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Birmingham has ambitious plans for its future over the next twenty years. That is only what we would expect of our city.

My prime aim in undertaking this review was to bring these plans to Members' attention and to encourage your involvement. Through debate, discussion and the generation of ideas, these plans can only be improved. The clearer and more resolute we can be about the changes we want to see in Birmingham, particularly in uncertain times, the more likely we are to succeed in attracting investment.

There is also a local angle to these plans. Big projects capture the imagination and attract headlines. But each new project will actually be situated in a local area. Reconciling the city-wide interest and the local interest, and obtaining the maximum benefit for both, is an important job. It needs to be thought about early on in the planning stages of projects and acted upon during the implementation phase. With Members involved it is more likely that the locality, as well as the wider city, share in the benefits that follow from the investment.


My Committee's main interest is in growing the prosperity of Birmingham's people and businesses, rather than in population growth for its own sake. As the plans come to fruition over time, there will be new buildings and activities to see in Birmingham, but that is not my main aim. Rather it is for a future in which people's day-to-day lives and experiences are further enriched by the increasing variety and liveliness of our city.

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- 1.1.1 The starting point for this inquiry was the publication in early 2007 of the Birmingham Prospectus. This key document formally sets out the shared vision of local partners for the future development of our city.
  - 1.1.2 Following the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment of 2007, the City Council decided it needed to develop a clearer, more quantified and more challenging long term vision for the city, fully shared by partners. The Executive invited Overview and Scrutiny to play a role in this. Our approach was to give the current proposals a "health check" to make sure that all relevant factors are being considered and are beo0e6u7(0a995ck)3(le)43d coheoly.
  - 1.1.3 We were particularly concerned to test whether the proposals were comprehensive, with the various parts of the City Council working together, and to assure ourselves that partners are supportive, engaged and contributing to the agenda.
  - 1.1.4 During the review we have heard from the Leader and the Chief Executive, and City Council officers from Development, Housing and Children, Young People and Families Directorates. We also heard from key partners – such as the Chamber of Commerce, three of Birmingham's Universities, and Centro. We held some interesting discussions with neighbouring Solihull.
  - 1.1.5 It was clear from the outset that this inquiry was strategic in nature with a very broad scope. It
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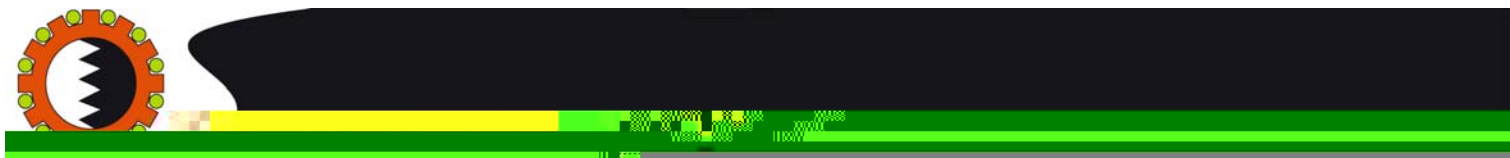
- 1.3.1 Through the second half of the twentieth century, Birmingham had a declining population, to just below one million people at the time of the 2001 census. This has now changed; the population grew by 16,600 from 2001 to 2005. The projection is that the population will reach 1.1 million by 2026. Providing homes, jobs and supporting infrastructure to this increasing population is a key element in the growth agenda.
- 1.3.2 An important contributor to the decline from 1961 to 2001 was the movement, often of families, from the city to the surry





1.3.9 Another priority for the business community is to improve transport in the city and the region. As well as significant infrastructure developments an





elsewhere; and for more affordable housing. The Executive has said that it intends to provide





	That the Executive commence a fresh assessment of transport requirements and then set out clearly its intentions for improving all forms of transport in Birmingham, private as well as public, including funding mechanisms.	Cabinet Member for Transportation and Street Services	January 2010
	That as an early element in that new plan the Executive support Centro in bringing forward an enhanced programme of provision of Park and Ride facilities in and around Birmingham.	Cabinet Member for Transportation and Street Services	January 2010
	That the Executive, through the Digital Birmingham Partnership or other routes, identify and start to address any blockages to expanding and exploiting digital infrastructure in the city.	Deputy Leader	January 2010
	That the Executive, with partners, review whether the approach taken to worklessness in the current LAA provides the best value for money at a time of rising unemployment in the city.	Deputy Leader	September 2009
	That the Executive adopt a realistic but stretching target date, with clear improvement plans, for the achievement of the aspiration that at least 60% of Birmingham pupils obtain 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE including English and Maths; and that no school should accomplish less than 40%.	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families	January 2010 (for feedback from the Cabinet Member on a realistic target date)

That the Executive clarify, with appropriate





3.1.1 The starting point for this inquiry was the publication in early 2007 of the Birmingham Prospectus. This key document formally sets out the shared vision of local partners for the future development of our city. In its own words, the Prospectus “represents an ambitious long-term strategy to secure Birmingham’s position as a leading world city and as a place in which people wish to live, learn and work.”

3.1.2 The Prospectus goes on to say:

“Birmingham has a 20-year vision to secure long-term, sustainable growth in its population,-8ke7d3.1 -0.

3.2.3 For example we were looking to:

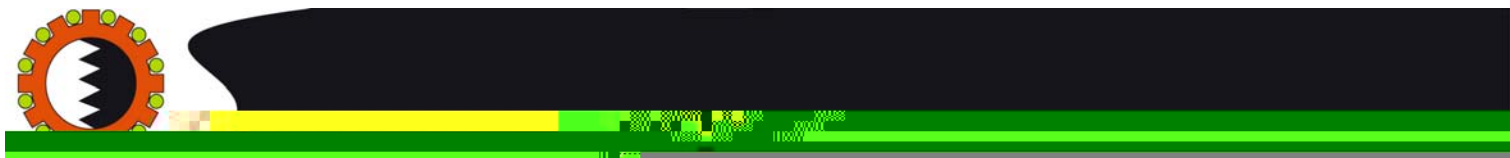
make sure that Birmingham's ambitions are clear and well-founded;

check that all the key agencies (both partners and within the City Council) are engaged with the agenda and are following through;

ensure that the agenda in practice is well-rounded in terms of covering economic, social and environmental issues, e.g. covers issues such as social cohesion and the provision of public services as well as physical development;

make sure that both planning and delivery work are carried out efficiently and effectively, and that resource assumptions, e.g. the availability of capital investment, are realistic.

3.2.4 We took evidence in full Committee most of the time, supported when needed by a small group consisting of Cllrs Alistair Dow, James Hutchings and Ian Ward. Our support team included staff from the Scrutiny Office; Veronica Docherty, Head of Economic Strategy, and Dave Carter, Head of




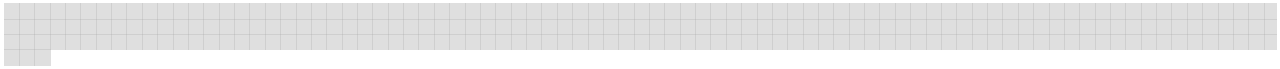







More births than deaths	+206,700
Overall international migration	+173,400
Overall migration within UK	-259,600
<b>Total net population change</b>	<b>+120,600</b>

- 4.2.2 We were told that the city currently has the youngest population of any EU city and it is currently set to retain a similar position going into the future with the majority of future growth predicted in age groups under 45 years of age.
- 4.2.3 The composition of the city's population, we were informed, is also changing. By 2026, about 48% of residents will be from one of the white ethnic groups, 31% from the Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups, and 21% from other groups.
- 4.2.4

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- 5.1.1 These demographic trends and projections give a starting point in evaluating Birmingham's ambitions and plans for the next twenty years, the scale of change involved and what policies and actions will be needed to realise them. But of course there is need also to consider the current pace of change – the rates of construction of buildings, the changes of land use, the provision of facilities and the adequacy of infrastructure. Much of this activity is governed by the existing planning policy for Birmingham – the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). Essentially this is the current 20-year strategy but is nearing the end of its period – the 20 years in question being 1991-2011.
- 5.1.2 The City Council produces an Annual Monitoring Statement setting out progress on key development planning outcomes and the Core Strategic policies of the UDP. The most recent was published in December 2008. The report's conclusions are shown in Box 4 below.
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5.1.3 So this evidence is that current targets are being met. The Regional Spatial Strategy – the development plan for the West Midlands region, in effect – is currently being revised, as the table indicates. The development policy for Birmingham – now called the Core Strategy – is also in course of updating through statutory processes, and will in due time replace the UDP.

5.1.4 These current formal targets, though, since they expire in 2011, do not address the ambitions of the Growth Agenda. In addition, as we came to the end of our work, the effects of the tightening of the economic situation and the national slowdown in the housing market became clear. So the fact that previous targets have been met, whilst reassuring, does not of itself guarantee the future. We therefore looked at the record in some more detail.

5.2.1 When considering future population growth, one of the first factors which springs to mind is that there must be sufficient, and sufficiently attractive, housing; and that people must find it affordable, using the word in a general sense, not as the official Government term.



Whilst the Prospectus' action plan does not contain actions which concern housing alone, the more strategic text reflects the importance of housing. We have already reported a relevant quotation, at paragraph 3.1.2, which emphasised the need for a full range of attractive housing and neighbourhoods.

Later on, in the chapter concerning The Birmingham Brand we find:

“In an increasingly global marketplace, the reputation and perceptions of Birmingham underpin our ability to attract and retain more skilled workers and entrepreneurs and to secure private sector investment. Quality of life factors, including the city's range of housing choices, are especially important in determining such decisions and we must boldly promote our strengths in this area.”

5.2.2 We took evidence to help us test both Birmingham's recent record in housing development and its future prospects.

5.2.3

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- 5.2.5 The Annual Monitoring Report comments that the recent high completion rates are in part due to the encouragement of housing in the city centre.
- 5.2.6 At the time we took evidence, discussions were underway to look further into the future. The suggested revised Regional Spatial Strategy target was for 50,600 net dwellings during 2006-2026. The assumption was for 26,900 demolitions in that time, giving a gross figure over the 20 years of 76,800 – an average of 3,840 per year.
- 5.2.7 This is a still higher rate of completions, higher even than that achieved in the last few years. Even so, central government intervened in these regional discussions, proposing a still higher target. We will return to this issue later in this report.
- 5.2.8 The evidence we heard also stressed the importance of achieving the correct character of housing growth – a mixture of types and tenures, with good quality design movement towards carbon neutral housing by 2016. The current thinking was that this would be achieved through the continuation of city centre growth, a focus on new sustainable centres and the renewal of unsustainable estates. There would be increased Government funding for affordable homes and also “growth point” funds.
- 5.2.9 Officers also emphasised to us that they did not see this as a separate “housing” agenda. They spoke of developing new skills in the construction work force, and of recreating social infrastructure so that opportunities to tackle worklessness could be taken. The evidence we heard was couched in generalities, showing a desired direction of change, rather than specific proposals and projects; and at this stage this is understandable.
- 5.2.10
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be to encourage high-density developments around local centres that will allow larger homes to be built further away.

5.2.13 More recently, we note that the City Council's Housing Plan 2008+ says:

"Setting a target for affordable housing completions is complex and dependent upon a number of variables including land availability and the mix of land supply in terms of ownership and size; the level of funding to support delivery – both in terms of social housing grant and discounted public sector land and the size and type of dwellings that are being delivered on privately owned sites. In addition it is vital that our planning for housing is aligned with economic development. This is being brought together through the Programme of Development that we are required to develop, by 1 August 2008, for CLG to progress our proposals for growth. Developing a target for affordable housing will be progressed as a priority action."


5.2.14 In the accompanying action plan, there is an action:

"Increase the amount of new affordable homes provided each year, with early progress on the amount of affordable housing agreed on private sites."

The target milestones are given as:

1. Review affordable housing policy December 2008.
2. Set target for gross affordable housing in light of Regional Spatial Strategy. Target date to be confirmed."

5.2.15 We will return to the issue of updating the Regional Spatial Strategy later in this report, but at this point should note pending changes in the central government machinery. In April 2009 the new Homes and Communities Agency is expected to start work, combining English Partnerships, the investment programme of the Housing C(o)5s12(r)-6(Td3 T5-6(Td3 T\*wIw 14b5c3J0.0007 Tc 0.




5.3.1 The bare figures indicate that there is plenty of development activity either underway or planned over the next few years across Birmingham.

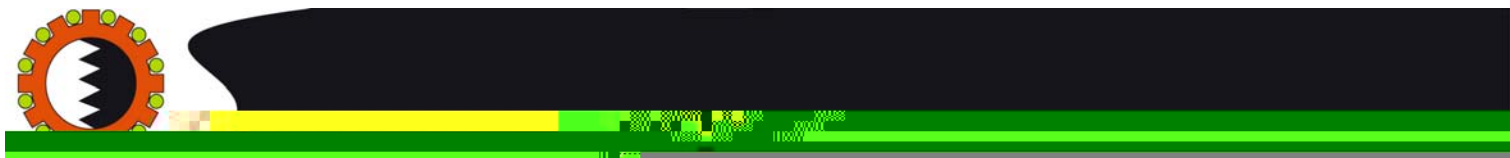
5.3.2 According to Locate in Birmingham, the city's inward investment service, as shown on its website in February 2009:

"There is currently of £17.5 billion worth of investment over the next 10 years in Birmingham. Over £11.8 billion worth of investment is either planned or underway in the city centre alone."

5.3.3 The breakdown of this total by development use is shown in Box 5, below, which is again taken from the Locate in Birmingham website.

5.3.4 The economic importance of Birmingham city centre to the city and the region cannot be exaggerated, and over the last twenty-five years it has been the subject of a strong focus to ensure its regeneration. Continuing attention and improvement will be key, and the preparation of





investigation and reclamation, and gap funding), and an outline of the services available from the







- 6.1.1 One of the areas identified at the outset as presenting key challenges and opportunities for the city over the next 20 to 30 years was the strand comprising business and the economy. A successful economy is needed to underpin the whole of the Growth Agenda.
- 6.1.2 The Birmingham Prospectus sets out a vision that the city will both continue the growth of its service sector and modernise and diversify its manufacturing base, capitalising on its skills and expertise to develop modern manufacturing technologies alongside the wider knowledge economy. It talks about encouraging a 'culture of enterprise' in all communities, supporting the creation of new and sustainable businesses.
- 6.1.3

- 6.2.2 **Employment Issues** – We were told that at approximately 63% of the working age population, Birmingham's employment rate is significantly below the national rate of 74%. It is estimated that (holding commuting patterns constant) employment in Birmingham would have to grow by approximately 187,000 by 2026 to cope with the expected increase in the population and to reach the government's employment rate target of 80%.
- 6.2.3 **Worklessness** – Evidence was given that nationally the government set out its long-term agenda for welfare reform in a 2006 Green paper ('A New Deal for Welfare') and more recent policy developments, particularly the recent Green Paper 'No-one written off', aim to address inactivity and long-term welfare dependency through changes in benefit conditionality and out-of work support, particularly for the key client groups of incapacity benefit claimants and lone parents. Tackling worklessness is crucial to addressing long-term issues such as Birmingham's relatively high levels of deprivation and child poverty – a key indicator in Birmingham's LAA. The relatively poor level of skills of the resident population is one of the barriers holding Birmingham's employment rate down and contributing to worklessness.
- 6.2.4 **Skills and Qualifications** – While school leavers are attaining improved GCSE results, Birmingham has 22% of its working population with no qualifications, more than the UK average or 15%. We were told that Birmingham also has a significantly lower proportion of the working age population educated to degree level or higher, as well as a smaller percentage attaining trade apprenticeships.
- 6.2.5 **Future Job Growth in Birmingham** – Although there will be job growth in lower skilled, lower wage service sector occupations, much of future growth will be in high-income, skilled, knowledge intensive jobs that include managerial, professional and associate professional occupations. Whilst some manufacturing sub-sectors will see future growth, most of the city's future employment growth will be in the service sector, particularly in financial and business services, public services and retailing and wholesaling.
- 6.2.6 **High Levels of In-Commuting** – The result of having a resident population with a comparatively poor skills base and high levels of inactivity is that more than 160,000 of the city's 451,000 jobs are taken up by people who live outside Birmingham and commute into the city for employment. Of these, more than 130,000 are taking up skilled jobs. To reduce this reliance on in-commuters and ensure that local residents benefit from future job opportunities the following factors need to be addressed:

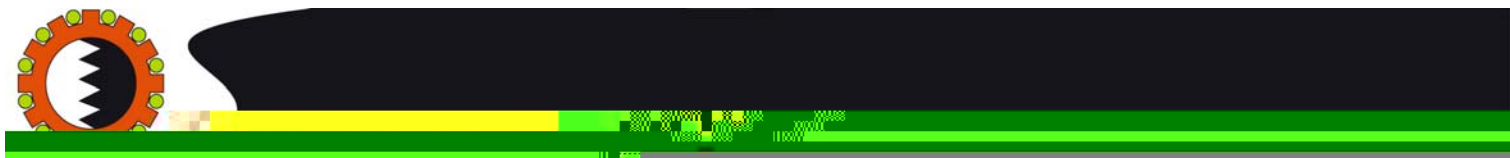
Given the increasing importance of the knowledge economy and future job growth, it is vital that the skills levels of the resident population are increased.

It is also necessary for the right conditions (including the housing offer) to be created to encourage and retain highly skilled people to want to live and spend in Birmingham, rather than live outside the city and commute in.



- 6.3.1 In their first discussion with us, representatives of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry set out their priorities. These originated in November 2005 when business leaders from across the city met to assess the state of Birmingham business and to produce a view of what needed to happen in the city to make success happen.
- 6.3.2 Those present agreed on a plan of priorities for action. Their vision was that, for Birmingham to be a world-class city, it would need a world-class built environment, world-class business education offering, an ability to create wealthy businesses and individuals faster and more often than its competitors and a business community that spoke with one voice.
- 6.3.3 The six business membership organisations in the city (the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Birmingham Forward, the Confederation of British Industry, EEF which is the organisation for engineering, manufacturing and technology based businesses, the Institute of Directors and the Federation of Small Businesses) identified a common "one voice" agenda for Birmingham, at the heart of which is an overarching objective to maximise the competitiveness of Birmingham. The One Voice Group priorities are:
1. **A Well Connected City** – Birmingham must become a well-connected and accessible city that boasts a world-class transport and communications infrastructure and offers access to its cosmopolitan population.
  2. **A World-Class Built Environment** – Birmingham must have a world-class skyline and aesthetic appeal and must demonstrate a good standard of housing stock throughout the city. It must take advantage of the demand for office space and take steps to provide high quality, sustainable office accommodation.
  3. **An International School** – Currently, the most convenient international school for the families of international businesspeople working in Birmingham to use is located in Oxford. The city must have its own international education facility to make it an attractive residential location for overseas businesspeople and their families.
  4. **A Well Skilled Workforce** – The city must increase the number of individuals appropriately skilled to match the changing labour demand of the Birmingham economy. It must also improve the linkage and understanding between its school population and its business community. And its universities must promote Birmingham as a world-class destination for business education.
  5. **A World-Class Marketing Strategy** – Birmingham must promote itself as a cosmopolitan city and maximise the potential of its proximity to London.
- 6.3.4 There is a high degree of correlation and overlap between the priorities for action identified by the









Professor Clarke expressed the view that graduate retention, although good, could be better and said that the way that employers build relationships with students was important.



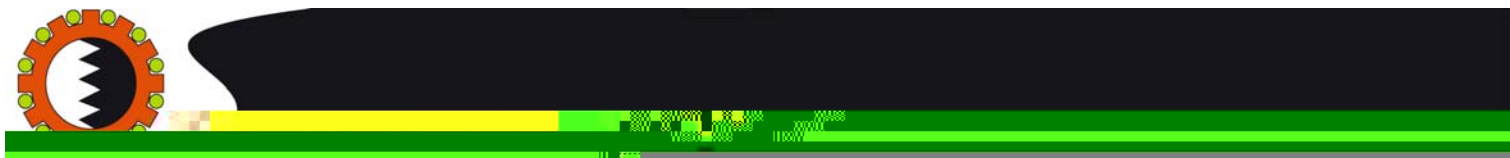
71,735 more people need to achieve level 1 numeracy

171,779 more people need to achieve entry Level 3 numeracy

209,440 more people need to achieve Level 2 and

106,640 need to achieve Level 4

- 6.5.3 BCCI believe that better communication between the business community and educationalists in Birmingham will ensure that all parties are more informed about the current and future developments in the skills agenda within the city. Birmingham Chamber is well positioned to facilitate this dialogue for example by helping to resource business representation on steering groups at Birmingham City Council, at local schools and colleges and well as on university groups as appropriate.
- 6.5.4 The BCCI evidence was that skills shortages and gaps in Birmingham directly affect the productivity and bottom line of business. This is reflected in a BCCI survey where 92% of respondents thought that the skill levels of their employees were crucial to the success of their business.
- 6.5.5 This view was reinforced by the evidence given to us directly by two employers running very different types of businesses but experiencing similar types of skills issues.
- 6.5.6 The smaller employer has recruited at graduate, post graduate and administrative and clerical level and had found that literacy and numeracy skills were inadequate at all qualification levels.
- 6.5.7 The larger business employs 150 people in the region using local agents. They had experienced problems in recruiting people with the right skills and cultural values. They valued a willingness to work and had invested in training within the workplace and had been successful in recruiting from migrant communities and training them in the workplace.
- 6.5.8 When recruiting graduates both employers emphasised the importance of transferable skills and valued people who were flexible, had good IT skills, were able to work in teams and could manage people.
- 6.5.9 We were very interested in this evidence, rooted as it was in the everyday experience of employers. It suggests that the City Council, businesses and the education sector could work together beneficially to address some skills issues which formal qualifications, valuable as they are, do not reach.



6.6.2 It is also clear that the knowledge economy has

6.6.9 Given this evidence, there is a strong argument that more activities are required. These might include some or all of the following:

6.6.10 **Governance** - Within the City Council, there is no forum that brings together the breadth of interests that have a role to play in developing the knowledge economy in the city, including regeneration, education, culture, libraries, planning, policy etc. It would be sensible to establish a group of senior officers with a remit to develop a strategic direction and action plans for consideration by members. It is possible that the Digital Birmingham Partnership could take on this role.

#### 6.6.11 **Projects**

Establish one of more high profile projects which gain widespread national and international publicity. These might include, for example, creating corridors of connectivity/information to provide seamless access for citizens, businesses or visitors e.g. linking Birmingham International Station, the NEC and Airport, the train to New Street and the A45 route and the city centre.

Developing an integrated approach to providing information to the public would be of widespread value and, if delivered in partnership, cost effective. There are already many outlets typically with plasma screens in public buildings, health centres, building societies etc. and there are managed television services in local trains and buses, betting shops and pubs which form a potential channel for people difficult to contact.

6.6.12 **Infrastructure** – Working in partnership with BT, the Council has recently launched the Wi-fi city centre which includes free access to tourist, travel and other ‘public’ information. This is a good example of working with the private sector to establish the necessary infrastructure for the ‘digital future’. A comprehensive perspective on future infrastructure requirements needs to be established and a development ‘pipeline’ established to deliver these.

6.6.13 **Integrated Policy** - Ensure that Council policies are aligned to work together to help develop the digital economy. For example, planning policy could be shaped to help deliver the infrastructure needs identified above.

#### 6.6.14 **Levering Investments**

Ensure the digital aspects of major developments. E.g. the potential new Library is an obvious example of an opportunity for leveraging investment to support the digital economy.

There are further opportunities across the city e.g. through programmes such as Building Schools for the Future and the Council’s probable investment in the ‘hubs’ and ‘spokes’ for the Customer First transformation programme.



#### 6.6.15 **Education**

Working with Schools, further and higher education and adult education bodies to ensure that the requisite quality and quantity of information age skills are in place to encourage inward investment.


As many future jobs in the digital economy are likely to come from start-up businesses, develop additional opportunities for encouraging entrepreneurship e.g. by establishing graduate retention programmes which support digital innovation.

6.6.16 **Building on our Strengths** – The diversity of Birmingham's population means that we have people who have contacts, understanding and the language of many countries across the world. There is an opportunity here to link to 'home' countries in order to foster trade with manufacture in the developing world and finishing and marketing in Birmingham. The richness of cultural background means that in music, literature and drama we can draw on a major range of traditions to create entertainment packages for an international market.

#### 6.6.17 **Promotion and Marketing**

Apply additional resources to ensure that activities that the Council and its partners undertake gain positive national and international press coverage and that they reinforce the city's digital image.

On the back of the Council's buying power and transformation programme, establish partnerships with key international technology companies that can be used to profile and promote the Council's activities.



Increase the city's economic output and productivity through expansion of key growth sectors, greater enterprise and innovation in high value-added activity.

Provide high quality infrastructure to support improved local and regional connectivity and accessibility, enhance global competitiveness and underpin future economic and population growth.

Increase employment and reduce poverty across all communities through targeted interventions to support people from welfare into work activity.



Create a vibrant low carbon, low waste economy through the best use of environmental technologies and ensure that Birmingham is prepared for the impact of climate change.

Improve Birmingham's educational attainment and skills base to meet the economic needs of the city now and in the future.

- 6.7.4 From September 2008, responsibilities for the Youth Service, Youth Offending, Education Welfare Service and Targeted Prevention Services have been aligned under an Assistant Director (Head of Integrated Youth Support) with a management structure that sits within Inclusion Services. The transition of Connexions within the new framework took place on 1 October 2008. This will give the Council more influence over Schools Careers Services in the future.
- 6.7.5 The expectation is that Local Authorities will work with partners to deliver this through the development of an Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS). The IYSS will establish a youth offer for all young people describing how young people can access, enjoy and get involved in shaping service delivery. The youth offer will encompass the widest possible entitlement for young people, including both a sporting and cultural offer and will focus on activities both in universal and targeted settings.
- 6.7.6 Within this universal context the new service will also be responsible for integrated prevention and targeted intervention activity focusing on teenage pregnancy, substance misuse and prevention and reduction of anti-social behaviour and crime through targeted youth support. It will align closely with the work of Extended Services in the city ensuring that school clusters provide a varied menu of activities for young people outside of the school day and working with partners to ensure there are safe places for young people to be.




- 7.1.1 Birmingham's recent renaissance has focused heavily on the city centre, which is acknowledged as the economic heart of the region.
- 7.1.2 Whilst reinforcing the strength of the city centre through the implementation of a city centre master plan, the Prospectus also contains a commitment to drive forward transformation in other parts of the city, providing a wider range of economic and social opportunities for all local communities.
- 7.1.3 To this end, one of the aims of the Prospectus is to create a strong network of vibrant urban villages across Birmingham which will provide high quality, clean and safe environments in which

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- 7.3.1 **Introduction** – The North Solihull Programme is driven by the objectives of transforming the educational provision for young people, providing accessible services people want and restructuring the local housing market and its environment. The Partnership is well established, with committed partners and a dedicated team in place to deliver the project. The Strategic Regeneration Framework provides a robust planning policy context, with the detailed activity agreed with local residents through a neighbourhood planning process.
- 7.3.2 **The North Solihull Partnership** was created in May 2005. Four partners signed a 15 year Regeneration Agreement with the aim of bringing about the physical, social and economic regeneration of North Solihull.
- 7.3.3 The agreement sets out a number of key objectives on how and what partners will do to regenerate the area, create a distinctive place and a community with a long term future. Activities range from community engagement, housing, education, environment and open spaces, economic development and business, to employment and skills development, transport, accessibility and leisure.
- 7.3.4 **The North Solihull Strategic Framework** sets out the principles for the regeneration of the area. It sets out a vision for North Solihull which is consistent with and conforms to the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Council's development plan: the UDP. It is a vision which contributes to the urban renaissance agenda for North Solihull, the Sub Region and the Region as a whole and which sees North Solihull as a place with:
- quality of life and choice;
  - an engaged and active population;
  - a place of first class connections; and
  - a distinctive character defined by open space.
- 7.3.5 The Strategic Framework identified the following priorities in order to deliver on the regeneration principles: rebuilding the primary schools, open up neighbourhoods, improve community safety, remove unsuitable housing stock, improve housing choice, create better transport links and facilitate pedestrian, cycle and vehicular movement throughout the area.
- 7.3.6 **The North Solihull Model** is based on the belief that rebuilding 10 primary schools and transforming primary education to provide brand new, state of the art primary schools for every child in the area will, along with radical improvements in the housing offer, drive the regeneration of the area. The challenge has been to regenerate the whole community including schools, health services and business.
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skills for better jobs. A strategic partnering board has been established to ensure involvement in and the wider use of facilities by local residents.

### **7.3.12 Community Engagement**



- 8.1.1 When the Members began this review their main focus was the 'Birmingham Prospectus'. The Prospectus is clear that good transport links are integral to the Growth Agenda and highlights the value of schemes such as the extension of Birmingham International Airport's runway and the Birmingham New Street Gateway development, both of which will underpin economic growth in the West Midlands and provide Birmingham with world class gateways to the city.
- 8.1.2 Birmingham needs a transport system that:
- encourages people to live, work and stay here and connects people with employment, learning and leisure opportunities;
  - improves and extends our bus, rail and Metro networks;
  - reduces traffic congestion; and
  - delivers key infrastructure projects such as the redevelopment of New Street Station and the expansion of Birmingham International Airport.
- 8.1.3 During the course of the review, the Sustainable Community Strategy – Birmingham 2026 was published, setting out the long-term vision and priorities for the Council and its partners. Surveys have highlighted the importance of improving the connectivity of the city as a matter of priority for the city:
- In a major survey of over 6,000 local people one of the issues considered to be vitally important to quality of life in Birmingham was integrated transport and as a result one of the goals contained in the strategy is to have the best pedestrian, cycling, road, rail and air access to, and within, the city.
  - Repairing roads and pavements and reducing traffic congestion were among the top five issues identified in the annual resident survey as needing improvement.
- 8.1.4 The vision recognises the importance of transforming the connectivity of the city and the first outcome, 'Succeed economically' is expressly stated in the Sustainable Community Strategy to mean:
- "Road, rail and air access to, and within, the city will improve – congestion in the city will be managed."

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- 8.2.1 In their second evidence session the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry gave evidence on the BCCI major transport priorities. They were represented by Katie Teasdale, a Policy Adviser with the Chamber who was accompanied by Brian Summers, who is a BCCI member, former Chief Executive Officer of Birmingham International Airport and Vice-Chair of the Regional Transport Partnership on the Regional Assembly.
- 8.2.2 They expressed the view that the issue of transport in the West Midlands is of vital importance in tackling the region's GDP deficit. They said that the city is disproportionately affected by transport congestion which, it is estimated, costs the West Midlands region £2.2 billion per annum and that the problem is due to get worse.
- 8.2.3 It was made clear that the BCCI members consistently rank the transport infrastructure as one of their top three concerns, citing it as one of the key barriers to improving the economic competitiveness of Birmingham.
- 8.2.4 The BCCI position calls for the development of an integrated transport system to match the region's economic aspirations.
- 8.2.5 BCCI have identified the following five major transport policy priorities, all of which carry equal weighting:


Significant infrastructure developments: New Street Station Gateway Scheme and the expansion of Birmingham International Airport.

Recognition and accommodation of car and freight within the context of an integrated public transport system, incorporating modal interchange infrastructure.

A co-ordinated Road Traffic Management System to maximise the benefits of existing road infrastructure, including quick wins.

Capacity increases across the Midlands motorway system and


Promoting Green Travel initiatives and sustainable transport to help protect the environment





and is further under threat due to the cost of delivering the transport infrastructure needed for the Olympic Games in 2012 and the ongoing economic downturn.

- 8.3.1 We were told that Centro believes that the Birmingham Prospectus and Birmingham City Council's evolving Core Strategy need to give equal priority to the transport connectivity within Birmingham and to key centres and growth areas across the West Midlands.
- 8.3.2 This includes new high quality local rail and rapid transit links between Birmingham city centre and its suburbs as well as the proposed new major urban centres outlined in the Prospectus. This is a fundamental plank of a wider transport strategy for Birmingham.
- 8.3.3



status and as the focal point of the city region, public transport operators, Network Rail and also economic and regeneration partners such as Advantage West Midlands and business.

- 8.4.1 There was a large degree of consensus amongst the witnesses and the Members of the Committee about the main issues.
- 8.4.2 The view that the region has suffered from a lack of investment on transportation infrastructure was highlighted by the BCCI and was supported both by Brian Summers in his evidence and by the Members. There was general agreement by Members that underinvestment was a key issue. Capital funding is being allocated from central government, but authorities in the region are failing to utilise that funding due to a fragmented structure for decision making which is leading to poor performance.
- 8.4.3

**Capital funding** Tw 1 (Greggsport)





the need for twin tracking on railway lines and better car parking at local railway stations to increase the provision of local trains; and

concern that more needs to be done to address anti-social behaviour on buses which discourages greater use of public transport.

These illustrated the problem of a lack of a co-ordinated structure for planning and delivery. There was general recognition of the need to work together in addressing the longer term road capacity and rail capacity and the fact that this is not just an issue for the city – it needs to be addressed as a region.

8.4.4 **Park and Ride Facilities** – There was also consensus around the need for the development of park and ride facilities.





- 9.2.3 This is a reminder that in fact Birmingham's ambitions for growth do not rest in attracting up to 100,000 people and catering for them. In actuality the ambitions involve improving living standards and conditions for all Birmingham people – it is an agenda for both growth and prosperity.
- 9.2.4 At the time of taking evidence for this inquiry, the City Council and the Strategic Partnership were consulting on the draft of a revised Community Strategy. The final version, entitled Birmingham 2026, was debated and approved by the City Council in September 2008. As was intended, it is indeed based on the same demographic forecasts as the Birmingham Prospectus, and in its "Succeed Economically" chapter in particular bears a close resemblance to the strategic material in the Prospectus.
- 9.2.5 Often described as an "over-arching" strategy, the Community Strategy is central to a number of policies and programmes. It is expressed spatially in formal planning documents – the Local Development Framework. Housing and economic strategies also have to be consistent with the Community Strategy. The Birmingham 2026 document of t2d, it4.412f5nity St8w2-8s The(of t2d,we)2(r F







Improve Birmingham's educational attainment and skills base to meet the economic needs of the city now and in the future.

9.3.8 For example, the Birmingham Prospectus contains an action:

"Continue to diversify Birmingham's economy by keeping under review the prospects for all sectors and to reflect the key growth opportunities particularly within the knowledge economy."

with an associated sub-action:

"Encourage a vibrant 'enterprise culture' within Birmingham."

9.3.9 Much the same sentiments can be read in the LAA document under the second priority outcome listed above. But this is now supported by indicators showing export activity, the growth of small firms, innovation, graduate employment, export activity and so on.

9.3.10 It is encouraging to see evidence of broad policy statements in the Prospectus Action Plan reflected in identifiable priorities with appropriate indicators to measure progress, contained in the LAA.

9.4.1 Of direct relevance to the achievement of the growth agenda will be the quality of a suite of key policies – land-use planning, economic development and transportation – at strategic and detailed levels. Indeed, when it comes to promoting, influencing and controlling proposals for new buildings or changes of use, up to date and robust formal planning policies will be essential if the Growth Agenda is to succeed.


9.4.2 Several of the actions in the Birmingham Prospectus Action Plan relate to this work, such as:

"commence the development of the Core Strategy for Birmingham's Local Development Framework – target February 2007."


The proposals for identifying new town centres in the east and north of the city would be developed through the Core Strategy. The existing plans for the future of Northfield would be re-examined by July 2007.

As well as integrating the Prospectus' vision and priorities into the Sustainable Community Strategy (as mentioned in section 8.2, above), the Prospectus's action plan also aims to influence the reviews of Regional Economic Strategy, Regional Spatial Strategy and the city-region's strategy and investment plans.

9.4.3 It was important for us to check that this import




9.4.4 Public consultation on the Core Strategy Issues and Options paper took place in autumn 2008. A preferred option will now be designed, with further consultation during 2009. At the time we discussed this, the timetable was for them to be adopted as formal planning policy in mid-2010. But they needed to follow on from, and be consistent with, the Regional Spatial Strategy revision, a process which is not under the City Council's control.






- 9.6.1 The policy and delivery framework set for local authorities by central government rarely seems to stay constant. Obviously the City Council needs to be aware of these changes as they come about, and ideally be able to use them as positive opportunities for delivering local priorities. This is, however, not always straight forward.
- 9.6.2 In July 2007 the Government published its review of sub-national economic development and regeneration. Major points included:
- to move to a single integrated regional strategy which sets out the economic, social and environmental objectives for each region;
  - to give the Regional Development Agency th



Similarly the initial proposals that Regional Development Agencies would delegate delivery functions to local authorities had become subject to a test of capability – that is clearly not appropriate for an organisation with the City Council's track record over the past 25 years in economic development and regeneration.

9.6.5 In addition, the Chief Executive raised questions about the robustness of central government's approach, which are highlighted in Box 9 below.


9.6.6 The Government has now introduced legislation, the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill, to affect these changes. The "statutory economic development duty" is indeed a duty to prepare an economic assessment. The new Regional Strategy will replace the existing Regional Economic Strategy and the Regional Spatial Strategy, and will form part of the statutory development plan. It will be drawn up by the Regional Development Agency and a new Regional Leaders' Board (such a Board now exists in shadow form in the West Midlands). At sub-regional





area agreements with statutory duties. It will need careful thought to identify the correct way ahead for Birmingham in all this

- 9.6.7 Our conclusion from this is sombre, rather than gloomy. Birmingham, as a self-confident city, needs to assert its agenda for growth and prosperity, and to move as quickly as possible to implementation. Full implementation, in turn, requires up to date, formally approved planning and



10.1.1 When we started this inquiry in 2007 we recognised the importance of the Growth Agenda in shaping the city and its constituent neighbourhoods and villages over the next 20 years, and in driving the actions of the City Council and its partners during that time. We also recognised that knowledge of and involvement in the developing agenda was at that time limited, particularly perhaps amongst elected Members. Stimulating that interest was a fundamental aim for us in carrying out this review.

10.1.2 At the heart of the Agenda is the desire to improve the quality of life of Birmingham's population, creating sustainable communities where people will want to live, work, visit and invest. This in turn requires:

- more good job opportunities matched by more residents with higher levels of skills;

- good housing choice within the city;

- significantly improved infrastructure – such as transportation, ICT, and local services;

- good choice of leisure facilities and activities.

10.1.3 During the course of our inquiry, key factors have changed. The City Council and its partners have developed fuller statements of policy, for example through the Sustainable Community Strategy and its delivery plan, the Local Area Agreement; and continue to do so, with for example the Core Strategy currently being shaped through public consultation. Changes to the machinery of government at regional level, continuing interest in city-region possibilities and potential redefinition of the powers of Passenger Transport Authorities (now formally renamed Integrated Transport Authorities) may also provide new opportunities to pursue Birmingham's vision. .0002 Tc -0.0000







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That every three years the Executive update and publish the Prospectus, showing progress, the next key projects and areas of policy development.





10.3.5 This is a very important point. As a note from the City Council's Head of Economic Strategy in October 2008 reminded us:

"It is necessary for the right conditions (including the housing offer) to be created to encourage (and retain) highly skilled people to want to live (and spend) in Birmingham rather than live outside the city and commute in."

Altering the pattern of movement, albeit marginally, is probably more important than attaining any particular overall population growth target. We will return to the issue of the housing offer later in this chapter.

10.3.6 It must also be remembered that these net figures result from much larger gross flows; for example the net migration within the UK obviously consists of the difference between very large numbers of people moving in and out of Birmingham. Slight changes to either of the gross flows can result in a large change to the net figure. These migration figures in particular may be expected to be sensitive to economic changes including the onset of the credit crunch and recession, a further reason for not treating any specific population growth figure as a firm target.

10.3.7 Our conclusion therefore is that the growth agenda must be understood, and communicated, primarily as growing prosperity for Birmingham residents and businesses, to which a growing population can contribute; and not first and foremost as having any particular target number for population growth.

10.3.8 This should of course be read as aiming to increase prosperity for everyone. There is a common official formulation referring to "closing the gap", which is found for instance as one of the principles underpinning Birmingham's Sustainable Community Strategy, in which it states:

**"Targeting** – protecting and nurturing vulnerable people, and tackling disadvantaged communities in the city. We call this 'closing the gap' between different sections of the city, in terms of issues like prosperity, safety, health, education, and social and digital exclusion."

Logically the gap could be narrowed by reducing the prosperity of the better off, and for the avoidance of doubt we should state that this is not what we would wish to see.

10.3.9 This issue is also central to the companion review of Employment Strategies, produced by the Regeneration O&S Committee and due for discussion by the City Council today. The first recommendation of that report concerns the need to measure the gap between the city average and those areas with higher rates of worklessness, in order to assess whether employment strategies are succeeding.

10.3.10 Within the overall population figures, there are important trends. As the Sustainable Community Strategy states:

"We are already the youngest European city, with 24,000 more under-18 year olds expected by 2026. The greatest forecast increase is in over 85s; a 38% increase by 2026 from 18,750 people to 25,950.







"The current economic downturn is having a significant impact on the housebuilding industry and is likely to impact on housebuilding rates for a number of years. It is therefore necessary to adjust the estimated annual completion rates to take account of these challenging times.

The best information available in relation to the impact of the economic slowdown on housebuilding rates is the work undertaken by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners on behalf of the Government Office for the West Midlands (published October 2008) which considered options for increasing housing provision in the West Midlands Region. This study considered indicative build rates per year up to 2012/13 as a percentage of actual completions in 2006/7. For Birmingham this results in the trajectory shown (below).

<b>Year</b>	<b>Dwellings</b>
2009/10	920
2010/11	1,287
2011/12	1,655
2012/13	2,022
2013/14	2,206
2014/15	2,391
Source: BCC	

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- 10.4.5 We would emphasise the second of these points. The practicality and desirability of the targets in the first sentence above are uncertain. Particularly with the higher figure preferred by the Government, there are serious questions about the subsequent quality of life for residents.
- 10.4.6 What are clear are the needs to provide in the city both more affordable housing, and more of the type and quality of housing which will encourage families and highly-skilled people in particular not to move away. We would emphasise the importance of finding ways of doing this in the future rather than analysing the desirability of any particular target figure. The Executive is of course working on proposals to provide some affordable housing; we look forward to seeing the details both of any immediate scheme and of schemes to tackle the issue throughout the period to 2026.
- 10.4.7 Housing quality is extremely important but there are other considerations too. The environmental quality of the surrounding neighbourhood is closely bound up with the quality of life experienced
- 



services between Kings Norton and Bordesley and provide a connection into Birmingham Moor Street via a new 'chord' at Bordesley. We would like to see the City Council support Centro in vigorously pursuing this, moving it from a proposal to a project. Alongside this we would also like to see a more ambitious programme of Park and Ride facilities, both for rail and bus services.

10.4.11 There is progress in these and other areas. The Chamber of Commerce, for instance, in their written evidence referred to "the highly regarded Birmingham Quick Win scheme". But these steps on their own are not enough. Transportation is the key factor which always arises in any discussion of Birmingham's future. We call on the City Council to respond thoughtfully, carefully but ambitiously to the concerns and aspirations of local people and businesses over transportation.

10.4.12 Transportation is of course only one communications technology of economic and social importance. Digital infrastructure is another, and needs attention if Birmingham's competitive position is not to suffer during the economic downturn. There are good elements of digital infrastructure already in this city; more needs to be done to support Birmingham to compete in the knowledge economy.

	That through the Core Strategy, the Executive identify ways in which a range of good quality housing can be provided in Birmingham, particularly aimed at encouraging more highly skilled people to come to and stay in the city.	Cabinet Member for Regeneration	January 2010
	That through the Core Strategy and associated work the Executive make firm proposals for enhancing the quality of parks and open spaces thus adding to the attractiveness of Birmingham's residential areas.	Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture	January 2010
	That the Executive with partners bring forward a programme for increasing the availability of affordable housing in the city.	Cabinet Member for Housing	January 2010
	That in particular the affordable programme should highlight actions by the City Council to increase availability in the short term, since the economic situation has led to a reduction in other sources of supply.	Cabinet Member for Housing	January 2010
	That the Executive commence a fresh assessment of transport requirements and then set out clearly its intentions for improving all forms of transport in Birmingham, private as well as public, including funding mechanisms.	Cabinet Member for Transportation and Street Services	January 2010





to worklessness is a prime example. That concentrates on moving the most difficult cases from worklessness to work, and involves substantial amounts of public money. Strong voices among our Committee have questioned whether this is the best use of that money, or whether some would be better used helping the recently redundant find new jobs quickly.


- 10.5.7 We have not formed a considered view on this, but the question does need to be asked.
- 10.5.8 The City Council and its partners are clearly working hard to encourage skills development. Universities are involved in trying to raise the aspirations of young people whose background does not include further or higher education. Similarly there are interesting schemes under which the Chamber and the Universities encourage graduate placements with local firms.
- 10.5.9 Birmingham's GCSE results have improved significantly over several years, and this is of great credit to our teachers, schools and education service. But the national targets are unambitious and more needs to be done. This lack of national ambition has three facets:
- the national targets are for lower skills levels than important international competitor countries;
  - the average attainment level is set too low, with the national threshold target for 2011 being for only 53% to achieve 5 A\*-C GCSE grades and equivalent including GCSEs in English and Maths;
  - the "tail" of underachievement is too long, with the Government target that by 2012 there should be no schools where less than 30% of pupils achieve 5 A\*-C grades including English and Maths.
- 10.5.10 This set of Government targets will expire in the next few years. This provides an opportunity for an ambitious city like Birmingham to move ahead of the curve and first consider, and then announce, stretching local targets for GCSE attainment in English and Maths, to take over from the current centrally-derived figures. We must also keep in mind that there are very many school leavers who will not obtain 5 A\*-C GCSEs; their literacy and numeracy standards need to be as good as possible, too. We note the Government's introduction over the next few years of Functional Skills qualifications and invite the Executive to consider whether these will provide useful opportunities to raise standards.
- 10.5.11 Employers have told us that young people need to have much more relevant skills if they are to be "work ready", particularly in literacy, numeracy and communication. This applies, apparently, to all levels of formal education – GCSE, A levels, graduate and postgraduate. There could be a role for the City Council in bringing the correct partners together to clarify and tackle the problems here. As we have already said, there is certainly a role in adopting local targets which are more stretching than the national ones. But there is also








- 10.6.1 Achieving our ambition – the growth and prosperity of Birmingham and its people – will require wise choices of development projects and service improvements, and the expenditure of large sums of private and public money. It will be essential for this investment to work as hard as possible, in terms of maximising social, economic and environmental benefits per pound.
- 10.6.2 One way of achieving this is for the City Council and its partners to be as clear as possible about what exactly they are trying to achieve. Within Birmingham, with the publication of the original




O&S Committee reported to the City Council on 1 April 2008 on their inquiry into Regeneration in South West Birmingham. That had a specific line of inquiry into whether stakeholders could work together better, and their concluding report (which was accepted by the City Council and welcomed by the Executive) made some useful suggestions for improving the situation (see Box 13 below).

In a progress report to the Regeneration O&S Committee on 18 November 2008, the Cabinet Member set out the various mechanisms he had then put in place to respond to Scrutiny's concerns.



10.6.9 These concerns, clearly shared by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration who has taken appropriate action, very much chime with our own findings. We were heartened by the words and attitude of the Chief Executive when he gave us his annual report in October 2008. In response to questions, he told us that immediately after the meeting he would be attending a Chief Officer seminar, at which they would be discussing ways of breaking down the "silo" mentality between Departments. This certainly needs to be done if the Growth Agenda is to be realised.

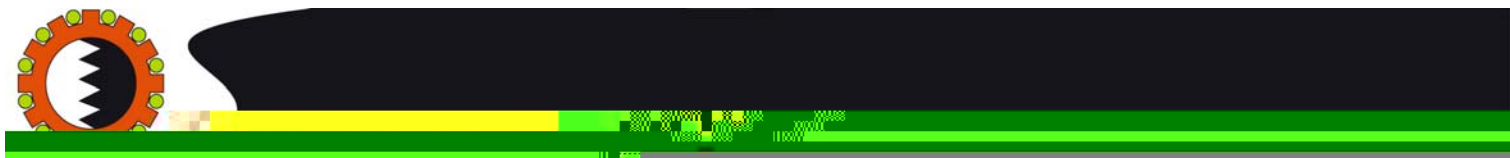
10.6.10 Regeneration O&S Committee's point about Member involvement and understanding is well made. But we must recognise that wards can be silos, too, and there needs to be greater recognition of what goes on over the border - both in neighbouring wards in Birmingham and across the city boundary, for instance in areas such as North Solihull.







- 10.6.11 The City Council accepted these suggestions made by the Regeneration O&S Committee in April 2008. They are useful and represent a significant step forward. But, in line with the ambitious nature of the Growth Agenda, we are interested in developing the theme further, moving through improved understanding to co-ordinated action.
- 10.6.12 The example of North Solihull is inspiring. It demonstrates that it is possible to modernise a neighbourhood by improving several public services at once, and indeed to reshape a neighbourhood around that improved provision to give the area a new heart and the community a new focus.
- 10.6.13 Officers advised us that the scale of change at North Solihull is smaller than that required for the Growth Agenda. But we see the Growth Agenda not as requiring a single approach, but as involving many actions at several different scales. Many smaller improvements as a few larger ones can all contribute to improving the prosperity of Birmingham and its people, and thus to achieving the Growth Agenda.
- 10.6.14 The trick will be to be sure, on as many occasions as possible, that silos are broken down and that opportunities for change involve several public services.
- 10.6.15 In North Solihull, a particular company structure was used as the delivery mechanism for the regeneration project. Whilst we were impressed with the progress made in the area, it is not our view that in all cases the same mechanism should be used. Whilst every project in the current or future editions of the Prospectus would inevitably be a partnership project to some degree, the extent to which a formal partnership was required, who the lead partner should be and similar issues would require analysis on a case-by-case basis.
- 10.6.16 In all cases, however, local elected Members should be involved in the planning and implementation of major projects. Even though each project may only be given the go ahead because of what it contributes to the city, it inevitably is placed in a particular locality and will pose local issues. Experience shows that the involvement of local Members at all stages will help to resolve those issues.
- 10.6.17 The final point here is similar. When a project is located near to the city boundary, consideration should be given to the involvement of neighbouring authorities, even when they have no immediate stake in the project. The approach taken at Longbridge is a high-profile example of where co-operation with the neighbouring District Council moved matters forward very constructively, although of course in that case Bromsgrove had a very important role in its own right. But that sort of inclusive approach could also be beneficial in other cases as well.

	That with the aim of easing the implementation of the new transport strategy for Birmingham, the Executive work with city-region partners and report on progress towards an integrated strategic plan and a co-ordinated delivery structure for transport investment.	Leader	January 2010
	That in successive editions of the Birmingham Prospectus, as actions move from aspirations to firm projects, the Executive show how each project will be implemented.	Leader	January 2010
	That local elected Members (including when relevant Members of neighbouring authorities) be appropriately involved from the very start in the planning and implementation of each major project to help manage the local issues which inevitably arise.	Leader	January 2010



underway includes the Children and Education O&S Committee's inquiry into Building Schools for

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1. The Birmingham Prospectus, Birmingham City Council and Birmingham Strategic Partnership, January 2007.
  2. Birmingham's Growth Agenda – Project Brief, report of the Head of Scrutiny to the Co-ordinating O&S Committee, Birmingham City Council, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2007.
  3. Regeneration in South West Birmingham, report of the Regeneration O&S Committee to Birmingham City Council, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008.
  4. Birmingham Demographic Briefing Issue 2006/02, Migration, Birmingham City Council
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15. West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy: Phase Two Revision, letter from Cllr David Smith, Chairman, West Midlands Regional Assembly, to