









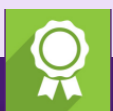
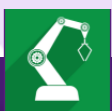


Scrutiny Annual Report 2018-19



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Governance and Scrutiny Arrangements

Overview and scrutiny is a key aspect of this Council's governance framework and integral to decision making. The scrutiny function in Sandwell informs policy making, reviews delivery, monitors performance and shapes services to support services and Sandwell Vision 2030 ambitions.

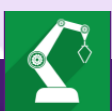
The Council appoints a Scrutiny Management Board and four thematic Scrutiny Boards to discharge the functions conferred by section 12 of the Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent legislation. The local authority has a duty to have a means of scrutinising crime and disorder, health and flood provisions under the following legislation:

- Crime and Disorder Functions – Police and Justice Act 2006.
- Health functions – National Health Services Act 2006.

The Scrutiny Board terms of reference as approved by Council, and set out in the Council's Constitution, make provision for the Council to carry out the duty.

Scrutiny powers are provided through a legislative framework for enhancing both the democratic accountability of public services at a local level and the crucial leadership role for councillors as champions of their communities. The scrutiny function maintains overview and holds to account partner and Council services through regular reports to the Scrutiny Boards:

- Annual Adults' and Children's Safeguarding Reports;
- Budget Monitoring and Outturn Reports;
- Partnership approach to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour;
- Health Reports.



The scrutiny function is member led. Scrutiny work programming process ensures that the public, businesses, council officers and partners are consulted to bring forward potential topics for scrutiny to look at in the work programme. The work programme is reviewed regularly to check that items are still relevant for scrutiny, that it is the right time to look at the item, this ensures that scrutiny contributes to other processes, it does not replicate other work and that it captures emerging items and topics.

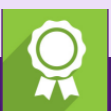
With fewer resources in local government, decisions are critical and may impact on how we deliver services. Scrutiny adds challenge on several levels and it is more important than ever to monitor performance, to check the best use of resource is being made and to monitor and challenge when things are not going to plan. Scrutiny is most effective and adds value when it is properly scoped and supported, the scrutiny function must be open and transparent.

Partnership Working

Partnership working is an integral part of the scrutiny process and good governance. It creates an environment and a platform to shape and develop policies and services with our key strategic partners for the people and communities in Sandwell.

Scrutiny Chairs actively encourage partners to participate in the scrutiny function. During 2018-19 there are several good examples of how this happens:

- local Clinical Commissioning Group, hospitals and other relevant health bodies regularly attended and contributed to the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board meetings;
- appointment of a new co-opted member nominated by the Tenant Review Panel to ensure the voice of Council tenants is represented at Scrutiny Board level;
- the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board maintained overview of preparations and progress towards the transfer of children's services to the Sandwell Children's Trust and considered how emerging issues were being addressed. The Council retains accountability for children's services and scrutiny will continue to monitor delivery and budget.



Member Development

The Scrutiny Team delivered two training courses last year, for Scrutiny Board Chairs and for Scrutiny Members. Both sessions were well attended and feedback was excellent. Scrutiny members are offered training and development opportunities through the Council's Member Development Programme to:

- strengthen their own skills and knowledge;
- ensure that scrutiny in Sandwell continues to deliver robust challenge;
- achieve outcomes that contribute to the Sandwell Vision 2030;
- ensure that our partnership arrangements and partner organisations are effectively scrutinised in line with statutory guidance.

The Member Development Programme has recently been refreshed to provide interactive and engaging sessions for members to ascertain members learning, development and support requirements to help them to deliver the priorities contained in Sandwell's Vision 2030.

Scrutiny Boards

In 2018-19, Sandwell Council approved Scrutiny Boards to conduct the scrutiny function as follows:

Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

Membership:

Chair and Chairs of the four Scrutiny Boards

Chair



Cllr Peter
Hughes



Cllr Zahoor
Ahmed



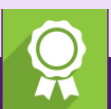
Cllr Elaine
Giles



Cllr Laura
Rollins



Cllr Joyce
Underhill






Remit of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board:

Budget strategy; budget monitoring; examination of budget setting and outturn reports and scrutiny of the treasury management function. The Board is also responsible for scrutinising departmental Business Plans, and all Council functions and activities not covered by the terms of reference of the other Scrutiny Boards, including the corporate core; information and communication technology; corporate information management; organisational development; human resources and performance management.

Four Portfolio-focused Scrutiny Boards




The Council also has four Scrutiny Boards each with its own terms of reference covering aspects of the Council's, and its partners', work.

Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board




Chair	Vice-Chair	Vice-Chair	Members	Remit
			Cllr Samiya Akhter Cllr Peter Allen Cllr Lorraine Ashman Cllr Sandra Hevican Cllr Mushtaq Hussain Cllr Sue Phillips Cllr Laura Rollins Cllr Farut Shaeen	Children's Social Care Children and Family Services Education
Cllr Joyce Underhill	Cllr Sharon Davies	Cllr Mohammed Yaseen Hussain		
Co-opted Members:			Rev Peter French (until Jan 2019) Charlotte Ward-Lewis (Jan 2019 onwards) Tahira Majid	Church of England Parent Governor



Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board




Chair	Vice-Chair	Vice-Chair	Members	Remit
			Cllr Zahoor Ahmed	Economy
Cllr Laura Rollins	Cllr Lorraine Ashman	Cllr Rajbir Singh	Cllr Wasim Ali	Employment and Skills
			Cllr Keith Allcock	Transport
			Cllr Jenny Chidley	Environment
			Cllr Elaine Giles	
			Cllr Ian Jones	
			Cllr Liam Preece	
			Cllr Mohinder Tagger	

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board

Chair	Vice-Chair	Vice-Chair	Members	Remit
			Cllr Babu Singh Bawa	Health and Public Health
Cllr Elaine Giles	Cllr Susan Downing	Cllr Bob Lloyd	Cllr Samiya Akhter	Services for older/vulnerable adults
			Cllr Maria Crompton	Local safeguarding arrangements for adults
			Cllr Olwen Jones	
			Cllr Farut Shaeen	
			Cllr Chris Tranter	
			Cllr Caroline White	
			Cllr Christopher Worsey	



Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

Chair	Vice-Chair	Vice-Chair	Members	Remit
			Cllr Keith Allcock Cllr Jenny Chidley Cllr Joanne Hadley Cllr Mohammed Yaseen Hussain Cllr Mushtaq Hussain Cllr Stephen Jones Cllr Sue Phillips Cllr Caroline White	Crime and anti-social behaviour Housing Leisure and culture Voluntary sector
Cllr Zahoor Ahmed	Cllr Maria Crompton	Cllr Sandra Hevican		
			Co-opted Member: Mike Babb (until Jan 2019) John Cash (Jan 2019 onwards)	Tenant Review Panel

The Scrutiny Boards use a range of methods to deliver their work programme and carry out scrutiny, such as:

- inviting witnesses or experts to provide reports and presentations;
- giving consideration of 'pre-decision' matters, where the Board considered and commented on key decisions to be made by Cabinet;
- inviting Cabinet Members, service providers and partners to attend to report on progress, performance and monitoring.

Actions arising from scrutiny meetings are recorded and monitored as part of the agenda and work programme planning process. Recommendations made by scrutiny to Cabinet are monitored to ensure the decisions and actions filter through to relevant business plans and working practices, and that the outcomes arising from scrutiny recommendations can be tracked.

More information and background to the topics considered by the Boards can be viewed on the Council's Committee Management Information System.



Scrutiny Activity 2018-19



34 Scrutiny Board meetings

4 Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny meetings held with Birmingham City Council



2 site visits to see services first hand.

Met with witnesses to hear their views and experiences



48 topics considered

Over 37 recommendations made



Contribution to Vision 2030



Sandwell is a community where our families have high aspirations and where we pride ourselves on equality of opportunity and on our adaptability and resilience.

Childcare Sufficiency Report 2018/19

The Children's Services Scrutiny Board considered how the Council was meeting its duty to secure sufficient childcare under the Children's and Families Act 2014 and in line with the requirements of the March 2018 Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities.

The Board wanted to know more about how parents were consulted to ensure parents had a voice on what provision they needed for children in Sandwell. The Board highlighted the need to raise awareness about childcare where to look and who to contact for more information.

Members welcomed the progress being made against the 2017 Childcare Sufficiency Report and endorsed the 11 recommendations arising from the findings of the 2018 report. Comments and observations of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board were considered by Cabinet 25 July 2018.



Sandwell is a place where we live healthy lives and live them for longer, and where those of us who are vulnerable feel respected and cared for.



Joint Health Scrutiny Work with Birmingham City Council

As Sandwell comes under the Sandwell and West Birmingham area for health related services including the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Hospitals Trust, there is a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee with members from both Sandwell and Birmingham Councils.

The members work together to scrutinise important health topics affecting the Sandwell and West Birmingham area. There has been a strong focus on a range of oncology related services including specialised gynae-oncology and solid tumour oncology. There has also been significant overview of the Midland Metropolitan Hospital project. Both topics will remain on the work programme for the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Tackling Isolation and Loneliness

Keeping people well in their own homes and tackling isolation and loneliness was identified as a priority for the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board.

An evaluation of the Community Offer social prescribing model was considered by the Board. The Community Offer, based on reducing isolation and loneliness, had ceased to operate, however lessons learnt were considered. The assumption was that the investment in low level social and practical support would generate long-term savings across the health and social care system through avoided hospital admissions and readmissions, and delays in permanent admission to care homes.

The Board established a work group to investigate the work of the Council and its partners in relation to tackling loneliness and isolation. Members considered the work of the SPARCS project from the Murray Hall Community Trust which supported people over 65 years to maintain their health and wellbeing and to reduce social isolation and loneliness.



Tackling Isolation and Loneliness (cont.)

The Social Isolation Work Group attended a workshop on the strategy for social isolation with the Voluntary sector arranged by Adult Social Care, Sandwell Council.

The Board will carry forward the matter of tackling social isolation in the 2019-2020 work programme.

Assessments for Aids and Adaptations

Supporting People to live independently in their own home had remained a priority for members of the Health and Adults Social Care Scrutiny Board.

The Board found that Sandwell had had some success in recruiting occupational therapists and that there had been an 36% increase in the number of assessments carried out in Sandwell 2017-18. The Council would continue to work with Coventry University to increase the Occupational Therapy Student Programme to support the national agenda to address the shortage of therapists.

Members of the Board visited the Independent Living Centre in Smethwick to view the demonstration flat and tried out the range of adaptations available to support people in their own homes.

The Board found that the increase in demand for all aids and adaptation services had put pressure on occupational therapy services but there was no resource to grow capacity. They considered the time taken to deal with the number of lower value aids and adaptation assessments and how this would free up some capacity to ease the pressure on occupational therapy services.

Members made a recommendation to Cabinet to increase the financial limit for minor adaptations currently provided free of charge to residents with an assessed need from the value of £1,000 to £1,500 as part of the current review of the Council's aids and adaptations policies.

Cabinet agreed the recommendation.





Our workforce and young people are skilled and talented, geared up to respond to changing business needs and to win rewarding jobs in a growing economy.

Digital Strategy 2018-2021

The Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board considered the Digital Strategy 2018-2021 as a pre-decision scrutiny item.

The Digital Strategy set out, in a non-technical way, Sandwell's high-level vision, principles and ambitions for digital transformation. The outcomes set out in the Strategy had been determined following engagement with the Council's workforce and the communities of Sandwell. The outcomes focussed not only on developing digital services, but also ensuring residents were supported in a digital world.

The Strategy set out four strategic outcomes:

- Digital Communities supporting Social Inclusion;
- Skills, Confidence and Trust;
- Transformation of Services;
- Organisation Fit for Future.

The Board welcomed the Digital Strategy and supported the Strategic Outcomes, Key Themes and Guiding Principles that had been identified. However, members commented on the need to ensure that the Strategy also reflected the growing importance of regional and national opportunities, particularly those presented by the West Midlands Combined Authority.



Implementation of the Devolution Agreement—Adult Education Budget—Transfer of Powers to West Midlands Combined Authority

The Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board considered the full devolution of the Adult Education Budget to the Combined Authority. It was confirmed that the devolution order would not contain apprenticeships, adult offender learning or provision for people aged 16-18 but certain functions contained in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 would transfer to the Combined Authority. The Management Board welcomed the approach for greater local and regional collaboration to map provision and identify gaps to target funding more effectively.



Our children benefit from the best start in life and a high quality of education throughout their school careers with outstanding support from their teachers and families.



Sandwell Children's Trust Performance Monitoring

Sandwell's Children's Services transferred to Sandwell Children's Trust on 1st April 2018. The Chief Executive and the Chair Sandwell Children's Trust have attended the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board on two occasions to provide six monthly performance updates from the Trust.

Scrutiny has received comprehensive reports from the Trust and has considered and challenged the Trust on a range of issues including staff permanence and staffing levels, numbers of looked after children and permanence, quality of audits carried out and resources. Scrutiny has highlighted good practice and matters for further development.

The Trust has reported and responded to questions relating to performance and processes and highlighted the key risks for achieving success including the demand and the number of young people coming into the system.

Overview and performance monitoring of the Children's Trust is a key part of the Council's governance arrangements and included in the Trust contract agreement.





Our communities are built on mutual respect and taking care of each other, supported by all the agencies that ensure we feel safe and protected in our homes and local neighbourhoods

Emergency Accommodation

The Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board considered Emergency Accommodation for the homeless in Sandwell. The Board identified the possibility of increasing the use of some of the Council-owned housing stock as Temporary Accommodation.

It was considered that this would help make effective use of properties and would reduce costs related to securing externally-provided Temporary Accommodation. This course of action is being followed with an anticipated increase to 50 units by April 2019. This will greatly reduce the need to use Bed and Breakfasts during 2019/20, reducing the cost to the Council while providing a better quality service to households requiring temporary accommodation.



We have excellent and affordable public transport that connects us to all local centres and to jobs in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, the airport and the wider West Midlands



Cycling Infrastructure Programme 2018/19 and 2019/20

The Cabinet referred the Cycling Infrastructure Programme to the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board for review and consideration.

The work undertaken by the Council in relation to Sandwell's cycling infrastructure supported the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan—Movement for Growth. The cycling network as a whole contributes to the provision of a high-quality transport system linking homes and communities to jobs and facilities.

The Board endorsed the programme of cycle infrastructure improvements but it agreed there was a need for future Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plans to be reviewed as part of pre-decision scrutiny processes.





We now have many new homes to meet a full range of housing needs in attractive neighbourhoods and close to key transport routes.

Housing Allocations Policy

A number of challenges impacting upon housing allocations were discussed by the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board including:-

- Affordability within the Private Rented Sector was becoming a significant issue as there was a weekly affordability gap of between £16-18 for properties of all sizes.
- The five-year residency test could also cause some households to be excluded from the housing register because the test itself, or their inability to provide proof even when they had been resident within Sandwell for the required length of time.
- There was a mismatch between the customer base for Council housing and the levels of age restrictions on certain types of accommodation.

Officers were reviewing the Policy and consultation was being carried out with a wide range of organisations in addition to the Scrutiny Board including the Tenant Review Panel, Tenant Management Organisations, the Housing Management Partner for the Sandwell PFI and Sandwell Community Information and Participation Service (known as SCIPS).

Members were keen to ensure they had a full understanding of the outcomes of the consultation before formulating further recommendations. This important Policy will therefore be the subject of further scrutiny prior to revisions being submitted to the Cabinet in 2019/20.



Our distinctive towns and neighbourhoods are successful centres of community life, leisure and entertainment where people increasingly choose to bring up their families.



Waste and recycling in Sandwell

Sandwell Council is a Waste Collection Authority (WCA), under the Environmental Protection Act 1992 and is required to provide a collection of household waste in its area, it has provided this since 2010 in an Integrated Waste and Cleansing Partnership with Serco Limited.

The Economy Transport Skills and Environment Scrutiny Board considered the 2017/18 performance on the contract with Serco, visited the waste recycling and transfer site, deliberated the Government New Waste Strategy and thinking about separate food waste collections and statistics, and considered the EU amending Directive 2008/98/EC which requires separate bio-waste collections or recycle by 31st December 2023.

The site visit highlighted the need to raise public awareness of how to separate waste and plastics to reduce the amount of contaminated waste and to have a closer look at the future of organic food waste collection.

Sandwell has to provide a recycling collection to householders but there is currently no specific requirement to provide a food waste collection service. Sandwell Council spent £640,000 per annum on food waste collections but the amount of actual food waste collected in Sandwell was only 18% across the Borough. The Board highlighted the need to investigate the demand for the service and suggested a range of variations to the service and savings options to look at and bring back to a future meeting in an options appraisal.

The Government new resources and waste strategy was published in December 2018 and Sandwell Council has fed comments back to the Cabinet Select Committee about food collections, EU legislation and strategy. Some local authorities are making the decision to discontinue food waste collection services on primarily cost grounds.

The Board highlighted the need for the Cabinet Member to consider the findings of the Select Committee on the new waste strategy, an options appraisal for the future of food waste in Sandwell and to raise awareness and encourage residents to reduce food waste and focus for future food waste campaigns in Sandwell on 'reduce first and recycle last'.





Legacy Plans for the Aquatics Centre and Commonwealth Games 2022

The Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board reviewed the proposals for the development of a Legacy Plan for the new Aquatics Centre and the Commonwealth Games 2022.

The Legacy work was based around five key themes:

- Sport Development and Clubs;
- Public Health and Physical Activity;
- Skills and Education;
- Regeneration, Job, Tourism and Place Building; and
- Culture and Communities.

There would be significant consultation and engagement taking place to develop the Legacy and the Scrutiny Board would be considering the Plan in 2019/20.





Sandwell has become a location of choice for industries of the future where the local economy and high performing companies continue to grow.

Local Enterprise Partnerships

The Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board considered the Government's paper on "Strengthened Local Enterprise Partnerships" and was asked to consider the implications for Sandwell.

Sandwell was a member of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, along with Dudley, Walsall and City of Wolverhampton Councils.

The Government's paper made clear that the longer term aspiration was to have Local Enterprise Partnership boundaries mirroring Combined Authority areas (in Sandwell and the Black Country's case as part of the West Midlands). While the Board welcomed the aimed improvements in diversity and accountability outlined in the Strengthened Local Enterprise Partnerships Strategy, it agreed that the Black Country and Sandwell is best serviced by the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership.



Sandwell now has a national reputation for getting things done, where all local partners are focused on what really matters in people's lives and communities.



Robust budget monitoring

The Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board has carried out extensive monitoring and reviewing of the Council's finances. The Cabinet, which recognises the significant role of Scrutiny in this work, refers budget monitoring, outturns and proposed budgets and business plans to the Scrutiny Management Board throughout the year for detailed review. This work has proven ever more vital in the face of the Government's continued austerity programme.

The Scrutiny Management Board made a number of recommendations arising from its regular monitoring including:

- requesting the consideration of off-site construction units, for example one-bedroom pod style units, for providing temporary accommodations to homeless people;
- identifying topics for in-depth review as part of the Scrutiny Work Programme in 2018/19 and 2019/20.



Air Quality Strategy

The draft Air Quality Strategy 2018-2023 had paused in 2018 because of a challenge in court to the Government, by Client earth, for Councils with higher levels of Nitrogen Dioxide to do more to improve the quality of air in their area. Sandwell was one of 33 Councils to receive a Ministerial Direction to undertake a Targeted Feasibility study on Nitrogen Dioxide reduction. The Government also advised Birmingham to develop a Clean Air Zone (CAZ).

The Health and Adult Social Care and the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Boards considered the specific challenges for Sandwell including the transport infrastructure, motorways and A-roads across the Borough; Industry and logistics companies; and the age of vehicles in Sandwell. The Boards heard from officers, considered work that the West Midlands Combined Authority was doing relating to the Birmingham Clean Air Zone (CAZ).

The Boards highlighted the need to consult with local ward members to seek their views about congestion and air quality in their area.

There would be a specific workshop for Scrutiny Members to look at the consultation process and feedback, comments from discussions with Birmingham on the CAZ and the implications for Sandwell with a focus on what more the council could do.

Scrutiny Board would consider the revised draft Air Quality Action Plan 2018-2023 as pre-decision scrutiny in Spring 2019 to check that the strategy met the requirements of the Ministerial Direction including additional sites by Defra from updated Pollution Climate Mapping data; to check it sets out mitigations against the impact of the Birmingham Clean Air Zone; and focuses on improved air quality locally to reduce the number of hot spot zones.



Topic List

Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

Budgets

- Outturns
- Quarterly Monitoring

Directorate business plans

Vision 2030 - tracking our journey

Implementation of Devolution Agreement - Adult Education Budget (Transfer of powers to West Midlands Combined Authority)

West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny

Digital Strategy 2018-2021

Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

Foster Carers report

The Sandwell Children's Trust—Monitoring and Performance reporting

Cambridge Education Review and remaining Children's Services in the Council

Play and Youth Services

Childcare Sufficiency

Expansion of Westminster School

School Place Planning

Education Performance Planning

Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements



**Economy, Skills,
Transport and
Environment Scrutiny
Board**

Integrated Waste and Cleansing Contract
Cycling Infrastructure Programme 2018/19 and
2019/20
Growing what we have got and supporting
local business
Review of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP)
Waste and Recycling Visit
Air Quality Update
Skill in Sandwell
Black Country LEP
Food Waste Recycling

**Health and Adult
Social Care Scrutiny
Board**

Re-establishment of the Joint Health Scrutiny
Arrangements with Birmingham City Council
Tackling Loneliness and Social Isolation
SPARCS partnership
Update on Treatment Policies Evidence Based
Policy Harmonisation Programme
Transforming Care Partnership (TCP) for adults,
Children and Young People with Learning
Disabilities and/or Autism across the Black Country
Proposed Closure of the Halcyon Birth Centre
Sustainability and Transformation Partnership
Public Health Development Officers role and
delivery plan
Assessments for aids and adaptations



**Safer
Neighbourhoods and
Active Communities
Scrutiny Board**

Anti-Social Behaviour, Community Safety and
Crime in Sandwell
Temporary Accommodation for the Homeless
Burial Spaces in Sandwell
Housing Allocations Policy Review
Community Legacy of the Commonwealth Games

**Joint Health Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee**

Solid Tumour Oncology Services and Specialised
Cancer Surgery Services in Sandwell and West
Birmingham
Midlands Metropolitan Hospital
Proposed Changes to Some GP Practices in
Sandwell and West Birmingham
Measures to Address Waiting Times at Sandwell
and West Birmingham Hospitals
Recommissioning of Gynae-oncology Services

