

# BEST VALUE COMMISSIONERS

## Improvement & Recovery Board (IRB)

Wednesday 13 March 11.30-1.00pm

Council House

### Board Members

Max Caller, Lead Commissioner (Chair)

Chris Tambini, Finance Commissioner

Pam Parkes, Commissioner

Jackie Belton, Commissioner

John Coughlan, Commissioner

John Biggs, Political advisor to Commissioners and Council

John Hutton, Political advisor to Commissioners and Council

Graeme Betts, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Birmingham City Council

Fiona Greenway, Interim Chief Financial Officer Birmingham City Council

Marie Rosenthal, Interim Monitoring Officer, Birmingham City Council

Cllr John Cotton, Leader of Birmingham City Council (Deputy Chair)

Cllr Sharon Thompson, Deputy Leader of Birmingham City Council

Cllr Robert Alden, Leader, Conservative Group, Birmingham City Council

Cllr Roger Harmer, Leader, Democratic Group, Birmingham City Council

Tom Smith – Chief of Staff to Commissioners (DLUHC)

### Other

Rishi Shori, Director of Intervention Response, Birmingham City Council

Paul Clarke, Assistant Director Programmes, Performance & Improvement & Intervention SRO, Birmingham City Council

Jennifer Gray Political Assistant, Liberal Democratic Group, Birmingham City Council

Lucy Bouncer, Commissions Support Unit Lead, Birmingham City Council (Secretariat)

### Apologies

None

### 1 Welcome & Introductions

1.1 Max Caller, Lead Commissioner welcome the meeting.

### 2 Previous Minutes

2.1 January 2024 Improvement & Recovery Board minutes agreed as a true record.

2.2 January 2024 Finance Board minutes tabled. Max Caller, Lead Commissioner recognised the Councils achievement in setting the budget.

2.3 January 2024 Business Transformation Board minutes were tabled. Myron Hrycyk, Commissioner, updated the Board that the programme is taking shape with the right skill set in place. Stabilisation is making progress, and the selection of a new information management system is now in contract negotiation stages. The new programme director is working closely with Fiona Greenway, the programme SRO, drawing up a high-level draft plan for reimplementation.

### The Commissioners:

Max Caller CBE, John Coughlan CBE, Chris Tambini, Pam Parkes FCIPD, Jackie Belton, Myron Hrycyk, Lord John Hutton, John Biggs.

Furthermore, opportunities are being identified for cross cutting savings which are not currently factored into next year's budget.

- 2.4 Fiona Greenway, Interim Chief Financial Officer and programme SRO reassured the Board that the Council is delivering on essential changes and the programme is on track. Members will be taken through the high level reimplantation plan and papers will go to April or May Cabinet.
- 2.5 Cllr Rober Alden, Leader Conservative Group, sought further reassurance that essential fixes were being prioritised with a lead from Finance. Fiona Greenway, Interim Chief Financial Officer and programme SRO assured they are and that an update will be provided.
- 2.6 Jackie Belton, Commissioner, updated the Board that the first Housing Board had taken place, identifying key issues which are wider than the HRA, including the housing general fund and regulatory issues. A plan is being formed which will be circulated.
- 2.7 Cllr Roger Harmer, Leader Democratic Group raised an issue regarding compensation. Jackie Belton, Commissioner advised a deep dive will be conducted on complaints and compensation.
- 2.8 Pam Parkes, Commissioner, updated the Board that the second Equal Pay Board had taken place earlier today. The minutes will be tabled in due course.
- 2.9 Marie Rosenthal, Monitoring Officer noted the minutes contain some sensitive information and to consider this when tabling.
- 2.10 John Biggs, Political Adviser updated the Board that the first Governance Board is due to take place on 20 March 2024 and an update will be given at the next Board.

### **3 Improvement & Recovery Plan**

- 3.1 Cllr John Cotton, Leader, led discussions noting the plan clearly marks the beginning of a journey for the organisation and there is a collective understanding that there is a lot of work to do to gain the trust of citizens and stakeholders, and secure continuous improvement within the organisation. BCC must become a financially stable organisation that delivers consistency good services and makes Birmingham a place people are proud to live and work in. The plan is the overarching framework that will hold all this activity in place addressing the challenges the organisation faces. To support this plan, cabinet member portfolios have been reshaped and BCC have announced the Shaping Birmingham's Future Together commission. The content of the plan is focused on 16 priorities for immediate attention and more priorities will be identified as the journey progresses. The organisation will need to adapt in order to deliver on these. The plan will give reassurance on how the organisation operates and is everyone's responsibility.
- 3.2 Max Caller, Lead Commissioner, stated that the most important part of the IRP is the forward plan. Without the context of where the Council is going, none of this will be a reality. It is crucial that the priorities drive everything the Council does. The plan needs to be turned into action, training given and there needs to be internal challenge to processes in order to make this plan work. There is also a cultural change required throughout the organisation.
- 3.3 The plan is a long document, it is not clear how the interdependencies work, and will be hard for members to see how the organisation will transform. The cabinet member reshuffle should be accelerated and have a named officer accountable for each item alongside them who can dedicate time for their items. They will need to have proper conversations about responsibilities and risks.
- 3.4 The Council must bring forward key issues relating to any dependencies and update the board each month.
- 3.5 Commissioners will do a deep dive with the organisation so we can learn together how to make this work.
- 3.6 Cllr Robert Alden, Leader Conservative, noted key parts of the plan is attitude, monitoring and challenge. We need to prove what has been saved/achieved and be clear on critical priorities such as Equal Pay deadlines etc.
- 3.7 Graeme Betts, Interim Chief Executive notes points are well understood, the fault lines has been recognised, and work is underway to address these. This is the most robust plan he has seen and

named officers and timelines have already been started to be put in place, with savings being checked to ensure on track and give reassurance on delivery. The plan is a live document and will change as it progresses, and we need to be responsive to ensure successful delivery.

- 3.8 Paul Clarke, Intervention SRO, noted the plan isn't just a document, it has governance and resource behind which we have lacked before. The presence of Commissioners and the Board supports this, and behaviours need to align. A more simplified paper is being produced to make the plan more digestible to all staff, being no more than 4-5 pages which will be updated quarterly.
- 3.9 Max Caller, Lead Commissioner, noted things will go wrong, changes be required, and the Council need to have the ability to react to these defining its success. The Council must learn from setbacks. Commissioners would like to see a programme of deep dives so every element of the plan comes under the right directorate, cabinet member and senior reporting officer and the Board will go through each element of the programme.
- 3.10 Commissioners will submit their first report back to Secretary of State in April which will demonstrate progress the Council has made and do their first assessments on progress.
- 3.11 John Biggs, Commissioner, challenges whether the plan says much about partnerships.
- 3.12 Graeme Betts, Interim Chief Executive responds that the Council had been restrained by the work, but that it now moves out to partnerships.
- 3.13 Cllr John Cotton, Leader, notes more specifically to partnerships is communities. The Council needs to consider what communities want to get the best of the plan.
- 3.14 The plan is on the agenda of the Extraordinary Cabinet on 4 April for which the agenda will be published on 25 March. It will then go to Full Council 16 April. Commissioners will treat this milestone as the Council having met its challenge of having a plan in place within 6 months.

#### **4 AOB**

- 4.1 N/a

#### **5 Actions**

- 5.1 Jackie Belton, Commissioner advised a deep dive will be conducted on complaints and compensation.
- 5.2 Commissioners will do a deep dive with the organisation so we can learn together how to make this work.