

# Birmingham Community Action Network (BCAN) Governance Review Specification

## 1. Background and Context

Birmingham Community Action Network (BCAN) is a city-wide membership-based network of community organisations (anchors and grassroots) operating across Birmingham. Further information about B:CAN and its members can be found at [B:CAN | Birmingham Community Action Network](#)

B:CAN exists to:

- Strengthen collaboration across the community sector and neighbourhoods.
- Improve services to transform lives and neighbourhoods by tackling deep seated challenges.
- Amplify community voice in citywide decision-making.
- Support collective action on shared priorities affecting local communities.
- Enable anchors to exercise influence while remaining accountable to grassroots communities.

B:CAN currently comprises:

- **24 full Members** (with full voting rights)
- **4 Affiliates** (aspiring members)
- **1 Partner** (collaborating on specific bids/projects)

All Members attend Members Meetings where decisions are made collectively. B:CAN also has:

- A Governance & Membership Committee
- Several thematic workstreams
- Externally funded projects led by designated Lead Members

B:CAN currently has **no legal status**, no constitution, and no formal governing documents or policy framework. Governance operates through collective agreement and custom and practice.

As B:CAN grows in scale, ambition and external engagement, it seeks an independent governance review to determine whether its current arrangements remain fit for purpose and how they should evolve.

## 2. Purpose of the Review

The purpose of the review is to:

- Assess whether, as a growing network, the current informal governance arrangements remain appropriate.

- Consider whether formalisation (including legal status) is required and, if so, what form and function it should take.
- Provide clear, practical governance options for the next phase of development.

The review should balance robustness with proportionality and preserve B:CAN's collaborative ethos.

### **3. Scope of the Review**

The following headings outline the areas the review should examine. Consultants are invited to propose how they would approach these within their methodology.

#### **3.1 Governance Structure and Legal Form**

Examine the appropriateness of the current informal structure and consider whether greater formalisation is required. This should include potential legal or incorporated forms, alongside associated risks and benefits. Any structural adaptation should maintain member primary and agility and responsiveness without being overtly bureaucratic.

#### **3.2 Decision-Making and Accountability**

Examine transparency of decision-making, documentation practices, conflict of interest management, mandate for community representation, and mechanisms for dispute resolution or challenge.

#### **3.3 Strategic Alignment and Purpose**

Assess whether governance arrangements support B:CAN's long-term ambitions, including transformation in public service delivery, Community Power principles, prosperity and wellbeing across Birmingham, and capacity building for grassroots organisations — while avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy.

### **4. Methodology**

Consultants are required to propose an appropriate participatory approach as part of their response.

The methodology must:

- Reflect B:CAN's collaborative ethos.
- Be proportionate to the scale and maturity of the network.
- Avoid over-engineering governance structures.
- Enable constructive engagement from Members, Affiliates and relevant stakeholders.

Consultants should outline how they will gather insight, test governance options and build consensus.

### **5. Deliverables**

The consultant will produce:

- i. **Governance Review Report** including:
  - Findings and risk assessment.
  - Analysis of scalability.
  - Assessment of legal and liability implications.
  - Structural options (minimum of three).
  - Recommended model with rationale and governance documents.
  - Clear phased implementation plan.
- ii. **Governance Architecture Diagram**
  - Authority flow.
  - Committee structure.
  - Member accountability loops.
  - Project governance relationships.
- iii. **Implementation Roadmap**
  - Immediate actions (0–3 months).
  - Medium-term reforms (3–12 months).
  - If required, steps toward incorporation.
- iv. **Member-Facing Summary Presentation**

## 6. Timescale

The review is expected to be completed within 8–10 weeks.

## 7. Required Experience

Consultants must demonstrate:

- Experience reviewing governance in collaborative networks.
- Knowledge of unincorporated associations and incorporation options.
- Understanding of multi-organisation partnerships.
- Strong facilitation and consensus-building skills.
- Knowledge of relevant legal and regulatory considerations in England.

## 8. Proposal Requirements

Proposals should include:

- Understanding of BCAN's context and ambition.
- Proposed methodology.
- Relevant examples of similar work.
- Proposed team and roles.
- Proposed timescale.
- Fee proposal and breakdown.

## 9. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be assessed against:

- Quality and clarity of approach.

- Demonstrated understanding of member-led governance.
- Ability to design structures enabling influence with accountability.
- Experience in comparable networks.
- Value for money.
- Collaborative and accessible working style.