

Report to Council

2 March 2021

Subject:	Corporate Plan 2020 - 2025
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1. That the progress made towards the achievement of the strategic priorities set out in the Corporate Plan - Big Plans for a Great Place 2020-2025, as set out in Appendix 1, be noted.
- 1.2. That the plan to refresh the Corporate Plan during 2021 be approved.

2. Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1. Whilst consideration of Council Finances is a substantive item on the agenda for Council to consider, discussion on the Corporate Plan cannot be done in isolation from this, the Council's budget is an integral part of our strategic planning.
- 2.2. The Corporate Plan contains details about future service provision and how each directorate will spend the target budget available to them. A refresh of the detailed actions that underpin the delivery of the strategic objectives is required to take into account the impact of the pandemic on Sandwell as a whole and on the organisation.



3. How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people
	People live well and age well
	Strong resilient communities
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods
	A strong and inclusive economy
	A connected and accessible Sandwell

- 3.1. The Corporate Plan “Sandwell Plan – Big Plans for a Great Place” sets out the strategic priorities for Sandwell Council that will enable us to contribute the achievement of Vision 2030. This report sets out a summary of progress that has been made against each of the strategic priorities since approval by Council in March 2020.
- 3.2. The council’s financial status will be the vehicle to deliver the strategic outcomes in the Corporate Plan.
- 3.3. The integration of the corporate planning and budgetary processes ensures that the limited resources available to the council are directed to corporate priorities to achieve maximum impact.

4. Context and Key Issues

- 4.1. Background and COVID-19 Impact Assessment
- 4.1.1. Our Corporate Plan – Big Plans for a Great Place, sets out what the Council will do to deliver Vision 2030, and Sandwell’s 10 ambitions, over the period 2020 to 2025. The Corporate Plan was approved by Council on 10 March 2020.



- 4.1.2. The Plan is not intended to be an exhaustive list of everything we do as a council, but simply set out our strategic outcomes which will guide us in making sure our people and communities thrive and prosper.
- 4.1.3. The driving theme of the Corporate Plan is One Team: One Council. This reflects the culture change that is being delivered through strong leadership in an open, honest and transparent environment. The six strategic outcomes cannot be delivered by one directorate alone. This approach moved away from the previous system of individual directorate business plans and sought to unite the organisation to deliver the best results.
- 4.1.4. The council recognised that it would have to adapt its business structures and focus resources to deliver the strategic priorities. This would also involve continuing to strengthen partnership working and developing strong links with local people and businesses to make sure the strategic priorities became a reality. Although delayed due to the pandemic, progress has been made on the Senior Management Restructure and further work to focus the council's resources to deliver the strategic priorities will continue in 2021/22.
- 4.1.5. The intention during the first half of 2020/21 had been to work with staff, members, partners and communities to develop delivery plans for each of the strategic priorities. These delivery plans would have mapped out the detailed actions that would lead to the achievement of the strategic priorities.
- 4.1.6. However, the coronavirus pandemic reached the UK at the end of March 2020. This meant that focus has been diverted to the initial response and establishing longer-term support mechanisms as the pandemic has continued into 2021.
- 4.1.7. The pandemic has impacted on many aspects of everyday life, communities and on our economy. At the same time, businesses and other organisations have been preparing for the UK's departure from the European Union. It was clear that the impact of the pandemic on Sandwell Council and the borough as a whole needed to be understood to ensure our priorities and future actions would address the needs of our communities.



- 4.1.8. In May 2020, the council's approach to reset and recovery planning was approved by Emergency Committee. This set out a roadmap to determine the impact of coronavirus on our organisation and our communities, and how this would inform the actions to achieve the strategic priorities of the Corporate Plan. Phase One of this approach was to conduct a series of impact assessments on:
- Communities
 - Economy
 - Staff
 - Finances
 - Services and transformation programmes.
- 4.1.9. The findings of Phase One were reported to Cabinet in September 2020. This set out that whilst the impact of the pandemic had been far reaching, it had exacerbated known issues affecting Sandwell rather than raise any new areas for exploration. The findings formed the basis for a series of engagement events with members, staff and partners throughout the autumn, and will drive the second phase of our reset and recovery planning to develop actions to address the key issues affecting our residents.
- 4.1.10. Plans to engage staff across the organisation on developing the action plans through virtual events have been delayed due to national lockdown restrictions and the requirement of staff to focus on response actions or backfill capacity for redeployed staff. However, a robust communication and engagement plan is in place that is designed to be flexible and responsive to the needs and priorities of the organisation. This will offer opportunity for all staff to engage and help shape our way forward; further details are included below in section 4.3.



4.2. Key Achievements

- 4.2.1. It must be remembered that during 2020, Sandwell Council has responded to unprecedented challenges as a council in every aspect of what we do and how we do it. We have responded effectively to the emergency of the pandemic as one Council, establishing our business continuity rapidly and calmly. We have shown how we can mobilise flexibly and quickly. This has been a true one council, one team response where departments have been irrelevant to the job we've needed to do.
- 4.2.2. This goes for how we have worked with our partners too – we have pulled together as a whole place to support the people of Sandwell. Organisational boundaries between us have been invisible.
- 4.2.3. At the same time, we have continued service delivery where it was possible. We must be very proud of our overall achievement and our front-line services, supporting our communities in times of crisis. To do this we have had to shift our services to a digital platform where possible, this has been astounding and impressive.
- 4.2.4. The End of Year Review attached in Appendix 1 to this report sets out our key achievements in 2020. The following summarises some of these key achievements in terms of both our response to the pandemic and in delivering our strategic objectives.
- 4.2.5. **Response to Covid**

Impressive outbreak response:

- Response service operational seven days a week
- Local contact and tracing service recognised as model system by Cabinet Office
- With partners delivered testing centres for Covid in a community swabbing service exclusive to Sandwell



Safeguarding our most vulnerable

- 12000 of our most vulnerable people supported through welfare calls
- Food distribution hub created at Tipton Sports Academy
- Adapting our services for children and adults and keeping them safe
- Outbreak response in Sandwell's care homes limited death rates significantly

Administering grants and support efficiently to people and businesses

- £57m worth of business grants distributed to over 5,000 businesses
- Council tax hardship payments of £1.6m paid
- Over 3,000 Council Tax reduction scheme new claims
- Test and trace support payments made

Responding to relentless changes in government guidance and legislation

- Successfully implemented hundreds of Covid guidance/legislative changes across our statutory services
- Supporting and advising care homes, schools and businesses constantly
- Influencing national policy makers

Responsive collaborative working across the council and with our partners

- Extensive cross-council working demonstrated in a number of ways such as providing welfare calls and support to the food hub
- Willing redeployment and volunteering key to successfully delivering the right services at the right time
- Effective Covid response relied on good partnership working across numerous sectors on a daily basis
- Building trust and codesigning solutions with partners
- Maintaining good reputation and relationships with central government departments



Finding creative and innovative solutions

- Striking level of adaptation to huge Covid-imposed change
- Sandwell influenced national delivery models for shielding, infection control, and locally sourced PPE
- Schools encouraged to support local communities through food banks, food collection and distribution of food parcels

Taking strides in delivering services virtually

- Many services adapted to continue delivery online
- MS Teams Live deployed to ensure effective decision-making, operational management and engagement

Communicating and engaging clearly with our community and each other

- Extensive community-based communication undertaken
- Monthly meetings with faith leaders to produce communications, which they helped to deliver
- Detached Youth Work continued to engage young people
- Over 500 young people were engaged in a Covid impact survey

4.2.6. Delivery of our Strategic Objectives

One Council, One Team

- Collaborative working has grown significantly, breaking down departmental boundaries
- Great strides in progressing workplace vision with 90% of workforce working from home
- Creative, digital solutions ensuring our services continued
- Establishment of virtual committee meetings and staff conferences
- Transformation agenda on track

Best Start in Life for Children and Young People

- Approval for the first music-focused free school in England in partnership with City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
- Strengthening and developing further our strategic partnership working – through SHAPE, Police and Crime Panel, Strategic Commissioning Partnership
- Extended our offer of support to care leavers up to age 25



- 20% increase in children successfully placed for adoption compared to previous year
- Sandwell rated top employer for apprentices
- Winner of the acclaimed MJ Award for Innovation in Children's Services

People Live Well, Age Well

- Keeping people safe and maintaining wellbeing despite the pandemic
- An acceleration of personalised care
- The council and our partners have pulled together as a whole system e.g. discharge to assess, to enable timely discharge and finding solutions to PPE together
- Proactive in our engagement with rough sleepers
- Adapted our Move More Sandwell programme to encourage people to move more at home and allocated our fleet of 40 bicycles to frontline health workers

Strong Resilient Communities

- Increased civic participation/volunteering in response to Covid
- Supporting the voluntary sector, enabling people to support each other through for instance the food bank
- Increased demand on services for the community,
- Welfare Rights support helped 7,700 people, bringing in £17m
- New Climate Change Strategy ratified, and we declared climate emergency
- Huge strides towards channel shift
- Customers using other methods of payment to cash up significantly

Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods

- Continuing to build our council house programme at pace
- Progressed major housing regeneration projects – Friar Park, Brandhall, Grove Lane
- More than 1000 empty properties have been made ready for new tenants
- Fire safety in our high and low-rise blocks is critical following the Hackitt report



A Strong Inclusive Economy

- The Inclusive Economy Deal and a Community Wealth Building action plan launched
- Towns Fund Programme advancing well, including Accelerated Programme
- Work is on track to deliver the Sandwell Aquatic Centre on schedule
- Other major regeneration projects progressing well - Bull Street, West Bromwich Gateway area, Wednesbury Heritage Action Zone

A Connected, Accessible Sandwell

- Delivered a suite of improvements to our cycling and walking network
- Submitted application for funding for Birchley Island to the Department for Transport
- Engaged our local schools in Road Safety week this year
- Commissioned the first phase of work to develop a transport interchange at Dudley Port
- Wednesbury to Brierley Hill metro line underway
- Worked with TfWM on the Bike Share scheme that will see a cycle hire scheme being rolled out in Sandwell in 2021

4.3. Corporate Plan Refresh

4.3.1. Building on the impact work undertaken in Phase 1 and 2 of Sandwell's recovery process, work has commenced to understand how the findings of that work affect our Corporate Plan. It is paramount that our guiding strategic framework reflects the changing needs within our communities and that we continue to do the best for the people of Sandwell.

4.3.2. The One Council: One Team ethos underpins our approach to developing this work. The aim being to ensure that we build these plans together, as one organisation.

4.3.3. A robust communication and engagement framework has been developed that offers consistent and meaningful opportunities for members, staff, partners, stakeholders and the community to contribute and help shape our future. This is attached at Appendix 2 and sets out timescales for proposed activity throughout 2021.



4.4. Strategic Resource Implications – Budget 2021/22 – 2023/24

4.4.1. The Cabinet, at its meeting on 10 February 2021, received a report about the provisional local government finance settlement and approved net revenue target budgets for services. The approved funding for each service, including the use of underspends brought forward from previous years, is as follows:

Service	Target Budget £m	Carry Forwards £m	2021/22 Budget £m
Corporate Management	(0.246)	0.000	(0.246)
Resources	18.658	0.000	18.658
Adult Social Care, Health & Wellbeing	87.416	2.728	90.144
Children's Services	86.156	0.000	86.156
Regeneration & Growth	25.741	0.000	25.741
Housing & Communities	18.638	0.000	18.638

4.4.2. Those services have now submitted detailed financial plans. These are shown in the appendices attached to this report and can be summarised as follows:

Service	Gross Expenditure £m	Gross Income £m	2021/22 Net Expenditure £m
Corporate Management	0.371	(0.617)	(0.246)
Resources	40.607	(21.949)	18.658
Adult Social Care, Health & Wellbeing	231.233	(141.089)	90.144
Children's Services	108.887	(22.731)	86.156
Regeneration & Growth	54.201	(28.460)	25.741
Housing & Communities	38.394	(19.756)	18.638



5. Alternative Options

- 5.1. Due the impact of the pandemic on the council's budget position and the continued need to respond to the needs of our communities during this time, the council has not developed savings proposals for the financial year 2021/22. It has taken the position to fund any budget shortfall for this year from one-off use of reserves. This means that service and financial planning for 2022/23 and beyond will need to take into account this shortfall.
- 5.2. Through the planned engagement work on the refresh of the Corporate Plan, members and other stakeholders will be asked to consider a wide range of options around budget savings. Outcomes from these workshops will feed into the future Corporate Plan and budget proposals.

6. Implications

Resources:	See section 4.4 within the main body of the report
Legal and Governance:	The Council has a statutory duty to set a balanced budget by 11 March each year prior to the start of the relevant financial year.
Risk:	Risk implications have been considered by services during the development of the budget proposals.
Equality:	The work carried out during 2020 to understand the impact of the pandemic on our communities will be used as evidence to inform the action plans that sit beneath the strategic priorities within the Corporate Plan. This work will be updated and referred back to throughout the refresh of the Corporate Plan to ensure that we are addressing the inequalities uncovered by the impact assessment. Specific EAs will be conducted as the Corporate Plan is refreshed and new actions are identified. A corporate EA will be presented to Cabinet with the refreshed Corporate Plan together with detailed budget proposals before recommendations to full Council.



Health and Wellbeing:	This information is contained within the main body of the report and the Corporate Plan.
Social Value	The Corporate Plan sets out the strategic priorities for the council, and services will use these to shape delivery to derive maximum social value.

7. Appendices

- Appendix 1: Key Achievements 2020
- Appendix 2: Corporate Plan Refresh – Communications & Engagement Framework

8. Background Papers

- [Report to Council 10 March 2020: Corporate Plan - Big Plans for a Great Place, for the people of Sandwell](#)
- [Emergency Committee Report 27 May 2020: COVID-19 Reset and Recovery Planning – Roadmap of Activity](#)
- [Report to Cabinet 23 September 2020: Reset and Recovery Phase One Findings](#)
 - [Appendix 1 Community Impact](#)
 - [Appendix 2 Economy Impact](#)
 - [Appendix 3 Staff Impact](#)

