

## **Consultation on the Future “EU 2020” Strategy**

### **Response from Birmingham City Council**

#### **1. Overview**

- a. Birmingham City Council welcomes the consultation on the Future EU 2020 Strategy although regrets that this consultation comes at a relatively late stage.
- b. We welcome the proposed priorities, particularly the greater emphasis which is placed on the environmental and social aspects of cohesion and how these are intrinsically linked to jobs and growth.
- c. We are, however, disappointed by the lack of detailed proposals relating to the delivery of the EU 2020 Strategy and the lack of recognition given to the crucial role that local authorities and, in particular, cities play in being catalysts of change in the delivery of knowledge-based growth, inclusive societies and greener economies.

#### **2. Priorities**

- a. Birmingham City Council shares the EU 2020 vision of a more inclusive, more sustainable, greener and strong knowledge-based economy and welcomes the priorities set out in the consultation document of:
  - Creating value by basing growth on knowledge
  - Empowering people in inclusive societies
  - Creating a competitive, connected and greener economy
- b. These priorities are already considered core business by Birmingham City Council, as well as by local authorities across Europe. The local level plays an important role in the delivery of these priorities which goes unrecognised in the consultation document.

#### **3. Governance and reporting**

- a. Little is proposed about the governance of the EU 2020 strategy. The current governance and reporting mechanisms used for the Lisbon Strategy of the Open Method of Co-ordination and the National Reform Programmes have been weak, formulaic, lacking in visibility and with only very limited opportunities for local government to directly contribute.
- b. The involvement of local government in any governance and reporting mechanism should be mandatory so that the effectiveness of the EU 2020 priorities (and associated delivery resources) and how they flow from national to regional and local level can be monitored and

assessed. There should also be an opportunity in the governance and reporting structures for the local level to feed back up the chain.

#### **4. Delivery - the importance of the local level**

- a. Birmingham City Council regrets that the consultation proposes disappointingly little regarding the delivery of these priorities. Moreover, the consultation document fails to recognise the important role to be played by local authorities across Europe in delivering EU 2020 on the ground.
- b. We strongly urge the European Commission to correct this in the proposal that is sent for agreement at the Spring Council in 2010.
- c. The local level is where many EU and national policies come together and, most crucially, where they are delivered on the ground. Local authorities such as Birmingham City Council are on the frontline and taking the lead when it comes to dealing with issues such as the impact of the recession, worklessness, developing green energy initiatives and behaviours, and investing in the knowledge economy. Local authorities are well positioned to utilise existing strong local strategic and delivery partnerships involving public sector agencies, the private sector and civil society.
- d. Annex 1 provides an overview of just a selection of projects and initiatives which Birmingham City Council is leading or is part of with local partners to deliver EU 2020-type actions.
- e. It is particularly vital that future EU cohesion policy is fully aligned to the EU 2020 Strategy to support its delivery at the local level and to longer term public investment. It is crucial that this is made available across all parts of the EU to address both the deep-seated problems, as well as the challenges of tomorrow, which are set out in the EU 2020 Strategy.
- f. Cohesion policy has already been instrumental in shifting the attention of sub-national levels towards key EU priorities in the area of sustainable development, inclusion, and innovation. The leverage effect cannot be underestimated since the sub-national levels are responsible for the design and implementation of around 70% of public investment in Europe.

#### **5. Summary**

Birmingham City Council:

- **Welcomes the proposed priorities**, particularly the greater emphasis which is placed on the environmental and social aspects

of cohesion and how these are intrinsically linked to jobs and growth.

- Calls for the **mandatory involvement of local government in the governance and reporting mechanisms** for the EU 2020 Strategy.
- Strongly urges the European Commission to **fully acknowledge the important delivery role of local authorities, particularly cities**, play in the delivery of EU 2020 and that this be **reflected in the proposals to be put to the Spring Council** for approval.
- Considers that it is particularly vital that **future EU cohesion policy is fully aligned to the EU 2020 Strategy** to support its delivery at the local level and that this is **made available across all parts of the EU** to address both the deep-seated problems, as well as the challenges of tomorrow, which are set out in the Strategy.

### ***About Birmingham City Council***

*Birmingham City Council is the largest local authority in the UK and one of the largest in Europe with a turnover of £3.2bn.*

*Birmingham lies at the heart of the West Midlands region and is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest city in the UK. It serves a population of over 1 million, approximately 35% of which are of black or ethnic minority origin. It is also one of the youngest cities in Europe.*

*Employment is concentrated in the service, public, and professional and financial sectors. Birmingham has a large and high-quality university sector with three universities based in the city and a total student population of 65,000. The city also has a traditional manufacturing base which is declining.*

*Birmingham has been affected by the recession more than most cities, with unemployment claimant count rates rising faster and to higher levels than in any other English Core City.*

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## **Annex 1: Examples of how Birmingham City Council is already leading and delivering on EU2020-type actions**

### **EU 2020 priority 1: Creating value by basing growth on knowledge**

#### **Birmingham Digital District**

The Digital District will transform Digbeth area of Birmingham into a high-quality environment for working, living and learning, supported by an exceptionally high-speed network. The District will act as a catalyst in encouraging growth in specific business sectors which rely on high bandwidth to compete globally. Benefits to the city would be to increase its competitive advantage, attract new businesses, new jobs and maintain the city's reputation as a leading digital city.

<http://www.digitalbirmingham.co.uk/projects/digital-districts->

#### **Birmingham Science City**

Birmingham is leading the way in positioning Birmingham and the wider West Midlands region as the premier location for science and technology through the Birmingham Science City partnership. Focusing on four key technology strengths - digital, low carbon, innovative health care and security technologies - the partnership will firmly establish the region as a centre of scientific and technological excellence.

<http://www.digitalbirmingham.co.uk/case-stories/number-one-destination-for-science-and-innovation->

<http://www.birminghamsciencecity.co.uk/about-us/default.aspx>

<http://www.birminghamsciencecity.co.uk/projects/default.aspx>

### **EU 2020 priority 2: Empowering people in inclusive societies**

#### **Helping the long-term unemployed**

A £700,000 project funded through the UK government's Working Neighbourhoods Fund will see dedicated one-to-one support offered to individuals on long term incapacity, with a view to identifying what their training and health needs are in order to allow them to return to work in the future.

<http://birminghamnewsroom.com/?p=5624>

#### **Stimulating enterprise through coaching**

The project aims to build an entrepreneurial culture people in deprived communities, providing individuals with the skills and knowledge to start their own business.

<http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/cs/Satellite/entrepreneurs?packedargs=website%3D1&rendermode=live>

### **EU 2020 priority 3: Creating a competitive, connected and greener economy**

#### **Birmingham Climate Change Declaration**

Birmingham's Climate Change Declaration is a commitment to use the council's purchasing power and influence as a vehicle to stimulate green initiatives which will provide significant employment opportunities for Birmingham's people and reduce energy bills for citizens and businesses alike.

<http://birminghamnewsroom.com/?p=5550>

### **Electric car demonstrator project**

Birmingham is part of the CABLED (Coventry and Birmingham Low Emission Vehicle Demonstrators) consortium. The project is worth £15 million and over the next 12 months will trial 110 ultra low-emission vehicles on the roads of Birmingham and Coventry.

<http://birminghamnewsroom.com/?p=5613>

<http://birminghamnewsroom.com/?p=3458>