

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

**3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2019 at 5.45 pm  
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

- Present:** Councillor Moore (Chair);  
Councillors Bawa, Edwards, M Y Hussain, Padda  
and Sandars.
- Apologies:** Councillors Akhter, Bostan, M Gill and P M Hughes;  
Mr J Cash (Co-opted member).
- In attendance:** Councillor Maria Crompton (Cabinet Member for  
Safer Neighbourhoods);  
Alison Knight (Executive Director –  
Neighbourhoods);  
Chris Jones (Commonwealth Games 2022  
Aquatics Centre - Project Director).

11/19 **Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2019 be approved as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Councillor Padda in the list of members submitting apologies to the meeting.

12/19 **Commonwealth Games – Sandwell Aquatics Centre**

The Commonwealth Games Aquatics Centre – Project Director reported to the Scrutiny Board on the progress made on the project since it was approved by Cabinet in January 2018.

Since approval, the Council had undertaken consultation with local residents, including a community engagement leaflet and a pre-planning consultation process which included consultation packs delivered to local residents, an online survey and drop-in events local to the site at locations agreed with ward councillors. The consultation found that 80% of residents were positive about the

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project and that the Council was delivering against the principles that had been agreed during the initial engagement work.

Following the consultation process, a planning application for the Sandwell Aquatics Centre was considered and agreed in March 2019. In April the departure from the Development Plan was approved by Council. In July 2019 the site was closed to the public and enabling works commenced; this was to help ensure the timely delivery of Construction Phase 1.

Construction Phase 1 was due to start in January 2020 and would conclude in February 2022. This Phase included the frame and superstructure of the centre and fit out. The building would then be handed over to the Commonwealth Games Organising Committee for the work needed to allow the Centre to hold the aquatic sports for the Games between July and August 2022 – this was designated as Construction Phase 2.

Following the end of the Commonwealth Games 2022 the building would be handed back to the Council for Construction Phase 3, where the legacy construction would take place prior to the Centre opening to the public in May 2023.

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

- a report on the Contract was scheduled for consideration by the Cabinet in November;
- the Council was working with a range of partners on the project including Birmingham City Council, the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, Sport England and Swim England;
- there would be full Clerks of Works arrangements in place throughout the project;
- the site currently had a play area, this would be replaced with improved equipment as part of the site's development;
- the Council was continuing to engage with residents' groups throughout the project. For example, while approximately 40 trees had been felled as part of the preparatory works, over 200 trees and shrubs were being planted on the site; the

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species for the new plants were selected in conjunction with a residents' group;

- the Centre would have a changing village facility in line with Sports England standards; however, to meet locally expressed needs single-sex changing facilities would also be available;
- the Centre included a dry diving training facility; other centres did not tend to have such a dedicated facility on site;
- the enabling works that had taken place helped to reduce risk on Construction Phase 1 as they had taken place during the summer months avoiding wet weather;
- 'float' had been built into Construction Phases to mitigate risks, providing a buffer of time should any works overrun;
- a Traffic Regulation Order was in place on Londonderry Lane; the Council had worked with local residents to minimise impact on them including by installing drive on their properties if they didn't have them;
- the Commonwealth Games 2022 would be a 'public transport games' and there would be no parking on the site or nearby for spectators. Walking routes and park and ride options would be promoted to visitors attending the Games;
- the Sandwell Aquatics Centre progress would report to the Capital Programme Board for the Games along with the other capital projects that were underway to successfully hold the Games in Birmingham and Sandwell;
- Sandwell was represented on the Chief Executives Group of the Organising Committee;
- the project was included on the Council's Corporate Risk Register.

The Scrutiny Board requested further reports on the Sandwell Aquatics Centre Project, including details of financial implications for the Council and the project's risk register.

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### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that a further progress report on the Sandwell Aquatics Centre be brought to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board in January 2020 to include further details on the project's financial implications for the Council and the project's risk register;
- (2) that a site visit for the members of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Panel be arranged during Construction Phase 1.

### **13/19 Commonwealth Games - Legacy**

The Commonwealth Games Aquatics Centre – Project Director gave an overview of the five Legacy Workstreams that had been identified:-

- Sport Development and Clubs;
- Physical Activity;
- Skills, Education and Raising Aspiration;
- Regeneration, Jobs, Tourism and Place Building;
- Culture and Communities.

These workstreams would link with current work and initiatives which the Aquatics Centre and Commonwealth Games 2022 could help to drive forward or increase the pace of. This could be through securing additional funding or inspiration generated from hosting the events. The intention was to leverage the best possible social and economic benefit from the Games for Sandwell.

Each workstream had a range of activities and aims that connected to the ambitions of Vision 2030. These included diverse goals including the creation of a West Midlands Diving pathway to maximise the benefits of both the dry dive training facility and the diving pool.

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

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- the Council was working with swimming and athletics clubs in the borough to prepare for an increase in public interest in taking part in sport and physical activity;
- the competition pool at the Aquatics Centre would have accessibility steps and ramps;
- the Council was working with the Canal and Rivers Trust to improve signage from canals in the borough to assist those using the towpaths to know what local attractions and facilities were available;
- a Business Expo was being held as part of the Commonwealth Games, which would have opportunities for local businesses to promote themselves;
- the development of the Legacy Plans was in its early stages and prior to them being considered by the Cabinet, it was intended to bring them to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Board for pre-decision scrutiny.

The Chair advised the meeting that no money for legacy projects and initiatives had been attached to the Commonwealth Games by the Government. The Birmingham Commonwealth Games Bill was currently progressing through Parliament and it was suggested that the Chair of the Scrutiny Board write to the Members of Parliament for Sandwell asking them to seek a commitment to Government funding for the legacy of the Commonwealth Games. The Chair extended an invitation to the Cabinet Member for Safer Neighbourhoods to send a joint letter on this matter, which she agreed to do.

**Resolved** that the Chair of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities and Cabinet Member for Safer Communities send a joint letter to the Members of Parliament for Sandwell asking them to seek a commitment to Government funding for the legacy of the Commonwealth Games as part of the Birmingham Commonwealth Games Bill that was progressing through Parliament.

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### **14/19 Discussion with Cabinet Member for Safer Neighbourhoods**

The Scrutiny Board received a presentation from the Cabinet Member for Safer Neighbourhoods on current and future key areas of work within her portfolio.

The Safer Neighbourhoods portfolio included:-

- town and neighbourhood development and working;
- safer neighbourhoods;
- leisure and recreation;
- the local environment (including waste and street cleaning);
- emergency planning and resilience.

Key areas of work currently being undertaken by the Cabinet Member included:-

- being a member of the Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board and working with partners on crime and community safety matters;
- borough-wide tasking meetings;
- signing the Slavery Free Sandwell Pledge;
- the West Bromwich Public Space Protection Order;
- review of the multi-agency flood plan;
- the Sandwell Aquatics Centre project;
- working with Sandwell Leisure Trust to review their Business Plan;
- on-going meetings with the Warley Sunday League on their needs and issues;
- looking at options for maximising the potential of Sandwell Valley;
- a review of the condition and management of Sandwell's pools and watercourses;
- considering different approach to grounds maintenance including the use of wildflower meadows;
- developing the capacity and capability of the voluntary sector in collaboration with Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations.

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

- Lightwoods Park and Red House Park had recently been awarded Green Flag status, bringing the total number of parks in Sandwell with the award to 12;
- the Cabinet Member would be bringing a report to Cabinet to commit Sandwell to planting a tree per child starting school in September – if approved this would result in over 4000 trees planted per year over the next three years in conjunction with the Woodland Trust;
- the Council's CCTV network was being expanded over the next ten years to cover all remaining high-rise blocks in the borough;
- multi-agency days were held to carry out emergency planning, including mock scenarios. The Council worked with key partners such as the Police and Fire and Rescue Service on emergency planning matters. The Council's officer representative on the Local Resilience Forum was the Director – Homes and Communities;
- the Police and Crime Commissioner has recently established a West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit. It was important that the Council built good relationships with the Unit;
- the arrangements for Christmas trees across the borough had been reviewed due to cost pressures. The Cabinet Member reported that officers had worked hard to negotiate contracts so that one Christmas tree could be retained in each of the six towns. If local traders and businesses were willing to provide sponsorship then the Council would consider if additional trees could be provided at other locations;
- it was important to maintain the strong relationship that Sandwell had formed with strategic partners such as Sports England – this could result in invitations to bid for programmes and initiatives.

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In response to queries from members, the Scrutiny Board was advised that most issues relating to housing matters were the responsibility for the Cabinet Member for Homes. Questions relating to fire safety in the Council's flatted accommodation would be referred to Cabinet Member for Housing to provide further information to the Board when she attended a future meeting.

The Scrutiny Board thanked the Cabinet Member for attending the meeting.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that a report on Emergency Planning and Resilience in Sandwell be brought to a future meeting of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board to include:-
  - (a) an overview of preparedness;
  - (b) relationships between key partners in relation to Emergency Planning;
  - (c) how the Council and partners test resilience.
- (2) that the Cabinet Member for Homes be requested to respond to questions about fire safety matters for the Council's high-rise flatted accommodation when she attends the November meeting of the Scrutiny Board.

(Meeting ended at 7.21 pm)

<p>Contact Officer: Alex Goddard Democratic Services Unit 0121 569 3178</p>
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