



DIGITAL BIRMINGHAM

Building our digital future, together



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ABOUT DIGITAL BIRMINGHAM



Digital Birmingham is a city-wide initiative that is transforming Birmingham into a leading digital city. We are making the city a better place to live, work, and visit through providing the city's institutions, communities, and businesses with the digital infrastructure, data platforms, and enablement programs they need to thrive in the digital world.

We collaborate with the city's digital ecosystem to support the council with innovative solutions and technical support, while also striving to make Birmingham one of the world's leading digital cities.

OUR MISSION

We believe that becoming a truly inclusive digital city requires a strong partnership between the council, business and the community. We collaborate with local businesses, entrepreneurs, and organizations from the public, private, community, and academic sectors to maximize the use of digital technologies and the skills of our citizens and local businesses. This collaborative approach enables valuable insights from data to be focused on the growth of the city's economy and creating new innovative opportunities. Digital Birmingham is a city-wide initiative that is transforming Birmingham into a smarter city.

PROVIDING A BASE FOR INNOVATION

where organizations and entrepreneurs can effortlessly experiment with new ideas and technologies. We ensure that all the necessary tools and resources are available to them. This ensures a testbed for new technologies, through innovation and city wide technology we will truly become a smart city.

CREATING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

by helping to create jobs, not only in the tech sector but throughout the city. We do this by bringing businesses together and enabling them to easily utilize technology. This allows the digital sector to expand and creates more companies overall.

AGENDA

**4:30
-
5:10**

WELCOME & REFRESHMENTS

**5:10
-
5:15**

WELCOME

led by Councillor Saima Suleman, Cabinet Member for Digital, Cultural, Heritage and Tourism

**5:15
-
5:25**

SETTING THE SCENE

led by Rick Robinson, Director and Global Principal for Smart, Connected and Secure Cities and Places for Jacobs

**5:25
-
5:40**

BIRMINGHAM'S OFFER

led by Richard Brooks, Director of Strategy, Equality and Partnerships at Birmingham City Council

5:40
-
6:00

FIRESIDE CHAT

Chaired by Rick Robinson, Director and Global Principal for Smart, Connected and Secure Cities and Places for Jacobs

Panel members include:

Linda Chandler, Industry Advisor in the local and Regional Government Team at Microsoft UK

Rebecca Debenham, Chief Executive Officer of Northfield Community Partnership

Rajvir Cheema, Director, Digital & Technology Advisory for Healthcare at KPMG

Mark Smith, Executive Director of Business and Regional Engagement, Aston university

6:00
-
6:40

PANEL SESSION

Chaired by Richard Brooks, Director of Strategy, Equality and Partnerships at Birmingham City Council
Panel members include:

Martin Freer, Director of Birmingham Energy Institute and Energy Research Accelerator

Victoria Pargetter, Assistant Director, Business Engagement & Research Impact at University of Birmingham

Catherine Hadfield, Principal Place Development Lead at Connected Places Catapult

Rob Valentine, Regional Director Leeds and Birmingham at Bruntwood

Taran Singh, Chief Technical Officer, Birmingham Open Media

Hardik Singh, Birmingham Youth City Board

6:40
-
7:00

NETWORKING AND CLOSE

SPEAKER PROFILES



WELCOME



COUNCILLOR SAIMA SULEMAN

Councillor Saima Suleman was appointed as Cabinet Member for Digital, Culture, Heritage, and Tourism in May 2023. Working with colleagues in the Cabinet she has pledged to work with and for every single community to deliver the services our citizens deserve. She is especially committed to Digital Inclusion, to remove barriers and to ensure that everyone can thrive in the city.

Saima is committed to improving the lives and life chances of the people of Birmingham. She previously served as the Chair of Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee and led on various inquiries. This included an inquiry into Employment and Skills for Young People, 'Something to Aim for,' to reshape careers and mentoring provision to improve the confidence and resilience of young people. A member of both the Labour and Co-operative parties, she was first elected to Birmingham City Council in 2021 and represents Hall Green North. Saima was raised in Birmingham and lives there with her family.

Over the course of a varied career, she has worked in the civil service, in private industry and in the voluntary sector. Saima was also a regional equality officer for one of the largest Trades Unions for the Civil Service and is committed to equality for all.

SETTING THE SCENE

FIRESIDE CHAT



**RICK
ROBINSON**

Rick is Director and Global Principal for Smart, Connected and Secure Cities and Places for Jacobs. He advises clients on the role of technology in transforming the built environment – improving places, infrastructure, and services in the interest of communities, business, and the environment.

Previously, he has led Smart Cities businesses for Arup and IBM, and was Director of Technology for Amey.

Rick spent 8 years as a Non-Executive Director of Innovation Birmingham, the West Midlands leading digital tech campus, is the Chair of the Birmingham Digital City Partnership and a member of the Birmingham Knowledge Quarter Advisory Board.

In 2019 he developed the strategy for the Essex / Hertfordshire Digital innovation Zone, a collaboration of 12 Local Authorities and businesses, and in 2012 he founded the Birmingham Smart City Alliance, which has supported 100s of digital innovation projects through collaboration with over 50 city institutions. He is currently leading the development of digital strategies for multi-£billion regional and city developments in the UK, Europe, and the Middle East.

BIRMINGHAM'S OFFER

PANEL SESSION



RICHARD BROOKS

Richard joined Birmingham City Council in November 2021 to lead the new Strategy, Equality and Partnerships Directorate. He has established new capability in the council for generating insight, developing strategic thinking, citizen engagement and partnership working. His Directorate works with other services to improve outcomes for citizens, and to promote equality and inclusion across the city. In November 2022 he launched the Birmingham City Observatory, and he leads the council's response to the Cost of Living Crisis.

Before joining BCC, Richard worked on a wide range of policy, strategy, research, and public service delivery challenges at local, national and international level. He was Senior Adviser to the Secretary of State for Education, then Director of Strategy at Ofsted, and subsequently developed and implemented programmes of educational reform in South Africa and Uganda.

Prior to working in government, Richard led award-winning research at the Institute for Public Policy Research and the Fabian Society. He has published extensively on poverty and welfare reform, public service improvement, education, economics, and employment. There is a strong focus in his work on equality and fairness, and on using evidence to drive change and improvement.

FIRESIDE CHAT



**LINDA
CHANDLER**

Linda Chandler is an Industry Advisor in the Local and Regional Government team at Microsoft UK with a particular focus on Smart Places. Her interest is in the role of digital in place leadership in the 2–5-year timeframe and with that, the convergence of adjacent industry sectors of transport, built environment and energy. Linda is a returner to Microsoft having been the Smart Cities Lead for Microsoft Services at Microsoft both in the UK and APAC for 10 years.

In between her Microsoft roles, Linda was an independent smart cities advisor, working on a portfolio of projects across the pillars of built environment, energy and mobility. Prior to Microsoft, she was Chief Information Officer for the London Development Agency. Linda has experienced many facets of the technology industry in her 30-year career, having worked for systems integrators, large independent software vendors, an analyst firm and a number of start-ups. Linda is currently part of the Design Council Expert network, an RSA Fellow and Member of the IET. She also sits on the LandAid Tech Network Steering Group.

FIRESIDE CHAT



**REBECCA
DEBENHAM**

Rebecca is the CEO of NCP, with a long career in Community Development, moving to NCP 11 years ago where she has developed the charity to become a Vibrant Community Anchor.

Passionate about People and Communities, enabling them to fulfil their potential by providing vital services and projects, Rebecca has been instrumental in lobbying for the importance of digital for local communities and the impact of digital poverty.

Rebecca developed a digital lending library during the COVID-19 pandemic and now oversees the citywide NNS digital project building capacity across Birmingham's 10 constituencies.

Rebecca has delivered presentations and contributed to numerous pieces of research on innovative community and stakeholder engagement.

Leading on stakeholder engagement, Neighbourhood Network Schemes, Northfield Beach Festival and is the Chair of Northfield Stakeholders Group which brings a united voice to the community sector to address issues and create local solutions with citizens.

FIRESIDE CHAT



RAJVIR CHEEMA

Rajvir leads our Digital Healthcare Advisory services across the UK. Rajvir helps clients create change that matters, empowering healthcare organisations to grow and thrive in the digital age. This is by harnessing the power of data, innovation, modernising core technology through transformation, and capitalising on new technology; fuelling digital growth that creates new and improved patient and staff user experience. Recent work at an NHS provider level includes helping clients sustain digital transformation through capabilities, and deliverables have included achieved efficiency, agility, and profitable growth.

At a regional and national level, Rajvir has led a number of reviews over cyber security and data sharing programmes for large high-profile integrated care systems in the UK. Rajvir is currently leading the Innovation Factory for NHS Digital (2 year contract). He has also led the procurement and deployment of large-scale £10million+ tech transformation programmes for large NHS Acute Trust's.

PANEL SESSION



**MARK
SMITH**

Mark Smith is Aston University's first-ever Executive Director of Business Engagement. Mark takes strategic responsibility for all business engagement activities at the University and showcases the commercial benefits of working with Aston to business, professional and public sector organisations. This includes Aston's business growth programmes, student placements, knowledge transfer partnerships (KTPs), and other initiatives.

Mark also oversees the development of degree apprenticeship programmes, where students work and study over the course of their degree gaining the exact skills their employer needs. Aston has been a trailblazer for this growing trend in higher education and was the first university in the UK to produce degree apprenticeship graduates.

Mark joined Aston from Birmingham City University where he was Director of Enterprise and Employability. His career has involved working across government, regeneration and online education taking on big projects including establishing new airports and fostering enterprise in inner-city areas.

PANEL SESSION



MARTIN FREER

Professor Martin Freer a nuclear physicist, and Director of the Birmingham Energy Institute (BEI) at the University of Birmingham. He is also Director of the Energy Research Accelerator (ERA), which comprises eight internationally renowned Midlands universities which are part of the Midlands Innovation partnership, together with the British Geological Survey.

Martin is former Director of the Birmingham Centre for Nuclear Education and Research, which he established in 2010. He has overseen the development of the BEI, helped establish Energy Capital and has co-led the establishment of the joint University of Birmingham–Fraunhofer Germany research platform. He led the development of the Birmingham Energy Innovation Hub and the co-development of Tyseley Energy Park in Birmingham.

Most recently, he led the policy commission “Pathways for Local Heat delivery” chaired by Sir John Armitt. He has championed the establishment of a National Centre for the Decarbonisation of Heat. His main research area is the study of the structure of light nuclei, using nuclear reactions. He received the Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel Prize, Humboldt Foundation, in 2004 and the Rutherford Medal in 2010.

PANEL SESSION



**VICKIE
PARGETTER**

Vickie Pargetter is Assistant Director of Business Engagement & Research Impact for the University, and the Strategic Business Engagement Partner for the University's Colleges of Social Sciences and Arts and Law. She is a chartered marketer with 20 years of experience in management, strategy, events, business development, and B2B full-service marketing and communications.

Vickie helps to lead the Business Engagement team, facilitating seamless links between academia and industry for the purposes of innovation in research collaboration, consultancy, CPD and up-skilling, and talent management more broadly.

The Team's operations span all sectors, geographies and business sizes and work closely with local and national intermediary organisations. Vickie is currently leading on the University's 'Birmingham Digital Futures' programme with PwC and Tech She Can, and on the development of a Digital Skills Innovation District for the City.

PANEL SESSION



**CATHERINE
HADFIELD**

Catherine is Principal Place Development lead at Connected Places Catapult, and Programme Lead for the diatomic innovation accelerator programme. She is an economic development and public policy professional with a passion for regeneration, innovation and cross sector collaboration. She brings a full 'place-based' viewpoint to discussions drawing on experience working with both the public and private sectors, where she worked with numerous Local Authorities, Universities and Combined Authorities throughout the UK and beyond.

PANEL SESSION



**ROB
VALENTINE**

Rob is the Director of Birmingham for Bruntwood Works, which forms part of the Bruntwood group which has been creating thriving cities for over forty years.

Bruntwood Works creates, owns, and manages over 5M sq ft of inspiring workspace environments and offers everything from individual coworking desks and meeting rooms to fully managed offices, in superb locations across Manchester, Cheshire, Leeds, Liverpool and Birmingham to help businesses thrive and grow.

Part of Rob's role is ensuring that Bruntwood's promise of value, quality and service is delivered. Another element is implementing Bruntwood's commitment to an active presence in the cities in which it operates.

PANEL SESSION



TARAN SINGH

Taran Singh is a highly accomplished digital business leader who has achieved remarkable success in his entrepreneurial journey. Taran built a thriving business and has also made significant contributions to the field of 3D technology and education. With over 20 years of experience, he is recognized as an expert in his field and has been instrumental in the development of cutting-edge immersive applications across various sectors.

Having successfully grown his business, Taran3D, Birmingham's foremost 3D Agency, Taran recently merged with Birmingham Open Media, further expanding the organisation's reach and influence in the industry. This merger signifies Taran's commitment to continuous growth and his dedication to staying at the forefront of technological advancements. At BOM Birmingham Open Media, Taran leads a dynamic and passionate team that works closely with clients to bring their projects to fruition. With a strong belief in making immersive technology accessible to all, he actively supports this vision by partnering with inspiring organizations and actively fostering the growth of the next generation of tech talent within the industry.

PANEL SESSION



HARDIK SINGH

Hardik Singh is a student and active member of the Birmingham Youth City Board. He has worked alongside multiple organisations, leaders and councillors to provide strategic leadership and direction for the city of Birmingham. His role has seen him travel across the UK to collaborate with local communities. He was also elected as a representative for Birmingham in the UK Youth Parliament. This role has allowed him to work closely with other young people from the UK and attend conferences and sessions to develop strategies addressing societal issues. His powerful speech at the House of Commons highlighted the Youth Parliament's work and advocated for meaningful action to address youth concerns.

Hardik is also a member of the Youth Independent Advisory Group for the West Midlands Police, volunteers with community groups across Birmingham and supports initiatives addressing food poverty and promoting social inclusion among children and young people. He is currently involved in research with the University of Birmingham aiming to improve the quality of food offered to young people in schools. He continuously strives to use his voice to advocate for young people's rights social justice and environmental sustainability. Hardik is an outstanding young man who is making a positive difference in the world and contributing to a better future for all.

2040 PLAN

Birmingham is a city with a proud history of innovation and progress. Now, with the release of the Birmingham 2040 Plan, the city is set to enter a new era of digital transformation. The plan outlines a vision for a more connected, sustainable, and prosperous city, powered by digital technology.

At the heart of the Birmingham 2040 Plan is a commitment to digitisation. The plan recognises that digital technology has the power to transform the way we live, work, and interact with each other. By embracing digital technology, Birmingham can become a more efficient, productive, and inclusive city.

One of the key goals of the Birmingham 2040 Plan is to create a more connected city. This will be achieved through the development of a high-speed digital infrastructure, making it easier for people and businesses to access the internet and connect with each other. This will be supported by the development of smart city technology, such as sensors and data analytics, which will help to improve the efficiency of city services and reduce costs.

Another important aspect of the Birmingham 2040 Plan is its focus on sustainability. The plan recognises that digital technology has the potential to help us tackle some of the biggest environmental challenges facing our city, such as air pollution and climate change. By using digital technology to monitor and manage our energy usage, we can reduce our carbon footprint and create a more sustainable city.

However, it is important to recognise that the benefits of digitisation are not just limited to the environment. Digitisation can also help to create a more inclusive and prosperous city, by providing new opportunities for residents and businesses. For example, the development of digital skills and training programmes can help to create new job opportunities and improve the employability of local residents.

Furthermore, digitisation can also help to create a more inclusive city, by improving access to services and information. For example, the development of digital platforms and apps can help to make it easier for residents to access city services, such as healthcare and education. This can be particularly beneficial for those who may have difficulty accessing traditional services, such as people with disabilities or those living in remote areas.

In conclusion, the Birmingham 2040 Plan represents an exciting vision for the future of our city. By embracing digital technology, Birmingham can become a more connected, sustainable, and prosperous city, with benefits for everyone. However, it is important to recognise that the benefits of digitisation are not automatic, and will require a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including the local government, businesses, and community organisations. By working together, we can create a digital future that works for everyone.

**A DIGITAL
FUTURE
FOR ALL**

BIRMINGHAM'S INNOVATION QUARTER

Birmingham is a city with a rich history of innovation and progress. From the Industrial Revolution to modern-day advancements in technology and science, Birmingham has always been at the forefront of change. Now, with the development of the Innovation Quarter, the city is poised to enter a new era of opportunity.

The Innovation Quarter is a 30-acre development located in the heart of Birmingham's Eastside district. It will be home to a range of businesses, startups, and research institutions, all working together to drive innovation and growth in the city. The development is set to create thousands of new jobs and attract millions of pounds in investment, making it a key part of Birmingham's future economic success.

One of the key goals of the Innovation Quarter is to create a hub for innovation and collaboration. By bringing together businesses, startups, and research institutions, the development will foster a culture of creativity and entrepreneurship. This will be supported by state-of-the-art facilities and infrastructure, making it easier for companies to develop and test new ideas.

Another important aspect of the Innovation Quarter is its focus on sustainability. The development will be built to the highest

environmental standards, with a range of features designed to reduce energy usage and carbon emissions. This commitment to sustainability is not only good for the environment, but it also makes good business sense, as companies increasingly look to reduce their environmental impact.

The Innovation Quarter is also set to have a significant impact on the local community. With the creation of thousands of new jobs, the development will provide new opportunities for people in the area. This will help to improve the prospects of all residents, creating a more vibrant and prosperous city.

However, it is important to recognize that the Innovation Quarter will pose some challenges for the city too. The development is set to create thousands of new jobs and it is important to ensure that these jobs are accessible to all residents, particularly those from disadvantaged communities. The stakeholders, including the local government, businesses, and community organizations are committed to ensuring that this is the case alongside an equally important commitment to ensure that the benefits of any new housing created by the development can be accessed by all members of the community.

In conclusion, the Innovation Quarter is a vastly exciting development that has the potential to substantially transform Birmingham's economic prospects. By fostering a culture of innovation and collaboration, and creating new opportunities for residents, the development will help to create a more vibrant and prosperous city, guided by stakeholders working together to ensure the benefits of the development are shared by all members of the community.

**A NEW ERA OF
OPPORTUNITY**



**DIGITAL
BIRMINGHAM**

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Thank you for attending
our event today

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HERE**

to learn more about
Digital Birmingham