



Working together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods

Policy Statement (White Paper)

January 2019

Contents

Foreword	2
Our Commitment to Working Together in Birmingham’s Neighbourhoods	4
Our Overall Approach to Working with Neighbourhoods	12
A Framework of Relationships	13
Neighbourhood Charters	14
Creating New Parish, Town or Neighbourhood Councils	16
Local Devolution Deals.....	18
Conclusion: Delivering on our New Vision for 2022	21
Appendix 1: The Different Types of Neighbourhood Organisation	23
Appendix 2: The Framework of Relationships	25
Appendix 3: Case Studies	33
Appendix 4: Foxwood Neighbourhood Agreement in York.....	43
Appendix 5: Creating a Town or Parish Council.....	44

Foreword

I am grateful to the many organisations and individuals who responded to our green paper *Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods* and held local meetings to discuss the issues it raises. A separate report summarises the feedback we received in detail.

The responses to the consultation demonstrate yet again that Birmingham is blessed with a rich diversity of community organisations and many passionate and creative community leaders doing amazing things for their neighbourhood.

The Green Paper and this White Paper build on the work carried out by the Corporate Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which provided the foundations for our policies and the valuable work of the four Assistant Leaders and the Cabinet Committee Local Leadership which concluded in 2017.

In this new paper we set out our commitment to neighbourhoods and the policies that we will now take forward to improve neighbourhood working in general and to help those areas that are interested to create new neighbourhood organisations or a parish council.

The City Council remains as committed as ever to the goal of helping local neighbourhoods and communities to have more influence over the services and the decisions that affect their lives. But this policy statement marks a new beginning and sets a new direction for delivering on this commitment. For the first time we have set out in this paper a framework for a truly bottom-up approach to localism. It is not about a top-down, one-size-fits-all blueprint or council structures and decision making. It is about how we can all work together to liberate the energy, creativity and innovation within our neighbourhoods and empower our communities to achieve their ambitions.

We have seen a number of big changes in recent years, including the removal of the old system of district committees (which held budgets for some council services) and ward committees. We have also switched to having elections every four years instead of each year and seen an increase in the number of wards from 40 to 69, with smaller wards electing one or two councillors instead of three.

These changes to the City Council are permanent. We now need to build a new vision for localism in the city and this policy statement is the beginning of that process. We want to work together with all the communities of the city to develop this vision over the months to come, but we have kicked off that discussion in this paper by setting out the direction we want to take. Our overall aim is to move from focusing

on the city council and its structures to a citizen focused approach, working with neighbourhoods to make things work better from the point of view of local residents. Our commitment is to work hard to make Birmingham a localist city and to transform the culture of the City Council to support that.

However, we must also be honest about the difficult times in which we are seeking to achieve this change. There is far less public money available than before and many communities are stretched, both within families and in their local organisations. So, we need to avoid making promises we cannot keep.

We also recognise that we will have to work hard to build stronger relationships between the City Council and neighbourhood organisations and to grow confidence and trust in those relationships. As someone said in their response to the consultation, the City Council needs to become a more “can do” organisation when it comes to helping residents solve the problems they face. This is a strong message we have heard loud and clear from the consultation.

This has also been a period when the City Council’s own performance has been rightly challenged. But, with our new political arrangements in place we have set ourselves on a clear course towards improvement. As the city as a whole looks forward to hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2022 and the arrival of HS2 in 2026 we will strive to ensure that the benefits are felt across the City. We also look forward to creating a modern, efficient city council that is focused more than ever before on the needs of Birmingham people and on helping you to achieve your goals.

Working better together in neighbourhoods is absolutely central to that vision.

[Insert pic]

Cllr Sharon Thompson

Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods

Our Commitment to Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods

The green paper set out three key principles:

- We recognise the value of all the different types of neighbourhood organisation, which all have different strengths. The diversity of such groups is a great asset to the city.
- Local residents need to be able to develop their own ways of getting involved in their local area.
- The democracy of the city needs strong participation as well as elected representation.

There is no “one size fits all” when it comes to residents working together to improve their neighbourhood (see Appendix 1). Each neighbourhood will be on its own journey towards stronger community engagement. For some this road will lead to them setting up more formal structures such as neighbourhood forums and even parish or town councils. Others will be happy with a more informal approach that can achieve their aims just as well. The section on the Framework of Relationships below sets out in more detail how we will work with neighbourhoods at different stages in their journey.

We also understand that neighbourhood boundaries are defined by their residents and community groups and not by the City Council. In some instances these may be the same as ward boundaries (especially now that these are smaller) but not necessarily.

Our commitment to neighbourhoods also means we will work to:

- Make the services that matter most to local neighbourhoods more responsive to their needs and priorities
- Redesign council jobs so that staff are free to work with residents to make a difference
- Support ward councillors to focus on local issues and represent their residents more effectively
- Develop Ward Forum meetings and Ward Plans to make them more effective
- Modernise key local services
- Tackle priority issues such as jobs, health and housing at the local level

What you told us

In the consultation, there was wide support for this overall approach to working with neighbourhoods. However there were also a number of concerns which included:

- **Representation and equality.** It is important that neighbourhood organisations include and represent the whole community, rather than merely giving a louder voice to those already influential. We also need to take care that neighbourhood structures benefit the less well-off areas of the city as well as the wealthier areas
- **Flexible approach.** A one size fits all approach will not work for Birmingham where the needs of each neighbourhood differ. Not every neighbourhood aspires to be a parish council, a flexible approach must be adopted so that each neighbourhood can work in a way that suits their needs best
- **Funding and support.** There were concerns that there are insufficient resources available to support local organisations and that funding tends to be short term. There is a need for adequate training and coaching and stronger neighbourhood infrastructure. The withdrawal of resources from neighbourhood working in recent years has undermined community engagement and networks
- **Community focus.** There needs to be better engagement between services and the community and a clearer focus on their needs, rather than the structures that are set up. We need to reduce “red tape” and not create further bureaucracy
- **A genuine commitment to working together.** Services need to undertake conversations with local residents in planning future changes and communications need to improve. Commitment must be sustainable over the long term.

People suggested that improvements were needed in:

- The use of ward plans - by making them more practical and action based
- The support and training available for neighbourhood groups, including peer support, so that they can learn from and share good practice with others
- The provision of support for unblocking problems and taking co-ordinated action across different services – the City Council needs to be more joined up

- Communications with neighbourhood groups - ensuring they have the information they need, This should include information on projects occurring within the local area and service delivery standards
- Funding available for wards and local groups to support small but innovative local projects.

There were a lot of people who called for better sharing of best practice across local areas and projects. One idea was that we identify and recognise a number of “Pioneer Wards” that are making progress in developing their local arrangements and could provide learning for other areas.

Setting a new vision for localism in Birmingham

The City Council has changed forever over recent years and there can be no going back to previous structures and ways of working. Previous models are now unaffordable, but they are also not appropriate to the more bottom-up, flexible way we want to operate in future.

The overall direction of change will be away from the structures of the City Council towards a diverse pattern of neighbourhood and community groups and organisations taking on more power and more assets to enable them to deliver their own solutions to the challenges in their area. What is needed is a change of culture not necessarily a change of council structure.

At the same time there are enormous changes taking place in the way we create and sustain the various communities we belong to and how we communicate and organise to get things done. The internet revolution and digital technology have changed the landscape completely. Communities of identity and interest now often seem as important as those of place. We need to listen to social media and to new voices and not just rely on traditional forms of engagement.

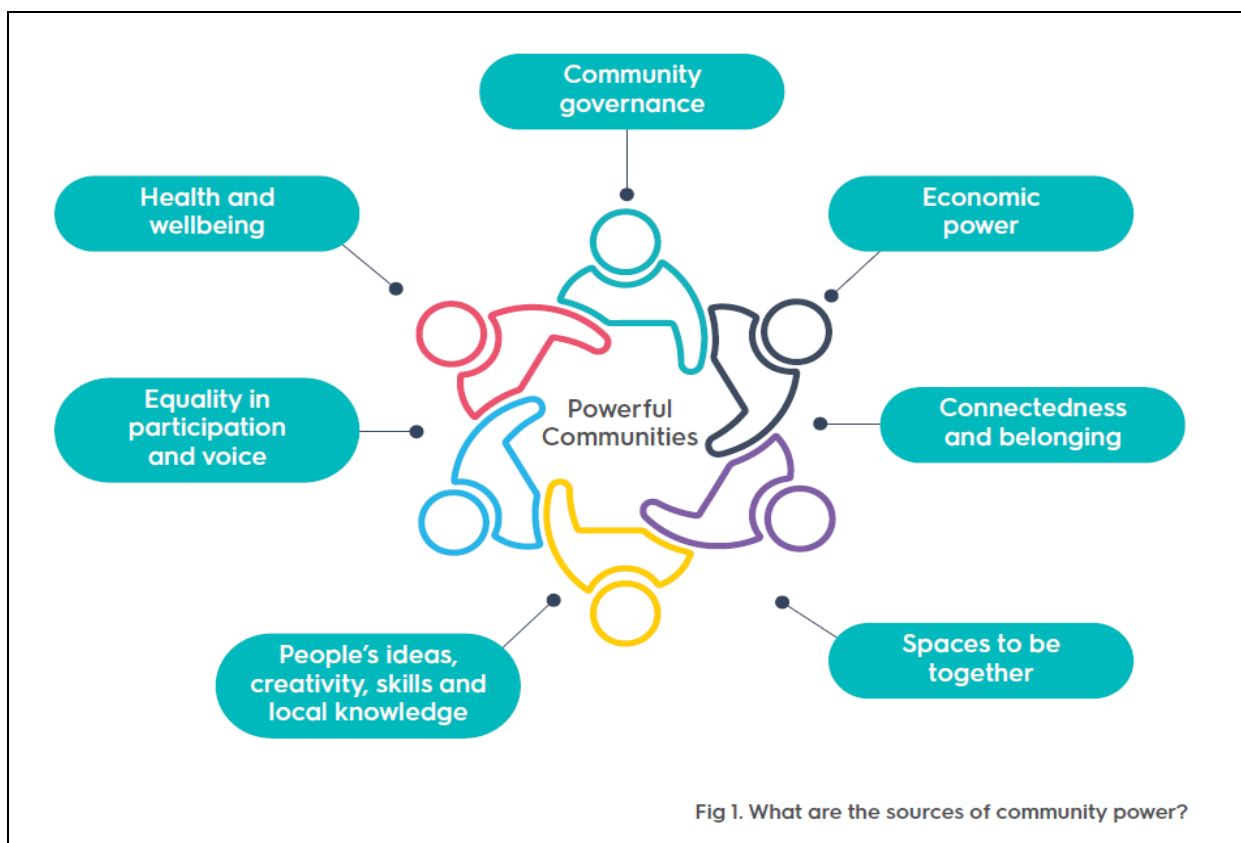
But ‘Place’ will remain at the centre of our work. We will continue to have a representative democracy based on ‘place’ and ‘place’ matters enormously in all our lives.

As we develop the work on localism and think about what replaces the previous structures and ways of working we need to develop a new vision, which takes account of these changing trends and is clear about how we will move from top-down to bottom-up. How do we listen to the quiet voices of the many communities in the city on a permanent basis and make sure that policy and service delivery is guided at all times by those voices?

Things are changing on the ground – ward forum meetings have replaced ward committees, meetings are shifting from “top table” to “round table” with local residents and groups often leading the meetings (see examples in Appendix 3). Many councillors are now experimenting with new ways of operating. This needs to be supported and built upon.

We want to develop this vision through dialogue with communities and groups across the city and build it from the experience of the people of the city. This paper can only set a direction and show how we want to change the City Council’s approach. It is for communities and neighbourhoods themselves to bring it to life through their actions and their energy.

In setting the direction of change we want to make use of the approach suggested by Locality in their recent publication *People Power: Findings from the Commission on the Future of Localism*¹. The box overleaf and the diagram below summarise their view of community power and the areas of action and principles they recommend.



¹ Locality is an organisation that supports local community organisations to unlock the power in their community, to build a fairer society. It has a network of 550 organisations that it supports through advice and peer-to-peer learning. The Commission on the Future of Localism was chaired by Lord Kerlake and the report can be found here: <https://locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/LOCALITY-LOCALISM-REPORT-1.pdf>

Locality: People Power

The sources of community power (see diagram above):

- Connectedness and belonging
- People's ideas, creativity, skills and local knowledge
- Equality on participation and voice
- Community governance – giving influence and links into other levels
- Economic power – control of assets and devolved budgets
- Health and wellbeing.

Four key domains for action:

1. Institutions for localism – neighbourhood forums, parish councils and strong relationships between all local organisations
2. Powers and mechanisms for localism – building on the rights in the Localism Act
3. Relational Localism – removing hierarchies, embracing risk, co-production and communities in the lead
4. Capacity for Localism – supporting community development, sustainable spaces for participation, support to under-represented groups, involvement in service delivery.

Six principles of Localism:

1. People are the end goal of localism
2. Equality in local participation
3. Dynamic local accountability – valuing participation as much as voting and consultation
4. Local leadership is built around place
5. Localism requires meaningful powers and integrated structures
6. Economic power must support community responsibility.

Resources

We recognise that more or different resources are needed to strengthen neighbourhood activity and engagement and to enable people to make vital small investments in their area. But we also know that City Council resources are very tight and that, in any case people do not want to be dependent on the City Council. Imaginative ways forward that empower communities are more likely to come from engaging with partners and external funders and looking at the resources of communities themselves.

So, our approach to resources will be partnership based and will look at all of the resources available to neighbourhoods – from other public agencies, within the community, local businesses and social enterprises and from wider funding sources such as central government, trusts, foundations and the National Lottery.

What we will do

We will take the following actions to strengthen the overall approach to working together in neighbourhoods:

We will share and celebrate good work in neighbourhoods

- **Work with interested community organisations and social enterprises to create an online resource** where good practice, great ideas and common challenges can be shared and where we will celebrate the great work being done in Birmingham's neighbourhoods
- **Recognise "Pioneer Wards or Neighbourhoods" and facilitate them working together to share best practice with others.** These will provide a focus for practical experimentation and "making it real" – we recognise that further conversations with other neighbourhoods will be based on practical challenges and not on theoretical policies.

We will strengthen ward partnership working and Ward Planning

- **Work to ensure that all ward forums are moving towards the practice of the best** and are able to innovate and experiment with new methods. This will include events and other ways of sharing good practice and strengthened guidance and support. Ward Forums should be effective partnerships between different public sector agencies and local residents, organisations and businesses

- **Encourage innovations in community engagement in wards** - enabling the “quieter voices” to be heard
- **Help elected members** to become more effective local leaders who can empower others, through development and coaching opportunities
- **Work with local and strategic partners** such as the police and health to ensure our local work is closely aligned
- **Ensure that every ward produces a good Ward Plan** (one which reflects the priorities of local residents in a realistic and action-oriented way whilst still capturing the long term ambitions of the ward) and most importantly that Ward Plans can be effectively delivered. We will also look to improve the publication and circulation of the Plans
- **Build on the arrangements already put in place to work with Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council** and extend them to New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council
- **Encourage services and the City Council as a whole to make more use of neighbourhood conversations** and rely less on top down consultations.

We will review and strengthen neighbourhood resources

- **Establish a partnership based review of the resources available to support neighbourhood working.** The review will be completed by autumn 2019 and will look at:
 - The infrastructure of support to local engagement – including Ward Forums but also development support for community groups and elected members
 - External funding sources for local projects and access to support on fundraising, including looking at the potential for a new local areas small grant fund
 - Data resources for neighbourhoods to support engagement, ward planning and performance monitoring. We need to equip wards and neighbourhoods with open data that can unlock opportunities for change. This will include improving ward based information on the council’s website
 - The community hubs policy and how this can bring benefits for community groups
 - Improving City Council support to Community Right to Challenge, Right to Bid and Neighbourhood Planning
 - The use of the Community Infrastructure Levy

- Greater integration with partners – e.g. hosting service design sessions with partners, including the Citizen’s voice, to model increased integration and to anticipate changes to local practice.

In the short term we have established a package of flexible support for Ward Forums, so that wards are able to hold six meetings per year. However, in the long term we want our resources to focus less on administrative support to meetings and more on a wider role in strengthening local organisations.

We will make services more responsive to local neighbourhoods.

- **Establish a cross-service (and partnership) review to explore ways to make services more responsive to neighbourhoods**, including:
 - Extending the role of Relationship Managers who provide a point of contact for wards in each key local service
 - Service redesigns, using the example of Neighbourhood Networks in our Adult Social Care service
 - Job design in public facing roles to enable more flexibility and responsiveness
 - How service managers and senior management can engage with neighbourhoods
 - Identify and implement ways to reduce “red tape” that prevents local groups from addressing local issues. This will include considering: ensuring conditions of grant aid are proportionate; the requirement for public liability insurance for all organisations and a “Citizens Right to Challenge Bureaucracy”
 - Contracts and procurement (including engaging the community more in commissioning).

We will address other issues raised in the consultation through setting up working groups led by senior managers which will engage with community groups and elected members. These will focus initially on:

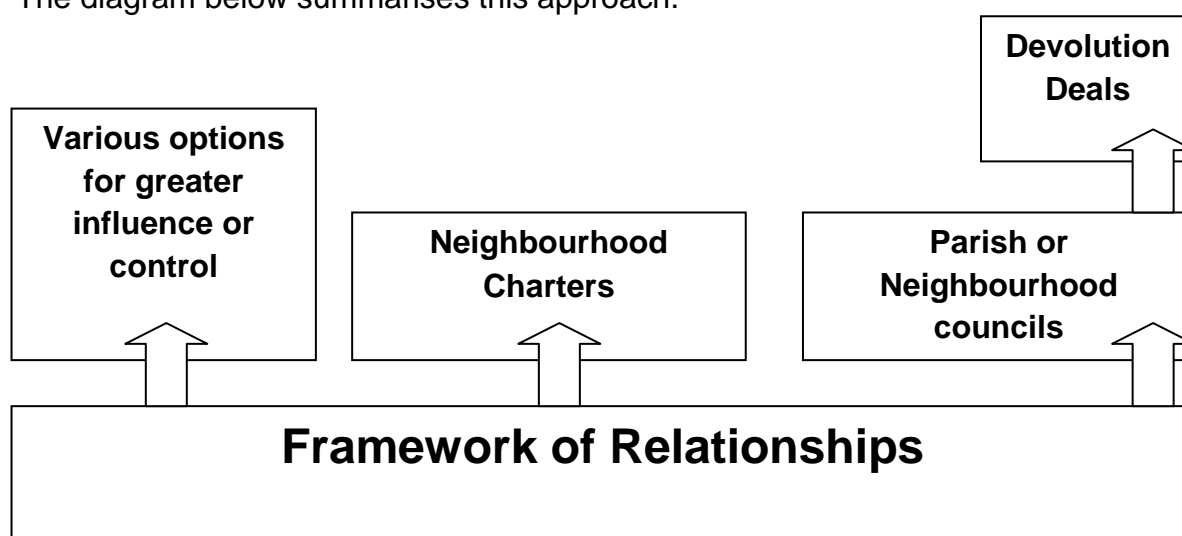
- Devolution deals – the detailed prospectus proposed later in this paper for publication in summer 2019
- Innovations in community engagement – potentially linked to external funding bids for pilot activities
- Development and support for councillors

Our Overall Approach to Working with Neighbourhoods

The overall approach set out in the Green Paper was broadly welcomed. We will therefore take forward the following:

- **A Framework of Relationships.** This will set out the range of different roles that neighbourhoods can have in service delivery and in influencing the future of their area, on a scale from influence to devolved control of services. It will provide the framework for all of our work with neighbourhoods and its principles will apply to the whole city
- **Neighbourhood Charters.** These will be agreed between the City Council and specific neighbourhoods, where they are wanted by the local community. They will specify in more detail the relationship between the council and that neighbourhood and the commitments each makes to the other
- **Fast track creation of new parish councils.** Where a local area is interested in exploring this option we will work with them to go through the process and agree the activities that their new council will carry out
- **Devolution deals.** For parish councils who want to take on the delivery of a range of services or the management of community assets, we will offer a comprehensive agreement on services and assets that will be transferred. This will not preclude specific asset transfer or local service delivery arrangements with other neighbourhood organisations (as set out in the Framework of Relationships).

The diagram below summarises this approach.



A Framework of Relationships

There are many different forms of neighbourhood governance and to more thoroughly engage localities the City Council will need to embrace different models.

To encourage greater participation and to provide guidance to those neighbourhoods wishing to become further involved, the Green Paper suggested the introduction of a Framework of Relationships. This would set out the range of options for greater neighbourhood involvement and governance the City Council supports and was well received by consultation respondents.

An outline of the proposed framework is included in Appendix 2. This framework allows for the varying needs and aspirations of neighbourhoods to be met, starting from an influencing role and scaling up to actual service delivery. Neighbourhood organisations are free to choose the level that suits them best and can progress to higher levels of devolution if and when they wish to do so.

Examples of organisations that already fulfil responsibilities similar to the options included in the framework are detailed in Appendix 3.

By working together within this framework the City Council aims to:

- Clarify the approach to more local control of services and the options available
- Provide greater local influence over services
- Improve local service delivery, increasing effectiveness by tailoring it to better suit local needs
- Maintain access to local services that might otherwise be at risk and where possible enhance services
- Ensure that, where services or assets are transferred to local control or management, the necessary resources are in place to make them sustainable.

What we will do

- We will publicise the framework widely and use it to support discussions with interested neighbourhoods about their ambitions and the support they may need
- We will carry out a review of the legal boundaries and options related to our procurement process, to ensure as much flexibility as possible in adopting new contracts and amending existing ones.

Neighbourhood Charters

Getting relationships right between the City Council and local neighbourhood groups or parish councils will be critical to successful neighbourhood governance. It's important to develop a mutual understanding of respective roles and the added value that greater neighbourhood involvement brings.

To help foster good relationships, the City Council will seek to adopt more formal agreements which set out the principles of how it and the neighbourhood will work together. The agreement must be sustainable, realistic and deliverable. This is an approach adopted by councils elsewhere and one which again received overall support by consultation respondents.

Each Charter will be individually negotiated with a neighbourhood organisation or consortium of organisations although there will be common areas covered in each. Charters will generally be agreed where a neighbourhood organisation has expressed an interest in having one; however, the City Council may also propose using this approach in cases where a neighbourhood organisation is seeking control of services or assets.

Charters will be primarily used by geographically specific neighbourhood groups such as forums and parishes, however they can also be adapted for groups delivering functions or services in a local neighbourhood.

Reflecting on the consultation feedback, common areas will include:

- The agreed role and responsibilities of the City Council and the neighbourhood
- Where responsibilities of the neighbourhood include service delivery, there will need to be requirements around:
 - standards of service
 - demonstration of value for money
 - performance monitoring
 - arrangements regarding unacceptable performance or service failure
- Support offered by both parties including resources and use of local assets
- Communication and consultation requirements, between each other and other stakeholders including the local community. This must allow for ongoing communications between all parties so that a common understanding continues to develop

- Promotion of equality and respecting diversity within neighbourhoods
- Other working protocols including the process for resolving issues, gaining approval for new projects and initiatives, and negotiating changes to the existing agreement
- Expected standards of conduct and the arrangements for investigating any alleged breach in standards.

Charters will be signed off by City Council Cabinet and a senior council officer as well as a representative of the neighbourhood group.

An example of a similar Neighbourhood Agreement used in York can be found in Appendix 4.

What we will do

We will discuss with neighbourhoods whether or not they wish to enter into a Charter Agreement. As stated earlier each agreement will be individually negotiated, relevant common areas and other appropriate content will be included to reflect the needs of the neighbourhood.

Creating New Parish, Town or Neighbourhood Councils

As outlined in the Framework of Relationships, one form of neighbourhood governance a local area may wish to introduce is a parish, town or neighbourhood council. We recognise the enormous potential to create more parish councils across the city, given that outside Sutton Coldfield only Frankley currently benefits from one, and will work with any area that is interested in exploring the possibility.

Local councils offer the potential to:

- Focus more on improvement in smaller areas of the city
- Bring more people into local civic leadership and improve local decision making
- Raise additional public money within their area to support local needs.

Local councils are also legally able to take on service delivery functions (other organisations can take on service delivery but only at the discretion of the City Council).

The process for creating a parish, town or neighbourhood council must be in line with the relevant legislation and government guidance (see Appendix 5) and will be as follows:

- The process can be triggered by a petition from residents, setting out the suggested area (boundaries) of a parish council. The government guidance includes rules about such petitions, what they should include and the number of signatures that must be secured. The City Council will be happy to receive such petitions through a variety of community groups, but they must conform to the guidance
- The City Council can also start a review without a petition and will do so if we think there is strong enough support for the idea in the local area. This could be indicated, for example, by the views of local community organisations or a vote of residents at a well-attended Ward Forum. There will also be a presumption in favour of creating a parish council where a neighbourhood forum with an agreed Neighbourhood Plan has expressed support. However, no parish council will be created without the consultative ballot mentioned below, to ensure there is widespread support in the community
- The City Council will conduct a formal Community Governance Review, which must assess various issues such as the proposed boundaries, other proposals in the same area, the strength of community identity and the impact on community cohesion. We will do this well within the statutory maximum period of 12 months and ideally within six months

- The City Council will then publish its conclusions and recommendations including boundaries, the grouping of parishes and electoral arrangements
- A consultative ballot will be held to enable every elector in the proposed area to say whether they support the proposal for a new parish council. The Green Paper asked for views on whether there should be a ballot threshold for support and turnout. There was no consensus in the responses on the level of thresholds, however we will set a threshold for turnout to ensure the ballot is reasonably representative of the area. A simple majority of those that vote will be sufficient to decide the issue
- We recognise that effective communication of this process will be essential to ensure common understanding and to maximise turnout in the ballot. A communication plan must be developed for each proposal for a new parish council
- If the proposal is supported by residents, and has the confidence of the City Council, it must then be approved by the government
- The City Council will then work with local residents to establish the parish council and organise elections.

What we will do:

We will work with areas that express an interest in exploring this option, supported by input from the National Association of Local Councils.

Local Devolution Deals

The Green Paper proposed the idea of innovative “devolution deals” between the City Council and parish councils (and possibly other appropriate local organisations) which would set out an agreement on services that could be transferred and managed locally. There was broad support for this idea, so we will now develop the policy further.

Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council (RSCTC) is providing a test bed for this idea and discussions are already under way to identify further functions that the Town Council could take on. At the same time we need to develop a consistent framework so that, in time, other parts of the city will be able to agree devolution deals.

The aim of devolution deals is to take a comprehensive approach to devolution where a parish or town council is ready to take that step. In some cases a range of specific transfers of assets or services could be brought together into a devolution deal. There are already many examples of transfer of assets to neighbourhood bodies and groups in the city (for example through the Community Asset Transfer process).

Initially we will make the full process available to parish councils only, though there is plenty of scope within the Framework of Relationships and Neighbourhood Charters for other sorts of neighbourhood organisation to develop specific proposals for the transfer of community assets, the management of services under agreement or the provision of new bottom-up services.

What you told us

The principles for devolution deals and the process for agreeing them were supported, but respondents to the consultation made valuable suggestions for further issues that we should address or points we should strengthen. The most frequently raised issues concerned equalities and inclusion in service delivery, standards of communications and engagement in devolved services and ensuring strong accountability and probity, with ways for the City Council to intervene in the event of service failure. But other respondents emphasised the need to enable risk taking and innovation. Arrangements for income generation should also be included in the deals.

The amended principles and process are set out below.

Principles

- Parishes proposing devolution of services must have been in existence and functioning effectively for at least a year (this means that they are engaging widely in the community, managing their finances well and being inclusive and open in their approach). The City Council will be particularly concerned to ensure strong accountability and probity, including regular council elections and contingency plans which will be agreed in the event of service failure or failure to meet standards of good governance
- Proposals for devolution of services must set out how they will be managed to ensure effective engagement with all service users and diverse communities, including a communications strategy to ensure service users and residents are informed and can access services easily. This should also set out the service data to be made available to the public, including performance data
- Services considered for devolution must be things that a parish council can legally provide
- The City Council will indicate which services may be appropriate for devolved management or funding and which must remain at a larger scale. We intend to exclude child protection and care, some education and special needs services, adult social care, road maintenance and street lighting, strategic procurement, financial management and corporate administration from the process
- Proposals can include joint service delivery and management arrangements as well as full transfer of services and they can be made by a collaboration of more than one parish council
- Services considered for devolved management must be capable of being delivered at the scale proposed, either through the parish council's own resources or a management arrangement with the City Council. The City Council will also consider any detrimental effect devolution may have on other areas or the service as a whole
- Proposals should demonstrate that the service will be provided reasonably efficiently, compared to central provision
- Proposals should demonstrate that the service will be more responsive to local needs or provide different, tailored aspects of the service not currently provided centrally. The City Council will be seeking to encourage innovation and well managed risk taking to achieve better service outcomes

- The parish council will have to demonstrate sound business cases for all devolution proposals, including the management and other resources that will be put in place. This should include income generation from the service
- The parish council will have to show how the community will be engaged in the delivery of the service and how their views on the service will be monitored and performance managed
- Proposals for assets to be transferred to a parish council will have to demonstrate the capacity to manage the asset independently and to put the asset to good use for the community. Assets will generally be transferred on a leasehold basis and not freehold.

The process

- Submission of initial proposals for the devolved management of services and assets by the parish or town council to the City Council
- An initial analysis by relevant officers will be drawn up and returned to the parish council
- Detailed discussions on the different proposals made, including the relevant officers mentioned above and consultation with relevant Cabinet Members and Chief Officers
- Officers will focus on the sort of conditions outlined above and will be concerned to ensure that the devolution of the service in one part of the city does not have a detrimental impact on efficiency and quality in other areas. Different options for local delivery of the service will be explored
- Submission of a signed agreement to the Cabinet for formal decision
- Planning and then implementation to agreed timescales.

What we will do

- We will continue to work with RSCTC to develop a devolution deal and we will seek to learn from this process to develop a more detailed framework for wider use
- A wide range of city council services will work together to develop a **prospectus for devolution deals** which will set out in detail the options and limitations for further deals and guidance on the process, providing maximum clarity on what is available to parishes. This will be published in summer 2019.

Conclusion: Delivering on our New Vision for 2022

As we stated at the beginning of this paper, it is not a blueprint or top down plan. However, we will develop an action plan to guide the delivery of the actions the Council needs to take and the changes we want to achieve over the next few years.

Our overall measures of success in this process will be those set out in the Policy Statement on Localism in Birmingham in March 2018:

- Services being different, better suited to the area, and more efficient
- Officers working for “one council”, putting shared outcomes and local places first, not their service or directorate
- Local councillors having more influence on services
- Residents feeling they are more in control of their services and their local area.

Summary of Key Actions:

Delivery date	Action
By end of March 2019	<p>Communicate the new approach to working with neighbourhoods</p> <p>Publicise the Framework of Relationships and Neighbourhood Charters widely and use it to support discussions with interested neighbourhoods.</p>
By end of March 2019	<p>Identify Pioneer Wards</p> <p>Identify wards across the city to pilot the approach to working with neighbourhoods and to further develop neighbourhood working. Learning will help to finesse ways of working in order to benefit other wards and neighbourhoods.</p>
Ongoing	<p>Strengthen ward partnership working and ward planning</p> <p>Support provided to ward forums to enable more effective working, including developing innovations in community engagement and making ward plans more action focused.</p>
By spring 2019	<p>Review the council’s Procurement process</p> <p>To review of the legal boundaries and options to ensure as much</p>

	flexibility as possible in adopting new contracts and amending existing ones.
By summer 2019	<p>Develop online resource</p> <p>Create an online resource to facilitate the sharing of good practice amongst neighbourhood groups and to celebrate the great work being done.</p>
During 2019	<p>Agree a Devolution Deal with Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council</p> <p>Apply learning to the development of the prospectus for devolution deals.</p>
By summer 2019	<p>Develop a prospectus for devolution deals</p> <p>Council services to work together to develop the options and limitations for devolution deals and guidance on the process.</p>
By autumn 2019	<p>Carry out a partnership based review of the resources to support neighbourhood working</p> <p>To consider funding and resources available for neighbourhoods including for infrastructure, projects, community engagement and data.</p>
By autumn 2019	<p>Establish a cross-service (and partnership) review to explore ways to make services more responsive to neighbourhoods.</p> <p>Looking at all our local services and learning from other places to find ways of redesigning services, the roles of staff and our procurement processes. Finding ways to reduce 'red tape'..</p>
Ongoing	<p>Create new Parish Councils</p> <p>Work with areas that express an interest in Parish Councils with input from the National Association of Local Councils.</p>

Appendix 1: The Different Types of Neighbourhood Organisation

Type of organisation	What they're good at
Neighbourhood (Parish) Council	<p>Providing some local services</p> <p>Power to raise local Council Tax precept</p> <p>A further representative voice for the area</p>
Ward Forum or Partnership	<p>Bringing together local councillor(s), residents and other public agencies to focus on how to solve problems in the area.</p>
<p>Neighbourhood Forum</p> <p>Note: Birmingham has a long tradition of local neighbourhood forums which adhere to local ways of working. The Government has created a specific definition and requirements which must be met before some powers are taken up.</p>	<p>Resident led organisations which may have elections to a committee.</p> <p>Power to initiate a Neighbourhood Planning process. This is where communities come together to prepare plans that will guide the type of development in their area. Birmingham City Council offers technical guidance and assistance but the local community has responsibility for writing a Neighbourhood Plan document.</p> <p>Once ideas and proposals have been generated by a recognised Neighbourhood Forum or Parish Council, and consulted on locally, an independent examiner will check that the proposals follow local and national policy and that they are deliverable. The plan will then be put to a referendum, and people on the local electoral register in the plan area can vote on the proposals.</p> <p>If the majority of people vote in favour, the council will approve the proposals as a Neighbourhood Development Plan. It will then be used to determine planning applications for development in the area.</p> <p>Some Forums provide additional voluntary services.</p>
Community Development Trust	<p>Focused on the regeneration and improvement of the local area.</p> <p>Can raise money from trusts and foundations and apply</p>

	for grants for specific projects.
Residents Association	<p>Similar to a Neighbourhood Forum but without the legal powers for neighbourhood planning.</p> <p>Many associations work closely with local services and the police, for example running neighbourhood watch schemes.</p>
Social Enterprise	Take a variety of forms and are set up to provide a variety of services (such as leisure, retail, social care or health related) but all are not-for-profit businesses that re-invest income in the local community.
Local groups and charities with a specific interest	A wide diversity of informal groups provide additional local services, support particular groups in the community and campaign on specific issues. They may also raise money as charities.
Faith groups and religious centres	Religious communities, leaders and places of worship also make a major contribution to many communities and raise money for charitable activities.
Business Improvement Districts	<p>Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are partnerships between local authorities and local businesses which are intended to provide additional services or improvements within a defined geographical area e.g., improving security or cleaning.</p> <p>A BID must be agreed by ballot and is funded in whole or in part by a levy on nondomestic ratepayers.</p>

Appendix 2: The Framework of Relationships

A framework for neighbourhood groups and local councils to have an increased influence in their local area.

Background

Birmingham City Council is committed to helping local neighbourhoods and communities to have more influence over the services and the decisions that affect their lives. We want to move from being focused on the City Council and its structures to a more citizen focused approach, working with and supporting neighbourhoods to make things work better for local residents.

The City Council recognises that there are many different forms of neighbourhood organisations and in order to more thoroughly engage localities the City Council will be flexible in working with a variety of organisations rather than adopt a one size fits all approach.

The way we work with the different organisations will differ according to their preferred level of involvement.

How BCC will work with different types of organisation

All neighbourhood groups – the City Council will discuss this framework (and possibly Neighbourhood Charters) with groups, it will provide relevant information e.g. on service delivery standards within the locality, and will support ward forum partnership working. In addition a wide variety of neighbourhood groups will be able to exercise rights under the 2011 Localism Act² and the Council's Community Asset Transfer Protocol (see box overleaf). Business Improvement Districts are also playing an increasingly important role in localities.

Neighbourhood Forums – the City Council will provide specific support according to the forum's responsibilities, support their rights under the Localism Act 2011 and fast track any parish council proposals.

² See a summary of the provisions of the Act here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/localism-act-2011-overview>

Parish councils – the City Council will discuss this framework with Parish Councils (and possibly devolution deals), will provide a named contact officer as support as well as meeting with them regularly and consulting on planning applications and other relevant issues including the City Council budget. Options 5 – 9 below apply mainly to parish Councils.

Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Protocol

Since 2011 there has been an agreed Community Asset Transfer Protocol for Birmingham City Council owned assets (buildings and land). This means for voluntary and community groups in Birmingham there is a consistent and transparent pathway from the initial expression of interest in an asset to any agreed point of transfer. Community Asset Transfer is not an automatic right like those in the Localism Act but is considered according to each individual business case and not all buildings are available for transfer. In Birmingham Community Asset Transfer means:

- Transfer of buildings and/or land
- Leasehold not freehold – generally on a full repairing lease and up to 25 years (negotiable)
- Economic Rent offset by Valuing Worth
- to “not for profit” community organisations e.g. charities and social enterprises

The new Property Strategy recently approved by the Council’s Cabinet recognises that community assets are an important element of the city’s public property portfolio. A review is underway to improve our approach to CAT and this work will be progressed during 2019.

Purpose and aims of the Framework

The framework sets out a range of options for greater neighbourhood involvement and governance the City Council supports; it provides the framework for all of our work with neighbourhoods and its principles will apply to the whole city.

Neighbourhood organisations are free to work at a level that suits them best and can progress to higher levels of devolution if and when they wish to do so. They can also join with other organisations to put together proposals around the options included in the framework.

By working together within this framework the City Council aims to:

- Clarify the approach to more local control of services and the options available
- Provide greater local influence over services
- Improve local service delivery, increasing effectiveness by tailoring it to better suit local needs
- Maintain access to local services that might otherwise be at risk and where possible enhance services
- Ensure that, where services or assets are transferred to local control or management, the necessary resources are in place to make them sustainable.

These options are consistent with the Council's commissioning approach.

Options

Option 1: Influencing local priorities by contributing to the development of the Ward Plan.

Each ward has a Ward Forum which focuses on the issues, priorities and decisions important to people in their local area. Ward Forums also:

- make comments on behalf of ward residents on significant planning applications which affect the ward;
- enable community engagement, debate and action by coordinating the work of councillors with neighbourhood forums, residents associations and neighbourhood, community or parish councils;
- work with other wards to engage with partners, such as the police;
- develop a ward plan setting priorities for the local area and planned actions to progress these.

Most wards will hold up to 6 ward forum meetings each year. The Ward's councillors sit on the ward forum as do members of other public service organisations e.g. the police and representatives from other local organisations. Any resident or neighbourhood group can attend their local Ward Forum meeting and can suggest agenda items, raise issues of local concern, use the forum for consultation, contribute to ward planning and priority setting, share good practice, receive and comment upon feedback on service updates and project delivery etc., provide feedback when the forum is used for consultation and engagement. This list is not exhaustive and each meeting is unique so the format may vary.

The ward planning process usually starts around November time and will run through until the end of March when a draft plan should be available. A dedicated meeting (where possible) will be held to agree 3-6 key local priorities using previously gathered intelligence from ward data plus elected member, resident and stakeholder input. A further meeting or working group can be established to develop the associated Action Plan and progress is reviewed at subsequent ward meetings.

Option 2: Influencing local service delivery levels through monitoring delivery performance against agreed standards.

Groups monitor and report on the delivery of services within their local area, highlighting good performance and issues to responsible teams. The City Council will provide relevant information to groups to assist them e.g. the agreed service delivery standards and commit to feeding back on how issues raised have been progressed.

Option 3: Influencing the commissioning of local services by helping to identify local need and desired outcomes, appraising delivery options, and helping to evaluate bids.

Groups highlight local need and support responsible teams throughout the commissioning of new contracts. This can include the identification of the outcomes against which performance will be measured, considering the potential delivery options and evaluating bids.

The City Council can explore requests for change of existing contracts with contractors but only within legal boundaries. (We will undertake a review of our current approach to setting contracts to ensure that it is as flexible as possible particularly with regard to the variation of future contracts; however there may not always be scope for changes in existing contracts).

Option 4: Communities developing their own service models

Neighbourhood groups can also work independently to identify and deliver services to meet local need which complement City Council services. For example Social Enterprises providing services such as skills training, youth work, housing and employment support, environmental projects.

The City Council will seek to work closely with such groups to look at how they work with existing contractors and to minimise duplication.

The following options apply mainly to Parish Councils, however we will consider their application to other groups.

Option 5: Joint delivery or service enhancement, where local councils choose to enhance an existing service by funding work that exceeds the base level provided or deliver additional services not currently provided.

This option is more likely to apply to Parish councils. They can choose to enhance a service provided by Birmingham City Council by funding work that exceeds the level of service provided or deliver services not provided.

There will be some legal considerations relating to this option and a form of authorisation document or delegation agreement will need to be put in place.

Examples where services could be enhanced include street cleaning and other environmental maintenance work, parking enforcement, winter maintenance. There are other possibilities and the City Council is happy to consider suggestions.

Please refer to assessment criteria below.

Option 6: Agency Agreements, Management Agreements, Licences and Sponsorship between Birmingham City Council and a parish council.

Under this option Birmingham City Council would make an agreement with a Parish council on the delivery of a service. The agreement sets out standards and conditions and includes a lump sum payment to the Parish Council based on the minimum level of service Birmingham City Council requires. The local council can choose to invest more or enhance this service locally.

Please refer to assessment criteria below.

Option 7: Delegation of service delivery to a local council where they take on responsibility for that service on behalf of Birmingham City Council.

Parish councils may wish to take on the delivery of a local service on behalf of Birmingham City Council. The City Council will still be ultimately responsible for the service and therefore will have to set delivery standards, value for money considerations and monitor performance however the day to day management would pass to the Parish Council. The Parish Council will be required to provide regular reports on performance delivery and highlight any areas of concern.

A legal agreement will need to be put in place for this option between the City Council and the Parish Council to ensure the necessary safeguards are in place, including provision for alternative arrangements where there are performance issues.

Examples where services could be delegated include ground maintenance including of parks and gardens, libraries, street cleaning and environmental improvement, sports and leisure facilities.

Please refer to assessment criteria below.

Option 8: Transfer of a single service.

Parish Councils can use their local income to provide a range of additional or enhanced services through the mechanisms outlined above. They may also take over the delivery of an existing council service, shaping it to better suit local needs.

Parish councils are consulted and offered the opportunity to take on full responsibility for the delivery of the service, if the parish council agree the full responsibility for the service will pass to them and the transfer of any relevant asset(s) may also be part of the discussion.

Option 9: Devolution Deals

Where a Parish Council wants to explore a wider package of devolved services the transfer would be included in a Local Devolution Deal with the City Council. This is an agreement about what services will be run by the parish council and what assets they will manage. Supplementary legal agreements regarding this transfer of services will also be required.

Please refer to assessment criteria below.

Exclusions

There are some services that Birmingham City Council will not consider transferring to local councils, however neighbourhoods can still influence the monitoring and commissioning of these service as outlined above. These services are not being considered either because there are legal or practical restrictions or because there are significant advantages to keeping them under central management e.g. economies of scale.

Excluded services are child protection and care, some education and special needs services, adult social care, road maintenance and street lighting, strategic

procurement, financial management and corporate administration. Others will be identified in the Prospectus for Devolution Deals to be published in the Spring.

Assessment criteria for options involving service delivery or enhancement of a service by local councils (options 5 to 9 above)

When considering service delivery or enhancement to service delivery by local councils Birmingham City Council will apply the following principles:

- Parish councils must have been in existence and functioning effectively for at least a year. The City Council will be particularly concerned to ensure strong accountability and probity, including regular council elections and contingency plans which will be agreed in the event of service failure or failure to meet standards of good governance.
- Proposals must set out how services they will be managed to ensure effective engagement with all service users and diverse communities, including a communications strategy to ensure service users and residents are informed and can access services easily. This should also set out the service data to be made available to the public, including performance data.
- Services considered must be things that a parish council can legally provide.
- Services must be capable of being delivered at the scale proposed, either through the parish council's own resources or a management arrangement with the City Council.
- The service must be provided reasonably efficiently, compared to central provision.
- The service must be more responsive to local needs or provide different, tailored aspects of the service not currently provided centrally. The City Council will be seeking to encourage innovation and well managed risk taking to achieve better service outcomes.
- The parish council should deliver additional social value for citizens, setting out a policy that is at least comparable to the City Council's.
- The parish council will have to demonstrate sound business cases for all proposals, including the management and other resources that will be put in place. This should include income generation from the service.
- The parish council will have to show how the community will be engaged in the delivery of the service and how their views on the service will be monitored and performance managed.

- Proposals for assets to be transferred to a parish council will have to demonstrate the capacity to manage the asset independently and to put the asset to good use for the community. Assets will generally be transferred on a leasehold basis and not freehold.

Appendix 3: Case Studies

Ward Forums

Ward forum arrangements are developing to be more inclusive and responsive to local need. Examples of this include:

- Meetings are being held in new venues and at different times to allow more people to attend. For example, Sparkhill and Hall Green North wards are both holding occasional afternoon meetings to allow more older people, parents and carers to attend. The agendas of these meetings will be tailored to include items relevant to those groups
- Meetings are becoming less formal with more time given for more two way conversation
- Agendas are increasingly reflecting what residents want to discuss as well as ward priorities
- In Stirchley the ward councillor held a series of informal meetings in micro neighbourhoods before the first ward forum meeting to get a full picture of priorities. The location of future ward forum meetings will be rotated across these neighbourhoods
- There are many more meetings chaired by non-councillors and in some cases by community members.

Cheswick Green Parish Council

Cheswick Green is a village and civic parish within the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull. It is one of the four new civic parishes formed on 1st April 2009 when the large parish of Hockley Heath was abolished. Cheswick Green is funded by a precept. It is an example of a smaller parish council that takes on a more limited oversight and monitoring role.

In addition to managing the local allotments, Cheswick Green Parish council:

- Monitors and has the right to be consulted on planning applications within its borders
- The council is also consulted on various issues by Solihull Council including on their green spaces strategy, their housing and land availability consultation, and issues around flooding

- The parish council have had the ability to influence and input into the ground management's contract for their local parks. This includes a new provision for the grounds staff to pick litter when the contract was retendered.

Website: <http://www.cheswickgreen-pc.gov.uk/>

Stirchley Baths

Stirchley Baths was built in 1910 when Stirchley was a small village and most of the homes in the village lacked bathrooms. It was closed in 1988 following falling attendance and severe structural problems with the building.

In 2012, Birmingham Council developed a plan to restore the building and turn it into a multi-purpose community hub. From the start of the renovation in 2014 there have been high levels of community involvement:

- Local residents were involved in co-producing aspects of the building design, working with contractors, and in planning and programming
- Residents, community groups, public sector employees and councillors acted as an informal wider stakeholder group, and a small number were directly involved as a steering group
- Residents were directly involved in the naming of the community hub as "Stirchley Baths" through a community competition.

The building is owned and managed by Birmingham City Council but a very successful volunteer programme has run since its opening in January 2016. Volunteers provide general support including acting as weekend supporters, a maintenance task force, events volunteers, daytime "meet and greet" volunteers and a newsletter coordinator

Website: http://www.social-life.co/publication/changing_places_stories_innovation_tenacity

Moseley Community Development Trust

Moseley Community Development Trust was founded in 2001 by The Moseley Society and the Central Moseley Neighbourhood Forum with help from Moseley & District Churches Housing Association. It is a community led organisation whose aim is to improve the neighbourhood through a combination of social, economic and environmental projects for Moseley's diverse communities. It looks for practical answers to local problems.

The Trust developed Moseley's Big Plan (a supplementary planning document) which sets out how Moseley's character can be protected whilst still allowing it to develop. Local residents were asked to submit their ideas for improving the area, ideas were considered and incorporated wherever possible.

Moseley Regeneration Group is part of the Trust and is made up of a number of neighbourhood representatives. They share information about local issues and work out collective responses. They monitor planning and licensing applications that impact Moseley, meeting with council officers as necessary to understand the impact of proposals on the neighbourhood.

Website: <https://moseleycdt.com>

Soho First Community Development Trust

The Soho First Community Development Trust is a local initiative made up of community groups, statutory services, and individuals. Its trustees include residents and representatives from third sector and statutory organisations. Every trustee is fully committed to and passionate about the work of the Trust and give voluntarily of their time.

Their mission is to promote a sense of community across the Soho ward and they are currently working in three main areas:

- Environment – providing a clean, safe place to live, work and play
- Bringing People Together - building a stronger community cohesion
- Thriving Soho - working to grow the local economy and tackle issues such as unemployment and other related challenges. They have dedicated task groups working on each of these areas.

In 2017 the Trust secured funding through the Birmingham City Council 'Local Innovation Fund' which has helped them to fund activities, events, and local initiatives.

Newbiggin Community Trust

Newbiggin Community Trust is a charity which aims to provide a place of welcome, inclusion and social cohesion for families in Winson Green in order to reduce social isolation and support people in times of need.

Based in Newbiggin House they offer a place where neighbours come together to meet each other, plan and run community events, and share life together. They promote inclusion and

participation by all, and actively try to connect with those who are often excluded from mainstream society.

They take an asset based approach using the skills and experience of local residents in the delivery of programmes and services to help others. Examples of services offered, all of which use local volunteers, include:

- Provision of community meals
- Cooking exchange programme where residents from different cultures come together to share recipes and cook together;
- Mental health group
- Afterschool and youth clubs;

They also run two social enterprises again serving the local community.

Website: <https://newbigintrust.uk/>

Norton Hall Children & Family Centre

Norton Hall Children & Family Centre is a registered charity and voluntary organisation based in Washwood Heath, East Birmingham. Their vision is for 'a community where children and young people are able to fulfil their potential and where parents and guardians are enabled to support their families'.

They listen and respond to the needs of their neighbourhood and work with the local authority, colleges, schools, housing associations and other voluntary organisations and partners to provide services which improve the lives of children and families. Services provided include:

- A day nurser;
- Out of School and After School Care
- Positive Activities for young people who are at risk of being excluded from school or drawn into anti-social behaviour
- Sports Activities and classes.

The Hall was transferred to the organisation from Birmingham City Council in March 2010 under its Community Asset Transfer protocol.

Website: <http://www.nortonhall.org.uk>

Balsall Heath:

Balsall Heath is served by a number of neighbourhood groups including Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Forum and St. Paul's Community Development Trust.

The Neighbourhood Forum started as a few residents campaigning to build a better Balsall Heath. For example, they organised a street watch campaign which reduced crime levels in the area within 6 months. In 1992, all the efforts of the Forum were voluntary. Today, the forum employs 20 people including a youth worker, neighbourhood wardens who liaise between the police and residents and provide some additional resident services e.g. mending locks and solving low level crime and a 'park keeper' type role responsible for maintaining parks and public areas.

There are still lots of opportunities for volunteers, these include street stewards who help to organise and support fellow residents to gain better living conditions in the street and home where they live; monitoring CCTV cameras and staffing the front desk of the police station, answering residents' enquiries.

Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Planning Forum prepared the Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Development Plan which was adopted in November 2015.

Website: <https://balsallheathforum.wordpress.com/history/>

St. Paul's Community Development Trust is a charity that was established by three small groups also working with the community of Balsall Heath. The Trust works with and alongside children, young people, and adults in Balsall Heath and the wider neighbourhood to enhance the provision of education, recreation, and life-long learning.

The Trust provides a number of services, including an independent school, Early Years Services, nurseries, St Paul's City Farm, and the Ellen Gee canal boat. Across these different services, the Trust delivers and facilitates a wide range of events and activities including:

- **#GetBalsallHeathReading** – a literacy campaign in partnership with [Smartlyte](#) which aims to improve the skills of parents to enable them to better support their child's development, enhance their own social mobility, and create a more integrated community
- **Coffee mornings** – an opportunity for people aged over 50 to have refreshments, socialise, and take part in activities at the Trust's farm
- **Housing, benefit and debt advice** – working in partnership with [Narthex](#) to offer free advice for local families
- **Talking Together Stay and Play** – sessions for parents/carers and their children to learn English through play and fun activities.

The Trust is dedicated to working for and with the local community to help secure better opportunities and better quality of life for people who are disadvantaged in a deprived area of the city.

Website: <https://stpaulstrust.net/>

Witton Lodge Community Association (WLCA)

Witton Lodge Community Association is a Community Association and Community Landlord, based in Perry Common, north Birmingham. The association:

- Has built 187 properties on land given to them by Birmingham City Council that they rent out directly
- Has refurbished and extended Perry Common Community Hall which is a focal point for the local community, with different clubs and events being held throughout the week (this was a successful asset transfer from Birmingham City Council who also paid 50% of the costs of refurbishment)
- Provides help with Jobs and Skills, promote local good health and wellbeing through their Living Well work and have a wide range of Environmental Projects.

WLCA have also recently received funding from the Birmingham City Council 'Local Innovation Fund' which has helped them to add value to library resources.

Website: <http://wittonlodge.org.uk/>

Warley Woods Community Trust

Warley Woods Community Trust was set up in 1997 to restore and manage Warley Woods Park as an asset for the local community. This made it the first urban park in the United Kingdom to be managed by a community trust.

Warley Woods Community Trust is a registered charity and is committed to the long term improvement, maintenance and management of the park. The Trust plans to restore historic features and develop new facilities by working with charities, community enterprises, local partners and volunteers. The Trust intends that the park should be a true People's Park and so local people are involved in every aspect of the park from its management and maintenance, to developing educational materials and organising events.

The Trust formally took over running the site in 2004 from Birmingham City Council.

Website: <https://www.warleywoods.org.uk/>

Castle Vale Community Housing Association

Castle Vale estate has undergone a transformation over recent years which has seen 32 of the area's 34 tower blocks demolished and replaced with low rise, mainly terraced housing.

The process of regenerating Castle Vale began in 1993 with the introduction of a Housing Action Trust (HAT) approved by a resident ballot. HATs were public bodies designed to oversee improvements to deprived neighbourhoods over a time limited period. Each was governed by a board which included active residents, representatives of resident organisations and members of the local authority.

The HAT existed for 12 years until 2005 when it was replaced by a number of organisations including Castle Vale Community Housing Association (CVCHA) which now manages much of the areas housing stock (which was transferred to it) and community initiatives.

Castle Vale Community Housing (CVCH) is a community-led organisation where the customer and community is at the heart of everything they do. With input from the Neighbourhood Partnership, all policies and values are strongly resident/tenant influenced.

As well as housing provision CVCH also manages the repairs and maintenance of the housing stock, provides advice and support to residents and is responsible for graffiti removal and communal gardens.

Website: <https://www.cvch.org.uk/>

New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council

New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council is in the South West of Birmingham and serves nearly 10,000 residents and is funded by a precept.

The Parish's main functions are to provide advice, guidance, and information to local people, and to provide funding to local groups and facilities in the area. Some of the projects and activities the Parish supports include:

- **Frankley Street Champions** – local volunteers collecting rubbish and fly tipping from the streets, as well as dealing with other environmental issues in the Parish
- **Frankley Carnival** – an annual carnival organised by local residents, community groups, and other organisations.

The Parish has made huge strides on issues like the local environment and community cohesion through its events.

Website: www.newfrankleyinbirminghamparishcouncil.gov.uk

Broadstairs and St. Peter's Town Council

70 miles from London, Broadstairs is a seaside town in the South East of England. The town's architecture, from Edwardian, Victorian and earlier periods is a draw for tourists and is seen as a community asset, however low levels of investment in those community assets has left them in a state of disrepair.

Broadstairs and St. Peter's Town Council decided to step in and acquire two buildings when they went on Thanet District Council's asset disposal list and these now play an important community role:

- Pierremont Hall is currently a hub for cultural and community services
- Retort House is the only indoor sports facility in Broadstairs.

The town council believes that the community benefits offered by the purchase of both buildings more than justify the price paid.

Website: <http://mycommunity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/PTC-COMA-Case-Study.pdf>

Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council (RSCTC)

RSCTC is civil parish created in 2015 by consultative postal ballot in which 70% of the votes cast supported the establishment of a town council. The town council is funded by a precept which is paid by the residents of Sutton Coldfield to commission and provide certain local services. The town council represents around 95,000 residents living in around 41,000 households.

The town council takes on responsibility for certain local services, which include:

- provision of allotments and cemeteries
- the award of grants to the community
- the promotion of entertainment and the arts
- planning (where the Town Council is a statutory consultee)
- recreation
- traffic calming
- the care of war memorials.

Birmingham City Council is working closely with RSCTC to explore further delegation and transfer of services.

Website: <https://www.suttoncoldfieldtowncouncil.gov.uk/>

Northfield Community Partnership

Northfield Community Partnership is a charity which helps people and community groups in South Birmingham. It delivers a range of services from its Hub in Northfield which contribute to the overall wellbeing of the local community. Services include job support, health and financial services and it offers a range of volunteering opportunities for local residents.

The Hub has become an integral part of Northfield, providing an accessible and prominent high street location for the provision of services that improve people's life chances, whilst providing facilities and support to groups who deliver opportunities to the wider community.

Website: <https://www.northfieldcommunity.org/about>

Abram Ward Community Cooperative, Wigan

The Cooperative develops capacity building within the Abram Ward area and works in partnership with all community groups in the Ward to help provide services to address the needs of the community. They believe in locally grown businesses, that trade for the benefit of local communities.

Their aims are:

- To promote the growth of Community Businesses and help to shape a vision for Abram Ward via a Neighbourhood Plan, utilising Community Businesses as a way to deliver the vision
- To provide 'backroom support' and Business advice for Social Enterprises within the Wigan Borough. This includes Business Incubation space
- To support a Community Hub network and Community Assets building within Abram Ward, via the provision of services which reflect local needs and demands within Abram Ward and the Wigan Borough
- To support the health and wellbeing of the local communities via innovative services.

Website: <http://www.abramwardcooperative.org/about-us>

Birmingham Community Homes

In order to diversify the housing that is built in Birmingham a group of experienced and expert practitioners from across a range of housing and community focused organisations has come together to form Birmingham Community Homes. It aims to promote the benefits of community led housing approaches like Community Land

Trusts, recognising the contribution they can make in addressing the city's affordable housing shortage, and is founded on a belief in genuine collaborative working, striving for equality of outcomes and community focused objectives. The long-term goal is to see 5% of the 80,000 homes needed in Birmingham by 2031 to be community led.

Partnership members include representatives from emerging citizen led organisations, anchor institutions such as University of Birmingham and Birmingham City Council, Impact Hub Birmingham and national organisations Confederation of Cooperative Housing, National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations and Locality.

Website: <https://www.birminghamcommunityhomes.com/>

Appendix 4: Foxwood Neighbourhood Agreement in York

The Foxwood Neighbourhood Agreement began life as a community safety and crime initiative resulting from concerns about vandalism and lack of adequate youth provision in the Foxwood area. The neighbourhood agreement was initially developed and later monitored by a formal partnership of residents, service providers and elected members.

Services initially covered by the neighbourhood agreement included community policing, street and environmental cleaning and refuse collection, jobs, training and enterprise support and housing. Agreements for welfare benefits and services for young people were added a year later in response to identified needs.

Individual service agreements were produced from a network of meetings and discussions between residents and service providers. The meetings would work through ideas and formulate proposals that were then agreed by the project steering group. The agreements were succinct statements of background information, targets, response times and contact points.

Monthly monitoring statements from the service providers and performance against targets or commitments are reviewed at meetings of the Foxwood Community Action Group.

Appendix 5: Creating a Town or Parish Council

The Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission has set out guidance on the creation of a new parish council.³

In addition The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) provides lots of guidance on the subject and how community groups can set up a campaign for a parish council.⁴

Extract from Government and National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Guidance on Creating a Town or Parish Council

To establish a local council a Community Governance Review needs to be triggered. This can be by either the principal authority themselves or by the community, through the submission of a petition*.

The petition must state exactly what it proposes: creating a parish or town council for a defined area. The number of minimum signatures required varies according to the size of the population. If the petition area:

- Has fewer than 500 local government electors, the petition must be signed by 37.5% of the electors
- Has between 500 and 2,500 local government electors, the petition must be signed by at least 187 electors
- Has more than 2,500 local government electors, the petition must be signed by at least 7.5% of the electors.

Once the petition gathers the required number of signatures, it can be submitted to the principal authority, who will validate the signatures and, provided that the minimum threshold is met, will conduct a Community Governance Review within 12 months of submission.

During this time, the principal authority will launch a consultation, asking residents to state whether they are in favour or against the establishment of a local council. At the end of the consultation period, the council will review residents' responses before reaching a decision. If the principal authority decides in favour of a parish council, it will also set the date for the first election.

*A neighbourhood forum that's had a neighbourhood development plan passed at referendum can trigger a community governance review without needing a petition.

³ Guidance can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/8312/1527635.pdf

⁴ See: <http://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/create-a-council>