

Hello, I'm Sara Pitt. I'm the Assistant Director of Service Finance here at Birmingham City Council.

**What drew you to working for the Council?**

Not so long ago, I was sat, most likely in the same position that you are, thinking about my next career move, where did I want to go? Birmingham was a big pull for me, biggest local authority in Europe, size didn't faze me.

I've lived and worked in and around the region for my whole career in local government. This was an aspirational career step to me. I'm a pretty local girl. And my mum's Birmingham, born and bred. In my early career I always felt Birmingham led the region both locally and nationally, there's an incredible ambition in Birmingham, it's like you can feel it. The council is setting its sights on greatness, wanting to be the best in the world.

I want to be part of that, to help Birmingham to deliver on those aspirations and its priorities. What's more, I'm not the only one that feels that way. Birmingham is attracting some brilliant new leadership, including the arrival of a talented new chief exec. All seasoned individuals, who were not new to those roles. That bring a wealth of practical experience to Birmingham, not fazed by challenges and who know what good looks and feels like.

**Describe some key challenges that the Council is facing and how important the finance team are in tackling these?**

Birmingham has done really well economically as a city, but there is a lot to do. To create a brighter future for all of our citizens and tackling inequality is at the heart of that. We have a really ambitious delivery plan, running up to May 2022 and beyond. So those are the new kind of council, to deliver services to our citizens, our communities and our businesses deserve and need. Finance is absolutely central to that. We're a key player. To ensure that all financial resources are aligned behind that delivery plan, and that every penny is spent really well.

**What is the future direction of the finance team at the Council?**

I believe it is really important to have a sense of purpose and direction, without that we're a little bit rudder less. As a team, we've established a vision for finance and a roadmap that sets us up to be the best in class, in finance. This is so incredibly exciting for us at this moment and a really great time for you guys to join us. We're changing the finance offer to the council. Empowering self-service, adding value through greater data analytics and insights. We've got a new Oracle fusion ERP system being implemented, and that will massively support us in this change and new offer. We're also developing a workforce strategy. To support the teams, the staff. I want to make sure that people are really clear on the development pathways. I want to make sure we've got some really great modern apprenticeships and some graduate schemes. What's great is that we have the encouraged and support from both within and outside the council, including CIPFA everybody really rooting for us. And that's so important. And we have some really fantastic internal talent to get us there.

**What inspires you about working for Birmingham City Council?**

By virtue of its size, Birmingham has greater visibility and presence than any other local authority. As the second city, there's a lot going on here. You'll get to be involved in some really high profile schemes and initiatives. We've got the Commonwealth games coming to Birmingham in 2022. We're delivering new homes for our residents, taking advantage of open spaces and waterways, and really great transport links. The public realm improvements make Birmingham a great destination for many thousands of visitors. And the economic regeneration is evident with a thriving local economy. Birmingham offers you a really great platform to grow, and to spring your career forward. You get to work in a coaching and supporting environment, with like minded people. We want to create and promote leaders, wherever you are in the organisation, wherever you are in your career journey. And you will get some really great opportunities to develop. We promise to give you those great opportunities, to achieve your goals and ambitions. The way I see it, is if you are willing to give it your all. You care, you're passionate about what you do, then you'll be rewarded.

**What does a career at Birmingham promise that other authorities may not?**

I tell everybody at Birmingham, that you feel like you can fly. You're trusted, you're empowered, and encouraged to give it a go. To make improvement, to drive change. And you're supported to achieve those goals. Nobody wants to see anybody fail at Birmingham. It's great to see the passion in our members. It's great to feel well led. And that leadership is really visible and relatable. There's no rank, there's no status barrier. You feel motivated to make a difference every day, and I see that in my teams. Having the support of a great team behind me, that pulls together to collectively work through our challenges is just fantastic. Knowing that you're valued and you're listened to. It is the best environment in which to thrive.