

## BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

### STRATEGY FOR OPEN DATA

#### What we are trying to achieve

This strategy sets out how Birmingham City Council will provide regular comprehensive releases of public open data and how it will use open data to support transparency, economic growth and community / citizen involvement.

The strategy is intended to provide the most effective way of delivering the requirements of the City Council's Open Data Policy. The Council regards the introduction of a comprehensive set of services for the publication of open and linked data as a keystone of several of its initiatives to transform the nature of public services. These include the policy goals of making Birmingham a Smart City and increasing local participation in and control of local services.

The open data strategy supports four key objectives:

1. **Engagement:** Increasing citizen engagement in service development, decision making and democratic debate requires citizens to understand the context in which the Council operates. Giving citizens and communities access to some of the Council's operational data and in particular localised data can contribute to encouraging informed responses and involvement.
2. **Transparency:** Enabling the public to understand, scrutinise and question the services delivered and decisions made in the Council requires information. The more public open data we can provide, the more input we can encourage, which could help us not only be accountable to citizens but also improve our services. The Leader's Statement has made becoming an 'Open City' one of Birmingham's priorities.
3. **Economic Development:** Releasing public open data is considered to be a trigger for economic and community activity. Cities around the world have already found that releasing widespread public open data is enabling local businesses and developers to create new applications. These can be of value to the community e.g. live road gritting maps in the winter. These are often provided free of charge but they may be commercially viable - e.g. property / planning data used to create applications for estate agents. Birmingham has a particularly active and growing digital creative and ICT sector that we aim to support.
4. **Service improvement and efficiency:** Providing open data will support and accelerate the Council's internal data sharing. Creating a comprehensive open data portal that makes the data searchable and easily accessible in one place should also increase staff productivity and reduce the need for meeting time-consuming Freedom of Information requests. Public feedback on open data can help to improve data quality and accuracy. Applications created by others can give us ideas for new or better services, could be more cost

effective than council ones or fill gaps in areas where the Council does not provide a service.

### **How we will do it**

Several parallel activities will be needed to deliver the objectives:

➤ **Provide policy information and advice**

The policy statement will be turned into a set of more detailed procedures covering the application of the corporate policy in specific contexts – such as different types of data and different uses. This will guide Council service areas in meeting the objectives of the policy.

➤ **Identify and agree datasets for publication**

Experience from previous engagement of Birmingham's open data community shows that data will attract interest if it:

- provides transparency on Council decisions (e.g. budgets)
- can be used to create revenue
- is real-time data that can be used to make decisions (e.g. traffic flow)
- helps citizens with informed choices (e.g. applications for school places per neighbourhood)
- is updated regularly and released over a long period of time

We will engage further with Birmingham's digital innovators, developers, data analysts, universities and the wider community to identify particular areas of interest.

We will also engage with service areas to identify data that is requested regularly by the public or which is of interest to other services. See Appendix 2 for work carried out by the Open Data Project Board in identifying potential datasets.

➤ **Create an Open Data platform**

Meeting the policy objectives requires the Council to provide more than just a page on the Council's web site with data sets attached. The technical platform which will be delivered will be capable of providing the following:

- making the data reusable

There will be a range of standard software for extracting data from City Council operational systems and turning the "raw" data into the technical formats needed to make the data fully reusable

- making the data available

A major objective of the strategy is the provision of a public location for the sharing of the data sets that are published, together with the supporting descriptive information (the scope and currency of the data), explanatory material and basic software for handling it. A specific project to determine the particular technical platform to be used is already in progress. It will be web-based, include social media and while it is likely to be separate from the City Council's web site, it will be linked to it

- help with managing the data

Data will be published in raw format and, in order to encourage reuse of the data, a basic set of data manipulation and analysis tools will be provided to assist those users who want to develop skills in using the data. See Appendix 1 for draft implementation plan.

➤ **Processes for extracting data**

The technical platform being provided will be supported by a set of procedures for identifying, requesting and putting into production the agreed process for extracting raw data from operational systems or other locations.

➤ **Standards**

Adhering to technical and information standards is critical to ensuring the effective use of open data. Compliance with formally approved or de facto standards is a key success factor for delivering an open/linked data service. The principal sources of standards are:

National/industry-wide:

- Compliance is needed with the relevant technical standards for data formats and key elements of the information frameworks.
- Descriptions of the data (metadata) will conform to the relevant accepted standards such as the Integrated Public Sector Vocabulary (IPSV) and INSPIRE (for geographic data).

Local/specific:

The national or other agreed standards will be supplemented as required by locally determined standards – at least until more widely agreed standards are developed.

- These include extending IPSV and INSPIRE with local place names.

➤ **Addressing issues of data ownership**

The Council plans to commission more services in the future. We need to ensure that operational data and data collected or created by these services are fully accessible by the Council if we are to continue to meet the objectives of the open data policy. This work will involve Corporate Procurement Services and Legal Services in ensuring that commissioning work and contracts fully reflect the need to retain access to data.

➤ **Managing the work**

The initial implementation will be overseen by the Open Data Project Board. One of the deliverables of the strategy will, however, be proposals for the continuing cross-service management of the basic publication service.

➤ **Projects**

Each of the components of this stage will be covered by a formal project in order to ensure its effective delivery. Initial projects include: the provision of a publication platform; the

identification (and, if necessary development) of standards and their implementation in the technology and processes; the development of the necessary supporting procedures and the creation and support of stakeholders and developer community groups.

### **What we need to do the work**

The following resources will be required to achieve the goals set out in the Open Data Policy:

#### ➤ **Funding**

Funding for the initiatives will be sought from the following sources:

- the Council's own financial resources, tied to the delivery of policy goals and internal operating efficiencies;
- external grant funding

The possibility of joint ventures with other bodies will also be investigated.

#### ➤ **People/skills**

The existing skills and experience available to the City Council and Service Birmingham will be enhanced by the engagement of people or organisations with complementary skills – such as local academic institutions and the national standards bodies.

#### ➤ **Technology**

Wherever possible, existing technology available to the City Council will be used to deliver the new services. Where these are inadequate or need to be supplemented by additional or different technologies, open technologies will be preferred over proprietary ones.

#### ➤ **Partnerships**

Partnership working is a key element of the programme. Partnerships will be formed with other interested bodies and higher education. One of the most important elements of the overall approach will be to build a collaborative developer community linked to the open/linked data platform.

### **Implementation and Review**

The programme and its component projects will follow the City Council's standard practice for managing projects.

## Appendix 1

### Draft Project Plan



ODPlan\_v01.xls

## Appendix 2

### Open Data Responses

This sheet contains details of the 37 data sets that were contacted data holders within BCC. It also contains information about the availability of the data, the data holders response and recommendations based on the data holders response.



Open Data  
Responses.xls

### Open Data Details

This sheet contains details for all 62 data sets supplied by the Open Data Board. The sheet includes the fields that were identified, the data owner that was contacted or (where applicable) further details.



Open Data  
Details.xls