Birmingham: Where the World Meets

A report from Overview & Scrutiny

Contents

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This report is the conclusion of a significant debate about how people living within a locality can do so

Summary of Recommendations

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R01	The Register Office should be supported (with the support of the private sector in Birmingham) in developing a 'welcome pack' for new citizens in Birmingham, including signposting options to community groups, other support and general information about Birmingham.	Leader	September 2013
R02	The City Council should explore the appetite to achieve City of Sanctuary status with organisations across the city, and strive towards gaining this title if supported.	Cabinet Member for Social Cohesion and Equalities	September 2013
R03	In reviewing the objectives and organisation of the Social Cohesion Forum, the Cabinet		

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R07	The Cabinet Member should aim to increase transparency with regards to the support given to community groups, to negate the perception that only specific groups receive support from the City Council. This should include: Establishing a set of criteria which requests for support are matched against; Making this criteria widely available; Making a list of the supported groups publicly available alongside reasons for this support.	Cabinet Member for Social Cohesion and Equalities (working with Executive Members for Local Services)	September 2013
R08	In his role in challenging service areas to meet cohesion and equality objectives, the Cabinet Member should encourage a move away from focusing on groups based on a single demographic, towards one which focuses on community based on locality or neighbourhood, so that competing needs and entitlements can be discussed and balanced.		

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1 Purpose of this Inquiry

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 At the beginning of the 2012/13 municipal year Members of the newly formed Social Cohesion and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee ("the Committee") agreed to look at how social cohesion is strengthened through the promotion of shared values, common ground and understanding between people in Birmingham. The concept of being 'Brummie' was chosen as a theme to explore because it was something which we felt people could easily relate to. Given the nature of the publicity that the inquiry received it went on to commonly be known as 'The Brummie Inquiry'.

1.1.2 This report summarises the findings of this inquiry. It attempts to examine levels of social cohesion in Birmingham currently and the ways in which the City Council both helps and sometimes hinders that move towards greater cohesion. It then looks at some of the structural and practical ways through which the City Council, partners and residents can support cohesion in the city and create a greater sense of belonging and pride in Birmingham.

1.1.3 It is not intended that the conclusions reached in this inquiry will ingege Tw[w[(dillt2Tw[(ng jus.55s

- People; how can we maximise the potential of our rapidly changing and diverse population?

- Wellbeing; how can the wellbeing of the people of Birmingham be improved?

- Inclusive Economic Growth; how can everyone share in the city's growth and prosperity?

- Young People: what can we change to better encourage all our young people to fully develop their talents in a positive way?

1.2.3   That piece of work concluded in October and the findings were presented through a consultation paper towards the end of 2012[1]. There were some obvious overlaps with this inquiry, and efforts were made to keep both sides informed of each

(Inner city ward where one minority group is in substantial majority) and Brandwood (South Birmingham ward).

1.3.12 The participants were asked to discuss three key questions:

- Whether the heritage of the city plays an important part in social cohesion, and whether more needs to be done to build that understanding amongst communities;

- How the diversity of Birmingham impacts on Social Cohesion and whether more should be done to encourage people to mix with different cultures in different.9(e)-5T6ms wan-1.4u6(e)1ient h c

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2 Background

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 We believe that there has never been a better incentive to build social cohesion. Its importance has been widely recognised, with the Government's 2004 report on Social Cohesion suggesting, for example, that it should be on a par with other areas, such as education and health[5].

2.1.2 In thinking about social cohesion as a concept we concluded that it has the potential to help tackle some of the difficult problems we face at the moment. Cohesive societies that promote participation, integration and interaction can encourage people to support each other independently of public service support and perhaps place less strain on already stretched services.

2.1.3 Some might also raise the question, as one member of the public did during this inquiry, as to whether "a sense of belonging [is] that applicable in a modern transient large society". With a variety of people coming together in a locality to live beside one another and with more transnational networks find themselves running through the city, we felt that social cohesion again becomes an increasingly important issue. This concept has become commonly labelled as 'superdiversity' and will be touched on later in this chapter.

2.2 Definitions of Social Cohesion

2.2.1 By accepting that social cohesion is important in today's Birmingham, it is then important to understand what social cohesion means and to determine just how aspirational we want our definition of cohesion to be; whether, for example, we want to move away from a traditional urban context where people maintain cordial relationships to one where there is deep and meaningful civil interaction.

2.2.2 There are various definitions of Social Cohesion which can be found within relevant literature. These definitions focus on varying themes but all appear to be complementary. In general terms cohesion can be described as, for example; "A process of building shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities in wealth and income, and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges, and that they

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[5] House of Commons ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee: 'Social Cohesion'

are members of the same community"[6]

2.3   The Case for Cohesion

2.3.1   In economic terms, there are a number of potential benefits from achieving positive social cohesion. The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) suggest in their report *The Economic Case for Cohesion*[9], for example, that more cohesive areas might experience lower crime levels. The reason behind this is that 'high levels of social integration can lead to the community sharing the same values and goals, and these include keeping the neighbourhood safe and free from crime.'

2.3.2

2.4.3   Both verbal and written evidence was received from the University of Birmingham, who have recently established an Institute for Superdiversity. This Institute will focus on five work streams including theories and methods (ie. new approaches to mapping), health and wellbeing, language, role of business and government, role of religion and culture. Representatives from the University outlined some of the challenges of Superdiversity as how to:

- Engage with people, and the ability of some migrants to do so;

- Encourage connections;

- Foster links with the private sector;

- Focus on the asset model of communities rather than the deficit model.

2.4.4   Superdiversity will clearly bring with it its own challenges. However what is encouraging is the added benefit that superdiversity could bring to Birmingham, including the exchange of knowledge amongst cultures and a greater innovation and creativity.

3   General Observations

3.1   Introduction

3.1.1   We initially chose to explore whether people feel a sense of belonging to Birmingham and what gave Birmingham people their identity. We also wanted to find out whether the term 'Brummie' is relevant and helpful for cohesion within the Birmingham landscape. The following general observations are based on the written and verbal evidence received, serving to set a helpful baseline for taking the inquiry forward.

3.2   Findings

3.2.1   The response and reaction to the term 'Brummie' was mixed. For many of those that understood the term, it did appear to create a sense of pride and belonging. People cited various traits associated with the term, such as 'hard working', 'creative' and a tendency to be self deprecating (which was seen as both a positive and negative thing). Particularly for those that attended a workshop organised for the inquiry, people saw no conflict in having more than one heritage and cultural identity and almost all associated them3.2.1   7eted to find outotow5e(th)2.5(t5.1(ecTJ-th)-5.20

appreciate and use these assets. This again will be considered in more depth throughout the report.

> I am proud of all the old buildings we have e.g. Aston Hall and Church, Town Hall, two Cathedrals, churches in the Jewellery quarter and Bull Ring, the Museum, Bournville and all of their histories.
> **Member of the Public**

Table 1: Marketing Birmingham's assessment of the number of physical assets in the Core Cities

Local authority	Arts	Sports	MLA[11]	Heritage	Total
Manchester	82	431	31	138	682
Liverpool	80	386	36	161	663
Sheffield	62	665	38	197	962
Newcastle upon Tyne	34	242	29	114	419
Sheffield	62	665	38	197	962
Birmingham	**87**	**920**	**54**	**215**	**1,276**
Leeds	81	922	70	293	1,366

3.2.4

Table 2: Sample of Resident Tracker Survey results – Quarter 2 2012/13[13]

Measure	Highest Scoring Constituency	Lowest Scoring Constituency
Agreement that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on	Edgbaston (96.8%)	Hodge Hill (84.7%)
Agreement that the local area has a good sense of community	Hall Green (86.9%)	Yardley (66.2%)
Agreement that the local area where people from different cultures and religions can live together without difficulty	Hall Green (95.5%)	Hodge Hill (85.1%)

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R01	The Register Office should be supported (with the support of the private sector in Birmingham) in developing a 'welcome pack' for new citizens in Birmingham, including signposting options to community groups, other support and general information about Birmingham.	Leader	September 2013

4.2.4　Welcoming people is clearly something we do well. This led us to consider how this can be built on and in particular we discussed the integration of new arrivals to Birmingham. We were told by one community organisation about a 'City of Sanctuary' movement which started in Sheffield in 2007 to welcome new arrivals (asylum seekers and refugees) to that city[14]. Organisations came together to request that Sheffield be declared a 'City of Sanctuary'. A resolution of the City Council was passed that year to that effect and subsequently a series of events were arranged to encourage new arrivals to be involved in the life of the city. This has grown and a number of cities have now been recognised as Cities of Sanctuary, but Birmingham is not yet on that list.

4.2.5　The former Leader of Birmingham City Council, Cllr Mike Whitby pointed out in his evidence that we were already a welcoming city in terms of asylum seekers and refugees, regardless of a title. However we see no harm in aspiring to attain this title, alongside other major cities in the country and would hope that organisations across the city would like to take this forward with the aim of encouraging new arrivals to have a stake in society and their communities.

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R02	The City Council should explore the appetite to achieve City of Sanctuary status with organisations across the city, and strive towards gaining this title if supported.	Cabinet Member for Social Cohesion and Equalities	September 2013

4.2.6　Another example of a service which aims to bring people together is the Youth Service. We were provided with evidence by both the Head of the Youth Service and a youth worker who was preparing for the opening of the Lighthouse Centre in Aston Ward, a new facility open to all young people. We were told that work was being undertaken to seek feedback from young people and the community as to what they would like to see provided and to raise awareness of the youth facility in the community, particularly in schools. It was acknowledged that there would be challenges in seeking to bring together young people from diverse backgrounds and from different

[14] See http://www.cityofsanctuary.org/

parts of the city but the aim was to break down the barriers and to seek to ensure that they considered the facility to be a safe environment.

organisations rarely work collaboratively and certainly do not represent all the new migrants in Birmingham.

Jenny Phillimore, University of Birmingham

4.2.10 We are aware that the organisation of the Social Cohesion Forum is under review, and hope that issues of adequate representation will be addressed, without making the size of the forum unmanageable. This is of course though not the only opportunity to improve the participation of more representative individuals. More widely, getting people involved in trusts and organisations set up and supported by the City Council could help encourage people to have a stake in society and become more engaged, for example, the Education and Vulnerable Children Overview and Scrutiny Committee has two specific places allocated for young people. The young people have played a very positive role in not only highlighting issues affecting young people within the city, but they have also played a pivotal role in determining the work programme and priorities for the committee. We believe this is something that the Trusts and Charities Committee in particular could take a view on.

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
RO3	In reviewing the objectives and organisation of the Social Cohesion Forumri061 Tf0.00031.76[(in4)4 allo		

The Council needs to support community networks but should be aware of the problems of perception of particular groups and the impact on effective engagement.

excellent examples of work being undertaken within local areas to work with and understand the developing nature of their neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood police teams work in partnership at a local level to understand communities, with regular meetings which are often linked with schools and feed into Neighbourhood Tasking groups where appropriate. Examples of neighbourhood policing initiatives provided to the inquiry included proactive work to build relationships with new communities, through setting up a police base in a school to engage with newly arrived pupils and measures to ensure more effective communication, such as Urdu language classes for officers. Overall it was felt that community mapping and impact assessments could be undertaken quite easily by the Council as providers of public services.

> The job of ensuring effective service provision for all has never been harder, with basic information lacking about who is out there, what their needs are, and how those needs might be met.
>
> **Jenny Phillimore, University of Birmingham[16]**

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R05	Better communication around how organisations and individuals can engage with council processes is needed. Ways to achieve this should be explored and in particular each ward should have a clear strategy on how to engage local communities.	Cabinet Member for Social Cohesion & Equalities (working with Executive Members for Local Services)	September 2013
R06	That the Executive sets out how it intends to use social media to increase engagement in City Council's democratic activities, taking into account issues raised in this report, the District & Public Engagement OS& Committee's report on Devolution, and the Governance, Resources & Member Development's report on Public Engagement in Council Meetings.	Deputy Leader	September 2013
R07	The Cabinet Member should aim to increase transparency with regards to the support given to community groups, to negate the perception that only specific groups receive support from the City Council. This should include: • Establishing a set of criteria which requests for support are matched against; • Making this criteria widely available; • Making a list of the supported groups publicly available alongside reasons for this support.	Cabinet Member for Social Cohesion and Equalities (working with Executive Members for Local Services)	September 2013

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[16] www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/superdiversesociety.aspx

R08	In his role in challenging service areas to meet cohesion and equality objectives, the Cabinet Member should encourage a move away from focusing on groups based on a single demographic, towards one which focuses on community based on locality or neighbourhood, so that competing needs and entitlements can be discussed and balanced. Districts will be key in helping this happen. Where specific support to one particular group is needed, this should be on a task and finish basis.	Cabinet Member for Social Cohesion and Equalities (working with Executive Members for Local Services)	September 2013

5.2.3   In addition to a specific event there's an opportunity to better use the events we already have. Firstly, evidence suggests that these need to be promoted more widely than just to those already 'in the know', in order to encourage people to attend events that they would not normally go to. For example, during the workshop session some of the participants suggested using Black History Month to commemorate the thousands from all over the world who had fought in the First and Second World Wars, a shared history of many Birmingham citizens.

5.2.4   During the course of the evidence sessions what became quite clear was a strong feeling that promoting and learning about the history of Birmingham and the contributions made by all communities would go someway towards an increased sense of belonging and unity.

> Being part of Birmingham gives us a sense of identity
> **(Workshop participant)**

5.2.5   Secondly we feel there needs to be a common theme running through major events, which focuses on local history and communities within Birmingham. Taking smaller events around the city would also negate the difficulties of people not being able to reach the city centre. Markets are an excellent example of people coming together (the Bull Ring Market being a prime example) and should be encouraged not only in the city centre but across the city, as these kinds of contact are the daily stuff of existence. Smaller local markets, allowing local producers and designers to showcase their talent, also play a part, as our city centre shopping experience that does not reflect the culture, skills and creativity of Birmingham. One example is the Moseley Arts Market which has a range of original artworks, traditional and contemporary crafts, and handmade jewellery from professional and semi professional designer/makers. The Jewellery Quarter also had a Christmas market, selling food, crafts, gifts and jewellery. Previously there had been a Handmade Market at the Bull Ring, a weekly Arts and Craft Market. This was a good example of how Birmingham's

5.2.7   Finally, we feel that more work needs to be

R11	The City Council should explore opportunities for handmade and food markets to be re-established in Birmingham and examine how these can be taken into different parts of the city.	Deputy Leader	September 2013
R12	The City Council should re-examine its communication methods to ensure that arts, sports, cultural and other events are better promoted across the city.	Deputy Leader	September 2013

5.2.8   When thinking about heritage, history and culture, the issue of schools came up time and time again. We believe, as others do, that not enough is done within schools to teach a local aspect to history and to learn about different cultures and practices that make up Birmingham.

> One of the ways the council leadership can facilitate unity through diversity is through education
> **Professor Carl Chinn**

> I firmly believe not enough is taught in local schools about how important Birmingham is or what a fantastic history and breadth of culture it contains
> **Member of the Public**

5.2.9   We do recognise that there are issues in implementing this, including:

- The national curriculum giving little space to teach local history;

- Teachers may not have the knowledge to teach local history as they may not be from the area and would need additional support and resources; a local resource to inform them of the changing face of the City could help to provide current teaching of key developments;

- Young people often have a number of identities that they associate with;

- The constraints on schools in terms of funding, teacher cover and transport.

5.2.10   During the workshop session held, the participants felt that the national curriculum gave no space to teach local history and they thought that this was a great loss. They thought that the history of Birmingham should include more recent history, including the mass immigration from the 1950s and 60s so that children understood why they were here and their part in history.

> Learning about history would not gnr7eteach lgbgnise teh-5.3(rrof1.1694 w7(thEug)-e

5.2.11 However there are examples of schools doing some good work. Birmingham City Council in partnership with local schools worked with local schools to develop a scheme of work to help young people in school understand more about the census through a series of lessons, for example pupils learnt how the data collected from the census could be used to understand changes in society and to help with planning services for the people of the city.

5.2.12 However the curriculum is being used in some ways to teach about values and common ground. Guidance from the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education in Birmingham (SACRE) provides teachers with a set of values which can be explored through learning about religion. The 24 dispositions which regardless of faith, or having no faith, should help to bring people together. As to examples of where the syllabus made a difference, attention was drawn to a film on the SACRE website showing exemplar lessons on religious education. From the film it was clear that young people from a range of different religious backgrounds were comfortable about sharing views on their faith.
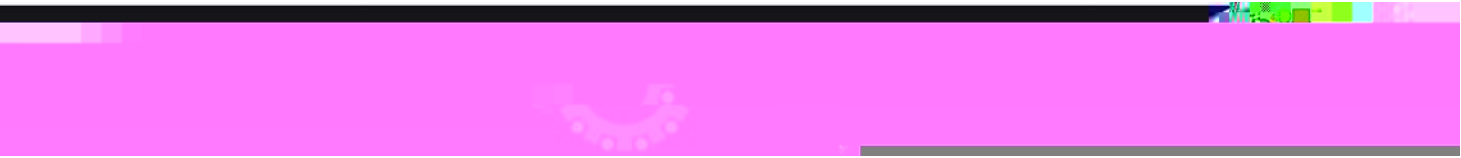
> Agreement on the dispositions, which has already drawn the Faith Traditions together, will also draw children and young people together by voluntary association on the basis of the inherent merit of the dispositions rather than by compulsion.
> **Guy Hordern, SACRE**

5.2.13 We think this a very positive example of learning which should be encouraged and we look forward to receiving further information demonstrating the success of this approach. We are concerned however, that the implementation of Academies and Free Schools may result in approaches like this being lost, as they do not need to conform to local authority rules and procedures. We would like to see these types of schools actively support and promote the SACRE work and resources.

5.2.14 We believe there is potential for something more to be incorporated into the wider curriculum within schools. The citizenship programme would be an ideal avenue for this. The citizenship curriculum aims to provide young people with the skills and understanding to play an effective role in wider society. There are a number of key areas which underpin the citizenship curriculum including democracy and diversity, rights and responsibilities and identity and diversity. There is also potential for 'Brummie' historians from a range of communities to be involved.

7 Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 This inquiry aimed to examine how social cohesion could be strengthened by promoting common ground and understanding between people in Birmingham. It has gone some way to achieving that but is only one part of a wider debate and discussion into how social cohesion can be improved, particularly in this difficult economic climate.

7.1.2 We knew that residents in Birmingham come from many different places, countries and backgrounds. We also knew that they have many different cultures, tastes and traditions. What we were not clear about was how integrated different individuals and groups of people actually are, whether they interact positively and whether there is opportunity to learn and understand different cultures. There is a need to be united in our diversity, and we are unsure whether this is being achieved currently.

7.2 Way forward

7.2.1 We are never going to create a Birmingham where everyone is close friends with everyone else, the scale of Birmingham compared with other places makes that impossible to achieve. A positive move would be to see a Birmingham where people are understanding of people different to themselves, one where people can come together to have a stake in society, where people can move around easily to experience life in different parts of the city and are confident that they have the same opportunity to engage with life in Birmingham. The City Council cannot impose this kind of social cohesion but it can begin to put the things in place for it to be more easily achieved.

7.2.2 Some of the recommendations listed in this review are structural, focusing on the City Council improving its approach to working with different communities. Others are practical and we would like them to be explored. The Social Inclusion Process can play a role in helping make some of these recommendations happen, best placing them alongside the conclusions of their own work, so that they can be further enhanced.

7.2.3 We have been greatly encouraged by the number of people that chose to get involved in this inquiry and hope the debate will continue in an effort to ensure that cohesion in Birmingham is strengthened.

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R15	An assessment of progress against the recommendations and suggestions made in this report should be presented to Scrutiny.	Cabinet Member for Social Cohesion and Equalities	September 2013

Appendix 1: Inquiry Outline

Lead Member:	Councillor Waseem Zaffar
Inquiry Members:	Councillors Phil Walkling, Eva Phillips, David Barrie
Key question:	Birmingham is a diverse city with a range of people and cultures, but what are the shared values that make us proud to be 'Brummie'?

Lines of enquiry:

- Do residents of Birmingham consider themselves 'Brummie'?
- Why do people choose to come and live in Birmingham?
- What gives people a shared sense of belonging and identity – is it their street, neighbourhood, city or other factor?
- How much pride is there in Birmingham as a place to live and work?
- What makes businesses choose to locate in Birmingham?
- What positive stories are there around people with shared values coming together to make a difference?
- What impact can the local curriculum have in supporting cohesion and shared values?
- How do people learn about the heritage of the city and how this has shaped today's Birmingham?
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Appendix 2: Contributors

The review group would like to thank all those who contributed to the inquiry – whether through written evidence, through attending a session or workshop, or through contribution to the debate via social media.

The following contributors attended inquiry sessions:

Birmingham City Council – including

Birmingham City Councillors (Cllr Albert Bore, Cllr Mike Whitby, Cllr Paul Tilsley, Cllr John Cotton),

Cllr Alan Rudge: *Civic Enterprise in Bimingham: The Birmingham Approach to Big Society*

Mashuq Ally Assistant Director Equalities and Human Resources

Gez Hughes, Chief Superintendent Registrar

Niall Crawford, Education Adviser

Harry Fowler, Birmingham Youth Service

Desta Hall, LightHouse MyPlace Centre Aston

University of Birmingham – including Dr Simon Pemberton, Professor Carl Chinn and Jenny Phillimore

Birmingham City University

Institute of Asian Business – including Ms. Amina Bukhari and Mr. Sarabjeet Soar

Birmingham Mail – Paul Fulford and Neil Elkes

Chamberlain Files – Marc Reeves