

**Safer Neighbourhoods  
and Active Communities  
Scrutiny Board**

**Thursday 28 March, 2019 at 5.30pm  
in Committee Room 1  
at the Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**Agenda**

(Open to Public and Press)

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Members to declare:-
  - (a) any interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting;
  - (b) the existence and nature of any political Party Whip on any matter to be considered at the meeting.
3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 21 February, 2019 as a correct record.
4. Review of the Legacy Plans for the Sandwell Aquatics Centre & Commonwealth Games 2022.

**J Britton**  
**Chief Executive**

Sandwell Council House  
Freeth Street  
Oldbury  
West Midlands

**Distribution:**

Councillors Ahmed (Chair);

Councillors Crompton and Hevican (Vice-Chairs);

Councillors Allcock, Chidley, Hadley, M Y Hussain, M Hussain, S Jones, Phillips and White.

Co-opted Member:-

Mr J Cash

**Agenda prepared by Alex Goddard  
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## **Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board**

### **Apologies for Absence**

The Board will receive any apologies for absence from the members of the Board.

## **Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board**

### **Declaration of Interests**

Members to declare:-

- (a) any interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting;
- (b) the existence and nature of any political Party Whip on any matter to be considered at the meeting.

## **Minutes of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board**

**21<sup>st</sup> February, 2019 at 5.39pm  
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**Present:** Councillor Ahmed (Chair);  
Councillors Crompton and Hevican (Vice-Chairs);  
Councillors Allcock, Chidley, M Hussain, Phillips and  
White;  
Mr J Cash (co-opted member).

**Apology:** Councillor M Y Hussain.

**In attendance:** Nigel Collumbell (Service Manager – Housing  
Management);  
Mark Satchwell (Service Manager – Registration);  
Wendy Peniket (Neighbourhood Manager Housing  
Choice).  
Neville Rowe (Housing Strategy and Research  
Manager).

### **1/19 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2018  
be approved as a correct record.

### **2/19 Provision for New Burials in Sandwell**

The Service Manager – Registration attended the meeting and presented a report on the provision of new burials in Sandwell. This matter had been referred by Council at its meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2018 for further consideration by the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board.

At the October meeting of Council, a proposal to depart from the Site Local Development Plan at Powke Lane, Rowley Regis was considered. This was for approval for a cemetery and associated works at a site near to the existing cemetery in Powke Lane. This would help meet the continued need and demand for burial spaces in Rowley Regis.

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The Board noted that there were eight operational cemeteries in Sandwell which were managed by Registration Services. These were:

- Fallings Heath Cemetery, Wednesbury
- Heath Lane Cemetery, West Bromwich
- Oldbury Cemetery, Smethwick
- Powke Lane Cemetery, Rowley Regis
- Tipton Cemetery, Tipton
- Thimblemill Cemetery, Smethwick
- Uplands Cemetery, Smethwick
- Wood Green Cemetery, Wednesbury.

The only sites currently able to accommodate new burials were Heath Lane, Tipton, Thimblemill, Fallings Heath and Powke Lane. Using historic burial data and numbers of graves available at each site, it was possible to anticipate when each site would no longer be able to accommodate new burials. These indicated particular pressures at the cemeteries serving both Rowley Regis and West Bromwich. Due to these pressures, the pre-purchase of graves at Powke Lane and Heath Lane Cemeteries was no longer being made available.

A number of options for the provision of burial spaces in Sandwell were reported. These included identifying new sites locally across and out of the borough, identifying a more central site meet the needs of several of the six towns, doing nothing (which would result in families needing to bury their deceased in other boroughs) or lobbying government to seek the power to re-use existing graves.

From the comments and questions by members of the Scrutiny Board the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- Nationally 80% of bereaved families chose cremation, the remaining 20% chose burial. Whilst each year there was a decline in the number of families choosing burial, due to a variety of cultural or religious factors the demand for burial was unlikely to ever subside completely.
- A Water Cremation Working Group was now established to look at the possibilities of that method. However, as with traditional cremation, this would not remove the demand for burial spaces.

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- Currently only London boroughs were able to re-use graves, and even then, only one out of 32 London boroughs had chosen to do this.
- The Council did not have responsibility for any churchyard cemeteries that were operated by the Church of England or the Roman Catholic Church.
- The planning application for the new cemetery at Powke Lane had been approved by Planning Committee. The site had undergone relevant investigations and was suitable for such a development. All required consultation in relation to the application had been complied with.
- Only 30% of the open space at Powke Lane was proposed to be used for the cemetery. The remainder would be subject to improvement works and increased security such as CCTV would be installed.
- Additional sites were being investigated in West Bromwich. The possibility of using out of use sports pitches at the former Churchfield School was suggested by the Scrutiny Board.
- The Board noted that costs of burials and cremations in Sandwell were amongst the lowest nationally, which encouraged families from across the Black Country and Birmingham to use Sandwell's bereavement related services. The Board felt that it was important to understand the impact of any fee changes for out-of-borough burials and asked for a further report on this matter.

The Scrutiny Board thanked the Service Manager for attending the meeting and providing detailed information and points for discussion.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board agrees that the option of providing a cemetery at Powke Lane, Rowley Regis is the appropriate one to help meet the need for burial spaces in the part of the borough;
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth be recommended to resubmit to Council the proposal to depart from the Local Development Plan in relation to the proposed cemetery at Powke Lane, Rowley Regis;

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- (3) That, further to (2) above, the Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer ensures that the local community in the vicinity of Powke Lane, Rowley Regis are informed of the proposed improvements to the remaining open space to help address any concerns;
- (4) That the Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer continues to investigate suitable sites that either meet individual towns' burial needs, or provide a central facility for the borough;
- (5) That the Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer provides a further report to the relevant Scrutiny Board in 2019/20 on out-of-borough burials in Sandwell cemeteries, including an impact analysis of any changes to the fees.

3/19

**Review of the Housing Allocations Policy**

Officers from the Housing and Communities Directorate attended the meeting and presented a report on the ongoing review of the Housing Allocations Policy. This review was focussed on four key areas:-

- The increasing affordability gap for residents seeking rented accommodation;
- The current stock/customer base mismatch;
- The Homelessness Reduction Act;
- Looked After Children and other vulnerable persons.

It was reported that the current Housing Allocations Policy came into force in April 2013. The key amendments made at that time included the introduction of a five-year residency test to gain access to the housing register, together with a series of amendments that enabled the best use of the existing housing stock. These included giving greater priority to households living in a flat with children under 16 years of age and to households living in accommodation that was either overcrowded or under-occupied. In addition, 3- and 4-bedroom houses were restricted to households with children under 16 years of age.

It was anticipated that the Cabinet would consider a revised Housing Allocations Policy in June 2019. Discussions and consultation around the Policy review were already underway, including this Scrutiny Board, the



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Tenant Review Panel, Tenant Management Organisations, the Housing Management Partner for the Sandwell PFI and Sandwell Community Information and Participation Service (known as SCIPS).

From the comments and questions by members of the Scrutiny Board the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- Over half of the housing register was made up of households with children under the age of 16.
- In 2017/18 two-thirds of lettings were to new applicants; the remainder were to existing tenants who were transferring to another property.
- There was strong evidence of a weekly affordability gap between the Local Housing Allowance and lower quartile rental rates in the private rented sector.
- The 5-year residency test was felt to act as a growth stimulant for the private rented sector as it caused households to be excluded from the housing register either because of the 5-year requirement, or their ability to provide adequate proof. Furthermore, the test itself was a source of delays due to the administrative burden on the Council and the applicant.
- National guidance suggested a 2-year residency test and this was used by most Councils.
- The under-occupancy penalty (better known as the bedroom tax) imposed by the government was still in effect. The Council took a flexible approach to assist household who were seeking to downsize to prevent being subject to the penalty. One of the ways the Council helped such households was through assistance with moving costs.
- The priority granted to households in overcrowding situations was extended to all individuals aged 18 or over within that household.
- There was the potential for legal challenge to the high proportion of age-restricted blocks that were in Sandwell.

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- The Council was engaging in a significant programme of building housing. The Board felt that local people, for example those looking to downsize but stay in the local area, should get priority for new build properties.
- A recent study by an independent organisation had shown that 26% of homes in Sandwell were in the private rented sector. It was known that nationally around 40% of all Council properties bought under the Right to Buy scheme ended up in the private rented sector.
- If existing Council tenants (of five years or more) moved into new build properties they would be able to exercise their Right to Buy on that new property. In these instances, the Council was able to apply a cost floor calculation to mitigate the financial impact however.
- The need to encourage owners of long-term empty properties was raised and would be included in the work programme for Scrutiny.
- The Tenancy Agreement, as a legal document, had to contain certain wording. The Tenant Handbook could help explain key responsibilities of tenants in plain English.

The Scrutiny Board thanked officers for attending the meeting and providing detailed information and points for discussion.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that the Director – Housing and Communities:-
  - (a) promote the review of the Housing Allocations Policy by various means, including suitable advertising in facilities used by the local community, for example libraries, community centres, doctors' surgeries and places of worship;
  - (b) consider the inclusion of a local lettings plan for new build giving priority to local people looking to downsize within their local area to enable them to remain in their neighbourhoods;

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- (c) provide a report to a future meeting of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board on the outcomes of the consultation on the Housing Allocations Policy review to provide an opportunity for the Board to identify any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet on the revised Policy;
  - (d) provide all councillors with information relating to the support available to Council tenants who are seeking to downsize;
- (2) that the Council's approach to Long Term Empty Properties be included on the work programme for the relevant Scrutiny Board in 2019/20.

(Meeting ended at 8.10pm)

Contact Officer: Alex Goddard Democratic Services Unit 0121 569 3178
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## REPORT TO SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ACTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY BOARD

28 March 2019

<b>Subject:</b>	Review of the Legacy Plans for the Sandwell Aquatics Centre & Commonwealth Games 2022
<b>Cabinet Portfolio:</b>	Cabinet Member for Leisure and Commonwealth Games – Councillor Bill Gavan
<b>Director:</b>	Executive Director – Neighbourhoods – Alison Knight
<b>Contribution towards Vision 2030:</b>	
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b>	Abigail Kellas Project Officer

### DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

**That the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board:**

1. consider and comment upon the information presented on the proposed Legacy plans; and
2. make recommendations on taking forward the approach outlined.

### 1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide Scrutiny with an overview of the recommendations to develop and launch the Legacy workstream.

## 2 IMPLICATIONS FOR VISION 2030

Vision 2030 Ambition	Ambition Statement	How the Legacy to this 2030 Vision
<b>Ambition 1</b>	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.	Through education and sports development, future generations in Sandwell will inspired to compete at the highest level in sports. We will encourage families to be active and inspire all generations to participate in physical activity and join sporting clubs. The Sandwell Aquatics Centre will be a facility which encourages children and athletes to dream of achieving international sports accolades. The facility will provide Smethwick and wider Sandwell with more opportunities than they currently have access to, increasing aspirations across the borough.
<b>Ambition 2</b>	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.	We will help more people be active, fit and well by providing services in a way and a place and time that is convenient to them. Sandwell Council will work closely with the community to ensure that residents use the facility Commonwealth Games to live healthier lives.
<b>Ambition 3</b>	Our workforce and young people are skilled and talented, geared up to respond to changing business needs to win rewarding jobs in a growing economy.	Through the build and development of the Sandwell Aquatics Centre and the delivery of the Commonwealth Games, there will be an increase in jobs and apprenticeship opportunities. The provision of new jobs and training programmes will present the local community with the opportunity to train and develop. Sandwell Council will work closely with schools, colleges and local businesses to ensure that our community gets the best opportunities available to them.
<b>Ambition 4</b>	Our children benefit from the best start in life and a high-quality education through their school careers with outstanding support from their teachers and families.	We will work closely with schools, colleges and other educational providers to ensure there is an established support structure in place which will develop stronger relationships. We will work with families to encourage parents to be more involved in their child's education, using the Commonwealth Games and athlete engagement to drive ambition and inspiration.

Vision 2030 Ambition	Ambition Statement	How the Legacy to this 2030 Vision
<b>Ambition 5</b>	Our communities are built on mutual respect and taking care of each other, supported by all agencies that ensure we feel safe and protected in our homes and local neighbourhoods.	We will provide more opportunity for people to participate and engage in sport by delivering a robust programme of classes, activities and initiatives to divert young people away from anti-social behaviour and crime. We will use the Commonwealth Games as an opportunity to not only develop and continue effective partnership working, but as a platform to showcase Sandwell and build community pride. The Sandwell Aquatics Centre will build stronger community links and encourage communities to come together.
<b>Ambition 6</b>	We have excellent and affordable public transport that connects us to all local centres and jobs in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, the airport and wider West Midlands.	Situated in a residential area, the Sandwell Aquatics Centre will be built between Galton Bridge train station and Rolfe Street train station. Working with partners, we will invest to improve local transport links surrounding the facility, ensuring that people have efficient and cost-effective ways to access the facility across both Sandwell and the wider West Midlands. Public transport improvements will also incorporate the review and improvement of bus routes. We will also invest in the local area to improve highways and increase road accessibility to the aquatics centre.
<b>Ambition 7</b>	We now have many new homes to meet a full range of housing needs in attractive neighbourhoods and close to key transport routes.	The Sandwell Aquatics Centre and the Commonwealth Games will provide local neighbourhoods with excellent facilities. We will encourage new businesses to Sandwell, bringing economic regeneration to the area. This will further encourage the development of new houses and improved highways and transport links in Smethwick, allowing residents to easily access jobs and amenities across the region. The facility will bring investment to Sandwell, meaning that Sandwell will be a noticeably better and more attractive place to live.

Vision 2030 Ambition	Ambition Statement	How the Legacy to this 2030 Vision
<b>Ambition 8</b>	Our distinctive towns and neighbourhoods are successful centres of community life, leisure and entertainment where people increasingly choose to bring up their families.	The aquatics centre is a facility which will be distinctive, not just for Sandwell but for the whole of the West Midlands. We will provide a facility for the community which will be accessible for all as well as facilities which will attract regionally significant competitions providing a boost for the community personally and economically. The legacy of the Commonwealth Games and facility will ensure that community life resonates outwardly to the wider community of Sandwell.
<b>Ambition 9</b>	Sandwell has become a location of choice for industries of the future where the local economy and high performing companies continue to grow.	We will provide local businesses with the opportunity to be involved in the build of the facility, which will provide a boost for the local economy. The Sandwell Aquatics Centre and Commonwealth Games will be of interest to businesses nationwide. Business in Sandwell will continue to grow as a result of the Sandwell Aquatics Centre and Commonwealth Games, further developing the local economy.
<b>Ambition 10</b>	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.	<p>The Sandwell Aquatics Centre and Commonwealth Games will mean that Sandwell has a national reputation for delivering. The Commonwealth Games will encourage local partners and businesses to come together to support and contribute to the delivery of the games and success of the facility.</p> <p>The impact of the games and legacy of the facility must stretch much further than the 2022 Commonwealth Games. The Sandwell Aquatics Centre will become a facility that is nationally recognised for developing athletes in both swimming and diving that can compete at the highest level.</p>

### 3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 To date, the priority of the Sandwell Aquatics Centre project has been centred around the design of the new facility. This is to solely ensure that the facility is delivered on time for the Commonwealth Games 2022. However, the lasting benefits that can be achieved from the delivery of this facility and the Commonwealth Games 2022 is far broader than just the construction of the facility.

- 3.2 As the design and build element of the project is on programme and the Project Team is at full capacity, it is now timely to start considering the launch of a Legacy Workstream for the project.
- 3.3 The Legacy Workstream for the project will ensure that the Sandwell Council can develop and deliver a Legacy Plan for the project.
- 3.4 It has been agreed with the Commonwealth Games 2022 – Members Steering Group that, in the first instance, the Legacy Workstream focuses on the following five themes:
- Sport Development and Clubs;
  - Public Health and Physical Activity;
  - Skills and Education;
  - Regeneration, Job, Tourism and Place building; and
  - Culture and Communities.
- 3.5 These themes support the delivery of Sandwell Council's Vision 2030 and link through to the Commonwealth Games 2022 Birmingham Legacy Pillars.

#### **4 THE CURRENT POSITION**

- 4.1 The design of the facility has been agreed through the collaboration of the entire design team, partners and key stakeholders. A design has been developed that delivers both the requirements of a community leisure facility and a building which can host the Swimming and Diving events for the 2022 Commonwealth Games.
- 4.2 Following a pre-planning consultation exercise with residents, a planning application for the facility was submitted on January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019.
- 4.3 The Legacy Workstream was launched in January 2019, with approval from Members Steering Group for the project team to hold several focus groups from April 2019 onwards. Focus groups will be held with Members, all directorates from across the Council and key stakeholders / partners. They will seek to ascertain what outcomes are desired / can be achieved from the delivery of the Sandwell Aquatics Centre and the Commonwealth Games 2022 being hosted in Sandwell.
- 4.4 Focus groups will be initially run internally for all directorates across the Council and Members. Following internal focus groups, the Project Team will then look to arrange external focus groups with schools and partner agencies from across the borough.



- 4.5 The outcomes identified from the focus groups will then be populated into five themes and contribute to the creation of a Legacy Plan. The Project Team aims for the Legacy workstream to be fully operational with a Legacy plan in place from December 2019.

## **5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)**

- 5.1 The consultation exercise for the development Legacy workstream will begin in March 2019 in the form of focus groups. Focus groups will be run in a staged approach;

<b>Phase One</b>	<b>March 2019</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Project Team</b></li></ul>
<b>Phase Two</b>	<b>April 2019</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Members</b></li><li>• <b>Internal Sandwell Council Staff</b></li></ul>
<b>Phase Three</b>	<b>May / June 2019</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>External Stakeholders</b></li><li>• <b>Partners</b></li><li>• <b>Schools</b></li></ul>

- 5.2 At each stage the format and structure of the focus groups will be reviewed allowing the Project Team to review lessons learned and improve the facilitation of focus groups. At each stage a briefing report will be created, this report will analyse the data captured at each focus group and the lessons learned, and presented to the Commonwealth Games 2022 – Members Steering Group.

## **6 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 In summary, the priority of the Sandwell Aquatics Centre project so far has been the design of the new facility to ensure that it is delivered in time for the Commonwealth Games 2022. However, the benefits that can be gained from the delivery of this facility and the Commonwealth Games 2022 is much broader than just its construction.
- 6.2 It is recommended that Scrutiny agree to proceed with the development of the Legacy workstream as outlined above. Outcomes identified from the focus groups will then be populated into the five themes and a Legacy Plan will be developed.