

Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board Agenda

Thursday 1 October 2020 at 5.45pm

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[Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board -
1 October 2020](#)

This agenda gives notice of items to be considered in private as required by Regulations 5 (4) and (5) of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

1. Apologies

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. Minutes

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2020 as a correct record.

3. Declarations of Interest

- (a) To receive any declarations of interest from members relating to any item on the agenda, in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Conduct and/or S106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- (b) To receive any declarations of the existence and nature of any political Party Whip on any matter to be considered at the meeting.

Public Items

4. Reset and Recovery – Phase One Findings

To consider a report on the activity undertaken in Phase One of the reset and recovery framework and the findings from this work in relation to impact on the community.

5. COVID-19 Reset and Recovery - Neighbourhoods

To consider an update on the COVID-19 reset and recovery activity taking place and planned in the Neighbourhoods directorate.

6. Homelessness Update

To consider an update on homelessness in Sandwell; and in particular the work done during the pandemic and future plans to tackle homelessness.

7. Work Programme

To consider items for inclusion on the Scrutiny Board's Work Programme.

David Stevens
Chief Executive

Sandwell Council House
Freeth Street
Oldbury
West Midlands

Distribution:

Councillors Moore (Chair);
Councillor P M Hughes (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Akhter, Bawa, Bostan, Edwards, M Gill, S Jones, Padda,
Sandars and M Yaseen.

Co-opted Member:-
Mr J Cash

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk

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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

Thursday 9 July 2020 at 5.45pm

Present: Councillor Moore (Chair)
Councillors Akhter, Bawa, Edwards, M Gill, M Y Hussain, S Jones and Sandars.

Officers: Alison Knight (Executive Director – Neighbourhoods) and Alan Caddick (Director – Housing and Communities).

9/20 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bostan and Padda and Mr J Cash.

10/20 **Matter of Urgency**

There were no additional items of business to consider as matters of urgency.

11/20 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interests declared at the meeting.

12/20 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2020 were agreed as a correct record.



5



COVID-19 Reset and Recovery - Neighbourhoods

The Board received a presentation from the Director – Housing and Communities on the response by the Neighbourhoods directorate to the COVID-19 pandemic and the move to the reset and recovery phase that was currently underway.

It was reported that the Council had established a Reset and Recovery Board that was meeting weekly. This Board was where plans to restart services would be signed off, but only after a specific process had been followed which included risk assessments, engagement and consultation with Trade Unions, Public Health, Health and Safety, Facilities Management, Human Resources and Communications.

Within the Neighbourhoods directorate a range of services had already restarted or increased their activities. These included:-

- Grounds Maintenance – 3-phase approach to the restart of services;
- Housing Repairs – increase in activities which would enable non-urgent repairs to be completed;
- CCTV and Concierge Services – night shifts had now been reintroduced, bringing this back to full service;
- Sandwell Valley Phase 1 – recommencement of services and increase in activities from Monday 13th July;
- Parks – inspections of all play areas prior to potential reopening;
- Allotments Service;
- Urban Forestry – restart of full services.

Other services that were in the planning stages included:-

- Estate Services and Caretaking – restart and increase in activities – this was planned to be presented to the Reset and Recovery Board for approval on 16th July;
- Lightwoods House;
- Sandwell Valley Phase 2;
- Libraries and Museums – phased reintroduction being considered;
- Leisure Centres – work on-going with Sandwell Leisure Trust and Places Leisure.

It was noted that important services within the Neighbourhoods directorate had continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This included the continued operation of the Locals resulting in over 1000 contacts per week with tenants, either by telephone or over the internet.

A key area had been around Homelessness, with significant work undertaken to engage with rough sleepers. The Board noted that out of 27 out of 34 known rough sleepers in Sandwell had been accommodated, with the remainder reported to be living with family or friends.

Following comments and questions from members of the Board, the following responses were made, and issues highlighted:-

- Meetings with Town Chairs had continued during the pandemic using online methods.
- Whilst landlords were not currently able to apply for repossession orders due to COVID-19 legislation, it was possible that there could be an increase in such orders once the ban was lifted. The Council was engaging with private landlords and hoped to eradicate homelessness as much as possible.
- There was not yet a target date to reopen Local offices. It was reiterated that the public did not have to pay Council Tax or other bills at these offices but could instead use online methods or via PayPoint locations.
- There was not currently any enforcement action being taken in relation to rent or Council Tax areas however it was important to remember that these bills would need to be paid, however the Council would seek to engage people in a sympathetic way over arrears.
- Grass cutting was being phased in; the first phase included communal areas in places with elderly people, sports pitches and schools. The next phase included wider open spaces, followed by verges, islands and banks. It was reported that the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board was intending to conduct an inquiry day into re-wilding which could impact on grass cutting in some areas.
- Consultants had been brought in to assist the Council to work with its leisure facility operators as part of the reopening of those facilities whilst taking into account requirements around social distancing. This consultancy had been supported by Sport England.

The Board placed on records its thanks to officers for continuing their work during difficult circumstances, including the support for the emergency food and care parcels which had operated from Tipton Sports Academy.

Resolved that an update on the Council's activities around homelessness be brought to an October meeting of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board.

Meeting ended at 6.28pm

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.

REPORT TO

SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ACTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY BOARD

1 October 2020

Subject:	Reset and Recovery – Phase One Findings
Cabinet Portfolio:	Deputy Leader of the Council
Director:	Executive Director - Neighbourhoods Alison Knight
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Contact Officer(s):	Jane Alexander – Senior Lead Officer Sarah Sprung – Senior Lead Officer

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board:

1. Considers the findings from the impact assessment work undertaken on communities in phase 1 of reset and recovery.

1 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To apprise Scrutiny of the activity undertaken in Phase One of the reset and recovery framework and the findings from this work in relation to impact on the community.

2 **IMPLICATIONS FOR VISION 2030**

- 2.1 Recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic with our communities, stakeholders and partners will have a positive impact on all ambitions contained in the Vision.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The priority for Phase 1 of the reset and recovery programme, our immediate post-crisis response, has been to move out of lockdown safely and ensure that we retain flexibility to respond to changes in the local infection rate to support the most vulnerable in our communities. The Cabinet report on 23 September outlines more detail on Phase 1.
- 3.2 In order to achieve the required outcomes from Phase 1 on understanding the impact of COVID-19, on 18 June 2020 the Reset and Recovery Board established three impact working groups:-



- 3.3 Each group had the following remit: -

- i. to share impact intelligence (including service user/ community intelligence) from directorate areas and external contacts, discuss findings, themes and future implications
- ii. to agree the key messages from analysis of the intelligence to feed into the overall impact report, with particular focus on the following points: -
 - o The impact of COVID-19 on existing issues (negative/positive impact)
 - o Whether COVID-19 resulted in new issues for the borough/council?
 - o Suggest areas for the next stage (thematic working groups).

4 CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The Impact Working Groups have now concluded their initial analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on our borough, although it is acknowledged that the effects of COVID-19 will continue to be felt by our communities for some time to come. We will work to continue to understand this developing picture to ensure that the Council continues to respond to any new and emerging needs.

Community Impact Working Group

- 4.2 This group, led by the Executive Director - Children's Services and the Director – Housing and Communities, has met twice during July and August 2020. Made up of officers from across the Council's Directorates the group has pooled their collective intelligence to develop a deeper understanding of how COVID-19 has impacted the communities of Sandwell.
- 4.3 Overall, we found that the effect of COVID-19 on our communities reflected that of the national picture, experiencing issues around mental health, food insecurity, digital exclusion, financial hardship and social stresses.
- 4.4 Also, like the national picture our BAME communities have been affected greatly by the pandemic.
- 4.5 A more comprehensive view of the findings from the Community Impact Working Group is attached at Appendix 1, the points below represent some of the key findings identified: -
- i. COVID-19 has exacerbated existing weaknesses in Sandwell's community, related to underlying poverty and deprivation
 - ii. We need to do something different to address these underlying vulnerabilities
 - iii. To do this well, we need to ensure:
 - a. Engagement is done in the right way and is culturally sensitive
 - b. Changes in our own organisation to do things more corporately
 - c. Focus more resources in areas of most need
 - d. Clear measures of success
- 4.6 Further impact work has considered the impact on the economy, our staff, our services and the finance of the council and details are contained in the report to Cabinet considered on 23 September 2020.
- 4.7 Phase two of the reset and recovery programme will take the findings from this impact analysis to inform the development of a revised corporate plan in order to ensure that the council continues to meet the needs of the communities we serve.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

- 5.1 Town Workshops were held with elected members, this ensured that all members had the opportunity to participate, and add intelligence to, the impact analysis. Discussions that took place in this series of seven events were fed through to the impact working groups.
- 5.2 The Chief Executive held a series of staff focus groups, to both offer staff an opportunity to ask questions and to hear about staff experiences of lockdown, challenges in working from home and ideas they may have for the future. Again, this intelligence was fed into the Impact Working Groups.
- 5.3 Looking forward it is paramount that the key messages from the impact work are shared and discussed across our organisation and with our partners, so we can develop a shared understanding of the challenges we face and the positives we want to harness. There are plans to consult widely internally and externally with the findings of the impact analysis.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS.

- 6.1 The framework set out in the report approved by the Emergency Committee will result in the development of plans to enable the organisation and the borough to recover from the impact of COVID-19, therefore alternative options are not required at this stage. When developing approaches and determining specific activities, it will be essential to consider alternative options to ensure the most appropriate way forward is agreed.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The development of the Reset and Recovery Plan will not require specific resources over and above those already allocated to corporate planning activities within the 2020/21 budget.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 Transparency in decision making and accountability for delivery of the Reset and Recovery Plan will be key to its success. Governance will feed into the existing democratic arrangements and develop over time as more functions come back online. Links to regional activity will be key to the recovery of the council and borough, working in partnership with others, sharing intelligence and maximising the opportunities for Sandwell as whole.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken on the reset and recovery process, no specific activity was required on the framework. However, the impact assessments of COVID-19 carried out as part of this framework will highlight if any specific groups have been impacted more than others. This intelligence will drive priorities and activity within the Reset and Recovery Plan.
- 9.2 Throughout the development of the Reset and Recovery Plan, equality impact assessments will be conducted on specific proposals at the appropriate time.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 Any information used to compile this report is subject to information governance legislation and is managed in accordance with the council's policies and protocols. A Data Protection Impact Assessment is not required.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 There is no requirement to carry out a Crime and Disorder and Risk Assessment.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

- 12.1 The information contained within the presentation that accompanies this report will be incorporated into specific plans developed as a result of this framework.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

- 13.1 The immediate impact of COVID-19 on the health and wellbeing of both Sandwell residents and council staff has been captured through the impact assessments. These impact assessments have identified priorities for action that will be assessed further in Phase 2 of the recovery framework. The longer-term impacts will not be understood for some time, it will be important to continue to update our impact assessments throughout the planning period to ensure any planned activity addresses the key issues.

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

14.1 As part of the development of the Reset and Recovery Plan and in response to increased financial pressures on council budgets, we will need to review the council's corporate estate rationalise costs and ensure it accommodates the future needs of a more flexible workforce.

15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 The work carried out over the last few months has captured data and intelligence from a broad range of sources. This has enabled us to determine the impact of COVID-19 on the borough and on the organisation.

15.2 It is clear from our experiences of responding to the crisis that we work better by coming together. Therefore, the key messages from this intelligence should be shared and discussed widely in order to identify the best activities and approaches to address the issues.

15.3 Members are asked to consider the findings from the impact assessment work in order to shape the future priorities for the council and Sandwell as a whole.

16 BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 Cabinet report – 23 September 2020

17 APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Community Impact

Alison Knight
Executive Director - Neighbourhoods

Impact of Covid on the Community



Sources of intelligence

- This chapter focuses on the impact on people and place to the end of July
- Captures the national evidence
- Led by the Community Impact Working Group
- Drawn on local service provider experience, insights and caseload
- Town member workshops
- Public data on infections/ fatalities
- Neighbourhood level impact and vulnerability



National Context

- As well as the direct impacts of Covid, restrictive social distancing and lockdown measures have had major and unequal impacts on society
- Public Health England findings:
 - mental health and personal relationships have deteriorated
 - Disrupted delivery of NHS meaning long term conditions may worsen, delayed diagnoses
 - Unhealthy behaviours increasing – alcohol misuse, decreased physical activity
 - Exacerbating impact of poor quality housing – 12% had no access to a garden



National Context continued

- Food insecurity and financial hardship
- Children and young people hit hardest – by social distancing/lockdown, closure of schools and concern about increasing abuse in the home
- Increased civic participation in response to Covid and positive impact on social cohesion
- Decrease in car journeys shortlived and may be lasting damage on public transport system. More people are cycling
- Covid has exposed and exacerbated long standing inequalities in society



Sandwell evidence

- Evidence suggests Sandwell reflects the national picture

Mental Health

- SCVO survey identifies mental health as a significant widespread issue – due to isolation, lack of daily provisions, employment worries and this is expected to grow
- CAMHS referrals halved in lockdown but have since recovered and further rise is expected as schools return
- Pandemic has galvanised safeguarding partnerships



Sandwell evidence

Food insecurity, digital exclusion and financial hardship

- food security has been exacerbated
- Demand for food vouchers up 188% (358% in Smethwick) by early June
- 3,451 food parcels delivered to vulnerable households
- 1,586 laptops distributed from DfE for children and young people (some lacked broadband as well)
- The effects of digital exclusion have been exacerbated with reliance on online during lockdown – e.g. hindering benefit take up
- Eligibility for free school meals up 90% on previous year
- Mounting household debt – which has direct impact on Council's ability to support people. Housing arrears up 26.6%, council tax collection down 2.1% and cost of CTRS increased by £3m



Sandwell evidence

Social Stress

- Signs of neighbourhood stress have arisen due to the increase in mental health, wellbeing and financial issues
- Homelessness successes in reducing numbers and engaging with rough sleepers but homelessness is expected to increase because
- Households facing eviction once ban on evictions lifted in August
- ASB incidents increased by 50% in March and April and crime is expected to increase as financial hardship deepens
- Reports of domestic abuse have increased by 22% compared with the same period last year
- Concern about level of hidden abuse exacerbated by social restrictions



Sandwell evidence

Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups

- Public Health survey of BAME groups underlined that communities that are heavily interconnected have been affected more than others
- “Epidemic of loneliness, isolation, health fears, anxiety due to family separation”
- Challenges of living with other family members of all ages for long periods
- Fear has been deepened by language barriers
- Highlights need to understand BAME needs better
- Intergenerational housing- normally a strength but one of the reasons for being more vulnerable to the pandemic
- A concern that Covid has widened inequality and community leaders are determined to address this



Sandwell evidence

Young People

- 509 young people surveyed
 - A third were worried
 - A fifth were lonely
 - A quarter were stressed
 - A small number were angry, sad and having trouble sleeping
- Most difficult aspect was not seeing family and friends
- Half welcomed more time spent with their family in lockdown
- 652 children shielding and half of these are in West Bromwich and Smethwick
- Service providers concerned about long term impact on learning in younger children, especially those in challenging home environments



Sandwell evidence

Volunteering and the Voluntary/Community Sector

- Huge increase in volunteering- 732 residents signed up to the SCVO database
- 400 actively deployed, supporting 1000 residents, voluntary organisations and telephone befriending
- Almost all said they would do it again
- Third sector faces widespread pressure – increased demand from users at the same time as closure/depletion of services in lockdown
- Most have maintained service delivery by changing how they work, forcing innovation
- Medium sized organisations most affected – a third had suspended services altogether



Sandwell evidence

Town member workshops

- Reinforced our findings on community impact
- Particular concerns about mental health, financial impact on households, ensuring effective communication and digital exclusion

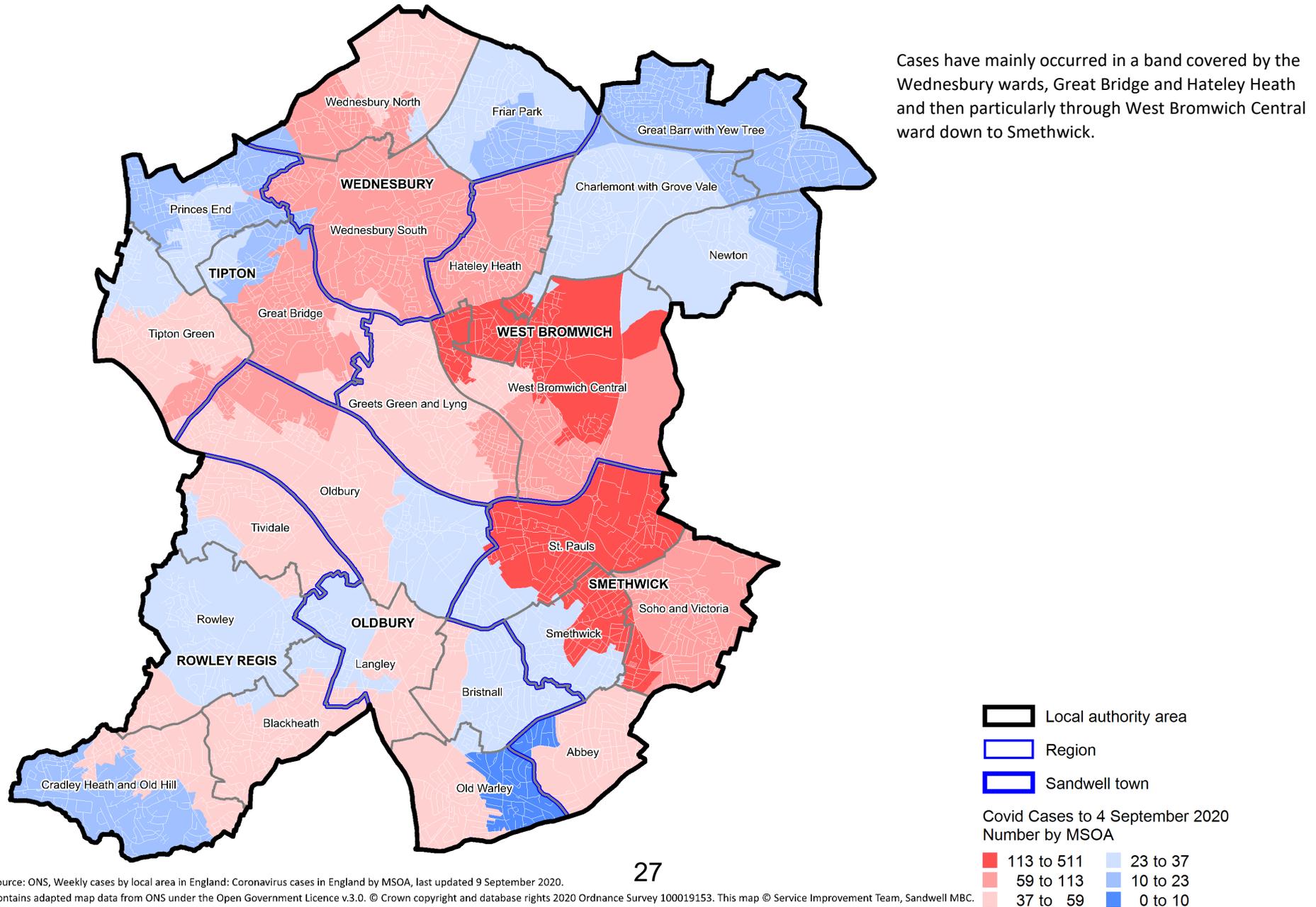


Direct Impact of Covid in Sandwell

- The following maps illustrate the impact of Covid across the wards in Sandwell
- These maps represent a snapshot in time
- Note that the concentration of Covid infection and deaths is in the central band of Sandwell that reflects our areas of greatest deprivation



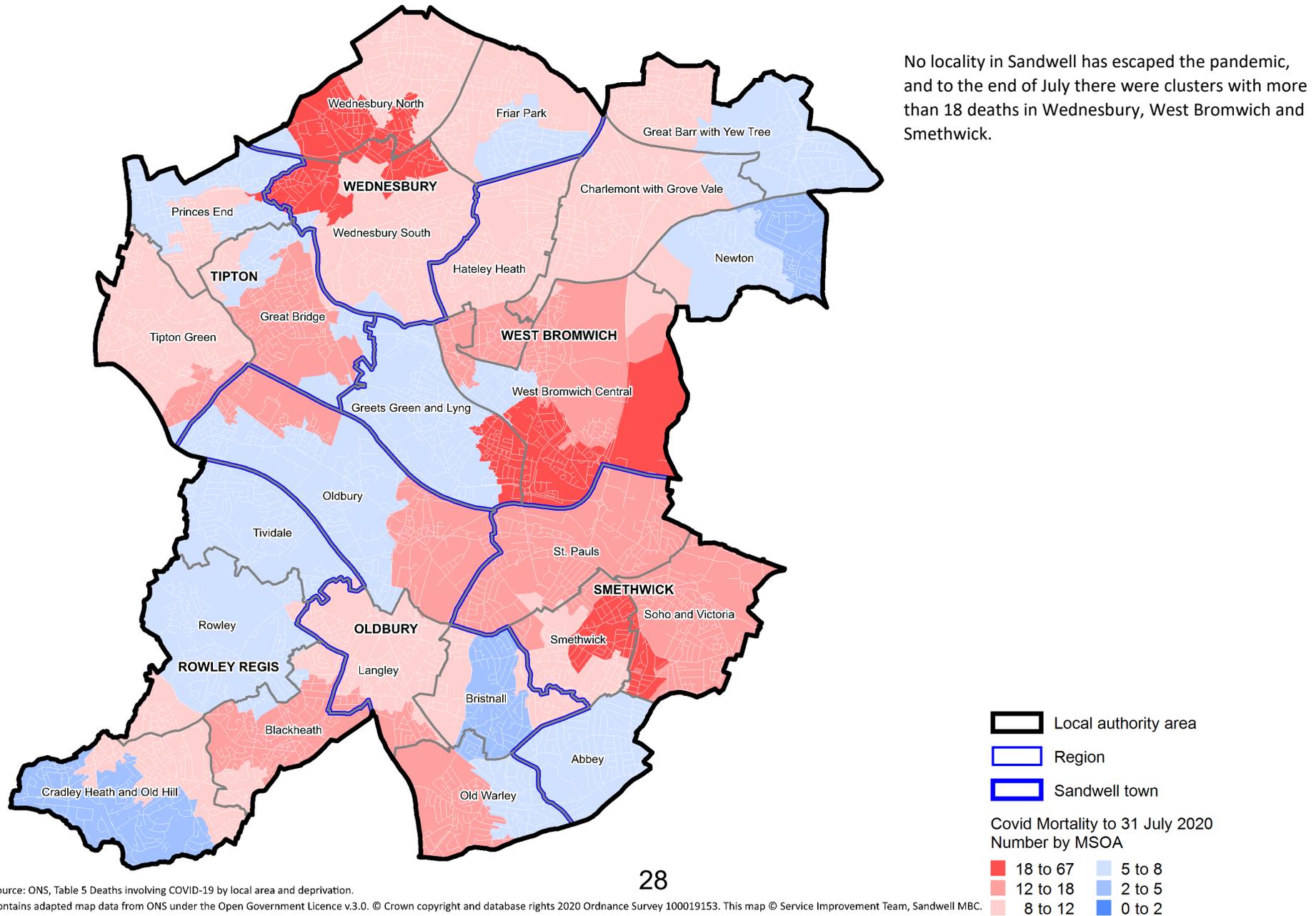
Direct Impact - Number of Covid-19 cases to 4 September 2020



Source: ONS, Weekly cases by local area in England: Coronavirus cases in England by MSAO, last updated 9 September 2020.

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Direct Impact - Number of Covid-19 deaths to 31 July 2020



Source: ONS, Table 5 Deaths involving COVID-19 by local area and deprivation.

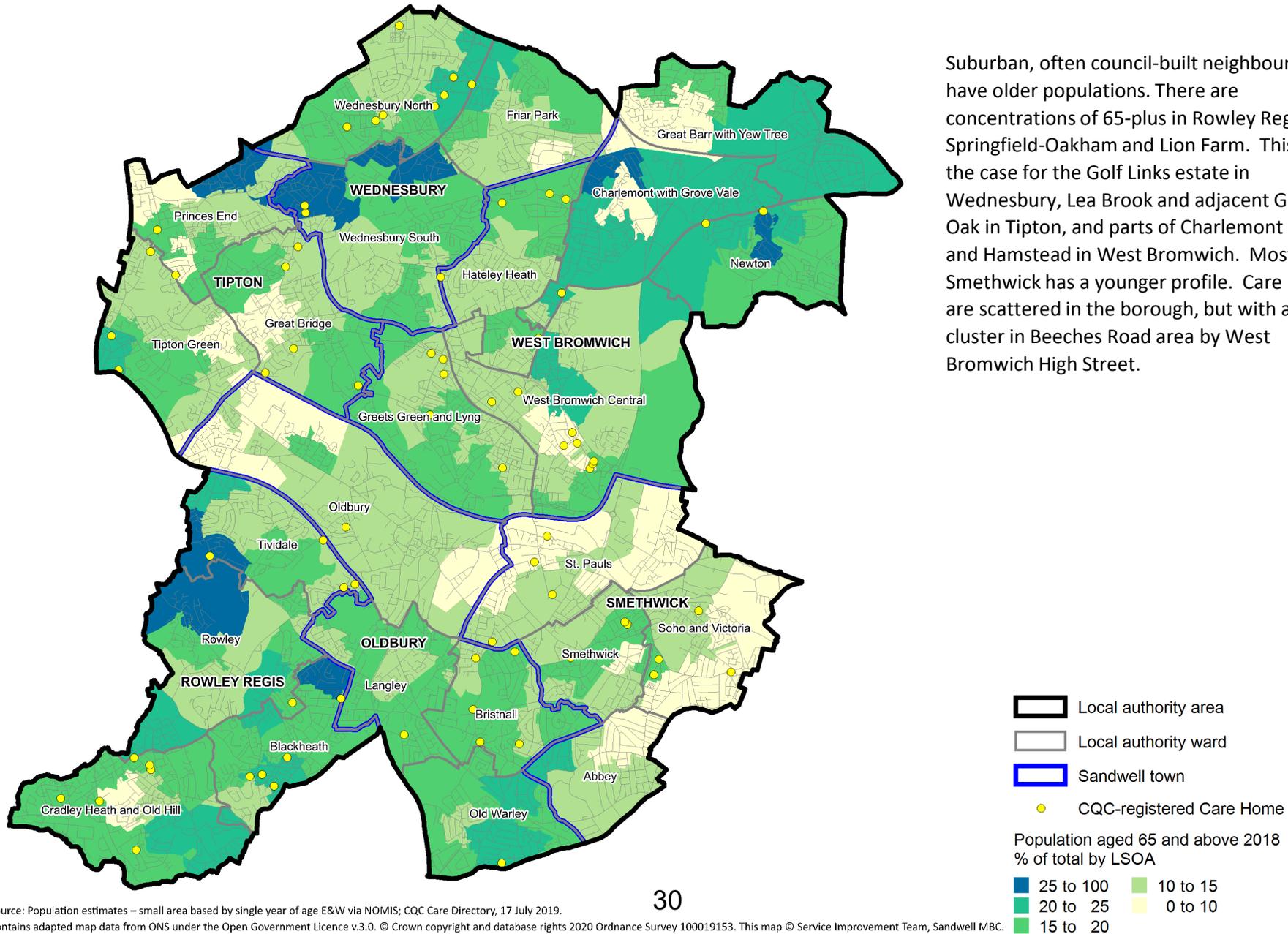
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Community Vulnerability to Covid

- Studies have shown that in addition to personal long term health issues, Covid risk factors also include gender, older age, deprivation, overcrowding and ethnicity
- Sandwell is a densely-populated inner-urban area
- Deprivation is widespread but concentrated in the central part of the borough
- Spatial impact in the Borough is highly uneven
- The following maps illustrate some of the known risk factors and therefore indicate where future vulnerability to Covid may lie – there is not necessarily a causal link
- Parts of Tipton, Central Wednesbury, Central West Bromwich and Smethwick emerge as areas vulnerable to Covid



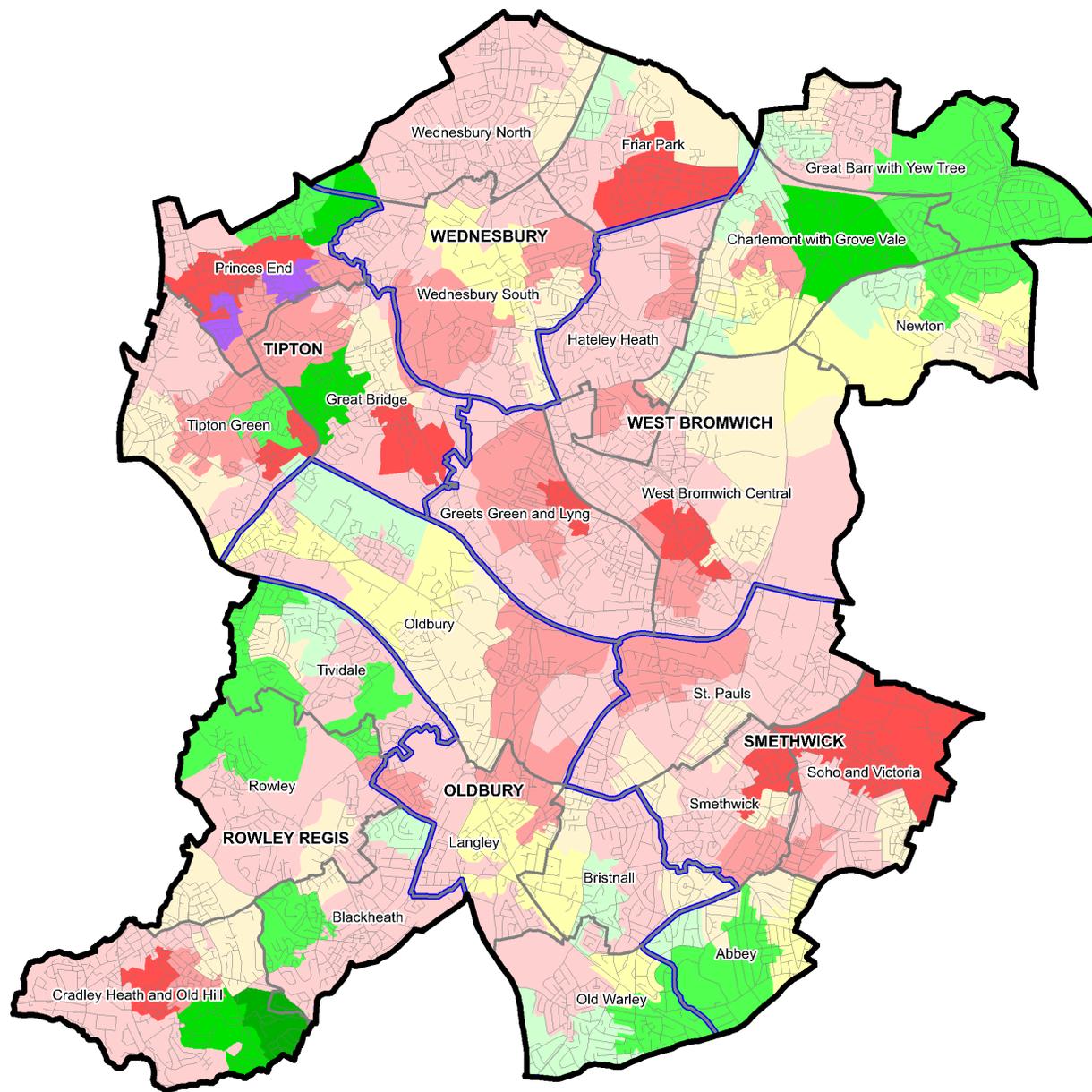
Risk Factor: Population Aged 65-plus 2018 and Care Homes 2019



Source: Population estimates – small area based by single year of age E&W via NOMIS; CQC Care Directory, 17 July 2019.

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Risk Factor: Multiple Deprivation 2019



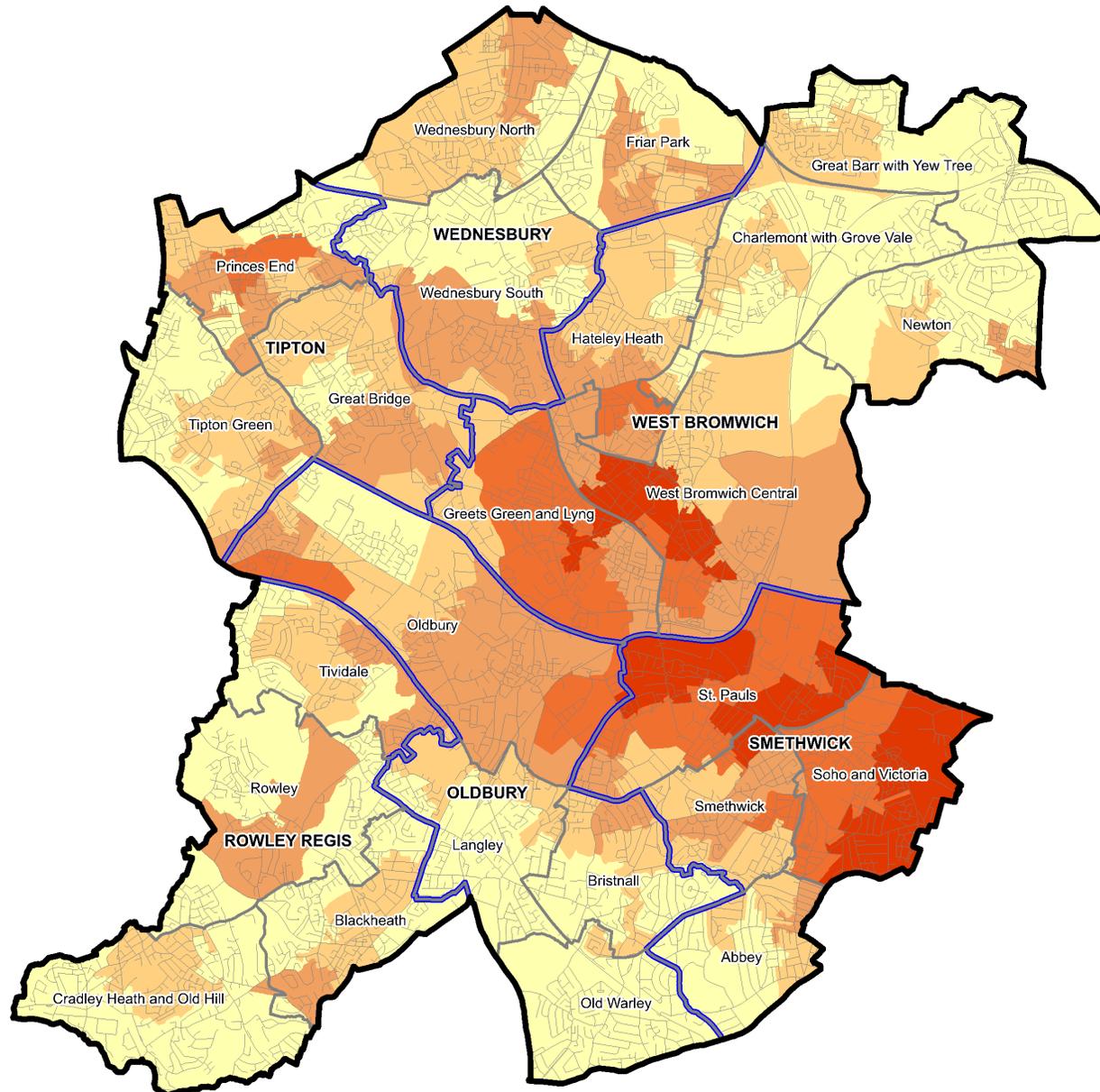
Although deprivation is widespread in Sandwell, a corridor of severe deprivation from Tipton to Smethwick and in major council estates was evident by 1981. Successive indices of relative English deprivation at locality level (IMD) show improvement between 2004 and 2019. Only parts of Tibbington in Tipton now fall in the 1% most deprived locality. However, Windmill Lane and Uplands in Smethwick; parts of Cradley Heath in Rowley Regis; Beeches Road and Hamblett's South in West Bromwich; and the large Friar Park estate in Wednesbury all fall in the worst 5%. So do further parts of Tipton, next to increasingly affluent Toll End, which has benefited from significant new housing. Otherwise the least deprived areas are all on the fringe of the borough, notably the North-East; Old Warley, Bearwood and Old Hill in the south and Oakham and Gospel Oak in the east. The map shows that although its severity is diluted, much of Tipton, Wednesbury, central West Bromwich and Smethwick fall in the most deprived 10% neighbourhoods in England and are therefore at risk from Covid.

-  Local authority area
-  Local authority ward
-  Sandwell town

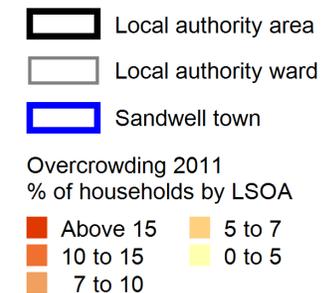
Indices of Deprivation 2019 - Overall IMD
Position in percentile ranking of 32,844 LSOA

- | | | | |
|---|------------------|---|-----------|
|  | 1% most deprived |  | 40 to 50 |
|  | 1 to 5 |  | 50 to 60 |
|  | 5 to 10 |  | 60 to 70 |
|  | 10 to 20 |  | 70 to 80 |
|  | 20 to 30 |  | 80 to 90 |
|  | 30 to 40 |  | 90 to 100 |

Risk Factor: Overcrowding 2011



Housing density is about proximity and where it results in overcrowding it is especially problematic. In Sandwell it is concentrated in areas of pre-1919 housing and localities of mainly flats. This map examines overcrowding in 2011, affecting more than 15% of households in Lodge Road and Beeches Road in central West Bromwich; in Galton Village, the West Smethwick and North Smethwick neighbourhoods as well as Cape Hill and Windmill Lane. Analysis of localised population and dwelling change in areas overcrowded in 2011 suggests the problem has since worsened, especially in Cape Hill and Beeches Road. Overcrowding is particularly a Smethwick issue.

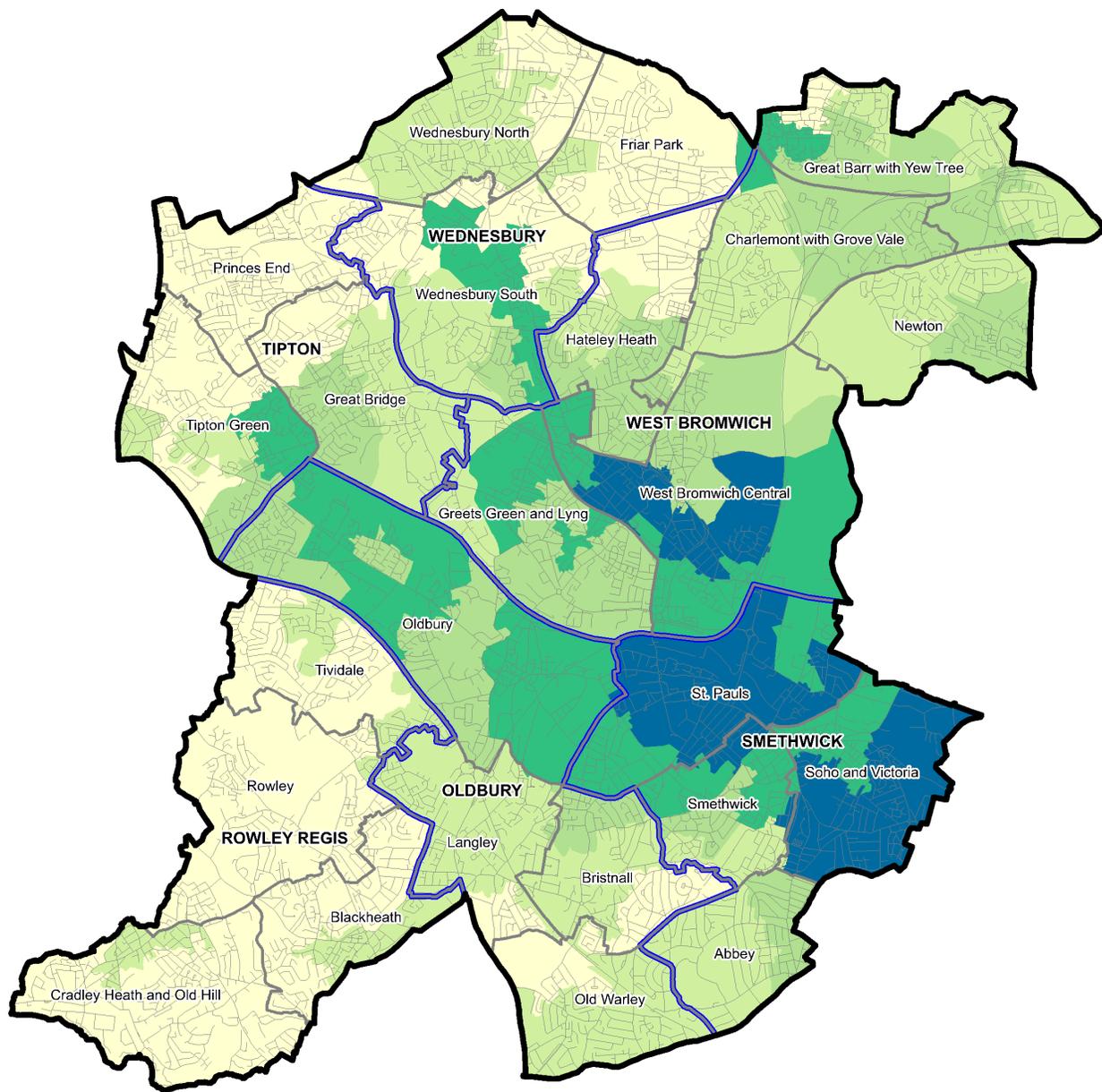


Note: A household with at least one bedroom too few for the number and composition of people living in the household is considered overcrowded by the bedroom standard.

Source: Census 2011 Table QS412EW via NOMIS.

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Risk Factor: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity 2011



Older, cheap, private housing areas historically act as reception areas for immigration. Smethwick, which gained the UK's first Sikh temple as well as notoriety for race politics in the 1960s, is now strongly BAME as well as being ethnically diverse. This is also true of the neighbourhoods off West Bromwich High Street. BAME communities expanded strongly across Sandwell in the 2000s, and community cohesion activity is a continuing council focus. This is otherwise a risk factor for social stress and economic pressure after Covid. More immediately, areas mapped at above 75% BAME are at risk from Covid, especially given their pattern of deprivation and overcrowding. Fresh inflows have since generated 'super-diversity' in many of these BAME areas, often via the private rented sector. Net international migration in Sandwell in 2013-18 was 10,301 people and 37.3% of live births were to non-UK born mothers in 2018.

-  Local authority area
-  Local authority ward
-  Sandwell town

Black Asian and Minority Ethnicity 2011
% of population by LSOA

-  75 to 100
-  50 to 75
-  35 to 50
-  20 to 35
-  0 to 20

Source: Census 2011 Table KS401EW via NOMIS.

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Key findings/recommendations

- Covid has exacerbated existing weaknesses in Sandwell's community, related to underlying poverty and deprivation
- We need to do something different to address these underlying vulnerabilities
- To do this well, we need to ensure:
 - Engagement is done in the right way and is culturally sensitive
 - Changes in our own organisation to do things more corporately
 - Focus more resources in areas of most need
 - Clear measures of success



REPORT TO SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ACTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY BOARD

01 October 2020

Subject:	COVID-19 Reset and Recovery - Neighbourhoods
Cabinet Portfolio:	Deputy Leader of the Council Cabinet Member for Homes
Director:	Director – Housing and Communities – Alan Caddick
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Contact Officer(s):	Alex Goddard alexander_goddard@sandwell.gov.uk

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board:

1. Consider and comment upon the information presented at the meeting in relation to the COVID-19 reset and recovery activity taking place, and planned, in the Neighbourhoods directorate services that are within the terms of reference of the Board.
2. Identify any recommendations it wishes to make.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 A presentation will be given at the meeting to provide the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board with an update on the COVID-19 reset and recovery activity taking place, and planned, in the Neighbourhoods directorate services that are within the terms of reference for the Board.

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR VISION 2030

- 2.1 The Reset and Recovery Framework and associated activity will support all of the ambitions contained within Vision 2030.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 On 9th July the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board received a presentation on the reset and recovery activity taking place in the Neighbourhoods directorate services within its terms of reference.
- 3.2 An update presentation will be given at the meeting to provide members with the latest information in relation to this topic.

Alan Caddick
Director – Housing and Communities

REPORT TO SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ACTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY BOARD

1st October 2020

Subject:	Homelessness Update
Cabinet Portfolio:	Cabinet Member for Homes
Director:	Director Housing and Communities, Alan Caddick
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Contact Officer(s):	Alex Goddard alexander_goddard@sandwell.gov.uk

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board:

1. Consider and comment upon the information presented at the meeting in relation to homelessness in Sandwell.
2. Identify any recommendations it wishes to make.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 A presentation will be given at the meeting to provide the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board with an update on homelessness in Sandwell; and in particular the work done during the pandemic and our future plans to tackle homelessness.

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR VISION 2030

- 2.1 Our work on tackling homelessness in the borough will make key contributions to the 2030 Ambitions, in particular Ambitions 2 and 5, and the Council's Corporate Plan

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board has requested an update on homelessness in Sandwell. Attached to the report is the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy, which provides the context for our approach to tackling homelessness.

- 4 **APPENDICES:**
2018-2021 Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.

Alan Caddick
Director Housing and Communities

2018-21 Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy

CONTENTS:

- 1. Forward**
- 2. Introduction**
- 3. Strategic aims and measuring outcomes**
- 4. Defining Homelessness**
- 5. Legal Duties**
- 6. Summary overview of homelessness in Sandwell**
- 7. Strategic aims and outputs**

1. FORWARD

Welcome to Sandwell's 2018-21 Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy. Our Strategy sets out how we aim to prevent homelessness and to ensure that support and accommodation will be available for people who are either at risk of losing their home or have lost their home.

We know that the causes of homelessness are complex and intertwined. It is not just a lack of accommodation, but is often connected to a wider set of more complex circumstances. Homelessness can affect our physical and mental health and wellbeing, educational achievement, ability to gain and sustain employment, and puts pressure on our personal and family relationships. These effects, especially on children, can be life long and can cause repeated homelessness of a generational nature.

No single organisation can prevent homelessness alone; together we must be proactive in working together and crucially as early as possible. We know the task ahead will be challenging. Increasing pressure on budgets across all sectors together with the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act, welfare reform and wider housing market pressures are just some of the challenges that we face going forward. However, I am strongly committed to reducing homelessness in all its forms within Sandwell and I am confident that through a strong partnership approach we can deliver the outcomes of this strategy.

Cllr Kerry Carmichael – Cabinet Member for Housing

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Every local authority has a statutory obligation to produce a strategic homelessness review and implement a strategic homelessness plan. The Council has completed its most recent strategic review this year. The action plan accompanying this strategy is a separate document and will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- 2.2 Homelessness is caused by a complex interaction between a person or family's individual circumstances and a number of social and structural factors that are often outside of their own control. Unless these factors are addressed, the ability of an individual or family to become resilient and improve their chance of a positive future is greatly reduced and places them at risk of becoming trapped in a cycle of homelessness.
- 2.3 Tackling all of these factors at the point of crisis is complex and costly. More must therefore be done to intervene as early as possible, to limit the impact of homelessness, to help people recover from homelessness, and prevent it from happening in the future.
- 2.4 The journey into and through homelessness is different for everyone. People enter at different stages, at different times in their lives, and each with individual support needs; it is important therefore to adopt a flexible approach to respond effectively.
- 2.5 Over the next few years, the challenges imposed by welfare reform together with the probability of rising housing costs will continue to place a significant number of Sandwell households into 'housing stress' at a time when service budgets remain under strain. Because of the pace of change in many of the dynamics that interface with homelessness, including the introduction of a revised Code of Guidance this strategy will be reviewed after three years.

3. STRATEGIC AIMS AND MEASURING OUTCOMES

- 3.1 Over the course of the last three years over 12k households approached the Housing Choice Service. With the help of our partner organisations approximately a third were enabled to either

stay in their existing home or were assisted to obtain suitable alternative accommodation before they hit crisis point.

3.2 Looking to the future, the Council will continue to pursue with vigour the 'prevention' agenda, with intervention taking place at the earliest point possible to prevent crisis. The Council has therefore adopted the following five aims to support people in Sandwell who are affected by homelessness:

1. **UNIVERSAL PREVENTION - to ensure people are well informed about their housing options.**
2. **TARGETED PREVENTION - to prevent people, particularly vulnerable people, from becoming homeless**
3. **CRISIS PREVENTION AND RELIEF - to assist people as soon as possible if they do become homeless so that their homelessness can be relieved by securing suitable accommodation and support**
4. **RECOVERY - to support people to recover from their experience and stay out of homelessness**
5. **SUSTAINABLE HOUSING OPTIONS - to enable people to secure homes that they can afford and maintain**

These aims together with their respective outputs are detailed further in Appendix One.

3.3 Through its 2030 Vision, the Council has adopted ten Ambitions to make Sandwell a thriving, optimistic and resilient community. This strategy will play a role in this vision and in particular it supports Ambitions 2 and 5:

Ambition 2: 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.

Ambition 5: 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.

Measuring the outcomes of this strategy

- 3.4 The Council will measure the impact of this strategy by how well it achieves, or is on track to achieving, the following outcomes:
- A** A year on year reduction in the number of homeless acceptances set against the data outlined for 2016/17 in *Figure One*.
 - B** A year on year increase in the number of households prevented from becoming homeless set against the data outlined for 2016/17 in *Figure Two*
 - C** A year on year decrease in the use of Bed and Breakfast/Hotels set against the data outlined for 2016/17 in *Figure Three*
 - D** To keep the level of rough sleeping below the relevant England Rough Sleeping Rate as set out in *Figure Four*.

4. DEFINING HOMELESSNESS

- 4.1 An applicant is to be considered homeless if they do not have accommodation that they have a legal right to occupy, which is accessible and physically available to them (and their household) and which it would be reasonable for them to continue to live in. The law defines a person being threatened with homelessness if they will not have any accommodation within 56 days. (*Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2018*).
- 4.2 Rough Sleepers are defined as follows (for the purposes of rough sleeping counts and estimates):
- People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or “bashes” which are makeshift shelters, often comprised of cardboard boxes). (Communities and Local Government, 2018¹).*

1

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/682001/Rough_Sleeping_Autumn_2017_Statistical_Release_-_revised.pdf

5. LEGAL DUTIES

5.1 The Council's legal obligations with regard to homelessness are as follows:

- The Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002, places statutory duties on local housing authorities to ensure that advice and assistance to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness is free of charge. A 'main homelessness duty' is owed where the authority is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a specified priority need group. Where a main duty is owed, the authority must ensure that suitable accommodation is available for the applicant and his or her household.
- The Homelessness Act 2002 places a specific requirement for local authorities to devise and implement a Homelessness Strategy.
- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places three duties on local authorities, namely:
 1. to assess all eligible applicants and agree an individual Personal Housing Plan
 2. to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness
 3. to relieve homelessness by helping the applicant to secure accommodation.

The Act also introduces responsibilities on the part of the applicant to take steps to either prevent or relieve their homelessness and is accompanied by a new statutory code.

6. OVERVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS IN SANDWELL

6.1 Over the last three years the number of approaches to the Housing Choice Service and subsequent cases opened has remained constant, with 4,163 opened in 2014/15, 4,200 in 2015/16 and 4,215 in 2016/17. This latter figure represents a 12% increase when compared to 2010/11. From cases opened covering the two financial years, the most common causes for approach to the service were:

- Parents/relatives no longer willing to accommodate (27%)
- Termination/loss of assured shorthold tenancy (AST) (20%)
- Relationship breakdown non-violent (11%)
- Relationship breakdown violence from partner (11%)
- Loss of National Asylum Seeker Support (NASS) (5%)

Overall, 74% of households presenting to the service did so under one of the five reasons outlined above.

Those owed the 'main duty'

6.2 In 2016/17 the Council helped 551 households who were eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need. Known as the 'main duty' or 'full statutory duty', the authority must ensure for these households that suitable accommodation is available for the applicant and his/her household. The most frequent cause of homelessness for people that the Council had a legal duty to rehouse was (in declining order):

1. Termination/loss of assured shorthold tenancy
2. Relationship breakdown – partner violent
3. Parents/relatives no longer willing to accommodate
4. Loss of National Asylum Seeker Support
5. Relationship breakdown partner non-violent

85% of households owed the 'main duty' present to the service under one of the five reasons outlined above. In addition, from the 551 households owed the 'main duty', the presence of dependent children accounted for 68% (376) of the Priority Need award.

Figure One: Total number of cases accepted as eligible, unintentionally homeless, and in priority need 2014/15 to 2016/17:

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Total Cases Full Duty Accepted	565	546	551
<i>Total cases opened</i>	4163	4,220	4,215
2016/17 Homeless and in Priority Need Acceptance Rate (per 1,000 households):			Sandwell: 4.52 England: 2.09 (Excl. London)

Preventing people from becoming homeless

6.3 In 2016/17, 1,288 households were prevented from becoming homeless either by enabling them to remain in their existing home or finding suitable alternative accommodation.

Figure Two: Homeless Preventions by number 2014/15 to 2016/17:

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Assisted to remain in property	1,105	703	697
Assisted to obtain alternative accommodation	638	450	591
Total cases prevented from becoming homeless	1,743	1,153	1,288
<i>Total cases opened</i>	4,163	4,220	4,215

Temporary Accommodation

6.4 Whilst the use of temporary accommodation (TA) remains an issue in the borough, the Council has in recent years considerably improved the options at its disposal where the use of TA is the only option. The Council can now utilize:

- 23 self-contained units leased from Housing Options West Midlands
- 6 bed HMO; leased from a Private Landlord
- 6 x 2&3 bedroom flats within own stock
- 7 bed HMO within own stock
- 6 B&Bs used on a regular basis
- A range of other B&Bs and hotels when the regular B&Bs are not available.

Figure Three below outlines by number TA usage by accommodation type and household type (number of persons). The data only includes households who were placed into TA for seven days or more.

Figure Three: Temporary Accommodation usage 2015/16 & 2016/17:

	<u>2015/16</u>				<u>2016/17</u>			
	Household Type (No. persons)				Household Type (No. persons)			
	1P	2P	3P	4+P	1P	2P	3P	4+P
B&B or Hotel	10	22	39	36	11	16	27	27
Leased units	7	9	21	19	8	15	25	37
LA Accom.	0	2	0	0	3	14	6	15

**Note: 1P = one person household
4+P = four or more persons**

Rough Sleeping

- 6.5 The Council's rough sleeper estimate completed in November 2017 accounted for 10 people. *Figure Four* below outlines the rough sleeper returns from 2013 to 2017

Figure Four: Sandwell Rough Sleeper Estimates by year/number 2013 to 2017:

	Year (November)				
	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>
Number	3	2	4	11	10
2017 Rough Sleeping Rate (per 1,000 households):		Sandwell: 0.08 England: 0.18* <i>*excludes London</i>			

APPENDIX ONE:

AIMS AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

AIM ONE: UNIVERSAL PREVENTION - to ensure people are well informed about their housing options.

This aim covers:

Ensuring signposting outlets are readily accessible and are embedded beyond Council operated service areas covering the personal factors associated with homelessness:

- Access to employment and benefits
- Advice on housing costs and tenancy issues
- Debt Advice
- Mortgage and Repossession
- Managing your tenancy
- Neighbourhood Issues – ASB, Harassment, Environmental Services

Desired outcome:

People/families are empowered to understand about housing costs, options and know where to get help if they need it.

AIM TWO: TARGETED PREVENTION - to prevent people, particularly vulnerable people, from becoming homeless

This aim covers:

Early intervention targeted to reach households most likely to be at risk of homelessness. Groups at risk of homelessness include:

- people released from prison or youth detention accommodation
- care leavers
- victims of domestic abuse
- people leaving hospital
- people suffering from a mental illness or impairment
- teenage parents
- those on low incomes and / or in debt

Desired outcome:

People/families are supported wherever possible and where it is appropriate to remain in their existing home

People/families are supported where it is appropriate to make planned moves to reduce risk of homelessness and other harms

AIM THREE: CRISIS PREVENTION AND RELIEF - to assist people as soon as possible if they do become homeless so that their homelessness can be relieved by securing sufficient accommodation and support

This aim covers:

Integrated, co-ordinated response for accommodation and support for people / families where the threat of homelessness is imminent or they are homeless.

Comprehensive multi-agency assessment of household need including housing, health, education or family mediation etc

Desired outcome:

Homelessness is prevented through intervention at point of crisis

Emergency accommodation is secured for those without other housing options,

AIM FOUR: RECOVERY - to support people to recover from their experience and stay out of homelessness

This aim covers:

Building resilience after the prevention or relief stage to stabilise and sustain accommodation focussing where appropriate on:

- Accessing relevant support services, e.g. MH,
- Maximising family income and facilitating tenancy sustainability
- Entering / maintaining employment and/or accessing education/ training.

Desired outcome:

Patterns of repeat homelessness are broken, individuals and families recover from their experience of homelessness and have the resilience to sustain accommodation and a more positive and healthy future.

AIM FIVE: SUSTAINABLE HOUSING OPTIONS - to enable people to secure homes that they can afford and maintain

This aim covers:

To ensure sufficient supply of suitable affordable housing options including access to the private rented, housing association and third sector accommodation;

Desired outcome:

There is a range of safe, decent, affordable housing options for all covering the private, social and third sectors.

REPORT TO SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ACTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY BOARD

01 October 2020

Subject:	Work Programme
Director:	Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer – Surjit Tour
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Contact Officer(s):	Alex Goddard alexander.goddard@sandwell.gov.uk

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board considers matters for inclusion on its work programme.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Board is asked to consider its work programme taking into account where scrutiny can add value, strengthen decision making to enhance services that the Council delivers and aligns to the Vision 2030.

2 IMPLICATION FOR SANDWELL'S VISION

- 2.1 The scrutiny function will support the Sandwell Vision 2030 and focus on the 10 ambitions. Items selected must support and strengthen the Council and its partners' work to achieve Vision 2030.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The Scrutiny Board is invited to consider items for inclusion on its work programme.

The remaining scheduled meetings for the Board are as follows – where there are already items identified and allocated to a meeting, these are included:

26 November 2020 Leisure in Sandwell
Update on Aquatics Centre

28 January 2021

1 April 2021

- 3.2 To assist members in determining topics, the Sandwell Scrutiny Prioritisation Tool is attached at Appendix 1. This Tool can help determine priorities for each topic and provide members with a structured method of creating a focussed work programme.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 In accordance with the Council's Scrutiny Procedure Rules, each Scrutiny Board is responsible for developing and agreeing its own work programme.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

- 5.1 The Scrutiny page on the Council's website includes an online form that invites the public to send their suggestions, or suggest a topic, of what they would like the scrutiny boards to look into. This is available all year and advises the public that all suggestions will be passed on to members for consideration. No suggestions have been made at this time.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 If the Scrutiny Board does not determine a work programme then the opportunity to review policies and services will not be realised meaning that improvements, savings and income generation possibilities may be missed.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Scrutiny function is directly supported by the Council's Statutory Scrutiny Officer and Democratic Services within the Council's Law and Governance directorate. Additional technical expertise and evidence on specific matters will be provided by officers within the various directorates of the authority.
- 7.2 The strategic resource implications of the topics selected for scrutiny will be identified and reported to members on a case by case basis.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 Local Government Act 2000 states that Councils operating executive arrangements must also make provision for the appointment of overview and scrutiny committees.
- 8.2 Further powers relating to overview and scrutiny are set out in the Police and Justice Act 2006, the Localism Act 2011, the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 and the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 Equality implications of topics selected for scrutiny will be identified and reported to members on a case by case basis.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 Data protection implications of any topics included on the work programme for the Board will be reported to members at the relevant time.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 Any crime and disorder impacts of scrutiny work programme items will be reported to members on a case by case basis.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

- 12.1 Sustainability of proposals will be addressed within reports for each identified topic for consideration by the Scrutiny Board.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

- 13.1 These will be included in reports for each item of work.

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

- 14.1 Any impact on Council managed land or property will be detailed in reports for each topic throughout the year.

15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 To ensure effective and efficient use of resources the Scrutiny Board is requested to determine items for its work programme.

16 BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 All relevant papers are included in the appendices to this report.

17 APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Sandwell Scrutiny Prioritisation Tool.

Surjit Tour

Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

