingham Adults and Communities and the primary care trusts in partnership with the third sector, carers' organisations and carers themselves.

Key actions include:

- increasing the choice, quality and supply of housing that residents can afford
- reducing global-warming CO₂ emissions by 60% from housing compared to 1990 levels
- retaining more of the 10,000 or so graduates each year from Birmingham's universities to enable the city to compete in the global economy
- reducing the need to travel and in particular the amount of travel by car, for example through better land-use planning and the development of local centres and facilities; and by improving public transport to make it more efficient, flexible and accessible.
- improving the quality of our parks, open spaces and waterways.
- improving cultural infrastructure to ensure that residents have access to high-quality cultural opportunities in their neighbourhoods, such as the new Library of Birmingham, new City Park and a new museum and to help make the city more attractive to potential investors and new residents.
- supporting events that bring residents together to share cultural experiences, including high-profile events that will build on the city's unique strengths, such as an international digital convention
- enabling people to access services in different ways; improve online learning; and increase home-based job opportunities.

Outcome 5: Make a contribution *valuing one another and playing an active part in the community*

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

- more people (in general and hard-to-reach groups in particular) will feel that they can influence local decisions and have a say over their services
- more people will vote locally in elections
- people will be more satisfied with local services and feel they deliver better value for money – and will increasingly have more direct influence over spending decisions and shaping service delivery
- people will celebrate the city’s diversity, culture and history and be proud of its achievements – acting as ambassadors for Birmingham and promoting the city externally
- the community and voluntary sector will increase the scope of their activities so that they feel they are full partners in the life of the city and are making a particular contribution
- more people will volunteer and undertake neighbourly tasks in their communities
- communities are at ease with themselves and each other and people value the increasing diversity of the city’s population – violent extremism will be eliminated and there will be less cause for concern about racially motivated harassment and attacks
- more people will be clear about how they are expected to behave, including taking responsibility for their own and their children’s behaviour and showing respect for others and for their local area
- citizens will have, and make use of, a range of ways to communicate, interact and take part in local decision-making and influence their neighbourhoods
- new and established communities will have the tools to communicate and share experiences and exchange information, wherever they are.

We are committed to consulting, involving and engaging Birmingham citizens, with a particular focus on groups we have sometimes found hard to reach, such as people who do not read or write in English and people who cannot leave their home. We will continue this proactive public consultation and engagement.

We need to be clear on the rights and responsibilities associated with living in the city, possibly developing a Birmingham Citizen’s Charter.

Citizens will need to get actively involved if we are to tackle Birmingham’s key issues. Many are already active, influencing the future of their area and making a positive contribution to their local community. For example, across the city, voluntary Birmingham Street Champions take responsibility for reporting local environmental issues.

The community and voluntary sector, including our thriving faith communities, make a vital contribution to the city. They have a unique perspective on how to make improvements, often demonstrating this through innovative local work. They often have excellent relationships with volunteers and people who benefit from their services, providing unique insights. And they increasingly deliver services on behalf of the public sector. More thought has to be given to the responsibility for local community facilities.

Building on the council's Beacon status, the public sector needs to continue working in partnership with the voluntary and community sector, making funding and commissioning opportunities more accessible and valuing the sector's roles in lobbying and in working with the public. We will involve the third sector earlier in the policy development and planning process.

Everyday digital technologies such as mobile phones and the Internet can open up opportunities to contact hard-to-reach communities and enable them to take part in and contribute to local decision making. Traditional approaches to engage socially excluded communities have limitations, so we need to provide alternative digital channels to reach them. The Birmingham Bulletin has been successfully launched and communicates regularly with over 100,000 Birmingham residents via email. The Birminghamcuttingco2 web site attracted 16,000 pledges in its first three months.

A digital divide remains among socially excluded communities, and we need to address this by giving citizens further opportunities for e-participation, blogging and creating their own virtual communities so that they have full access to 21st century communication technologies.

We are rightly proud of our openness to new arrivals. Many older people recall the arrival of Irish workers to help rebuild the city after the War, as well as later arrivals from Commonwealth countries fuelling the growth of manufacturing industry and wider economy in the 1950s and 60s. More recently, we have also welcomed people from new European Union countries and those escaping persecution through asylum. In a changing global economy, our diversity is a key strength for the future. In the short term, changing populations can cause extra burdens to local public services.

Before 2026, Birmingham is likely become with a city where no one ethnic group forms the majority. Our long experience of different communities getting on well together stands us in good stead for this development. We need to encourage those who build links across communities, and stand together against those who would sow misunderstanding and mistrust.

Where we want to be

By 2026, Birmingham will achieve:

- higher levels of social literacy among its children and young people
- very high levels of people from different communities getting on well together, as in the best-performing UK cities
- more people feeling able to influence local decision-making, as in the best-performing UK cities
- more people with access to digital technologies, enabling them to take part in Birmingham life and reducing social and digital exclusion.

Where we are now

How far people feel involved in the development of their local area is important in building a community. We carry out surveys to measure how far people feel they can influence local decisions. In 2006, 37% of people agreed that they are able to influence decisions that affect their local area. This shows an improvement since 2004 where only 18% of people felt this. Tracking this result will be an important measure of progress, in light of Birmingham's ongoing commitment as a Civic Pioneer and the move to more localised services.

However, the percentage of residents voting in local elections in the UK is low, and Birmingham has one of the lowest percentages of European cities. The reasons for this are complex and many are not open to local action. However, we need to re-engage people, particularly younger adults, with the democratic process. The use of digital technologies and the digital switchover offer an excellent opportunity for all citizens, including young people, to join in with two-way participation directly from their home

Birmingham people make a valuable contribution through volunteering and giving their time freely to others. Currently nearly 40% of people provide some sort of unpaid help for others, whether it's giving advice, helping to organise a local event, doing household jobs or caring for children. We need to help sustain and improve this important contribution.

Faith communities are important in Birmingham, where the proportion of the population who identify with a faith is higher than the national average. There are almost 578,000 Christians, 140,000 Muslims, 29,000 Sikhs, 19,000 Hindus, 3,000 Buddhists and 2,000 Jews across Birmingham. While Christianity is the most common faith, nearly 20% of the population belong to another faith. The highest percentages of residents identifying with a religion are in Bordesley Green, Springfield and Washwood Heath.

Differences and deprivation can cause tensions between people and communities. But over three-quarters of people in Birmingham think their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get along well together. This figure has risen in recent years, while the proportion that thinks the city does not have strong communities has fallen.

But as in all big cities community cohesion cannot be taken for granted. Many residents feel that racial attacks and other hate crimes are a problem. And agencies have identified the need to reduce hate crimes – whether directed at different ethnic communities or other groups, such as lesbian, bi-sexual, gay and trans-gender people – as a priority in the Crime and Disorder Strategy.

Moving forward

Our Community Cohesion Strategy underlines a commitment to putting social cohesion at the heart of our work.

Constituency Strategic Partnerships (CSPs) provide a framework for co-operation at a local level between key public services. Their future role needs greater clarity and a focus on clear actions to improve the local area.

The City Council's consultation and engagement strategy establishes clear principles and approaches to work with residents. The Birmingham Strategic Partnership is currently developing this further into an agreed approach across public agencies in the city.

Key actions include:

- streamlining the range of consultation and involvement activities undertaken across the city to enable residents to get involved more effectively, and continuing proactive consultation and engagement
- encouraging active citizenship by all groups, including young and older people and faith communities by strengthening current arrangements for involving people in positive activities and local decision making
- undertaking more detailed and sophisticated shared needs analysis across the city for each of the five outcomes in the Community Strategy
- evaluating the work of faith groups, and identifying how to enhance their contribution
- providing support to people who act as ambassadors for the city externally, for example through key literature or tools
- making sure people are clear about their responsibilities as citizens in contributing to the wellbeing of the city (by producing a citizens charter outlining their responsibility)
- supporting the development of community organisations in local areas and for groups of people (for example the disability network)
- more effective liaison between the voluntary and community sector and the public sector, in line with Compact principles [[hyperlink](#)], to increase the third sector's capacity to work in partnership with public services
- supporting the voluntary and community sector in encouraging more people to give freely of their time
- encouraging local businesses to play an active role through their corporate social responsibility work
- taking a fresh look at how the public sector (including constituencies) conducts business, to encourage greater and wider public involvement
- understanding why few people vote in local elections and addressing these issues at local level where possible, as well as influencing national policy in this area
- developing an exchange mechanism ('Birmingham Xchange') by creating multiple digital channels to enable citizens to communicate and participate using everyday devices such as mobile phones, computers and digital television
- identifying and implementing ways for residents to shape their local environments.

Delivering the vision

Links to other key strategies

The Community Strategy, building on our economic **Prospectus** published last year, sets the over-arching framework for all public-sector bodies in the city. In particular, it sets the vision and outcomes to which other strategic and organisational plans contribute.

To achieve this ambitious vision the city will need the support and collaboration of central government, in particular through the **Local Area Agreement**.

Government is using the Local Area Agreement increasingly to deliver funding. The next Agreement is currently being negotiated. It is how much of Birmingham 2026 will be delivered through rolling three-year programmes. The LAA will focus on relatively few priorities. It will be subject to negotiation and agreement with Central Government, and informed by the priorities of this vision. Government funds will be combined with local agencies' own resources to achieve agreed outcomes.

The LAA will have clear and costed plans setting out what is to be delivered each year. Progress will be formally monitored every six months through the Birmingham Strategic Partnership and Government Office (West Midlands).

The strategy reflects and informs our involvement in key regional strategies, including the **Regional Spatial Strategy**, **Regional Economic Strategy** and our emerging **Multi-Area Agreement**.

There is a spatial dimension to this (ie what happens where geographically), with Government committed to provide funding for the regeneration of the most disadvantaged areas of the country – many of these are Birmingham neighbourhoods.

We are also preparing our spatial strategy for the city – the **Local Development Framework Core Strategy**. This explains how the community strategy will be implemented in different parts of the city (the spatial expression of Birmingham 2026). So it is crucial that this document is coherent with this vision.

Growth in the city inevitably puts pressure on housing. To address this, Birmingham 2026 has to be in line with the city's **Housing** and **Homelessness Strategies**, which are also currently under review.

Organisational strategies such as the Council Plan and those of other local public agencies will be shaped within the Community Strategy as it develops.

Where a "lead responsibility" has been identified, partners will work collaboratively to achieve the shared objectives and ensure the relevant decisions are open and transparent with a view to optimising added value and cost-effective use of resources.

Resources

This strategy sets out our shared ambitions for Birmingham. Public-sector partners are committed to co-operating and directing their funds towards these ambitions and the key actions identified. The public sector alone controls around £6,000 million of spending in the city each year. We are developing a sustainable procurement compact to enable partners to align their mainstream expenditure to help achieve the outcomes of this strategy and our local area agreement.

Private and third-sector partners will be encouraged to invest their considerable financial and non-financial resources in this vision.

Our Local Area Agreement and its associated delivery plans will set out how specific key actions will be funded over the next three years.

Working with the region and city region

As Birmingham is the nation's second city, its success is vital to the future prosperity of the country. The Government's Sub-National Review points to increased delegation of decision-making to local areas. The plans set out in this strategy therefore link into those of the national government and of the regional development agency, Advantage West Midlands. Some of the most important issues in this document, such as job creation, housing, transport and climate change, need to be addressed across local government boundaries through working with other councils and agencies.

Birmingham is the capital of the region and the centre of a conurbation stretching from Coventry to Wolverhampton. The council leaders of Birmingham, Coventry, Solihull, Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall, Wolverhampton and Telford have come together to form a new 'city region' partnership and to work together to make sure we have a strong, integrated approach to these issues. As a partnership we also work closely with Advantage West Midlands.

As we take forward our Local Area Agreement and also a Multi-Area Agreement for the city region, we will seek to ensure that our local priorities, set out in this document, are reflected in larger-scale plans and that Birmingham and the city region receive the resources necessary to apply them.

Working with neighbourhoods

All the five outcomes in this document need to be tackled at both a strategic and a local level.

Local public services are starting to refocus their organisations so that they can work with residents in their own neighbourhoods. Good examples include the introduction of neighbourhood policing across the city and projects such as Safer Neighbourhoods, Safer Estates and the New Deal for Communities programmes in Aston and Kings Norton. But these initiatives have not until now been part of a coherent strategic programme.

The City Council and the Birmingham Strategic Partnership is consulting on a Birmingham Green Paper – Vibrant Urban Villages. This proposes a ‘Single Neighbourhoods Programme’ to bring together the wide range of initiatives at the most local level. This programme would ensure that local constituency partnerships could work closely with community organisations in real neighbourhoods (as defined by local people) to tackle issues ranging from litter to anti-social behaviour, crime, health and employment. Priority neighbourhoods (those most in need) will receive special attention from different agencies working together in partnership and from ‘neighbourhood management’ arrangements.

The funding for the Single Neighbourhood Programme will initially come mainly from our Local Area Agreement, based on this strategy. The programme will support all the outcomes set out in this strategy. But it will also aim to build up the strength and resources of community organisations, enabling local people to get more involved in tackling local problems and to have more influence over decisions in their part of the city.

It's 2026...

Birmingham is a globally competitive city contributing fully to the thriving, prosperous and sustainable city-region.

Birmingham people have high aspirations, and the skills and opportunities they need to succeed.

Birmingham is a safe, clean and friendly city that is tackling climate change and protecting the local environment.

People are healthy and economically successful, and enjoy living together.

The city is truly ‘a global city with a local heart’.

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How to have your say

TEXT TO BE FINALISED

Please send any comments on this draft Community Strategy to:

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