

Agenda Council

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, to be held on Tuesday, 12 October 2021 at 6.00 pm for the purpose of transacting the following business:-

The Mayor of Sandwell, Councillor M Hussain, in the Chair

- | | | |
|---|--|---------|
| 1 | To receive Apologies for Absence | 13 - 14 |
| 2 | Declarations of interests in any matters to be discussed at the meeting. | 15 - 16 |
| 3 | To confirm as a correct record, the minutes of the ordinary and extraordinary meetings of Council held on 26 July 2021. | 17 - 32 |
| 4 | To consider any urgent business (with prior approval by the Mayor). | 33 - 34 |
| 5 | To receive announcements from the Mayor. | |
| 6 | To receive petitions under Standing Order No. 5. | 35 - 36 |
| 7 | To consider written questions under Standing Order No. 6 to:- | 37 - 38 |
| | (a) the Mayor; | |
| | (b) the Leader of the Council; | |



- (c) any other member of the Cabinet;
- (d) any person appointed to preside at a committee, sub-committee or panel;
- (e) the members of the Council nominated pursuant to Section 41 of the Local Government Act 1985, on the discharge of the functions of the following Joint Authorities:-
 - (i) West Midlands Combined Authority (the Leader);
 - (ii) West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (Councillor C Padda);
 - (iii) Transport for the West Midlands (Councillor Akhter);
- (f) a nominated member appointed by the Council to the Board of Sandwell Leisure Trust;
- (g) a member of the Council who is, as a result of action taken by or on behalf of the Council, a member or director of any company.

| | | |
|------|---|-----------|
| 8 | Corporate Plan 2020-2025 - Refresh 2021 | 39 - 84 |
| | To consider the Corporate Plan 2020-2025 Refresh. | |
| 9 | Section 41 of the Local Government Act 1985 Update | 85 - 88 |
| | To receive updates from the Council's lead representatives on:- | |
| 9(a) | West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority | 89 - 94 |
| 9(b) | Transport for West Midlands | 95 - 118 |
| 9(c) | Police and Crime Panel | 119 - 122 |

| | | |
|------|--|-----------|
| 9(d) | West Midlands Combined Authority | 123 - 138 |
| 10 | Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee 2020-21 | 139 - 150 |
| | To receive the annual report of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee 2020-21. | |
| 11 | Appointments to Vacancies on Committees, Boards and Other Bodies | 151 - 160 |
| | To consider any appointments required to vacancies on committees, boards and other bodies. | |
| 12 | Cabinet | 161 - 218 |
| | To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 7 and 21 July and 1 September 2021. | |
| 13 | Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board | 219 - 222 |
| | To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board held on 21 July 2021. | |
| 14 | Audit and Risk Assurance Committee | 223 - 246 |
| | To receive the minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 18 March, 24 June and 29 July 2021, and to consider the recommendations arising from the meeting. | |

15 **Notice of Motions**

To consider the following motions received under Standing Order No. 7:-

15(a) **Sandwell Herald**

Proposer: Councillor Abrahams

Seconder: Councillor Kalari

“This council resolves to discontinue the delivery of 'The Sandwell Herald', which is printed and delivered at a cost of over £42,000 per year. The council instead resolves to install 150 new litter bins a year in parks and high streets across the Borough.”

15(b) **Houses of Multiple Occupation**

Proposer: Councillor Henlan

Seconder: Councillor Chapman

“This Council recognises the difficulties of monitoring Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) of under 5 occupants due to the lack of any requirements for these to be registered with Local Authorities.

Further, This Council resolves to request The Cabinet Member for Housing to bring forward a report outlining the feasibility of an Additional Licensing Scheme for all HMOs within the Borough of Sandwell to run simultaneously alongside the Mandatory Licensing Scheme, pursuant to Section 56 of the Housing Act 2004 and to release the findings of this Report.”

15(c) **Walker Grange Care Home**

Proposer: Councillor Williams

Seconder: Councillor W Gill

“This council welcomes the public engagement and scrutiny activity regarding the ongoing consultation on the future of Walker Grange Care Home.

Walker Grange is a precious council care home for Tipton. For many families in Tipton, Walker Grange is fantastic option for them to put their elderly loved ones in a local care home. This is due to the expensive cost of private care homes. It currently has 22 residents, some of which have been there for over 20 years. The care home has proved over the last 29 years that it can provide safe and effective service for its residents. It was given a good report by the Care Quality Commission in January 2020, there report stated that Walker Grange is a well-lead, responsive, caring and safe provider.

It is reasonable for the consultation to result in Walker Grange being upgraded or remaining open in its current condition. It is unthinkable for many families in Tipton including the residents of Walker Grange that it could possibly be closed. In recognising the community value of this facility, this Council urges the leader and cabinet to reconsider and remove the option of closure for Walker Grange Care Home”.

15(d) **Cuts to Universal Credit**

Proposer: Councillor Bostan

Seconder: Councillor Piper

“This Council recognises how hard last eighteen months have been for the people of Sandwell during the pandemic. They have dealt with the uncertainty of a local economy put on hold, the hardship of tens of thousands of Sandwell’s residents either furloughed or out of work, and in some cases personal tragedy. Many are reliant on Universal Credit.

The announcement of this government's plans to cut Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit will be devastating for many people.

This Council deplores the fact that food bank usage in the borough is soaring, and recognises that the increase in fuel prices as we wind down into the colder months will add to pressures on household budgets. Emerging research by the Local Government Association has shown that this will force thousands of families into severe poverty.

This Council has endeavoured to shield residents from the full impact of the economic downturn in recent years, particularly in anticipation of the furlough scheme ending.

These measures include but are not limited to the following:

- An emergency food hub to feed our most vulnerable which supported thousands at the height of the pandemic.
- Free school meals for our most disadvantaged children and young people, a provision which continues despite the failure of the Conservative Government failed in its basic duty to feed Sandwell's children during school holidays amid the pandemic.
- 100 % council tax reduction scheme taking another significant burden off the shoulders of our most vulnerable, despite the huge financial challenges of ever-increasing cuts to our core grant from government.

Under Labour leadership, this Council has organised workfares across our towns supporting young people in to good jobs whilst working with our skills providers to help our residents affected by Covid-related redundancies, re-skill and train into alternative forms of employment.

In Sandwell, as of July 2021, there were 42,104 people claiming universal tax credits of which, 15,876 (38%) of people were in employment. 1,396 are aged between 16-19 and Sandwell

ranks the 7th highest with number of people claiming universal credit in all English metropolitan boroughs.

Research carried out by the Centre for Research in Social Policy at Loughborough University in a report called 'Local indicators of child poverty after housing costs, 2019/20' which covers the five-year period from 2014–15 to 2019–20 shows an increase of child poverty in the borough of around 7%.

Council recognises the limits of its abilities to mitigate the economic downturn for its most vulnerable residents and calls upon the government to step up to its duty to protect those most at risk.

Families most at risk of deepening poverty will not benefit from the increases because they are subject to the benefits cap. Migrants without recourse to public funds, many of whom work in industries hardest hit by the lockdown, have also been left out in the cold and millions of families reliant on the legacy benefit system did not receive the uplift channelled through Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit.

This Council resolves for the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, calling upon the Government to:

- Continue the £20-a-week increase to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit early contributions which was brought in to help households deal with the impact of COVID-19.
- Extend this to other benefit schemes to help residents who are most in financial need and have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.
- Support Councils through better funding to help them up skill and retrain residents at risk of unemployment as furlough ends.”

Dated 4 October 2021



Kim Bromley-Derry CBE DL
Interim Chief Executive
Sandwell Council House
Freeth Street
Oldbury
West Midlands

Distribution

All Members of the Council

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk

Information about meetings in Sandwell



If you are attending the meeting and require assistance to access the venue, please contact Democratic Services (democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk).



If the fire alarm sounds, please follow the instructions of the officers present and leave the building by the nearest exit.



Only people invited to speak at a meeting may do so. Everyone at the meeting is expected to be respectful and listen to the discussion.



Agendas with reports with exempt information should be treated as private and confidential. It is your responsibility to ensure that any such reports are kept secure. After the meeting confidential papers should be disposed of in a secure way.



This meeting may be recorded and broadcast on the Internet. If this is the case, it will be confirmed at the meeting and further information will be provided.



You are allowed to use devices for the purposes of recording or reporting during the public session of the meeting. When using your devices they must not disrupt the meeting – please ensure they are set to silent.



Members who cannot attend the meeting should submit apologies by contacting Democratic Services (democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk)



All agenda, reports, minutes for Sandwell Council's meetings, councillor details and more are available from our website (<https://cmis.sandwell.gov.uk/cm5/>)

This page is intentionally left blank



Apologies

To receive any apologies from members

This page is intentionally left blank



Declarations of Interest

Members to declare any interests in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

This page is intentionally left blank

Minutes of Council

26 July 2021 at 6.00pm
Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: His Worshipful The Mayor, Councillor Mushtaq Hussain;
Deputy Mayor, Councillor Richard Jones;

Councillors Abrahams, Ahmed, Akhtar, Akhter, Akpoteni, Allcock, Allen, Anandou, Ashman, Bhullar, Bostan, Carmichael, Chambers, Chapman, Chidley, Crompton, Dhallu, Fenton, Fisher, Gavan, G Gill, S Gill, W Gill, Hackett, Hadley, Hartwell, Henlan, M Y Hussain, Z Hussain, Jalil, O Jones, S Jones, Kalari, Kausar, Mabena, McVittie, Melia, Millar, Millard, Moore, Owen, C S Padda, I Padda, Phillips, Piper, Randhawa, Rollins, Rouf, Shackleton, Shaeen, Simms, R Singh, S Singh, Webb, Williams.

Officers: Surjit Tour – Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer; Sue Stanhope – Interim Director of Human Resources; Elaine Newsome – Service Manager - Democracy; Trisha Newton – Senior Democratic Services Officer and Stephnie Hancock – Senior Democratic Services Officer.

65/21 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Ali, Costigan, Davies, E M Giles, E A Giles, L Giles, M Gill, Hinchliff, Hughes, Kaur, Khatun, Smith, Tagger and Taylor.

66/21 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council – 26 July 2021

67/21 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of Annual Council held on 25 May 2021 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

68/21 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business for consideration.

69/21 **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Henlan to her first meeting following her election to represent the Tividale ward at the July by-election.

Details of Mayoral engagements since the last meeting of the Council had been circulated to members.

70/21 **Petitions under Standing Order No. 5**

No petitions were received under Standing Order No. 5.

71/21 **Questions under Standing Order No. 6**

No questions were received under Standing Order No. 6.

72/21 **Proposed Departure from the Local Development Plan in respect of land to the rear of John Dando House, 235 Hamstead Road, Great Barr**

At the Planning Committee on 7 July 2021 consideration was given to planning application DC/21/65185, in respect of land to the rear of John Dando House, 235 Hamstead Road, Great Barr.

The rear of the site was on land allocated as community open space and as such it was contrary to adopted Council policy and constituted a departure from the Local Development Plan.

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council – 26 July 2021

The land in question was private and not accessible to members of the public. The proposal would provide 26 new homes. Furthermore, the planning application had attracted no objections. On balance the land was considered an appropriate site for the development.

Planning Committee granted conditional approval, subject to the application being referred to Full Council as a departure from the Local Development Plan.

Resolved that an exception to the Local Development Plan be allowed in respect of planning application DC/21/65185 (Demolition of existing building at rear. Proposed building comprising of 18 No. residential dwellings along with 8. No residential dwellings in existing building with associated car parking) on the land to the rear of John Dando House, 235 Hamstead Road, Great Barr.

73/21 Annual Report of the Licensing Committee and Licensing Sub-Committees 2019-20 and 2020-21

Council received the Annual Report of the Licensing Committee and Licensing Sub-Committees for municipal years 2019-20 and 2020-21.

74/21 Scrutiny Annual Report 2019-2021

Council received the Scrutiny Annual Report for municipal years 2019-20 and 2020-21.

The Leader of the Council wished to place on record his thanks to all councillors for their contribution to scrutiny and also to officers supporting the function which involved some exceptional pieces of work.

75/21 Extensions to Six Month Attendance Rule

Consideration was given to formal requests from Councillors Khatun and Tagger to waive the requirements of Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 and approve an extension of the six-month attendance rule due to the respective members' ill health.

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council – 26 July 2021

Under the circumstances, it was requested that Council approved an extension of the six-month rule for Councillors Khatun and Tagger and that Council's best wishes be conveyed to the Councillors for a speedy recovery. The extension of time would be effective for a six-month period for the periods stated, however, this did not, of course, prevent the councillors returning to meetings at any time if their health improved sufficiently.

In accordance with Standing Order No. 12, Councillor Hadley called for a named vote. The required support to the request was achieved and the motion put to a named vote, as follows:-

For:

Councillors Ahmed, Akhtar, Akhter, Akpoteni, Allcock, Allen, Ashman, Bhullar, Bostan, Carmichael, Chidley, Crompton, Dhallu, Fenton, Gavan, G Gill, S Gill, Hackett, Hartwell, M Y Hussain, M Hussain, Z Hussain, Jalil, R Jones, S Jones, Kausar, Mabena, McVittie, Melia, Millar, Millard, Moore, Owen, C S Padda, I Padda, Phillips, Piper, Randhawa, Rollins, Rouf, Shackleton, Shaeen, Simms, R Singh and Webb.

Against:

Councillors Abrahams, Anandou, Chambers, Chapman, Fisher, W Gill, Hadley, Henlan, Kalari, S Singh and Williams.

Resolved:-

- (1) that, having regard to the circumstances of the absence of Councillor Khatun from Council meetings, approval be given to the waiving of the requirements of Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 and an extension of the six-month rule for Councillor Khatun for a period of six months, with effect from 27 July 2021 expiring 28 January 2022;
- (2) that, having regard to the circumstances of the absence of Councillor Tagger from Council meetings, approval be given to the waiving of the requirements of Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 and an extension of the six-month rule of Councillor Tagger for a period of six months, with effect from 2 September 2021 expiring 3 March 2022.

76/21 Constitution and Political Balance of Committees and Boards

Council considered the constitution and political balance of committees and boards for the 2021-22 Municipal Year, following the outcome of a by-election for the Tividale Ward which took place on Thursday 15 July 2021.

Resolved that the political balance of the committees, boards and other fora for 2021-22 be approved.

77/21 Appointments to Vacancies on Committees, Boards and Other Bodies

Council considered nominations to vacant positions on committees, boards and other bodies.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the nominations for vacancies on committees, boards and other fora established by the Council, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved with immediate effect;
- (2) that the nominations for vacancies on outside/other bodies, as set out in Appendix B to the report, be approved with immediate effect;
- (3) that the appointment of the co-opted representatives to the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved with immediate effect.

78/21 Constitution Review – Cabinet Advisor Roles

Consideration was given to revised remit and job role descriptions of the six Cabinet Advisor roles, in a way that would better support delivery of the strategic priorities of the Council.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the remit of the six Cabinet Advisors and the proposed job description for each area, as set out in the Appendix to the report, together with the theme allocated to the Cabinet Advisors, be approved;
- (2) that, in relation to (1) above, the Director of Law and Governance be authorised to make any necessary changes to the Council's Constitution.

79/21 General Purposes and Arbitration Committee

The minutes of the General Purposes and Arbitration Committee meeting held on 8 June 2021 were received.

The Council considered the recommendations of the Committee on the following matter:-

79/21(a) Admission Agreement to participate in the Local Government Pension Scheme relating to services provided to Hargate Primary School

Resolved:-

- (1) that the signing and execution of the Pension Fund Admission Agreement, which would allow catering staff working at Hargate Primary School to continue to participate in the Local Government Pension Scheme as a result of a TUPE transfer to Aspens Services Ltd, be approved;
- (2) that authority be delegated to the Chief Executive to sign the Admission Agreement on behalf of the Council and for the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer to make arrangements for the document to be executed under deed of seal.

80/21 Cabinet

The minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 8, 17 and 19 March, 24 May and 16 June 2021 were received.

81/21 Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

The minutes of the meetings of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board held on 17 March 2021 and 23 June 2021 were received.

82/21 Motions under Standing Order No. 7

The Council proceeded to consider motions received under Standing Order No. 7.

82/21(a) Right to Food

It was moved by Councillor Piper and seconded by Councillor Rollins:-

“That this Council notes that approximately 11 million people in the UK are experiencing food insecurity;

Further notes that the use of food banks was increasing before the covid-19 pandemic, and has effectively doubled during the pandemic and all indications are that this situation will continue to get worse;

Is concerned that children in particular have been badly affected by the covid-19 crisis and the Trussell Trust that administers many of the nation’s foodbanks reported that 2.5 million emergency food parcels were given to people in crisis in the year to March 2021;

Acknowledges the profound and devastating consequences of food insecurity on the health, wellbeing and livelihoods of people in our communities;

This Council believes that the Government has a duty to ensure nobody in our communities goes hungry and requests that the Leader of the Council writes to the Minister for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs outlining the Councils view that the “Right to Food” should be enshrined in UK law in order to make clear this obligation; and calls on the Government to set positive targets and monitor progress accordingly and include the “Right to Food” in the Government’s National Food Strategy white paper which is due to be published in 2021.”

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried and it RESOLVED accordingly.

82/21(b) **SEND Transport**

It was moved by Councillor Anandou and seconded by Councillor Fisher:-

“That this Council welcomes an independent external review into the SEND transport procurement and the future delivery model for SEND Passenger Transport.

It also notes the respective work of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and relevant Scrutiny Boards into this matter so that all lessons are learned and recommendations on an effective and efficient future model are implemented.”

In accordance with Standing Order No.7, Councillor Akpoteni moved the following amendment to the Motion, which was seconded by Councillor Fenton:-

“That this Council welcomes an independent external review into the SEND transport procurement and the future delivery model for SEND passenger transport, as already instructed by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Rajbir Singh.

The Council welcomes a culture of accountability and transparency under the leadership of Councillor Rajbir Singh.

It also notes the respective work of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and relevant scrutiny boards into the matter, so that all lessons are learned, and recommendations on effective and efficient future model are implemented.”

The amendment having been moved and seconded was put to the vote and having been carried, the substantive motion was put to the vote.

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council – 26 July 2021

In accordance with Standing Order No. 12, Councillor W Gill called for a named vote. The required support to the request was achieved and the motion as amended was put to a named vote as follows:-

For:

Councillors Ahmed, Akhtar, Akhter, Akpoteni, Allcock, Allen, Ashman, Bhullar, Bostan, Carmichael, Chidley, Crompton, Dhallu, Fenton, Gavan, G Gill, S Gill, Hackett, Hartwell, M Y Hussain, M Hussain, Z Hussain, Jalil, O Jones, R Jones, S Jones, Kausar, Mabena, McVittie, Melia, Millar, Millard, Moore, Owen, C S Padda, I Padda, Phillips, Piper, Randhawa, Rollins, Rouf, Shackleton, Shaeen, Simms, R Singh and Webb.

Against:

Councillors Abrahams, Anandou, Chambers, Chapman, Fisher, W Gill, Hadley, Henlan, Kalari, Singh and Williams.

The motion as amended carried and it was RESOLVED accordingly.

82/21(c) **Brandhall**

Councillor Hadley declared an interest, left the chamber and took no part in the voting or debate on this item.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Chapman and seconded by Councillor Anandou:-

“This Council recognises the benefits of open space in relation to the wellbeing of current and future residents of the Borough. Access to open space has demonstrable links to health benefits alongside the broader positive impact that green space has on the climate.

The coronavirus pandemic saw an increase in the number of residents regularly using our green open space and there are significant local concerns around the potential loss of this space for redevelopment.

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council – 26 July 2021

Brandhall as a former golf course has been identified as a site for redevelopment and the Council undertook a public consultation between November and December 2019 requesting views on three potential visions for the site which included a school which would be a replacement for Causeway Green Primary, housing to address the housing shortage, and a public park. In light of the increase in external recreation activities, it is an appropriate time for the Council to review and reconsider its position in relation to this space. This Council calls for the relevant scrutiny boards, to work closely with the local residents to consider and make recommendations to Cabinet on the outcome of the consultation and future of Brandhall recognising the Council's Climate Change, Living Well agenda and the wishes of the local residents."

In accordance with Standing Order No.7, Councillor Crompton moved the following amendment to the Motion, seconded by Councillor Bostan:-

"This Council recognises the benefits of open space in relation to the wellbeing of current and future residents of the Borough. Access to open space has demonstrable links to health benefits alongside the broader positive impact that green space has on the climate.

Brandhall, as a former golf course, has been identified as a site for redevelopment and the Council undertook a public consultation between November and December 2019 requesting views on three potential visions for the site which included a school which would be a replacement for Causeway Green Primary, housing to address the housing shortage, and a public park.

This Council welcomes the consultation instructed by the Cabinet currently taking place regarding the future direction for Brandhall Golf Course.

Following the consultation, Council welcomes the commitment of the Leader to be guided by the outcome in determining the future use of this facility.

Council deplores the Government's punitive house building requirement imposed on local authorities when we have made it very clear that we do not have the space to meet their requirements.

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council – 26 July 2021

This Council re-affirms its commitment to addressing the climate change emergency and has made significant steps and will continue towards this aim.”

The amendment having been moved and seconded was put to the vote and approved. The substantive motion was put to the vote and, having been carried, it was RESOLVED accordingly.

Meeting ended at 8.24pm.

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Council

26 July 2021 at 8.45pm
Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: His Worshipful The Mayor - Councillor Mushtaq Hussain;
Deputy Mayor - Councillor Richard Jones;

Councillors Abrahams, Ahmed, Akhtar, Akhter, Akpoteni, Allcock, Allen, Anandou, Ashman, Bhullar, Bostan, Carmichael, Chambers, Chapman, Chidley, Crompton, Dhallu, Fenton, Fisher, Gavan, G Gill, S Gill, W Gill, Hackett, Hadley, Hartwell, Henlan, Z Hussain, Jalil, O Jones, S Jones, Kalari, Kausar, Mabena, McVittie, Melia, Millar, Millard, Moore, Owen, C S Padda, I Padda, Phillips, Piper, Randhawa, Rollins, Rouf, Shackleton, Shaeen, Simms, R Singh, S Singh, Webb, Williams.

Officers: Surjit Tour – Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer; Sue Stanhope – Interim Director of Human Resources; Elaine Newsome – Service Manager - Democracy; Trisha Newton – Senior Democratic Services Officer and Stephnie Hancock – Senior Democratic Services Officer.

83/21 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Ali, Costigan, Davies, E M Giles, E A Giles, L Giles, M Gill, Hinchliff, Hughes, M Y Hussain, Kaur, Khatun, Smith, Tagger and Taylor.



84/21 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors R Singh and Crompton declared a personal interest in Minute No. 86/21, Employment Matter. They left the meeting and took no part in the debate on the matter for consideration

85/21 **Exclusion of the 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 paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, information relating to any individual.

86/21 **Employment Matter**

Council considered the proposed retirement of the Chief Executive. The matter required urgent consideration in order to continue to deliver the services of the statutory officer.

Resolved:-

- (1) that approval be given to the release of the Chief Executive's unreduced pension and payment of any contractual entitlements;
- (2) that the Interim Director of Human Resources, in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance and Section 151 Officer, be authorised to process the early retirement of the Chief Executive;



- (3) that Section 4 of the Officer Employment Procedure Rules be waived and that the Chief Officer Terms and Conditions Committee be authorised to approve any interim arrangements which include the interim appointment to the position of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service;
- (4) that, until such time as the Chief Officer Terms and Conditions Committee is able to approve the interim arrangements, the Director of Business Strategy and Change be authorised to undertake the roles and functions of the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service, as set out in the Scheme of Delegation to Officers at Part 3 of the Council’s Constitution;
- (5) that, until such time as the Chief Officer Terms and Conditions Committee is able to approve the interim arrangements, the Director of Law and Governance be appointed as the Interim Electoral Registration Officer and Interim Returning Officer.

Meeting ended at 21.45pm

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk



This page is intentionally left blank



Urgent Business

To consider any urgent business (with prior approval by the Mayor).

This page is intentionally left blank



Petitions

To receive any petitions under Standing Order No. 5 (strategic policy issues or which are of a Borough-wide significance if they are relevant to some matter to which the Council has functions and responsibilities, or which affects the Borough, or part of it, or its citizens or a number of them).

This page is intentionally left blank

Report to Council

12 October 2021

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Subject: | Written Questions |
| Director: | Surjit Tour – Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer |

The following written question has been received:-

To the Leader of the Council

Can I ask the Leader why the Cox review of the Wragge report has not been made public?

Councillor Yvonne Davies



This page is intentionally left blank

Report to Cabinet

12 October 2021

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Subject: | Corporate Plan 2020-2025 - Refresh 2021 |
| Director: | Kim Bromley-Derry Interim Chief Executive |
| Contact Officer: | Sarah Sprung, Senior Lead Officer Sarah_sprung@sandwell.gov.uk Kate Ashley, Strategic Lead Kate1_ashley@sandwell.gov.uk |

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Council approve the Corporate Plan 2020 – 2025 – Refresh 2021.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The approach to refreshing the Corporate Plan has been very much about building it in a collaborative way to ensure we capture and take account of key issues and concerns from a wide range of our stakeholders.
- 2.2 The resulting intelligence from the conversations with our stakeholders has informed the draft set of actions within the proposed refreshed Corporate Plan that will achieve the strategic outcomes and address the key issues affecting the borough and our organisation.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

| | | |
|---|---|--|
|  |  | <p>The Corporate Plan sets out the strategic priorities for the council and details future service provision to achieve them. The Corporate Plan then informs how each directorate will spend the target budget available to them. A refresh of the detailed actions that underpin the delivery of the strategic objectives is required at this time to ensure that the Corporate Plan takes into account the impact of the pandemic on Sandwell as a whole and on the organisation.</p> |
|  |  | |
|  |  | |



4 Context and Key Issues

Background

- 4.1 Our Corporate Plan – Big Plans for a Great Place, sets out what the Council will do to deliver Vision 2030, and Sandwell's 10 ambitions, over the period 2020 to 2025. The Corporate Plan was approved by Council on 10 March 2020.
- 4.2 Following this, the intention during the first half of 2020/21 had been to work with staff, members, partners and communities to develop delivery plans for each of the strategic priorities contained in the Corporate Plan. These delivery plans would have mapped out the detailed actions to achieve the strategic priorities.
- 4.3 However, the coronavirus pandemic reached the UK at the end of March 2020. This meant that focus of the council and its partners was diverted to the initial response and establishing longer-term support mechanisms as the pandemic has continued into 2021.
- 4.4 The pandemic has impacted on many aspects of everyday life, communities and on our economy. At the same time, businesses and other organisations were preparing for the UK's departure from the European Union. It was clear that the impact of the pandemic on Sandwell Council and the borough as a whole needed to be understood to ensure our priorities and future actions would address the needs of our communities.
- 4.5 We commenced work to understand the initial impact of Covid on our communities, on our economy and specifically on the council. This work was presented to Cabinet in detail on 23 September 2020.
- 4.6 The report set out that whilst the impact of the pandemic had been far reaching, it had exacerbated known issues affecting Sandwell rather than raise any new areas for exploration. The findings formed the basis for a series of engagement events with members, staff and partners throughout the autumn, and drove the second phase of our reset and recovery planning to develop actions to address the key issues affecting our residents.



4.7 At its meeting on 10 February 2021 Cabinet approved proposals to refresh the Corporate Plan. Within this was a comprehensive Communication and Engagement Framework. The Framework placed emphasis on rebuilding our corporate plan with our key stakeholders. We have committed to utilising the principles of co-production in our Corporate Plan refresh. Nesta define co-production as:-

“delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours. Where activities are coproduced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change.”

The Starting Point for Conversations

4.8 Building on the impact assessment work with managers across the council and Leadership Team resulted in the creation of a set of principles to guide the refresh and embed into everything we do as a council. These principles would be used to test against our actions and decisions to ensure we are continually working towards delivering the strategic objectives of the Corporate Plan.

4.9 The principles depicted below focus on creating a fairer Sandwell, a place where no one gets left behind, where we do things with our communities and not to them, where we focus on making sure our money is spent locally and where we take our green agenda forward in all aspects of our business, and try to help our communities to do the same.



4.10 In addition to these principles a set of key challenges for the Council were developed, these challenges were derived from the impact assessment work undertaken and further intelligence from staff. This document is appended at Appendix 1. These challenges were then used as the basis of conversations with stakeholder groups to test whether there were any further issues that needed to be addressed in the refreshed Corporate Plan.

Co-producing our Corporate Plan

4.11 The image below outlines key strands of co-production activity that have taken place:-



4.12 All of the conversations that have taken place have sought to build on existing intelligence generated through the impact work and the challenges.

4.13 The sections below outline the approach for each stakeholder and key themes from the various strands of conversation that have taken place.

Members

4.14 A Cabinet Workshop was held in June 2021 to discuss the proposed fairer Sandwell principles and the key challenges to be addressed through the refresh. The fairer Sandwell principles were endorsed by Cabinet Members to include in the further conversations with stakeholder groups and seek their views. Discussion at the Cabinet workshop identified the following areas that needed to be reflected in the Plan:-

- clean and green streets, including refuse collection and tackling long-standing unused land
- mental health and wellbeing support



- engagement with communities
- young people and their future prospects
- support for vulnerable people, particularly housing

4.15 A series of members workshops were run in July and August, one for each of the six towns in the borough. Discussion focused on the principles and the key challenges facing the borough. Headlines from these conversations are detailed below:-

- Universal support for principles and agreed with the challenges.
- Words are good, we have the right principles and have identified the right challenges but how will we deliver all this? Ensuring principles underpin everything and we can demonstrate we have adhered to them. Need to report back regularly, including to residents so they can see change.
- Getting the basics right. Particularly around litter, fly tipping, bins, grass cutting. Appearance of an area gives either right or wrong message.
- Digital exclusion and accessing services for those who need face to face services big issue. Particular difficulties around non-digital access and lack of access to services locally which disadvantages already disadvantaged groups and people. Getting through to the council can be difficult for residents.
- Engagement and communication with residents needs to improve considerably. We need to let people know what we are planning and doing around corporate plan and in their areas; more importantly listen to them.
- Employment/ Economy was universally supported but recognition that quality of life and living well mattered just as much. Priority was young people.

4.16 A further Cabinet Workshop was held in September 2021, focus at this session was to assess key themes from conversations against the strategic outcomes and underpinning headline actions. Members welcomed the clear narrative on how conversations had influenced the content of the Plan and the proposals to develop a Young Persons version of the Plan in autumn/winter 2021/22.



4.17 Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board considered the strategic outcomes and draft underpinning actions at their meeting on 21 September. Members commended the collaborative process for building the refreshed Plan but emphasised the need for a comprehensive performance management framework to track and monitor progress in delivering the Plan. In addition, it was noted that directorate level business plans would provide further detail on delivering the aspirations contained in the Plan.

Voluntary and Community Sector

4.18 A virtual event was organised with the support of Sandwell Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO). Whilst the principles were shared together with the challenges, the focus was on collecting the experiences, views and perspectives from our partners in the voluntary and community sector.

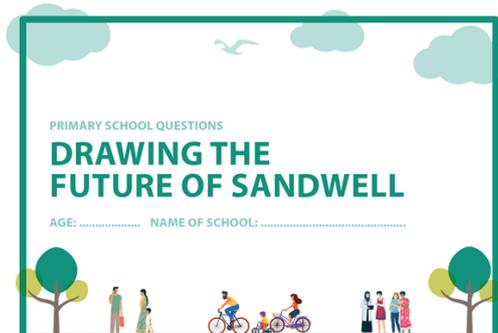
4.19 Some 39 organisations attended the session which was led by the Director of Business Strategy and Change. The commentary from the session was rich and insightful, providing a grassroots perspective on key issues in the community, particularly from those groups that have traditionally been harder to engage with. A summary of the key points is detailed below:-

- There is a need to look at how the council engages with the voluntary sector
- Agreement with Fairer Sandwell principles but more detail needed on how these will be implemented
- Long term impact of Covid will be huge. Need to address recovery and living with on-going threat
- Tackle health inequalities
- Role of the voluntary sector needs to be recognised
- Focus on community housing
- Young people's access to jobs needs particular focus and attention



Young People

4.20 We ran virtual workshops with seven schools across the borough. Workbooks were posted out to all schools ahead of each session to support discussion, with different versions for primary and for secondary schools. The booklets included topics such as the impact of the pandemic, what children and young people liked about their local area, what they would like to see change and their future aspirations.



4.21 Sessions were run at three primary schools and four secondary schools:-

| Primary | Secondary |
|--------------|--------------|
| Christchurch | St Michael's |
| Grove Vale | Shirelands |
| St Philip's | Q3 Langley |
| | Q3 Tipton |

4.22 Each session was led by a director and Cabinet Member or Cabinet Advisor.

4.23 The points below are the key themes from these sessions:-

- Mental health and wellbeing services need to be signposted and advertised widely, the need for these services is greater than ever
- More green spaces that are safe for young people
- Climate change is an issue for everyone, so let's work together
- We need to prepare young people for adult life with life skills sessions



- The community is what pupils liked most about Sandwell
- Pupils will move away from Sandwell to University and for more job opportunities

4.24 Following the school events the SHAPE Youth Forum were presented with commentary and key themes from the school sessions and invited to provide further feedback.

4.25 The SHAPE Forum considered the following points were the most important areas for the council to focus on from the perspective of young people:-

- Preparation for adult life
- Ensuring everyone feels safe in their community
- Facilities for young people
- Climate change

4.26 Members of the SHAPE Forum agreed to work with the council to develop a Young Persons version of the Corporate Plan and were committed to holding the council to account for delivering the actions.

4.27 The Care Leavers Forum also received a presentation on key themes from school sessions and were invited to share their perspective on key issues and challenges.

4.28 Young people present at the meeting highlighted the following key issues:-

- Living independently from a very young age is challenging - more support is needed, particularly people to talk to for advice;
- Waiting lists for mental health services is excessive, often young people are struggling with issues and need more immediate support to avoid the situation escalating;
- Digital poverty is a major issue;
- There aren't enough youth facilities for young people to access - not only do facilities address social need, they also provide a place to get advice, support and signposting;



- Difficulty in securing housing because of the high level of proof required from care leavers.

4.29 The challenge provided to the council from the Care Leavers Forum was that every section of the Corporate Plan, and Directorate Business Plans, needed to consider the council's responsibilities as a Corporate Parent.

4.30 Members of the Care Leavers Forum felt that the proposals to develop a Young People's version of the Corporate Plan were positive and that it would be a good tool to hold the council to account for its actions.

Residents' Survey

4.31 Capturing the views, concerns and thoughts of residents is paramount to developing a Corporate Plan that really focuses on areas that are important to residents.

4.32 The survey covered communication and information, digital inclusion, satisfaction with the council, participation and influence, council spending and priorities, neighbourhood issues and improving Sandwell.

4.33 The online survey ran from 27 July to 16 August, with a total of 1,268 responses being received.

4.34 Whilst the level of response received is encouraging and provides insight into the views of residents, it must be noted that, due to the survey being available online only, the sample is not truly representative of the demographic make-up of the borough. Key points to note about the sample include: -

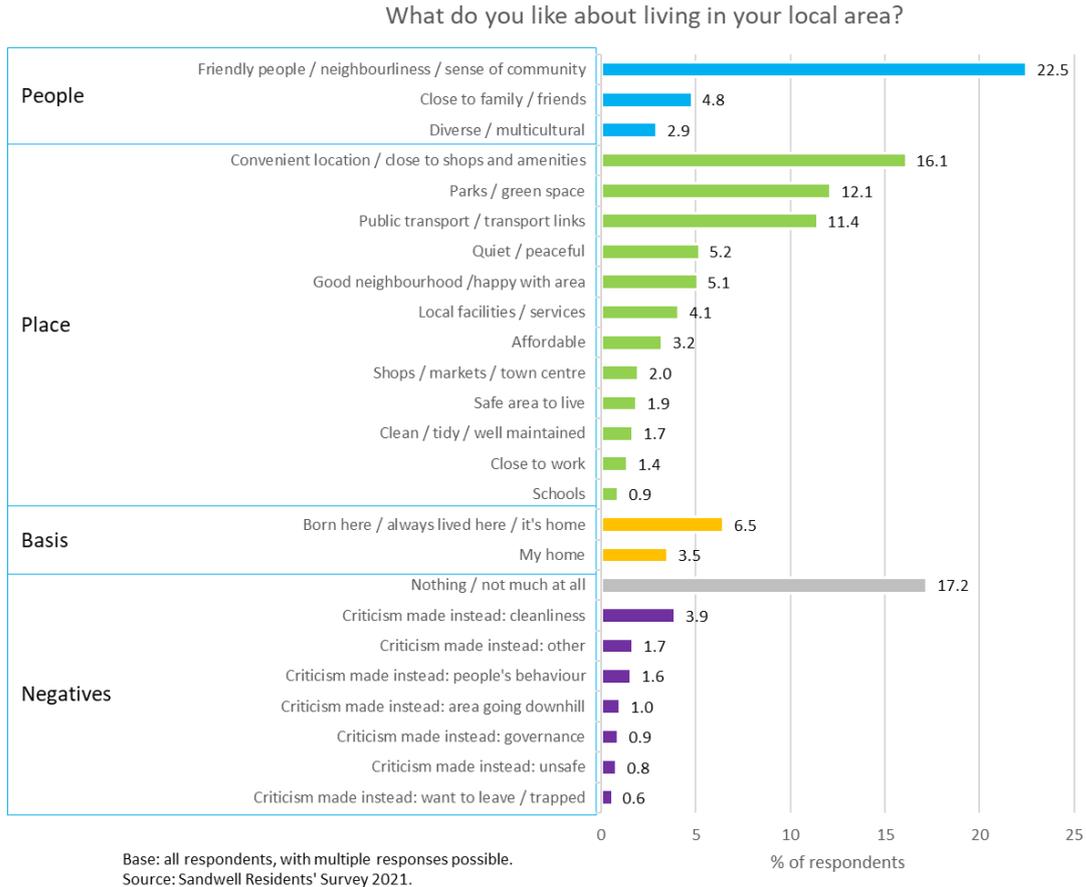
- Over-represented groups: females, 45-54; 55-64 and 65-74 ages and White British
- Under-represented groups: males, 18-24 and 25-34s and 75-plus ages, BAME and economically active
- High response from residents in Wednesbury and Oldbury; low response from residents in Smethwick and West Bromwich



- 4.35 Therefore, the results cannot be used alone to determine the future of the council or measure service performance. However, building this data into the wider intelligence gathered through our engagement work, the findings from this survey support the key issues that will direct the refresh of the Corporate Plan.
- 4.36 The survey asked, without any prompts, why people liked their local area and what they would like to see improved. The charts below highlight perceptions of those who completed the survey in relation to what they like about living in their local area and what they would like to see improved.
- 4.37 Figure 1 below shows that nearly one quarter (22.5%) of respondents felt that their local area was a friendly place with a sense of community, and over 15% of respondents said that it was a convenient location close to amenities. However, almost a fifth (18.7%) of respondents offered no view on what they liked in a survey they otherwise completed. Of those commenting on their area, 17.8% said they liked nothing about it, and many offered specific criticisms, conveying feelings of area decline and neglect.



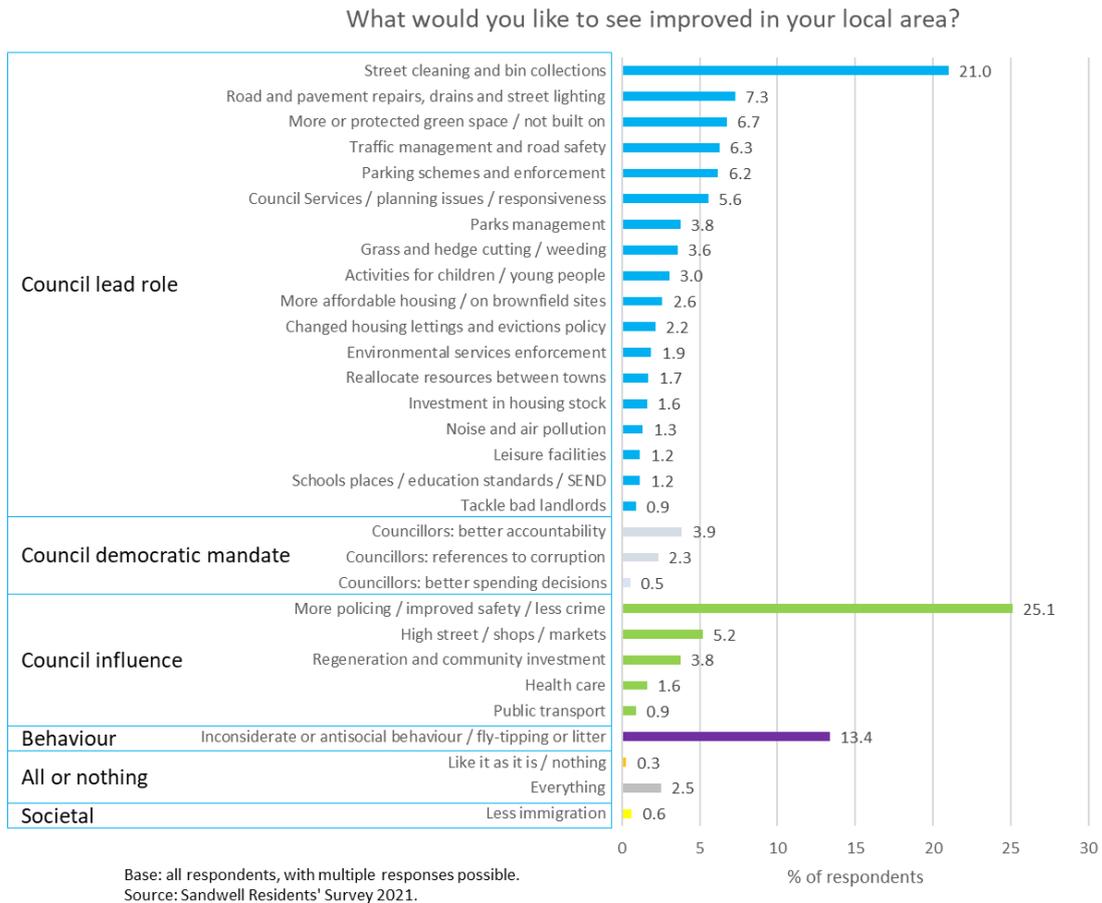
Figure 1: Residents Survey August 2021 - Living in Your Local Area



4.38 Figure 2 below shows the people-based aspects (community, family, diversity) valued and the place appeal (convenience, green space, transport). This chart analyses calls for improvement and distinguishes between issues the council leads on (including the democratic dimension) and where the council contributes or has an influence only. Street scene dominates the first category with over 20% of respondents saying improvements in street cleaning and bin collections were important to them. Policing and community safety issues were the high priorities for improvement in the second category.



Figure 2: Residents Survey August 2021 - Improvements to Local Area



4.39 Importantly, the items scoring highest in areas that residents would like to see improved (street cleaning and bin collections, more policing/improved safety/less crime and inconsiderate or antisocial behaviour) have all been strengthened within the proposed refresh of the Corporate Plan, specifically within the Strong and Resilient Communities strategic outcome. These areas have been strengthened as a result of the combined analysis of intelligence from all of the engagement activities carried out during this refresh.



Staff

- 4.40 Leadership Team have sought to keep staff informed of the need to refresh the Corporate Plan and about the outcomes from the impact assessment work undertaken. Virtual staff conferences have taken place in July 2020, September 2020, December 2020 and April 2021.
- 4.41 The Corporate Plan has also been an item of each of the 'Team Talk' slide decks issued to managers across the council. These slides form the basis of discussion at team meetings and ensure that consistent messages are communicated.
- 4.42 All staff were invited to join a Staff Panel which was established in May 2021. The aim of the Panel was to harness the knowledge and experience of staff across the council in developing corporate strategy and policy. Whilst the Panel was established to aid the development of the Corporate Plan, it is intended that the Panel will be a longer-term platform for staff to influence plans across the council.
- 4.43 There are currently 87 staff signed up to the Staff Panel from a range of services and levels across the organisation.
- 4.44 Headline comments from the Staff Panel are:-
- Need to review and monitor regularly for success in delivering success
 - Need to be realistic in what we can promise and deliver and match resources to deliver outcomes
 - Value for money and buy local
 - Do everything efficiently and green
 - Listen to staff and give them the resources, both financial and staffing, to deliver.
 - Need to be honest and transparent in what we can do and what and how we are delivering
 - Need to engage with and work with community and make co-design and co-working everyday practice
 - Need to celebrate and share our successes with communities and employees



- Lead by example on climate change and the green agenda and build this into all our functions
- Listen to staff and our communities

Ensuring Conversations Influence Plans

4.45 We want to be a council that listens and responds. Whilst this report only contains the headlines from each of the strands of conversation, in developing the revised actions that underpin the strategic outcomes directors were provided with the relevant individual comments in order that these could be considered and help to shape each outcome.

4.46 Conversations that have taken place have led to changes from the original iteration of the Corporate Plan. These conversations have specifically strengthened:-

- Our commitment to improving standards of cleanliness across the borough;
- Our drive to ensure that everyone feels safe in the communities they live in;
- Our commitment to whole life care and choice.

4.38 It is not intended that any of these conversations are isolated 'one offs'. Our aim is to keep the conversation going with all of our stakeholders. For example, we will return to each of the schools we visited in the autumn to tell them how their feedback has helped to shape our plan and get their help to develop a young person's version of the Corporate Plan.

Our Reshaped Plan

4.39 Appendix 2 is our proposed Corporate Plan, it contains the six strategic outcomes together with underpinning aspirations.

4.40 Cabinet considered the strategic outcomes together with the underpinning aspirations at its meeting on 29 September. Cabinet recommend that Council approve the Corporate Plan Refresh 2021.



5 Alternative Options

5.1 The Corporate Plan was originally approved by Full Council in March 2020 and was for a five-year period, this would expire in 2025. Therefore, the existing document could have remained in place without refining the actions to ensure the council's resources are focused on responding to the impact of the pandemic on the borough or the organisation.

5 Implications

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Resources: | The Corporate Plan sets out the strategic priorities for the council as a whole and informs how the council's resources are used to achieve them. |
| Legal and Governance: | The Council has a statutory duty to set a balanced budget by 11 March each year prior to the start of the relevant financial year. The agreement of the refreshed Corporate Plan up to 2025, aligned to the needs of the borough and the organisation, will inform the development of the council's medium-term financial strategy and support the delivery of a balanced budget within the required timescale. |
| Risk: | Risk implications have been considered by services during the development of the refreshed priority actions. Further detailed work on managing risks will be carried out through directorate business planning. |
| Equality: | The work carried out during 2020 to understand the impact of the pandemic on our communities has been used as evidence to inform the refresh of the Corporate Plan, this together with the conversations that have taken place over Summer 2021 provide an excellent evidence base for the refresh of the Plan. An Equality Impact Assessment is appended to this report. |
| Health and Wellbeing: | This information is contained within the main body of the report and the Corporate Plan. |



| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Social Value | Embedding the Fairer Sandwell Principles in all council activity will ensure that social value will be delivered. Within the One Council, One Team strategic outcome, a key action will be to develop a Social Value Policy. By embedding the Fairer Sandwell Principles in this policy, we are providing clarity for all our suppliers on what additional social value we expect to be achieved through our spend. |
|---------------------|---|

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Key Challenges

Appendix 2 – Corporate Plan – 2021 - 2025

8. Background Papers

Report to Council 10 March 2020 – Corporate Plan – Big Plans for a Great Place for the people of Sandwell

Report to Council 2 March 2021 – Corporate Plan 2020 – 2025

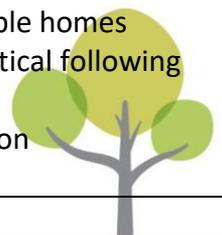
Report to Cabinet 23 September 2021 – Reset and Recovery Phase One Findings

Report to Cabinet 10 February 2021 – Corporate Plan 2021 – 2025 and Budget



This page is intentionally left blank

| Strategic Outcomes | Challenges |
|---|---|
| One Council, One team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing the budget • Developing the new operating model and transformation agenda • Developing the digital offer • Combatting digital exclusion • Embedding senior management restructure • Strategic communication • Positive mental wellbeing of staff • Equalities Commission • Updating our governance arrangements |
| Best Start in Life for Children and Young People | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising poverty and household stress, notably food insecurity • Increasing safeguarding concerns and need for family support • Young people disproportionately affected by the pandemic • Lost teaching in pandemic worsening existing education gap and risk of those Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) increasing |
| People live well, age well | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widening health inequalities • Pandemic gravely affected specific groups, notably BAME and disabled people • Combatting mental ill health and social isolation • Promoting wellbeing and preventing the need for longer term support. • Joined up care • Vaccination take-up and risk of localities where Covid persists |
| Strong, Resilient Communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising reliance on benefits, poverty, debt and inequality • Impact on our high streets • Anticipation of increasing homelessness • Building on the increase in civic participation • Digital exclusion made worse • Action to address climate change as an organisation and in the community, a green recovery • 40% increase in waste collection |
| Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspiration for new house building programme delivering green, environmentally-friendly and affordable homes • Fire safety in our high and low-rise blocks critical following Hackitt Report • Vulnerability in private rented accommodation • Isolation of families in high rise blocks |





| | |
|--|---|
| A Strong, Inclusive Economy | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low wages, low Skills, and higher levels of deprivation• Meeting additional skills and retraining needs• Increasing need for digital skills and equipment• Increasing need for improved support for businesses• Disadvantaged groups being left behind• Impact on high streets and other economic scarring• Making the most of government funding opportunities |
| A connected and accessible Sandwell | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continuing development of sustainable travel opportunities to build on increased walking/cycling• Securing funding/investment and delivering major transport projects• Implementing 5G infrastructure |



BIG PLANS FOR A GREAT PLACE: **THE SANDWELL PLAN**





Foreword by the Leader of Sandwell Council, Councillor Rajbir Singh

During the COVID pandemic, councils have been at the forefront of providing vital services, supporting local action and bringing partners together. In Sandwell we have been proud to collaborate with our residents and partners, and we have worked together to understand the needs of our communities and respond rapidly and appropriately. We will take what we have learned over the past months into our refreshed corporate plan – Big Plans for a Great Place.

This has been a hard time for many people. The pandemic has exacerbated inequalities and both the direct impact of the virus and the consequences of infection control have affected Sandwell profoundly and disproportionately.

But we know that there are things we can do to address this. This plan aims to build a fairer Sandwell, building resilience by investing locally, developing services with our communities to meet their needs, leaving no one behind and looking to the future in everything we do, including taking our environmental responsibilities seriously.

As well as addressing the challenges that lie ahead, this plan aims to maximise the great opportunities in Sandwell, putting us on the map. We will capitalise on the exciting new Sandwell Aquatics Centre, new housing developments and infrastructure such as the Midlands Metro Line and the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital as catalysts for wider regeneration.

As an organisation, we will ensure we have robust, transparent governance and decision-making processes in place.

The way we work has changed immensely since the pandemic hit, driving innovation and resource sharing. We will continue to modernise and transform the council at pace.

I look forward to working with you all in rising to this exciting agenda and delivering our Big Plans for a Great Place.

Our borough

Sandwell is a local government administrative area created in 1974 following successive local government reorganisations that brought together six boroughs: Oldbury, Rowley Regis and Smethwick in the south, and Tipton, Wednesbury and West Bromwich in the north.

So Sandwell covers many historically disparate towns and urbanised villages at the core of the Birmingham-Black Country conurbation; places with distinctive identities that flourished along with their many world-class firms.

With postwar economic decentralisation and deindustrialisation, this urban core entered decline. Deprivation intensified from the 1970s, and some neighbourhoods became stigmatised, unpopular and needed housing clearance.

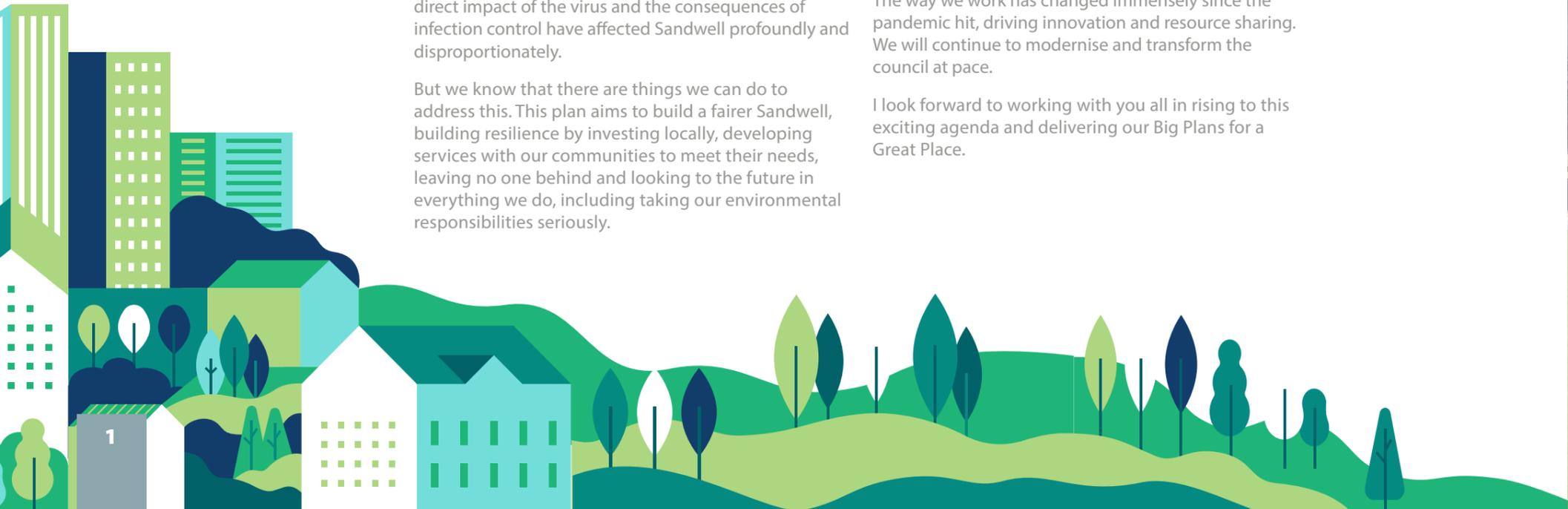
Most twentieth-century housing was council-built, especially in the north and was often of high quality but eventually culminated in concrete estates of flats. In an area of low incomes, some 28,600 homes were still managed by the council in 2019 accounting for 21.6% of the borough housing stock.

A legacy of intensive manufacturing and extractive industry, rail and canal corridors, and pockets of Victorian housing marks Sandwell today, but so too do its many parks, and quality open space like the Rowley Hills and Sandwell Valley.

It is an increasingly complex area, with varying internal dynamics and cross-boundary relationships affecting housing markets and travel to work within the conurbation. These differences are outlined in the next section, 'Our Towns'.

Sandwell has since the 1980s attracted significant government regeneration investment, often through area-based initiatives. This has addressed many physical problems such as dereliction, poor transport and local facilities, underpinned by a sustained focus on West Bromwich Town Centre. The borough's strategic advantage as a business location has been reinforced. And investment continues with a new hospital, a new Aquatics Centre, the extension to the West Midlands Metro line, and funding through the Stronger Towns Fund.

Significant new housing (4,727 units in 2012-20 alone) built on 'brownfield' ex-industrial sites has expanded and fused residential neighbourhoods, supported the historic centres and since the turn of the century, helped retain and attract working-age aspirational households. Serious long-term population decline has sharply reversed (Figure 1).



Our borough

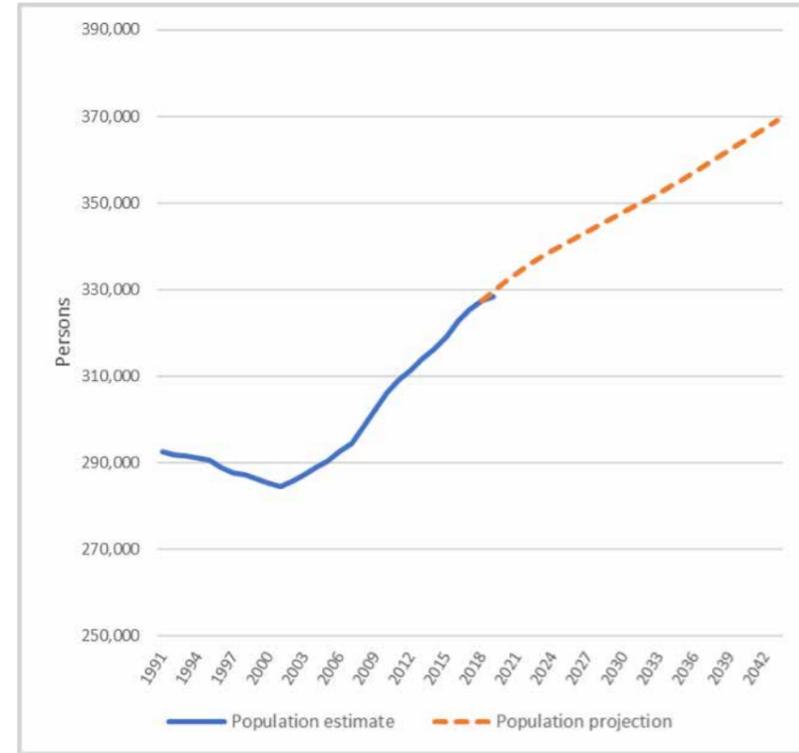
The £6 billion local economy has 8,775 businesses employing 136,000 people. It retains a significant manufacturing sector, with strengths in logistics, health and social care as well as retail and wholesale. Sandwell has nevertheless been better at adding population than jobs (Figure 2) with employment growth generally in low-skill and pay occupations.

International migration has been a major driver of change, first from the Commonwealth then from Europe and globally, including asylum seekers and refugees. From 2002-20, some 58,000 national insurance registrations were given in Sandwell to overseas nationals from 136 countries, although many have not remained. So it is now increasingly ethnically diverse, with an estimated 37% BAME population in 2019, when 37% of births also were to women not UK-born. This contributes to a young age profile, with 40% of people under 30 in 2019, although some neighbourhoods are rapidly ageing.

The number of localities in the worst 1% nationally has noticeably dropped but overall Sandwell remains the eighth most deprived English district. This reflects place-based issues but most seriously, people-based outcomes: low skills and educational attainment leading to labour market exclusion; child and family poverty; and poor health and life expectancy. Its demography and urban structure recently exposed it to Covid. This is why the six strategic outcomes identified in this plan are so important.



Figure 1 Sandwell Population



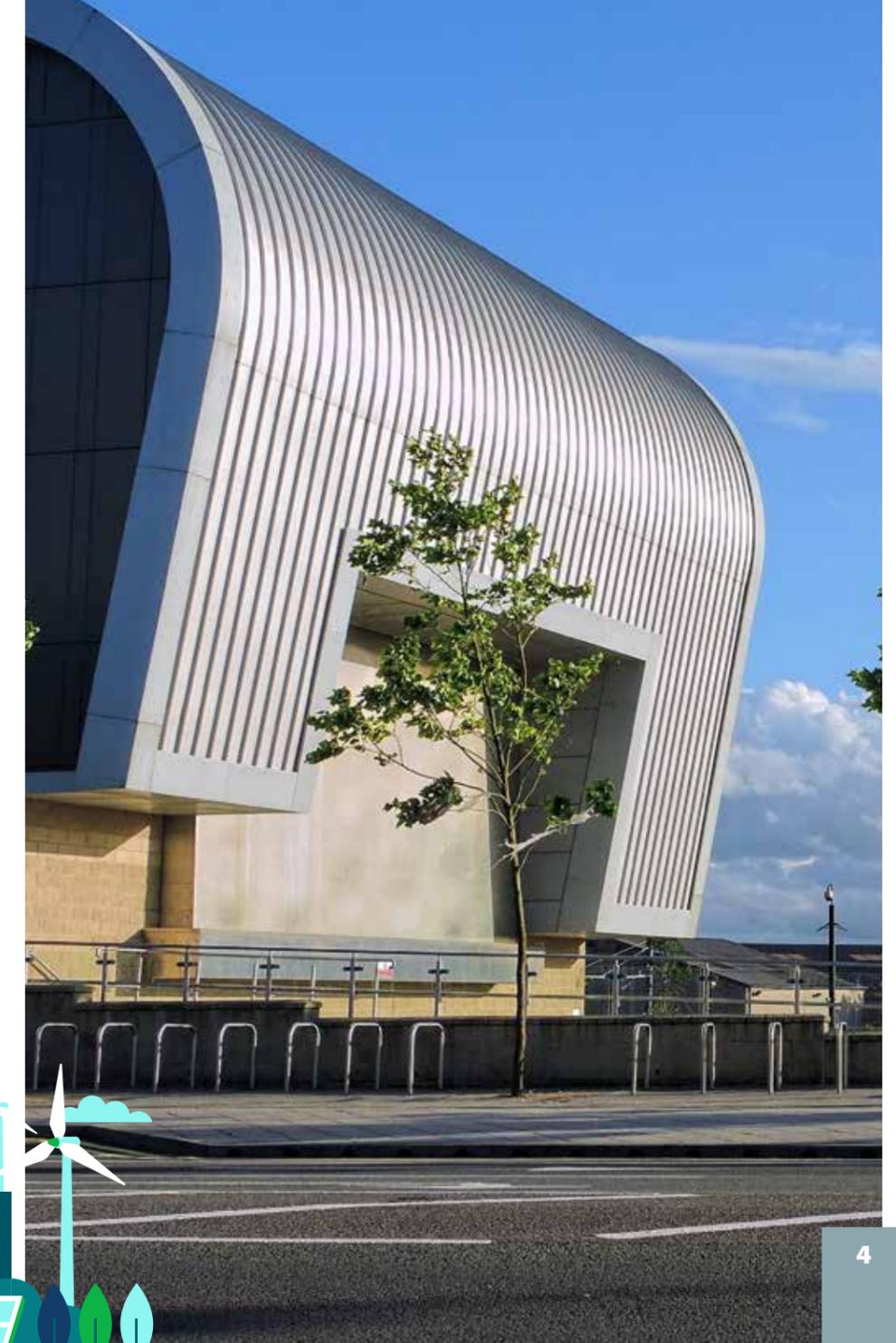
Source: Population estimates and projections – Local Authority based via NOMIS

Figure 2 Sandwell Jobs



Source: Jobs density via NOMIS.

Job density is the number of jobs in an area divided by the resident working age population.



Our towns

Oldbury

The population of Oldbury has grown by 4.9% since 2012 to 53,734. This is the same as the regional average and like the UK average, but slightly slower than the borough as a whole. Of the six towns, it is mid-rank in terms of population density, close to the borough average. It remains an industrial centre with suburban neighbourhoods in the south. It includes the administrative centre of Sandwell.

Oldbury has the second largest amount of jobs (27,500 jobs) and has experienced a 2.7% decrease in jobs over the past five years.

DID YOU KNOW?

Oldbury began as an Iron Age settlement and hill fort on the south-eastern slopes of the Rowley Hills, until its move to the current site of the town centre in the 15th century to take advantage of the improved road built between Birmingham, Dudley and Wolverhampton.

Rowley Regis

Rowley Regis includes Rowley Village and settlements ringing the Rowley Hills including the towns of Blackheath, Cradley Heath and Old Hill. Its population is growing slowly at 1.9% – far below the borough, regional and UK averages. It has an older age profile than the West Midlands and UK and has the highest proportion of over 65-year-olds and lowest proportion of under 19-year-olds of all the towns. The amount of businesses in Rowley Regis has grown by 3.1% in the last five years to 1,310, bringing job numbers to 14,250.

DID YOU KNOW?

The highest point of the Black Country is Turners Hill, part of the Rowley Hills, now the location of digital radio transmission aerials. During WW2 it was the site of a heavy anti-aircraft battery protecting the Black Country and Birmingham from German air attack.

Smethwick

Smethwick was marked by heavy post-war population loss after housing clearance in places like Windmill Lane. The town has grown by 9.4% since 2012 to 61,097, far outstripping the borough, regional and national average. It is the most densely populated town in Sandwell. It has a strong travel to work and retail relationship to Birmingham which is adjacent. It is ethnically highly diverse. Smethwick has the youngest population with the highest proportion of young people aged 0 to 15 (25.9%) and lowest proportion of over 65-year-olds (10.8%), making it younger than the region and UK. The amount of businesses in Smethwick has grown by 13.4% in the last five years to 2,165, bringing job numbers to 20,000.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many of the Birmingham ironmasters moved to Smethwick and built grand houses with extensive gardens to escape the growing pollution of the city. Few survived the 19th century industrial growth, one noted exception being Lightwoods House and Park, now splendidly restored by the council.

Tipton

Tipton is the second smallest town by population. It has grown by 5.6% since 2012, slightly under the borough average but higher than the West Midlands and UK. Tipton is the smallest town by area and has a relatively high population density. New build housing has been significant over the past 25 years. Demographically, Tipton is young with a higher than average proportion of young residents and lower than average proportion of older residents. The amount of businesses in Tipton has grown by 11.6% in the last five years to 1,055. Employment has remained constant at 11,500 for the past three years.

DID YOU KNOW?

Being about as far from the sea as anywhere in the UK (it's about 70 miles to the nearest coast) it is perhaps remarkable that the world's first iron ocean-going steamship was built in Tipton. This was the Aaron Manby, designed by Aaron Manby, owner of the Horseley Ironworks, in 1822.

Wednesbury

Wednesbury is the smallest town by population with 39,499 people, it is growing slower than the regional and national average. Its population is slightly older than the Sandwell average, although it is still younger than the West Midlands and UK overall.

Despite being the smallest town by population, Wednesbury has a higher number of jobs than Rowley Regis and Tipton at 17,250. The amount of businesses in Wednesbury has grown by 9.9% in the last five years to 995.

DID YOU KNOW?

The earliest evidence for coal mining in the Black Country comes from Wednesbury, showing the industry was well-established in the town by the early 1300s. Extensive iron and pottery industries developed through the 1400s and 1500s, with Wednesbury's ceramic production so prolific the term 'Wedgbury' ware came to be applied to a specific type of pottery produced not only in Wednesbury but across the Black Country.

West Bromwich

West Bromwich is the largest town with a population of 81,304, giving it the lowest population density in Sandwell. It includes the main commercial and retail centre of Sandwell. Its housing markets include older terraced housing in the town centre, extensive council-built neighbourhoods to the north and the more affluent suburban Great Barr area. It has the second oldest age profile with 16.6% of its population aged over 65. It has the highest number of jobs at 35,000 and the highest amount of business at 2,370, which have grown by 10.7% in past five years.

DID YOU KNOW?

West Bromwich was originally a scattered series of hamlets (known locally as 'ends') where pottery and metal working – nails, springs, locks and buckles and latterly guns – developed as cottage industries, exploiting the coal, clay and ironstone, found just beneath the surface.





Sandwell Vision 2030

Sandwell has a clear vision for what the borough should look and feel like by 2030:

In 2030, Sandwell is a thriving, optimistic and resilient community.

It's where we call home and where we're proud to belong - where we choose to bring up our families, where we feel safe and cared for, enjoying good health, rewarding work, feeling connected and valued in our neighbourhoods and communities, confident in the future, and benefiting fully from a revitalised West Midlands.

This plan sets out what the council will do to deliver Vision 2030 and Sandwell's 10 ambitions over the next five years. It is not intended to include an

exhaustive list of all the functions of the council but sets out our priorities over the next five years.

Our Vision and everything we do is underpinned by our values - trust, unity and progress.




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.



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.



Our workforce and young people are skilled and talented, geared up to respond to changing business needs and to win rewarding jobs in a growing economy.



Our children benefit from the best start in life and a high quality education throughout their school careers with outstanding support from their teachers and families.



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.



We have excellent and affordable public transport that connects us to all local centres and to jobs in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, the airport and the wider West Midlands.



We now have many new homes to meet a full range of housing needs in attractive neighbourhoods and close to key transport routes.



Our distinctive towns and neighbourhoods are successful centres of community life, leisure and entertainment where people increasingly choose to bring up their families.



Sandwell has become a location of choice for industries of the future where the local economy and high performing companies continue to grow.



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.





Building our Plan together

We want to be a Council that listens and responds. We want to make sure what we prioritise as a Council are the things that matter to our communities. To achieve this, we have had lots of conversations which have helped us build our refreshed plan.

We've embraced the principles of co-production in designing our refreshed plan and we want this to become the norm for everything we do, doing things with our communities and harnessing the understanding, intelligence and creativity our communities hold.

Young People

We know that our young people are the future of Sandwell and we want to make sure that their views influence the detail in our plan. We ran virtual workshops with seven schools in the Borough and attended the SHAPE Forum and Care Leavers Forum.

In designing our approach to talk to young people we used Sandwell's Children and Young People's Engagement Strategy as this sets the standards for engaging with young people in the borough.

We had a fantastic time talking to young people and want to say thank you to the schools that agreed to run workshops with us:

- Grove Vale Primary School
- Christchurch Primary School
- St Phillip's Primary School
- St Michael's Secondary School

Shirelands Secondary School

Q3 Langley

Q3 Tipton

Going forward we want to do further work with young people to develop a young person's version of the Corporate Plan.

Voluntary & Community Sector

Sandwell Council for Voluntary Organisations helped us organise a workshop for the sector so we could hear first-hand what their experiences had been over the past 18 months and what they felt the challenges would be going forward.

Member Workshops

Our 72 elected members hold a wealth of knowledge about their local communities and neighbourhoods. We ran six member workshops, one for each town in Sandwell.



Resident Survey

We want to make sure that what we do as a Council reflects the need within the community and that we build a Sandwell everyone can be proud of. To collect the views of residents on services the council provides and those that we work together with partners on we ran a survey to which we received over 1,200 responses.

This survey is the start of an ongoing project to create a Residents Panel. This Panel will provide regular feedback to the Council on key issues and services throughout the year. This intelligence will be fed into our strategic development and directly to service areas.

Our Staff

Not only do our staff have an amazing amount of knowledge about their specific areas of work and beyond, many are also residents of the borough. We want to make sure we harness the creative intelligence of our workforce to deliver improvements for our residents.



SECONDARY SCHOOL QUESTIONS

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SANDWELL

AGE: ...12..... NAME OF SCHOOL: Stratford Collegiate Academy

SECONDARY SCHOOL QUESTIONS

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SANDWELL

AGE: ...12..... NAME OF SCHOOL: Stratford

WHAT ARE THE 3 THINGS THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?

my mental health
my family & friends
my peace

WHAT ARE YOUR AMBITIONS FOR THE FUTURE?

as an individual in this community, I would love to be a lawyer. This is because I want the chance to help make the world a better place.

WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL WORRIED ABOUT THE FUTURE?

I am a little anxious about my future because I will have to take over responsibilities and be mindful for things like bills.

I FEEL THAT I BELONG TO A COMMUNITY AND WE ALL WORK TOGETHER?

YES NO WHY? Because everyone is very warm and welcoming!

I FEEL THAT I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

YES NO WHY? Because of the support around me and support from school!

I FEEL THAT I AM BEING LISTENED TO?

YES NO WHY? Because when a certain group of people listen!

PRIMARY SCHOOL QUESTIONS

DRAWING THE FUTURE OF SANDWELL

AGE: ...9..... NAME OF SCHOOL: Green Vale Primary School

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP? DRAW A PICTURE.

Name: Amrutha Khan
Job: Pediatrician

WRITE DOWN THREE THINGS THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?

The three most important things to me are my family, my friends and my education as they make me who I am.

WHERE WOULD YOU LIVE AND WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE? DRAW A PICTURE.

WRITE DOWN THREE THINGS TO IMPROVE WHERE YOU LIVE AND HOW IT CAN BE IMPROVED?

- We could improve better in more areas
- We could encourage more people to walk, jog or cycle to school
- We could do more community events.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP? DRAW A PICTURE.

MP

WRITE DOWN THREE THINGS THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?

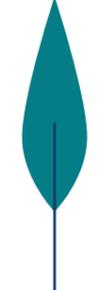
- Helping people
- Self-esteem
- Believing in my self

WHAT NEW SKILLS WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEARN IN THE FUTURE. DRAW A PICTURE.

Being confident with what I do
Basic first aid
Speak multiple languages
Doing things I enjoy

HOW WOULD YOUR NEW SKILLS HELP YOU IN THE FUTURE. WRITE DOWN THREE THINGS.

1. They would help me with what I want to do when I'm older for example speaking multiple languages. 2. First aid would help me if I ever needed to help someone. 3. Doing things I enjoy.



Our Partnerships

One of our great strengths in Sandwell is our partnerships. We work with our partners to ensure our vulnerable residents are safe, to make sure our services are meeting people's needs and to look at how our services can be improved. The only way we can deliver our Vision for Sandwell is by everyone working together.

Regional Level

Sandwell plays a large part on the regional stage as one of seven constituent members of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

The WMCA is made up of 18 local authorities and three Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). It aims to drive economic prosperity across the region and is one of our key partners for bringing forward opportunities both in Sandwell and for Sandwell people across the West Midlands.

At the Black Country level, we work in close partnership with the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (BCLEP). The BCLEP is a joint private and public sector body created to drive forward economic development in the Black Country. It is focused on increasing employment and improving the levels of business and enterprise.

The council is working hand in glove with both the WMCA, BCLEP and our business partners to shape Sandwell and deliver the key regeneration priorities contained within this plan.

Local Level

Amongst a multitude of hard-working partnerships at the local level, we have four statutory partnerships that form the foundation of our collaborative working:

- Sandwell Health and Wellbeing Board
- Sandwell Children's Safeguarding Partnership
- Sandwell Safeguarding Adults Board
- Safer Sandwell Partnership

Voluntary and Community Sector

Sandwell is immensely proud of its thriving local voluntary and community sector, who are key to the delivery our vision for the borough. Active and visible voluntary and community groups play a crucial role in building resilience in Sandwell and we will continue our long-standing history of working collaboratively.

The Plan

Our engagement with local people and partners in developing Vision 2030 has been invaluable in helping the Council shape this plan – Big Plans for a Great Place. The plan is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of everything we do as a council but sets out those outcomes that are strategically important for delivering Vision 2030.

Big Plans for a Great Place sets out six strategic outcomes. This is supported by our vision for one team, one council to create a modern and efficient council to deliver this exciting agenda. This plan will provide the framework for delivery plans.

The six outcomes:

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

Realising our vision in Big Plans for a Great Place is a huge undertaking and will mean breaking the cycle of poverty, improving support and outcomes in a child's early years, increasing skills and education attainment, reducing health inequalities, creating an environment for more inclusive economic growth and ensuring all residents are able of benefiting from new opportunities.



Our Resources

MAKING IT HAPPEN

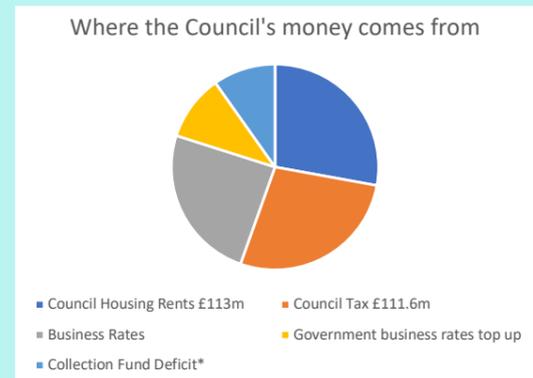
The diagrams, Figures 1 and 2, show where the council's money comes from and where it is going to be spent for the financial year 2021/22. Figure 3 shows the spend for the Housing Revenue Account, which for 2021/22 is £113million. In addition to this, we spend approximately £25m on Public Health which is funded from a separate grant. We also distribute £380 million of government money to schools and academies to fund children's education.

For the last 10 years, we have met the financial challenges of austerity and we will continue to manage our resources within the context of uncertain funding in the future; doing our best to deliver the best services we can within the resource limitations placed upon us.

To make this plan a reality we shall be aligning our resources to deliver our priorities set out in this plan. We recognise we cannot do this alone, so we will make sure that we are working in tandem with our partners to co-ordinate spending where possible. We will maximise our assets and build community wealth, spending more of the council's money with local businesses. This supports the local economy, it means more jobs and apprenticeships for local people-meaning more people earning, better spending power and more money going back into the local economy.

We want to hear from our residents when planning our spending and so we will be developing plans for involving the public in budget decision making.

FIGURE 1



* this is the shortfall in business rates and council tax from the previous year. This is much higher than normal because of the impact of COVID

FIGURE 2

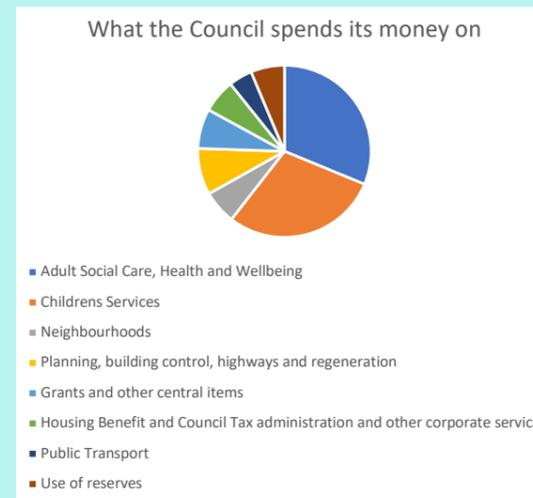


FIGURE 3



Impact of COVID

Since the beginning of 2020, the global Covid pandemic has resulted in desperate loss of life as well as widespread social and economic costs. The successful programme of mass vaccination has now reduced the risks of Covid infection but the virus is likely to remain a key challenge over the life of the corporate plan.

Sandwell's demography and urban structure exposed it to Covid, most notably its central corridor of older, poor quality housing and BAME communities where infection rates were highest.

The impact of successive lockdowns in 2020-21, needed to contain the pandemic, has caused significant economic damage. Sandwell was already in recession when Covid hit and has subsequently experienced many business failures, most visibly in our high streets, and widespread rises in unemployment, particularly among young people. Self-employed people suffered greatly and many jobs were sustained only through short-term government furlough support. The economic scarring of Covid is expected to be considerable.

The pandemic has deepened hardship and inequality in our already deprived area. Reliance on Universal Credit more than doubled and household debt has grown. Also of concern is the impact on mental health from bereavement, money worry, social isolation and family pressures, often exacerbated by digital exclusion. Young people have been badly affected by school and university disruption and by lockdown restrictions.

Impact on council services has also been great. Lockdown led to the suspension or rapid recasting of many services as facilities and offices closed. Home

working became the main way of keeping services running. In conjunction with the voluntary sector, the council supported thousands of households with food packages, and acted to prevent homelessness while also giving a financial lifeline to many businesses. Agencies like the NHS and the police worked with the council seamlessly to keep people safe. The council lost significant income during this time and this has fundamentally affected our financial position. Staff have been under intense pressure but working together they responded magnificently.

There are many lessons to learn from the pandemic. Both Sandwell's people and our place have been profoundly affected and the impact of inequality has been magnified. Yet we have also responded to challenges and new ways of working rapidly, built trust and relationships with our partners and our community has pulled together to support each other. This plan sets out how we will respond to the challenges and seize the opportunities.



Our Strategic Outcomes



THE BEST START IN LIFE
FOR CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE



PEOPLE LIVE
WELL AND
AGE WELL



STRONG
RESILIENT
COMMUNITIES



QUALITY HOMES
IN THRIVING
NEIGHBOURHOODS



A STRONG AND
INCLUSIVE ECONOMY



A CONNECTED
AND ACCESSIBLE
SANDWELL



ONE COUNCIL
ONE TEAM



Creating a Fairer Sandwell

The pandemic has affected Sandwell in many different ways, but one thing it has done consistently is to make existing inequalities present in Sandwell worse. We want to redress this balance and make Sandwell a fairer place. We've come up with a set of principles to measure everything we do against, at the heart of it is creating a fairer Sandwell.

These principles will put in practice our aspirations for Sandwell. They are simple, clear messages of our intent.

Local Investment

We are a major investor in our local economy, but we can do more along with our partners.

Local investment should be at the heart of what we do, it's how we create opportunities for our residents and keep the Sandwell pound in Sandwell. By pushing forward our Community Wealth agenda, focusing on Social Value and maximising opportunities to draw in external funding we can start to architecturalise a new Sandwell. This together with our house building programme and other local regeneration programmes offers significant opportunity.

This alongside our skills agenda will mean our residents have opportunities for well paid, local jobs.

Doing things with the community

This is about designing projects and services with the people so that they are part of the solution. We know that this approach delivers better outcomes, better outcomes that fit community need. This approach has added benefits of improving relationships and partnerships

and buy in to making things work, ultimately it can make better use of limited local resources.

Building on the strengths of the community in our approach, together with looking at how we can support local organisations to come together to do more, will also help to deliver better outcomes and keep Sandwell money in Sandwell.

We also need to acknowledge and celebrate when things go well, this is really important in building momentum to deliver bigger and better.

No one gets left behind

This is really about putting the growing inequality that has been experienced as a result of the pandemic front and centre. It picks up the need to break growing health, social and economic inequality.

It is about addressing the reasons why people maybe excluded, for example digital exclusion.

Green in everything we do

Climate change is the biggest threat facing humanity and has a massive impact on inequality. The green agenda is another principle that should permeate through everything we do. In all our decisions and projects we should ensure that we are having a positive impact on climate change, making sustainable decisions in order to reach our carbon neutral targets. Part of this is about raising our awareness and understanding of climate change as an organisation and about encouraging culture change in the wider community.



The following pages contain our strategic outcomes together with our aspirations for making these a reality.





The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People

The critical early period from pregnancy to a child's second birthday provides the foundation for how they will develop, grow and learn; and for their future life chances.

We know that poverty can limit nutrition, affect cognitive development, the ability to do well in school and ultimately earn a good living later on. It can contribute to vulnerable environments. This is why we have placed the emphasis on the importance of the first 1,000 days of a child's life and the importance of families securing the support available to them.

We want children to be ready for school and for schools to be ready for children. Families and communities being able to support that readiness are vital, so we are introducing specific additional measures for this early period and to prepare young people for adult life and skills, with a particular focus on vulnerable children. This chapter outlines our commitments to giving all of our children the best start in life.



| First 1000 days | |
|-----------------|---|
| B1 | We will bring together all partners to transform services through an Early Years Transformation Academy. |
| B2 | We will work with partners to deliver the EY Outcomes Framework and specifically, create new pathways for support that meet the needs of our residents and fill in the gaps in services for children aged 12-24 months. |
| B3 | We will ensure that culturally sensitive and accessible service hubs are in all six of our towns, and that community-led support is available. |



The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People

| Ready for school | |
|------------------|--|
| B4 | We will establish programmes that specifically address language development, in partnership with other local authorities. |
| B5 | We will support improvements in home learning environments. |
| B6 | We will promote the importance of communication and language to parents, and we will provide earlier support to children who need it. |
| B7 | We will ensure that professionals work together, across agencies, to develop their expertise in early childhood matters by delivering a multi-agency workforce development plan. |
| B8 | We will seek additional support for social mobility projects that address early language, with an intention to increase aspiration and ability. |
| B9 | We will provide enough good school places that offer families choice and confidence that their children can experience high quality education and achieve good outcomes. |
| B10 | We will work with schools and other learning providers to improve educational outcomes for children and young people. |



| Children and young people that need more support | |
|--|--|
| B11 | We will work with partners to make sure that vulnerable children in our community receive the right support to enable them to thrive and have successful adult lives. |
| B12 | We will be a council that understands the impact of adverse childhood experiences and trauma, with a workforce that provides services with compassion and understanding. |
| B13 | We will work with Sandwell Children's Trust to improve the quality of children's social care. |
| B14 | We will be a good Corporate Parent for the children in our care, ensuring that those children are fully a part of our 'family', and promoting fostering and adoption. |
| B15 | We will work with partners to ensure early help is available to children and young people at the earliest opportunity depending on their need. |
| B16 | We will ensure that children and young people with SEND can access high quality local services when they need them, by working with partners to ensure there is a comprehensive local offer available to children and families |
| B17 | We will ensure that emotional health and wellbeing support is in place for children and young people. |



People Live Well and Age Well

The pandemic and lockdowns have worsened existing health inequalities. We will work to redress that balance by investing in the community, voluntary and faith sectors, playing our part in the vaccine roll-out and ensuring that local communities are connected.

Living healthy lives is also paramount. From an early age, health is an issue for residents, with Sandwell underperforming for prevalence of obesity as well as mental ill health. People are living longer but are often in poor health as they get older. We want people to live well for longer. And we will put in place the measures to reverse this trend by working with local people to create community-based opportunities leading to healthier lives

It is also vital that people with care and support needs are enabled to make choices about the life they live. Being able to choose where you live, how you are supported, if you work or attend college and how

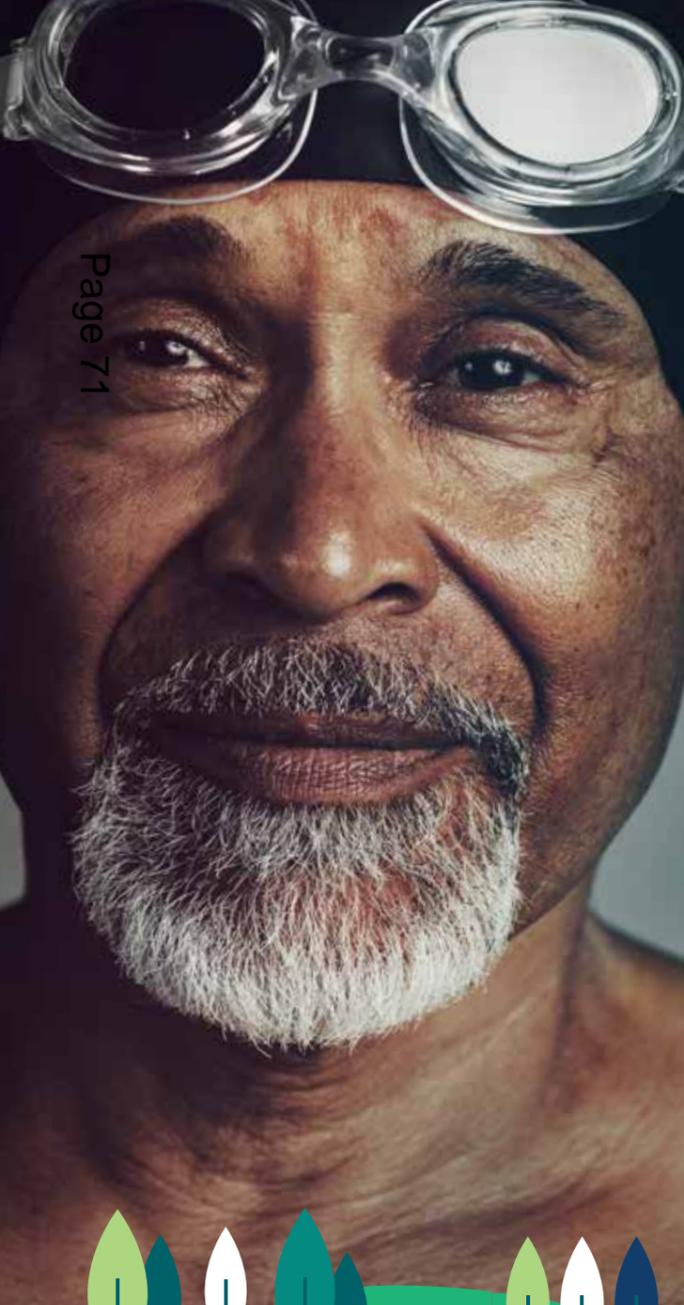
you spend your free time are basic decisions that many people with care and support needs find it difficult to make without support. We will help people make everyday choices around not just how they are supported, but also how they choose to live their lives.

We'll make sure that people don't stay in hospital for longer than they need to and we will share information across health and social care staff to reduce duplication. We will do this by working with partners to integrate health and social care.



| Rebuilding | |
|------------|--|
| L1 | We will work with the Council's Equalities Commission to ensure that no one is left behind. In particular, we will identify and tackle health inequalities that have been widened by the Covid pandemic, including inequalities emerging across ethnic groups. |
| L2 | We will increase investment of public health funds into community, voluntary and faith sector grants to support Covid resilience and recovery. |
| L3 | We will continue to respond to the pandemic and play our part in the vaccination roll out. |
| L4 | We will work with our partners, including the community and voluntary sector, to reduce social isolation and ensure people are connected within their local communities and beyond. |





People Live Well and Age Well

| | Healthy lives |
|-----|---|
| L5 | We recognise our responsibility to invest in our community to promote wellbeing and help people live healthy lives. We will increase the role of local people in initiating, designing and delivering health improvement initiatives. |
| L6 | We will create lots more community-based opportunities with local people, working across our partnerships, including the Voluntary and Community Sector, and we will commission a range of services that make the most of Sandwell's assets (including leisure centres, libraries, parks, community centres, youth centres, museums, canals and Sandwell Valley). |
| L7 | We will develop a strength-based approach to further develop a Stronger Sandwell, by working with our public-sector partners and voluntary and community organisations. |
| L8 | We will support people through easily accessible information, advice and guidance. |
| L9 | We will continue to support access to food through food banks and opportunities for children in school holidays. |
| L10 | We will ensure that we have sufficient mental health provision and we will promote good mental health through a range of initiatives, ensuring equitable access to mental health support. |
| L11 | We will contribute to better air quality and climate change through raising public awareness, increasing active travel and supporting organisations to reduce carbon emissions. |
| L12 | We will ensure new investment into health and wellbeing services including drugs and alcohol, adult obesity and smoking cessation. |



| | Choice and independence |
|-----|--|
| L13 | We will help people make everyday choices around not just how they are supported, but also how they choose to live their lives. |
| L14 | We will promote access to employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities and those with mental ill health. |
| L15 | We will review access to day care provisions to ensure that people have access to community resources to improve independence and choice. |
| L16 | We will ensure our safeguarding processes are effective. We are committed to continuous learning to keep vulnerable adults safe from harm. |
| L17 | We will ensure the right provision to enable people to stay independent for longer. |
| L18 | We will work with our partners to ensure that everyone who needs it receives the good, personalised care they should be able to expect at the end of their life. |
| L19 | We will ensure that all carers in Sandwell are offered support in a timely way and that they have access to the information, guidance and advice that they need. |

| | Joined up Health and Social Care |
|-----|--|
| L20 | We will develop a workforce strategy with partners |





Strong Resilient Communities

Sandwell is an area rich with heritage and culture, with historic town centres and a legacy of metalworking to celebrate. Our residents tell us that vibrant local towns are really important for encouraging families to stay and have pride in where they live. This together with our programme for enhancing our green spaces and commitment to becoming carbon neutral will deliver positive outcomes for all of our communities.

We know that people want to feel proud of where they live and that part of this is about getting the basics

right, ensuring that our neighbourhoods and towns are clean and well maintained.

We will ensure that Sandwell is a safe environment, whether that be the safety of our road network, our parks and open spaces, adequate street lighting or, for instance, that our residents do not get caught out by rogue traders.



Vibrant community

| | |
|----|---|
| C1 | We will ensure our grant funding of community/voluntary sector activity supports the priorities we're outlining in this plan. |
| C2 | We will deliver the Towns Investment Plans in West Bromwich, Smethwick and Rowley Regis, secured through £64.5m of Town Deal funding. |
| C3 | Through working with the SHAPE Forum, we will make sure that our towns become welcoming places for young people and that they have jobs, activities and facilities to give them a part in the local community. |
| C4 | We will put the needs of our residents at the heart of what we do, establishing processes to engage with them to ensure that our residents guide and influence our services. |
| C5 | We will strive to maintain Green Flag status, whilst also working to enhance our existing green and open spaces, create new places to play and committing to plant a tree for every child starting school in Sandwell up to 2030. |

Culture

| | |
|----|--|
| C6 | We will develop and deliver a libraries strategy that works together with the community. We will start to roll out the Open+ model which represents a different way of working for public libraries. |
| C7 | We will deliver the operational requirements to ensure the smooth running of the Commonwealth Games and ensure a lasting legacy for Sandwell. |
| C8 | We will showcase local, regional, national and international talent in an engaging and inspiring programme. |
| C9 | We will explore and develop a Sandwell Valley phased investment programme over the next five years – towards the Valley becoming a key Visitor and Destination Gateway into Sandwell. |



Strong Resilient Communities

| Green | |
|-------|---|
| C10 | We will work with partners to deliver initiatives that will help up to achieve our climate change strategy and the target of being a carbon neutral borough by 2041. |
| C11 | We will embed climate change considerations into our decision making to enable us to become a carbon neutral council by 2030. |
| C12 | We will invest in our buildings and fleet, so both are low carbon and compatible with 2030. Working with our partners, we will make refuse collection and street cleansing greener with the rollout of electric street cleansing vehicles and participation in pilot projects to test other green vehicles. |
| C13 | We will work to make our own housing stock greener by implementing minimum energy performance standards for existing and new build council homes and exemplar schemes for modern methods of construction. |
| Clean | |
| C14 | We will recover, improve and transform our street maintenance programmes post Covid. |
| C15 | We will increase recycling rates and encourage cultural change. |



| Safe | |
|------|---|
| C16 | Sandwell's Community Safety Strategy will be reviewed and priorities will include ongoing work around prevention of violence and exploitation, reducing offending, reoffending and serious organised crime and supporting victims. We will develop a revised Domestic Abuse strategy in line with the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the new statutory duty on local authorities |
| C17 | We will continue to work with partners and agencies to ensure that there is a joined up and effective approach to hate crime. |
| C18 | We will strengthen our approach to supporting victims of modern slavery, developing an understanding of the threat, risk and harm modern slavery and human trafficking poses and target resources to the best effect. |
| C19 | We will raise awareness across partner agencies, businesses and communities, to address modern slavery and work collaboratively to target perpetrators and victims. |
| C20 | We will strengthen our multi-agency Tasking processes steps to foster resilience, shared understanding, support networks and cross-community working |
| C21 | We will deliver more responsive, robust and co-ordinated enforcement across the council. To do this we will establish an Enforcement Co-ordination Board that will bring together intelligence and expertise from across the council to tackle issues by theme or by geographical area. |



Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods

Having a warm, safe and secure home in an attractive environment is vital for improving living standards. There are 133,000 homes in Sandwell and more than a fifth of those are managed by the council.

We continue to have a active council house building programme and to work productively with partners to deliver quality homes in Sandwell. We are rightly proud of our council house building programme and we are looking at developing the second Council House Build Programme, this will enable us to deliver more homes that meet our residents' needs.

By 2030, we aim to have 8,000 more new homes in the borough. This will be a mix of council house building and homes built by registered housing providers and the private sector. We will also be working with our communities to explore the potential of community-led housing schemes and self-build.

We will also want to improve the quality of existing homes in terms of making sure our properties are safe and comply with fire and building safety requirements and that they are energy efficient. As a Council we want residents to inform service delivery and help to shape our services, this is no different in housing. We want to ensure that our tenants can participate in activity that helps to develop our offer.

More than 4,000 Sandwell families or individuals declared themselves homeless in 2020/21. In 70% of these cases we worked to prevent individuals and families losing their home. We will work to identify the needs of the most vulnerable people in Sandwell and work to support families who are at risk of becoming or who are homeless.



A home for everyone

| | |
|-----|--|
| H1 | We will deliver much needed new homes across the borough, especially affordable homes, on our own land and other viable sites in order to help meet the demand for affordable housing in our communities |
| H2 | We will help keyworkers to access affordable housing in order that Sandwell can attract and retain a strong local health and social care workforce for the benefit of our communities. |
| H3 | We will aim to keep people independent in their own homes as long as possible which includes incorporating lifetime homes adaptable standards in to as many new homes as possible. |
| H4 | We will focus more of our ambitious house building programme on the needs of our children and young people who have complex needs and those who have been in care, so we have a good housing offer for them in Sandwell when they become adults. |
| H5 | We will focus more of our council house building on the needs of people with learning disabilities, autism and mental health needs. |
| H6 | We will develop the second Council House Build Programme. |
| H7 | We will incorporate more renewable energy measures into the design of new-build Council homes, including modern methods of construction and heating. |
| H8 | We will work to identify the needs of the most vulnerable people in Sandwell and work upstream to prevent homelessness where ever possible. |
| H9 | We will work to prevent and end rough sleeping. |
| H10 | We will explore all options for housing delivery, including community-led schemes. |
| H11 | We will raise the standard of homes in the private rented sector and bring more empty homes back into use. |

Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods

| Regeneration and resources | |
|----------------------------|---|
| H12 | We will introduce town centre living in appropriate locations ensuring council developments maintain excellent standards in urban design. |
| H13 | We will continue to progress the review of the Black Country Plan to ensure the policy base is robust and meet the needs of Sandwell and the Black Country. |
| H14 | We will take a proactive approach to accessing national funding for Sandwell that benefits our tenants and people who are homeless or in housing need. |



| Existing estate | |
|-----------------|--|
| H15 | We will modernise our tenancy and estate management offer, delivering a more proactive service, early identification and intervention to mitigate risks to tenancy sustainment and a new neighbourhood management working in partnership with communities to address their priorities. |
| H16 | We will work to ensure our tenants live in safe and thriving neighbourhoods and that social housing is a tenure to be proud of. |
| H17 | We will ensure that council homes are safe places to live by fully complying with fire and building safety requirements and regularly reviewing compliance. We will support people in the private rented sector to ensure their landlords comply with safety standards too. |
| H18 | We will deliver a rolling programme of upgrades to our stock that improves energy efficiency and plan for the installation of alternative heating systems. |
| H19 | We will aim to be a Borough of Sanctuary, offering a safe place for asylum-seekers and refugees to live, while recognising our leadership role in promoting integration and community cohesion. |
| ??? | We will increase our engagement with tenants, including tenants in high rise blocks. |

A Strong and Inclusive Economy

Sandwell is the third largest borough in the West Midlands with a population of almost 330,000 and a £6.3 billion economy, the largest in the Black Country. But for our size our economy is not yet punching its weight and reaching its full potential. It is well understood that working and having a good income is one of the determinants of health and wider social benefits.

We are committed to working together with all our partners to create a strong and growing Sandwell, built on fairness. An economy where no one is left behind, that benefits everyone and where we build on the collective strengths of our community. We also want to work with our partners to make sure that, wherever possible, we spend our money directly with local suppliers so that the economy in Sandwell benefits and the money stays in Sandwell.

As a council, we really value our local businesses and want to continue to deliver high quality support that helps them thrive and prosper; and encourage the growth of new businesses. Part of this is ensuring that local people have the skills and knowledge to fill any vacancies by offering local training and development opportunities.

We want our young people to have access to good jobs and we will work with education providers and local businesses to guide young people to the pathways that enable them to meet their aspirations.



Local Investment

Green is Everything we do

Doing things with the Community

No one gets left behind

Spend our money and invest locally

| | |
|-----|---|
| E1 | We will lead our partners in Sandwell to make the most of all our assets, spend local wherever possible and make long-term investment decisions that benefit our borough. |
| E2 | We will spend more money directly with suppliers in Sandwell. We will do this by developing better intelligence and improving our knowledge of local supply chains, as well as working with major contractors to encourage spending and sub-contracting with local suppliers. |
| E3 | We will develop and commit to delivering a Commonwealth Games Legacy Plan which ensures sustainable economic, wellbeing and cultural benefits of the Games for our communities. |
| E4 | We will work proactively with our partners at the Local Enterprise Partnership, West Midlands Combined Authority and in central government to take maximum advantage of funding opportunities to secure additional funding for Sandwell regeneration projects. |
| E5 | We will work with our health partners to deliver the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital and to maximise the significant regeneration benefits to the wider surrounding area, including training, traineeships, apprenticeships and employment opportunities. |
| E6 | We will deliver the agreed Town Deals in collaboration with our partners across Rowley Regis, Smethwick and West Bromwich |
| E7 | We will work with the Department for Education to deliver a facility for a new school aligned to the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. |
| E8 | We will work with local providers to ensure local spend also has green outcomes. |
| E9 | We will have a current strategic plan for the Borough that feeds into the Black Country Plan and ensures we allocate appropriate development land to meet our future needs for housing, employment opportunities, amenities and community facilities. |
| E10 | We will develop an overarching Regeneration Strategy supported by an approved Pipeline of Regeneration Projects to support economic recovery from Covid19. |

A Strong and Inclusive Economy

| Working with businesses | |
|-------------------------|--|
| E11 | We will work more closely with strategic businesses to develop shared opportunities |
| E12 | We will strengthen our business sector so that local people can benefit from quality jobs that are stable and well paid through our work with Stronger and Inclusive Economy Board |
| E13 | We will develop and implement an economic recovery strategy to support businesses and deliver economic growth in Sandwell following the impact of Brexit and Covid |
| E14 | We will work with our partners to support the development and growth of business start-ups in Sandwell |
| E15 | We will support local businesses to reduce their carbon footprint and work towards carbon zero targets |
| E16 | We will establish more business networking and support events utilising Sandwell's Business Ambassadors |



| Jobs and training | |
|-------------------|---|
| E16 | We will ensure that local people have the skills and knowledge to fill any vacancies by reducing the number of residents with no/low qualifications and offering local training and skills development opportunities via the Adult Education Budget. |
| E17 | We will work with our partners and voluntary sector to improve and develop digital skills in the community to minimise digital exclusion and maximise employment and training opportunities. |
| E18 | We will work to ensure our young people have access to good jobs and we will work with all education institutions to guide young people to the pathways that enable them to meet their aspirations. We will do this through the provision of independent advice and guidance. |
| E19 | We will support people into employment through the delivery of the Skills Strategy with our strategic partners in the Employment and Skills Partnership. |
| E20 | We will offer quality work experience placements within the council. |
| E21 | We will continue to deliver the Apprenticeship Levy and increase the take up of apprenticeships, particularly within small businesses in Sandwell through transferring some of the Apprenticeship Levy to that sector. |





A Connected and Accessible Sandwell

Sandwell is located right in the heart of the West Midlands and is well connected both regionally and nationally. Sandwell's five motorway junctions, extensive canal network and 12 train stations are critical connectivity points, with easy access to Birmingham and Coventry.

Recognising that transport can be a barrier to work, we will work with our partners such as the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to ensure that our residents can access employment opportunities across the region particularly by public transport.

We want to make sure that all public transport options available locally are as green as possible. So, we will continue to invest in green infrastructure, alongside the investment we will continue the implementation of the Sandwell's Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan to develop more cycling and walking routes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the digital divide that exists in our communities. So now more than ever it is important that we address digital exclusion when designing services and making key council decisions. We also need work with our partners at WM5G to ensure Sandwell maximises opportunities for 5G infrastructure, so that internet users in Sandwell have the best connectivity.

This chapter outlines our commitments to make Sandwell more connected and accessible.



| A connected and accessible Sandwell | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| A1 | We will work with the WMCA to ensure that our residents can access employment opportunities across the region, particularly by public transport. |
| A2 | We will continue to work with partners to deliver the Midlands Metro extension connecting Wednesbury to Brierley Hill and the SPRINT scheme. |
| A3 | We will ensure improvements to the highway network are facilitated to support the local economy and the movement of goods and people across the borough. |
| A4 | We will ensure that the responsibilities of the Local Highways Authority are delivered and continue to maintain standards in relation to highway condition. |
| A5 | We will deliver accelerated funding projects relating to connectivity as part of the Town Deal. |
| ?? | We will work with our partners and voluntary sector to improve and develop digital skills in the community to minimise digital exclusion and maximise employment and training opportunities. |



A Connected and Accessible Sandwell

| Clean & green | |
|---------------|---|
| A6 | We will enable people to get around in a healthy and sustainable way, supporting our health and wellbeing and our climate change strategies. |
| A7 | We will continue to implement Sandwell's Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and deliver a programme of infrastructure improvements across the borough. |
| A8 | We will ensure that all public transport options available locally are as green as possible, including lobbying for clean green buses for our borough. |
| Partnerships | |
| A9 | We will maximise government funding opportunities for infrastructure through working with our partner organisations including the Black Country Transport Team and Transport for West Midlands. |
| A10 | We will develop and maintain relationships with Midlands Connect to profile major transport interventions in Sandwell. |
| A11 | We will continue our partnership work with the Canal and River Trust to enable us to make the best use of our waterways. |
| A12 | We will work with the Environment Agency in our role as Lead Local Flood Authority to adopt a Flood Risk Management Plan for 2021 to 2027. |



Key infrastructure projects

| A13 | We will continue to deliver our key transport infrastructure projects, namely the major upgrade of Birchley Island, metro corridor walking and cycling programme, and Blackheath interchange. |
|---------|--|
| A14 | We will continue to develop and deliver projects that reduce barriers to the use of public transport and sustainable travel choices including working with Transport for West Midlands in relation to bus and metro provision and the Rail Alliance. |
| A15 | We will ensure Sandwell is well placed to support the move towards electric vehicles by delivering key infrastructure requirements. |
| Digital | |
| A16 | We will ensure that Digital Inclusion matters when designing services and making key council decisions. |
| A17 | We will work with WM5G to ensure Sandwell maximises opportunities for 5G infrastructure. |



One Council One Team

To deliver our ambitious plans we will create a modern, outstanding council, one where our organisational structure, business systems, process and people and cultural working practices are fully aligned to deliver our strategic outcomes. We will build a One Council: One Team ethos, breaking down departmental barriers, building collaborative team working and setting a sustainable budget aligned to outcomes.

At the centre of everything we do are the services we provide on a day-to-day basis, that make life better for people in our communities. The pandemic has changed the way we work significantly, and our residents are interacting with the council increasingly online. We want to make sure that Sandwell people get a good quality, consistent level of service, however they choose to contact the council. Central to this is the development of our digital services and supporting those people who want help in improving their digital skills. We are committed to becoming a listening,

responsive council that enables our residents to influence the design of services.

Our key strength as an organisation is our staff and their commitment to give Sandwell people the very best. A skilled, diverse, motivated and healthy workforce is key to this success. We will create a modern workplace and give staff technological tools that encourage creativity, collaboration and transformation. We take the health and wellbeing of our employees very seriously and will build the resources available to support them.



Council organisational structure

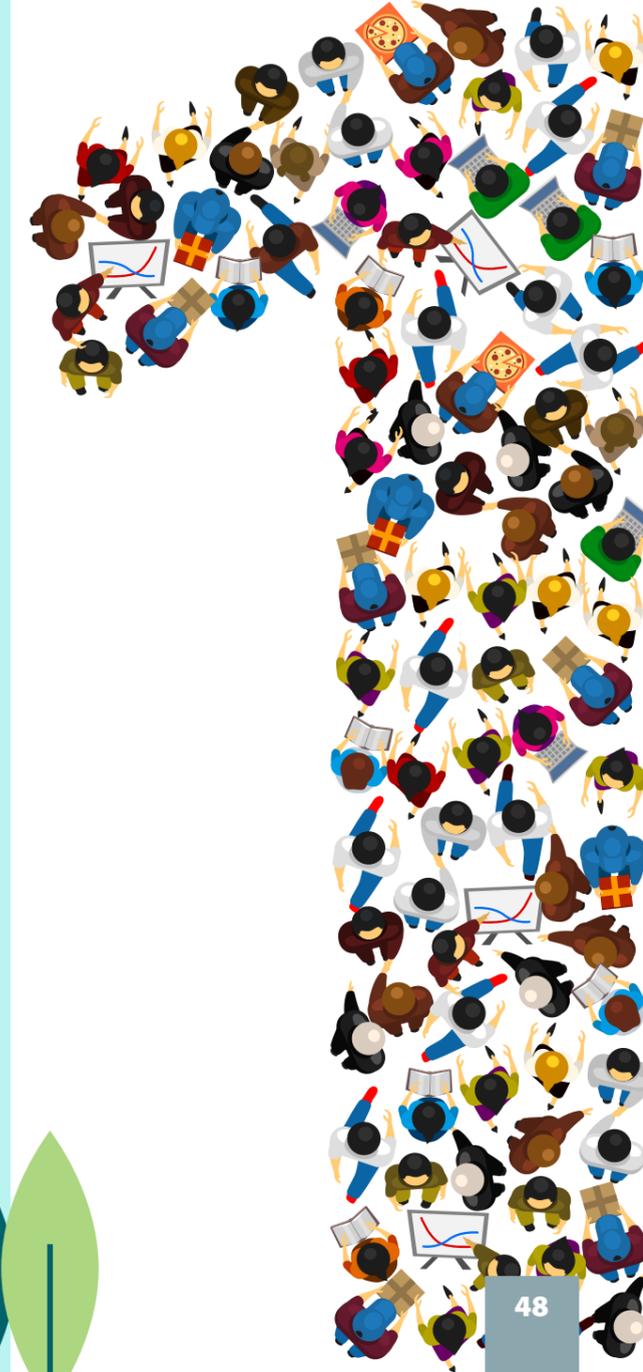
| O1 | We will create a modern, outstanding council, one where our organisational structure, business systems, process and people and cultural working practices are fully aligned to deliver our strategic outcomes. |
|--------------------|---|
| O2 | We will complete a review of all directorate and departmental structures to ensure they are aligned to supporting the successful delivery of the Corporate Plan. |
| O3 | We will build a One Council: One Team ethos, breaking down departmental barriers and building collaborative team working. |
| O4 | We will implement new operating models for the delivery of services in a safe way and ensure that staff are supported to work in the most appropriate location. |
| Access to services | |
| O5 | We will design a corporate approach to improve both the accessibility of Council services and the quality of service we deliver; to make sure that Sandwell people get a good quality, consistent level of service, however they choose to contact the council. |
| O6 | We will ensure that support is in place where people need support to access services digitally. |
| O7 | We will invest in digital platforms to enable better access for our residents and other service users and to build on the benefits of increased digitalisation of our services |
| O8 | We will exploit the potential of new technology and 5G to deliver services more effectively and efficiently across the organisation |

One Council One Team

| Organisational development | |
|----------------------------|---|
| O9 | We will invest in a range of opportunities, qualifications and experiences for our workforce. We will do this through workforce development plans to ensure our workforce is an enabler for current and future service delivery. |
| O10 | We will enable all our staff to fulfil their full potential and have opportunities to progress within the organisation regardless of their protected characteristics by understanding the barriers faced by employees, establishing stakeholder staff groups and implementing the approved workforce action plan. |
| O11 | We will continue to build on existing workforce mental health and wellbeing resources, by proactively responding to emerging challenges and trends, enabling our employees to effectively support their own, and their colleague's, positive mental health and wellbeing. |
| O12 | We will develop and embed excellent people management practices, by effectively leading, supporting and improving our workforce, fostering a workforce that is engaged and productive. |
| O13 | We will promote our successful work experience, apprenticeship, intern and graduate programmes to local people. |
| Systems and Governance | |
| O14 | We will build robust and effective systems which improve transparency and co-ordination around decision making and service delivery. |
| O15 | We will review all governance arrangements including a Constitution refresh, completion of the scrutiny review and refresh of the council's decision-making and performance management arrangements. |
| O16 | We will deliver the Equalities Commission and implement its recommendations in order to ensure we meet our specific equalities duties and drive the equalities agenda at the heart of our organisation. |
| O17 | We will develop the social value policy and implement the social value portal |
| O18 | We will review and refresh the organisations digital strategy and digital platforms |
| O19 | We will embed the newly designed Communications and Corporate Affairs Strategy to ensure we are communicating effectively with both our internal workforce and external stakeholders. |



| Listening, learning and accountable | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| O20 | We will embed co-design and collaboration as the standard approach for designing our services and developing our future priorities. |
| O21 | We will listen to and work alongside Sandwell residents and partners to make sure that everything we do is focused on achieving the best outcomes. |
| O22 | We will make sure that vulnerable groups who find it difficult to make their voices heard, influence and shape all of our plans and decisions and those of our partners. |
| O23 | We will review how we manage complaints and customer feedback within the council to make sure that when things don't go to plan, we put them right and learn from what has happened. |
| Making the Most of Our Resources | |
| O24 | We will set a sustainable and balanced budget each year |
| O25 | We will update the Medium Term Financial Strategy in line with the 2021 Spending Review, Settlement and longer-term impact of COVID-19 |
| O26 | We will ensure all our services provide value for money and are run as efficiently as possible. |
| O27 | We will implement a new Corporate Asset Management system to ensure the Council has sufficient, comprehensive information to make best use of its assets and assist with timely and accurate completion of annual accounts. |



This page is intentionally left blank

Report to Council

12 October 2021

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Subject: | Reports from the Council's representative on the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority, Transport for West Midlands, Police and Crime Panel and West Midlands Combined Authority |
| Director: | Surjit Tour – Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer Surjit_Tour@sandwell.gov.uk |
| Contact Officer: | Trisha Newton Trisha_newton@sandwell.gov.uk |

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Council receives updates from the Council's representatives on the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority, Transport for the West Midlands, Police and Crime Panel and West Midlands Combined Authority.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Council, at its annual meeting on 24 May 2011, approved an arrangement whereby members nominated pursuant to Section 41 of the Local Government Act 1985 to answer questions on the discharge of the functions of any joint authority or any joint board of which the Council is a constituent authority (Section 41 members) would report to the Council twice a year on important and contentious matters relating to the joint authority/board, and on any other occasion by exception. Procedural Standing Orders provide that any member of the Council shall be entitled to ask questions of the relevant members and the Council on these reports.



Reports are attached in respect of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (Councillor C Padda), Transport for the West Midlands (Councillor Akhter), West Midlands Police and Crime Panel (Councillor R Jones) and West Midlands Combined Authority (The Leader).

2 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  | The involvement of Council representatives in the decision-making process of joint authorities will encourage better understanding of local and wider needs and viewpoints. |
|  |  | |
|  |  | |

3 Context and Key Issues

- 3.1 Council will receive an update on the work undertaken by the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority, Transport for the West Midlands, Police and Crime Panel and West Midlands Combined Authority from the member nominated pursuant to Section 41 of the Local Government Act.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 It is usual practice to receive six monthly update reports.

5 Implications

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Resources: | There are no strategic resource implications arising from this report. |
| Legal and Governance: | Under Section 41 of the Local Government Act 1985, arrangements have been made for enabling questions on the discharge of a joint authority's functions to be put in the course of the proceedings of any constituent district council. A member is nominated by the joint authority for that purpose (the Section 41 member). |



| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| | It is customary for the Council to receive six monthly reports from those members appointed pursuant to Section 41 of the Local Government Act 1985 to answer questions put to them at council meetings relating to the discharge of functions of joint authorities. This was the case in respect of the West Midlands Police Authority until the Police and Crime Commissioner [PCC] took office on 22 November 2012. The West Midlands Police Authority ceased to exist at that point. The West Midlands Police and Crime Panel, on which the Council is represented, now holds the Police and Crime Commissioner to account. |
| Risk: | There are no direct risks associated with this report. |
| Equality: | There is no requirement for an equality impact assessment. |
| Health and Wellbeing: | There are no direct health and wellbeing implications from this report. |
| Social Value | There are no direct social value implications from this report. |

7. Appendices

- Appendix A – West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service update.
- Appendix B – Transport for West Midlands update.
- Appendix C – West Midlands Police and Crime Panel update.
- Appendix D – West Midlands Combined Authority update.

8. Background Papers

Note



This page is intentionally left blank

12 October 2021

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

'Making the West Midlands Safer, Stronger and Healthier'

Report by Cllr Charn Singh Padda

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

Making the West Midlands Safer, Stronger and Healthier

wmfs.net @WestMidsFire

Fire Service Headquarters,
99 Vauxhall Road, Birmingham B7 4HW



National Activities during the last quarter

1. Full Inspection

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) have recommenced their full Inspection regime for Round 2. West Midlands has been moved to the final tranche of Services for inspection, at dates to be confirmed for between March and July 2022.

As part of the Inspectorates initial assessment of fire and rescue services, West Midlands Fire Service received its first full inspection in 2018/19.

In general, the Inspectorate found that:

1. The extent to which the service is effective at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks is **good**.
2. The extent to which the service is efficient at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks is **good**.
3. The extent to which the service looks after its people is **good**.

The Authority was particularly proud to find that West Midlands Fire Service was to be the only fire and rescue service to be rated outstanding for how effective the Service was in terms of responding to fires and other emergencies.

The COVID inspection that took place in 2020 found that West Midlands Fire Service was managing well during the pandemic.

2. Firefighters Pay Award

The Firefighters pay award has been agreed by Employers and Representative Bodies at 1.5% increase with immediate effect.

3. White Paper on Fire Reform

As part of the conclusion of Part One of the Police and Crime Commissioner Review, the Home Secretary outlined proposals to reform governance within the fire sector as part of a ministerial statement published in March 2021. As a result of the proposals, the statement included the announcement of the publication of a White Paper which will be used to set out the reform agenda in further detail. The White Paper is due to be published later this year (October onwards)

4. Core Code of Ethics

A Core Code of Ethics has been published for Fire and Rescue Services, following collaboration between the Local Government Association, National Fire Chief Council and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. The Core Code will help service continuously improve culture and workforce diversity.

5. Helping to battle devastating Greece wildfires

West Midlands firefighters had flown out to Greece to help battle wildfires that devastated the country. Wildfires had swept across the country following the most severe heatwave in 30 years, which had seen temperatures soared to 45 deg (113F).

Budgetary Pressures

Known

- **Pay award = 1.5%**
- £1.1M efficiencies to be made in year 2021/22
- £1.4M efficiencies to be made during 2022/23 in addition to anticipated Government funding reductions

Unknown

- **Future pay awards and Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) reductions**
- Possible 10% CSR reduction over three-year period 2022-2025 (as reasonable worst case scenario), would equate to circa £5M in addition to the current year's unfunded pay award.
- Green book pay award impact
- Council tax and business rate impacts

WMFRA have been lobbying the Government office for increased funding to reflect the work being undertaken.

WMFRA 3 year Rolling Strategy

In February 2021 the Fire Authority approved its 3 year rolling Strategy and the development of Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) proposals. These had been identified from an analysis of foreseeable risk to fire and other related incidents across the West Midlands Conurbation.

These proposals sought to identify how WMFS could maintain and improve its delivery of services to local communities. These proposals continue to be developed and trialled working with all key stakeholders for implementation from April 2022 onwards.

Key Performance data information for Sandwell

For Q1 1 2021/22 ending 30 June 2021. Information is collated from West Midlands Fire Service incident data collected via a digital workbook; the one exception is the Killed or Seriously Injured in Road Traffic Collisions (RTC) which is provided by West Midlands Police.

| PREVENTION AND PROTECTION | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Performance Indicator | Actual | Target | 3yr avg | Last Year | Performance against target | | Difference against Target |
| Accidental Dwelling Fires | 53 | 54 | 54.3 | 52 | -1.9% | ● | -1 |
| Accidental Non-Domestic Fires | 12 | 15 | 14.7 | 14 | -20.0% | ● | -3 |
| Deaths in Accidental Dwelling Fires | 1 | | 0.7 | | N/A | | |
| Deliberate Derelict Building Fires | 8 | 10 | 10.0 | 3 | -20.0% | ● | -2 |
| Deliberate Dwelling Fires | 5 | 5 | 5.0 | 2 | 0.0% | ● | 0 |
| Deliberate Non-Domestic Fires | 3 | 5 | 5.3 | 2 | -40.0% | ◆ | -2 |
| Deliberate Rubbish Fires | 53 | 54 | 54.3 | 48 | -1.9% | ● | -1 |
| Deliberate Vehicle Fires | 18 | 25 | 24.7 | 21 | -28.0% | ● | -7 |
| False Alarms (Equipment) | 128 | 130 | 130.0 | 127 | -1.5% | ● | -2 |
| Injuries in Accidental Dwelling Fires | 2 | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 100.0% | ◆ | +1 |
| Killed or Seriously Injured in RTCs | 10 | 20 | 20.3 | 14 | -50.0% | ◆ | -10 |

| RESPONSE | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|--------|-------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Risk Category | Avg attendance time | Target | % in target | % in target (High Risk areas) | Avg att time 2nd app |
| Cat 1 (High Risk) | 04:45 | 05:00 | 54.4% | 58.8% | 06:58 |
| Cat 2 (Medium Risk) | 05:41 | 07:00 | 69.2% | 78.9% | 07:58 |
| Cat 3 (Low Risk) | 05:21 | 10:00 | 88.5% | 73.3% | 07:14 |
| Cat 4 (Secondary Fires that attract a 20 minute-response time) | 07:21 | 20:00 | 98.7% | 100.0% | |
| Cat 5 (False Alarms) | 05:38 | | | | |

Targets have been met in all areas except in Injuries in Accidental dwelling fires.

Summary of some WMFS activity during 2020/21

1. Fire Control handled **45,027 calls**, in an average of **76 seconds per call**.
2. Attended **25,216 incidents** and they arrived at the most serious in an average of just **4 minutes 32 secs**.
3. Completed **46 large-scale training exercises** – that’s nearly 1 a week!
4. Carried out over **18,422 Safe & Well visits**, of which **8,746** originated from **partner referrals**.
5. Handed out **14,674 pieces of equipment** such as smoke alarms, hearing impaired alarms, mailbox protectors and fire retardent bedding, which has contributed to a **7.7% reduction** in the number of casualties.
6. Recorded **326** accidental fires in non-domestic properties.
7. Attended **5,629** false alarms caused by fire alarm systems

For Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council Consideration

Planning Process should ensure that Fire Regulations are complied with and High rise blocks in Sandwell have water sprinkler system installed as per other West Midlands Local Authorities e.g. Wolverhampton. Mains Electric connected Fire Alarms.

Cllr Charn Singh Padda
 Lead Member WMFRA
 12 October 2021

This page is intentionally left blank

Transport for West Midlands Update

October 2021

Overview

1. Local Transport Plan (LTP) Review and Transport Green Paper

WMCA is the Local Transport Authority and has duties to produce and review the Local Transport Plan that covers the West Midlands' seven metropolitan districts. The LTP sets out policies and implementation proposals for tackling the regions transport challenges and opportunities. Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) advises WMCA on this responsibility.

The LTP is being reviewed and a [Green Paper](#) has been developed to frame early engagement on the issues a future LTP could aim to resolve and how it could go about doing that. TfWM are engaging across the region to understand how people and organisations want to change transport.

The public response rate to the online survey has been good (better than for consultation on previous actual draft LTPs).

Deliberative engagement has also been undertaken with TfWM's online (representative) community of citizens covering a broad spectrum of issues.

TfWM officers have presented to Sandwell members and supported Sandwell officers with engaging on the Green Paper. TfWM officers attended a session of Sandwell's Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board on 22nd July 2021.

A Transport Summit is planned for 24th September where members will discuss challenges, they face in the development of a coherent LTP where gaps between ambition for aims and appetite (and capacity) for action are resolved. Technical work is nearing completion that will support the Summit – alongside the outputs of engagement - and explores 3 policy scenarios with varying degrees of overall change in approach.

It is proposed to prepare a Transport policy statement/prospectus before COP26 to set out the regions understanding of how we can decarbonise transport and the scope of options that need to be considered through development of the LTP in order to do so.

TfWM is commissioning additional consultant support as it develops the LTP to completion. The scope of this work will include capacity to support the development of 4 area strategies which will evidence the case for and detail implementation proposals in Coventry, the Black Country, Birmingham and Solihull.

The current plan is to prepare a draft LTP (consisting of core strategy, area strategies, and implementation plan) by the end of 2021 to be consulted on and adopted in 2022.

2. Covid-19 update

TfWM and partners have continued to work on behalf of Sandwell to ensure the best possible response and ongoing recovery of the region by maintaining an integrated transport network, which has in turn supported the wider economic recovery of the region by ensuring key workers could get to work. All of the following activities of TfWM and its partners have generally taken place with updates and engagement being provided between TfWM and Sandwell throughout the Covid recovery period. These Covid recovery areas include, but are not limited to:

- Transport Cell and regional coordination response
- Education transport
- Infrastructure and bus stops
- Highways and Key Route Network
- Ring and Ride and SEND transport
- Travel Demand Management
- Bus, Metro, rail and Park and Ride services
- Maintaining the delivery of capital schemes

TfWM has continued to work closely with its constituent authorities on matters relating to transport. They have also cooperated with other metropolitan and major urban authorities to coordinate Government communication, responses and engagement on various fast-moving agenda changes linked to the recovery including funding, modal proposals and strategies, conditions, communications, and policy.

TfWM has also continued to work with the Department for Transport (DfT) to maintain funding to Metro and bus services across the region, working through the West Midlands Bus Alliance to communicate the requirements to Government.

During the early stages of the pandemic a CV19 Transport Recovery Cell was established. This multi-modal and multi-organisation Cell's purpose was to assess the ongoing threat of Covid-19 from a strategic perspective, within the Local Resilience Forum framework. This forum ensured that there was consistency in approach from a regional perspective, that risks were identified as early as possible and mitigated in the most appropriate and collaborative way.

Following the publication of the Governments Roadmap in Spring 2021, the Transport Cell continued to ensure that its response and recovery of the transport network was fully aligned to this stepped approach. Measures taken were shared in our last report.

The decision was recently taken that the Transport Cell will now stand down following services now being incorporated into 'business as usual' functions. It has been noted to all partners that should there be a requirement to initiate the Transport Cell once again, that can and will be actioned. Peer to peer support can continue through the established contacts and support mechanisms put in place via the Cell.

As previously reported, we observed a significant decrease in the usage of public transport in the first lockdown followed by a slow recovery of usage. However, in subsequent periods of lockdown, we never observed the same levels of decrease due to more sectors being able to remain open. Fluctuations in patronage did occur as expected.

As government guidance has relaxed in stages over time there has been a steady rise in patronage and return to the transport network. At the time of writing this report patronage levels were around 73% pre-Covid levels for bus, 44% train, 89% tram and 94% for roads. Congestion has returned to the key route network and is having an impact on bus services. More detail around this has been included in later sections of this report.

It is expected that the return to schools and offices will have an uplift impact on the use of public transport, road use and congestion. The Highways teams and the Regional Transport Coordination Centre will continue to monitor and make amendments where appropriate and possible.

Some service disruptions occurred as a result of the 'Ping-Demic' and the requirement of large numbers of people to self-isolate. Operators across all modes experienced some staffing issues which impacted on the delivery of some services, with some areas including Metro and rail seeing a resolution to some of the staffing challenges (as at mid-September), whilst bus continues to see a significant challenge in staffing levels due to a mixture of sickness, people leaving to take up alternative employment, and a backlog in training and tests for new drivers.

As in all other regions of the UK, local bus operators are reporting an increased risk of short notice service cancellations due to driver shortages. TfWM are working closely with operators to ensure passengers are kept informed and that measures are being put in place to try and identify timely mitigation. We anticipate that during October 2021 TfWM may need to support some further changes to registrations to allow for a reduced level of service on some high frequency bus services whilst the driver shortages and sickness levels are resolved.

From 19th July National Express West Midlands (NX) reduced many of their bus fares in several ways to encourage more people back to the bus network. Other operators have followed suit and reduced the all operator nBus tickets to attract passengers back to the bus network. NX also made wider network service changes from Sunday 29th August to reflect the changes in travel demand and impacts on expected journey times. There will be a period of settling in to understand the demand and the 'new normal' and TfWM will work with partners to monitor customer feedback during this period, further information can be found in the Bus Network section of this report.

Through the pandemic TfWM have worked in partnership with Sandwell Council officers and local colleges to ensure the transport network is safe and has sufficient capacity to enable pupils and students to get to school and college. This engagement has developed into new professional relationships which have been a positive legacy from the last few months and has already led to discussions around future developments and improvements.

TfWM have worked in partnership with Sandwell to ensure this has been targeted towards providing additional capacity on SEND transport led by the Authority and also additional capacity on the college and public transport networks led by TfWM. This has culminated in ensuring that the return to school in September 2021 was fully coordinated and safe for returning students and pupils.

The Travel Demand Management Team also worked with partners and supported the education restart from September 2020 up to end of March 2021 with a package of

travel planning support embedded in the council. Proactive contact was made with 30 schools and Sandwell College to assist with school travel and Covid-19 toolkits and congestion bulletins were issued.

For the duration of the pandemic the Ring & Ride vehicles had been repurposed as a free NHS shuttle bus for NHS staff to help support these keyworkers to get to work in some of the main hospitals across the region. However, as we progressed through the governments' roadmap and further restrictions lifted, Ring and Ride users were feeling more able to get out and about and the fixed bus network had returned to previous capacity. As a result, the decision was taken to cease the operation of the shuttle service to allow the minibuses to return to their original duties from 12 April 2021. The NHS shuttles provided a much-needed service for hospital staff during the darkest days of this pandemic, and we were delighted to have been able to provide this support for the last year. In total the service provided more than 39,700 trips and at its peak was providing nearly 1,150 trips each day.

In addition to the further relaxation of restrictions, the relaxation of the pre-9.30am concessionary travel was withdrawn from Monday 19 April 2021 and the use of concessionary passes returned to normal. The relaxation was initially re-introduced to assist pass holders to travel to vaccination appointments before 9.30am. However, with the roll out of the vaccination programme and vulnerable groups vaccinated, combined with the reopening of non-essential retail and return of schools, the peak time capacity would be needed by students and workers, and removing the relaxation of the pre-9.30am enabled us to ensure social distancing was maintained on the network in order to keep passengers safe.

On Monday 19th April 2021, TfWM became the provider of the Ring and Ride Customer Services. TfWM has historically supported Ring and Ride services through funding however this move has seen TfWM assume direct responsibility for the relationship with our Ring and Ride customers, bringing Ring and Ride customer service activities in-house. National Express Accessible Transport (NEAT) continue to operate the Ring and Ride fleet with TfWM registering new customers and managing journey bookings over the phone in our new Ring and Ride contact centre. This also saw the transfer of some NEAT employees to WMCA. TfWM continue to keep the service under review and are increasing the available capacity and hours of operation based upon demand from customers. This also aligns with the various milestones in the recovery process and guidance on social distancing etc. Further information can be found in the Bus Network section of this report.

Throughout the duration of the pandemic TfWM has supported and enforced the use of face coverings in a variety of ways across all modes of transport, stations, and transport hubs in line with the government guidance. On 19th July the legal requirements relating to social distancing and face coverings were removed. Transport for West Midlands continues to relay the message from Government, in that the public are recommended and expected to continue to use face coverings in crowded places such as public transport (and socially distance where possible). However, we are unable to enforce the use of face coverings and all modes have noted a significant reduction in passengers wearing face coverings which is further supported by CCTV evidence.

Transport for London have amended their conditions of carriage to make the use of face coverings a requirement of travel, but this is not an option available within the West Midlands as the transport network is operated and resourced in a very different way.

As well as the creation of the CV19 Transport Cell, a CV19 Communications group was created at the beginning of the pandemic to ensure a consistent messaging was being shared across the region. The group consisted of members from the Transport Authority, Local Authorities, Operators, and other agencies. At present Covid messaging is being actively removed from the network in light of the recent changes in guidance, and TfWM will continue to work with our partners to ensure a consistent message is communicated to customers via all appropriate channels. This will of course follow the most recent Government guidance.

The long-term core messaging will continue to be one focused on planning ahead, hand sanitising, open windows (where appropriate), distancing (where possible) as well as the use of face coverings.

Enhanced cleaning regimes have remained in place across the transport network throughout the pandemic. As a result of stronger evidence-based understanding of transmission risks, and the latest Government guidance, TfWM will continue with enhanced cleaning of high touch/contact point areas at bus stations, and for the remainder will revert to the pre-pandemic levels of cleaning which were already deemed to be effective. This has been fully risk assessed and will be monitored to ensure effectiveness.

Following delays from Covid we opened our brand new first pay to use car park in Longbridge in August 2021. We are seeing a recovery of Park & Ride usage which is currently around 30% pre-Covid levels.

TfWM are currently reviewing options to fully integrate with Metro at Dudley Port, along with heavy rail, bus and other sustainable modes of transport.

The Travel Demand Management Team is gearing up to provide support for the Birchley Island scheme. Initial introductions have been made to gain a solid understanding of the scheme and project timescales. Work is underway to plan ahead for this and any significant impacts on the wider highway network.

TfWM has worked in partnership with Sandwell throughout the pandemic to ensure that bus passenger stops, and shelters remained safe and available for passengers. This has included an enhanced level of cleaning, which has continued, and also the identification and introduction of additional stops to give bus passengers more space and allow for social distancing.

TfWM teams have worked to support Covid testing and vaccination sites. These sites were mapped against the public transport and gritting routes in the colder months and TfWM have been fully prepared to respond to any issues to keep these facilities accessible. As the vaccination programme continues, TfWM continue to support wherever required.

Implementation of the National Workplace Testing Scheme is being led by the Health and Safety Team. The organisation has been registered with the Department of Health and Social Care and the required on-boarding information provided to allow for the

workplace provision of Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests for collection from the workplace to take at home prior to leaving for work.

Test kits have been available for collection from 16 Summer Lane from week commencing 14th June 2021 and colleagues working on the transport network continue to utilise the home ordering service available from the GOV.UK website or pharmacy collection.

In addition to the operational aspects, TfWM teams have managed to work with our partners to maintain the delivery of the capital programme schemes. This required new Covid processes to be created, additional risk assessments and health and safety protocol and processes to be implemented to enable the delivery teams to continue delivering in a safe way adhering to all government guidance.

TfWM have continued to provide Covid recovery updates to Transport Delivery Committee during this time also.

3. 2022 Commonwealth Games

Games Transport Plan

The Games Transport Plan is currently out for consultation with a closing date of 24 September. Sandwell MBC is a statutory consultee on the Plan; review and response of the document is encouraged. Further information can be found at <https://www.tfwm.org.uk/who-we-are/our-strategy/commonwealth-games-2022/>

Network Management / Games Route Network/Local Area Traffic Management

For any Games' related Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) within Sandwell, the agreed approach for delivery is that TfWM develop TTROs plans and orders and Sandwell assume responsibility for delivery.

In addition to the above point, Sandwell MBC has provided TfWM with a signed letter agreeing to the use of Concurrent Powers under the Games Act 2020. This enables TfWM to create and implement Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders for Games purposes within the boundaries of the Council, should this be required at Games time

Discussions are also ongoing with Wolverhampton's Urban Traffic Control team about management of Games Route Network (GRN) across the Black Country. This will lead to a GRN operations plan to be prepared and published early 2022.

Spectator Transport

The area around Hawthorns rail station will be used as the primary transport hub to access Sandwell Aquatics Centre by spectators. It will provide:

- Rail (from Birmingham Moor Street/Snow Hill) and tram access via Hawthorne station and tram stop
- Taxi & Accessible Shuttlebus via existing rail station park and ride.
- Several potential additional park and ride stops have been identified around the Hawthorns with capacity for up to 500 spaces. Negotiations are continuing with landowners.

- Spectators accessing the Hawthorns will then use a shuttle buses on Halfords Drive to be taken to the venue with shuttle load zones on Manor Road
- Smethwick Galton Bridge will provide an alternative rail station option. This has direct services to Birmingham New Street (up to 4 trains per hour, not evenly spread across the hour), as well as being served by all trains that also serve The Hawthorns.
- Smethwick Rolfe Street is a third station option, although not promoted it is a less frequent service than SGB with a similar walking distance to the venue.

4. Bus Network

Local Bus Services

As lockdown restrictions have continued to ease and the demand for travel has increased bus patronage has shown a steady rate of growth. There are fluctuations by service but the network in total is currently carrying approximately 73% of expected patronage in comparison to what would be expected for the equivalent period pre-Covid (week ending 10th September). Patronage is expected to increase further from September onwards as the holiday period comes to an end, schools and colleges return and workers are encouraged back into their places of work following the removal of the national working from home guidance. A further boost will be realised later in September when the university academic year begins with a greater focus on site learning generating increased travel by bus.

On most routes service levels are now at 100% of pre-Covid levels with only minor variances on some corridors to reflect seasonal variations or changes in travel behaviour.

Buses are now able to operate at near full capacity following the most recent changes in social distancing although many operators are still taking some measures to protect drivers such as preventing passengers from sitting in seats closest to the cab and also encouraging passengers to be mindful of when buses are less busy.

The use of face coverings is no longer mandatory on public transport including bus but is expected. This message is being portrayed to passengers along with passengers being asked to be respectful and mindful of other users when travelling. These messages are being conveyed through various means including digital channels, social media, posters & notices and announcements.

TfWM and bus operators are maintaining enhanced cleaning processes in place. This is inclusive of vehicles and passenger waiting infrastructure including bus shelters and bus stations. National Express are currently maintaining in service cleaning of the high touch points on bus although this is currently under review.

Supporting Bus Operators

The reduced number of passengers using local bus services means that fare revenue for operators is also reduced. To support bus operators through this period and ensure the bus network continues to operate to aid the recovery of the region, TfWM have worked with DfT to develop and administer a number of measures.

TfWM have continued to provide support in the form of maintaining contract payments for tendered services at pre-covid levels as well as maintaining payments for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) at the predicted rate assuming the pandemic hadn't occurred. Subject to agreement and managing other budgetary pressures, this support could continue to the end of March 2022.

Commercial bus operators and TfWM are receiving funding from the DfT Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) which is designed to ensure bus services can continue to operate to full-service levels during the pandemic. This grant will continue to be provided through to the end of August 2021.

From September the DfT will continue to support operators and local authorities but this will be based upon a grant formula rather than 'topping-up' operators to cover their costs. Under the revised conditions for this grant operators will need to maintain a minimum of 90% of mileage of pre-covid levels, will be able to make a profit and also make commercial service changes. However, the conditions of the grant are such that any service changes must be undertaken in consultation with the Local Transport Authority. If agreement cannot be reached locally an appeals process has been put in place by the DfT.

The period of this new Bus Recovery Grant will be from September 2021 to the end of March 2022 and we will seek to maintain service stability and continuity from operators during this period. Beyond March 2022, TfWM with operators will be seeking to secure funding through the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) process to maintain the current baseline network.

Ring & Ride

Use of the West Midlands Ring & Ride service continues to grow with customer levels currently at approximately 18% of pre-Covid levels. This is expected given the demographic of the users and the number of regular destinations currently being closed. We are forecasting an increase from September as destinations start to reopen and confidence to travel continues to grow.

The service is currently operating reduced hours and is operating Monday to Friday 0800 to 1730 and Saturday 0830 to 1530. From October the service level will be increased to operate Monday to Saturday 0800 to 2300 and Sunday 0800 to 1530. During peak times we have also agreed an increased number of vehicles to be available to provide additional capacity on the service.

We are in the process of agreeing a revised contract with National Express Accessible Transport (NEAT) up to the end of March 2022. We continue to have discussions regarding contractual and service arrangements to ensure the service reflects any changes in travel demand and aligns with the ambitions of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) which may include wider use of Demand Responsive Services in the region.

Vision for Bus – National Bus Strategy and Bus Service Improvement Plans

The National Bus Strategy (NBS) published in March 2021 sets out the requirements for all Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to access transformational funding from April 2022. TfWM is the LTA for the WMCA constituent area. The first step was to publish a notice of intent to pursue an Enhanced Partnership (EP) and/or franchising by the

end of June 2021. By 31st October 2021, TfWM must publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan. By 31st March 2022 the LTA should have either an EP in place or be following the statutory processes for a franchising assessment.

The BSIP will drive forward productive partnerships delivered through an EP or a franchising assessment to make a step change in bus services required to achieve the objectives of the NBS. Having an adopted BSIP in place will be critical when Government decides how the new £3 billion of discretionary funding is allocated – covering both revenue and capital. Overall, the BSIP should:

- Be developed by LTAs in collaboration with local authorities and bus operators, community transport bodies and local businesses, services and people.
- Focus on delivering the bus network that LTAs (in consultation with operators) want to see, including how to address the under provision and overprovision of bus services and buses integrate with other modes.
- Set out how it will grow bus use.
- Set out how it will be delivered.
- Be updated annually and reflected in the Local Transport Plan (LTP).

TfWM has an existing EP in place for the region and is also undertaking an assessment of the wider bus service reform options available through the Bus Services Act 2017. This ongoing assessment includes bus franchising options, and a report outlining the outcomes of this will be considered by WMCA Board in November 2021. Therefore, the BSIP will set out the vision and provide an updated EP including delivery details (by 31st March 2022); with a separate franchising assessment detailing how, the vision could be delivered and pursued. If principles, objectives and outcomes cannot be agreed between TfWM and bus operators, franchising is identified as a mechanism which authorities can still turn to if the operators cannot deliver the objectives within an Enhanced Partnership to deliver the BSIP.

The BSIP guidance encourages, LTAs, local authorities and bus operators to work at pace with communities to plan and deliver a fully integrated bus service with simple, cheaper, multi-modal tickets, more bus priority measures, maintaining high-quality information for all passengers in more locations and more zero emission buses and better turn-up-and-go frequencies including during evenings and weekends.

The BSIP is currently under development and TfWM are facilitating discussions with all stakeholders including bus operators and Local Highway Authorities.

Network Changes

From Sunday 29th August National Express made a number of changes to Bus Services across the region. Full details can be viewed at; <https://nxbus.co.uk/west-midlands/service-updates/timetable-and-route-changes-from-29th-august-2021>

The rationale for changes included;

- Uncertainty over the level and speed of patronage recovery and changes to passenger travel habits observed for different demographics and communities during the Covid period.
- Changes in journey speeds and the typical daily traffic profile. For example, changes in the traffic volumes in the morning peak, the inter-peak period

including school pick up and the evening peak have all been observed requiring variations in pre-Covid running times.

TfWM have been involved in reviewing the details of these service changes and have provided feedback to ensure that the rationale and supporting data of service changes was provided, analysed and understood and therefore changes are not detrimental for passengers. Additionally, as TfWM have ensured the changes meet the service requirements for continued public subsidy.

Bus Recovery Funding replaced Covid Bus Service Subsidy Grant with effect from 1st September. Due to the uncertainty around the mechanism and the quantum of Bus Recovery Funding the date the service changes were confirmed meant there was not sufficient time for a comprehensive passenger and key stakeholder engagement exercise. However, National Express did provide direct communications to Councillors and MP's and subsequently direct passenger communications were made using on-bus posters, at-stop posters (on routes where there was a more significant change), website and using social media channels.

A limited number of other service changes by other operators have taken place to either co-ordinate with the National Express network changes as a result of National Express's network changes or alternatively timetable changes to accommodate departure headways at bus stations. In both cases there was not a material impact upon service provision or coverage.

West Midlands Bus Alliance

The West Midlands Bus Alliance has continued to oversee and influence the bus network response and recovery to the Covid-19 pandemic and has sought to ensure that operators and wider stakeholders are fully aligned on issues affecting passengers. This has included developing a consistent approach to passenger communication at the various stages to the release from Covid measures, including changes to social distancing on-bus and continuing to encourage and expect passengers to continue to wear a face covering.

The Alliance has continued to hold fortnightly bus operator sessions to discuss operational issues relating to the current operating environment. This has evolved from the practical considerations of operating buses during the pandemic and the various funding mechanisms and related Terms and Conditions to developing a network to meet the changing requirements of passengers and establishing a forum for developing the ambition for the BSIP.

The Alliance continues to receive updates on the development and delivery of initiatives to deliver the overall outcomes as stated under the bolder bus alliance. This includes the continued delivery of bus priority measures to facilitate the implementation of the Cross-City Bus Network, measures to improve bus emission standards at the decarbonisation of the fleet, initiatives to improve the fares and ticketing structure and RTI passenger information as part of an integrated network.

The Bus Alliance board is currently considering the governance structure and the part it will play in developing the BSIP and the resulting enhanced partnership agreement. This will need to reflect that current and future initiatives being delivered by partners will move from a voluntary partnership arrangement to a legal / statutory requirement.

Enhanced Partnership

On the 28th June 2021, the WMCA area became the first city region and only the second local transport authority to make an EP. The scheme aims to support the development of improved bus service on two corridors; A34 (N) Walsall to Birmingham City Centre and A45 Birmingham Airport / B425 Solihull to Birmingham City Centre. This includes the introduction of bus priority measures to support the delivery of Sprint and improvements to services on these corridors and improvements to emission standards.

The first operator requirements will be effective from Monday 6th September from which date all buses serving stops on these corridors will need to meet a minimum of a Euro VI emission standard.

It is a requirement of the BSIP that LTAs deliver any enhancements through an Enhanced Partnership or through Franchising. TfWM will initially seek to amend this existing enhanced partnership to deliver the aspirations of the BSIP. This will involve public consultation on a revised EP Plan to reflect the BSIP proposals.

The further development of the EP and coverage of a greater geographical area will have an impact on the existing AQPS areas. Under the Bus Services Act 2017 legislation, it is not possible to have two statutory partnerships covering requirements in the same geographical area. TfWM are currently exploring the removal of the AQPS as the EP scheme is expanded in the region under the BSIP proposals.

Under the Enhanced Partnership Scheme, TfWM are exploring adopting bus service registration powers from the Office of the Traffic Commissioner to give a greater level of oversight and local management. We have engaged with senior officers and the West Midlands Traffic Commissioner directly to seek to adopt those powers under the Enhanced Partnership during 2022.

Cross City Region Bus Priority

As part of the Better Deal for Bus Users funding package TfWM received over £20 million to fund the first phases of prioritised bus priority measures to complement Sprint and deliver a Cross City Region bus network, also influencing the wider region. The overall package will benefit almost 90 million passengers per year, providing 5km of new bus-only roads, 8 junction upgrades, 5km of new bus lanes and enhanced waiting facilities.

The proposals for Burnet Tree Island Improvements Cape Hill and are currently at the feasibility stages that include traffic studies and surveys in the individual areas. These studies and survey work will provide us with the basis to draft the best design to consult on. Once the survey data is reported, the ambition is to progress the draft designs for public consultation in October 2021.

Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme

On the 30th March 2021, the Department for Transport (DfT) invites Local Transport Authorities to submit expressions of interest in receiving funding to become a Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA); a place based scheme that will allow areas to bring forward zero emission bus proposals. The scheme is designed to support the

wider government commitments to Net Zero and plans to decarbonise the transport system.

The West Midlands Bid includes the most ambitious hydrogen bus project ever seen and if approved by Government and WMCA Board, over the next two years the project will see 200 new hydrogen double decker buses and 24 articulated hydrogen buses come into operation in all parts of the region with the exception of Coventry (that was successful to be the UK's first all-electric bus city in March 2021); seven electric single deck buses on subsidised bus services in Wolverhampton, as well as a new pantograph at Bilston bus station and hydrogen refuelling at two bus depots in the West Midlands.

The full business case was submitted to DfT on 20th August 2021 and we are currently awaiting the outcome of the decision which is due in mid-September. The project is not without significant risk and we are continuing to seek mitigation in order that WMCA would be able to accept a funding offer from Government should it be forthcoming.

Tendered Bus Services

Due to the continued unusual and difficult market conditions, including the on-going public sector financial support and a level of uncertainty in estimating future patronage, it has been deemed not an appropriate time to issue tenders as part of a competitive tender process. The exception to this has been where it is felt appropriate to test costs in the market or where there is a new requirement.

The Bus Delivery Team have worked with the existing operators to agree an extension of applicable contracts for suitable periods in adherence to procurement rules. In most cases contracts will be extended to the end of March 2022 in line with Bus Recovery funding for the sector from the DfT. We are currently awaiting guidance from the DfT to confirm the level of funding to maintain funding for the contracts prior to confirming this extension.

As with the commercial network the average patronage on tendered bus services is lower than the equivalent pre-Covid usage and in some cases is relatively lower. It has been seen the recovery level of concessionary passengers is lower than fare paying passengers, which has impacted some tendered services which have a high proportion of concessionary passengers.

The level of usage is an important factor in the rationale for the provision of subsidised bus services and TfWM Officers are closely monitoring usage, especially over the coming months.

5. Rail Network

West Midlands Franchise

WMT's impressive improvement in performance has been arrested over the summer. Punctuality and reliability has fallen from a PPM of 93.2% in Period 1 (April) to 88.6% in Period 5 (August). Over the same period the PPM MAA has dropped from 92.1% to 90.3%.

Other performance metrics show a similar trend. Right Time (percentage of trains on time or early at destination) has slipped from 79.6% in period 1 to 73.8% in Period 5,

whilst T-3 (trains arriving at all stations within three minutes of advertised time) has gone from 91.8% to 87.3%. However, the Period 5 results were noticeably better than for Period 4, suggesting that the decline over the summer may have been arrested.

TOC on Self cancellations rose by 3.8% to 5.2% in Period 4, mainly as a result of a decline in the number of available traincrew. This is also reflected in the split of PPM failures between WMT and Network Rail/Other Operators. In Period 1 Network Rail/Other Operators were responsible for 55% of all of WMT's PPM failures. In Period 4 this had fallen to 37%.

Delivery to customers in the West Midlands has also been affected by a shortage of DMU vehicles. This has occurred at the same time as customers are returning to services and when traincrew shortages have hit a peak. The shortfall has been particularly acute as many services have been significantly short-formed. The cause of the problem remains mostly down to exam bunching and an accumulation of deferred work. Work has commenced to extend exam cycles to ease the maintenance burden on Tyseley Depot. A taskforce has also been established to tackle legacy and cultural issues about the way Tyseley operates.

This issue has also affected Cross Country, whose 29 Class 170 units are maintained by WMT at Tyseley under contract. These units work services between Nottingham-Cardiff and Birmingham-Leicester/Derby.

The phased reopening of the economy in June has resulted in a welcome uplift in patronage across the region, with Thursday 2nd September 2021 being the busiest day on WMR since Tuesday 17th March 2020.

Positively, the growth in both passengers and revenue exceeds the government's forecasts. Indeed, in Period 5 WMT recorded their highest grossing week since March 2020. This was largely as a result of strong leisure travel, with season ticket earnings remaining very low.

The rail industry welcomed the changes to test and trace rules that took effect on 16th August. These removed the mandatory requirement for someone who is double jabbed to self-isolate for 10 days if they are contacted by test and trace. However, it is not a panacea, as staff are not obliged to share their vaccination history with their employer. This means that people can falsely claim to not have been vaccinated in order to take 10 days of paid time off work.

West Midlands Rail Programme

Across the programme, work continues to lay the groundwork for successful Entry into Service processes, with further site visits undertaken with members of Network Rail's System Review Panel and the Office of Rail and Road. We have made progress in agreeing how nonconformances will be treated and this is currently being formalised in advance of a series of project reviews planned for October. Building these relationships will also assist in future with the Entry into Service of the Package 1 and 2 stations.

Construction at both University and Perry Barr is proceeding well. Installation of the steel frame for the station building has started at Perry Barr, whilst at University installation of the pre-cast concrete segments that make up the frame is now near

completion. In both cases the work has been undertaken quickly and safely. There has been a strong focus on safety, supported by regular safety leadership tours, and this has been seen in a good rate of near miss reporting and low level of incidents.

We have also undertaken cost and schedule assurance for these projects in the period. Internal assurance of Perry Barr was completed at the end of July and then subject to review by Turner and Townsend; their feedback was very positive. Turner and Townsend will now turn their attention to assurance of the University project.

University Station

The successful installation of the concrete frame for University station means that we remain on track for the installation of the footbridges at the end of September / early October. There remain a series of complex legal agreements to resolve between partners including UoB and NR before the bridge can be installed and resolving these challenges is critical to keeping open the option for delivery in time for the Commonwealth Games. We are working with partners to ensure that all parties understand the criticality of this point.

As we have previously reported, we expect to see some cost pressures emerge at University as part of the programme re-baseline. Working with our contractor we have already identified opportunities for potential cost efficiencies. In parallel with this, we are also engaging with partners to identify possible funding approaches, including potential matched funding opportunities.

Perry Barr Station and Bus Interchange

At Perry Barr, alongside work on the rail station we have also seen good progress on the Bus Interchange project which is being delivered by BCC and Tarmac. Planning permission for the bus interchange was secured on 22 July. The project faced some challenges due to cost escalation which was driven by increases in the cost of key materials. This is a well-acknowledged problem across the industry, which the team have sought to mitigate through early procurement. Thanks to good joint working across the teams, we have reached a position where the scheme can be delivered within funding and schedule constraints and we hope to be in a position shortly where the work can be instructed.

Package 1 – Walsall to Wolverhampton Connectivity

Mobilisation in advance of contract award continues. At the Eurofoods site in Darlaston we are pressing ahead with making a CPO and seeking legal advice from counsel. Our preference remains to reach a negotiated settlement here and with that in mind colleagues from the CA undertook a site visit with Eurofoods representatives. Following this we have arranged for a ground-penetrating radar survey to identify potential buried assets which may have an impact on valuation.

Progress continues on the other sites, although in the bulk of cases we are now awaiting responses from vendors which we continue to chase. We are in negotiation with the owners of the Triple R site to agree a backstop date for vacant possession which would give us sufficient confidence to develop a contract. In this case, however, the owners have indicated that it would be possible for the CA to secure early access for enabling works. We understand that the owners have, in addition, now secured a key licence for their new site which is an important step towards their relocation.

Package 2 – Camp Hill Line Connectivity

On Package 2, we agreed the procurement strategy which enabled the release of the Selection Questionnaire to move the procurement process forward. Our current aim is to start ITT of Package 2 in September, dependent on resolving land acquisition issues as a lesson learned from Package 1. Of the three parcels of land we need to acquire permanently, one is subject to negotiation with Network Rail, one is ready to exchange contracts, and one is currently at Heads of Terms stage.

Works to relocate the badgers living in Moseley cutting were completed two weeks ahead of schedule and the site is currently being demobilised. These works were undertaken with no safety incidents. Finally, on Package 2, we are close to resolving the objection from Network Rail, which was preventing progress with Network Change, thanks to engagement with DfT.

West Midlands Grand Railway Collaboration

The GRC continues to be a primary focus of activity within the West Midlands, driving industry collaboration. This is demonstrated by the engagement from all its partners and the effectiveness of the Strategic Board which last met on 17th August. The Board is currently meeting bi-Monthly however it was agreed at the Board to amend this to 6-weekly to ensure the momentum is maintained on all workstreams.

The work on the One Team Proposal for Birmingham city centre stations is progressing well with some good actions being taken by the team. Communication between the three Stations in Birmingham was an area that was identified as requiring improvement and we now have installed new radios at each of the locations meaning that they are able to communicate with each other much more effectively. This has been well received by the staff on the ground.

To support with the visibility of the GRC, a short video is currently being produced to make the case for the GRC to those unaware of what the GRC is and to demonstrate to railway staff, customers and suppliers how the GRC is going to benefit them. All partners of the GRC have agreed to feature in this short video and it is hoped that it will be completed later this year.

The Collaborative timetable development work which is being led by the GRC continues to progress well. It has been agreed that the consultation process will be ran collaboratively with the GRC producing an umbrella document which will be released alongside the TOC consultations and would provide an overall narrative of changes in the West Midlands area signposting customers to the relevant TOC consultations for further detail on proposals.

6. HS2 Connectivity Package

The HS2 Growth Strategy sets out how the positive effect of HS2 will be felt across the region. The approach uses HS2 to create an outstanding legacy in terms of regeneration, jobs, skills, economic development and connectivity for the Midlands. The strategy has been refreshed, with 'The Defining Decade – The Midlands high speed path to recovery' approved by WMCA Board in February 2021.

Work on the Connectivity Package has been progressing in line with the Implementation Plan, with updates being provided through regular dashboard reports to the HS2 Growth Delivery Board. A headline summary of activity is set out below:

Sprint: Significant progress has been made with the Walsall to Birmingham via Sandwell (A34) and Birmingham to Birmingham Airport and Solihull (A45) in construction. Joint work undertaken by TfWM and Local Authorities during this period includes:

- A45 main works underway with completion expected in line with programme
- A34 procured as four separate packages of work which are all on site with completion expected in line with the programme
- Sprint A34 and A45 Phase 2 is included within the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement proposals which has been approved by WMCA Board

Rail projects are listed within section 4 of this report.

7. Metro Delivery Programme

The Metro programme is defined into two main phases based on funding position and current project status.

| Project | Planned Opening |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Phase 1 | |
| Centenary Square Extension | Opened December 2019 |
| Wolverhampton City Centre Extension | Early 2022 |
| Edgbaston Extension | December 2021 |
| Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Extension | November 2024 |
| Phase 2 | |
| Birmingham Eastside Extension | 2026/7 |
| East Birmingham Solihull | No schedule yet defined. |

Work continues to progress with all extension projects being undertaken by the Midland Metro Alliance (MMA). During this period, the following activity has been undertaken:

- Wolverhampton City Centre Extension – Works for Phase 4 to take the tram into the station plaza have commenced, since MMA took possession of the site in June 2021. Design is being closed out with all stakeholders. Assuming there are no major issues concerning design approval, the construction should be completed in December 2021, with operations commencing January/February 2022. There are some small additional works to complete on Phases 1-3 which will occur in the same period.
- Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension – Detailed design of this extension started in December 2019 and is almost complete. This will enable MMA to provide full costs for the complete delivery. As procurement of the rail corridor took longer than anticipated and the TWAO was not approved until October 2020, construction works started later than planned but are now under way in Dudley town centre and along the old railway corridor. A number of bridges have been replaced along the route and main track works have commenced on

Castle Hill. Together with the issuing of the full MMA cost we will also receive an updated schedule.

- Edgbaston Extension – Work is almost complete for the delivery of the Westside extension to Edgbaston, including the overhead line equipment. We need to install the substation in October and complete road signage and marking once the TRO is published and approved by BCC. A Road Safety Audit is planned for November and then we will complete testing and commissioning. Unless the TROs are delayed, we should still be able to deliver for the end of 2021.
- Birmingham Eastside Extension (BEE) – Construction has commenced on the two sections to be delivered before Commonwealth Games: The Delta junction at Bull Street, and the Digbeth High Street section, the remaining sections will start after CWG. They are also dependent on agreements with HS2 on collaborative construction. These agreements are not yet in place. This will determine the delivery date and start of operations.
- East Birmingham to North Solihull Extension - TfWM is working with Government to gain further funding to develop a Full Business Case. A first request is included in the current CRSTS submission.
- Procurement contract for the new fleet from CAF was completed in October with a first phase of 21 trams, and options to extend the fleet for the East side extensions. The first 8 trams needed for Edge and WCCE extensions have been delivered and are being commissioned. They will enter service as soon as approved.

8. Metro Operations - Midland Metro Limited

Midland Metro Limited (MML) continues to maintain the 4 key principals adopted at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic as it enters recovery:

1. Keeping MML colleagues safe
2. Keeping MML customers safe
3. Letting MML customers know we are keeping them safe
4. Protecting MML revenue

Since the lifting of almost all legal restrictions on the 19th July including the requirement to social distance, Metro patronage has continued to grow, and it is currently at circa 75-80% compared with pre-Covid passenger numbers. Weekends have seen an even stronger recovery with patronage at 90%+. Taking a data lead approach MML has used its onboard Automatic Passenger Counting system and data from Swift to monitor demand and plan services, deploying queue buster trams at busy times as required.

Although recovery is strong, MML remains dependent upon support from Central Government and is receiving funding via the Light Rail Recovery Revenue Grant. This covers the period up to the 5th April 2022 after which financial support is planned to end.

As well as focusing on recovery MML has, and continues to, prepare for the opening of the new extensions to Edgbaston and Wolverhampton Rail Station. These and the extension to Brierley Hill will see the Metro team grow by 70% in the next few years. To help prepare for this a new West Midlands Metro Training Academy opened in July

at the Metro Centre, Wednesbury. New recruits and existing colleagues will be trained at the Academy which has a new state of the art driver simulator and another two simulators on order. Recruiting new team members will be a key focus for MML in the coming months and a new recruitment campaign has already launched with a short video showcasing colleagues sharing their experience of working at West Midlands Metro. The video can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/9Pjb1ETtTn8>.

Other activity in recent months and which will continue over coming months, includes the testing and commissioning of the new Urbos 100 trams; procured to serve the expanding network. Each must deliver 1500km's without a service affecting failure before it can be accepted into operation.

9. Active Travel

Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF)

On 9th May 2020 the Government announced that an 'Emergency Active Travel Fund' will fund local authorities across the country to help make it easier for people to use bikes to get around. The West Midlands were successful in their application to the Emergency Active Travel Fund, Tranche 1, with an allocation of £3.85m being granted from DfT for our ambitious Emergency Active Travel programme. The amount is more than our indicative allocation, with DfT noting our proposal as being "particularly strong."

A programme of schemes that included cycle pop-up lanes, increased room for pedestrians on footways, modal filters and cycle parking was included in the application to DfT. The programme also included supporting measures to deliver interventions that support long term behaviour change. A communications and marketing package were included in the programme.

In November 2020, the allocations for Active Travel Fund (ATF, Emergency dropped from the name) Tranche 2 was announced with WMCA awarded £13.1m (80% Capital, 20% Revenue) to deliver a programme of schemes including new cycling infrastructure, making some the current pop-up cycle lanes more permanent, developing Places for People and a supporting measures package (see below for the full list).

The EATF Tranche 1 programme in Sandwell has an indicative cost of £0.296m and includes the following schemes:

- Scheme 1: Oldbury Town Centre to NCRN81 (Completed)
- Scheme 2: Smethwick Town Centre to Spon Lane (Completed)

The following schemes have been delivered as part of the Sandwell's Tranche 2 programme (indicative cost of £1.4m):

- Blackheath Town Centre Active Travel Interventions – Reallocation of road space and widening of footway to create a new permanent off-road segregated two-way cycleway along the Blackheath bypass from the Oldbury Rd/Henderson Way junction, along the bypass on A4100 Henderson Way to the High St/John St junction.

- Wednesbury Town Centre Active Travel Interventions - Reallocation of road space to provide a new segregated contraflow cycle lane within the town centre, new permanent footway sections, temporary widening of footways using barriers, new TTRO's and new signage and road marking scheme and decluttering of footways along various roads within the town centre to ensure wider footway space. New cycle parking at selected locations will also be provided.
- Bearwood High Street Active Travel Interventions - High Street - adjoining Bearwood Road is Waterloo Road and on the northern side of the High Street is Hadley Stadium sports centre which hosts inclusive cycling projects. On this side of the High Street there will be a reallocation of road space (along Bearwood Rd/Waterloo Rd) to provide a new two-way segregated cycle route from Beaks Road to Hadley Stadium with a Tiger Crossing for cyclists.
- A4123 Corridor (Dudley/Sandwell section) – this is a jointly promoted scheme by Dudley (DMBC) and Sandwell (SMBC) Councils.

Community Cycle Clubs

In partnership with Cycling UK, Community Cycle Clubs have been set up in Sandwell. Community Cycle Clubs in Sandwell include Lightwoods Community Club, Smethwick Beat Streets Community Club, Hadley Stadium, Friar Park Community Centre and Bangladeshi Women's Association.

Living Streets Walk to School Programme

On Friday 21 May, the Department for Transport announced the National allocation of £2.1m towards the continuation of Living Street's Walk to School Outreach Programme. This funding will help more pupils enjoy the fresh air, freedom and fun that walking to school brings in Walsall. Living Streets will continue to work with us in the West Midlands until 31 March 2022.

Sandwell has 19 schools currently involved in the WOW Programme.

West Midlands Cycle Hire (WMCH)

West Midlands Cycle Hire will consist of a minimum of 1,500 bikes across the seven Local Authorities, with at least 10% of the fleet being e-bikes.

Since the 21st June to 31st July 2021 68 pedal bikes and 10 docking stations have been launched across Sandwell, focused around West Bromwich. Sites include close to the West Bromwich Metro stop, College, High Street and Sandwell and Dudley Rail stations.

Users can hire a bike on a Pay as You Ride (PAYR) paying £1 unlock fee and 5p per minute. The offer of the first 30 minutes of first ride ends in November 2021. From September there will be an introduction of two new tariffs to encourage users to hire a bike regularly as part of their commute, leisure or utility journeys, supporting mode-shift. On September 6th the Early Morning Bird went live, reducing the cost of hire between 6-11am (5p per minute and the £1 unlock fee is waived). This means between these times a 10-minute ride is 50p instead of £1.50.

E-bikes will be available from late Autumn 2021, subject to confirmation. Seven E-bikes have been allocated to Sandwell (exact numbers are subject to confirmation).

Since the launch of the WMCH bikes in Sandwell there has been a cumulative total of £1,297 journeys (June -July 2021).

Walking and Cycling Programme

£23.5m of Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) has been allocated to develop and deliver an improved Walking and Cycling programme. The programme is coordinated by TfWM.

As part of the TCF programme, funding has been allocated towards the development of the Year 1 priority routes within the LCWIP. The local authorities are currently working on developing business cases and preliminary designs as part of this project. Part of this investment has been allocated as capital contributions as follows:

| Allocation | TCF Funding Contribution (Capital, £m) |
|---|--|
| Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Corridor Access Improvements at stops for cycling and walking | 3.0 |

Additionally, a development funding contribution has been allocated as follows:

| Scheme | Development Contribution | Funding |
|--|--------------------------|---------|
| Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Corridor Access Improvements | £200,000 | |
| A34 Perry Barr Extension through to Walsall | £200,000 | |

The A34 strategic feasibility study from Birmingham to Walsall was completed in February 2021 and it was determined that a segregated cycle route is not feasible and the alternatives to match the ambition for the region or the local authorities. A change request is currently pending for the remaining funding.

Better Streets Community Fund

TfWM launched the Better Streets Community Fund in May 2019. The scheme enabled anyone in the West Midlands to submit their ideas for projects to improve their local area for cycling and walking. TfWM and Sandwell Council assessed the applications and 5 projects were selected to receive funding. These applications are:

| Name of Project | Description of project | Progress to date |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Friar Park Public Realm Improvements | Two applications for the Better Streets Community Fund were submitted within proximity of each other asking for improvements near the Millennium Community Centre and Friar Park Primary School. This project will provide improvements at and between these two locations providing a safe and enjoyable space for local people to walk and cycle. | Consultation with applicants has taken place and designs for improvements have been developed. Contractors are being procured with construction to begin shortly. |
| Friar Park Public Realm Improvements | | |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Smethwick Old Church and Dorothy Parkes Community Centre Community Centre Public Realm Improvements | This project will aim to improve the public space outside of Smethwick Old Church and Dorothy Parkes Community Centre by reducing traffic speed and making it easier for people to walk and cycle in their local community. | Consultation with applicants has taken place and designs for improvements have been developed. Contractors are being procured with construction to begin shortly. |
| Access improvements to existing crossings | The Better Street Community Fund contributed to improving the accessibility of an existing crossing for cyclists and those with mobility issues by providing small amount of dropped kerb. The crossing in Blackheath forms a part of an existing cycle route between Blackheath and Rowley Regis Train Station and this small improvement will help improve this route. | Completed in January 2021. Working on promotion and launch. |
| YMCA Cycle Parking | This project will provide public cycle parking outside of the YMCA in West Bromwich Town Centre allowing people attending the YMCA and the wider town centre to be able to park their bikes securely. | Completed in April 2020. A launch event was cancelled due to lockdown, as soon as there is an opportunity to promote and formally launch the project this will be done. However, parking is available to the public now. |

Workwise

TfWM's Employment Outreach Lead works with Job Centres to promote discounted travel to those gaining new employment. This approach has been successful and was extended to include libraries, local employers and training providers.

A popular discounted travel scheme is Workwise which offers 50% off selected tickets in the first three months of employment. Eighteen applicants in the Sandwell area were helped with travel to work through Workwise in the last quarter. ¹

TfWM has teamed up with local transport operators to extend the Workwise offer. It was launched on 10th September 2021 and will provide ground-breaking support for newly employed people.

The new offer includes the first two 4-week tickets FREE then a third 4-week ticket at a 50% discount from the standard price on selected bus, tram and nNetwork passes.

In line with recent engagement opportunities related to Covid-19 restrictions, the Employment Outreach Lead is expanding promotion to include a portfolio of virtual advertising and engagement activity alongside non-virtual activity. This includes online recruitment events, online jobs fairs and social media engagement tools as well as digital newsletters and information packs.

¹ Statistics are from May to July 2021 to be in line with quarterly reports for August and September

10. Safety and Security

The Safer Travel Partnership is a collaboration of organisations including TfWM, West Midlands and British Transport Police forces, Transport Operators and the 7 regional local authorities. They work together with the purpose of making the public transport network safer.

The Partnership is responsible for delivering the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner's 'Local Transport Policing Plan'. The key objectives of this plan for 2020/21 continue to be to reduce crime and improve passenger perception of personal safety.

Traffic Monitoring Developments – The Head of Network Resilience for TfWM has overall operational and developmental responsibility for the Regional Transport Control Centre (RTCC) based at Summer Lane. Through TCF and a contribution from Midlands Connect, around £220k has recently been invested in 24 new urban traffic cameras for Sandwell Borough at key junction locations. These key junctions are now being viewed in the RTCC by traffic managers to help mitigate against congestion and road disruptions.

The Transport Safety Officers have provided a highly visible presence around the transport interchanges in the area, the bus station and train stations and they have travelled on all modes of public transport dealing with issues identified in the Safer Travel Tasking process or by partners. Following patrols along the Midland Metro in West Bromwich and them sharing information with Neighbourhood Policing Team an arrest was made for a serious offence.

The notices have been issued with regards to Bus Byelaws, which will cover Sandwell, this allows for a 30-day period ending September 2021 to receive replies from the travelling public for the WMCA to consider

RTCC continue to liaise with Sandwell for incidents on Highways England's Strategic Road Network, allowing them to set VMS where available/appropriate, and mitigate on signals to any local approaches, a recent example being the RTC causing 60+ minute delays on the M5 southbound at J4 (Friday 31st July), with VMS set on Hagley Road advising traffic heading towards M5 J3, which could use the traffic advice to use local routes down to J4, rather than sit in M5 delays.

Appendix 1 – Network Monitoring

Monitoring ensures TfWM understands changes of the performance of the transport system arising from schemes, for example the reliability of public transport, modal usage and customer satisfaction. Covid-19 has had a major impact on the public transport network, but patronage is now starting to increase across all modes.

- Headline Measures

| Performance (June 2021 – unless otherwise stated) | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------|
| | Annualised Patronage | Punctuality |
| Bus | 123.2m  (116m – Jan 2021) | 89.3% (April 2020 – March 2021) |
| Rail | 20m  (Approx 12m – Jan 2021) | 93.2% (Period 1 2021/22) |
| Metro | 4.1m  (4.1m – Jan 2021) | 91.6% (98.5% - Jan 2021) |

Bus

Overall bus patronage in the West Midlands has been falling each month since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, with decreases during the 1st lockdown and increases seen on the previous month in August, September and October 2020 as lockdown restrictions eased. A further decline in bus patronage was seen in the winter months of November, December and January as the 2nd lockdown was in place. Since January 2021 bus patronage has started to recover each month with current annualised bus patronage (July 2020 – June 2021) standing at 123.2 million a decrease of –37.2% compared to the previous year (June 2020) of 196.2 million, but an increase of +6.2% since January 2021 (last Sandwell report). Monthly bus patronage is now at 66.5% of pre-COVID-19 levels.

Bus Punctuality stands at 89.3% of non-frequent bus services operated ‘on time’ (between 1 minute early and 05.59 minutes late).

Rail

Rail patronage has also been impacted by Covid-19. Current rail patronage is approximately -65% of pre Covid-19 patronage and stands at approximately 20 million per year. Data collection has been suspended due to the pandemic.

Rail punctuality (trains arriving not more than 5 minutes late) has fallen slightly to 93.4% for Period 1 2021/22 compared to 94% for Period 10 2020/21.

Metro

Metro patronage has also decreased from 8m passengers during the year period April 2019 to March 2020 and remains at 4.1m (July 2020 – June 2021).

Fleet availability (i.e. proportion of rolling stock available as a percentage of the target number needed to run to timetable) stood at 91.6% in June 2021 a decrease from 98.5% in January 2021.

The most recent public transport satisfaction survey can be found here: <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/publication/travel-during-covid-19-key-lessons-for-2021-and>

Modal Share West Bromwich

The latest West Bromwich cordon survey was undertaken in March 2020 - 2 weeks ahead of the first national lockdown due to COVID-19.

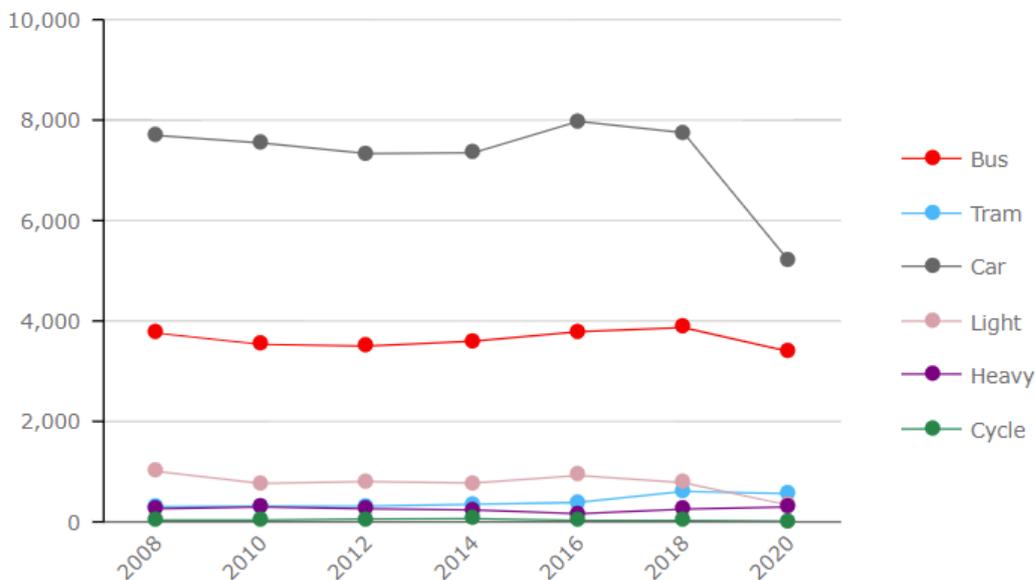
Despite this the AM Peak Public transport mode share has increased in 2020 to 40.4% (bus 34.6%, tram 5.8%) from 33.7% in 2018, where the decrease in trips using private vehicle modes was greater than trips undertaken using public transport.

Bus trips have decreased by -12.2% and tram trips by -7.2%. Tram trips undertaken in 2018 increased by +57.9% and despite the threat of COVID-19 there was only a reduction of -44 trips in 2020.

Car trips have decreased by -32.9%. Light vehicle trips decreased by -57.6% and cycle trips by -62.5% (17 trips). Heavy vehicle trips increased by +17.6% but by a small number of +45 trips.

Overall trips into West Bromwich (March 2020) have decreased by -26.2%.

Total Trips into West Bromwich Town Centre AM Peak (7:30-09:30)



The next West Bromwich Cordon Survey will be undertaken in March 2022. Further details on modal share for all strategic centres can be found here: <https://community-engagement-tfwm.hub.arcgis.com/pages/modal-split>.

Report to: Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Date: 12 October 2021

West Midlands Police and Crime Panel – Update September 2021

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Bi-annual reports on the activities of the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel are presented to Sandwell MBC for consideration. Sandwell is represented on the Panel by Cllr Cllr Rajbir Singh. Cllr Farut Shaeen and Cllr Richard Jones are named substitute members.
- 1.2 This report reflects on the work of the Panel between March 2021 and September 2021.

2 It is recommended that:

- a) **The information contained in the report be noted; and**
- b) **Members consider whether there are any recommendations relating to policing and crime matters that could be championed by Sandwell’s West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Members.**

3 Role of the Police and Crime Panel

- 3.1 The Police and Crime Panel was established in November 2012 as part of the new governance arrangements for policing. Under these arrangements the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) sets the strategic direction and budget for local policing and holds the Chief Constable to account for an efficient and effective police force.
- 3.2 The Panel provides the checks and balances in relation to the performance of the PCC, acting as a critical friend on behalf of West Midlands residents.
- 3.3 The Panel has a dual role to both support and scrutinise the work of the PCC. It reviews and scrutinises the decisions and actions of the PCC, makes reports and recommendations, and fulfils a number of statutory tasks.

4 Panel Membership

- 4.1 The Panel consists of 12 councillors representing the 7 West Midland districts. The membership reflects the political balance of the region. Named substitutes are appointed for each councillor member. Two independent members also serve on the Panel who were appointed following a regional advertisement and competitive interview process.
- 4.2 In July 2021 the Panel elected Councillor Suky Samra (Walsall MBC) as Chair and Kristina Murphy (Independent Co-opted Member) as Vice Chair for the 2021/22 Municipal Year.
- 4.3 Sandwell is represented on the Panel by Cllr Rajbir Singh. Cllr Farut Shaeen and Cllr Richard Jones are named substitute members.

5 Meetings and agenda papers

- 5.1 Meeting papers, meeting dates, published reports, together with more information about the Panel can be found on the Panel’s website: www.westmidlandspcp.co.uk. All 2020/21 meetings were held virtually and live streamed.

- 5.2 In May 2021, the regulations allowing remote police and crime panel meetings expired and all formal meetings had to be held face to face. The Panel agreed to a flexible approach with a combination of formal in-person meetings when conducting statutory tasks (see paragraph 7) and other matters requiring a formal decision, combined with informal virtual meetings for discussion items.
- 5.3 To ensure full transparency virtual meetings are webcast for public viewing and papers published on the panel website.

6 Panel Resources and Officer Support

- 6.1 The Panel continues to operate within the limits of the Home Office Grant. The Panel agreed in 2012 that Members would not use this to draw special responsibility allowances, but travel and carer expenses can be claimed.
- 6.2 Dudley's Chief Executive supports the Panel and the Birmingham Scrutiny Office acts as the secretariat. Support is also provided by Birmingham legal officers and a Solihull finance officer.

7 Core Work Programme –Statutory Tasks

- 7.1 The Panel has five statutory responsibilities that are the core element of its work programme:
- Scrutinise and make a recommendation on the PCC's proposed policing precept and budget, with the power to veto the precept;
 - Scrutinise and comment on the PCC's Police and Crime Plan;
 - Review the PCC's Annual Report;
 - Hold confirmation hearings before the PCC makes certain senior appointments; and
 - Handle non-criminal complaints about the PCC, referring serious complaints to the Independent Office for Police Conduct. (This task is delegated to the Birmingham Monitoring Officer).
- 7.2 The Panel's work programme consists of statutory tasks (listed above) and wider exploratory work to build knowledge and insight into the strategic policing and the wider community safety and criminal justice landscape in order to hold the PCC to account.
- 7.3 The PCC attends every Panel meeting to respond to questions and provides updates on recent activities. The Panel may also invite the Chief Constable to attend to answer any questions which appear to the Panel to be necessary to carry out its functions. The Panel may also invite other persons (residents, stakeholders, councillors, officers from other parts of the public sector) to discuss issues of local concern and/or answer questions.

8 Highlights March 2021 – September 2021

- 8.1 **March 2021:** David Jamieson presented his end of term report and members reflected on the progress towards his Police and Crime Plan priorities. The Panel also received an update on the National Uplift Programme for recruiting front-line police officers and local recruitment activity to boost the diversity of the force. Members sought reassurance on retention and progression of new officers. Members also welcomed the joint WMP/ OPCC Fairness and Belonging Programme to refresh the Force's approach to diversity and inclusion.

8.2 **June 2021:** The annual appointment process of panel members resulted in a 60% turnover of councillor panel members. The panel secretariat delivered an induction workshop with Frontline Consulting Ltd for all members that examined the role of the Panel, and the tools and information required to hold the PCC to account. A further member briefing on police finance was held in September.

8.3 **July 2021** – The Panel formally met Simon Foster West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. He shared with the Panel his aspirations and his approach to developing his Police and Crime Plan. Panel members welcomed the PCC’s offer of facilitating visits to develop knowledge of different policing services, the police estate and the use of mobile technology.

9 **Scrutiny Inquiry into Public Confidence in the Police**

9.1 In 2020/21 The Panel began an in-depth inquiry into public confidence in the police with the aim to understand why reported public confidence in West Midlands Police had fallen from 71% in March 2019 to 65% in March 2020. Given the PCC’s commitment to increase public confidence in the police, the Panel was keen to examine the factors that had an impact and what the PCC could do to address these issues.

9.2 Between March and May, the Panel collected insights and perspectives from resident groups, community groups and local stakeholder organisations.

9.3 The Panel’s report and recommendations are currently being developed with panel members and findings will be presented to the new PCC to consider in October.

10 **Looking Ahead**

10.1 In October 2021 the Panel will review the new Police and Crime Plan issued by the PCC. Panel members will examine whether the plan reflects the priorities of residents.

10.2 As the Panel shapes its work programme for the 2021/2022 Municipal Year to assess the impact, actions and decisions of the PCC there are opportunities for further dialogue and closer working with local scrutiny committees.

10.3 Elected members should be encouraged to raise issues relating to policing and crime with the Sandwell Police and Crime Panel Members.

Background Papers

West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Minutes and Agenda: www.westmidlandspcp.co.uk

Contact officer:

Sarah Fradgley, Panel Officer, Email: wmpcp@birmingham.gov.uk Tel: 0121 303 1727

This page is intentionally left blank

Report to Council

12 October 2021

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Subject: | West Midlands Combined Authority - Update |
| Director: | Director Regeneration & Growth Tony McGovern |
| Contact Officer: | Senior Lead Officer, Jane Alexander Jane_Alexander@sandwell.gov.uk |

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 Consider opportunities for the Borough arising from the West Midlands Combined Authority.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Being a constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority offers Sandwell Council access to funding and initiatives that positively impact the borough and the people of Sandwell.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

| | |
|---|---|
|   | <p>Participation as a constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority offers opportunity to contribute positively to all strategic outcomes contained in the Corporate Plan.</p> |
|   | |
|   | |



4 Context and Key Issues

Governance

- 4.1 At its Board meeting on 25 June 2021 appointments were made to Combined Authority Portfolio Areas:

| Portfolio | Lead Member |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Deputy Mayor | Cllr Bob Sleigh (Solihull) |
| Culture & Digital | Cllr Patrick Harley (Dudley) |
| Economy & Innovation | Cllr Ian Brookfield (Wolverhampton) |
| Environment, Energy & HS2 | Cllr Ian Courts (Solihull) |
| Finance | Cllr Bob Sleigh (Solihull) |
| Housing & Land | Cllr Mike Bird (Walsall) |
| Inclusive Communities | Cllr Brigid Jones (Birmingham) |
| Public Service Reform & Social Economy | Cllr Rajbir Singh (Sandwell) |
| Skills & Productivity | Cllr George Duggins (Coventry) |
| Transport | Cllr Ian Ward (Birmingham) |
| Wellbeing | Cllr Izzi Seccombe (Warwickshire) |

- 4.2 Sandwell Council, at its annual meeting on 25 May 2021, appointed the following members to represent the Council on WMCA fora:-

| Committee | Member/s |
|--|---|
| WMCA Board | Councillor R Singh Councillor M Crompton |
| WMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee | Councillor C Padda |
| WMCA Audit & Risk Assurance Committee | Councillor C Padda |
| WMCA Environment Committee | Councillor M Crompton |
| WMCA Investment Board | Councillor M Crompton |
| WMCA Strategic Economic Delivery Board | Councillor C Padda |
| WMCA Growth Company | Councillor R Singh |
| City Deal, Growth Deal and WMCA Advisory Board | Councillor C Padda |
| WMCA Housing & Land Delivery Board | Councillor Z Ahmed |
| WMCA Public Service Reform Board | Councillor R Singh |
| WMCA Wellbeing Board | Councillor Hartwell |



4.3 The council is committed to maximise Sandwell influence, funding and wider benefits through working collaboratively and positively with the WMCA.

State of the Region Report 2021

4.4 5 Regional Challenges were endorsed by the WMCA Board in March 2021.

1. Delivering good jobs
2. Supporting thriving places and communities
3. Embedding our green ambitions
4. Tackling inequality and levelling up
5. Preventing a lost generation

4.5 The WMCA State of the Region report was agreed in June 2021. This analysis directly influences and reflects the region's shared priorities, which in turn are informing the development of the Combined Authority's Corporate Strategy and response to the 5 Challenges. The headlines are as follows:

4.6 Economic forecasts consistently showed through 2020/21 that the West Midlands was to be one of the UK regions hit hardest by the economic crisis, Oxford Economics have produced initial baseline forecasts which show that pre-pandemic levels of employment will not return until 2023 and GVA after a drop back to 97bn in 2020 will not return until 2022. This reflects our industrial and demographic mix, with some local economies among the most vulnerable in the UK in terms of their sectoral composition and health vulnerability. Those same forecasting models also show relatively strong regional growth in 2021, and latest forecasts have been revised up with the success of the vaccine rollout, but this growth depends on assumptions about future market demand and international trade agreements.

4.7 In the first part of 2020 the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was initially severe. In the second quarter UK GDP fell 20% compared to the previous year, manufacturing PMI hit an all-time low and by May 2020 496,000 people across the 3 LEP area were on furlough, the equivalent of all jobs in Birmingham. Now many sectors have returned and the number furloughed has dramatically reduced to 230k people, predominately in retail, hospitality and cultural sectors. Despite the general stasis felt at the time by the economy through furlough and lockdown, the overall claimant count had nearly doubled overall and was most acute for young people. What is now known is that globally there is



a twin track economy: some sectors are largely unaffected and some consumers are still active. By contrast, some sectors are essentially closed and still in stasis - mainly because of the direct impact of lockdown. The impact of easing lockdown has yet to be fully understood, and what it means in the short, medium- and longer-term.

- 4.8 Sectors where the region had previously seen growth and expansion were hard hit, such as construction which back in June 2020 was hardest hit but has seen some recovery as the lockdowns have eased. Evidence in the Weekly Economic Impact Monitors that the lockdowns in November 2020 and from January 2021 have had an ongoing sustained impact on the same sectors. The expanding higher education sector in the three cities - Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton - have switched to online and distance learning. This has contributed to leaving cities empty for much of the last year. Our largest employment and GVA sector (professional, businesses and financial services) is still resilient, but has sustained job losses and workers are unlikely to return to the workplace in the same way as in the pre-Covid era. This will have a significant effect on our three city centres, especially Birmingham. The sectors hardest hit through furlough and lockdown (retail, hospitality and tourism) could bounce back providing consumer demand returns and certainty in a future where people feel safe and able to return to the leisure activities they once had. The Commonwealth Games will rely heavily on these sectors and demand will increase so it is important that the jobs are protected to ensure the games can be delivered.
- 4.9 The success of the region is vital to the success of the UK, ensuring strong recovery, especially in sectors of national importance such as advanced manufacturing, automotive and the business and professional services sector, will support the wider growth of the nation. The upcoming Commonwealth Games in 2022 is an opportunity to show the world the resilience and capacity of the people of the West Midlands to bounce back. Hence investment in the jobs and sectors which have been hardest hit in pandemic but are of greatest importance to the Games is essential to ensure the ongoing strengths in attracting international visitors and trade.
- 4.10 However, the region has demonstrated amazing resilience in the face of the pandemic, through business innovation and redesign and adoption of technology, as seen by some of our most successful support programmes which have enabled businesses to adapt, pivot and prosper. Recently there has been very positive signs of recovery, in June



the Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) is still at a record high (65.5) for the region, the West Midlands is the second highest region for business activity and future activity index is at 83.6 reaching levels not seen since 2021. There is also a continued increase in vacancies being advertised and manufacturing has rebounded. The pandemic has also highlighted the role, importance and response of the social economy, through a galvanised voluntary and community sector addressing key issues such as food poverty, mental health and community support.

- 4.11 There is also an emerging trend towards ‘north shoring’. This can be seen in large relocations and expansions such as Goldman Sachs announcing setting up an office in Birmingham and moves of Civil Service jobs to the region. Investments are holding up and the housing market is growing, especially at the top end. But these are not mirrored at the bottom of the market in the rented sector, and data suggests that the risks of homelessness are growing.
- 4.12 The report focuses on understanding the current state of the 5 Challenges, and the longer-term vision of the improving the Sustainable Development Goals. Over the past year partners have mobilised plans and programmes to address the challenges from the pandemic and end of the transition period associated with the UK leaving the EU. This is a fast-moving environment and WMCA plans and priorities have reflected this.

Regional Environment and Energy Programme

- 4.13 In June 2019, the WMCA declared a climate emergency and the Combined Authority Board agreed a target for the region to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2041. The unfolding events of the pandemic resulted in ‘WM2041: a programme for implementing an environmental recovery’ which was approved by the CA Board in June 2020, outlining the priority actions for a ‘green recovery’ from Covid-19 including broader environment and energy work on natural capital and the circular economy.
- 4.14 This was then followed by the production of a Net Zero Five Year Plan which set out 15 Goals and provides a clear overview of the scale of delivery and collaborative action required over the next five years to stay on track for net zero by 2041. This was approved by the WMCA Board in March 2021.



- 4.15 The plans and activities of the WMCA are only a small part of the collaborative action required in order to maximise the economic opportunities presented by the ‘green industrial revolution’ and to reduce the impacts of damaging climate change.
- 4.16 Sandwell’s Climate Change Strategy has the same goal as that of the WMCA, in that we have stated that the borough will be carbon neutral by 2041. The areas listed below which WMCA have decided to focus on, closely align with our own action plans.

The Environment and Energy Programme: Key Priorities

- 4.17 The Environment and Energy Programme has developed into the following areas, with corresponding plans or strategies that shape the delivery:
1. **Climate change** – decarbonising our economy and society to net zero by 2041.
 2. **Energy** – leading on energy devolution, retrofit and energy infrastructure.
 3. **Natural environment** – protecting, restoring and enhancing our green spaces, and improving our air and water quality
 4. **Circular economy** – designing out waste from our economy and keeping products and materials at their highest value

Climate change

- 4.18 The region’s first Net Zero Five Year Plan focuses on five main areas of delivery:
1. Domestic heat and energy efficiency
 2. Commercial heat and energy efficiency
 3. Industrial decarbonisation
 4. Transport and mobility
 5. Strategic land use (including large-scale renewables and natural capital)
- 4.19 It also identifies the high-level cost of implementing the necessary programmes over the next five years (£4.3bn) as well as the potential jobs that could be created from the net zero transition (21,000 over the next five years and 92,000 by 2041). The WMCA committed £5.1m to support the implementation of the recommendations, including £2.1m for a Net Zero Neighbourhood Demonstrator and £1m for a Natural Capital programme incorporating Community Green Grants.



Energy

- 4.20 This activity is being led by Energy Capital, drawing on both the Regional Energy Strategy and the Five Year Plan. There are several areas of work that are moving forward:
- Energy infrastructure, which is the focus of our work on energy devolution. This is brought together in the **Net Zero Pathfinder**, reflecting that we want to be the region that experiments in this space.
 - **Smart Local Energy Systems** looking at how energy infrastructure works in particular places
 - **Industrial Decarbonisation**. There is a UKRI funded project in the Black Country (Repowering the Black Country) demonstrating how energy-intensive industries can reduce their use of high-carbon energy and change their energy usage and supplies.
 - **Retrofit**. This is mainly the responsibility of local authorities but WMCA are increasingly playing a co-ordinating role to put in joint funding bids to government through what they call the 'SMART Hub'.
 - The **Net Zero Neighbourhood demonstrator** received funding with the approval of the Five Year plan. The aim of this will be to show how a scalable finance model could work in terms of delivery of retrofit at a neighbourhood level, whilst also aligning with other elements of a net zero community.
 - **Infrastructure for Zero Emission Vehicles** will provide an overarching strategy on things like EV Transit Hubs and inter-operability, whilst recognising that delivery is largely a local authority responsibility. The aim is to attract some co-ordinated regional funding.
 - **Commercial green energy**, which has two principal aims: a) develop large-scale energy generation schemes to provide a revenue stream for the wider net zero agenda; and, b) work with businesses to support them to do the same.

Natural environment.

- 4.21 The first Natural Environment Plan was launched in September 2021. The Plan covers four priority areas:
- Widening access to green and blue spaces for all communities across the West Midlands, initially focusing on places where there is a deficit of access.
 - Increasing tree and hedgerow planting, but with an emphasis on 'right tree, right place', to support climate mitigation and adaptation.



- Promoting wildlife corridors and working with natural corridors (both green and blue) as well as those linked to infrastructure projects, e.g. along cycle ways.
- Recognising the importance of the enablers of change and supporting activity around financing and behaviour change that will enable the roll out, impact and scalability of the initiatives in this plan.

Circular economy.

4.22 A Circular Economy Routemap was published in September 2021. The vision of the routemap is: ‘The West Midlands circular economy will support the green industrial revolution. It will support sustainable growth and contribute to the social economy as well as to green recovery. Our circular economy will make better use of our resources, generating more value and creating new jobs’. In particular, the Routemap aims to kickstart the circular economy in the West Midlands by building on existing projects and expertise across the public, private and third sectors to:

- Generate economic advantage and innovation, safeguard existing jobs and create new ones. Although difficult to quantify, similar approaches in London have been predicted to create 40,000 additional jobs by 2036.
- Complement broader environmental recovery activity, significantly reduce material and resource consumption
- Support wider social outcomes and the creation of a social economy
- Accelerate green and just recovery from COVID-19 and maximise post Brexit opportunities
- Build on existing circular economy activity, expertise and best practice in the region.

Home of the Green Industrial Revolution

4.23 In July 2021, the WMCA hosted a local leaders’ event and international conference, in conjunction with UK100 (an organisation bringing all levels of local government together around their climate ambitions). As part of this event, the WMCA produced its Home of the Green Industrial Revolution prospectus, which outlines the specific opportunities linked to the environment and energy programme described above.

Key points to note from the prospectus include:

- Low carbon and environmental goods is the fastest growing sector in the West Midlands, worth £12bn to the regional economy with 5100 companies.



- There are 97,000 people currently employed in the low carbon and environmental goods sector.
- The West Midlands is a global leader in three key areas: Future Mobility, Smart Energy Systems and Energy Storage and Resource Management. This comes with significant economic opportunity.

COP26

4.24 WMCA is working closely with the West Midlands Growth Company (WMGC) to align the 'Home of the Green Industrial Revolution' prospectus, with the latter's Low Carbon Sector 'pitchbook', which underpinned much of the prospectus, and WMGC's investment activity. This collaboration will result in low carbon investment opportunities in the West Midlands being presented to government departments and ministers, as well as being showcased at key events such as the UK's 'Global Investment Summit' at Windsor Castle in October and COP26 in November 21.

Bike Share Scheme

4.25 Serco was announced as the successful bidder to operate the West Midlands cycle hire scheme. Testing of the payment platform and hire processes has taken place in Sutton Coldfield in advance of a full public launch in March 2021.

4.26 Initially 1,080 bikes will be supplied across the seven districts rising to 1500 within a few months. The aim is to have around 2,500 bikes in operation by year 4/5 of the scheme.

4.27 Sandwell will receive 108 bikes across 18 docking stations in the first instance. It is anticipated that the first bikes in Sandwell will be available to hire in June. On reaching the full figure of 2,500 bikes overall, it is anticipated that Sandwell would receive 250 although this will be kept under review depending on the take-up. The number of bikes allocated to Sandwell is broadly in line with Sandwell's % age of the West Midlands population.

4.28 Work is underway to identify the location of the docking stations. These are initially likely to be concentrated in the West Bromwich and Oldbury areas, typically at railway stations, town centres and major trip attractors such as hospitals, leisure centres etc.



4.29 Other than the docking stations, the scheme does not involve the provision of cycle infrastructure but complements the programme of works included in the Local Cycle & Walking Infrastructure Plan.

eScooter Hire Trial

4.30 The Government announced its intention to trial the use of eScooters on public highways in early summer 2020. Following a WMCA procurement process, Swedish firm Voi was announced as the West Midlands operator for eScooter trials in August 2020. The first trials began in Birmingham and Coventry in September 2020.

4.31 A Sandwell trial based in West Bromwich town centre began in September 2020. 50 scooters are available for hire to anyone 18 years old or over with a valid driving licence. The scooters are dockless, using GPS tracking both to enable hirers to locate a scooter, and to ensure that the scooters do not leave the trial zone.

4.32 The trial will run until September 2021 with the experience gained feeding into the Department for Transport's deliberations around the full legalisation of eScooters for use on the public highway.

Active Travel (Walking & Cycling)

4.33 As part of the Governments Active Travel Fund (ATF), WMCA has coordinated the planning and delivery of an extensive programme schemes across all seven districts in conjunction with local Transportation and highways teams. The projects consist of infrastructure and improvements to facilitate cycling and make it easier for pedestrians to circulate safely in our town centres.

4.34 In Sandwell schemes were introduced during 2020 in Oldbury and Smethwick, whilst further projects will be delivered during 2021 in Bearwood, Blackheath, Wednesbury and on the A4123 in Tipton.

4.35 In addition to the ATF, WMCA's Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) will fund the development of further projects on the A34 in Great Barr and links between local neighbourhoods and the new stops along the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill metro extension.



Employment and skills

- 4.36 Sandwell MBC plays an active role in the WMCA Employment and Skills officers group; the meeting includes representatives from all local authorities and local enterprise partnerships. This group also considers regional approaches and best practise sharing across the local area, with each local authority having their own Employment and Skills partnership to feed information to and from. Meetings have been also held at a regional level to consider West Midlands wide approaches for the new Kickstart initiative alongside the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). WMCA have very helpfully facilitated direct links between senior officials from the DWP and local authorities which is proving a great assistance to the Kickstart initiative.
- 4.37 The Sandwell Skills Strategy has been developed and is an overarching document which sets out the borough's skills challenges and key priorities. The strategy is aligned to the WMCA Regional Skills plan which similarly sets out the region's skills challenges and key priorities. The Skills strategy includes an action plan for Reset and Recovery which is aligned to recovery measures proposed over the WMCA geography. A Covid-19 jobs and skills delivery board has been established to assist economic recovery in the region. A jobs and skills academy has also been established alongside strategic partners to maximise opportunities from the Commonwealth Games (CWG) including volunteering and job opportunities. This programme is working alongside Sandwell MBC activities and the legacy programme for the CWG Aquatics centre. This is especially beneficial to Sandwell, ensuring links to wider job and training opportunities associated with the CWG.
- 4.38 WMCA has been revising the role of local authorities in influencing decision making and increasing collaboration. This is having a positive effect of increasing the influence and contribution that local authorities can have on WMCA activity. WMCA officers have also been actively participating in Sandwell's meetings to support our activity.
- 4.39 In 2021/22 the WMCA made an investment of £21.6m in the direct delivery of community learning with five local authority areas. In Sandwell, community learning takes place at a range of community settings including outreach centres, Sandwell College, schools and wider Council community settings like our children's centres and libraries.



4.40 At Sandwell Adult and Family Learning Service (SAFL) those adults who attend our centres voluntarily typically have clear ideas about their short term and longer-term goals and use our offer to improve their skills. We found that although learners' motives for joining our classes are diverse, they are often related to the practicalities of improving job performance and/or employment prospects, supporting their children's learning, improving their confidence and moving on to study at a higher level.

SAFL AEB Funding:

The maximum contract value for the funding year of 2022/21 is £1,330,000.

4.41 For adults of all ages, but particularly older ones, computer literacy provides a strong motivation for improving their literacy skills, digital inclusion is a key focus for our delivery model moving into 2022 with the expansion of the Ron Davis centre. Our main strategy to increase engagement and participation of adults in Sandwell is based on the following factors: -

- i. enabling as many learners to study with full or part fee remission
- ii. using outreach venues to provide localised delivery in the heart of communities
- iii. increasing the opportunities to engage with digital and ICT skills
- iv. expanding the choice of online courses to include more health and wellbeing
- v. offering courses in family learning which increase literacy skills and support the green agenda
- vi. the ability to create individualised programmes of learning
- vii. the ability to develop bespoke learning programmes to meet the needs of local employers and community groups in upskilling/retraining their workforce and volunteers
- viii. sector specific learning opportunities to help learners get closer to the job market
- ix. focussing our subcontracting specification to broaden our offer and increase opportunities for hard to reach learners.

Homelessness

4.42 Sandwell Council has been working over the last 6 months to develop a new operating model to help people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness and to ensure that we continue the excellent work of Housing First beyond the initial pilot period. The council has helped an



average of 80 people per week presenting as at risk of or already homeless and continues to support 69 rough sleepers, many of whom now have their own tenancies within the Housing First model.

4.43 The council has been an active partner within the WMCA on the Members Advisory Group, Homelessness Taskforce Steering Group, Rough Sleeper Task Group and Housing First Steering Group. The collaborative working through these groups has helped shape how we work and has allowed the sharing of best practice. This was particularly evidenced in the approach to supporting people who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF). The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping groups have maintained a continual focus on the NRPF agenda and the group members have worked together to ensure that we have consistent approaches to accommodating people with NRPF and can adapt to the changing policy environment.

4.44 WMCA's Housing First pilot programme ran from April 2019 to June 2021. Sandwell successfully met its Housing First target of 49 people housed by the end of June 2021 and has taken forward some of the key principles from Housing First as part of the design for our Complex Hub, which supports people who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping. The council joined the WMCA Change into Action model in early 2021 (an approach to alternative giving to support rough sleepers) which brings together key partners and is chaired by Sandwell Community Voluntary Organisation. The model has been set up to receive donations from the public to be made available to people and organisations who can bid for funding to support people sleeping rough in Sandwell. Change into Action will be further promoted around World Homeless Day on 10th October.

West Bromwich Town Centre Regeneration and Bull Street MSCP Demolition

4.45 Demolition works of the MSCP at Bull Street are complete, with an outline business case being prepared to determine how the cleared site can come forward for mixed use redevelopment.

Friar Park Housing Development

4.46 An initial public consultation exercise was conducted in May and complex Ground Investigations are underway. The results will inform the next stage of the masterplan optioneering for a second round of public consultation in due course.



4.47 The Council and WMCA will further progress the provisional delivery strategies as the results of the Ground Investigations are confirmed and the masterplan options become more developed.

One Public Estate

4.48 One Public Estate (OPE) is a national programme, started in 2013 delivered by the Cabinet office and the LGA, now administered by the West Midlands Combined Authority.

4.49 The OPE programme is to offer technical support to deliver property focused programmes across the public sector. OPE is looking to promote a strategic asset approach to get more from public assets.

4.50 SMBC has been successful with the OPE eight bid, that is the 2021/22 financial year. The total Sandwell bid is £150,000 of which the Council contribution would be £30,000. This element is currently being appraised by capital finance.

4.51 The proposal centres around West Bromwich Town Hall and central library, as we can demonstrate strategic links to the recent West Bromwich Town Fund (town investment plan) application, our own transforming local services programme and the collaborative working plans and arrangements being progressed with the NHS.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 Become a non-constituent member of WMCA - Participation as a constituent member of the WMCA enables Sandwell to deliver improvements to the locality that would otherwise be more difficult to achieve. In addition, through WMCA activity, we can ensure that Sandwell residents have the skills to access new employment opportunities both here in Sandwell and across the region, with excellent public transport available connecting the whole of the West Midlands. These benefits would be lost if Sandwell became a non-constituent member.



6 Implications

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Resources: | The contribution to the Combined Authority from Sandwell Council for 2021/22 is £0.611 million. |
| Legal and Governance: | Part 6 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (“the 2009 Act”) provides for the establishment of combined authorities for the areas of two or more local authorities in England. Combined authorities are bodies corporate which may be given power to exercise specified functions of a local authority under sections 104 and 105 of the 2009 Act, and power to exercise specified functions of any other public authority under section 105A of the 2009 Act. |
| Risk: | Section 21 of the West Midlands Combined Authority (Functions and Amendments) Order 2017 has the effect that where costs are incurred by the Combined Authority and are not met from other sources of income, then they fall to be met by the seven constituent councils, including Sandwell. |
| Equality: | The priorities of the West Midlands Combined Authority reflect the equality and diversity of the West Midlands, including striving to create prosperity through a strong and collective economic strategy and the policy aspiration to champion all that makes the West Midlands a Great Place to Live. The equality impact of any specific proposals will need to be addressed in reports to the WMCA Board or the appropriate decision-making body. |
| Health and Wellbeing: | All constituent members of the WMCA are be better placed to contribute and influence the Health and Social Care offer for local residents and create: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more sustainable local health and care economy; • Improved quality and experience of care; • Improved population health. |
| Social Value | There is potential in all schemes and initiatives, particularly those delivered directly in Sandwell, to have a positive impact on Social Value. |



7. Appendices

None

8. Background Papers

None



Report to Council

12 October 2021

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Subject: | Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee 2020-21 |
| Director: | Simone Hines – Director of Finance |
| Contact Officer: | Peter Farrow Audit Services and Risk Management Manager peter_farrow@sandwell.gov.uk |

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Council receive the Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The report summarises the main areas of work undertaken by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee during 2020/21.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

| | | |
|---|---|--|
|  |  | The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is a key component of the council's governance framework. |
|  |  | |
|  |  | |



4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is required to submit an annual report to Council detailing activities undertaken through the year and identifying outcomes.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The report does not require a decision and therefore, alternative options do not need to be considered.

6 Implications

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Resources: | There are no direct financial and resource implications arising from this report. |
| Legal and Governance: | The council is not obliged by law to appoint an Audit Committee, but this course of action has been taken in line with guidance from CIPFA. |
| Risk: | There are no direct risk implications arising from this report. |
| Equality: | An equality impact assessment is not required. |
| Health and Wellbeing: | There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising. |
| Social Value | There are no direct implications arising from this report. |

7. Appendices

Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee 2020-21.

8. Background Papers

None.



Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
2020/21



Introduction

Councillor Manjit Gill
Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee



The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee here at Sandwell, as across local government, is a key component of a council's corporate governance framework. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, risk management, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.

The purpose of the Committee is to provide independent assurance to the council on the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment. It provides independent review of the governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It also oversees the work of both the internal and external auditors, helping to ensure that efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place. The key benefits of the Committee can be seen as:

- increasing public confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial and other reporting;
- reinforcing the importance and independence of internal and external audit and similar review processes;
- providing additional assurance through a process of independent review; and
- raising awareness of the need for internal control and the implementation of audit recommendations.

The Committee agrees a work programme for each year. It is based on (but not limited to) the following main sources of assurance:

- Annual Governance Statement - this is the statutory report which the Committee approves and forms part of the council's Statement of Accounts.
- Strategic Risk Register – detailing how and where the Committee can gain assurance that risks are being well managed.
- Internal Audit - the ongoing work of, and reports from the council's internal auditors.
- External Audit - the reports submitted to the Committee by the council's external auditors Grant Thornton

It was certainly a challenging year for the Committee, following its meeting in January 2020, and as a result of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, it did not meet again until September 2020. While this meant a late start for the Committee's work, during the remainder of the year it managed to catch up with the bulk of its cycle of work during a series of meetings held remotely.

The Committee's business was also impacted by delays in the signing-off of the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts and the subsequent effect in the preparation of the accounts for 2020/21. Therefore, at the time of writing, there are still elements of the 2020/21 Committee cycle to be completed.

Following the May 2021 local elections, I was pleased to take the role of the Chair of the Committee, and would like to place on record my thanks to Councillor Ahmad Bostan who chaired the Committee during the 2020/21 year, and to all of the past members who served on the Committee during the year, alongside our independent members, officers who have provided ongoing advice to the Committee and our internal and external auditors who have all contributed towards its success. I also welcome my fellow new members to the Committee and no doubt the challenges that we face together in the year ahead.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to our late colleague Councillor Sandra Hevican who also served on the Committee during the year.

Councillor Manjit Gill

Committee membership

| Membership during the 2020/21 year | New Membership for 2021/22 |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Councillor Ahmad Bostan (Chair) | Councillor Manjit Gill (Chair) |
| Councillor Peter Allen | Councillor Peter Allen |
| Councillor Paul Moore | Councillor Jay Anandou |
| Councillor Liam Preece | Councillor Kacey Akpoteni |
| Councillor Sandra Hevican | Councillor Ahmad Bostan |
| Councillor Mohammed Yaseen Hussain | Councillor Zahir Hussain |
| | Councillor Olwen Jones |
| Mike Ager (Independent - Vice Chair) | Mike Ager (Independent - Vice Chair) |
| Jay Hussain (Independent) | Jay Hussain (Independent) |
| Heikki Doyle (Independent) | Vacancy |

The Committee met on the following dates:

- 3 September 2020
- 17 September 2020
- 11 February 2021
- 18 March 2021
- 24 June 2021
- 29 July 2021

Senior Officers from the council were also present as required, including the Chief Executive, Acting Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer, the Head of Audit and where appropriate the External Auditors (Grant Thornton).

The Committee's business

During the 2020/21 year the Committee conducted the following business:

Statement of Accounts 2018/19
Draft Statement of Accounts 2019/20
External Audit Findings Reports
External Audit Progress Reports and Sector Updates
Informing the Audit Risk Assessment
Accounting Estimate Management Summary

Internal Audit Plan 2020/21
Internal Audit Annual Report 2020/21
Internal Audit Progress Reports
Internal Audit Charter
Strategic and Covid-19 Risk Register Updates

Counter Fraud Updates
National Fraud Initiative Report 2020
Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy for the 2020's
CIPFA Fraud and Corruption Tracker Report
Amendments to the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules
Audit and Governance Panel Update

Draft Annual Governance Statement 2019/20
Code of Corporate Governance
Financial Management Code
CIPFA Audit Committee Updates
Committee Work Programme
Redmond Review Update

Risk Management

The Committee regularly receives and reviews the council's Strategic Risk Register, and assesses the assurance provided in order to demonstrate how risks are being mitigated. It may also, where required, call in individual risks for a more detailed review.

The work of our internal and external auditors

The council's internal auditors gave the following opinion in their 2020/21 Annual Report:

"Based on the work undertaken during the year and the implementation by management of the recommendations made, Internal Audit can provide reasonable assurance that the council has adequate and effective governance, risk management and internal control processes". However, they noted that throughout the year there were a number of key control issues, either through their work or that of other assurance providers that required addressing.

While not fundamental to the overall control environment, they gave a 'limited' rating in five of their internal audit reports and it remains important that the recommendations made in these areas are implemented and improvements made, in a timely manner.

There concerns included the significant delays in the completion and signing off of the finalisation of the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts and subsequent preparation of the

2020/21 Accounts. The background to these delays were detailed in the External Auditors Audit Findings Report for the year ended 31 March 2020, which was presented to the Committee on 18 March 2021. This included a number of high level recommendations for which an action plan has been developed and is being implemented, in respect of:

- Improving the council's asset register and property database
- Property valuations
- Bank reconciliation and control over journals
- Debtors and debt provisions

They also commented that the delays in the finalisation of the Statement of Accounts, had resulted in similar delays in the production of the council's 2019/20 Annual Governance Statement, which then forms part of the Statement of Accounts and which has subsequently impacted upon the council's ability to prepare its 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement. These delays also constrained the Committee in its ability to produce a timely Annual Report for 2019/20.

In the External Auditors Audit Plan for the year ending 31 March 2021, and as reported to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on 24 June 2021, the auditors also made reference to both a number of historic governance issues and governance over financial reporting resulting in such delays. At the time of writing the External Auditors were undertaking a wider review of governance within the council.

Counter Fraud

One of the roles of the Committee, is to review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the council from fraud and corruption along with monitoring counter-fraud actions. We receive regular reports from the Counter Fraud team which provide us with updates on a range of fraud related activities including:

- Outcomes from tenancy fraud, subletting, right to buy and other investigations
- The National Fraud Initiative Report 2020
- The Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy for the 2020's
- CIPFA's latest Fraud and Corruption Tracker Report
- The council's Fraud Risk Register

Conclusion of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee 2020/21

While it has been a challenging year, a number of the matters noted above do cause the Committee concern, and have impacted upon the levels of assurance available to us. We recommend that the council seek to address these issues as soon as possible, and that as the year progresses we obtain further assurances set against them on a regular basis.

The Committee's main achievements

While it has been a challenging year, the Committee believes its key achievements during the year were:

- Continuing to maintain a good working relationship with the council's internal and external auditors.
- Providing additional assurance through a process of on-going independent review.
- Raising the profile of internal control issues across the council and of the need to ensure that audit recommendations are implemented.
- Regular consideration and review of the council's strategic risk register.
- Maintaining a detailed focus on the actions being taken to combat fraud.
- Building the skills and knowledge of the Committee members through regular technical updates and the consideration of related guidance issued by CIPFA.
- The continued attendance of our independent members, which in turn helps broaden the Committee's experience and independent view point.

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee –Terms of Reference

Statement of purpose

Our Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is a key component of the council's corporate governance. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.

The purpose of our Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is to provide independent assurance to the members of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment. It provides independent review of the governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It oversees internal audit and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.

Governance, risk and control

To review the council's corporate governance arrangements against the good governance framework and consider annual governance reports and assurances.

To review the annual governance statement prior to approval and consider whether it properly reflects the risk environment and supporting assurances, taking into account internal audit's opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control.

To consider the council's arrangements to secure value for money and review assurances and assessments on the effectiveness of these arrangements.

To consider the council's framework of assurance and ensure that it adequately addresses the risks and priorities of the council.

To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management in the council.

To monitor progress in addressing risk-related issues reported to the committee.

To consider reports on the effectiveness of internal controls and monitor the implementation of agreed actions.

To review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the council from fraud and corruption.

To monitor the counter-fraud strategy, actions and resources.

To review the governance and assurance arrangements for significant partnerships or collaborations.

Internal Audit

To approve the internal audit charter.

To review proposals made in relation to the appointment of external providers of internal audit services and to make recommendations.

To approve the risk based internal audit plan, including internal audit's resource requirements, the approach to using other sources of assurance and any work required to place reliance upon those other sources.

To approve significant interim changes to the risk-based internal audit plan and resource requirements.

To make appropriate enquiries of both management and the head of internal audit to determine if there are any inappropriate scope or resource limitations.

To consider any impairments to independence or objectivity arising from additional roles or responsibilities outside of internal auditing of the head of internal audit. To approve and periodically review safeguards to limit such impairments.

To consider reports from the head of internal audit on internal audit's performance during the year, including the performance of external providers of internal audit services. These will include:

- Updates on the work of internal audit including key findings, issues of concern and action in hand as a result of internal audit work;
- Regular reports on the results of the quality assurance and improvement programme;
- Reports on instances where the internal audit function does not conform to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and Local Government Application Note, considering whether the non-conformance is significant enough that it must be included in the annual governance statement.

To consider the head of internal audit's annual report:

- The statement of the level of conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and Local Government Application Note and the results of the quality assurance and improvement programme that supports the statement - these will indicate the reliability of the conclusions of internal audit.
- The opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control together with the summary of the work supporting the opinion - these will assist the committee in reviewing the annual governance statement.

To consider summaries of specific internal audit reports as requested.

To receive reports outlining the action taken where the head of internal audit has concluded that management has accepted a level of risk that may be unacceptable to the authority or there are concerns about progress with the implementation of agreed actions.

To contribute to the quality assurance and improvement programme and in particular, to the external quality assessment of internal audit that takes place at least once every five years.

To consider a report on the effectiveness of internal audit to support the annual governance statement, where required to do so by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

To provide free and unfettered access to the audit committee chair for the head of internal audit, including the opportunity for a private meeting with the committee.

External Audit

To support the independence of external audit through consideration of the external auditor's annual assessment of its independence and review of any issues raised by PSAA or the authority's auditor panel as appropriate.

To consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports, and the report to those charged with governance.

To consider specific reports as agreed with the external auditor.

To comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it gives value for money.

To commission work from internal and external audit.

To advise and recommend on the effectiveness of relationships between external and internal audit and other inspection agencies or relevant bodies.

Financial Reporting

To receive detailed training in respect of the process associated with the preparation, sign off, audit and

To review the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the council.

To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts.

Accountability arrangements

To report to those charged with governance on the committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning the adequacy and effectiveness of their governance, risk management and internal control frameworks, financial reporting arrangements, and internal and external audit functions.

To report to full council on a regular basis on the committee's performance in relation to the terms of reference, and the effectiveness of the committee in meeting its purpose.

To publish an annual report on the work of the Committee.

Report to Council

12 October 2021

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Subject: | Appointment to Vacancies on Committees/Boards and Other Bodies |
| Director: | Surjit Tour – Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer |
| Contact Officer: | Trisha Newton Senior Democratic Services Officer Trisha_newton@sandwell.gov.uk |

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 To receive and consider nominations for vacancies on committees, boards and other fora established by the Council, as set out in Appendix A.
- 1.2 To receive and consider nominations for vacancies on outside/other bodies, as set out in Appendix B.
- 1.3 That subject to 1.1 and 1.2 above, the nominations received be approved and appointed to those vacant bodies with immediate effect.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Appointments to vacant positions on committee/boards/other bodies is a matter for Council to determine.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

| | | |
|---|---|--|
|  |  | The Council's decision-making structures are designed to support the delivery of Sandwell's Vision 2030. |
|  |  | |
|  |  | |

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 The Council's Constitution sets out the executive, scrutiny and constitutional functions and the rules and procedures for how the Council operates, it also prescribes the issues that the Council should address at its Annual Meeting in identifying the person(s) or bodies it wishes to carry out its functions as a local authority and the portfolios and terms of reference for those persons and bodies.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 There is no alternative option. Appointment of elected members to committees and other/outside bodies can only be made by full Council.

6 Implications

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Resources: | There are no direct resource implications arising from this report. |
| Legal and Governance: | Council can determine the making of non-executive appointments to committees and other fora. Council is under a legal and constitutional obligation to make appointments to its committees, boards and other fora to ensure the effective operation of the Council's functions and other obligations, duties and responsibilities. |



| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Risk: | A risk assessment is not required. |
| Equality: | An equality impact assessment is not required. |
| Health and Wellbeing: | The proposals have no direct implications. |
| Social Value | The proposals have no direct implications. |

7. Appendices

Appendix A – Appointment to Committees/Boards.
Appendix B – Nominations to Other Bodies.

8. Background Papers

None.



This page is intentionally left blank

Changes to Appointments to Committees/Boards

| Committee | Member |
|--|--|
| Member of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee | Councillor Webb to replace Councillor Bostan |
| Chair of Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee | Councillor Allcock to replace Councillor Carmichael |
| Vice Chair of Licensing Committee | Councillor Mabena to replace Councillor Piper |
| Member of Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board | Councillor R Jones to replace Councillor Piper |
| Member of Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board | Councillor Smith to replace Councillor Carmichael |
| Member of Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board | Councillor Millar to replace Councillor P Hughes |
| Member of Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board | Councillor P Hughes to replace Councillor Millar |
| Cabinet Advisor - Business Ambassadors and Community Wealth | Councillor Randhawa to replace Councillor Bostan |
| Governance and Constitution Committee | Change Cabinet Member for Governance and Democracy to Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism |
| Chair of Select Committee for Electoral Participation | Change Cabinet Member for Governance and Democracy to Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism |

This page is intentionally left blank

Appointments to Other Bodies – Nominations

| Organisation | Term of Office | Current Representative(s) | Nomination(s) | Notes |
|---|--------------------------------|---|--|-------|
| West Midlands Combined Authority Board | 1 year expiring annual meeting | Leader of the Councillor Deputy Leader of the Council Substitutes: Vacant Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth | Leader of the Councillor Deputy Leader of the Council Substitutes: Cabinet Member for Environment Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth | |
| West Midlands Combined Authority Strategic Economic Development Board | 1 year expiring annual meeting | Cabinet Member for Governance and Democracy | Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism | |
| West Midlands Combined Authority Environment & Energy Board | 1 year expiring annual meeting | Cabinet Member for Strong and Resilient Communities | Cabinet Member for Environment | |

| Organisation | Term of Office | Current Representative(s) | Nomination(s) | Notes |
|--|--------------------------------|--|---|-------|
| Climate Change Working Group | 1 year expiring annual meeting | Councillor Padda Councillor Crompton Councillor R Jones Councillor McVittie Councillor Piper Councillor Randhawa Councillor S Gill Councillor Allcock Councillor Taylor Councillor Hughes | Councillor Bostan Councillor Crompton Councillor R Jones Councillor McVittie Councillor Piper Councillor Randhawa Councillor S Gill Councillor Allcock Councillor Taylor Councillor Hughes | |
| Town Deal Local Board West Bromwich | 1 year expiring annual meeting | Cabinet Member (vacant) Cabinet Member (Councillor I Padda) Cabinet Member (Councillor Hartwell) Town Lead Member | Cabinet Member (vacant) Cabinet Member (Councillor I Padda) Cabinet Member (Councillor Hartwell) Town Lead Member | |
| Town Lead Local Board Smethwick | 1 year expiring annual meeting | Cabinet Member (vacant) Cabinet Member (Councillor Ahmed) Town Lead Member | Cabinet Member (Councillor Piper) Cabinet Member (Councillor Ahmed) Town Lead Member | |

| Organisation | Term of Office | Current Representative(s) | Nomination(s) | Notes |
|--|--------------------------------|--|--|----------|
| HS2 Regional Enterprise Board | 1 year expiring annual meeting | | Cabinet Member for Environment Director – Regeneration and Growth | New body |
| Commonwealth Games 2022 Steering Group | 1 year expiring annual meeting | Leader Ali I Padda K Singh Crompton | Leader Ali Millard K Singh Crompton | |
| Corporate Parenting Board | 1 year expiring annual meeting | Cabinet Member for Children and Education Councillor I Padda Councillor V Smith Councillor Shackleton Councillor P Kaur Councillor P Randhawa | Cabinet Member for Children and Education Councillor Hinchliff Councillor V Smith Councillor Shackleton Councillor P Kaur Councillor P Randhawa | |

This page is intentionally left blank

Minutes of The Cabinet

Wednesday 7 July 2021 at 3.30pm
Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: Councillor R Singh (Chair);
Councillors Ahmed, Crompton, Hartwell, Millard, I Padda,
Simms and Taylor.

Also present: Councillors Mabena, Moore and Shackleton.

Officers: Nicholas Austin (Interim Director – Borough Economy),
Lesley Hagger (Director – Children’s Services), Rebecca
Maher (Acting Director – Finance), Lisa McNally (Director –
Public Health), Tammy Stokes (Interim Director –
Regeneration and Growth), Sue Stanhope (Interim Director
HR), Surjit Tour (Director - Law and Governance and
Monitoring Officer), Katharine Willmette (Interim Director –
Adult Social Care), Elaine Newsome (Service Manager –
Democracy) and Suky Suthi-Nagra (Democratic Services
Manager).

123/21 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ali and
E M Giles.

124/21 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

125/21 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 16 June 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

126/21 **Additional Items of Business**

There were no additional items of business to consider at the meeting.

127/21 **2022 Commonwealth Games – Sandwell Aquatics Centre - Management and Operation of Highways for Commonwealth Games**

It was reported that West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) had been appointed by the Secretary of State to produce the Games Transport Plan. In order to enable a successful Games, a number of traffic management measures would be required at all the venues across the region and partners were working closely to ensure the network operated as an integrated whole.

Approval was sought to sign a Concurrent Powers consent letter with the West Midlands Combined Authority to allow them to make related Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders to enable safe and efficient operation of the highways during the Commonwealth Games over a period of up to 4 weeks from mid-July 2022 to mid-August 2022.

Approval was also sought to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with WMCA to identify and quantify the network management requirements to be delivered and implemented on the Games Route Network (GRN) to enable safe and efficient operation of the relevant highways during the Commonwealth Games.



Reason for Decision

In order to enable a successful Games, a number of traffic management measures would be required at all the venues across the region and partners were working closely to ensure the network operated as an integrated whole.

Although in normal circumstances Sandwell would undertake the necessary legal requirements to bring about Games Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders and issue Games Temporary Traffic Regulation Notices required for the Aquatics Centre venue, during the Games it was possible that there would be scenarios where, due to unforeseen circumstances, TTROs/TTRNs were required at exceptionally short notice (for example, on a Sunday or overnight).

To guard against this risk it was requested that TfWM should have the ability to exercise concurrent powers, as outlined in the Games Act 2020, in consultation with the local Highway Authority, if the need arose.

The successful management of the West Midlands road network was critical to the success of the Commonwealth Games. During the Games the road network including the Games Route Network would need to function efficiently to balance the travel movement priorities of athletes, other Games family and spectators with minimal disruption to businesses, residents and background users of the network.

Alternative Options Considered

The only alternative option available was not to sign the concurrent powers agreement letter. Consequently, if during the Games a scenario occurred where TTROs/TTRNs were required at exceptionally short notice to allow the games to continue without interruption (e.g. on a weekend or overnight), then the local authority may not have the resources to implement these within the required emergency timeframes.



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

The WMCA would have the resources available at very short notice to coordinate the required emergency activity on the GRN and across local authority boundaries, in consultation with the relevant Highway Authorities. In addition, this would also result in reputational harm as the only relevant Highway Authority not to enter into the wider agreement to help facilitate the operation of the Commonwealth Games.

Not entering into a Memorandum of Understanding would miss the opportunity to agree the mechanisms for efficient functioning of the Games Route network during the games period. This could result in competitors and officials being delayed and potentially missing or delaying programmed events. This would inevitably result in widespread reputational harm.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to sign a Concurrent Powers consent letter with the West Midlands Combined Authority to allow them to make related Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders to enable safe and efficient operation of the highways during the Commonwealth Games over a period of up to 4 weeks from mid-July 2022 to mid-August 2022, dates to be specified in the agreement;
- (2) that approval be given to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with WMCA to identify and quantify the network management requirements to be delivered and implemented on the Games Route Network to enable safe and efficient operation of the relevant highways during the Commonwealth Games;
- (3) that the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to sign both the concurrent powers consent letter and the memorandum of understanding with the West Midlands Combined Authority;



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

- (4) that the (Interim) Director Borough Economy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Connected and Accessible Sandwell, be authorised to make any necessary amendments to the content of the Memorandum of Understanding following completion of any reviews and inspections to the existing highway network and be authorised to agree any necessary amendments to the Concurrent Powers Letter, including the final dates on behalf of the Council.

128/21

Request to procure an Adult Weight Management Service

Approval was sought to use the adult weight management services grant of £320,730 to procure a behavioural (tier 2) weight management service (during 2021/22) for adults (that included a multi-component programme addressing dietary intake, physical activity and behaviour change for adults who were overweight or living with obesity with the primary aim of promoting health behaviour change, which reduced body weight), using the dynamic purchasing system provided by Public Health England (PHE).

The Director – Public Health gave a presentation setting out the impact and causes of obesity in Sandwell and how the funding would be used to commission an enhanced weight management service as well as build up capacity for weight management support across our community and voluntary sector.

Reason for Decision

Obesity caused problems at both an individual and societal level, in that it was a significant driver of ill health and demand on health services. The extent to which obesity was a challenge for any given area could be gauged in the routine data on hospital admissions in which obesity was judged by the clinician to be a primary or secondary factor in the patient's ill health.



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

In Sandwell last year the rate of admissions with obesity as a factor was 1842 per 100k population (see table one below). This equated to over 5585 individual admissions, which while by no means the highest in our region, still represented a significant impact on both individuals and healthcare resources.

The public health team would like to take the opportunity to use some short-term funding to provide a service that would improve levels of physical activity, healthy eating and support people to adopt healthier behaviours.

Alternative Options Considered

Develop a service specification and commission the service using the Council's internal procurement processes. The implication of this was that an internal procurement exercise for anything over £100k could take between 2 and 9 months. Given that this funding may only be used for eligible expenditure between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, there may not be time to go through a full procurement process and deliver the service within the timescales specified. Capacity was also currently stretched in public health due to additional Covid-19 duties.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Director of Public Health be authorised, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, to use the adult weight management services grant of £320,730 to procure a behavioural (tier 2) weight management service (during 21/22) for adults (that includes a multi-component programme addressing dietary intake, physical activity and behaviour change for adults who are overweight or living with obesity with the primary aim of promoting health behaviour change, which reduces body weight), using the dynamic purchasing system provided by Public Health England (PHE);



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

- (2) that the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to enter into and execute, under seal as may be required, any contracts or ancillary documentation in relation to the award of contract referred to in Resolution (1) above.

129/21

Adoption of Temporary Accommodation Policy

Approval was sought to the adoption of the Council's Temporary Accommodation Policy, in response to the requirement for all local authorities to have and keep up to date, a policy.

The policy covered:

- factors to be taken into account when making placements, including type, size and location of accommodation;
- length of stay in temporary accommodation;
- offers and refusals; and
- procurement of temporary accommodation.

When considering the factors taken into account when making placements, the policy covered and considered individual risk to households, the needs of children under the Children Act 2004, health and support needs, affordability and access to employment. Specific to the actual property, the policy provided the necessary steer on the type, size and physical condition of property to be offered.

More recently, the Housing Solutions Service had expended a considerable amount of resource to reduce the use of outsourced temporary accommodation (TA). This had involved a focus on sourcing TA from within the Council's own stock (almost exclusively two bedroom flats and around 40 units in total). This approach would be significantly enhanced with the development of the Council's own specific TA facility at Applewood Grove when it became operational and would provide a further 21 units of temporary accommodation.



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

In all instances except where a risk assessment or household need requirement required otherwise, the new Applewood Grove facility would be the preferred option by the Council for TA. Where the use of Applewood Grove could not be facilitated, the Council would endeavor to source accommodation from within its own stock and from its contracted arrangements to source accommodation from the private rented sector. The fourth and last option would be to use bed and breakfast accommodation.

In response to a question raised by the Chair of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board, the Cabinet member for Quality Homes and Thriving Neighbourhoods confirmed:-

- Applewood Grove was expected to be operational by the end of July 2021, having access to this accommodation was important to the delivery of the Temporary Accommodation Policy;
- the Council was continuing to make best use of its own stock, including some of our more difficult to let units, to discharge its duty to homeless households. This approach, alongside increasing access to good quality private sector accommodation had significantly reduced the number of people in temporary accommodation and the length of time before offers of more sustainable accommodation were made to homeless households. The Council would continue to look at the issue of age limit too when letting properties.

Reason for Decision

It was a statutory requirement for each local authority to produce and publish a Temporary Accommodation Policy setting out the requirements that it needed to consider when allocating and procuring temporary accommodation.



Alternative Options Considered

There were no alternative options, it was a statutory requirement for a local authority to publish a Temporary Accommodation Policy. The adoption of the Policy would ensure that the Council was not open to any form of legal challenge in this context.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given for the Council to adopt the Temporary Accommodation Policy as now submitted;
- (2) that the Director of Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Homes, be authorised to review and approve subsequent Temporary Accommodation Policy reviews and amendments except where the changes are major or involve amended legislation.

130/21

Black Country Collaborative Framework Contract for Minor Highway Works 2021-2024/25

Approval was sought to procure a new Black Country Collaborative Framework Contract for Minor Highway Works. The contract would commence on 1 November 2021, for a three year period up to 31 October 2024, with an option to extend for an additional twelve months until 31 October 2025, subject to satisfactory performance and budget availability.

The scope of the Framework Agreement included all minor civil engineering works associated with improving and protecting the highway network infrastructure. This could include, but was not limited to:

- construction of new footways and carriageways;
- associated highways landscape works;
- installation of new highway drainage;
- installation of new traffic signals and pedestrian crossings;
- installation of bitumen and block paved surfacing;



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

- installation of lighting columns, bollards and electrical connections;
- installation of road marking, road signs, electronic message signs;
- excavation, demolition and disposal of existing infrastructure;
- infilling of redundant subway and associated demolition works;
- protection to existing underground services;
- implementation of off-highway civil engineering works on behalf of external and internal clients.

The Framework Agreement would comprise of 3 Lots:

- Lot 1 for package orders up to £100,000;
- Lot 2 for package orders between £100,001 and £500,000;
- Lot 3 for package orders over £500,001.

The Council would lead on the procurement process which would be undertaken collaboratively amongst the four Black Country local authorities, Birmingham City Council and Transport for West Midlands. From 1 of January 2021, OJEU was replaced by a new UK e-tendering platform called Find a Tender service (FTS). Consequently, the new Black Country Framework Contract for Minor Works (2021-2025) would be procured through the new FTS.

It was proposed that a number of suitable contractors would be appointed to each lot to ensure adequate resource was available to undertake all the required minor works across the relevant authorities, during the period of the framework.

Reason for Decision

The benefits derived from the procurement of this regional Framework Contract would include delivery of projects necessary to improve the highway network and provide road safety measures, cost effectively and efficiently.



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

All participants in this Framework Contract would be able to achieve costs savings and additional benefits through the reduction in tendering costs, reduced contract administration and secure social value benefits.

Alternative Options Considered

Without a current Highways Minor Works framework to enable quick and efficient use of contractors to undertake programmes of work, each project would require separate costly and timely tendering processes. In addition, Highway Services would need to utilise elements of other less suited framework contracts for urgent service provision. This would inevitably lead to long delays in delivering safety and infrastructure improvement projects, increased costs and potential reputational harm.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Interim Director - Borough Economy be authorised to award the Black Country Collaborative Framework Contract for Minor Highway Works 2021-2025, for the sum of £2.5m per year for period of up to 4 years, from 1 November 2021 to 31 October 2025;
- (2) that the Interim Director Borough Economy be authorised to extend the Black Country Collaborative Framework Contract for Minor Highway Works 2021-2025 by one year subject to satisfactory performance during the first 3 years;
- (3) that the Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to enter into appropriate contract for the Black Country Collaborative Framework Contract for Minor Highway Works 2021-2025;



- (4) that the Director of Law and Governance execute any documentation necessary to give effect to Resolution (1) and (2) above.

131/21

Black Country Plan – Draft Plan for Consultation

It was reported that in accordance with national planning policy, development plans should be updated every five years and should identify requirements for 15 years from the date of adoption. It was intended that the Black Country Plan (BCP) would be adopted in 2024 and would replace the Black Country Core Strategy. The Plan would also allocate specific sites for different land uses, carry forward the allocations in the Site Allocations & Delivery Plan (SAD) and would roll forward the land use requirements to 2039.

The Draft Plan had now reached an advanced and important stage of its preparation and would make key decisions on:

- **Climate change** - how can we adapt and mitigate against the impacts?
- **New housing** - how much new housing is needed? How much can be provided in sustainable locations and where will it go? What type and density of housing should be provided and how much affordable housing is required and achievable?
- **Employment land** - where does employment land need protection? How much new employment land is needed and where should it go?
- **Supporting infrastructure and services** - what improvements to transport, schools, green space, etc. will be needed to support new development? Where will new services be located?
- **How we will create healthy and safe places** to promote better health and wellbeing?
- **In the face of new development** how will the natural and historic environment be protected and improved?



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

The public, through the consultation process, would have an opportunity to provide responses which would be considered by the Cabinets of all four councils during the next stage of the Plan's preparation, with regards to any proposals for the removal of sites from the Green Belt anywhere in the Black Country and their allocation for development.

It was proposed to undertake a public consultation on the Draft BCP for an eight-week period, to be agreed by the Interim Director of Regeneration and Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strong and Inclusive Economy. It was anticipated that the consultation would commence in August 2021 and run to the end of September/early October 2021.

In response to questions raised by the Chair of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board, the Cabinet Member for Strong and Inclusive Economy confirmed:-

- there were no general powers to force land owners to bring sites into use. Local Planning Authorities did have the power to compulsory purchase land to meet Local Plan objectives but this would require funding and would need to demonstrate that there were no reasonable prospects of the land owner bringing forward proposals of their own. S.215 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 also gave local authorities the power to compel land owners to tidy up sites or make them safe although this not a matter for the Local Plan decision today;
- with regard to the specific site at Majestic Cinema in Cradley Road, Cradley Heath, this site was not allocated in the Black Country Plan but was one of a number of sites allocated in the Sandwell Site Allocations & Delivery DPD which were carried forward until that plan was reviewed. The Council was actively engaged with the site owner to explore how the site can be redeveloped.



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

In response to questions raised by the Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board in relation to the future plans for the Charlemont Community Centre and Painswick Close, Great Barr site, which was not deemed suitable for housing, the Cabinet Member for Strong and Inclusive Economy would endeavour to provide a response on the Council's proposals.

Reason for Decision

The Draft Black Country Plan (formerly known as the Black Country Core Strategy) would provide the framework to guide future planning decisions in Sandwell as well as the wider Black Country. It was based on national policy and guidance, an assessment of local housing and employment needs, as well as meeting objectives that had been defined through an Issues and Options consultation in 2017.

It was important that Sandwell was covered by an up-to-date Local Plan in order to meet statutory requirements, to support regeneration and investment in the Borough, and to protect areas of value from development. Cabinet approval was required for each consultation stage of the Black Country Plan preparation process.

Alternative Options Considered

The preparation and adoption of a Local Plan was a statutory requirement resulting from Government planning legislation. The Draft Black Country Plan resulted from the outcome of the 2017 Issues & Options consultation, the Call for Sites and the gathering and robust assessment of evidence in the period since.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Draft Black Country Plan, consultation material and non-technical summary and Sustainability Appraisal Reports be approved for consultation during Summer 2021;



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

- (2) that the Interim Director - Regeneration and Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strong and Inclusive Economy, be authorised to make any necessary minor amendments to the Draft Black Country Plan and Draft Sustainability Appraisal Report prior to commencement of the consultation process;
- (3) that a further report be submitted to the Cabinet summarising key issues raised during the consultation, to inform preparation of the Publication Black Country Plan.

132/21

Black Country Community Renewal Fund 50 Plus Partnership

Approval was sought for the Council to act as accountable body in the event that the application submitted to lead a Community Renewal Fund application for a Black Country 50 plus partnership with public, private and voluntary sector partners was successful. The model would be embedded in the local community and respond to local needs. Support was targeted at economically inactive, unemployed and employed 50 plus residents, aiming to move individuals closer to the labour market, to upskill and to retrain.

The Community Renewal Fund (CRF) was £220 million of additional short-term funding with a focus on 100 priority areas. Sandwell and the Black Country boroughs were all on the priority list. CRF would lead into the wider Shared Prosperity fund due to replace funding for activities such as those currently funded by the European Social Fund.

The CRF funding should be used to test innovative models and should not duplicate existing/funded provision. Projects would be delivered over a duration of 6 months and all funds must be spent by March 2022.



Reason for Decision

Sandwell MBC had applied to lead a CRF application for a Black Country 50 plus partnership. Strategic Finance had carried out an appraisal of the funding application, which had been evaluated against HM Treasury Green Book guidance. The appraisal process had recommended action points to mitigate any risk to the council.

Alternative Options Considered

Alternative options were explored including an application for an all age employment service. This was not progressed since an all age service would duplicate existing funding streams in place.

The option for SMBC to not act as accountable body was explored however the other local authorities preferred SMBC as lead due to the 50 Plus JCP planned programme in Sandwell. The other local authorities had also led applications which Sandwell MBC were included in.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to allow Sandwell MBC to act as accountable body for the Black Country 50 Plus partnership;
- (2) that, in the event that the application is successful as set out in Resolution (1) above, the Executive Director of Children's Service be authorised to enter into a contract with West Midlands Combined Authority for Community Renewal funding;
- (3) that the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to execute any documentation necessary to enable the above in Resolution (2);



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

- (4) that in connection with Resolution (1) and (2) above, that the following action points identified within the financial appraisal of the funding application by Strategic Finance, be implemented to reduce any risk to the council:
- that funding agreements are issued and signed by delivery partners prior to the acceptance of funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) Community Renewal Fund;
 - that MHCLG's terms and conditions of funding are passported to delivery partners in agreements with Sandwell MBC and include the following:
 - procurement complies with Sandwell MBC's own procurement requirements;
 - agreed outputs for each delivery partner;
 - funding allocation for each delivery partner;
 - evidence required for grant claims;
 - grant claims to be paid to delivery partners following submission of claim and approval by MHCLG;
 - repayment of grant on non-delivery of outputs;
 - monitoring requirements;
 - responsibility for funding overspends on delivery of the project;
 - all grant recipients to verify that they are eligible to receive grant funding under the Trade & Co-operation Agreement between the EU and UK;
 - review all estimated costs with delivery partners to ensure that the outputs of the project can be delivered within available funding;



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

- that consideration is given on how the project could be continued after the initial funding period;
- that VAT/tax advice is sought from the Council's Tax Accountant;
- that a full governance structure with roles and responsibilities for each delivery partner is produced to ensure the effective management, monitoring and submission of grant claims;
- that systems and processes be established for the management and monitoring of the project.

133/21 **Appropriation of the Hamstead Sons of Rest Building**

Approval was sought to declare the land at The Hamstead Sons of Rest Building surplus to Council requirements. The building was single storey which was currently in part time use by a Church group. The building had not been used for community purposes since the Covid-19 emergency lock down of March 2020.

The church group had been offered and accepted alternative premises a few hundred yards from Broome Avenue. Once empty, the building would be refurbished to provide a specially adapted two bedroomed bungalow.

The proposal would make much better use of a Council asset to provide a much-needed renovated property for a disabled resident. Planning consent had been granted and subject to consent, work would commence quickly.

In response to a question raised by the Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board in relation to the cost of converting the building, the Cabinet Member for Strong and Inclusive Economy sought to provide the details to the Scrutiny Chair.



Reason for Decision

To authorise appropriation of the land to accommodate subsequent use by housing as part of the housing stock within the remit of the housing revenue account.

Alternative Options Considered

The building was currently under used. There was an opportunity to make better use of this asset.

If the building was sold this would prevent the Council from providing much needed social housing in the Great Barr area. A sale would also mean the Council losing influence on how this building, which was within a residential area, was managed. A sale of the building increased the risk of future anti-social activity.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to declare the following property surplus to the Council services identified:

The Hamstead Sons of Rest Building, Broome Avenue, Great Barr B43 5AR surplus (Site plan identification reference SAM/07760/002);

- (2) that subject to Resolution (1) above, the Director - Regeneration and Growth be authorised to appropriate the land and premises shown for identification purposes from the general fund to the housing revenue account;
- (3) that the Director – Homes be authorised to manage and let the premises referred to in Resolution (1) above as part of the Council's housing stock;
- (4) that in connection with Resolution (2) above, the Director – Finance be authorised to adjust the accounts accordingly.



134/21

Restart Programme 2021-2025

Approval was sought for the Council to enter into a contract with Serco to deliver Restart, a national employment programme commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to support long-term unemployed people back into work.

Unemployment had more than doubled in Sandwell since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic and the number of people unemployed for longer than 6 months had increased by 28%.

As supply chain partner to Serco, Sandwell Council brought local expertise to Restart participants including knowledge of the local labour market, knowledge of local complimentary provision and an understanding of the unique challenges residents face in each of the 6 towns of the borough.

The Restart programme complemented existing Employment and Skills services and provided an opportunity to expand our offer. It also provided the Council the opportunity to generate income and establish a track record of successfully delivering DWP employment programmes that could lead to future income generation for the Council.

A project appraisal has been undertaken by Strategic Finance and action points raised as a result of the appraisal would be actioned to mitigate any risk to the Council.

Reason for Decision

The Covid-19 pandemic had seen employment rates plummet and the extension of the furlough scheme meant that it was still not clear how many furloughed workers were at risk of future redundancy.



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

To tackle this, the Department for Work and Pensions had commissioned a new national flagship employment programme called Restart. The Restart programme would support 12-18 month Universal Credit claimants back into work, with participants receiving tailored support from an employment coach for up to one year.

The programme had been commissioned in England and Wales to large national companies across 12 Contract Package Areas, with Serco winning the contract for the West Central region, which incorporated Sandwell.

Delivering Restart as supply chain partner to Serco would allow the Council to expand the employment offer to residents and generate income for the Council.

Alternative Options Considered

The Council could act as a strategic partner for Serco and provide no programme delivery. This would reduce the risk to the Council but would not generate any income.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given for the Executive Director of Children's Services to deliver the Restart employment programme in Sandwell as part of Serco's supply chain;
- (2) that the Executive Director of Children's Services be authorised to enter into a contract with Serco Group Plc (Serco) to deliver the Restart employment programme with effect from 1 July 2021;
- (3) that the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to execute any documentation necessary to enable the course of action referred to in Resolution (1) and (2) above;



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

- (4) that in connection with Resolution (1) and (2) above, the following action points identified within the financial appraisal of the funding application by Strategic Finance, be implemented to reduce any risk to the Council:
- that sensitivity analysis and stringent monitoring is undertaken on delivery targets to enable timely corrective action to be taken in the event of under-performance;
 - that additional staff are employed on 1-year fixed term contracts to allow flexibility in programme delivery;
 - that contingency plans are reviewed to ensure proposals to manage under-performance will not breach Serco's delivery standards;
 - that a funding source is identified from within existing resources to be used in the event of under-recovery, severance payments or financial penalties incurred in programme delivery;
 - that should the STORM system be utilised by Sandwell MBC, the total cost be reflected in net income projections for the programme;
 - that VAT/tax advice is sought from the Council's Tax Accountant.

135/21 **2020/21 Financial Outturn**

Consideration was given to the Council's financial outturn position 2020/21. The overall net service outturn variance, excluding the Housing Revenue Account, was an underspend of £23.279m.



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

Services had reported an underspend of £6.939m from allocated budgets, however, after adjusting for reserves, corporate resources, revenue to fund capital costs (RCCO) and the application of centrally held Covid-19 grant funding the adjusted outturn was an underspend of £23.279m.

The Covid-19 crisis had significantly affected our financial position. The impact had included:

- reduced expenditure from the suspension / cancellation of services or a focus on emergency responses only;
- loss of income due to service reductions / travel restrictions;
- additional costs from undertaking new Covid related activity;
- redeployment of staff and resources as part of the corporate Covid response;
- access to additional Covid related grant funding to manage additional costs and income reductions.

Additional Covid related grant funding was available during Quarter 1 of 2021/22 however the financial impacts were expected to continue throughout the year.

Initial budget planning for 2021-2024 had identified non-Covid related financial pressures which were being managed in the short-term by reserves and other one-off sources of funding. The proposed treatment of the 2020/21 underspends would assist to temporarily manage the financial risks however, all service areas had been allocated indicative savings targets during the next phase of budget planning to address the projected funding gap on a long-term basis.

Reason for Decision

Section 151 of the 1972 Local Government Act required the Chief Financial Officer to ensure the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs. Budgetary control, which included the regular monitoring and reporting of budgets was an essential element in discharging this statutory responsibility.



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

The recommended treatment of the year end variances supported the financial sustainability of the Council.

Alternative Options Considered

Cabinet could vary the proposed transfer to the Sandwell Children's Trust, the use of revenue to fund capital costs (RCCO) and the proposed treatment of the year end variances from budget.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the financial outturn reports of the Capital Programme, Key Performance Indicators, each service area, Housing Revenue Account, Schools, and Treasury Management be received and referred to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board for consideration and comment;
- (2) that the allocation of £464,837 to Sandwell Children's Trust be approved to fund Covid-19 pressures which is in addition to the transfers made during the year and represents total funding of £1,920,307 from the Covid Emergency Grant in 2020/21. This proposal is reflected within the Children's Services Outturn report;
- (3) that the Revenue Contributions to Capital Outlay (RCCO) of £6.191m for the following capital projects which have been reflected within the relevant outturn reports be approved;



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

| | £'000 |
|---|--------------|
| <u>Resources</u> | |
| Contribution to development of West Bromwich Cemetery | 1,462 |
| Additional Laptops (SMBC) | 429 |
| Additional Laptops (SCT) | 600 |
| <u>Adult Social Care</u> | |
| Development of Health & Social Care Facility (Knowle) | 3,500 |
| <u>Housing & Communities</u> | |
| Purchase of additional fleet vehicles | 200 |
| Total | 6,191 |

(4) that the following treatment of the adjusted year end budget variances be approved:

| | £'000 | £'000 |
|---|---------|---------------|
| Add to / (Use) General Balances | | |
| Corporate Management | 123 | |
| Resources | 2,754 | |
| Adult Social Care | 11,102 | |
| Regeneration & Growth | 565 | |
| Housing & Communities | 2,044 | |
| Children's Services | (1,851) | |
| Net Total | | 14,737 |
| Carry Forward to 2021/22 | | |
| Resources | 929 | |
| Adult Social Care | 2,000 | |
| Housing & Communities | 92 | |
| Total | | 3,021 |
| Add to the Earmarked Balances of Revenues & Benefits (Resources) | | 2,500 |
| Add to the ring-fenced reserve for the Public Health Grant | | 3,021 |
| Total | | 23,279 |



136/21

Award of contract for the construction of the new cemetery in Rowley Regis

Authority was sought to authorise the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer to accept the tender of O'Brien Contractors Ltd for the construction of the of a new cemetery in Rowley Regis.

The contract award would enable the construction of a new cemetery for Rowley Regis and ensure key bereavement related services continued to be available locally to families in this part of Sandwell.

In accordance with the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules, three compliant tenders were received within the stipulated tender period. These were evaluated on a 70:30 (price:quality) most economically advantageous tender basis.

The tender submitted by O'Brien Contractors Ltd, in the sum of £1,342,242.47, had been checked and found to be technically and arithmetically correct.

In response to a question raised by the Chair of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board in relation to why the construction of the new cemetery had not been treated as an extension of the current site which was adjacent to the new site, with facilities being shared to save money, the Cabinet Member for Governance and Democracy clarified that these were two different cemeteries and this was a new cemetery, not an extension of the current one. This was to avoid any scenarios where elderly or vulnerable members of the public were having to cross a busy road to access facilities at the former site and would also allow two services to be undertaken concurrently.

Reason for Decision

Once complete, the new cemetery would create approximately 3,000 new grave spaces in the borough.



The Cabinet – 7 July 2021

Alternative Options Considered

If the Council chose not to appoint O'Brien Contractors Ltd as the preferred bidder, this would significantly delay the construction of the new cemetery which may impact on the Council's ability to provide key bereavement related services locally.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to award a contract to O'Brien Contractors Ltd, Manor Cottage, Church Lane, Leamington Spa, CV32 7JT for the construction of the new cemetery in Rowley Regis;
- (2) that the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to enter into or execute under seal any documentation in relation to award of the contract and/or other agreements as may be deemed necessary as referred to in Resolution (1) above.

Meeting ended at 4.21pm

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk



This page is intentionally left blank

Minutes of The Cabinet

**Wednesday 21 July 2021 at 5.00pm
in the Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor R Singh (Chair);
Councillors Ahmed, Crompton, Hartwell, Millard, I Padda,
Simms and Taylor.

Also present: Councillors E M Giles, L Giles, Moore and Shackleton.

Officers: Lesley Hagger (Director – Children’s Services), Rebecca Maher (Acting Director – Finance), Surjit Tour (Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer), Elaine Newsome (Service Manager – Democracy), Sue Moore (Group Head for Education Support Services) and Wendy Sims (Modern Slavery – Programme Manager)

137/21 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ali

138/21 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Ahmed declared a personal interest in that he was a registered taxi driver outside of Sandwell.



The Cabinet – 21 July 2021

139/21 **Additional Items of Business**

There were no additional items of business to consider at the meeting.

140/21 **SEN Transport arrangements: September 2021 to February 2022**

Approval was sought to initiate a tender process using the current Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for the passenger transport contracts from 1st September 2021 until 23rd February 2022.

The Local Authority had a duty and powers to make particular travel arrangements for children with special educational needs and disabilities to facilitate their attendance at an appropriate education provision.

The current DPS for the provision of SEN transport would have ended on 31st July 2021. Contracts had been procured through the current DPS on an annual basis from 24th February each year, up to 23 February 2022.

A closed bid tender process had been held for the award of passenger transport contracts, effective from 1 September 2021 and the proposal for awards to be made had been set out in the report to the Cabinet meeting on 16 June 2021.

A number of challenges had been made regarding the proposals contained in the June 2021 Cabinet report which resulted in the decision of the Cabinet being deferred pending review. At the request of the Leader of the Council, an internal review had been immediately established.



The Cabinet – 21 July 2021

The resultant internal review, the process of assurance regarding the procurement process via the Council's Audit and Risk Committee, and the request of the Council's Corporate and Budget Scrutiny Board and Children's Services and Education Board to jointly examine existing and proposed arrangements for SEN transport provision, was underway.

The need to ensure arrangements were in place in readiness for the start of the next academic year was understood by Cabinet to be critical. Failure to make such arrangements would have breached the Council's statutory duty. There was a lead-in time for the requisite arrangements to be made. Given the issues arising in respect of the matter and the tender exercise, a very limited window existed to be able to utilise the existing DPS to secure the requisite providers required to ensure service continuity for the start of the academic year for providers that are not able to continue to provide the service from September onwards.

In response to a question raised by the Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, the Leader of Sandwell Council reported that the reason for the delay in bringing the matter before members was to ensure the Council had received the necessary legal advice before extending the current contract. It was also important that the suppliers were contacted and on board with the extension of the current contracts to ensure the continuation of service.

In response to a question raised by the Chair of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board, the Leader of Sandwell Council reported that the use of Personal Budgets to support transport costs for those families with children and young people with SEND had been discussed and was something that could be considered and accommodated in the future. There had been an increase of the use of Personal budgets over recent years and communicating this option to parents was something that the Council would do going forward.



The Cabinet – 21 July 2021

In response to a question raised by the Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board, the Leader of Sandwell Council reported that on the allegations that drivers employed by current contractors had not been receiving the National Minimum Wage, the difficulty was that operators operated a self-employed system. The rate of pay may therefore not have been good practice. Following the Modern Slavery examination, the Council's policy was that if good practice was found not to have been implemented, the Council was obliged to report findings to HMRC.

Suppliers had been communicated with to ensure following the contract extension they would continue to have the capacity to fulfil the contract obligations. It was understood that contractors had a good relationship with Sandwell and parents, children and young people who they support.

Reason for Decision

Since February 2018, the provision of passenger transport services had been arranged via a DPS process that was due to end on 31st July 2021. In total there were 122 different contracts delivered by 18 different operators. At present 659 pupils access SEN transport attending 82 Sandwell schools and 47 out of borough schools.

Since 2018 the overall cost of providing travel assistance including parent mileage, travel passes and more recently the offer of personal budgets had increased by 45% from £3,528,000 in 2018/19 to a projected cost of £6,452,000 for 2021/22. Over the same period SEN pupils requiring travel assistance had increased from 680 to 850 with the average cost per pupil increasing from £5,188pa to £7,591pa. The situation was not unique to Sandwell with most Councils in a similar position.



The Cabinet – 21 July 2021

The pressure on the SEN transport budget had been managed over the past few years using carried forward underspends in the Education Directorate budget and were fully used by the end of March 2021. Additional funding had been provided in the 2021/22 budget, which had been increased to £5,655,000. A projected budget pressure of £800,000 remained. The projected budget however did not reflect the impact of continuing with the current contracts from September 2021 to February 2022. It also did not cover changes to the transport provided from September 2021 which historically had resulted in an increase in projected costs. To support officers with managing the on-going pressures, an independent review of SEN transport provision had been commissioned in March 2021 to provide assurances of the planned transformations and savings plans already in place and identify further potential options to improve service delivery and realise additional savings.

In August 2020 the Cabinet had agreed to establish a new DPS to ensure the ongoing provision of SEN transport for pupils. The new DPS consisted of a list of suppliers who could be approached as and when transport needs are required and only suppliers awarded a place on the DPS would have been considered to provide transport.

The new DPS included higher thresholds for the expectations of the quality of service to be provided, particularly regarding good practice by transport operators in respect of employment and safeguarding, including Modern Day Slavery, as there had been matters raised via anonymous sources that some operators were not complying with good practice.

Arrangements were required to be made for the provision of SEN transport from 1 September 2021 to comply with the Council's statutory obligations and provide assurance to vulnerable children, families and schools that provision would be in place for the start of the new academic year.

It was proposed to use the current DPS to tender for the new contracts from 1 September 2021 until 23 February 2022.



Alternative Options Considered

A full options appraisal had been developed ranging from the option to do nothing through to approval of the recommendations in the June 2021 Cabinet paper.

An options appraisal had been considered by external lawyers, and advice provided. Both the internal options appraisal and external legal advice had concluded that the continued use of the contracts issued via the current DPS until 23 February 2022 was the most suitable option. Any additional contracts could also be retendered pursuant to the current DPS. It was understood to be necessary to take this action prior to the expiry of the current DPS on 31 July 2021.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Executive Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, be authorised to:
 - a) Continue to use the existing contracts with providers for the continued provision of SEN transport until 23rd February 2022, in accordance with the terms of those contracts;
 - b) Agree any necessary exemptions be made under the Council's Procurement & Contract Procedure Rules to enable the course of action referred to in a) above to proceed;
- (2) that the Executive Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, be authorised to tender any new work or work that is handed back by operators using the current Dynamic Purchasing System Framework to cover the period 3rd September 2021 to 23rd February 2022.



The Cabinet – 21 July 2021

- (3) that in connection with Resolution (1) and (2) above, the Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer enter into or execute under seal the contracts and any ancillary documentation in relation to the extension of the contracts for the continued provision of Sandwell’s SEN transport;
- (4) that the Executive Director of Children’s Services, in consultation with the Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer seek assurance from the operators that they are operating within the terms of the existing contracts, and in accordance with the relevant legal framework, and in particular are complying with their obligations in relation to the workforce and good practice. Operators will be required to demonstrate good practice by Friday 13th August 2021;
- (5) that in connection with Resolution (1) above, where validated concerns have been identified, any existing contracts with those operators will be suspended, with immediate effect in accordance with the terms of the contract until adequate assurance has been provided.
- (6) that in connection with Resolution (1) above, constant monitoring of good practice will be in place and operators that do not comply will have their contracts terminated.

Meeting ended at 5.29pm

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk



This page is intentionally left blank

Minutes of The Cabinet

**Wednesday 1 September 2021 at 3.30pm
in the Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor R Singh (Chair);
Councillors Hartwell, Millard, I Padda and Simms.

Also present: Councillors L Giles and Mabena.

Officers: Kim Bromley-Derry (Interim Chief Executive), Nicholas Austin (Interim Director – Borough Economy), Melanie Barnett (Acting Operational Director – Children’s), Rashpal Bishop (Director of Adult Social Care), Neil Cox (Director of Business Strategy and Change), Gillian Douglas (Director of Housing), Simone Hines (Director of Finance), Sue Stanhope (Interim Director HR), Surjit Tour (Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer) Katharine Willmette (Interim Strategic Director – Children and Education) and Elaine Newsome (Service Manager – Democracy).

141/21 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ahmed, Crompton, E M Giles, Moore and Shackleton

142/21 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.



143/21 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 7 and 21 July 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

144/21 **Additional Items of Business**

There were no additional items of business to consider at the meeting.

145/21 **Consultation on the Future of Walker Grange**

It was reported that Walker Grange was designed and built in the 1980s and had now become dated, proving unsuitable to meet the changing care and support needs of some individuals. Rooms were not big enough to accommodate non-standard wheelchairs, along with additional equipment needed to meet people's care and support needs, such as mobile or fixed hoists.

The layout of the building and the mechanism of the entrances and exits did not provide suitable infrastructure to best support tenants with dementia and they did not offer best practice in dementia specialisms.

Approval was therefore sought for a 12-week consultation period for tenants and a 30-day consultation period for the affected staff group. The consultation would be developed to encourage and facilitate participation by all affected parties.

It was noted that following the completion of the consultation with tenants, stakeholders and affected staff, a further report would be presented to Cabinet where a decision would be sought to agree the future of Walker Grange.



Reason for Decision

Whilst Walker Grange had capacity for 39 properties, there was only 22 tenants in situ. This was as a result of decreased demand in recent years, exacerbated by the closure to admissions because of the pandemic. Similarly, the onsite day service had capacity for 20 attendees per day, 7 days per week. Prior to the pandemic 8 to 15 people had attended daily with 26 people registered. The day service had not operated throughout the pandemic. When day service clients had been contacted there had only been a small number who had wanted to consider day care options in the future once these services were back and operational. The consultation process, would look to support anyone wishing to continue with some form of day care to explore all available options at the appropriate time.

Alternative Options Considered

Options Appraisal:

Option 1 – Do nothing – continue to provide Extra Care Housing at Walker Grange.

Option 2 – Look at the closure of Walker Grange & the transfer of Tenants to Willow Gardens or other suitable ECH provision.

Option 3 – Look at Upgrading Walker Grange to ensure it is fit for purpose for the future.

The 3 Options were explored, and the advantages and disadvantages can be seen in the above tables. Based on the above summary, Option 2 was recommended as the most viable option.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to commence consultation with the tenants of Walker Grange and their relatives, on the future of Walker Grange;



The Cabinet – 1 September 2021

- (2) that in connection with Resolution (1) above, approval be given to commence consultation with affected Council staff members;
- (3) that a further report be presented to Cabinet, to agree the future plans for Walker Grange following completion of the consultation.

146/21

Sandwell Children's Trust Annual Review 2020/21 and Improvement Plan

Consideration was given to the Sandwell Children's Trust Annual Review 2020/21. The Service Delivery Contract between the Council and Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT) required that an annual review of services was completed and presented to the council. At the Cabinet meeting on 22 March 2017, it was agreed that the Cabinet would perform this function on behalf of the council in its executive role to agree certain 'reserved matters' that are set out in the Contract.

Reason for Decision

The Service Delivery Contract required SCT to meet the requirements of 'any improvement plan as agreed between the Council and the Trust and as amended from time to time'.

The initial improvement plan agreed with the Trust covered the period 2018 to 2021 and was presented to Cabinet on 19 September 2018.

The report presented SCTs Annual Review 2020/21 and updated Improvement Plan. Consideration of these reports by the Cabinet formed an important part of the governance of SCT; providing assurance to the council in its capacity as the body that was responsible and accountable for the for the discharge of the relevant children's social care services functions.



The Cabinet – 1 September 2021

Alternative Options Considered

At its meeting on 19 October 2016, Cabinet was advised of the Government's Statutory Direction (under Section 479A of the Education Act 1996) to set up a new arrangement in the form of a children's trust to deliver children's social care services. As a result, Sandwell Children's Trust started operating on 1 April 2018. Any alternative to the current arrangement must be agreed by the Secretary of State for Education.

Agreed that the Cabinet, in its capacity as the body that is responsible and accountable for the discharge of the relevant children's social care services functions:-

- a) formally receives the Sandwell Children's Trust Annual Review 2020/21;
- b) notes the progress made to date by Sandwell Children's Trust in delivering services as set out in the Contract between the Council and the Trust, as set out in the Annual Review 2020/21;
- c) formally receives the updated Improvement Plan 2021/24;
- d) notes the feedback from the Department for Education following its recent 6-month review of Sandwell Children's Trust;
- e) notes the reports from Ofsted for the period covering the Annual Review 2020/21.



147/21

Sandwell Children's Invest to Save Proposal

Approval was sought for the Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT) Invest to Save Proposal. The Service Delivery Contract between the Council and SCT allowed SCT to make an Invest to Save proposal which required an increase to the Contract Sum in the short term, but which would be paid back to the Council in terms of a future reduction in the Contract Sum.

Reason for Decision

The financial mechanism allowed SCT to request changes to the annual contract sum. These requests fall into 2 categories, Type 1 or Type 2.

Type 1: there had been an increase in the demand for the Services and/or an additional cost to the Trust that could not reasonably have been anticipated when the overall budget for the relevant Contract Year was agreed by the Parties; or (ii) a business case proposal which would require an Increase to the Contract Sum but would deliver an improvement in the Services

Type 2: where the Trust wishes to make an Invest to Save proposal which would require an increase to the Contract Sum in the short term, but which it would pay back to the Council in terms of a future reduction in the Contract Sum

The investment amount being requested was £287,500, split across Early Help and Strategic Commissioning. Both proposals would see additional investment in 2021/22 and 2022/23, with the investment being returned to the Council in 2023/24 and 2024/25 by a reduction in the overall contract sum.

The impact of the activity would be assessed after 12 months and if the anticipated progress in making savings was at significantly slower rate or significantly lower value than detailed in the proposals, the continuation of the activity and associated funding from the Council would be reviewed.



Alternative Options Considered

The Council was not obligated to agree to the proposals put forward by SCT. SCT may not be able to undertake the identified work which may in turn impact on its ability to achieve positive change for children and/or delay the achievement of a 'Good' rating from Ofsted.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Cabinet, in line with the Service Delivery Contract with Sandwell Children's Trust, considers the Invest to Save proposals put forward by the Trust and:
 - a) agree the increase to the Contract Sum in the short term as per the Strategic Commissioning Invest to Save proposal, to be paid back to the Council via a reduction in the future Contract Sum;
 - b) Agree the increase to the Contract Sum in the short term as per the Early Help Invest to Save proposal, to be paid back to the Council via a reduction in the future Contract Sum.
- (2) that, subject to (1)a) and (1)b), the Executive Director of Children's Services take the necessary actions, as laid out in the Service Delivery Contract, to vary the contract sum.

148/21

Contract for the Supply of Liquid Fuels - Appointment of Contractor

Approval was sought for the appointment of a contractor for the supply of liquid fuels. The Council's current contract was due to expire on 30 September 2021.



The Cabinet – 1 September 2021

Participation in the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) Framework would enable the Council to continue to obtain Liquid Fuels at regional competitive rates, based on the industry standard weekly lagged pricing model with supplier delivery margins fixed for the duration of the Contract.

The nominated contractor on the ESPO Framework for the West Midlands region is Certas Energy Ltd who were also the supplier on the current contract so there would be a seamless transfer across ensuring delivery lead times would be maintained and delivery site familiarity.

Reason for Decision

The Council had an ongoing requirement for the supply of bulk tanker deliveries of Ultra Low Sulphur Diesel to the depots at Taylors Lane, Oldbury and Waterfall Lane, Cradley Heath.

There was also a requirement for Heating Oil to be purchased for a range of sites including Sandwell Park Farm, Redhouse Park, West Smethwick ark, Tanhouse Centre as well as the out of Borough Residential Centres.

It was proposed that participation in the ESPO Framework would be for the period 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2024 and based on current levels of expenditure, would have a value of £750,000.

The Chair of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board sought clarification on why the contract had not gone through the regular tendering process. Councillor Millard responded that the process had gone through the correct framework for contracts under £250,000. It was noted that the contract was for 3 years and would save money as it allowed the Council to buy fuel in bulk.



Alternative Options Considered

One alternative option would be to undertake a tendering exercise on behalf of the Council in isolation or in conjunction with the other Black Country Boroughs. However, the levels of consumption would not be sufficient to improve of the pricing that could be obtained by participating in the ESPO Framework.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to utilise Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) Framework 301_20 to appoint Certas Energy UK Ltd to supply Liquid Fuels for the period 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2024 following the result of a procurement market review exercise undertaken in accordance with the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules;
- (2) that in connection with (1) above, the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to enter into an appropriate contract with Certas Energy Ltd.

149/21

Black Country Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Strategy

Approval was sought for the Black Country Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Strategy. The UK government had committed to banning the sale of petrol and diesel cars by 2030. The resultant societal shift from petrol and diesel, internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) would require widespread support from local authorities. It was projected that there would be an additional 42,500 ULEVs within the Black Country by 2025. The Black Country ULEV strategy set out a framework for how the Council could support the transition. Failure to support the transition would result in the borough and Black Country being left behind.



Reason for Decision

Adoption of the strategy would support reductions in air pollution. The whole of Sandwell had been a designated Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) since 2005, because of lower than average air quality across the borough. This low air quality had resulted in increased prevalence of heart and lung disease. Adoption of the strategy would support a transition away from (ICE) vehicles to cleaner electric ULEVs. It was forecast that a transition based on a 2030 ICE ban would, by 2025, result in a 12% reduction of transport Nitrous Dioxide (NOx) emissions and a 36.6% reduction in transport Particulate Matter (PM) emissions across the borough. By 2040 these reductions are forecast to be 83.4% and 90.1% respectively.

Adoption of the strategy would support emissions reduction. Following the UK Government's legislative commitment to the country reaching net-zero Carbon Dioxide (CO2) emissions by 2050, the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) had committed to the metropolitan area reaching net zero by 2041, a target which had been matched by the Council for the borough. Transport was the biggest contributor to CO2 emissions nationally, regionally and locally. It was forecast that a transition to ULEVs based on a 2030 ICE ban would result in a 4% decrease in transport CO2 emissions by 2025. This transition and resultant decrease in transport CO2 emissions would contribute to Sandwell meeting its own, regional and national emission reduction targets.

Adoption of the strategy would enable the council to use the document as a central plank for ULEV charging infrastructure bids such as the On-Street Residential Charging Scheme.

Alternative Options Considered

The 2030 ban on the sale of ICE cars would remain in place at a national level regardless of the formal adoption or not of local ULEV strategies.



The Cabinet – 1 September 2021

Not adopting the strategy at a local level would decrease local 'buy in', increasing the likelihood of Sandwell and the Black Country continuing to lag behind the rest of the UK in terms of ULEV adoption and its consequent carbon emission and air pollution reductions.

Agreed that approval be given to the Black Country Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) Strategy and Implementation Plan.

150/21 Q1 Budget Monitoring 2021/22

The Cabinet received and noted the Q1 Budget 2021/22. Section 151 of the 1972 Local Government Act required the Chief Financial Officer to ensure the proper administration of the council's financial affairs. Budgetary control, which included the regular monitoring and reporting of budgets was an essential element in discharging this statutory responsibility.

Reason for Decision

Services were projecting an over spend of £4.621m against allocated budgets however, after adjusting for reserves, corporate resources, RCCO and the application of centrally held Covid-19 grant funding the adjusted projected outturn was an under spend of £6.185m.

Services were continuing to experience the financial impact of the pandemic, most significantly a loss of income due to suspended or significantly reduced services. Pressures of £7.610m were expected to be managed through the centrally held Covid funding which was from the unused balance of grants received in 2020/21 and additional grants received or anticipated for part of 2021/22.

In addition to the Covid related issues, services were reporting a number of significant ongoing operational pressures which would need to be incorporated into the next refresh of the corporate medium term financial strategy.



The Cabinet – 1 September 2021

The Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board commented that the budget would be looked at in greater detail at the next Scrutiny Board and it was hoped that Councillor Crompton would attend.

Alternative Options Considered

There are limited decisions within the recommendations, Cabinet could vary the proposed transfer of Covid funding to the Sandwell Children's Trust or the requested virements within Public Health which reflected increases in the available resources since the 2021/22 budgets were approved.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the financial monitoring for individual directorates as at 30 June 2021 (Quarter 1 2021/22) be noted and referred to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board for consideration and comment;
- (2) that the projected financial position be noted; in particular, where services are projecting an over spend of £4.621m against allocated budgets and an underspend of £6.185m after adjusting for the movement on reserves, use of corporate resources and the application of centrally held Covid-19 grant funding;
- (3) that the following budget virements above the higher of £0.25m or 1% of the Gross Budget of the service area be approved:



The Cabinet – 1 September 2021

| Virements above £0.250m or 1% of Gross Budget for approval by Cabinet | £'000 | £'000 |
|---|--------------|----------------|
| | | |
| Public Health | | |
| Communicable Disease - Test & Trace Grant carry forward | | (1,142) |
| Grant funded expenditure for Test & Trace | 1,142 | |
| Communicable Disease Community Lateral Flow Testing grant | | (279) |
| Grant funded expenditure for Lateral Flow Testing | 279 | |
| Long Term Conditions In year PHE award for Adult Weight Management. | | (321) |
| Grant funded expenditure for Adult Weight Management Services | 321 | |
| Substance Misuse & Smoking - In year PHE award for Drug Treatment Crime and Harm reduction. | | (407) |
| Grant funded expenditure for Drug Treatment Crime & Harm reduction. | 407 | |
| TOTAL | 2,149 | (2,149) |

- (4) that an allocation of £514,083 to Sandwell Children's Trust to fund Covid-19 pressures be approved which is not currently reflected in the projections within the Children's Services monitoring;
- (5) that the revised Capital Programme be amended to include the urgency decision taken by the Leader on 31 August 2021.

151/21 Use of Local Council Tax Support Grant 2021/22

Approval was sought for the use of local council tax support grant 2021/22. As part of its response to Covid-19 the government announced in May 2021 that it would provide local authorities in England with new grant funding in recognition of the anticipated additional cost of the LCTRS in 2021/22. Sandwell had been allocated funding of £3,586,869 for 2021/22.

Government funding had been provided in 2020/21 however the criteria for its use was more rigid. There was £500,000 remaining from the 2020/21 funding and this had been used to continue to provide support to residents who had been affected by the pandemic and were struggling to pay their Council Tax. Sandwell's LCTRS was one of only a few schemes nationally that provided 100% support to the lowest income households and the current cost of the scheme was £30.9m for 2021/22.



The Cabinet – 1 September 2021

Any Local Council Tax Support Grant remaining at the end of 2021/22 could be used towards the cost of Sandwell's Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Reason for Decision

Each local authority had been issued funding based on national published LCTRS workload data.

The fund would administered by the Revenues and Benefits Service. Full funding would be provided to cover the costs of the grants and a New Burdens funding had also been provided to cover the council's administration costs.

Alternative Options Considered

The council could use the funding in recognition of the anticipated additional cost of LCTRS in 2021/22 however this approach would not target additional support to residents affected by the pandemic who are struggling to pay their Council Tax

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to the use of the Local Council Tax Support Grant 2021/22 to provide financial support to those Sandwell residents who are struggling to pay their Council Tax;
- (2) that the use of some of the Local Council Tax Support Grant to fund the cost of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) for 2021/22 be approved.
- (3) that approval be given for the households and hierarchy to be considered for an award as detailed below:-
 - Use the Local Council Tax Support Grant funding to award up to £150 to all working age LCTRS recipients – where they have an annual amount to pay. This could equate to 8,000 households being supported and would cost around £840,000;



- Council tax support where required to residents based on the hierarchy below:
 - Families in receipt of free school meals
 - Residents affected by the pandemic that are in arrears with their Council Tax who contact us to advise that they are struggling to make payment and for whom a hardship payment will help to reduce or completely pay their council tax for 2021-22
 - Residents affected by the pandemic identified by Revenues and Benefits, Welfare Rights, voluntary sector organisations and/or Citizens Advice Bureau who will benefit from receiving financial support to help to pay their council tax
 - Make an additional award to our working-age LCTRS claimants who have already received a payment if the funding allows. In all such cases only award an amount up to the balance outstanding on the account so as not to cause a credit

152/21

Premises 106/107/108 High Street, West Bromwich - Approval to accept surrender of lease prior to the break date of 30 June 2024

Approval was sought to accept the surrender of the lease of premises 106/107/108 High Street West Bromwich prior to the break date of 30 June 2024. The opportunity had arisen to obtain vacant possession of 106/107/108 High Street West Bromwich, currently owned by the Council and leased to Argos on a lease which runs to 2029. By taking the opportunity to obtain vacant possession now the Council would avoid significant costs in having to acquire a leasehold interest later. Vacant possession of the properties was necessary to relocate the indoor market and to deliver the emerging West Bromwich Masterplan.



The Cabinet – 1 September 2021

Whilst the opportunity to take a surrender of the lease has arisen earlier than ideal, it was a time-limited opportunity with obtaining possession at a later date likely to be more difficult and much more expensive.

Reason for Decision

A central element in the masterplan would be the relocation of the indoor market to a more central location where it could benefit from, and also contribute to, an increased level of footfall.

The new indoor market was a critical element of the Retail Diversification Programme which forms part of the Council's Towns Fund programme. This programme initially focuses on: Bull Street (incorporating the Queen Square Shopping Centre) and the Kings Square Shopping Centre (incorporating the Indoor Market and former Kings Square Cinema). This equates to circa 4.4 ha of land for regeneration. The programme aimed to kickstart regeneration and transformation of the West Bromwich retail submarket through site assembly and demolition.

Alternative Options Considered

The Council could decline to accept the offer of a surrender at this stage and delay the decision until the West Bromwich Masterplan was approved and a full business case developed for the market relocation.

The Council could consider acquiring another similar property in the town centre for the new indoor market. This would involve negotiating with property owners and tenants and would involve the Council paying premiums to tenants rather than receiving one.

The Council could consider the construction of a new market hall on an alternative site as part of the masterplan. This would inevitably be more expensive and might damage the viability of the masterplan as it would displace alternative uses e.g. residential or leisure.



The Cabinet – 1 September 2021

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Interim Director of Regeneration and Growth be authorised to conclude negotiations with the lessee's agents to agree a surrender premium for a surrender of the lease of 106/107/108 High Street, West Bromwich with effect from 10 September 2021;
- (2) that in connection with Resolution (1) above, the Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to prepare and agree formal surrender documents to allow the Council to obtain vacant possession of the premises;
- (3) that the Director of Finance be authorised to make an adjustment to the income target for Strategic Assets and Land to reflect the loss of income.

153/21

Award of a Framework Agreement for the Strong and Provision of Tree Maintenance & Arboricultural Services

Approval was sought to award the Framework Agreement and appoint the contractors for the Provision of Tree Maintenance and Arboricultural Services.

The Framework Agreement would include, but not limited to provision of the following tree maintenance services and Arboricultural services:

- Tree pruning / cutting / clearing
- Hedge cutting / pruning
- Crown reduction
- Tree / large shrub removal (felling, sectional, dismantling, crane assisted)
- Stump removal / chemical treatment
- Associated waste removal
- Emergency call out and make safe 24 hour response



The Cabinet – 1 September 2021

- Arboricultural advice and tree surveys

The Framework Agreement approach ensured continuity of service, including during peak times, i.e. storms, high winds and also encourages competitive pricing schedules.

Reason for Decision

The total expenditure over the four year life of the Framework Agreement was estimated to be £2.4m.

The Framework Agreement was procured in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 following an EU compliant open tender process. Contractors were invited to submit tenders on a 70% price and 30% quality basis with the top three submissions being appointed to the Framework Agreement.

In response to the tender advertisement, five compliant tender submissions were returned by the deadline of 8 January 2021.

Tender submissions had been scored in accordance with the stated evaluation criteria by officers from the Council's Corporate Procurement Service and Urban Forestry Unit.

Alternative Options Considered

Do nothing. The current agreement lapses and the Council would have to go out for quote/tender for individual tree work requests. This would result in numerous independent Tree Contractors working within the Borough and with the loss of the Framework Agreement prices and Officers time to deal with this would increase significantly.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Interim Director – Borough Economy be authorised to award the Framework Agreement for the Provision of Tree Maintenance & Arboricultural Services for the period 9 September 2021 to 31 July 2025 (subject to satisfactory performance and price competitiveness) to the following Contractors:



The Cabinet – 1 September 2021

- Acorn Environmental Management Group
- Beechwood Trees and Landscapes Ltd
- Midland Forestry Ltd

- (2) that in connection with Resolution (1) above, the Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to enter in to appropriate contracts with Acorn Environmental Management Group, Beechwood Trees and Landscapes Ltd and Midland Forestry Ltd.

154/21 Schools Capital Programme 2021-2024

Approval was sought to allocate School Condition Allocation funding for cyclical maintenance to support maintained schools. The balance would be retained for a future school replacement building programme.

Following Cabinet approval on 17 March 2021 (Minute No.79/21 of Cabinet refers), to allocate £850,000 from the council's Special Education Needs and Disability capital grant to fund extension works at The Meadows School (9-19), detailed design and survey work had now been completed, and full planning consent obtained. In particular, the survey work had established that significant ground works are required to enable construction, including an alternative foundation piling solution, and safe disposal of contaminated waste, which had been unknown at the time of the initial approval. Commencement of the works had now been delayed until mid-September.

Basic Need Allocation was providing new places in the borough. Data shows by the academic year 2023/24 there would be a shortfall in secondary places. It was the Local Authority's statutory duty to provide sufficient school places.

Reason for Decision

The DfE had confirmed a new allocation of £10,733,158 Basic Need capital grant funding to the Authority.



The Cabinet – 1 September 2021

It was currently projected that an additional 828 places would be required in secondary schools by September 2024. The project at Health Futures University Technology College (UTC) would provide 360 of those places. The shortfall was in addition to the proposed opening of two new secondary free schools that were due to be opened by the DfE in September 2022 and 2023 respectively.

Alternative Options Considered

There were either no alternative options, or options had already been discounted through project development:

- The terms of the School Condition Allocation met funds have to be spent on maintained school's cyclical maintenance.

Within the maintained schools sector, it was the primary school building stock that would also require a programme of replacement to commence shortly. The deteriorating condition of school buildings would otherwise continue to be a drain on the School Repair Account.

- Early feasibility at The Meadows School identified the proposed location for the extension works as the most suitable and appropriate. The Authority does not have an alternative secondary special school to admit the additional pupils to, that could meet their individual special needs.

- Health Futures UTC – the alternative option would be the Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust sponsored secondary free school proposed for West Bromwich Town Centre in partnership with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra that had already been approved by the DfE and will provide 750 additional secondary school places required in the town.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to a sum of £1.5m of the School Condition allocation to be used to support cyclical maintenance;



The Cabinet – 1 September 2021

- (2) that approval be given to the allocation of an additional £200,000 from the council's Special Education Needs and Disability capital grant to fund extension works to The Meadows School (9-19), Dudley Road East, Oldbury B69 3BU;
- (3) that approval be given to the allocation of £4,575,000 from the Department of Education (DfE) Basic Need allocation to fund remodelling and refurbishment at Health Futures University Technical College, 350 High Street, West Bromwich B70 8DJ as part of the Schools Capital Programme 2021– 2024;
- (4) that in connection with Resolution (3), approval be given to the allocation of £2,035,000 from the council's School Condition balances to enable works to be completed;
- (5) that in connection with Resolution (1), (2) and (3) above, that the following actions are implemented to reduce any risk to the council:-
 - In connection with School Condition, ensure that repair / maintenance work for schools is undertaken following an analysis of pre-determined criteria and that records are maintained to demonstrate the priority need of each school;
 - Maintain project programmes for each scheme within the Schools Capital Programme to ensure that effective project monitoring can be undertaken to aid the timely delivery of the programme
 - Ensure that corporate Risk Registers are maintained and reviewed for all projects, and ensure all risks are appropriately identified and assessed, with adequate mitigation;
 - That cost estimates are reviewed to ensure that any future costs can be managed within the allocated funding;



The Cabinet – 1 September 2021

- Ensure rigorous financial monitoring is undertaken on the Schools Capital Programme to ensure future funding needs can be met;
- Ensure that the Council enters into such form of legal agreements as required to allow capital works on all proposed sites; and
- Post project evaluation should include specific outcomes, to monitor the successful delivery of each project, along with benchmarking of final costs to ensure value for money is achieved; and
- Project evaluation information is reported at an appropriate level for accountability and to ensure future improvements in programme implementation.

155/21 **Cabinet Petitions Committee Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Petitions Committee held on 23 June 2021 were noted.

Meeting ended at 4.00pm

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk



Minutes of Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

**Wednesday, 21 July 2021 at 6.00 pm
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor L Giles (Chair)
Councillors J Anandou, E M Giles, Moore and A Shackleton

Also present: Rebecca Maher (Director of Finance/ Deputy S151 Officer), Lesley Hagger (Director of Children and Education), Charlie Davey (Business Partner - Adults, Finance) and Steve Lilley (Finance Business Partner)

38/21 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Mabena. Apologies were also received from Councillors Bhullar and Gavan who, as vice-chairs of Scrutiny Boards, had been invited to the meeting.

39/21 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

40/21 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2021 are approved as a correct record.

41/21 Additional Items of Business

Councillor Anandou raised an item relating to SEND Transport. He sought clarity around the overspend in relation to that service and



it was confirmed that an increase had been experienced after budget setting processes had taken place. Other issues in relation to the scrutiny of SEND Transport would be referred to the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board that was scheduled to meet on 2 August 2021.

42/21 2020/21 Financial Outturn

At its meeting on 7th July, 2021 the Cabinet referred the proposals arising from the 2020/21 directorate outturn reports for each service area to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board for consideration.

The overall net service outturn variance, excluding the Housing Revenue Account, was an underspend of £23.279m.

Services had reported an underspend of £6.939m from allocated budgets, however, after adjusting for reserves, corporate resources, revenue to fund capital costs (RCCO) and the application of centrally held Covid-19 grant funding the adjusted outturn was an underspend of £23.279m.

The Covid-19 crisis had significantly affected the Council's financial position. The impact had included:

- reduced expenditure from the suspension / cancellation of services or a focus on emergency responses only;
- loss of income due to service reductions / travel restrictions;
- additional costs from undertaking new Covid related activity;
- redeployment of staff and resources as part of the corporate Covid response;
- access to additional Covid related grant funding to manage additional costs and income reductions.

Additional Covid related grant funding was available during Quarter 1 of 2021/22 however the financial impacts were expected to continue throughout the year.

Initial budget planning for 2021-2024 had identified non-Covid related financial pressures which were being managed in the short-term by reserves and other one-off sources of funding. The proposed treatment of the 2020/21 underspends would assist to temporarily manage the financial risks however, all service areas had been allocated indicative savings targets during the next phase of budget planning to address the projected funding gap on a long-

term basis.

From the comments and questions by councillors, the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

* The recruitment to the restructured senior management team was ongoing. Costs related to interim appointments were met by individual directorate budgets.

* Even though costs relating to Covid had been covered by emergency funding provided to the Council by the Government, there was still a need to address savings as set out in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

* The Council's reserves had not gone below any statutory limits and remained within the guidelines of 3-5% of net expenditure. If savings were identified as per the MTFS then it was not anticipated that this situation would change.

Resolved that an update on the senior management restructure be brought to the September meeting of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board.

43/21 Cabinet Forward Plan

The Scrutiny Management Board noted the Cabinet Forward Plan as at the time of the meeting.

44/21 Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board Work Programme 2021-22

The Scrutiny Management Board noted its work programme for the remainder of the 2021-22 municipal year.

Meeting ended at 6.18 pm

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk

Minutes of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

**Thursday 18 March at 5.00pm
Virtual Meeting**

Present: Councillor Bostan (Chair);
Mr Ager (Vice-Chair and Independent Member)
Councillors Allen, Moore and Preece.
Mr Doyle and Mr Hussain (Independent Members)

Also Present: David Stevens (Chief Executive); Sujit Tour (Director - Law and Governance); Rebecca Maher (Head of Finance) Peter Farrow (Audit Services and Risk Management Manager); Mark Stocks and Zoe Thomas (Grant Thornton).

11/21 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hevican and Jarvis.

12/21 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interests made at the meeting.

13/21 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.



14/21 **Annual Governance Statement 2019/20**

This item was deferred.

15/21 **Statement of Accounts 2019/20**

This item was deferred.

16/21 **Amendments to the Council’s Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules**

The Committee was asked to consider two amendments to the Council’s Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules. A comprehensive review was due to be carried out later in the year, however some amendments were required more urgently, based on advice from the Cabinet Office of the government.

Following the UK’s exit from the European Union (“Brexit”), the Council had some additional freedoms, which allowed it to restrict the supplier pool for certain contracts falling below the threshold set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. This was subject to conditions, including being able to demonstrate that value for money was being achieved, and that the Council was acting in accordance with its constitution. This was directly aligned with the Council’s Inclusive Economy Strategy in that it would enable the Council to restrict the supplier pool that could bid for particular contracts to regional voluntary, co-community sector organisations, and small and medium sized enterprises.

The second changed proposed the temporary suspension of Rule 13 of the Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules to allow the Council to extend or modify existing contracts or directly award a contract without prior publication of a notice, in either urgent circumstances that could not be foreseen by the contracting authority (i.e. the covid-19 pandemic) or where there was a lack of resources to carry out the full procurement process. Again, this applied to contracts below the threshold set out in the Regulations and subject to the council receiving a satisfactory service. The



suspension of Rule 13 would be reviewed as part of the wider review of the Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules.

The Committee was assured that all due diligence checks would be undertaken when making a direct contract award.

Members requested a report to a future meeting setting out those contracts/occasions where a direct award or extension had been made under the temporary provisions.

Value for money would continue to be significant feature of the procurement process and the wider review of Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules would ensure that robust checks were in place to ensure that the council received value for money.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Council is recommended to approve the revisions to the Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules as follows:
 - (a) suspension of rule 13 to permit extension of contracts in circumstances where the response to the impact of Covid-19 has resulted in lack of resources to undertake procurement processes;
 - (b) approval to make direct award of contracts below the thresholds set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 in circumstances where the response to the impact of Covid-19 has resulted in lack of resources to undertake procurement processes;
 - (c) incorporation of Cabinet Office advice regarding reserving contracts below the thresholds set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 by geographical location or specified sectors;
- (2) that, in connection with resolution (1) above, the Chief Executive and the Section 151 Officer are authorised to approve the extension of existing contracts due to expire in 2021.



Audit Findings Report 2019/20

The Committee considered the Audit Findings Report 2019/20, presented by the Council's external auditors.

The deadline for the preparation of the financial statements had been extended to 31 August 2020 and the date for audited financial statements to 30 November 2020, due to the covid-19 pandemic and the challenges of working in a remote environment. A draft set of accounts had been made available available by 31 August 2020, however, two key issues prevented the final audit opinion from being issued.

The Committee heard the detail of a number of adjustments to income and expenditure accounts that impacted on the Council's bottom line by around £1.8million.

The method by which the Council recorded and valued its fixed assets had been identified as a risk and a few matters remained to be clarified before external auditors were in a position to sign off the accounts.

Auditors had concluded that the Council had proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, except for its arrangements around children's social care with Sandwell Children's Trusts, where it was not felt that adequate progress had been made.

No material errors had been identified in the accounts that had led to a loss to the Council, however, a number of risks had been identified, which were outlined in detail to the Committee.

The Council had been advised to close down Sandwell Land and Property Ltd as its purpose was now moribund and its existence was having an impact on the valuation of land and property.

A number of IT control issues had been identified, which would be resolved upon the implementation of the new financial ledger in the forthcoming financial year.



The Committee was assured that many of the issues identified in the 2019/20 accounts had been addressed, and measures had been put in place to prevent the same occurrences in 2020/21. A working group had been established to look at options for a new asset management system and officers would work with external auditors to ensure that the system was of a high enough standard.

The Committee expressed serious concern about the issues raised and requested a report to a future meeting on the measures that had been put in place to address them, including an identification of the root cause of the issues. The Chief Executive also undertook to report back to the Committee with a detailed action plan identifying the remedial action taken, along with timescales.

Resolved

- (1) that a further report be submitted to a future meeting to include:-
 - (a) a detailed action plan setting out the measures that have already been put in place, along with those that will be, to address the issues raised in the 2019/20 statement of accounts in relation to the recording and valuation of the Council's assets,
 - (b) an identification of the root cause of the issues identified,
- (2) that the matter remain on the Committee's work programme until it is suitably assured that the issues identified have been fully addressed.

18/21 PSA Informing the Risk Assessment

This item was deferred.

19/21 Internal Audit Plan 2021/22

This item was deferred.



20/21

Exclusion of the Public and Press

Resolved that the public and press are excluded from the rest of the meeting. This is 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 information that is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

21/21

Audit and Governance Assessment Panel Update

The Committee received a report by the Director – Business Strategy and Change.

Councillors Moore and Preece expressed concerns about the lack of time they felt that they had had to read and digest the report. The Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer confirmed that the dissemination of the information was consistent with the access to information rules.

The Committee examined the report and issues arising.

Meeting adjourned 8.31 – 8.47pm.

The Committee resumed its examination of the report and issues arising.

Due to the late hour and remaining issues under discussion, the Director of Law and Governance and the representative of the Council's External Auditor advised that the Committee adjourn the meeting and reconvene to another date in order to complete the consideration of the matter.

Councillors Moore and Preece concurred with this advice (and asked that this point be recorded in the minutes).

Following a debate on the adjournment, the Committee agreed to adjourn the meeting.



Meeting adjourned at 10.44pm.

**Meeting reconvened on 18 May 2021 at 12pm,
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

The Committee noted apologies from Councillor Moore, and independent members Mr Ager, Mr Doyle and Mr Hussain. It was also noted that former Councillor Liam Preece was not present as he was no longer a member of the Council.

The Committee noted that the Council had already established an Equalities Commission, to drive and promote its equality, inclusion and diversity agenda across the Council.

Whilst the Committee was not minded to make any recommendations to the Executive, the Committee was of the view that its' resolutions should be brought to the attention of the Cabinet at its meeting scheduled for Monday, 24 May 2021.

Resolved:-

- (1) that appropriate mechanisms are developed and implemented to ensure that any assurances and confirmations provided on behalf of the Council by officers to third parties are clear and unambiguous;
- (2) that periodic reviews of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules are undertaken by the Council's Internal Audit team, to help ensure compliance and drive improvement and learning; and that these reviews are reported to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee for its consideration;
- (3) during its examination of an historical investigation, this committee found evidence of racism and will be recommending that the Council apologises to those who have fallen victim of such behaviour. The relevant issues identified will be referred to the requisite external regulatory body for consideration. The Council also recognises that all necessary lessons must be



learned to avoid any recurrence. The Council reaffirms its absolute commitment to zero tolerance to any other form of discrimination;

- (4) the Council has already taken steps to address the issues identified, and has established an Equalities Commission, chaired by the Chair of this Committee, which provides an important platform and opportunity for the Council to continue driving and promoting its equality, inclusion and diversity agenda across the Council;
- (5) that the Committee's resolutions, are brought to the attention of the Cabinet at its meeting on 24th May 2021.

Meeting ended at 12.18pm on 18 May 2021.

The public session of this meeting was recorded and is available to watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZoNX5YQjBJA>

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk



Minutes of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

**Thursday 24 June 2021 at 5.00pm
In Council Chamber at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor M Gill (Chair);
Councillors Bostan, Z Hussain and O Jones

Officers: David Stevens (Chief Executive Officer); Sujit Tour (Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer); Rebecca Maher (Head of Finance) and Peter Farrow (Audit Services and Risk Management Manager);

Also Present: Mark Stocks (Grant Thornton).

22/21 **Councillor Sandra Hevican**

The Committee stood in silent tribute to the late Councillor Sandra Hevican, who had sadly passed away in March 2021. Councillor Hevican had been a member of this Committee.

23/21 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allen, Anandou, Akpoteni and Mr Jay Hussain (Independent Member).

24/21 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interests made at the meeting



Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2021 (and reconvened on 18 May following an adjournment) were submitted.

Members were not minded to approve the minutes as a correct record, and requested that it be submitted to a future meeting for further consideration.

Members also felt that the matter referred to at Minute 21/21 required further discussion at a future meeting of the Committee.

The proposals were put to the vote and carried unanimously by those members present and with voting rights.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 March (and reconvened on 18 May following an adjournment) are re-submitted to a future meeting of this Committee for consideration;
- (2) that, as a consequence of resolution (1) above the minutes of the meeting held on 18 March (and reconvened on 18 May following an adjournment) are not submitted to the Council at its meeting in July 2021;
- (3) that an additional meeting of the Committee is held, the matter referred to at Minute No. 21/21 of the meeting held on 18 March (and reconvened on 18 May following an adjournment) be re-considered at a future meeting of this Committee.

Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business to consider.



27/21

Internal Audit Plan 2021/22

The Committee received the Internal Audit Plan for 2021/22, which set out the proposed work of internal audit for the year ahead.

The plan had been put together based on the Council's risk register, the ambitions set out in the Corporate Plan, the views of relevant directors and an awareness of the Council overall. From this, a long list of areas had been assessed to create the Plan. The Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic was included in the Plan, along with a number of other high-profile areas.

The plan was fluid and could change to accommodate new or emerging risks.

The Committee was assured that the Internal Audit team was adequately resourced to deliver the 2021/22 Plan.

Members thanked the officers for the tremendous work they had done to deliver the audit service and programme of business grants required as a result of the pandemic.

Resolved that the Internal Audit Plan for 2021/22 is approved.

28/21

Annual Counter Fraud Report

The Committee received a report setting out the work undertaken by the Counter Fraud Unit over the last year. The Unit had spent a significant amount of time working alongside the government to conduct checks on businesses applying for grants to support them during the pandemic.

Over £58m of grants had been paid to businesses to support them during the pandemic and the Unit had carried out both pre-payment and post-payment checks. It was estimated that around five of the 5,482 grants paid had been found to be fraudulent, however, a significant number of bogus grant claims had been detected before payment had been made. Post-payment checks



continued and where necessary grants paid to ineligible businesses would be re-claimed. The government had provided local authorities with a number of free tools to support them in making checks on businesses applying for grants and it was anticipated that these tools would continue to be available for the foreseeable future.

The highest risk area continued to be housing related fraud and the Unit also spent a significant amount of time investigating council tax fraud. The Unit had also worked in collaboration with the Neighbourhoods directorate to recover 18 Council properties that had been obtained fraudulently. The government estimated that each property recovered was worth around £93k, in non-cashable terms.

The Unit continued to participate in the government's National Fraud Initiative, which provided valuable information and data matches to local authorities to support them in tackling fraud. Sandwell had been featured as a case study in the 2020 report.

Members congratulated the Unit on it's hard work and successes.

29/21

External Auditors Progress Report

The Committee received a report setting out the work undertaken by the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton, so far in 2020/21.

Auditing of the Council's financial statements for 2019/20 was still ongoing, due to outstanding matters in relation to property valuations. It was anticipated that the financial statements and the audit findings report would be presented to the Committee at its meeting in July 2021.

Audit of the financial statements for Sandwell Land and Property Ltd had now been completed and the Council had been advised to liquidate the company as soon as possible.

Work on the 2020/21 financial statements would commence in August, with findings being presented to the Committee in November 2021.



30/21

Informing the Risk Assessment

The Committee received a report setting out a series of questions that had been asked of the Council, the responses to which would inform the basis of the external auditors' risk assessments. In accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (UK), (ISA(UK)) auditors were required to consult the Committee. The Committee noted the responses that had been provided by officers.

Members sought clarification on the financial instruments used by the Council and the Head of Finance undertook to report back to a future meeting of the Committee.

31/21

External Audit Plan 2020/21

The Committee received an overview of the planned scope and timing of the statutory audit of the Council.

Council developments, including the impact of the pandemic, a chief officer restructure, the 2022 Commonwealth Games and the requirements of the Financial Reporting Code were some of the key factors in designing the work plan.

The new Code of Audit Practice 2020 had brought about significant changes to the way the audit of Value for Money would be approached, setting out a new set of criteria covering financial sustainability, governance and improvements in economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Auditors were now required to produce a commentary on arrangements across each of the key criteria, rather than the previous "reporting by exception" approach.

A significant risk of weakness had been highlighted in relation to governance and concerns were expressed about the Council's ability to move forward from past events and focus on the future. Whilst the past events referred to had been significant, it was felt that the continued scrutiny of these matters did not serve the people of Sandwell. Concern was also expressed about the impact that these matters had had on relationships between



officers and members. Auditors had written to the Chief Executive detailing the concerns and, under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, could make statutory recommendations that the Council would be required to consider and respond to publicly. Mr Stocks confirmed that he would be undertaking a governance review of the Council to determine what action, if any, was appropriate.

Meeting ended at 6.19pm

This meeting was recorded and is available to watch [here](#).

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk



Minutes of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

Thursday, 29 July 2021 at 5.00 pm
at Council Chamber - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: Councillor M Gill (Chair);
Councillors Akpoteni, Allen, J Anandou, Bostan, Hussain and Jones.

Mr J Hussain (Independent Member).

Also present: Surjit Tour (Director of Law and Governance/Monitoring Officer), Peter Farrow (Audit Services Manager), Rebecca Maher (Director of Finance/ Deputy S151 Officer), Elaine Newsome and Narinder Phagura (Business Partner - Audit, Fraud, Risk and Insurance).

32/21 **Apologies for Absence**

An apology was received from Mr Ager (Independent Member and Vice-Chair).

33/21 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

34/21 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2021 are approved as a correct record.



35/21 **Urgent Item of Business**

The Chair was of the view that an urgent item should be added to the agenda in relation to the current review of transport for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). He was of the view that the matter was urgent due to the media and public interest. However, due to issues around commercial confidentiality the public and press would be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the matter.

36/21 **Code of Corporate Governance**

The Committee received the revised Code of Corporate Governance for consideration prior to its submission to the full Council. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 required the authority to review the effectiveness of its system of internal control at least once a year, in accordance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework (2016).

The Code was a key component of the Council's governance arrangements and described the processes and arrangements that the Council had in place to evidence compliance with good governance principles.

The revised Code reflected the adoption of the Corporate Plan; the outcome of the review of the Code of Conduct; interim Covid governance arrangements; and had expanded the narrative around elements of the content for ease of public consumption.

| |
|---|
| <p>Resolved that the Council is recommended to approve the updated Code of Corporate Governance.</p> |
|---|

37/21 **Strategic Risk Register Update**

The Committee noted an update on the Council's strategic risks as of June 2021 and the arrangements in place to manage them.

The review and update of each strategic risk had been discussed with the risk owners and reported to the Leadership Team and Cabinet Members. The Committee noted that the covid-19 risk

register, was no longer separate and had now been incorporated into the Strategic Risk Register, as requested by the Committee.

A full review and refresh of all strategic risks had been undertaken by the Leadership team in line with the Corporate Plan refresh which was also underway. As a result of this review, a number of new risks had been identified for inclusion in the risk register, and some risks had been transferred to directorate risk registers.

The following six new risks had now been identified for inclusion in the strategic risk register:-

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (risk 54)
- Implementation of external audit recommendations (risk 55)
- Towns Fund programme (risk 56)
- New operating model (risk 57)
- Equalities (risk 58)
- Corporate governance (risk 59)

The risks below had been transferred to directorate registers:-

- CONTEST
- School Place Planning
- Supply chain resilience

A number of separate risks around future government policies and funding sources, previously included on the strategic risk register had been consolidated into one strategic risk. The register now contained 16 strategic risks - eight red risks and seven amber risks and one risk was assessed as green.

In relation to Risk 50 – Commonwealth Games Aquatic Centre members questioned why the risk remained amber. It was reported that the risk would likely be downgraded to green once the centre had been handed over to the organising committee. However, the risk owner would be asked to review this risk.

In relation to Risk 27 - Medium Term Financial Strategy and Resource Allocation, it was reported that the risk score had been reduced as a result of the reduced budget shortfall position, for 2021/22. The deficit was around £14 million, the budget for next year had been confirmed as £8 million. There had also been significant underspend across all council services, which had allowed the authority to replenish its reserves, however there was

still a need to identify ongoing savings to balance the budget going forward.

In relation to Risk 6b - Business Continuity Management (BCM) members felt that this risk should be higher, given the number of interim directors in post. It was reported that all but one posts had been appointed to on a permanent basis and recruitment was underway for the remaining position.

The risk in relation to school place planning had been moved to the directorate risk register as the Council had confidence that sufficient additional places had been created in Secondary Schools over the next academic year and projects to build new schools were on tracks. The risk remained amber however, and would remain under review.

In relation to Risk 59 – Corporate Governance – the risk related to the matters reported in the external auditors’ audit findings report and the delays in finalising the statement of accounts. External auditors would be undertaking a wide review of governance. The Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer reported that the scope for the review had not yet been finalised and so he would update the Committee on the draft in private session. However, the Chair reported that he would be discussing the matter with external auditors before the Committee was briefed.

In relation to Risk 4 – Children’s Social Care – It was reported that the last inspection had highlighted a number of areas of improvement and it was hoped that the Trust would move to “Requires Improvement” rating at the next inspection. However, the impact that the pandemic had had on the workforce had been a key factor. The Director Law and Governance undertook to provide members with a briefing setting out the governance arrangements in relation to the Trust and the role of scrutiny.

Councillor Allen declared that he was a non-executive director of Sandwell Children’s Trust. He reported that a national shortage of social workers was a key concern, however the Trust was making savings annually and had recently made changes to its operating model. The risk owner would be asked to attend the next meeting to discuss the risk in more detail.

In relation to risk 54 – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities – this was the consolidation of three red risks from the directorate risk register and did not just relate to the contract and

procurement. However, any lessons learned from the reviews currently taking place would be taken on board.

Resolved that the Director of Children and Education is requested to attend the next meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to discuss Risk 4 on the Strategic Risk Register;

38/21

Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

The Committee received the Annual Governance Statement for 2019/20 for consideration.

The Annual Governance Statement outlined how the Council complied with its adopted Code of Corporate Governance and detailed areas where the Council had significant governance issues arising. The Statement included a plan detailing the actions that were being taken, or would be taken, to address these areas of weakness.

It was highlighted that the Statement of Accounts had been delayed and that the Annual Governance Statement needed to be approved to form part of the Statement of Accounts. Due to the reporting period, reference had been made to the management of the COVID pandemic, however, further detail would be included in the Annual Governance Statement 2020/21.

To support the preparation of the statement, each Director and Cabinet Member had completed an assurance statement and any weaknesses identified had been included within the Statement, along with measures in place to address them.

The Committee noted the key changes to the framework during 2019/20 and the assurances received to comply with the Statement and the key changes following its annual review.

It was agreed to include the Licensing Committee Annual report in the Statement before it was incorporated into the Statement of Accounts.

It was agreed that when the current reviews in relation to the procurement of SEND transport had been completed, consideration would be given to including any relevant issues in the 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement.

Resolved that the Council's Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 as now submitted, be approved.

39/21 **Financial Management Code**

The Committee noted a review of compliance with the Financial Management Code, which had been published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) in recognition of the financial pressures that Councils were facing. An associated action plan had been developed to ensure that the Council was financially resilient and to provide assurance for stakeholders.

The Code was based upon six core principles which had been translated into a number of Standards:

- Responsibilities of the CFO and Leadership Team
- Governance and Financial Management Style
- Long to Medium Term Financial Management
- The Annual Budget
- Stakeholder Engagement and Business Plans
- Monitoring Financial Performance
- External Financial Reporting

The code applied to all local authorities. The first full year of compliance to the Code was 2021/22. However, CIPFA had reviewed this in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the unprecedented impact on local authorities and concluded that *'whilst the first full year of compliance can remain as 2021/2022, it can do so within a more flexible framework where a proportionate approach is encouraged. In practice this is likely to mean that that adherence to some parts of the Code will demonstrate a direction of travel'*.

The Council's external auditors would also be reviewing the authority's self-assessment against the Code and this would be reported in the Annual Governance Statement 2020/21.

In order to demonstrate conformity with the Code's standards, the Leadership Team including the Chief Financial Officer/ s151 Officer had reviewed its processes, procedures and governance arrangements to understand where the Council was already compliant with the standards. The Council was already meeting the majority of the Standards; however, areas of non-compliance had

been identified with two areas rated as red. Actions had been identified to address this as well as some additional actions to improve performance against other amber and green assessed areas. Overall, it was felt that the Council satisfied CIPFA's requirement to demonstrate a direction of travel towards full compliance of the Code during 2021/22.

40/21 **Annual Internal Audit Report 2020/21**

The Committee received the Annual Internal Audit Report for 2020/21, which summarised the work carried out by Audit Services throughout the year and provided an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk management and control processes.

Based on the work undertaken during the year and subject to implementation of the recommendations made, a reasonable level of assurance had been given by internal auditors that the Council had adequate and effective governance, risk management and internal control processes in place. However, it was noted that governance related issues as raised in the report were deemed to be borderline and would need addressing in 2021/22.

A number of key control issues, either through the work of the Council or the work of other assurance providers that required addressing were noted by the Committee. This included ongoing delays in the finalising of the Statement of Accounts and a number of issues raised by external auditors, Grant Thornton, alongside historic governance matters.

It was highlighted that the report covered a period up to March 2021 and issues that had come to light in previous weeks would feed into future reports.

Reference was made to a number of issues raised previously, including Voluntary Sector Grants, and an update on these items would be brought to a future meeting.

41/21 **CIPFA Audit Committee Update**

The Committee noted the latest Update from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

The two key areas of focus in the edition included the purpose of an annual governance statement and the working relationship between internal and external audit.

42/21 **Estimates Letter 2020/21**

The Committee noted the response provided to external auditors in relation to the key accounting estimates to be included in the Council's financial statements.

In majority of cases officers made use of external advisors to assist in any calculations and followed a check and challenge process to ensure that the figures were satisfactory.

43/21 **Exclusion of the 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.

44/21 **SEND Review**

In reference to Minute No. 110/21 of the Cabinet (at its meeting held on 16 June 2021) the Chair outlined his intention to carry out a learning exercise to understand all of the processes and procedures around the procurement of transport for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). He proposed that an independent member of the Committee accompany him in meeting with relevant officers.

It was reported that a workshop could be arranged for all members of the Committee on the matter, following the meetings with officers.

The Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer advised that members should focus only on gathering information to assist their understanding of the subject, prior to the presentation of a report to the Committee on the outcome of the

associated reviews being undertaken by both internal and external auditors. If the Committee wanted specific issues to be addressed, then the appropriate process would be for a report to be presented to the Committee for consideration and relevant officers would address any points of clarification or detail raised by the Committee.

Resolved that the Chair and Independent Member, Mr Jay Hussain, meet with relevant officers to gain an understanding of the processes and procedures around the procurement of transport for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Meeting ended at 7.03 pm

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Code of Corporate Governance
Revised July 2021.



Introduction

Corporate governance is a term used to describe the way that organisations direct and control what they do. For local authorities, it includes the systems, policies and processes, as well as the cultures and values, that underpin a council's arrangements for effective:

- leadership
- management
- performance
- delivery of positive customer outcomes
- community engagement
- stewardship of public money

The Sandwell Vision 2030



In 2030, Sandwell is a thriving, optimistic and resilient community. It's where we call home and where we're proud to belong - where we choose to bring up our families, where we feel safe and cared for, enjoying good health, rewarding work, feeling connected and valued in our neighbourhoods and communities, confident in the future, and benefiting fully from a revitalised West Midlands.

The Sandwell Vision and its 10 Ambitions are at the heart of everything the council and partners in Sandwell do.

Corporate Plan: Big Plans for a Great Place

The Council has developed its [Corporate Plan- The Sandwell Plan – Big Plans for a Great Place](#) that sets out what the Council will do to deliver Vision 2030 and the 10 Ambitions over the next five years, and is based upon six strategic outcomes. The driving theme behind the Plan is One Team: One Council, which reflects the culture of the organisation through strong leadership in an honest, open and transparent environment.

OUR STRATEGIC OUTCOMES



This Code of Corporate Governance contributes to our Big Plans for a Great Place by ensuring that a strong governance framework is in place and underpins everything the council does.

Good Corporate Governance

Sandwell Council is committed to achieving good corporate governance and this Code describes how the council intends to achieve this in an open and explicit way. In developing this Code, the council has considered best practice and guidance, particularly the seven core principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government”.

- Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
- Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
- Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.
- Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.
- Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
- Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
- Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.

However, the Code is purposefully written in a way that best reflects the council’s own structure, functions, size and the governance arrangements in existence.

The Sandwell Position

Sandwell embraces the seven principles with clear lines of accountability for any decisions it makes, and clear rules, regulations, policies and practices which govern how those decisions are made and implemented.

The council has adopted the strong ‘leader and cabinet’ form of executive arrangement under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 with a Cabinet of up to ten Councillors, meeting in public to make executive decisions on matters of strategy and borough-wide significance. Each Cabinet Member also has a portfolio of responsibility for the delivery of services, which are aligned to each of the 10 Vision Ambitions, for which they are accountable. The council’s practices are underpinned by three overarching principles:

Respect for others

Councillors should promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person and by treating people with respect, regardless of their sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race, religion and belief, disability, age, marriage and civil partnership. They should respect the impartiality and integrity of the council’s statutory officers and its other employees.

Duty to uphold the law

Councillors should uphold the law and, on all occasions, act in accordance with the trust that the public has entrusted in them.

Putting the principles into practice in Sandwell

Sandwell Council is confident that its governance arrangements are robust. The council recognises, however, that there is always room for improvement and progress, especially as the council continues to evolve to deliver extensive change and to meet rising government and customer expectations about the quality and responsiveness of services.

The council has established a Corporate Governance Board, which includes senior officers from across the council including finance, HR, ICT, audit, risk management, democratic services, health and safety, legal and assurance and procurement. As part of its role each year the Board:

- Assesses to what extent the council complies with the principles and requirements of good governance as set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE framework.
- Identifies systems, processes and documentation that provide evidence of compliance.
- Identifies the officers, Councillors and bodies responsible for monitoring and reviewing the systems, processes and documentation identified.
- Identifies governance issues that have not been addressed adequately and what actions should be taken and by whom; and draws up and monitors an action plan.
- Co-ordinates and drives continuous improvement through raising awareness and understanding of governance and the council's governance arrangements.
- Reports to the Leadership Team with the assurances it has obtained in respect of the council's governance arrangements.

Monitoring, Review and Changes

The council's commitment to good corporate governance includes the application, development and maintenance of this Code. This is undertaken by the council's Corporate Governance Board (the Board). The Board is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance framework and identifying any issues and agreeing an action plan. The results of this review are contained in the Annual Governance Statement which is reported to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and published with the Annual Statement of Accounts. The role of the Committee is to understand the process undertaken to review governance and to ensure that the Statement aligns with its understanding of the effectiveness of the council's governance framework. The Committee is also responsible for obtaining assurances that the measures within the action plan to improve governance are addressed and implemented.

Any changes that are required to this Code resulting from its review, will be submitted to the council for approval.

Councillor Rajbir
Leader of the Council

Principle 1: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

CIPFA/ Solace behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice

- Ensuring Councillors and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the organisation.
- Ensuring Councillors take the lead in establishing specific standard operating principles or values for the organisation and its staff and that they are communicated and understood. These should build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles).
- Leading by example and using these standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions.
- Demonstrating, communicating and embedding the standard operating principles or values through appropriate policies and processes which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are operating effectively.
- Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the organisation's ethical standards and performance.
- Underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the organisation's culture and operation.
- Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values.
- Ensuring that external providers of services on behalf of the organisation are required to act with integrity and in compliance with high ethical standards expected by the organisation.

The key processes and arrangements Sandwell Council has in place to demonstrate compliance with the principles of good governance

- The council's values and behaviours (Trust, Unity and Progress) guide and shape the council's culture and helps Councillors and officers understand what is expected from them.
- Upon election to office, Councillors confirm in writing that they will fulfil the expectations set out in the Code of Conduct for Elected Members.
- Codes of Conduct for officers and Councillors are in place and supplemented by guidance for when serving on outside bodies including partnerships. During 2020/2021, all members have been invited to contribute to a comprehensive review of the Code of Conduct. A new Code was considered and adopted by Council in March 2021 and implemented with effect from 25th May 2021.
- The ethical standards and member development committee have a development programme in place for Councillors.
- Completion of Cabinet Members' Assurance Statement, and Directors' Assurance Statements and individual sign off by Cabinet Members with regards to compliance with the Elected Member Code of Conduct.
- Performance appraisal process for officers.
- Professional development planning for Councillors informs the member development programme
- Register of interests for Councillors and officers.
- Declarations of interest sought and recorded annually.
- Gifts and Hospitality policy.
- Open and transparent decision-making arrangements, including an effective Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

- Ensuring Councillors and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations.
 - Creating the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders and Councillors are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements.
 - Striving to optimise the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders.
 - Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively.
 - Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively.
- Robust and proper arrangements in place to ensure high standards of behaviour in dealing with the invitation of tenders and award of contracts and financial matters through effective Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules.
 - Modern Slavery policy and statement to ensure modern slavery is not taking place in any part of its own business or any of its supply chains.
 - Policies and processes on information governance in place and process in place for dealing with Freedom of Information Act requests, Environmental Information Regulations requests and Subject Access Requests.
 - Confidential reporting code (whistleblowing policy) which allows employees, partners, contractors and the public to make confidential complaints on matters of concern.
 - The Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee promotes and maintains high standards of conduct and ethical governance by Councillors and presents an Annual Report to the council setting out how it has discharged its functions. The committee receives regular reports on allegations of Elected Member misconduct and the outcome of each complaint.
 - Customer Complaints and Compliments Process in place.
 - Arrangements for dealing with (Councillors) standards allegations under the Localism Act 2011 are in place.
 - Compliance with CIPFA's "Statement on the role of the Chief Finance Officer in local government" which is reviewed on an annual basis.
 - Specific roles and responsibilities of Councillors are detailed in the Constitution.
 - Each Committee has clear terms of reference which are reviewed on an annual basis.
 - Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Fraud and Corruption policies.

- Compliance with Data Protection requirements, GDPR and related guidance.
- Membership of various professional and advisory organisations (by both the council and professional officers) to help ensure up to date knowledge of legal and regulatory duties and responsibilities are maintained.

Principle 2: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

CIPFA/ Solace behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice

- Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organisation's commitment to openness.
- Making decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes. The presumption is for openness. If that is not the case, a justification for the reasoning for keeping a decision confidential should be provided.
- Providing clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and being explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. In due course, ensuring that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear.
- Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions/ courses of action.
- Effectively engaging with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably.
- Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively.
- Ensuring that partnerships are based on trust, a shared commitment to change, a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners and that the added value of partnership working is explicit.
- Establishing a clear policy on the type of issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with to ensure that service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes.

The key processes and arrangements Sandwell Council has in place to demonstrate compliance with the principles of good governance

- The council's Constitution outlines the way in which it is organised to carry out its functions, powers, duties and obligations. It explains the structures and decision making processes of the council and brings together in one document all the detailed rules and procedures that govern the behaviour of those who work for or represent the council.
- The Constitution sets out how the council is accountable to the local community, the individual rights of citizens and sets out the role of the scrutiny function in engagement with the public and partners.
- Cabinet reports include details of engagement and consultation activity undertaken as part of the decision-making process.
- A Scrutiny Annual Report is produced, and individual scrutiny review reports are also undertaken and published.
- Electronic communications and use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.).
- Statutory Notices are published on a monthly basis and set out what key decisions the council's Executive is going to make.
- The Committee Management Information System (CMIS) allows members of the public to examine agendas, reports, minutes and decisions of any meeting via the council's web site. A new Committee Management System will be introduced in September 2021 that will enhance the current provision
- Full Council, Cabinet and certain committee meetings are webcast.
- Reporting guidelines ensure consultation with all relevant officers takes place prior to submitting decision making reports.
- Sandwell's Elected Member level decisions are taken in a public forum, either at a formal meeting or as individual Cabinet

- Ensuring that communication methods are effective, and that Councillors and officers are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement.
 - Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs.
 - Implementing effective feedback mechanisms to demonstrate how views have been taken into account.
 - Balancing feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity.
 - Taking account of the interests of future generations of tax payers and service users.
- Members at a pre-advertised time and place so that the public and/or other Councillors of the council can attend. Decisions are only made in private if a report contains exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.
- The Freedom of Information policy and Publication Scheme provide details of information that is publicly accessible.
 - Council's compliance with the data transparency agenda includes publication of all expenditure in excess of £500 and all spend on procurement cards.
 - Sandwell Trends provides data, intelligence and analysis of the people and places of Sandwell to inform decision making
 - The council has protocol and procedure in place in line with the Localism Act 2011 for dealing with requests in relation to assets of community value.
 - The Sandwell Vision 2030, Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy set out the council's ambitions and plans, to achieve our vision.
 - Communication with officers through team briefs, staff surveys, the intranet, social media, newsletters, blogs, manager briefings and staff conferences.
 - Communication with representative bodies is conducted through the service area Joint Consultative Committees and the corporate Joint Consultative Panel.
 - The council is an Investors in People silver accredited organisation which confirms our commitment to supporting and developing our teams to deliver the best services for Sandwell.
 - The council website hosts a database of issues where we actively engage in public consultation.
 - The council consults with targeted stakeholders for specific projects using a variety of different consultation tools.

- The MySandwell account allows residents to request services, report problems and track any enquiries they put in to the council
- Improving resource use through effective business planning and appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other approaches in order to determine how resources are allocated to achieve outcomes effectively and efficiently.
- The council undertakes Equality Impact Assessments on issues that will affect our community.

Principle 3: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits

CIPFA/ Solace behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice

- Having a clear vision, which is an agreed formal statement of the organisation's purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provide the basis for the organisation's overall strategy, planning and other decisions.
- Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer.
- Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available.
- Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes
- Managing service users' expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available.
- Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies and plans when taking decisions about service provision.
- Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently where there are potential

The key processes and arrangements Sandwell Council has in place to demonstrate compliance with the principles of good governance

- The council's Corporate Plan sets out how the council aims to achieve its ambitious Vision 2030 to deliver positive outcomes for the people of Sandwell. The Plan is supported by the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy which ensures that resources are targeted towards achievement of the council's priorities.
- The council uses its combined spending power to work towards sustainable social and economic benefits.
- The Black Country Core Strategy makes a valuable contribution to shaping future development, improving the safety and security of the area and reducing crime and disorder within the Borough and is linked into the West Midlands Combined Authority Strategic Economic Plan.
- Annual reports including Scrutiny, Audit, Safeguarding Boards, provide details of performance against service specific activities.
- .
- Each directorate has a business plan which sets out performance standards.

conflicts between the organisation’s intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints.

- Determining the wider public interest associated with balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social and environmental benefits, through consultation where possible, in order to ensure appropriate trade-offs.
- Ensuring fair access to services.

- The MySandwell customer portal provides data derived from customer feedback for the use of service areas to direct improvements.
- Value for money is assessed through External Audit, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee reviews, service reviews and other external inspections.
- A Strategic Risk Register identifies the key risks which may impact upon the delivery of key priorities and appropriate mitigating actions. This is regularly considered by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.
- Decision making reports consider the sustainability of proposals as well as health, crime and financial implications.
- Cabinet Workshop meetings are regularly held to set the strategic direction and identify priorities in response to available resources, identified need, statistical evidence and citizen feedback.

Principle 4: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

CIPFA/ Solace behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice

- Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and associated risks. Therefore, ensuring best value is achieved however services are provided.
- Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to prioritise competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts.
- Establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets.

The key processes and arrangements Sandwell Council has in place to demonstrate compliance with the principles of good governance

- The council’s Constitution sets out our approach to decision making and details the responsibilities for and principles of decision making within the council.
- Decision making reports include alternative options available and details of any significant risks associated with the proposals.
- There are clear timescales for the submission of reports to Council, Cabinet and committee’s and a compulsory consultation process to evidence the review of reports prior to submission to Councillors. Reports are structured to identify options for consideration along with an analysis of outcomes, any identified risks and associated mitigating measures.

- Engaging with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered.
- Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively, including shared risks.
- Ensuring arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering goods and services can be adapted to changing circumstances.
- Establishing appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects is to be measured.
- Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly.
- Preparing budgets in accordance with objectives, strategies and the Medium Term Financial plan.
- Informing medium and long-term resource planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy.
- Ensuring the Medium Term Financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints.
- Ensuring the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term.
- Ensuring the Medium Term Financial strategy sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage.
- Ensuring the achievement of 'social value' through service planning and commissioning.
- The council's Medium Term Financial Strategy is updated annually. The strategy sets out how the council wishes to structure and manage its finances now and, in the future, and to ensure this approach facilitates delivery of the its vision, aims and objectives.
- Directorates produce individual business plans which are reviewed annually and set out the vision and strategy for the service.
- Electronic communications and use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) as tools for community engagement
- Communication with staff is through manager briefings, team briefs, staff surveys, the intranet, social media, newsletters and blogs.
- Communication with representative bodies is conducted through the service area Joint Consultative Committees and the corporate Joint Consultative Panel.
- Partnerships are in place where the council has arrangements to deliver services jointly or through other organisations. The effectiveness of these arrangements is assessed through partnership boards or contract monitoring.
- Partnership risks are identified in relevant risk registers.
- The council has a strategic risk register and a Covid 19 and Brexit strategic risk register which identifies the key risks which may impact upon the delivery of key services and the effectiveness of the council's response to the pandemic.
- The Sandwell Vision 2030, Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy set out the council's improvement plan,
- Detailed plans for annual budgets are prepared and presented to council for approval alongside financial plans for the medium term. Regular reports are presented to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board where the council's performance against budget is monitored.

- Annual reports including Scrutiny, Audit, Safeguarding, provide details of performance against service specific activities.
- The council has guidance for compliance with the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012. The Act requires all Public Services contracts above the OJEU threshold to be subject to appropriate social value criteria. While the Act is only compulsory for this category of contracts it was agreed that the council will consider social value criteria within all contracts.
- Community Wealth and Inclusive Economy Deal Board establish priorities and assist in informing and developing community wealth projects.
- Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how resources are allocated so that defined outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently.
- An Equality Impact Assessment is a compulsory consideration for all cabinet reports.

Principle 5: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

CIPFA/ Solace behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice

- Developing protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained.
- Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body.
- Ensuring the leader and the chief executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the chief executive leads in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by Councillors and each provides a check and a balance for each other's authority.
- Developing the capabilities of Councillors and senior management to achieve effective leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks by:
 - ensuring Councillors and staff have access to appropriate induction tailored to their role and that ongoing training and development matching individual and organisational requirements is available and encouraged.
 - ensuring Councillors and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis.
 - ensuring personal, organisational and system-wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from governance weaknesses both internal and external.

The key processes and arrangements Sandwell Council has in place to demonstrate compliance with the principles of good governance

- Cabinet member portfolios aligned to 10 Ambitions.
- The roles and responsibilities of the cabinet are set out in the council's Constitution, including the scheme of delegation.
- Annual reports including Scrutiny, Audit, Safeguarding, provide details of performance against service specific activities.
- Youth Parliament which encourages young people to engage with the council and its democratic processes.
- Protocol for Elected Member/Officer Relations included within the council's constitution.
- Member Development Programme Elected Member induction, training and development programme.
- The council's Leadership Team has a defined role and area of responsibility and all senior officers have job descriptions which set out respective responsibilities and accountabilities.
- Regular briefings between the Leader and the Chief Executive.
- The council-wide process for understanding the performance and professional development needs of our employees along with a suite of policies to support employee performance toward delivering excellence.
- Employee engagement survey helps understand how the council is performing against other organisations both in the public and private sector and identifies services and areas for improvement.
- Induction programme for staff and ongoing appraisal, training and development.
- The council-wide process for understanding the performance and professional development needs of our employees along with a suite of policies to support employee performance toward delivering excellence.

- ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation.
- Taking steps to consider the leadership’s own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections.
- Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs.
- Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing.
- Developing and maintaining an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources, including, Planned Leavers, Sandwell Graduate Programme and the Modern Apprentice programme. The council invests in its current and future leaders through the ‘Future Engage Deliver’ programme for all senior management and managers.
- Suite of clear policies and support mechanisms in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of its workforce, including access to Occupational Health, Employee Assistance and Counselling service, Wellbeing Hub, remote and flexible working.
- The Local Government Association undertook a Corporate Peer Review in 2018 with a follow up review in 2019. The council has developed an action plan to address areas for continuous improvement that were identified by the review process.
- Engagement in national and local benchmarking exercises to help identify whether the council is performing well and identify areas for improvement.
External inspections including Ofsted and external audit assess the capability and capacity of senior officers
- Assessment against CIPFA’s “Role of the Chief Financial Officer” and the “Role of the Head of Audit”.

Principle 6: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

CIPFA/ Solace behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice

- Recognising that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making.
- Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively
- Ensuring that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated.
- Monitoring service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review.
- Making decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation's financial, social and environmental position and outlook.
- Ensuring an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which provides constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made thereby enhancing the organisation's performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible (Or, for a committee system) Encouraging effective and constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives to support balanced and effective decision making.
- Providing Councillors and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement.
- Ensuring there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (e.g. financial statements).

The key processes and arrangements Sandwell Council has in place to demonstrate compliance with the principles of good governance

- The council has assessed itself against the six core principles in the CIPFA Financial Management Code and has prepared an action plan to address any areas of improvement for implementation during 2021/22.
- The corporate risk management policy and strategy sets out the processes in place to manage risk across the organisation and the roles and responsibilities of officers and Councillors in this respect. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee has oversight of risk management and is the council's primary body in respect of related issues.
- Partnership governance arrangements are in place where the council delivers services jointly or through other organisations. The effectiveness of these arrangements is assessed through partnership boards or contract monitoring.
- Regular reports to scrutiny boards, Audit and Assurance Committee and Full Council include annual Scrutiny, Audit, Safeguarding reports and quarterly monitoring reports from Children's Services Commissioner which provide details of performance against service specific activities.
- The Constitution contains a section on decision making which details the responsibilities for and principles of decision making within the council.
- The Committee Management Information System on the council's website advertises when committee meetings will take place and publicises the agenda, reports (unless legislative exemptions apply) and minutes of the meeting.
- The council has a scrutiny function which considers financial and corporate performance, making recommendations through to the cabinet.

- Aligning the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving objectives.
- Evaluating and monitoring risk management and internal control on a regular basis.
- Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place.
- Ensuring additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor.
- Ensuring an audit committee or equivalent group/ function, which is independent of the executive and accountable to the governing body.
- Provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment.
- That its recommendations are listened to and acted upon
- Ensuring effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data.
- Ensuring effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies.
- Reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring.
- Ensuring financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance.
- Ensuring well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls.
- Decision making reports have a standard template ensuring that the financial and risk implications of the decisions are explicit.
- The council's Constitution states that it will exercise all its powers and fulfil its duties in accordance with the law and the Constitution and the Monitoring Officer ensures that this is complied with.
- The council has Financial Regulations and Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules and which are reviewed on a regular basis.
- Appropriate Schemes of Delegation to Cabinet Members and Officers are in place.
- Internal Audit function and Corporate counter-fraud function in place to provide independent assurance on risk areas. Assurance is based on completion of an annual internal plan, approved by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and presentation of progress reports and an annual report to the Committee.
- An Annual Governance Statement, which provides assurances that the Council's governance arrangements are robust is published with the Annual Statement of Accounts.
- The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee has clear terms of reference and receives regular training updates.
- The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee presents its annual report to Council detailing how it has met its constitutional functions.
- Suite of information governance policies are in place to manage data in compliance with the law.
- Codes of Conduct and declarations of interest ensure appropriate safeguards are in place for potential conflicts of interest.
- Customer Complaints and Compliments Process are in place and a Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review is presented to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

- Process in place for dealing with Freedom of Information Act requests, Environmental Information Regulations requests and Subject Access Requests.
- Confidential Reporting Code (whistleblowing policy) communicated to officers, Councillors, partners and contractors.
- External Auditors provide an annual report which gives a conclusion on the council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.
- An Information Governance framework to ensure compliance with Data Protection requirements and related guidance including General Data Protection Regulations.

Principle 7: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

CIPFA/ Solace behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice

- Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in a fair, balanced and understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate.
- Striking a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand.
- Reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and stewardship of resources to stakeholders in a timely and understandable way.
- Ensuring Councillors and senior management own the results reported.
- Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in this Framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment, including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (the annual governance statement).
- Ensuring that this Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate.
- Ensuring the performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other, similar organisations.
- Ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon.
- Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to Councillors is in place, providing assurance with regard to

The key processes and arrangements Sandwell Council has in place to demonstrate compliance with the principles of good governance

- Website reports on actions completed and decisions taken and provides access to the information on which decisions were made. Stakeholders are kept informed of future plans of the council and asked to become involved through the completion of consultation exercises.
- Annual reports produced by the various committee's and are available on the council website.
- The Statement of Accounts is available through the council website. The public is able to inspect the councils accounts and discuss them with external auditors in advance of them providing their opinion on robustness.
- An Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is published with the Statement of Accounts. The AGS provides an accurate representation of the corporate governance arrangements and highlights areas where improvements are required and the action plan in place to address this which is monitored by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.
- Service support agreement with Sandwell Children's Trust stipulates requirements of the Trust to operate within this framework.
- Service Delivery Contract with the Trust sets out the respective responsibilities and accountabilities of the council and the Trust.
- External Auditors provide an annual report (ISA 260- Report to Those Charged with Governance) which gives a conclusion on the council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.
- Internal audit complies with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

governance arrangements and that recommendations are acted upon.

- Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations.
- Gaining assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties and that this is evidenced in the annual governance statement.
- Ensuring that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met.

- Annual Internal Audit Report with opinion from the Head of Internal Audit.
- Assessment against CIPFA's role of the Head of Internal Audit
- Action plans resulting from review reports (internal audit, external audit, peer reviews, third party reviews), a named officer is given responsibility for completion and progress is monitored by the appropriate committee or senior officer.
- The corporate risk management policy and strategy sets out the processes in place to manage risk across partnerships and the roles and responsibilities of officers and Councillors in this respect.
- Partnership governance arrangements are in place where the council delivers services jointly or through other organisations. The effectiveness of these arrangements is assessed through partnership boards or contract monitoring.
- Annual assurances sought from the Trust through completion of an assurance statement which informs the Annual Governance Statement.
- External inspections including Ofsted, and external audit assess council performance, of which the outcomes of which are reported as appropriate to Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Scrutiny and Cabinet.
- The Local Government Association undertook a Corporate Peer Review in 2018 with a follow up review in 2019. The Council has developed an action plan to address areas for continuous improvement that were identified by the review process.

Measures implemented to address the Coronavirus Pandemic

The key processes and arrangements Sandwell Council implemented to retain compliance with the principles of good governance whilst managing the Coronavirus pandemic

The Council initiated a framework of revised governance arrangements to address the many practical challenges of working during the Coronavirus pandemic

The Council continues to adapt the ways in which it is working to address Covid-19 in terms of its governance arrangements, safeguarding the borough's residents, supporting Sandwell businesses and assisting with the roll out of Central Government Covid related announcements, initiatives and policies.

On the advice of the officer responsible for leading the Council's response to civil contingencies or emergency situations, the Council utilised its constitutional provisions for the transfer of all Cabinet and Council functions to the Emergency committee for the initial months of the pandemic until remote decision making legislation was adopted. This ensured that decisions on live issues could be addressed appropriately and in line with established governance principles.

The Council's Financial Regulations were temporarily amended as part of Emergency delegated decision making powers to provide for necessary resources to be targeted toward immediate and emerging need. These have now reverted to pre Covid-19 arrangements. Contract Procedure Rules were similarly temporarily amended to allow for the provisioning of goods and services (for example the temporary food distribution hub)

Upon Central Government legislation for council meetings to be held remotely, the Council re-instated decision making functions to all committees from June 2020 onwards. Emergency Committee remained to progress any immediate coronavirus issues.

The nature of the pandemic required some decisions to be made at pace. The Council introduced a twice weekly meeting of its statutory officers to ensure that corporate governance mechanisms were robustly maintained, including those decisions taken using urgency provisions Statutory Officers Group

- Strategic IMT

- Reset and Recovery Board (including Brexit)
- Redeployment programme
- Welfare Hub
- Temporary food hub
- Remote working arrangements for non front line staff

RIDDOR reporting of Covid 19 cases at work

The Council's approach to governance during Covid-19 has been clearly set out and shared with Councillors, the key aspects of which include:

-The Sandwell Covid-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan outlines the locally led system for Sandwell to protect and promote health and wellbeing during the pandemic. This has been further updated in April 2021 to include new challenges that have since been presented.

-Sandwell Strategic Incident Management Team (SIMT) which is responsible for the day to day Covid-19 response and linked into regional governance structures including the Strategic Coordinating Group and Public Health England. SIMT is locally accountable to the Covid-19 Community Engagement Board which was established to monitor the progress of the pandemic and any changes in national policy or guidance and to advise on how this is communicated to local communities.

-A Reset and Recovery Board was established in June 2020 with agreed Terms of Reference overseeing the emergency response (which included the establishment of a temporary food hub and welfare hub to support the most vulnerable) and the rest and recovery programme of activity.

-The Reset and Recovery programme involved new ways of working with officers working remotely and delivering services virtually where appropriate. Some front line services initially ceased or were delivered with reduced frequency. These were only restarted once a full risk assessment and reset request had been completed and signed off by the the Council's health and safety team and Public Health team and approved by the Reset and Recovery Board. The

activity of the Reset and Recovery Board has now been integrated into Leadership Team meetings as part of Business as Usual activity.

-Following the enactment of the provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020 introduced in May 2020 on remote meetings, a full range of Council meetings has taken place using these powers and have been streamed and made available on the Council's website.

Development of a Covid-19 risk register interfacing with the Council's strategic risk register to ensure that the Council was aware of and taken account of the key Covid-19 risks. During the year this was consolidated with the Brexit risk register to form a combined Covid-19 and Brexit risk register. The register has been regularly presented to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee during 2020/21 and at the request of the Committee has now been merged into the Council's Strategic risk register.

-The Corporate Plan is being refreshed with learning and recovery from the impacts of Covid-19 being a key theme that runs through the plan.