

Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

Thursday 26 November 2020 at 5.45pm

Present: Councillor Moore (Chair)
Councillors Bawa, Bostan, Edwards, P M Hughes, M Y
Hussain and S Jones.

In Attendance: Deputy Leader of the Council (Councillor Crompton)

Officers: David Stevens (Chief Executive);
Alison Knight (Executive Director – Neighbourhoods);
Alan Caddick (Director – Housing and Communities);
Chris Jones (Project Director)

21/20 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Akhter, M Gill and Sandars and Mr J Cash.

22/20 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests made at the meeting.

23/20 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2020 were agreed as a correct record.



24/20 **Additional Item of Business**

Councillor S Jones requested clarification around COVID-19 grants for businesses in Sandwell, particularly in the hospitality sector. It was agreed that this would be added to the agenda later in the meeting.

25/20 **Discussion with Deputy Leader**

The Scrutiny Board received a presentation from the Deputy Leader, who was currently holding the Safer Neighbourhoods portfolio, on current and future key areas of work within her portfolio that came within the Board's terms of reference.

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 relevant to this Scrutiny Board that were currently being undertaken by the Deputy Leader included:-

- Sandwell Aquatics Centre;
- Waste collections and the Household Recycling Centre;
- Community Safety – including particular work around domestic violence and hate crime;
- Reducing rough sleeping;
- CCTV, including supporting Police activity in West Bromwich town centre;
- Libraries reopening;
- Reopening of aspects of facilities at both Sandwell Valley and Lightwoods House.

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

- In relation to a query about improvement plans for Brunswick Park, Wednesbury, the Deputy Leader confirmed that she

welcomed ideas and suggestions. It was confirmed that the Council was working with the Friends of Brunswick Park to look at funding opportunities.

- The Executive Director – Neighbourhoods undertook to take up specific issues relating to the Strathmore Road development in Tipton that had been raised by councillors.
- The Council was actively looking at reopening libraries in a safe way and details would be shared with councillors going forward.
- The Sandwell Valley Masterplan would include aspects to support the Commonwealth Games 2022, but it was confirmed that there was no intention to develop in the Valley.
- Long term investment plans for the Council's blocks of flatted accommodation were being developed.
- The moving of Oldbury Library into the One Stop Shop would allow visitors to use multiple services during one visit, potentially increasing library use.
- It was expected that working arrangements for Council officers going forward would be 'hybrid' with part working from home and part office-based.

The Chair thanked the Deputy Leader for attending the meeting and responding to questions from members.

26/20

Appointment to the Building Safety Board

The Board was advised that the Cabinet Member for Homes had extended an invitation to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board to appoint a participating observer to the Building Safety Board, in order to provide an overview and scrutiny perspective to the work of that Board.

The Building Safety Board was responsible for reviewing Sandwell's approach to safety in High Risk Residential Buildings and fire prevention measures in the wider Council portfolio.

Resolved that Councillor M Y Hussain is appointed to the Building Safety Board as a participating observer for the remainder of the current municipal year.

27/20 **COVID-19 Business Grants**

Further to Minute No. 24/20 the Board was informed that the Council's website had up to date information for business owners to apply for grants. Whilst grant applications could not yet be submitted, businesses could commence the process now and complete the necessary forms in due course. The Chief Executive also confirmed that all councillors had been sent an update on the grants.

28/20 **Sandwell Aquatics Centre Project**

Further to Minute No. 12/19 the Board received an update on the Sandwell Aquatics Centre Project.

An overview of the Sandwell Aquatics Centre COVID-19 resilience plan was given. This plan was updated monthly and whenever Government guidance was amended. All appropriate and necessary safety measures were in place at the site, including restriction of visitors.

The Board viewed drone footage of the site from October 2020 and was provided with updates on the construction of the Centre. Whilst most of the works were in line with timetables, it was reported that the dive tower build had experienced a delay due to a classified storm in the area causing high winds. Mitigation measures meant that this would not cause delays to other aspects of the build however.

Resolved that a further update on the Sandwell Aquatics Centre Project be brought to a meeting of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board in March 2021.

29/20 **Exclusion of Public and Press**

Resolved that the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order, 2006,

relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

30/20 **Sandwell Aquatics Centre Project**

The Board received further information relating to the financial impacts on the project as well as an overview of key areas of strategic risk. The Council continued to work with regional and national partners to mitigate and minimise risks associated with the project.

The Board placed on record its thanks for the hard work of the Project Director in challenging circumstances.

Meeting ended at 7.43pm

[Click here to watch a recording of the meeting](#)