

Making our 2026

This month sees the BBC's Nikki Tapper lead some of Birmingham's most talented youngsters in the launch of the city's long-term vision, Birmingham 2026.

Nikki who presents BBC WM's weekly Gospel show will launch Birmingham's new sustainable community strategy, Birmingham 2026 with the help of Dilveena Sokhi, 17, from Handsworth Wood, managing director of a Young Enterprise scheme company; Defra's West Midlands climate change champion, Ziana Kotadia, 14, from Selly Park; Anjenna Balasingam, 17, a Youth Parliament member from and 16-year-old Luke Smith, a Birmingham broadcaster

who appeared several times on the Paul O'Grady show.

The Birmingham 2026 vision will set out the long term ambitions the city hopes to aspire to and achieve during the next 18 years. The youngsters were chosen to launch Birmingham 2026 to celebrate their work within the city which reflects

the opportunities the vision will deliver for all Birmingham youngsters.

Dilveena Sokhi, 17, managing director of a Young Enterprise company called Junk'd, said: "By joining a programme like Young Enterprise, I was able to have a great insight into the business world. I learnt invaluable skills from this great project, which will help me to run my own business one day. I believe the Birmingham 2026 vision will aid me in achieving this opportunity."

The youngsters are also key to the process as they, and their peers present and future, are the ones that will inherit the city, the vision aims to create. Anjenna Balasingam, a member of

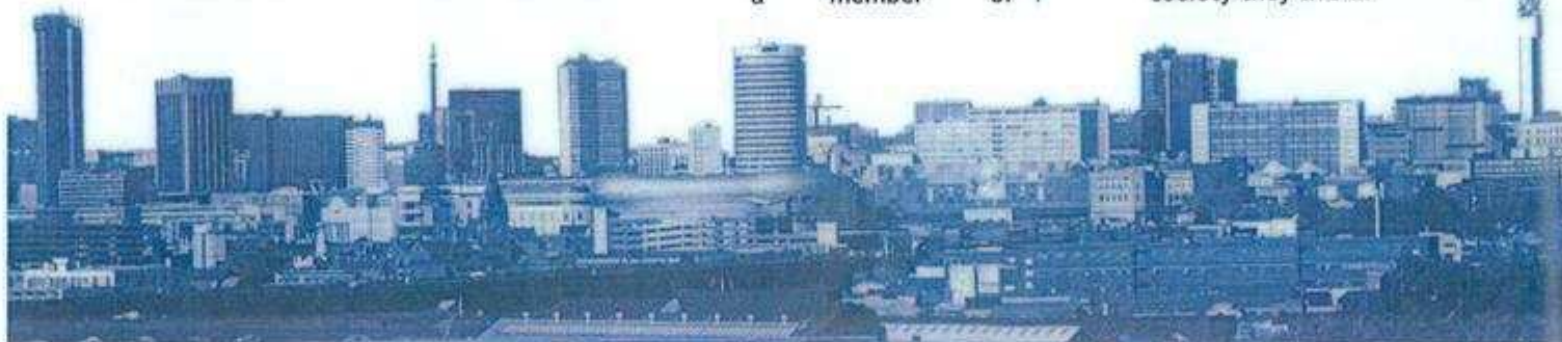
Birmingham's Youth Parliament, said: "Based upon my parliament work, I hope one day that I or one of my peers will have the chance to become leader of the council or perhaps even Prime Minister. I believe Birmingham 2026 could help make that vision a reality."

“ This is an exciting time for Birmingham ”

Earlier this year, The Vine supported the vision's author, Be Birmingham, by encouraging as many of our readers as possible to have their say in the future of our great city. In total, more than 1,300 of you let Be Birmingham know what you felt the city's priorities should be until 2026.

Be Birmingham, the city's local strategic partnership which brings together partners from the private, public, community, voluntary and faith sectors of the city, is committed to uniting Birmingham to provide collective action to improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of our city. As a result of what you said, Be Birmingham's 2026 vision has set out five outcomes for each person in the city, thus providing Birmingham with a clear mandate to ensure each citizen has the opportunity to:

- Succeed economically
- Feel and stay safe in a clean and green city
- Be healthy
- Enjoy a high quality of life
- Make a contribution to the society they live in



vision a reality

Gospel show presenter Nikki Tapper, who also works with youngsters at the city's Virtual College, understands the clear need to work together to deliver a better quality of life for the people of this city. Supporting the future the vision is trying to create, Nikki said: "I grew up in Birmingham and am really proud to be part of this great city. I am taking part in Birmingham 2026 because I believe that working together we can make a real difference to Birmingham appreciating our city's communities and cultures. My work also as a teacher at the Virtual College has this as a key hope and belief. This is the time to build and acknowledge the best of our city, giving us the confidence to present it as a world class city."

Proud history

Nikki is right. Like all great cities around the world, Birmingham has a powerful story to tell. It has a proud history and there is much to inspire its citizens, existing and new.

Birmingham is renowned for leading cutting edge innovation fuelled by a strong entrepreneurial spirit, a thirst for scientific discovery and a global reputation for civic leadership and municipal improvement.

The UK's second city was once at the heart of the industrial revolution, it now strives to play a key role in the current low carbon industrial revolution. The development of a strong service-based economy also gives Birmingham the strength and confidence to go forward as a global city whilst supporting its citizens at home.

However, Be Birmingham believes it is not just about the city's strategic leaders deciding and delivering what they think is best for its citizens. The citizens themselves are part of the decision-making process thereby contributing to their communities.

The key to this process is effective engagement with people to ensure

that all transformational change delivers a better quality of life. Birmingham 2026 is therefore a joint endeavour between Birmingham's leadership and the people it serves.

Be Birmingham's chair, Councillor Paul Tilsley, said: "Birmingham 2026 is about the citizens within our communities working together with us to deliver economic success, providing social wellbeing whilst living within our environmental limits. Birmingham is renowned for its innovative and creative past. We need to harness this spirit to ensure we deliver that kind of success but in a new age of cultural diversity, digital communication, technological advancement and environmental sustainability."

Future's bright

The Birmingham 2026 launch will take place at the Town Hall on September 17th. The launch will see three prominent Birmingham citizens, namely Be Birmingham chair and Deputy Leader of

Birmingham City Council, Councillor Paul Tilsley; David Cragg OBE, West Midlands regional director of the Learning & Skills Council and Nikki tell the story of the new long term vision with the help of the four youngsters.

In addition, the launch will include three short films that celebrate partnership work that is already being conducted around the city by ordinary citizens. It is hoped that this work, which is contributing to the successful delivery of the Birmingham 2026 vision, will inspire and excite others to follow their example. Again, the key message is about working together.

Defra's West Midlands' climate change champion, Ziana Kotadia, 14, from Selly Park echoes this sentiment: "This is an exciting time for Birmingham. I want to live in a city which is safe, environmentally sustainable and which provides each of its citizens with the highest quality of life possible. I believe that by working together we can achieve this vision."

Luke Smith, 16, who has worked on the Paul O'Grady show, is keen to ensure all youngsters get the same opportunities he has had and sums up the vision by saying: "I am proud to have been able to represent Birmingham on television. I believe the vision will help more youngsters fulfil their dreams of one day working in the media. We have the talent and creativity in our city. Let's use it!"

For more details on Birmingham 2026 or its launch, please visit www.bebirmingham.org.uk

“Birmingham 2026 is about working together to deliver economic success”

From left to right: Anjenna Balasingam, Luke Smith, Nikki Tapper, Dilveena Sokhi and Ziana Kotadia

