

COMMUNITY COHESION STRATEGY FOR BIRMINGHAM GREEN PAPER

Forward together to build a fair and inclusive
city for everyone

SUMMARY

May 2018



SECTION 1

Our vision

Community cohesion is about how we all live, work, learn and play together and where there is a shared vision that promotes a sense of belonging and trust in and across our communities. It means breaking down the barriers to social and economic inequality that damage the lives of individuals and families and causes divisions between communities and neighbourhoods. Promoting community cohesion will enable a shared vision of fairness and greater social integration.

Birmingham is a welcoming city where everyone has an opportunity to contribute and benefit from the success of the city. The City and its neighbourhoods are safe and flourishing places to live, work and grow up in, they are well connected places where people from all backgrounds trust and support each other. People of all backgrounds realising their full potential and exercising their rights and responsibilities.

What do we mean by community cohesion?

What community cohesion means in Birmingham:

- A defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and groups to a future local or national vision
- A strong sense of an individual's local rights and responsibilities
- A strong sense that people with different backgrounds should experience similar life opportunities and access to services and treatment
- A strong sense of trust in institutions locally, and trust that they will act fairly when arbitrating between different interests and be subject to public scrutiny
- A strong recognition of the contribution of the newly arrived, and of those who have deep attachments to a particular place – focusing on what people have in common
- Positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, schools and other institutions.”

Source: Commission for Integration and Cohesion¹ (CIC, 2007)

¹ <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Education/documents/2007/06/14/oursharedfuture.pdf>

SECTION 2

BIRMINGHAM'S VISION AND APPROACH: CITY, COUNCIL, COMMUNITY & INDIVIDUAL

Our strategy

Our strategy will be achieved through a collaborative approach between city, council, community and individuals. A joint commitment and approach to promoting cohesion underpinned by eight guiding principles, identified from city-wide discussions, will support our vision and underpin the strategy. Community cohesion and integration happens at different levels, including across the city, in neighbourhoods, schools and work places. Therefore, the success of our approach will rely on the city, council and communities embedding the principles in strategic and local approaches that promote cohesion and support communities develop a sense of belonging.

The following set of proposed guiding principles should be integrated in policies, plans and initiatives:

1. Mainstream cohesion: making cohesion everyday business

Mainstreaming community cohesion means becoming part of everyday policy and practice design and delivery - it should not be just a bolt on project or agenda.

2. Connecting and exchanging ideas that promote cohesion and mobilise social action

Connecting places, people and communities to share knowledge, exchange ideas and drive local innovation will be critical in building confidence and tackling local challenges together.

3. Nurturing and supporting aspiration of young people

Young people from all social backgrounds should realise their ambitions and hopes for the future and not be held back because of the lack of resources, social and professional connections. It is vital that young people have safe spaces to play and socialise; access to youth facilities that steers them away from criminal gangs and crime.

4. Promote rights and responsibilities

A city where everyone has a strong sense and understanding of their rights and responsibilities: what is expected of them and what they expect of others. We will tackle issues that exist within and between communities and promote understanding of our diverse communities which requires respectful attitudes and behaviours towards others who may be different than us.

5. Progress equality in all spheres of social and economic life

Eliminate all forms of inequality and gender based discrimination and violence in Birmingham. Challenge practices and social norms that hold back individuals from realising their ambitions and participating in the city's social and economic life.

6. Promote inclusive economic growth that benefits everyone across Birmingham

Benefits of economic growth should be shared and accessible to everyone. Working with partners at a local, regional and national level will seek to ensure that economic strategies are inclusive and impact locally; addressing the distinctly social, economic and cultural challenges and opportunities within our neighbourhoods. Improve social mobility by promoting routes into employment, career progression in work and create opportunities to boost earning power.

7. Empowered and engaged neighbourhoods

Citizens to be active participants in the conception and design of solutions that promote community cohesion rather than passive recipients of poorly conceived responses. Promote shared spaces that build social interactions, safely discuss and challenge misconceptions within and across communities and neighbourhoods.

Individuals, families and communities are afforded the opportunity to shape their own futures. Therefore, we will take an asset based approach to promoting cohesion; recognising and building on the strengths within the neighbourhood including: the skills, expertise and experience of local people, community networks and also the buildings and public spaces. And to move away from only focusing on the problems within the neighbourhood that only serve to stigmatise the area, instead to celebrate the assets.

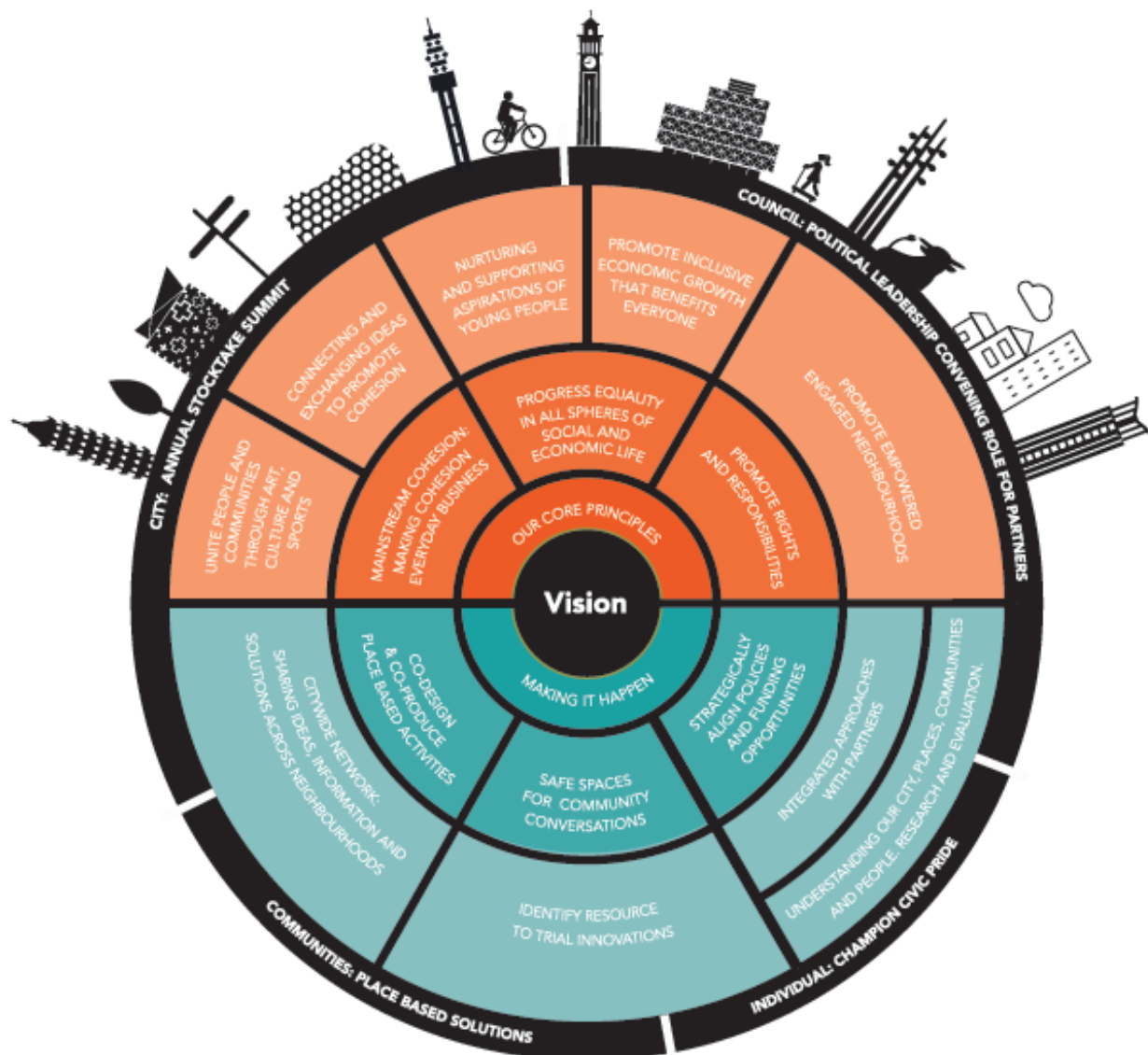
8. Unite people and communities through art, culture and sports

Arts, culture and sports to promote health and social benefits; social integration across people of different ethnicities, social class, disabilities and social and economic backgrounds.

SECTION 3

BUILDING BLOCKS TO MAKING IT HAPPEN

Community cohesion strategy for Birmingham



OUR VISION Birmingham is a welcoming city where everyone has an opportunity to contribute and benefit from the success of the city. The City and its neighbourhoods are safe and flourishing places to live, work and grow up in, they are well connected places where people from all backgrounds trust and support each other. People of all backgrounds realising their full potential and exercising their rights and responsibilities.

Leadership

Strong balanced leadership and a long term commitment is needed from across the city, council, community and individual to deliver the ambitions of our approach.

City: At a city level, our strategic approach will focus on delivering improvements in community cohesion that help improve effectiveness of policies to tackle issues such as crime, anti-social behaviour, low educational attainment, poor health, social care outcomes, all forms of discrimination.

Council: The Council will fulfil its democratic mandate from Birmingham communities to provide leadership and accountability on promoting cohesion. The Council will also play a convening role for partners that go beyond the 'usual suspects' to share and exchange ideas and champion 'what works'. Similarly, monitor and respond to any local or national influences that threatens cohesion. It will be vital to support a robust evidence base by working with partners and communities to collect and analyse data and local intelligence from national and local sources.

Community: The voluntary, community and faith sector organisations are well placed to provide leadership in identifying and supporting community based solutions. Local Councillors in their community leadership role will deliver on Localism by working with communities and local organisations to design place based approaches that shapes council policy and practice.

Individual: Engaging in volunteering that empower individuals to affect positive change and form networks with new people in their communities. Participate in civic life to design the right solutions that promote cohesion. Challenge and reject: all forms of discrimination and extremism that undermine equality and fairness; gender based violence, harmful sociocultural norms and practices.

Understanding our city and communities

A central plank to our approach is about building our knowledge and understanding of the dynamic nature of diverse communities. Continual research and analysis of the challenges and opportunities will enable evidence based policy and decision making.

A partnership-led approach

Working in partnership will help create the conditions for a fairer and cohesive city. Making a success of our approach will require leadership and commitment from city partners, council and community – working together. Partnerships will underpin our approach span the public sector, faith and community organisations, communities; universities, colleges and schools; business community and arts and cultural sector. Partners and communities to jointly explore strategic opportunities, including:

- 2022 Commonwealth Games
- Inclusive Growth Strategy
- HS2
- Skills agenda
- Joint initiatives with West Midlands Combined Authority partners
- Working with government departments to influence and shape national thinking and policy making.
- Share learning across city regions
- Developing Place based approaches

We will continue to build on the work of our existing partnerships where community cohesion is integral to the successful delivery of their plans and strategies.

How do we make it happen?

As city, we need to work collectively but also provide leadership in our different spheres of influence to effect real change. We will do this by:

- Holding an annual citywide partnership wide Community Cohesion Summit and local dialogues to enable communities, council and city partners to understand and responding to the changing needs of our city and communities; share learning and exchange ideas; forge new relationships and identify opportunities for joint working; evaluate our learning and identify what works and what doesn't and collectively respond to new opportunities and challenges.
- Where it makes sense for Birmingham, we will strategically align our approach to national and regional policies, including the government's Integrated Communities Strategy and the West Midlands Combined Authority's approach to inclusive growth, and work constructively with national and region teams.
- Co-designing and co-producing local solutions that promote an asset based approach to local problem solving, such as improvements to open public spaces; friends of local parks groups; and community clean-ups. This approach enables individuals and communities to find local community-led

solutions; encourage collective action to build stronger and more resilient places.

- Creating safe spaces to generate community conversations on real community concerns and grievances – to help dispel misconceptions and myths.
- Designing research and evaluation that informs mainstream agency spend and delivery.

Identify resources to trial innovations

To support the effective delivery of the strategy will require resources to innovate, upscale and test out new ideas by looking at how we can reshape our existing resources. Equally, we will work Government departments, the West Midlands Combined Authority and funders such as Big Lottery to explore piloting activity that promotes community cohesion.

NEXT STEPS

WE WOULD LIKE YOUR VIEWS

To deliver this vision and strategy, we would like to know your views on the proposed approach to promoting community cohesion in Birmingham.

Consultation questions

- Do you agree with the draft vision of a future, cohesive Birmingham?
- Are the proposed eight guiding principles the right ones to promote community cohesion across the city?
- How can businesses, public sector agencies, communities, faith organisations, schools, further and higher education providers play their part?
- How can we best capture and celebrate Birmingham achievements, identify new challenges and learn from excellent practice in the city?

Please send your responses and any examples/stories that illustrates community cohesion in action to the consultation by 31st August 2018

To: equalities@birmingham.gov.uk