

Agenda Cabinet

**Wednesday 23 March 2022 at 3.30 pm
at Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House, Freeth Street, Oldbury,
B69 3DB**

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

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Declarations of Interest

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

3 Minutes (Pages 9 - 74)

To confirm the minutes of the meetings held on 9 and 23 February 2022.

4 Additional Items of Business

To determine whether there are any additional items of business to be considered as a matter of urgency.

**5 Community Vaccination Champions Programme
(Pages 75 - 102)**

**Adults, Social
Care & Health**

To approve the Community Vaccination Champions



Programme and payment of grant to support the programme.

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| 6 | Liberty Protection Safeguards (Pages 103 - 134) | Adults, Social Care & Health |
| | To consider the proposed restructure of the social work service that forms part of the Adult Social Care directorate in preparation for the implementation of the new Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS). | |
| 7 | Temporary Accommodation - Elm Tree Primary Academy at Connor Education Centre, West Bromwich (Pages 135 - 142) | Children & Education |
| | To award a contract for the refurbishment of part of the Connor Education Centre, Connor Road, West Bromwich to provide temporary accommodation for the new Elm Tree Primary Academy Special School. | |
| 8 | Domestic Abuse Strategy (Pages 143 - 188) | Community Safety |
| | To approve the 2021-2024 Domestic Abuse Strategy and to allocate New Burdens funding for 2022-2024 | |
| 9 | Sandwell Community Safety Strategy 2022-26 (Pages 189 - 252) | Community Safety |
| | To endorse the implementation of the Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board's Community Safety Strategy 2022-26. | |
| 10 | City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement and Local Transport Capital Programme 2022/23 (Pages 253 - 268) | Environment |
| | To approve a programme of minor works, highways, bridges and street lighting maintenance for 2022/23 to be funded through the Local Network Improvement Plan and Maintenance Block allocations approved at WMCA Board on 14th January 2022 as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Programme. | |
| 11 | Corporate Climate Change Action Plan (Pages 269 - 312) | Environment |

To approve the Corporate Climate Change Action Plan.

- 12 **Contract for tyres and tyre related services** (Pages 313 - 316) **Environment**

To award a contract for the provision of tyres and tyre related services via the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) Framework 001009 Tyres for Motor Vehicles, Plant and Related Services.

- 13 **Vehicle and grounds maintenance equipment, spare parts, and workshop consumables** (Pages 317 - 322) **Environment**

To award contracts for the provision of Vehicle & Grounds Maintenance Equipment Spare Parts & Workshop Consumables.

- 14 **Purchase of grounds maintenance plant and machinery** (Pages 323 - 328) **Environment**

To award contracts to replace the council's grounds maintenance equipment using the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) Framework 274 and North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO) Framework Agreement.

- 15 **Revenues and Benefits Operating Model** (Pages 329 - 338) **Finance & Resources**

To approve the Revenues and Benefits Operating Model.

- 16 **Revenues and Benefits Policy Framework 2022/23** (Pages 339 - 452) **Finance & Resources**

To approve the Revenues and Benefits Policy Framework 2022/23.

- 17 **Refurbishment of Thorn Close, Wednesbury** (Pages 453 - 460) **Housing**

To procure a contractor for the refurbishment of Thorn

Close, Wednesbury.

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| 18 | Acquisition of land at Harvest Road, Rowley Regis for Council New Build (Pages 461 - 520) | Housing |
| | To approve the purchase of the site at Harvest Road, Rowley Regis for the development of new affordable rent council housing. | |
| 19 | Social Work Workforce - Market Supplement (Pages 521 - 534) | Children & Education |
| | To consider proposals in relation to a market supplement in order to recruit and attract children's social workers. | |
| 20 | Sandwell Regeneration Strategy, Pipeline and Economic Recovery Plan for Businesses (Pages 535 - 648) | Regeneration & Growth |
| | To approve the Regeneration Strategy for Sandwell and the associated appendices as the strategic documents outlining the corporate regeneration priorities for the period 2022 to 2027. | |
| 21 | Extension of Free Swimming Programme 2022-23 (Pages 649 - 658) | Culture & Tourism |
| | To enter into an agreement with Sandwell Leisure Trust and Places Leisure to offer free swimming and free swimming lessons for the financial year 2022/23. | |
| 22 | Co-operative working for the provision of services from the Integrated Social Care and Health Centre (Pages 659 - 666) | Adults, Social Care & Health |
| | To seek approval to develop a Co-operative Working Agreement with Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust for the purpose of achieving shared objectives for social care and health through the delivery of integrated social care and health services. | |
| 23 | Corporate Plan Achievements 2021 (Pages 667 - 730) | Leader |

To consider the progress made in delivering the Corporate Plan during 2021.

24 Exclusion of the Public and Press

That the public and press be 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 the financial and business affairs of any person, including the authority holding that information.

25 Care Home Fees - Standard Rate 2022/23 (Pages 731 - 752)

Adults, Social Care & Health

To consider proposals in relation to revising Care Home Fees for 2022/23.

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

Distribution

Councillor Carmichael (Chair)
Councillors Ahmed, Bostan, Crompton, Hartwell, Millard, I Padda, Piper and Simms

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Minutes of The Cabinet

9 February 2022 at 3.30pm
at Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House

Present: Councillor Carmichael (Leader of the Council)
Councillors Ahmed, Hartwell, Millard, I Padda, Piper and
Simms.

Also present: Councillors E M Giles, Moore and Shackleton.

Officers: Kim Bromley-Derry (Interim Chief Executive), Rashpal
Bishop (Director of Adult Social Care), Neil Cox (Director of
Business Change and Strategy), Alice Davey (Director of
Borough Economy), Gillian Douglas (Director of Housing),
Simone Hines (Director of Finance), Michael Jarrett (Director
of Children and Education), Tony McGovern (Director of
Regeneration and Growth), Lisa McNally (Director of Public
Health), Surjit Tour (Director of Law and Governance and
Monitoring Officer), Sue Stanhope (Interim Director of
Human Resources), Elaine Newsome (Service Manager –
Democracy) and Suky Suthi-Nagra (Democratic Services
Manager).

16/22 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bostan and
Crompton, L Giles and Mabena.



17/22 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Piper declared a personal interest in Minute No. 33/22 (Sandwell Community Dementia Support Service) on the basis that he was a trustee of a dementia charity.

Councillor Carmichael declared a pecuniary interest in Minute No. 32/22 (Sandwell Leisure Trust Business Plan 2021-24) on the basis that her son was an employee of Sandwell Leisure Trust.

18/22 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

19/22 **Additional Item of Business**

There were no additional items of business to consider.

20/22 **West Bromwich Interim Planning Statement (IPS) and West Bromwich Masterplan (Masterplan)**

Consideration was given to the outcome of the public consultation on the West Bromwich Interim Planning Statement (IPS) and West Bromwich Masterplan (Masterplan) and the response to the representations received.

Approval was sought for the West Bromwich Interim Planning Statement (IPS) and West Bromwich Masterplan (Masterplan) documents.

The Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board asked questions regarding plans in place to secure sufficient funding to deliver the masterplan, timescales for completion of a new market/hub area and where existing indoor market stall holders would be relocated whilst works on new market area were carried out.



In response, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth stated that regarding the funding the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) had expressed a willingness in principle to provide support, but the nature and timing of their involvement was dependent on further detailed and site-specific viability work which needed to take place. Officers were considering options to procure a development partner to work with the council on the delivery of the masterplan. A proposal on this would be brought to Cabinet during 2022. It was envisaged that once the development partner was in place it would be possible to be more specific about precise requirements, which would enable discussions with WMCA to progress.

Regarding the timescales for completion of the new market area, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth confirmed that the Council had acquired the former Argos units and a business plan was being prepared for the conversion of that space into a new indoor market. It was intended that the indoor market would continue to operate in its current location until the new space was ready. Specific timings for the delivery of the wider community hub area had not been determined as this would need to be considered as part of the wider masterplan delivery strategy.

The Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board asked further questions regarding whether there were plans in place to replace the current paving on the main high street with better material as the existing paving was of poor quality and very difficult to keep clean, requiring BID levy to cover the extra costs of jet washing.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth stated that currently, the Council was at the masterplan stage, meaning no details around specific material choices had been agreed. Material choices would form an important part of the schemes at future stages and the Council was willing to learn from other local authorities' public realm schemes, including materials used in those schemes, to help inform its public realm material choices in the future.



The Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board enquired whether a separate masterplan was envisaged for each of the other town centres in the borough. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth responded that there was currently no intention to develop this type of masterplan in all other town centres in the Borough, although it was possible that some towns would require masterplans in the future. Smethwick and Rowley Regis already had Town Investments Plans that were produced to support the Towns Fund submissions, and whilst these documents were not masterplans, they did set out areas for future investment. Also, there was a clear need to ensure regeneration opportunities in our other towns were maximised and a borough wide regeneration strategy and pipeline was therefore to be considered by Cabinet in March. This would set out some of the actions needed to ensure our town centres did not experience further decline.

Reason for Decision

Following public consultation, approval of the West Bromwich Interim Planning Statement (IPS) and associated West Bromwich Masterplan (the Masterplan) would provide the Council with an updated framework to guide the further regeneration of West Bromwich, the Borough's Strategic Centre. The documents were to bridge the gap between the current statutory Local Plan document, the 2012 West Bromwich Area Action Plan, and its replacement expected to be adopted in 2024.

Alternative Options Considered

To not proceed with endorsing the West Bromwich Interim Planning Statement (IPS) and West Bromwich Masterplan was not the preferred option as the existing development planning framework, as set out in the West Bromwich Area Action Plan, was becoming increasingly out of date. This would diminish the prospects of securing investment and development for the continued regeneration of West Bromwich.

It was considered that not providing an IPS and Masterplan would mean this gap between the existing Local Plan and the WBAAP, and its revised version, after 2024 at the earliest, would be too great. The IPS and Masterplan would form a material planning consideration that could fill this gap.



Agreed:-

- (1) that the outcome of the public consultation and the response to the representations received in relation to West Bromwich Interim Planning Statement (IPS) and West Bromwich Masterplan (Masterplan) be noted;
- (2) that the West Bromwich Interim Planning Statement and West Bromwich Masterplan be approved.

21/22

Re-commissioning Sandwell Adult Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services

Approval was sought for the Director of Public Health to be authorised to procure Adult Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services, with the contract commencing from 1 February 2023 for a period of three years to 31 January 2026 with the option to extend up to a further 2 years (until 31 January 2028).

Approval was also sought for the Director of Public Health to be authorised, in relation to the above contract, to include any future Drug Strategy monies awarded from National Government into the contract value, to enable the delivery of the 2021 Drug Strategy ambitions towards a delivering a world class treatment system.

It was reported that Sandwell was among the 10 local authorities with the lowest drug related deaths in the country and had won multiple awards for its drug and alcohol treatment services. It was deemed important that this positive trend was continued and re-commissioning of the contract for these services was important in this respect.

Reason for Decision

Procurement of Adult Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services would ensure that support for Sandwell residents continued to be available beyond the currently commissioned service which was due to end on 31 January 2023.



Whilst work to address the harms from substance misuse had resulted in some real successes for the local population, including one of the lowest drug related deaths in the country, the provision of well-delivered evidence-based community treatment provision remained integral to continuing such efforts. Furthermore, conditions attached to use of the Public Health Grant required that local areas must: “have regard to the need to improve the take up of, and outcomes from, its drug and alcohol misuse treatment services”.

Alternative Options Considered

To not approve the procurement of Adult Drug and Alcohol Service provision beyond 31 January 2023 would impact health outcomes (not just of substance misusers themselves but the health of others through secondary harms) and further exacerbate health inequalities for the most disadvantaged groups within the borough. This would be inadvisable given the impact across the wider health and criminal justice system due to substance misuse.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to re-commission Adult Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services ensuring future delivery of support for Sandwell residents;
- (2) that the Director of Public Health be authorised to commence a procurement process for the provision of Adult Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services to commence 1 February 2023 for a period of 3 years with the option to extend for up to a further 2 years;
- (3) that in connection with Resolution (2) above, the Director of Public Health be authorised to include any future Drug Strategy monies awarded from National Government into the contract value to enable delivery of the 2021 Drug Strategy ambitions towards a delivering a world class treatment system;
- (4) that the Director of Public Health be authorised to award a contract and enter into a contract with the successful bidder, on terms to be agreed by the Director of Public Health, for the provision of Adult



Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services to commence on 1 February 2023 for a period of 3 years to 31 January 2026 with the option to extend up to a further 2 years (until 31st January 2028);

- (5) that an exemption to rule 8.7 of the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules be made to allow a contract to be awarded to a successful tenderer in the event that the required minimum number of tenders are not received;
- (6) that the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adults, Social Care and Health, be authorised to make variations to the Contract up to a maximum of 10% of the Contract value, should they be necessitated;
- (7) that the Director of Law and Governance be authorised to execute any documentation necessary to give effect to the proposals set out in (1) – (6) above for the provision of Adult Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services.

22/22

Appointment of an Executive Director to Sandwell Children's Trust Ltd

Approval was sought to appoint Teodora Bot as an executive director of Sandwell Children's Trust Ltd following her appointment as Director of Practice, Quality and Partnerships for the Trust.

Reason for Decision

There were currently only two executive directors in place, one of which was the Chief Executive of the Trust. The appointment of Teodora Bot as the third executive director would bring the composition of Sandwell Children's Trust board into alignment with the Governance Side Agreement between the Council and Department for Education (DfE).



The Council had written to the Secretary of State to consult with them prior to confirming its decision. The Department for Education (DfE) officials had confirmed by email that the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families had approved the recommendation.

Alternative Options Considered

The alternative option would be for the Director of Practice, Quality and Partnerships to not be appointed as a company director. However, this would mean the composition of the board of directors was other than that as set out in the Governance Side Agreement and Articles of Association.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Cabinet, as the decision maker for the Council in its capacity as sole owner of Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT):
 - (a) the completed sequence of events that were contractually required to appoint an executive director of Sandwell Children's Trust Ltd be noted;
 - (b) the response from the Secretary of State be noted and taken into account in its decision-making;
 - (c) Teodora Bot, Director of Practice, Quality and Partnerships, be appointed as an executive director of Sandwell Children's Trust Ltd.

23/22

Award a Contract for Highway Surfacing and Associated Works

Approval was sought for Sandwell MBC to work in collaboration with Dudley MBC and Wolverhampton City Council, with Dudley acting as the lead Authority, to procure a contract for the provision of highway surfacing and associated works.



In response to a question by the Chair of Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board regarding slabbed footways and steps taken to planned footway maintenance priorities with ward members, the Cabinet Member for Community Safety stated, on behalf of Cabinet Member for Environment, that the contract recommended for approval in the report provided only for construction work to be undertaken, which would allow for work to be undertaken on all types of footway including locations with existing slabbed footways. Priorities were established separately in an equitable way based on regular borough wide condition surveys that provided the evidence for an impartial comparison across 1,400 km of footways in all wards. Ward members were advised of the work programme for the priority locations within their area in advance of construction and provided with information releases before they were made public.

Routine safety inspections were carried out on all streets around Sandwell at least annually. Where defects had been identified, these were classified according to degree of hazard. Prior to work taking place, where there were plans to remove slabbed footways, ward members would be advised that the work would see slabbed footways replaced with tarmac.

The Chair of Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment also enquired whether the Council considered purchasing JCB PotholePro machines to improve its efficiency in dealing with potholes.

In response, Cabinet Member for Community Safety stated, on behalf of Cabinet Member for Environment, that Sandwell Highway Officers had always been horizon scanning for innovative new products or tools to help increase efficiency and effectiveness. The Highway Service was aware of the use of the JCB PotholePro by Stoke City and other Councils, including Coventry and were monitoring the outcome these trials. Sandwell had also seen similar technology at various industry demonstrations.

These were, however, expensive machines costing in the region of £150k to £200k each. They could be cost effective in improving the speed of maintenance and/or productivity of pothole repairs in the right situation. In Sandwell, the Highway Service already repaired 96% of defects on time (Highways Services Performance



Summary Report- Quarter 3 2021/22), meaning little scope to improve the speed of defect repairs. There was no significant backlog of potholes to repair either. Equipment like the JCB PotholePro was most effective at delivering significant productivity benefits where authorities had substantial programmes of potholes to address. Typically, these machines could complete 3 years of pothole repairs in 4 months. Sandwell did not have the number of potholes to repair that would make deployment of this type of machine beneficial. Highway Service would continue to monitor trials at other local authorities, although currently there were no plans to purchase a JCB PotholePro device.

Reason for Decision

The Council had a statutory duty under section 41 of The Highways Act 1980 to maintain highways that were maintainable at the public expense.

To meet this duty, routine highway maintenance works had been programmed such as patching for minor defects or wider resurfacing and reconstruction works where required.

Alternative Options Considered

There were no other viable and affordable alternatives to enable effective and efficient highway surfacing and associated works.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to Sandwell MBC working in collaboration with Dudley MBC and Wolverhampton City Council, with Dudley acting as the lead Authority, to procure a contract for the provision of highway surfacing and associated works;
- (2) that the Director of Borough Economy be authorised to accept tenders and award the recommended collaborative contract for the provision of highway surfacing and associated works in support of Sandwell's annual planned highway maintenance programme, following a compliant competitive tender process;



- (3) that the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to execute any documentation necessary to enable the recommended course of action;
- (4) that any necessary exemptions be made to the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules to enable the recommended course of action referred to proceed.

24/22

Revocation of Highway Improvement Lines - A41 Birmingham Road, West Bromwich

Approval was sought to revoke the highway improvement lines at A41 Birmingham Road/Park Lane, West Bromwich.

Reason for Decision

Following a review by both Sandwell and Birmingham councils, the road widening scheme on the A41 between Park Lane and Island Road was no longer intended to be delivered. Therefore, the improvement lines which protected the land required for the scheme were no longer required.

Alternative Options Considered

The alternative would be to retain the improvement line. However, as Birmingham City Council no longer wished to pursue road widening in this location, and Sandwell had no proposals of its own for the land affected, there was no justification to do so.

Agreed that the highway improvement lines at A41 Birmingham Road/Park Lane, West Bromwich, more particularly identified on Drawing No. SP0290SE/J be revoked.

25/22

Smethwick to Birmingham Area Framework and Grove Lane Masterplan

Consideration was given to the results of the consultation undertaken on the Smethwick to Birmingham Area Framework and Grove Lane Masterplan during October to December 2021.



Approval was sought for the Smethwick to Birmingham Area Framework and Grove Lane Masterplan documents, as amended, and for both documents to be treated as a material consideration in the determination of future planning applications.

The Chair of Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board sought further clarification on the plan with regards to the industrial buildings either side of the road on Cranford Street and Heath Street, as these spaces were unsightly for visitors driving into Sandwell or into Birmingham.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth explained the vision for the wider Grove Lane area was to bring sites forward for residential development. As part of that process, buildings within the area would be assessed for their heritage value and consideration given to their reuse where physically and viably possible, and where it would contribute to the wider regeneration principles set out in the Masterplan. The buildings on Heath Street/ Cranford Street would be looked at once more detailed proposals come forward and in conjunction with other proposals set out in the plan such as improving walking and cycling connectivity. However, as part of the redevelopment of the sites north and south of Cranford Street, it was not envisaged to retain the bridge spanning the road.

Reason for Decision

The Draft Smethwick to Birmingham Area Framework and Grove Lane Masterplan were presented to Cabinet in June 2021 for consultation. However, prior to consultation being undertaken, amendments were requested from Birmingham City Council in the capacity of our joint partner for this project. Following this revision, both documents were presented to Cabinet again on 29 September 2021 for authority to consult.

It was also recommended that a further report be presented to Cabinet with the results of the consultation in due course. Consultation is now complete and both documents had been amended to take into account relevant amendments. This report requested that both documents be approved to assist with guiding decisions on future development proposals in the area.



Alternative Options Considered

Not progressing with the Masterplan for the Grove Lane area was discounted as the masterplan provided insight to developers and landowners in what type of development could positively contribute to the wider area regeneration. Lack of a masterplan might also lead to unconnected, piecemeal development that would lack cohesiveness and not provide for connectivity to the wider area and the creation of new, related communities.

Not progressing with the Corridor Area Framework was also discounted as an option. This was because the Corridor Framework ensured consistency between the two local authorities within this important regeneration corridor in achieving the provision of good quality housing that was well connected to sustainable transport links, open space and the canal network. The guiding principles also assisted in contributing to the vision for this area in creating a healthy place to live, work and visit and contributing to net zero and inclusive growth. Without the Area Framework to direct appropriate development for the opportunity sites and the related transport strategy to focus on sustainable transport, development within the corridor might fail to achieve the vision set out by the respective local authorities and partner agencies for the regeneration transformation of this area.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the results of the consultation undertaken on the Smethwick to Birmingham Area Framework and Grove Lane Masterplan during October to December 2021 as set out in the Consultation Report, be noted;
- (2) that the Area Framework and Grove Lane Masterplan as amended, be approved, and for both documents to be treated as a material consideration in the determination of future planning applications.



Sandwell Valley Urban Bike Park Project

Approval was sought to create a series of cycle trails within Sandwell Valley, close to the Swan Pool area and on neighbouring land within Birmingham (The former Hill Top Golf Course) with the Council to accept Grant funding from both Sport England (£400,000) and Birmingham City Council (£100,000), and to commit match funding of £100,000 towards the project.

The project was planned to start in September 2022 and to be completed by March 2023. It would form one of the legacy projects from the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

In response to a question by the Chair of Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board regarding how the Council's £100,000 commitment to the project would be funded, the Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism explained the commitment was expected to be funded from the 2021/22 underspend within the revenue budget for Borough Economy Directorate. A request for this reserve would be made at year end to set aside these funds for use in 2022/23.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism commented it was very positive to see Sandwell Council to be involved in a project with Sport England again.

Reason for Decision

The creation of new cycle trails would help increase visitor numbers to Sandwell Valley and would increase popularity of the destination for cyclists within the region. The facility would be a 'Legacy' from the 2022 Commonwealth Games and encourage people to visit the area. Cycling for sport and recreation provided many health benefits and could help individuals to meet their recommended levels of physical activity, help reduce social isolation and encourage community cohesion.

The recommendations would allow the project to be delivered in line with the project plan which was submitted to, and agreed, by both Sport England and Birmingham City Council. Authorising the Director of Borough Economy to oversee the implementation of recommendations would remove the need for further reports to be presented before Cabinet.



Alternative Options Considered

No alternative options had been considered for this project, however, as the scheme would be delivered on a 'design and build' basis, the final designs could be altered to fit with on-site factors such as environmental / ecological matters.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to create a series of cycle trails within Sandwell Valley, close to the Swan Pool area and on neighbouring land within Birmingham (The former Hill Top Golf Course);
- (2) that the Director of Borough Economy in consultation with the Section 151 Officer be authorised to:
 - prepare the necessary Tendering documentation;
 - procure, in accordance with the public procurement rules, the Council's procurement and financial regulations a contractor(s) to develop, on behalf of the Council, the proposed scheme;
 - enter into or execute under seal any financial agreement(s) as may be deemed necessary in relation to the scheme;
 - accept Grant funding from both Sport England (£400,000) and Birmingham City Council (£100,000) on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director of Borough Economy in consultation with Legal services;
 - commit match funding of £100,000 towards the project.

27/22

Council new build homes on land at Beaver Road, Tipton

Approval was sought to make an application to the Secretary of State to appropriate the site for housing purposes and to develop approximately 0.783 hectares of land at Beaver Road, Tipton with new affordable rent council housing.



Reason for Decision

This project would deliver 18 new Council-owned affordable rented properties on a council-owned site including 10 bungalows and 8 apartments are 2 flats and 2 bungalows that were being built to M(4)3 full wheelchair compliant standard for people with specific needs.

The development of this council site with new homes would result in additional benefits for the Council such as reducing the amount of vacant, under-utilised land within its ownership which is incurring maintenance costs; increasing the numbers of authority owned stock which would ease pressure on existing housing; replacing housing stock lost through Right to Buy; increasing income to the Housing Revenue Account; and contributing positively to the financial position of the Council by generating New Homes Bonus and new Council Tax receipts.

Benefits to residents would include developing fit for purpose accommodation, increasing good quality, energy efficient housing provision in the Borough; linking to the work of Think Local and Find-it-in-Sandwell approaches that would offer significant employment and training opportunities as well as additional community benefits to the local economy, including working with local supply chains and use of local labour; and producing positive outputs for community safety through the redevelopment of a vacant site.

Alternative Options Considered

The following options were considered as part of the appraisal process:

Option A – Dispose of the Site on the Open Market

Option B – Work in partnership with a Registered Provider Partner with the assistance of Homes England to build new affordable homes for rent

Option C – Leave the site undeveloped.



Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to make an application to the Secretary of State to appropriate the site for housing purposes and develop approximately 0.783 hectares of land at Beaver Road, Tipton with new affordable rent council housing, as shown for identification purposes in the report now submitted and subject to the Secretary of State's consent;
- (2) that the Director of Finance be authorised to allocate adequate resources from the Council's Housing Revenue Account to deliver the scheme and to utilise grant funding offered by Homes England, under the extended Homes England Strategic Partnership 1 Programme 2016 to 2021, to assist with the delivery of the project;
- (3) that the Director of Regeneration and Growth in consultation with the Director of Finance and subject to confirmation of the funding rules applicable, be authorised to submit an application for funding to the West Midlands Combined Authority and in the event funding is successful, the Director of Regeneration and Growth in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Director of Housing be authorised to accept the funding and execute under seal any financial agreement in relation to the West Midlands Combined Authority grant on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director of Finance;
- (4) that approval be given to authorise the steps necessary for the delivery of the proposed project, including:
 - (a) subject to (2) above, the Director of Regeneration and Growth, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Director of Housing, be authorised to prepare tendering documentation and subsequently procure, in accordance with any statutory regulations and the Council's Procurement and Financial Regulations and if so chosen as a procurement route any appropriate



requirements of the Homes England Delivery Partner Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) framework, a contractor/contractors as described in g) below to develop, on behalf of the Council, the proposed housing scheme; to enter into or execute under seal any financial agreement in relation to the Homes England grant on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director of Finance;

- (b) subject to (a) above, 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 development/partnership agreement, Homes England developer status, licence, undertaking, framework joining agreement, any consents or applications required for Planning or Highways appertaining to the delivery of the scheme and any other agreements with the procured contractor(s) and with the Homes England, as may be deemed necessary to facilitate development of the site with a housing scheme as described in below on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director of Regeneration and Growth;
- (c) subject to a) and b) above and following practical completion of each property the Director of Housing be authorised to manage and let the properties built in accordance with the Council's housing allocation policy.
- (d) that the following action points identified within the financial appraisal of the funding application by Strategic Finance, be implemented to reduce the risk to the Council:
- That Cabinet consider the alternatives and be satisfied that the proposal to construct the new build homes will meet the Council's objectives in the most appropriate manner;



- That a process be developed to prioritise the development of sites against pre-determined criteria and alternative options for achieving the Council’s housing objectives within each locality;
- That prior to submission of the external funding bid, review the planned use of Right to Buy receipts to ensure that HCA funding for the project would offer the most financially advantageous source of funding;
- That the Risk Register be reviewed to ensure all risks relating to grant funding and the use of Right to Buy receipts are identified and adequately mitigated;
- That approval be sought from the Secretary of State to reclassify the site for housing development;
- That the site be appropriated, where necessary, from the Council’s General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account.

28/22

Award of Contracts for Horticultural Products and Tools

Approval was sought to award contracts for the provision of Horticultural Products and Tools in lots to the highest scoring tender organisations, at a total cost of £475,000 for the period from April 2022 to March 2026.

Reason for Decision

Sandwell MBC was responsible for maintaining a broad range of green spaces and communal areas across the Borough, including Parks and Sandwell Valley, Cemeteries/Crematoria, Housing Estates, Industrial Estates, Corporate and Highways Land, etc.

Maintenance of these areas necessitated the use of products, materials, tools and equipment – some of which are of a specialist nature. A specification for a range of ‘Horticultural Products and Tools’ had been developed, generated from the needs identified by a number of council service areas. Suppliers were then asked to identify and tender for one or more of the available ‘lots’.



Alternative Options Considered

Do nothing. The current contracts for Horticultural Products and Tools had lapsed, therefore, in order to meet the Procurement Rules, the Council would need to go out for quotation/tender for individual items as and when they were required. This would result in numerous mini-procurement exercises being carried out, which would be inefficient, likely to lead to breaches of the procurement procedures and unlikely to be financially beneficial to the Council.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Director of Borough Economy be authorised to award contracts for the provision of Horticultural Products and Tools to the following organisations, at a cost of £475,000 from the period April 2022 to March 2026:

Lot No.	Description	Organisation
Lot 1	Aggregates & Turf	Green-Tech
Lot 2	Feeds, Seeds and Chemicals	Pitchmark
Lot 3a	Herbicides	Nomix
Lot 3b	Herbicides - Premixed	Nomix
Lot 4	Spraying Equipment	Tudor Environmental
Lot 5	Tools & Equipment	Corroy

- (2) that in connection with (1) above, the Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to enter into appropriate contracts with these organisations.

29/22

High Needs Block Funding Allocation

Approval was sought to distribute High Needs Block (HNB) grant funding allocated by central government to meet the needs of children and young people with additional needs, including special educational needs for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.



Reason for Decision

Every year the Council agreed with the Schools' Forum the local formulae through which the money would then be distributed to schools and early years settings. The Council was also responsible for distributing the high needs funding to meet the needs of children and young people with additional needs, including special educational needs. This was also done in consultation with the Schools' Forum.

Alternative Options Considered

A range of alternative proposals was considered during the stakeholder engagement and consultation process, before the final proposals were submitted to the Schools' Forum for approval on 8 November and 3 December 2021.

Agreed that the Director of Children and Education be authorised to distribute High Needs Block (HNB) grant funding allocated by central government to meet the needs of children and young people with additional needs, including special educational needs for the period 1 April 2022 to 21 March 2023.

30/22

Action Taken on a Matter of Urgency - Uplift of Hourly Rate - Domiciliary Care Costing Model

Cabinet noted details of the urgent action taken by the Leader of the Council, in relation to giving approval to an addition to the costing model used to calculate the domiciliary care hourly rate to include the increase to National Insurance Contributions from April 2022 and to uplift the hourly rate of the updated costing model for existing domiciliary care framework contracts and for the new domiciliary care agreements that are to be procured for service delivery from 1 September 2022.

The matter was urgent and could not be delayed until the next Cabinet meeting as procurement timescales were prohibitive to enable a report to Cabinet and legislative change requiring an increase to National Insurance Contributions was required from 6 April 2022.



The rate paid would be calculated using an agreed methodology, including the increase to National Insurance contributions for employers and an uplift in the hourly rate would be made to £16 an hour, from £15.16, from 1 April 2022.

Reason for Decision

The Council had a statutory duty under the Care Act 2014 to carry out an assessment of anyone who appears to require care and support. Local Authorities had the duty, under section 5 of the Care Act 2014, to shape and maintain an efficient and effective market of services for meeting care and support needs in the local area is firmly placed with them.

Alternative Options Considered

There was an option to do nothing and leave the model as it is, however it is likely that if it is not agreed, there is a risk to the ability of the Council to discharge its statutory obligations.

Agreed the details of the urgent action taken by the Leader of the Council, in relation to giving approval to an addition to the costing model used to calculate the domiciliary care hourly rate to include the increase to National Insurance Contributions from April 2022 and to uplift the hourly rate of the updated costing model for existing domiciliary care framework contracts and for the new domiciliary care agreements that are to be procured for service delivery from 1 September 2022 be noted.

31/22

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 paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended, by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, relating to the financial and business affairs of any person, including the authority holding that information.



32/22 **Nomination of Chair**

Resolved that Councillor Hartwell chair the remainder of the meeting.

33/22 **Sandwell Leisure Trust Business Plan 2021-24**

Consideration was given to the business plan presented by Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT) for 2021-2024.

Reason for Decision

Under the terms of the Management and Funding Agreement (MFA), the 'contract', there was a requirement for a three-year Business Plan to be in place and agreed with Sandwell Leisure Trust.

Negotiations relating to the business plan had been ongoing since August 2020. In early December 2021 a revised deadline for the resolution of all outstanding matters relating to the Business Plan 2021-2024 was agreed with Sandwell Leisure Trust. All matters were to be resolved by 24 January 2022.

Resolving matters related to the Sandwell Leisure Trust Business Plan 2021-2024 would ensure the sustainable delivery of leisure services in Sandwell, providing local people with local opportunities to be active, contributing to health and well-being.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism confirmed that the proposal would not have an impact on the delivery of the Aquatic Centre and the Commonwealth Games.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism also undertook to consider recommendations made by the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board in relation to the creation of a comprehensive wellbeing service due to the close connection between health and leisure.



Alternative Options Considered

- To extend the negotiation period;
- Accepting the Business Plan was not a recommended option.

In the event of termination, future alternative delivery arrangements would be progressed and a full Options Appraisal Report presented to Cabinet.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the business plan presented by Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT) for 2021-2024 in accordance with the Management and Funding Agreement dated 31st March 2004 (“hereinafter “the Agreement”) be refused;
- (2) that the Director of Borough Economy be given authority to:
 - (a) Formally notify SLT that the Council resolved not to approve SLT’s Business Plan for 2021-2024 (as set out at appendix 1 of the report as now submitted) and does not agree the unitary payments requested by SLT for the years 2022/23 and 2023/24 (as set out at appendix 2 of the report as now submitted).
 - (b) Serve reasonable notice of termination of the Agreement upon SLT due to the Council and SLT being unable to agree a business plan and unitary payment for the years 2021-2024 pursuant to clause 41.18.
 - (c) Bring a further report to Cabinet detailing a full Options Appraisal of future leisure service provision/delivery options.
 - (d) Negotiate and agree with SLT such arrangements as are deemed appropriate and/or necessary, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism, to enable



effective leisure service provision during the notice period under paragraph (2)(b) above.

- (e) Procure and appoint of an interim leisure provider, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism, in the event that SLT disputes the and walks away from the Agreement.

- (3) that the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer and Director of Borough Economy be authorised to negotiate, agree and execute any agreements, notices and/or documents necessary to give effect to paragraph (2) (a) – (e) above.

[Councillor Carmichael left the meeting for duration of this item]

34/22

Sandwell Community Dementia Support Service

Consideration was given to directly award a contract for the community dementia support service to a provider nominated by a group consisting of the delivery partners of the current service for twelve months duration with the flexibility to extend this by three months in the event of unplanned and unforeseeable delays to the procurement process running in parallel to the period of the directly awarded contract.

Reason for Decision

The direct award to a nominated lead provider for a period of twelve months (with the flexibility to extend for a further three months) would enable a comprehensive procurement process to be undertaken whilst ensuring continuity of this service during this period. This would also protect against unplanned delays in the procurement process.



Alternative Options Considered

A number of options were considered by members including seeking to direct award a contract to an existing delivery partner for up to 12 months whilst a formal procurement process was undertaken, to work with the current lead provider for a maximum of up to six months to maintain the service while a tender process was undertaken to secure a new lead provider or to work with the current lead provider for the duration of the contract.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to authorise the Director for Adult Social Care to directly award a contract for the community dementia support service to a provider nominated by a group consisting of the delivery partners of the current service;
- (2) that in connection with Resolution (1) above, the Director for Adult Social Care be authorised to award the contract for twelve months duration with the flexibility to extend this by three months in the event of unplanned and unforeseeable delays to the procurement process running in parallel to the period of the directly awarded contract;
- (3) that the Director of Adult Social Care be authorised to award the contract to a yet to be determined organisation for a Community Dementia Support Service;
- (4) that the Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, or their designated representative, be authorised to execute any documents necessary to give effect to (1) – (3) above for the provision of a Community Dementia Support Service;



- (5) that a further report be submitted to Cabinet on approval for another procurement process to be undertaken following the confirmation of funding from the Joint Partnership Board in June 2022.

[Councillor Piper left the meeting for duration of this item]

Meeting ended at 4.16pm.

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk



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Minutes of The Cabinet

**23 February 2022 at 3.30pm
at Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House**

Present: Councillor Carmichael (Leader of the Council)
Councillors Ahmed, Crompton, Hartwell, Millard, Piper
and Simms.

Also present: Councillors E M Giles, Moore and Shackleton.

Officers: Rashpal Bishop (Director of Adult Social Care), Alice Davey (Director of Borough Economy), Gillian Douglas (Director of Housing), Simone Hines (Director of Finance), Tony McGovern (Director of Regeneration and Growth), Surjit Tour (Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer) and Elaine Newsome (Service Manager – Democracy).

35/22 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bostan, L Giles, Mabena and I Padda.

36/22 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Ahmed declared a personal interest in Minute No. 45/22 (Sandwell Health Inequalities Programme: Grant funding for Sandwell Consortium CIC to deliver interventions to address health inequalities) on the basis that he volunteered as a Director at community centre that had been consulted upon within the report.

Councillor Hartwell declared a personal interest in Minute No. 45/22 (Sandwell Health Inequalities Programme: Grant funding for Sandwell Consortium CIC to deliver interventions to address health inequalities) on the basis that she was an employee of an organisation that had been consulted upon within the report.

Councillor Simms declared a pecuniary interest in Minute No. 49/22 (Q3 Budget Monitoring 2021/22) due to the nature of her employment.

37/22 **Additional Item of Business**

There were no additional items of business to consider.

38/22 **Capital Investment Proposal – Housing for Young People**

Approval was sought for the Director of Housing to be authorised to negotiate a suitable agreement with St Basils for the management and maintenance of apartments, to include 100% nomination rights for Sandwell Council and allocate £666,734 from the commuted sum pot of money (derived from Section 106 Agreements), as a contribution towards the refurbishment of 3 low rise blocks at Hallam Close, West Bromwich for the provision of 54 one-bedroom affordable rented apartments for young people.

Approval was also sought for the Director of Law and Governance to be authorised to execute (under seal if necessary) the agreement negotiated by the Director of Housing, and any ancillary documentation to secure the Council's contribution to, and rights in respect of the development.

The Chair of the Children Services and Education Scrutiny Board enquired whether young people could apply directly for this housing provision or whether it was based on recommendations.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Housing stated that Sandwell Council would have 100% nomination rights to the flats and could therefore assess the young person's needs and prioritise referrals to the scheme. Where young people approached St Basils directly, the Council would work with St Basils to assess the young person's housing needs and, if appropriate, put them through the nomination process. The details of the nominations agreement were yet to be worked out.

The Chair of Children Services and Education Scrutiny Board asked further questions regarding the criteria moving on from the provision.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Housing stated the accommodation was designed and reserved for young people up to the age of 24. There was no fixed time limit on how long the young person could stay up until this age. However, experience from phase 1 had shown that young people's circumstances changed, and most young people moved on of their own volition. The Council and St Basils would support young people with future housing options well before they reach the upper age limit.

The Chair of Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board enquired whether care leavers in the provision would continue to be supported by the Council. The Cabinet Member for Housing stated that the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities would apply, and any care leaver would still have access to support.

Reason for Decision

The report sought agreement to the allocation of £666,734 of commuted sum monies (derived from Affordable Housing Section 106 Agreements) as a capital contribution towards the refurbishment of 3 existing but unused residential apartment blocks near the site of Sandwell General Hospital in West Bromwich. The refurbished buildings would provide 54 self-contained affordable apartments to help prevent and relieve homelessness affecting young people in Sandwell.

The Council would act as the catalyst for bringing 54 additional affordable homes in to use and could secure 100% nomination rights to these properties for an investment contribution of only £12,347 per home.

The intended recipient of this investment, St Basils (a Registered Provider, Number H3994), would be required to enter into a suitable agreement with the Council to ensure that the allocation of the funding was in accordance with the specified purpose of the Section 106 Agreements and would meet the relevant legal requirements. The scheme would be phase 2 of the development of the project, phase 1 having opened in 2015 with 32 shared apartments.

Alternative Options Considered

There were no other alternative options contained within the report.

Agreed:-

- (1) that, subject to planning consent and negotiation of a suitable agreement in accordance with Resolution (2) below on terms to be agreed by the Director of Housing, approval be given to allocate £666,734 from the commuted sum pot of money (derived from Section 106 Agreements), as a contribution towards the refurbishment of 3 low rise blocks at Hallam Close, West Bromwich for the provision of 54 one-bedroom affordable rented apartments for young people;
- (2) that the Director of Housing be authorised to negotiate a suitable agreement with St Basils, a registered provider of social housing, for the management and maintenance of these apartments by St Basils, to include 100% nomination rights for Sandwell Council;

- (3) that the Director of Law & Governance be authorised to execute (under seal if necessary) the agreement negotiated by the Director of Housing, and any ancillary documentation to secure the Council's contribution to, and rights in respect of the development.

39/22

Review of Council Tenancy Conditions

Approval was sought to adopt the revised tenancy conditions and, that in compliance Section 103 of the 1985 Housing Act, the Director – Housing be authorised to issue a Notice of Variation to all tenanted households in due course.

Reason for Decision

The Council had recently concluded a statutory consultation regarding proposed amendments to the Council's Tenancy Agreement. The Tenancy Agreement was the legal contract between the Council and tenant and detailed the tenant's rights and responsibilities and the Council's rights and responsibilities.

Last reviewed in 2009, the current tenancy conditions had been reviewed to both update and align them with the modernisation of the Council's Housing Service.

The Council needed to ensure that the conditions were fit for purpose specifically to support the sustainment of tenancies, to continue to tackle anti-social behaviour, to help the Council to maintain housing standards and to contribute toward preventing homelessness.

Alternative Options Considered

There were no alternative options other than to retain the current Tenancy Conditions that took effect from October 2009.

Agreed that approval be given to adopt the revised tenancy conditions, as submitted, and that in compliance Section 103 of the 1985 Housing Act, the Director – Housing be authorised to issue a Notice of Variation to all tenanted households in due course.

40/22

Approval for consultation of the Draft Statement of Community Involvement 2022

Approval was sought to consult on the Statement of Community Involvement and to authorise the Director of Regeneration and Growth to make any minor amendments to the Statement of Community Involvement prior to circulation.

Reason for Decision

As the planning system had the potential to affect everyone, it was considered important that communities within Sandwell were able to contribute to the preparation of plans and policies. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) outlined how Sandwell Council would involve stakeholders such as; the public, developers, businesses and other agencies in the preparation of its planning policy documents and in the determination of planning applications. An SCI was adopted by Cabinet in 2016. This report proposed consultation on the revision of that document.

It was proposed that this draft Statement of Community Involvement was subject to a six-week consultation period. Responses would be considered, and any amendments would be the subject of a further report prior to adoption of the SCI.

Alternative Options Considered

The alternative option would be to continue to use the SCI adopted in 2016. However, this document would not be up to date and would not tackle issues surrounding the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to consult on the Statement of Community Involvement;
- (2) that the Director of Regeneration and Growth be authorised to make any minor amendments to the Statement of Community Involvement prior to circulation.

41/22 **Approval to proceed with Small Sided Spaces project**

Approval was sought to apply for external funding via the Football Foundation to develop and deliver a portfolio of 'Small sided' multi-sport facilities within the Borough of Sandwell as part of the legacy of the Commonwealth Games.

The Chair of Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board raised a question regarding the identification of suitable spaces for the projects and whether they would be at least one in each town in Sandwell.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism stated that the external investment into local projects would be subject to strategic evidence and demonstrating clear demand, via the Playing Pitch Strategy and Local Football Facilities Plan. Smethwick had been identified for the pilot project due to the location of the Aquatics Centre and the Commonwealth Games links. Further projects would also be delivered elsewhere in Sandwell with further scoping and consultation required. It was endeavoured to ensure that the projects reflect a reasonable spread around Sandwell.

In response to a question by the Chair of Children Services and Education Scrutiny Board regarding the inclusion of other sports within the projects, the Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism stated that it was a requirement of the funding and a key objective of the project for other sports to be delivered as well as football. The facilities should be developed to accommodate other sports and activation of other activities.

The Chair of Children Services and Education Scrutiny Board enquired whether all-weather pitches would be considered as part of the project. In response, the Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism stated that in most instances, a 'hard court' would be most appropriate although in some instances either a polymeric or hard wearing 3G surface may be used. Further details would be available once the community engagement had been carried out.

Reason for Decision

Inward investment from the Football Foundation would enable the delivery of Small Sided multi-sport facilities. These may be 'refurbishment' of existing facilities that had fallen into disrepair or the creation of brand-new facilities. Approval to apply for external funding would enable officers to complete and submit the necessary grant paperwork.

The project would be leaving a lasting 'Legacy' from the Commonwealth Games and recognised Sandwell's contribution as a 'host Borough'. It would also assist in the Council's efforts to help residents engage in sporting activities, combat inactivity and encourage healthy lifestyles.

Alternative Options Considered

No alternative options had been considered for this project. The 'Do nothing' approach would result in the loss of potential inward investment along with a missed opportunity to upgrade sports facilities and engage communities in sport/leisure.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to apply for external funding via the Football Foundation to develop and deliver a portfolio of 'Small sided' multi-sport facilities within the Borough of Sandwell with the facilities being a 'legacy' from the Commonwealth Games and will be either refurbishments of existing facilities or new builds;

- (2) that the Director of Borough Economy in consultation with the Section 151 Officer be authorised to:
- Prepare any necessary Tendering documentation
 - Procure, in accordance with the public procurement rules, the Council's procurement and financial regulations a contractor(s) to carry out works on site; to award a contract and to enter into or execute under seal any financial agreement(s) as may be deemed necessary in relation to the project
 - Accept Grant funding from the Football Foundation on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director of Borough Economy in consultation with Legal services.
 - Commit 'Capital' match funding of £100,000 towards the project (£50,000 from Public Health and £50,000 from Sport & Leisure). The minimum funding ratio is 75 : 25. Therefore a maximum total project cost for the main project would be £400,000 with the Football Foundation investing £300,000 along with a £100,000 match funding amount from Sandwell Council
- (3) that a 'Front Runner' project is delivered, completed ahead of the Commonwealth Games.

42/22

Provision of a Revenues and Benefits application, a corporate document management solution and scanning and indexing services

Approval was sought to authorise the Director of Business Strategy and Change to award a contract to NEC Software Solutions (formerly Northgate Public Services) for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2027 with an option to extend for a further 2 years up to 31 March 2029 for the following services:

- a) Provision of a hosted NEC Revenues and Benefits System
- b) Scanning and Indexing Services
- c) Provision of a hosted NEC Document Management solution (formerly Images@work)
- d) An optional back-scanning service

Reason for Decision

Approval is sought to award a 5-year contract with an option to extend for a further 2 years to ensure continuity and ongoing maintenance and support for core business systems used by the council. Throughout this period the contract would also allow other service areas to be integrated into the use of the systems and enable full compliance with the requirements of framework agreement.

Alternative Options Considered

The applications and services are considered essential for the delivery of key council services. Going out to the market was considered however the cost of change would be greater than the cost of this direct award.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Director of Business Strategy and Change be authorised to award a contract to NEC Software Solutions (formerly Northgate Public Services) for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2027 with an option to extend for a further 2 years up to 31 March 2029 for the following services:
 - a) Provision of a hosted NEC Revenues and Benefits System
 - b) Scanning and Indexing Services
 - c) Provision of a hosted NEC Document Management solution (formerly Images@work)
 - d) An optional back-scanning service

At a total cost for the above services over a 5-year period of £2,174,554.

- (2) that the Director Law and Governance – Monitoring Officer be authorised to execute any documentation necessary to enable the course of action set out in Resolution (1) above to proceed;
- (3) that any necessary exemptions be made to the Council’s Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules to enable the course of action referred to in Resolution (1) above to proceed.

43/22

eCapture and Webcapture Services

Approval was sought to authorise the Director of Finance to make a direct award of a contract to Govtech Solutions Limited for providing automation services for Council Tax, Benefits and Business Rates to the Revenues and Benefits Service, procured through the G-Cloud 12 Framework Agreement , for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2024 with an option to extend for a further 2 years up to 31 March 2026.

The value of the new contract was £168,110 per year making the total including the 2-year optional extension period £672,440.

Reason for Decision

The Revenues and Benefits Service had been using Govtech’s automated services since 2006.

The current contract was due to come to an end on 31 March 2022. It had delivered front and back-office productivity gains by automating transactions enabling Revenues and Benefits staff to focus on the more complex incoming work streams which cannot be automated. During the last financial year, over 174,500 transactions were handled by the Govtech solution.

Alternative Options Considered

Govtech Solutions Limited were the sole provider of eCapture and Webservices. One other provider resells Govtech Solutions Limited services through a package of digital services, however, this provider had been approached and confirmed that they would not bid for Sandwell's requirements.

An alternative would be to discontinue the use of Govtech however significant additional resource would be required to carry out the manual processing of notifications and both speed of processing and accuracy of data would be adversely affected.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Director of Finance be authorised to make a direct award of a contract to Govtech Solutions Limited for providing automation services for Council Tax, Benefits and Business Rates to the Revenues and Benefits Service, procured through the G-Cloud 12 Framework Agreement (Framework reference: RM1557.12), for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2024 with an option to extend for a further 2 years up to 31 March 2026;
- (2) that the Director Law and Governance – Monitoring Officer be authorised to execute any documentation necessary to enable the course of action referred to in Resolution (1) above to proceed;
- (3) that any necessary exemptions be made to the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules to enable the course of action referred to in Resolution (1) above to proceed.

44/22 **Direct Award of Microsoft Server Cloud Enrolment (SCE) License renewal using KCS framework agreement**

Approval was sought to authorise the Director of Business Strategy and Change to make a direct award of contract

using the Kent County Suppliers (KCS) framework to Phoenix Software Limited for the renewal of the existing Microsoft Server Cloud Enrolment (SCE) license agreement for continued support and licensing arrangements for a three (3) year period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2025 at a total cost of £377,555.76.

Reason for Decision

The current three-year Microsoft SCE agreement was due to expire on the 31 March 2022

The renewal of the Microsoft SCE license agreement was required for the continued use of the technology products being delivered through the agreement and for continued usage, vendor support and software license compliancy. These products made up a large part of existing ICT infrastructure.

Alternative Options Considered

A full tender exercise could have been conducted. However, there was an essential need to maintain service continuity across both existing Microsoft agreements with Phoenix Software Limited. Were the contract to be let to another supplier, there could be several operational problems. A direct award through the KCS framework allowed these issues to be negated in a compliant manner.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Director – Business Strategy and Change be authorised to make a direct award of contract using the Kent County Suppliers (KCS) framework to Phoenix Software Limited for the renewal of the existing Microsoft SCE license agreement for continued support and licensing arrangements for a three (3) year period from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2025 at a total cost of £377,555.76;
- (2) that the Director Law and Governance – Monitoring Officer be authorised to execute any documentation necessary to enable the course of

action referred to in Resolution (1) above to proceed;

- (3) that any necessary exemptions be made to the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules to enable the course of action referred to in Resolution (1) above to proceed.

45/22

Sandwell Health Inequalities Programme: Grant funding for Sandwell Consortium CIC to deliver interventions to address health inequalities

Approval was sought to award a 3-year grant (April 2022 – March 2025) to Sandwell Consortium CIC to address health inequalities within ethnic minority communities in Sandwell, prioritising mental health and wellbeing and prevention of long-term conditions. The 3-year grant was for £178,000 per annum to commence on 1 April 2022, for three years until 31 March 2025.

Reason for Decision

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) people had been acutely affected by pre-existing health inequalities. Many of these underlying inequalities made the impact of the pandemic far more severe for BAME people than their White British counterparts (House of Commons Women & Equalities Committee, 2000).

This grant to Sandwell Consortium would form just one part of a wider programme of Public Health work to address health inequalities that were widened during the pandemic. Other key groups had been adversely affected and specific work would be required to meet a wider range of needs.

Alternative Options Considered

There was an option to not invest in this grant. Without investment, health inequalities in Sandwell that widened during the pandemic would continue to worsen and become an increasing difficult challenge to address.

Services could be commissioned from provider companies on the open market. However, this would be out of line with Public Health England's recommendation that COVID recovery be achieved through "working in partnership with local BAME and faith communities". It would also potentially move resources out of Sandwell and fail to sustain the local community organisations that COVID recovery depends on.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to award a 3-year grant (April 2022 – March 2025) to Sandwell Consortium CIC to address health inequalities within ethnic minority communities in Sandwell, prioritising mental health and wellbeing and prevention of long-term conditions;
- (2) that in connection with Resolution (1) above, the Director of Public Health be authorised to award a 3-year grant of £178,000 per annum to Sandwell Consortium CIC;
- (3) that in connection with (2) above, the Director of Public Health be authorised to enable the grant to commence on 1 April 2022, for three years until 31 March 2025.

[Councillor Ahmed and Hartwell left the meeting for the duration of this item]

46/22

Communications and Corporate Affairs Team

Approval was sought for the proposed structure for a Communications and Corporate Affairs Team as the basis for consultation with employees and trade unions.

Approval was also sought for the revised structure for the Communications and Corporate Affairs team to be implemented with effect from 1 April 2022 and for the assimilation of relevant staff pursuant to the appointment process, should the Director of Business Strategy and Change, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for

Finance and Resources, be satisfied with the outcome consultation process.

In the event there were any issues arising from the consultation process on the revised structure deemed to be significant by the Director – Business Strategy and Change, a further report would be submitted to Cabinet.

Reason for Decision

The council's new corporate plan: Big Plans for a Great Place, set out its ambition to deliver Vision 2030, and demonstrated a clear ambition and a key role for Communications as a core, strategic service in achieving the outcome of instilling a One Council, One Team culture across the organisation which underpinned the delivery of all strategic objectives within the plan. Therefore, it was vital that a skilled, fit for purpose communications and corporate affairs team was in place to support this ambition. In addition, as the Local Government landscape and the needs of the Council change, it was important that the Communications Team adapted effectively to meet those changes and needs

Alternative Options Considered

Three options were explored as follows: Option 1 – Do nothing- continue with the existing communications team arrangements.

- Options 2 – Engage with other local authorities to create a 'shared' service.
- Option 3 – Restructure the existing communications team, adding additional resource to create a Communications and Corporate Affairs Team, as recommended by the external review.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the proposed structure for a Communications and Corporate Affairs Team, as set out in Appendix 2, be approved as the basis for consultation with employees and trade unions;
- (2) that subject to the Director of Business Strategy and Change, in consultation with the Cabinet

Member for Finance and Resources, being satisfied that all significant concerns or issues raised during the consultation referred in Resolution (1) above being satisfactorily responded to, the revised structure for the Communications and Corporate Affairs team be approved and implemented with effect from 1 April 2022;

- (3) that subject to Resolutions (1) and (2) above being approved, the Director – Business Strategy and Change be authorised to assimilate relevant staff pursuant to the appointment process (and the council’s Human Resources policies and procedures) as soon as possible after consultation responses have been considered.

47/22

Information Governance- Records Retention

Approval was sought for the Council’s Corporate Retention Policy, Email retention Policy and the Information Rights Policy for the purposes of complying with UKGDPR and in line with good practice as required.

Approval was also sought for the Director of Law and Governance and SIRO, in consultation with the Leader, to undertake requisite steps to ensure the Council complied with the approved E-mail Retention Policy, Corporate Retention Policy and Information Rights Policy and aligned with changes in good practice and legislation as and when required.

Reason for Decision

There was a legal responsibility for the Council to comply with its legal obligation in relation to the collection, use and retention of information relating to individuals.

The purpose of the policies was to ensure that the Council managed the data that it holds appropriately and in accordance with the legislative framework as principally set out in UKGDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Alternative Options Considered

The current state and management of email information is an area which lacked compliance and governance controls and therefore there were no other known options to consider.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to the council's Corporate Retention Policy, Email Retention Policy and the Information Rights Policy, as now submitted, for the purposes of complying with UKGDPR and in line with good practice as required;
- (2) that the Director Law and Governance and SIRO, in consultation with the Leader, be authorised to undertake requisite steps to ensure the Council complies with the approved E-mail Retention Policy, Corporate Retention Policy and Information Rights Policy;
- (3) that the Director Law and Governance and SIRO, in consultation with the Leader, be authorised to amend the E-mail Retention Policy, Corporate Retention Policy and Information Rights Policy to comply with changes in good practice and legislation as and when required.

48/22

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund – Wave 1

Approval was sought to authorise acceptance of grant funding from the Government's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) of £2,888,327 (2/3 of £4,332,800) to fund proposed energy-efficiency improvements to council-owned dwellings in Smethwick and to seek approval to allocate the sum of £1,444,473 (1/3 of £4,332,800) from the Housing Revenue account (HRA), to match-fund the proposed works.

Approval was also sought to authorise the Director of Housing to instruct agencies procured via the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to carry out specialist duties,

on behalf of Sandwell MBC, in relation to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

Authorisation was also sought to enter into a grant funding agreement with BEIS, subject to a satisfactory financial appraisal being completed by the Strategic Investment Unit.

Reason for Decision

This initiative supported the current drive towards a greener, low carbon economy and a need to address Climate Change priorities. It also aimed to help address high levels of fuel poverty in the Smethwick area.

Acceptance of the proposals would enable:

- A reduction in fuel poverty levels
- Improved living conditions for tenants of 273 Council homes
- Improved EPC ratings for the properties concerned
- Promote the Council's reputation as being serious about climate
- change and the move towards a carbon-neutral economy.

Alternative Options Considered

Should the Council decline this offer and still wish to continue with the projects, then alternative arrangements would need to be made in order to fund an extra £2,888,327 in addition to a proposed commitment of £1,444,473. This option was ruled out because it was important that we draw down funding for retrofitting. All registered providers of social housing, including local authorities, will need access to grant funding in order to meet climate change targets in housing.

Agreed:-

(1) that approval be given to authorise the Director of Housing to accept grant funding, from the Government's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) for £2,888,327 (2/3 of £4,332,800) to fund proposed energy efficiency improvements to council-owned dwellings in Smethwick;

- (2) that subject to (1) above, the Director of Finance allocate the sum of £1,444,473 (1/3 of £4,332,800) from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), to match-fund proposed energy-efficiency improvements to council-owned dwellings in Smethwick;
- (3) authorise the Director of Housing to instruct the Council's External Improvement Programme construction partner (Vinci Facilities Ltd), to deliver associated energy improvement works in accordance with existing contractual arrangements;
- (4) authorise the Director of Housing to instruct agencies procured via the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to carry out specialist duties, on behalf of Sandwell MBC, in relation to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

49/22

Q3 Budget Monitoring 2021/22

Consideration was given to the financial monitoring position as at 31 December 2021 (Quarter 2021/22) and the projected financial position.

Approval was sought to a number of budget virements and changes to the Council's capital programme.

The Chair of the Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board questioned whether the Council would consider undertaking an external review of the property maintenance account and the way in which this operated. In response, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources stated that the Scrutiny Board was reviewing the workings of the Property Maintenance Account and were meeting with officers imminently.

In response to the question raised by the Chair of the Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board regarding the date for the competition of the refresh of the

corporate Medium-Term Financial Strategy, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources stated it was aimed to be completed by the end of June.

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.

Alternative Options Considered

There were 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 reflect increases in the available resources since the 2021/22 budgets were approved.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the financial monitoring position as at 31 December 2021 (Quarter 3 2021/22) be noted and referred to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board for consideration and comment;
- (2) that the projected financial position and where services are projecting an overspend of £5.233m against allocated budgets and an underspend of £7.822m after adjusting for the movement on reserves, use of corporate resources and the application of centrally held Covid-19 grant funding be noted;
- (3) that the following budget virements above the higher of £0.250m or 1% of the Gross Budget of the service area be approved:

Virements above £0.250m or 1% of Gross Budget for approval by Cabinet	£'000	£'000
<u>Adult Social Care</u>		
Transfer of Hospital Team posts to STAR service	292	
Transfer of Hospital Team posts to STAR service		292

Creation of Workforce Grant within ledger	1,251	1,251
Creation of Workforce 2 Grant within ledger	2,310	2,310
Creation of Omicron support grant within the ledger	462	462
Creation of Rapid Testing Grant (October to March)	684	684
Creation of Infection Prevention & Control Grant (October to March)	1,249	1,249
Creation of Vaccine Grant (October to March)	92	92
<u>Regen & Growth</u>		
Markets and Street Trading move from Borough Economy to Regeneration and Growth	405	
<u>Borough Economy</u>		
Community Safety and Resilience from Housing to BE		621
Markets and Street Trading move from Borough Economy to Regeneration and Growth		405
<u>Housing</u>		
Community Safety and Resilience from Housing to BE	621	
TOTAL	7,366	7,366

- (4) that the following changes to the Council's capital programme be approved:-

£0.400m to be added into the 2022/23 capital programme in relation to the West Bromwich Town Hall Quarter project within Borough Economy. These resources are essentially match funding for the larger Towns Fund project.

A virement of £0.068m in 2022/23 from the Blackheath Library project within Borough Economy to further contribute match funding towards the West Bromwich Town Hall Quarter project mentioned above.

[Councillor Simms left the meeting for duration of this item]

50/22

General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programme Budgets 2022/23

Approval was sought for the proposals for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Budget, Capital Programme and Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23.

The Chair of the Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board enquired whether the Council would review its proposal to increase garage rent fees further to the comments made by the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources stated that the increase reflected the fact that no rent increase had been applied for a number of years and the new charge was favourable when benchmarked with neighbouring local authorities and storage companies. It was not felt that there would be equalities implications arising from this action as the service was discretionary and not based on an assessment of needs. On that basis, the proposal was to proceed with the increase in charges but the Council would monitor any terminations of garage tenancies as a result of the rent increase to consider if a further Equality Impact Assessment or mitigation was necessary.

The Chair of the Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board asked a further question regarding when the new telephony system was expected to be in place. In response, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources stated that it was aimed to be in place within 12 months.

Reason for Decision

The Local Government Finance Act 1972 required the Council to set a balanced, risk assessed budget each year and approve a Council Tax precept by 11th March.

Alternative Options Considered

Cabinet could request that alternative savings options be proposed and agreed, although there was limited time to do this and still be able to carry out the appropriate consultation on alternative savings. Cabinet could also consider an alternative Council Tax increase, subject to adhering to the Referendum Principles, or alternative increases in Fees and Charges.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the key points from the Local Government Finance Settlement and the impact on the budget position for 2022/23 be noted;
- (2) that the feedback on the draft budget proposals from the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board be noted;
- (3) that the feedback received on the draft budget from business representatives be noted;
- (4) that there be due regard to the feedback from Equality Impact Assessments and consultation feedback, as now submitted;
- (5) that the fees and charges increase for 2022/23, as submitted, be approved;
- (6) that the contract sum for Sandwell Children's Trust of £70.474m be approved;

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">(7) that the Council be recommended to approve the final General Fund budget position, as now submitted;(8) that the Council be recommended to approve the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2022/23 as now submitted;(9) that the Council be recommended to approve the Council Tax precept for 2022/23 of £117,967,934, representing a 1.99% increase in Council Tax and a further 3% increase in the Adult Social Care precept; |
|---|

- (10) that the Director of Finance's assurance statement on the robustness of the budget estimates and reserves, as now submitted, be noted;

- (11) that the Council be recommended to approve the Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators, as now submitted;
- (12) that the Council be recommended to approve the Capital Programme for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account for 2022/23, as now submitted;

- (13) that the Director of Finance be authorised to make transfers to or from reserves during the financial year to ensure that adequate reserves are maintained and adjusted when spend from earmarked reserves is required;
- (14) that the Director of Finance be authorised to adjust the funding sources applied to the Capital Programme during the year to maximise flexibility in use of capital resources and minimise borrowing costs where possible;
- (15) that a fundamental review of the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Capital Strategy be undertaken in the first quarter of 2022/23 and a further report submitted to Cabinet for approval;
- (16) that the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, be authorised to approve and administer the Council Tax rebate scheme for 2022/23 and approve a policy for the discretionary element of the scheme.

51/22

Recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of the Performance and Management of the Waste Partnership Contract

The Cabinet considered the recommendations from the Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board in

respect of the Scrutiny Review of the Performance and Management of the Waste Partnership Contract.

On behalf of the Cabinet Member for the Environment, the Leader thanked the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board for their comprehensive report and recommendations.

The Cabinet Member for Community Safety highlighted the thorough scrutiny report and welcomed the recommendation to introduce a Scrutiny Board to monitor the management and performance of the Council's contracts and to look at contracted services.

The efforts of the frontline staff during the pandemic were highlighted and emphasised that the inquiry focused on the wider management and performance of the contract.

Reasons for Decision

In response to both public and political concern, the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board decided to undertake a review of the performance and management of the waste partnership contract.

The repercussions of Covid-19 had undoubtedly provided additional challenges for Serco in delivering its contractual requirements. That aside, the Scrutiny Board felt that significant issues remained with the performance and management of the contract.

The findings and recommendations set out in the report were based on evidence gathered between October and December 2021, from a variety of sources.

The Cabinet was requested to consider the recommendations and determine what action it wished to take. In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the Cabinet was requested to respond to the recommendations of the scrutiny board within two months, setting out any approved recommendations and how they would be implemented. Progress against these recommendations would be monitored by the Children and Education Scrutiny Board.

Alternative Options Considered

The waste partnership contract was a high value contract. The risk of default would have a significant impact on both Serco and the Council, and ultimately our Council taxpayers if the contract were to fail. To do nothing was not an option. Whilst the former Interim Director Borough Economy had begun to address some of the areas of concern, this review had strengthened and complemented that work.

Agreed that the Cabinet consider the following recommendations from the Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board in respect of the Scrutiny Review of the Performance and Management of the Waste Partnership Contract and respond to the recommendations within two months, setting out any approved recommendations and how they will be implemented.:

- (1) that Serco sets out within its Service Delivery Plan 2022/23 how it will increase recycling rates, including options for recycling in communal living areas;
- (2a) that Serco provides a contractually compliant communication and engagement plan and that this is aligned to the Council's functions;
- (2b) that the plan is monitored through the agreed governance structures for the monitoring of the contract, including the Waste Partnership Board;
- (3) that arrangements for the reintroduction of food waste collections in 2022 be shared and agreed with the Authorised Officer by end of March 2022;
- (4) that Serco works with the Director of Borough Economy to develop a plan for the promotion of re-use options (i.e. for

furniture), including working with voluntary sector partners;

- (5a) that Serco reviews its approach to street cleansing, and submits a Street Cleansing Improvement Plan to the Director of Borough Economy by end March 2022, setting out a revised approach that moves away from the current and ineffective zone-based approach and takes into account population density, seasonality and data on areas of highest need;
- (5b) that the Plan is monitored and improvement progress/delivery/KPIs is reported and monitored through the agreed governance structures for the monitoring of the contract, including the Waste Partnership Board;
- (6a) that Serco completes an audit of Sandwell's street litter bin stock and its condition by end of March 2022;
- (6b) that Serco submits plans for consideration of a pilot scheme to implement smart technology linked to suitable locations for street bins;
- (7a) that the progress made with the Fleet Replacement Programme is maintained and that Serco submits the delayed Fleet Replacement Programme, which should be aligned with operational requirements and the Street Cleansing Improvement Plan, and include options for a more sustainable fleet, to the Director of Borough Economy by end of April 2022;
- (7b) that the delivery of the Fleet Replacement Programme is monitored through the agreed governance structures for the monitoring of the contract, including the Waste Partnership Board;

- (8) that both Serco and the Council consider reviewing the resources and funding provided to Litter Watch, with a view to increasing these if possible;
- (9) that Serco informs the Authorised Officer of any changes to its senior management teams, in connection with the contract, within 10 days of the new post-holder's start date;
- (10a) that Serco provides an update to the Scrutiny Board, in six months, on the progress made to improve morale and resolve workforce issues, including the establishment of the joint internal working group referred to in evidence gathering;
- (10b) that the Director Borough Economy ensures that Serco is carrying out its contractual requirements in relation to undertaking regular staff surveys and that the results of such surveys are acted upon appropriately;
- (11) that the constitution and terms of reference of the Waste Partnership Strategic Board are reviewed, and consideration is given to including the relevant scrutiny Chair as a member of the Board;
- (12) that the Director of Law and Governance ensures that the Joint Consultative meets regularly (e.g. quarterly) to enable any staffing issues in relation to the contract to be addressed in a timely manner;
- (13a) that the Governance and Constitution Review Committee is asked to recommend to the Council that an additional scrutiny board is established, with effect from the 2022/23 municipal year, to monitor the management and performance of the

Council's contracts with Serco, Sandwell Children's Trust and Sandwell Leisure Trust;

- (13b) that the new board considers how stakeholders and the public can contribute to its work and monitoring processes;
- (14) that the Director of Borough Economy reviews the structure of the Waste Client Team to ensure that it is sufficiently resourced to support a higher level of oversight and contract monitoring;
- (15) that a review is undertaken, and a process established, within 12 months, to ensure that there is clarity between the Council and Serco in terms of ownership and responsibility in the public realm.

52/22

Action Taken on a Matter of Urgency

Cabinet noted details of the urgent action taken by the Leader of the Council, in relation to giving approval to the Director of Adult Social Care to distribute the Workforce Recruitment Retention Fund (Round 1 November 2021 and Round 2 December 2021), Social Care Omicron Support Fund (January 2022) and the Adult Social Care Infection Control and Testing Fund (October 2021) as per the Department of Health and Social Care guidance.

Reasons for Decision

The matters were urgent and could not be delayed until the next Cabinet meeting given the short timescales to distribute and spend the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund for adult social care (round 1 & 2) and the DHSC adult social care Omicron Support Fund, as required in the DHSC guidance by 31 March 2022. The DHSC expected a reporting return in February 2022 on how these funds had been utilised. Failure to submit a return would mean the funds being reclaimed

back by the DHSC, at a critical time, when care providers in Sandwell were struggling for financial support.

An urgent decision was required in order to distribute and spend Adult Social Care Infection Control and Testing Funding (round 3) as per the DHSC guidance and to prevent the need to return any unused resources back to the DHSC.

Alternative Options Considered

No other options were considered, the Council must comply with the DHSC guidance. This set out the Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund and Omicron Support for adult social care including information on the distribution of funds and reporting requirements.

Agreed that the following details of the urgent actions taken by the Leader of the Council be noted:-

- (1) in relation to authorising the Director of Adult Social Care to distribute the Workforce Recruitment and Retention fund (Round 1 November 2021 and Round 2 December 2021) as per the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) guidance;
- (2) to authorise the Director of Adult Social Care to distribute the Adult Social Care Omicron Support Fund (January 2022) as per the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) guidance;
- (3) in relation to authorising the Director of Adult Social Care to distribute the Adult Social Care Infection Control and Testing Fund (October 2021) as per the Department of Health and Social Care guidance.

53/22

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 paragraph 3 of Schedule

12A to the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended, by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, relating to the financial and business affairs of any person, including the authority holding that information.

54/22

Acquisition of Kings Square Shopping Centre, West Bromwich

Approval was sought for the acquisition of the leasehold interest in Kings Square Shopping Centre, West Bromwich.

Approval was also sought for the Director of Regeneration and Growth to be authorised to undertake a procurement process and appoint a specialist firm of management surveyors to manage the centre on the Council's behalf.

The Chair of the Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board enquired whether strategic finance was asked to conduct an appraisal of the proposal.

On behalf of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth, the Cabinet Member for Community Safety stated that the acquisition of Kings Square was part of the West Bromwich Retail Diversification Project within the government-funded Towns Fund Programme.

Due to the number of Business Cases required to be submitted to government within a short timescale, Cabinet agreed that the completion of the Full Business Cases would be carried out by an external consultant rather than the Council's Strategic Investment Unit (SIU). The SIU then review the full business case before it was submitted to the Council's Towns Fund Assurance Panel. This process had been completed and the overall Benefit Cost Ratio of the Retail Diversification Project is 1.05, which was above the minimum level required under the Towns Fund criteria. The Assurance Panel approved the Business Case and SIU review on 21 February and it would now be submitted to government in March.

The Chair of the Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board also raised a question regarding the contingency plans that would be implemented if the Council failed to find someone suitable to run the shopping centre on its behalf.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Community Safety stated that the property management industry in the UK was very well served by experienced managing agents who acted for the owners of shopping centres and other commercial property assets throughout the UK, so there was no reason to think that SMBC would not be able to find a suitable firm to manage Kings Square. As a contingency officer had the in-house capability to manage the centre but consider that by appointing a firm with specific experience in shopping centre management it would reduce the risk of income deterioration.

In response to the question raised by the Chair of the Economy Skills Transport Scrutiny Board regarding whether recent building condition and asbestos surveys had been undertaken, the Cabinet Member for Community Safety stated that these would be undertaken shortly after Cabinet approval, prior to the exchange of contracts.

Reason for Decision

The acquisition of Kings Square Shopping Centre would facilitate the delivery of the West Bromwich Masterplan.

The redevelopment of Kings square would play a vital role in transforming West Bromwich Town Centre and realising the ambitions set out in the West Bromwich Masterplan. Due to its prominence in the town centre, it would be critical to help change the current perception of place/place making and, crucially, it would unlock economic growth by significantly reconfiguring the retail landscape of the town, reducing surplus retail space across the wider retail submarket and increasing demand for new retail space. Savills research suggested that Kings Square offered the most transformational opportunity in the town and that this redevelopment would be key in setting the town on a different growth trajectory, which would directly impact future land values and viability, improving the likelihood of organic growth and investment in future.

Alternative Options Considered

The Council could refrain from purchasing any property, relying instead on private developers bringing sites forward and submitting planning applications. However, there was no guarantee that owners would progress innovative schemes of the quality required, and in fact it was unlikely that any schemes would be brought forward for several years. Without intervention, the deliverability of the West Bromwich Masterplan would be extremely uncertain and public expectations would need to be managed accordingly.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the acquisition of the leasehold interest in Kings Square Shopping Centre, West Bromwich for £4.75 million plus costs, with the inclusion of fees, stamp duty, surveys & due diligence costs will be £5,104,500 plus VAT, be approved;
- (2) that in connection with Resolution (1) above, the Director of Regeneration & Growth, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer, be authorised to approve contract documentation and execute it under seal, and to complete the purchase;
- (3) that the Director of Regeneration & Growth be authorised to approve the undertaking of a procurement process and the appointment of a specialist firm of management surveyors to manage the Kings Square centre, West Bromwich on the Council's behalf;
- (4) that in connection with Resolution (1) above, the Director of Finance be authorised to include total acquisition costs to the Capital Programme for 2022/23.

Approval was sought to authorise the Director of Adult Social Care to approve the early voluntary cessation of the Sandwell Community Caring Trust (SCCT) 30-year contract for 80 care home beds, of which 20 years are remaining with effect from 30 April 2022.

Reason for Decision

The landscape of social care was dynamic and would continue to change. Although this contract met the needs of the service 10 years ago there was now a more progressive approach to service delivery which focussed on supporting people to lead independent lives within their own communities with a reduced reliance on residential care. The council wished to ensure that it future proofed care and support options and provided the best quality services to its citizens which no longer relied on traditional models but deliver cutting edge design, technology and access. To achieve this the council had invested in exciting new developments which offer further choice options for vulnerable people.

The term and value of the contract allowed very little flexibility. The existing 20- year term did not support the council's current corporate objectives and both parties agreed that the contract was no longer fit for purpose.

SCCT approached SMBC in June 2020 to start negotiations to end the 30-year contract by mutual arrangement.

Alternative Options Considered

A number of options were considered by members including seeking to direct award a contract to an existing delivery partner for up to 12 months whilst a formal procurement process was undertaken, to work with the current lead provider for a maximum of up to six months to maintain the service while a tender process was undertaken to secure a new lead provider or to work with the current lead provider for the duration of the contract.

Agreed:-

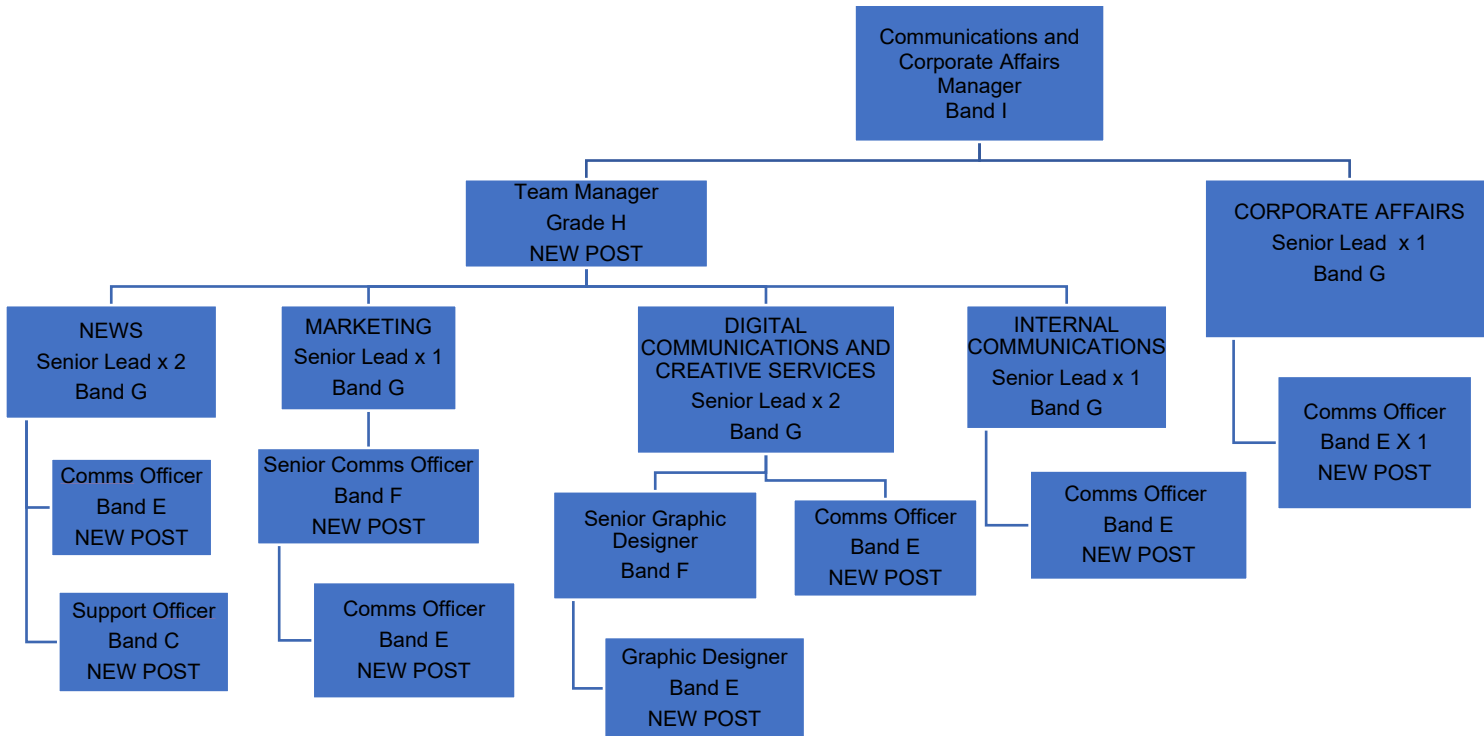
- (1) that the Director of Adult Social Care be authorised to approve the early voluntary cessation of the Sandwell Community Caring Trust 30- year contract for 80 care home beds, of which 20 years are remaining with effect from 30 April 2022;
- (2) that subject to Resolution (1) above, a further report be submitted to Cabinet on options for the site of the former Grafton Lodge Care home which closed in December 2020. parallel to the period of the directly awarded contract;
- (3) that approval be given to the asset freehold for Hall Green Care Home being retained by Sandwell Community Caring Trust on termination of the contract and agree to Sandwell Community Caring Trust repaying council funds from the sale of Greenhaven;
- (4) that the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to execute all legal or other documentation to give effect to the decisions of Cabinet in relation to the cessation of the contract with SCCT and transfer of the asset freehold as set out in (1)-(3) above;
- (5) that a further report be submitted to Cabinet on approval for another procurement process to be undertaken following the confirmation of funding from the Joint Partnership Board in June 2022.

Meeting ended at 4.33pm.

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk

Appendix

Proposed Communications and Corporate Affairs Structure



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Report to Cabinet

23 March 2022

Subject:	Community Vaccination Champions Programme
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Adults, Social Care and Health Councillor Suzanne Hartwell
Director:	Director of Public Health Lisa McNally
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Communities and Partnerships Manager- Public Health Katie Deeley Katie_deeley@sandwell.gov.uk Anna Blennerhassett- Consultant in Public Health Anna_blennerhassett@sandwell.gov.uk Strategic Policy Officer Heather Chinner Heather_chinner@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations



- 1.1 That approval be given to the Community Vaccination Champions Programme.
- 1.2 That a further grant of £112,000 to Sandwell Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) be approved for the following:
 - £100,000 vaccination support grants fund for distribution to voluntary and community organisations
 - £12,000 for programme co-ordination.
- 1.3 That the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the chief finance officer, be authorised to award a grant of £112,000 to Sandwell Council for Voluntary Organisations for the vaccination support programme.




2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Community Vaccination Champions Programme started in January 2021 and has proved to be highly effective in increasing the number of residents who have been vaccinated. Our approach has been to work closely with health colleagues and trusted faith and community leaders to provide reassurance and information to residents. Over 200 Vaccine Champions are involved in the programme and SCVO have awarded grants to voluntary sector organisations delivering 33 vaccination uptake projects. Examples of projects and organisations awarded funding can be found [on SCVO's website](#)
- 2.2 SCVO have a proven track record of delivering this programme by proactively engaging with local community groups across Sandwell and particularly those groups who represent and work with people more likely to be vaccine hesitant.
- 2.3 The Community Vaccination Champions Programme has received national recognition, winning the [LGC public health award](#). Due to the success of the programme, the council has been awarded a further £185,000 funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to continue this work into 2022/23; with the expectation that funded activities will have had a reasonable level of implementation by 30 July 2022.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people</p> <p>This vaccine take-up grants programme has and does engage with families across Sandwell by providing information, practical support and guidance to accessing COVID-19 vaccination.</p>
	<p>People live well and age well</p> <p>The COVID-19 vaccine is the best way to protect us from coronavirus and will save thousands of lives.</p> <p>The vaccination outreach programme is part of a collective effort between Sandwell Council, the NHS and community partners to protect residents against COVID-19.</p>



	<p>Strong resilient communities</p> <p>The COVID-19 vaccination outreach programme helps to make communities more resilient to the health impacts caused by COVID-19. It encourages residents to protect each other by helping to keep infection rates down, enabling people to participate in local community activities safely.</p>
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4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Background:

Sandwell’s Community Response to COVID-19

When the vaccination campaign launched in January 2021, we started work with CCG colleagues to gather data and intelligence on vaccination uptake rates broken down into geographical areas, age ranges and ethnicities. This enabled us to plan outreach programmes and engagement activities targeting more hesitant groups. The council was successful in applying for and receiving community champions funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (£318,000) which meant we could scale up our efforts to engage with communities about vaccination, provide practical support and deliver the vaccination outreach programme.

The programme has four elements:

I. Vision 2030 Vaccination Support grants strand:

SCVO have taken proactive steps to enable voluntary and community groups to contact their service users and members and provide information, reassurance and encouragement to get vaccinated. To date 33 grants have been awarded to voluntary sector partners, funding various projects including; providing transport, culturally appropriate messaging, translating information, practical support and focus groups.



II. Vaccination champion training and recruitment:

We've provided over 30 live, interactive training sessions which covered basic immunology, how vaccines work, myth-busting and behaviour change to train over 200 Sandwell vaccine champions. Sessions have been delivered to a range of partners including schools, businesses, elected members and community and faith groups. The vaccine champions have been invaluable in supporting their local communities to make an informed choice about being vaccinated and accessing appointments.

III. Two-way briefings with community, voluntary and faith sector partners:

The two-way briefing sessions have enabled us to communicate key updates and information to partners who can disseminate to their local communities. British Sign Language interpreters have been used to support people from the deaf community and resources provided in over 13 locally spoken languages. One partner commented that "This has been a platform to share my experiences with other community and organisational leaders and continues to be a place to go to for ongoing support and real dialogue".

IV. Vaccination phone calls and practical support:

We have supported local primary care networks to engage with patients to increase uptake. To date, of the 196-people contacted, 168 had not yet been vaccinated and 70 out of these (42%) had a vaccine arranged as a direct result of the contact.

Due to the success of the programme, the council has been awarded a further £185,000 funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to continue this work into 2022/23.

4.2 Sustainability: The Community Vaccination Leaders Programme is part of an asset-based community development approach to delivering public health programmes and improving the health of our residents. The approach is beginning to expand to other areas of public health, for example, climate change champions and community health champions.



- 4.3. **Timescales:** On the 21st December 2021, the council were informed that additional funding was being awarded. According to the terms of the grant awarded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the funding should be committed by the end of the 2021/22 financial year. Delivery of activities can extend beyond 31 March and need to be implemented by 30 July 2022.
- 4.4. **Approach:** In 2022 our approach will focus on: a more geographically targeted communications campaign, continued support to the growing network of health/ vaccination champions and continuation of SCVO's Vision 2030 Vaccine Support grants programme, with the flexibility to focus on COVID safe behaviours in community settings when infection levels permit.
- 4.5. **Consultation:** Consultation with the chief finance officer was conducted and a financial appraisal for the original tranche of community champions funding was approved on the 18th May 2021 (appendix a)

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 That we distribute the funding direct to voluntary and community sector groups via an expression of interest process, inviting applications from groups. This would cost more in terms of public health officer time, compared to SCVO. SCVO's management of the programme has already demonstrated that it is very effective, delivers value for money and has momentum. A different approach would not only cost more but would take time, leading to delay and loss of momentum.

6 Implications

Resources:	The recommendations within the report will be fully funded from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) Grant. The programme will continue to be managed by public health and communities staff. Programme costs include: public health staffing, communication campaign and the vaccine support grants programme co-ordinated by SCVO
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Legal and Governance:	The statutory power to provide grant funding is contained in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 (general power of competence). Grant funding is not subject to the requirements for competition under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
Risk:	<p>Risks to health of residents: The highest risk relates to doing nothing – which is likely to lead to adverse impact on the long-term health of residents.</p> <p>Financial risks to the council: No match funding is required, and all activities are designed to be short term / one off interventions.</p> <p>Success of the programme:</p> <p>There is a possibility that community engagement will start to taper off – we will explore different ways of communicating and engaging. In addition, the vaccine uptake steering group will continue to monitor the local conditions and pool ideas about getting our message out.</p> <p>The recommendations if approved will contribute to the continued mitigation of strategic risk 060 in respect of health and safety which is currently assessed as green</p>
Equality:	The approach taken by Community Vaccination Champions Programme enables us to specifically work with those groups that have shown vaccine hesitancy for a wide variety of reasons and tailor our approach – for example work with African Caribbean communities, supporting vaccine pop ups in community settings, enlisting the support of trusted community and faith leaders.
Health and Wellbeing:	The Community Vaccination Champions Programme has a direct and positive impact on the health of our residents. Vaccine take up rates have been much higher than predicted and we have been able to work proactively with some of our more vulnerable residents, such as adults with learning difficulties.



Social Value	The small grant element of the Programme ensures that funding is going into local voluntary and community groups.
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7. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Financial Appraisal Report - External Funding Application to Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, for funding from the Community Champions Local Authority Fund



Appraisal Report
Community Champio

Appendix 2 - Risk Register



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Appendix 3 - Equality Impact Assessment



EIA_community
vaccination champion

8 Background Papers

None



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Financial Appraisal Report

External Funding Application to Ministry of Housing,
Communities & Local Government, for funding from the
Community Champions Local Authority Fund

Report to Cabinet

Date Issued: 18th May 2021

Contents:

1. Executive Summary
2. Issues Arising

1 Executive Summary

Introduction

Homes & Communities are seeking retrospective approval to accept grant funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government to deliver support to communities and groups most at risk from COVID-19.

The project will be delivered by Public Health in partnership with several voluntary sector organisations.

An offer of funding was received in January 2021, following the submission of an expression of interest approved by the Council's Statutory Officer's Group.

The project aims to support a range of interventions to improve COVID-19 compliance and maximise vaccination take up.

Public Health England's review of disparities in risks and outcomes from COVID-19 in June 2020, highlighted that certain communities are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, both in transmission rates and in mortality. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and people with disabilities have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Death rates from the virus are higher for Black and Asian ethnic groups when compared to White ethnic groups.

Sandwell is an ethnically diverse borough and data from the 2011 Census showed 34% of residents are from black and minority ethnic communities. This compares to 20% across England and Wales.

Strategic Finance has been asked to carry out an appraisal of the funding application, which has been evaluated against HM Treasury Green Book guidance. The appraisal process recorded a score of 66%, with some areas of risk identified.

[ILO: UNCLASSIFIED]



Project Objectives

- To support the Council's Vision 2030, in ensuring that we have a strong approach with all partner organisations to prevent ill health and improve long-term health and wellbeing by protecting our most vulnerable adults and children.

Project Details

In October 2020, the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) launched a £25m 'Community Champions' fund to support communities disproportionately affected by Covid-19.

The project aims to deliver the following:

- Vaccine Take-Up Grants Programme - offering total grant funding of £250,000 for Voluntary Community Sector groups to provide practical solutions such as appointment reminders and lifts, as well as additional costs relating to COVID-19 compliance work including translation costs, videos, volunteer expenses etc.
- Weekly briefings and training sessions - a virtual team will work with key Voluntary Community Sector stakeholders including Community Offer, Sandwell Community Health Partnership, Sandwell Consortium and Sandwell Advice Providers Network to respond to local data about COVID-19 and vaccine take-up.
- Improve COVID-19 compliance through weekly briefings, support from additional partners, including community champions in voluntary sector groups that can reach and support people with disabilities and by providing additional support for BAME communities through welfare calls

The cost of delivering the Community Champions project is £0.319m, with 100% grant funding offered by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Whilst grant funding should have been committed by March 2021, project delivery can extend beyond this period but will need to have commenced by June 2021.

Scope and objectives of financial appraisal

The purpose of financial appraisals is to consider the guidance provided by HM Treasury in evaluating business case proposals and assessing the potential risk to the Council in achieving its objectives. The following components and risks are assessed:

HM Treasury Green Book	Potential Risks
<u>Strategic Case</u>	Insufficient justification for project/will not meet strategic objectives

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Objective, need, demand and reasonableness	
<u>Economic case</u> Option analysis and risk	Poor use of council resources & excessive risk to Council
<u>Commercial Case</u> Legal and statutory implications	Project may contravene legal/statutory regulations
<u>Financial Case</u> Affordability	Proposals are not affordable or realistic
<u>Management Case</u> Governance, project management, monitoring and evaluation	Non-delivery of project and outputs
Limitations to scope of appraisal	Information provided by Project Officer

LEVEL OF ASSURANCE GAINED FROM FINANCIAL APPRAISAL

Limited (0%-65%)	Satisfactory (66%-80%)	Substantial (81%-100%)
There is a high risk of objectives not being met due to insufficient assurance within the project proposals. There is limited evidence to confirm that the risks to the Council could be adequately mitigated.	There is adequate assurance that objectives could be met, but further actions are required to adequately mitigate the risk to the Council.	There is good assurance that objectives will be met, with little risk to council resources.

Overall Conclusion

The appraisal scored 66% and provides **satisfactory assurance** over the adequacy of the proposals.

Financial appraisals will identify the following levels of issues:

Fundamental

Action is imperative to ensure that the objectives of the project are met

Significant

Action is required to avoid exposure to significant risks in achieving objectives

[ILO: UNCLASSIFIED]



Merits Attention

Action is advised to enhance operational efficiency

Summary of key issues identified

- The financial appraisal has identified no 'fundamental' issues
- The financial appraisal has identified 2 'significant' issues
- The financial appraisal has identified 4 'merits attention' issues

2 Issues Arising

Action is required to avoid exposure to significant risks in achieving objectives
Significant

2.1 Commercial Case – Funding Terms and Conditions

Sandwell MBC and the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government have entered a Memorandum of Understanding with the following obligations:

- (i) Sandwell Council will be responsible for ensuring that any third-party partnership arrangements or procurement activities related to delivering activities for the Community Champions: Local Authority Fund programme comply with Procurement Law and Sandwell Council's own procurement procedures.
- (ii) Sandwell Council will be responsible for procedure, contract management and undertaking due diligence processes (including but not limited to the prevention of financial crime), on all organisations in receipt of financial support, which will be used in the delivery of the Community Champions programme.

Funding agreements have been issued by Sandwell MBC to voluntary sector organisations for the delivery of the project, but terms and conditions of funding do not include any procurement requirements and it is not clear to what extent the Council undertakes due diligence on external partners.

Implication:

Failure to adhere to the funder's requirements may have financial implications on the Council regarding the clawback of grant and may increase the risk to the project of non-delivery.

Recommended Action:

- (i) That all funding agreements with third-party organisations include the requirement to comply with Procurement Law and Sandwell's own

[ILO: UNCLASSIFIED]



procurement procedures and should transfer the risk of terms and conditions of external funding to the partner.

- (ii) That advice is sought from Procurement Services, to ensure that a reasonable level of due diligence can be undertaken on all third-party organisations, prior to future grant funding, ensuring good practice and mitigating financial risks to the Council.

2.2 Financial Case – Accurate costs and value for money

A breakdown of proposed grant funding allocations to third party organisations has been provided but no information was available to determine the level of outputs expected from partners.

Implication:

The lack of pre-determined levels of outputs, limits the potential for adequate evaluation of project delivery and cannot provide assurance that value for money is provided by partners.

Recommended action:

- That agreed output levels are agreed with partners involved in the delivery of the Community Champions programme and monitored throughout the funding period.

Action is advised to enhance operational efficiency
Merits Attention

2.3 Economic Case – Risks

A corporate Risk Register has been provided but only identified two risks. There was concern that not all risks to the project have been identified, including project delivery risks by partners.

Implication:

Risks may not be identified and therefore not adequately mitigated. This may impact on the delivery of outputs and result in financial implications to the Council.

Recommended action:

That the Risk Register is reviewed to ensure all risks relating to the project are identified and adequately mitigated.

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2.4 Commercial Case – State Aid

State aid advice has not been received for the project.

Implication:

Grant funding may not be compliant with state aid regulations.

Recommended action:

- That state aid advice is sought from Legal Services to ensure all grant funding is state aid compliant.

2.5 Financial Case – VAT/Tax implications

Whilst it is not envisaged that the project would have any negative VAT or tax implications for the Council, confirmation has not been sought from the Council's Tax Accountant.

Implication:

Negative VAT/tax implications may have financial implications for the Council.

Recommended action:

- That VAT/tax advice is sought from the Council's Tax Accountant.

2.6 Management Case – Project evaluation

Whilst Sandwell Council will be expected to provide short monthly progress reports during the funding period, it is not clear what programme evaluation will be undertaken to determine the success of the project.

Implication:

Objectives and outcomes may not be adequately evaluated for external audit purposes and cannot inform future improvements in service delivery.

Recommended action:

- (i) That expected outcomes are quantified,
- (ii) That a system be established to capture all outcomes relating to the project, to ensure that the project can be effectively evaluated,
- (iii) That a process for the evaluating and reporting of project outcomes is determined.

[ILO: UNCLASSIFIED]



Ref	Risk Title and Description	Risk Owner	Service/ Workstream Area	Current Measures in Place to Manage Risk	Current Risk Score		
					Likelihood	Impact	Total
1	Engagement- Lack of engagement with priority groups targeted to increase vaccination uptake	Katie Deeley/ Heather Chinner	Public Health	Initial engagement activity has already begun and a delivery plan sets out how we will work with local groups who already engage with our targeted communities.	1	4	4
2	Timescales- Insufficient time to deliver the programme set out in the grant conditions	Katie Deeley/ Heather Chinner	Public Health	The delivery plan sets out the timescales for delivery. We have also consulted with the funder and it's been agreed that there is additional flexibility where needed.	2	3	6
3	Public Health capacity- Insufficient capacity of the public health team to monitor and evaluate the programme effectively due to Covid-19.	Katie Deeley/ Heather Chinner	Public Health	Additional staff resources has been identified for the management and delivery of the programme, along with support from other council departments such as the communities team.	2	3	6

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Equality Impact Assessment Template

Please complete this template using the [Equality Impact Assessment Guidance document](#)

Version 4: January 2019

Title of proposal (include forward plan reference if available)	Community Vaccination Champions Programme
Directorate and Service Area	Public Health
Name and title of Lead Officer completing this EIA	Katie Deeley- Communities and Partnerships Manager
Contact Details	Katie_deeley@sandwell.gov.uk ,
Names and titles of other officers involved in completing this EIA	Heather Chinner- Strategic policy officer Anna Blennerhasset- Consultant in public health
Partners involved with the EIA where jointly completed	N/A
Date EIA completed	03.02.2022
Date EIA signed off or agreed by Director or Executive Director	
Name of Director or Executive Director signing off EIA	
Date EIA considered by Cabinet Member	

See [Equality Impact Assessment Guidance](#) for key prompts that must be addressed for all questions

1. The purpose of the proposal or decision required (Please provide as much information as possible)

That cabinet approval be given to the Community Vaccination Champions Programme.

This will include that a further grant of £112,000 is paid to Sandwell Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) to be approved for the following:

- £100,000 vaccination support grants fund for distribution to voluntary and community organisations
- £12,000 for programme co-ordination

That the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the chief finance officer, be authorised to award a grant of £112,000 to Sandwell Council for Voluntary Organisations for the vaccination support programme.

2. Evidence used/considered

The Community Vaccination Champions Programme started in January 2021 and has proved to be highly effective in increasing the number of residents who have been vaccinated. Our approach has been to work closely with health colleagues and trusted faith and community leaders to provide reassurance and information to residents. Over 200 Vaccine Champions are involved in the programme and SCVO have awarded grants to voluntary sector organisations delivering 33 vaccination uptake projects. Examples of projects and organisations awarded funding can be found [on SCVO's website](#)

SCVO have a proven track record of delivering this programme by proactively engaging with local community groups across Sandwell and particularly those groups who represent and work with people more likely to be vaccine hesitant.

The Community Vaccination Champions Programme has received national recognition, winning the [LGC public health award](#). Due to the success of the programme, the council has been awarded a further £185,000 funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to continue this work into 2022/23.

3. Consultation

This funding has been awarded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and there is a delivery plan being approved.

Consultation with the chief finance officer was conducted and a financial appraisal for the original tranche of community champions funding was approved on the 18th May 2021 (appendix a)

Cabinet Member – Living Healthy Lives will be briefed on the intention to expand the community vaccination champions programme.

4. Assess likely impact

Please give an outline of the overall impact if possible.

The community vaccination champions programme has already had a significant impact on the vaccination uptake rates across Sandwell. However, there are key groups we need to target and engage with where uptake is lower.

We will target locations in Sandwell where data tells us uptake rates are low and ensure that there is clear communication and an accessible vaccination offer. This will impact on vaccination uptake rates and ultimately protect our residents against COVID-19.

Please complete the table below at 4a to identify the likely impact on specific protected characteristics

4a. Use the table to show:

- Where you think that the strategy, project or policy could have a negative impact on any of the equality strands (protected characteristics), that is it could disadvantage them or if there is no impact, please note the evidence and/or reasons for this.
- Where you think that the strategy, project or policy could have a positive impact on any of the groups or contribute to promoting equality, equal opportunities or improving relationships within equality characteristics.

Protected Characteristic	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact	Reason and evidence (Provide details of specific groups affected even for no impact and where negative impact has been identified what mitigating actions can we take?)
	✓	✓	✓	
Age	✓			The programme will have a positive impact on people of all ages in Sandwell. This will be achieved by increasing vaccination uptake rates.
Disability	✓			Community vaccination champions engaged will be from a range of backgrounds and organisations such as Sandwell visually impaired, Jigsaw (supporting people with learning disabilities) and Sandwell deaf community association. These partner organisations and will continue to support local community vaccination opportunities.

Gender reassignment			√	People of gender reassignment will be able to access the programme, but they won't be targeted. Data has not identified this group as having lower vaccination uptake rates.
Marriage and civil partnership			√	This doesn't relate to the programme.
Pregnancy and maternity	√			We have and will be working with local community midwives as part of the programme to increase uptake in pregnancy as this has been highlighted as a group with lower uptake rates.
Race	√			The programme has and will target and engage with local groups from ethnic minority backgrounds.
Religion or belief	√			The programme has and will continue to engage with local faith groups to share COVID vaccination messages and communications.

Sex	√			The programme will target some male residents as some of the data on uptake suggests a slight disparity between men and women.
Sexual orientation			√	LGBTQ communities will be able to access the programme, but they won't be targeted. Data has not identified this group as having lower vaccination uptake rates
Other				

Does this EIA require a full impact assessment? Yes No X

If there are no adverse impacts or any issues of concern or you can adequately explain or justify them, then you do not need to go any further. You have completed the screening stage. You must, however, complete sections 7 and 9 and publish the EIA as it stands.

If you have answered yes to the above, please complete the questions below referring to the guidance document.

5. What actions can be taken to mitigate any adverse impacts?

6. As a result of the EIA what decision or actions are being proposed in relation to the original proposals?

7. Monitoring arrangements

8. Action planning

You may wish to use the action plan template below

9. Publish the EIA

Report to Cabinet

23 March 2022

Subject:	Liberty Protection Safeguards
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Adults, Social Care and Health – Councillor Suzanne Hartwell
Director:	Director of Adult Social Care – Rashpal Bishop
Key Decision:	Yes Request for additional staffing resources for the Implementation of Liberty Protection Safeguards in Sandwell.
Contact Officer:	Project Lead – Liberty Protection Safeguards Donna_Patel@sandwell.gov.uk Graham Terry, Interim Assistant Director, Adult Social Care Graham_terry@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

1.1 That approval be given:

1. To note the requirement to introduce Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) from a date to be determined by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) following their announcement that this will be delayed from the original date of 1 April 2022.
2. To endorse the implementation plan in preparation for the introduction of the new Liberty Protection Safeguards.
3. To the revised structure for social work service as set out below, to enable the council to prepare for the implementation of LPS, and to recruit to the required posts.



Deprivation of Liberty Team

Roles to be converted -

Current Role	Grade	No of New Posts
Social Care Lead Officer x 2FTE	G	** x2 FTE Social Worker (AMCP)

New Liberty Protection Safeguards Team

Roles to be created -

New Role	Grade	No of New Posts
Social Care Team Manager (with AMCP)	H	X 1 FTE
Social Worker (AMCP)	G	X 5 FTE ** (This includes the 2 FTE current SCLO Converted posts). (To respond to the 25% LPS Challenge cases / complex assessments)

Community Social Work Teams

Roles to be created -

Role	Grade	No of New Posts
Social Worker	F	X 8 FTE (to support the current social work structure to respond to the LPS and outstanding C- DOL cases)

The staffing and commissioned resources in the current DoLS team have been repurposed in the table below in line with the proposed staffing model and requirements to support implementation of the LPS.

Role	Grade	Annual Cost (Bottom of Grade (£))	Annual Cost (Top of Grade (£))	Number of FTE Posts	Comments
Team Manager (with AMCP Status)	H	55,439	62,167	1	Creation of one New post.



Social Workers (with AMCP Status)	G	235,610	270,385	5	Creation of new posts.
Social Workers (not an AMCP)	F	319,560	365,944	8	Creation of new posts. To be based in the CSWT, Safeguarding and Hospital Team. Additional capacity to respond to LPS Demand and current C-DOL requests.
Co-ordinator (Administrator Role)	E	32,532	38,760	1	Currently funded by existing Business Support Budget
Business Support Officer Post	D	27,003	31,867	1	Currently funded by existing Business Support Budget
Total Cost		670,144	769,129		
Conversion of SCLO posts	G	(108,154)	(108,154)	2	Conversion of posts
DOLS Budget		(358,600)	(358,600)		Existing Funding
Existing Business Support funded posts.		(70,660)	(70,660)		Existing Funded posts.
Total Redirection		(537,414)	(537,414)		
Net Cost / (Saving)		£132,730	£231,709		

4. To the commencement of the required consultation with the affected workforce and Trade Unions
5. To authorise the Director of Adult Social Care, to implement the new structure and make any minor modifications required following the guidance from the code of practice on the Mental Capacity Act and LPS.
6. To note that additional funding for Advocacy Support (Independent Mental Capacity Advocates) for the implementation of Liberty Protection Safeguards is likely to be required.








7. To agree to provide a further report on progress and financial implications before October 2022 and to confirm any new timescales for the introduction of LPS and its implementation once agreed by DHSC.

1.2 That the Director of Adult Social Care, be authorised to implement the new structure in preparation for Liberty Protection Safeguards.


2 Reasons for Recommendations

2.1 To enable the Director of Adult Social Care, Rashpal Bishop to prepare for the implementation of Liberty Protection Safeguards across Sandwell.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people
	People live well and age well
	<p>Strong resilient communities</p> <p><i>Ambition 3 – “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”</i></p> <p>The proposed structure will ensure the right number of resources, in the right places with the required skills, training and experience to respond appropriately to the residents of Sandwell in accordance with new legislation</p>
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods
	<p>A strong and inclusive economy</p> <p><i>Ambition 5 - “Our communities are built on mutual respect and taking care of each other, supported by all the agencies that ensure we feel safe and protected in our homes and local neighborhoods.”</i></p>



	<p>The proposed structure will ensure residents of Sandwell will be assessed to ensure that people only receive restricted care that is deemed ‘necessary and proportionate and in line with the forthcoming legislation and its Code of Practice, in a safe, appropriate least restrictive manner in the best interests of the person where there is no other option.</p>
	<p>A connected and accessible Sandwell</p>

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 This report outlines a proposed restructure of the social work service that forms part of the Adult Social Care directorate in preparation for the implementation of the new Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS).
- 4.2 The redesigned structure seeks to place an emphasis on the delivery of services and the statutory duty the Council has to ensure that people in all types of settings receive appropriate care and treatment without unlawful deprivation of their liberty freedom, or rights. The LPS will seek to ensure that in any care setting a person from the age of 16 years old and over who requires restricted care, will only be arranged if this is assessed as ‘necessary and proportionate’ and within a legal framework, and that this is only done when it is in the best interests of the person and where all other least restrictive options have been considered.
- 4.3 The focus of a small and defined re-modelling of the social work service is to ensure compliance with forthcoming legislation and the key objectives:
- The Local Authority is discharging its responsibilities and functions as the Responsible Body in cases where there are potential Liberty Protection Safeguards concerns with undertaking the assessments and authorisation of Liberty Protection Safeguards and the wider remit of this role.
 - Devising a service/structure that is equipped to respond to the changes in legislation.



- Ensuring that staff are skilled trained and experienced to meet the Council’s statutory obligations, the expectations of elected members and the expectations of our residents both now and in the future.
- Delivering a service that is affordable and proportionate in line with our statutory duties and can be expanded or reduced at a later date as the actual demand becomes known.

5 Background

- 5.1 The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) were introduced in 2009 following the decision of the European Court of Human Rights. These DoLS enable Adults to be deprived of their liberty in hospitals and care homes when the person lacks the relevant mental capacity.
- 5.2 The Supervisory Body will arrange an assessment to decide whether the qualifying criteria for DoLS is met and will either grant or refuse an authorisation.
- 5.3 The Supervisory Body’s current operating model includes commissioned external Best Interest Assessors and Section 12 Doctors undertaking the required deprivation of liberty assessments.
- 5.4 In 2014, a report by a House of Lords Select Committee, which had been appointed to consider and report on the Mental Capacity Act, concluded that the DoLS legislation was ‘not fit for purpose’, specifically, the DoLS were not being used when they should be, leaving individuals without legal safeguards and care providers vulnerable to legal challenge.
- 5.5 This was followed by a decision of the Supreme Court (known as “Cheshire West”) which gave a broader definition of what constituted a deprivation of liberty and which resulted in an influx of DoLS referrals to local authorities.
- 5.6 Therefore, The Department of Health, asked the Law Commission to review the DoLS. Following a public consultation in 2015, the Law Commission published a final report in March 2017, which included a draft bill. The report called for the DoLS to be replaced as a matter of “pressing urgency” and set out a new scheme called the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS).



5.7 The government's response to the Law Commission was published in March 2017. It accepted that the current DoLS system should be replaced and broadly agreed with the commission's LPS model. The Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act Bill has been passed and enacted. LPS was initially proposed to be implemented from October 2020, then extended until the 1st April 2022 due to the COVID pandemic. The date has been further extended due to COVID 19 and the delay in issuing of the Code of Practice. It is anticipated that the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) is likely to be implemented in October 2022. LPS will replace DoLS' and provide a framework to determine whether a deprivation of liberty is necessary and proportionate for the care and treatment of an individual in their setting.

5.8 LPS Legislation has a much wider remit to safeguard people living in their own home, supported living, including people attending day-care provision, whilst deprived of their liberty on transport, whilst attending specialist residential colleges and schools (up to age 25 years old). This will increase the level of Deprivation of Liberty to LPS significantly.

6 Preparing for LPS

6.1 The proposed new structure for the social work service seeks to deliver on the LPS legislation and ensure that decisions about deprivation of liberty are integrated into care planning, and that authorisation should be given as part of the process of deciding the arrangements which will, or which may not result in a deprivation of liberty.

6.2 The new legislation will identify Supervisory Body changes to become "Responsible Body (RB)" under the new legislation seeks to tailor the responsibilities to the appropriate organisation as defined:

- For people who are 100% Continuing Healthcare (CHC) funded, the RB will be the CCG
- For people in an NHS Hospital including Mental Health, the RB will be Health.
- All other requests for an LPS assessment will be the responsibility of the Local Authority (Adult / Children's Social Care) as the RB, and this includes Independent Hospitals and Self Funders for people aged from 16 years old.
- The Local Authority will also have responsibility for arranging Independent Mental Capacity Advocates (IMCA's) for all LPS Assessments, regardless of the RB.



- 6.3 The proposed new structure in preparation for LPS will have an impact on the following teams:
- Community Social Work Teams
 - Deprivation of Liberty Team
- 6.4 The proposed new structure will require: -
- Re-modelling of the current structure
 - The creation of new roles; to ensure compliance with legislation.
 - Conversion of some roles to ensure compliance with legislation
- 6.5 The remodelling of the current structure will require the service has the right number of resources with essential skills, experience and training to respond to the projected additional demands. Also, to ensure there is full consideration of potential interagency working with our partners.
- 6.6 This will be achieved by:
- Providing additional social worker posts to the current establishment
 - Creating a new post - Social Worker (AMCP Status).

The role of the AMCP

An individual from the RB, but not someone directly involved in the care and support of the person subject to the care arrangements must conclude if the arrangements meet the three criteria lack of capacity; mental disorder; necessity and proportionality.

Where it is clear, or reasonably suspected, that the person objects to the care arrangements, then a more thorough review of the case must be carried out by an Approved Mental Capacity Professional.

The Social Worker (AMCP status) is required to be employed directly by the RB, as advised by the DHSC.

- Creating a new post – Social Care Team Manager (AMCP Status).

- 6.7 Analysis of the projected demands from the changes from DoLS to LPS has been undertaken using national and regionally recognised tools to calculate the average time taken on each LPS and the likely volume to identify the new roles and number of staff required to meet these statutory duties. The proposed staffing model takes account of the fact that all LPS assessments will be completed by the community social work teams. Whilst also ensuring that there is sufficient resource for a



small dedicated LPS team who will be required to review and make arrangements to meet the person and family to assess whether a LPS is 'necessary and proportionate'. Notably, these will be when a person that objecting against their care arrangements. 25% of LPS's that are contested. The equality impact assessment is identifying that the additional tasks are likely to require three to 5 hours per assessment for the worker.

6.8 Community social work staff will consider whether care arrangements are 'necessary and proportionate' for the care and treatment of an individual and run as a golden thread in a person's assessment and care management documentation where they are being deprived of their liberty. (Care Act Assessments / Support Planning, Risk Assessments and Reviews).

6.9 Staffing Implications and Consultation

From a workforce perspective, the impact on existing staff within Adult Social Care will be minimal as a low number of employees will be directly affected.

Consultation on the change will be carried out in line with existing Council policies and further appropriate consultation will be arranged.

Trade union colleagues will be presented with the proposal at a special JCC in March 2022 and staff will be presented with the proposal in the same time period.

Details of the proposed changes are set out in the tables below.

Deprivation of Liberty Team

Roles to be converted -

Current Role	Grade	No of New Posts
Social Care Lead Officer x 2FTE	G	** x2 FTE Social Worker (AMCP)

New Liberty Protection Safeguards Team

Roles to be created -

New Role	Grade	No of New Posts
Social Care Team Manager (with AMCP)	H	X 1 FTE



Social Worker (AMCP)	G	X 5 FTE ** (This includes the 2 FTE current SCLO Converted posts). (To respond to the 25% LPS Challenge cases / complex assessments)
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Community Social Work Teams

Roles to be created -

Role	Grade	No of New Posts
Social Worker	F	X 8 FTE (to support the current social work structure to respond to the LPS and outstanding C-DOL cases)

The staffing and commissioned resources in the current DoLS team have been repurposed in the table below in line with the proposed staffing model and requirements to support implementation of the LPS.

Role	Grade	Annual Cost (Bottom of Grade (£))	Annual Cost (Top of Grade (£))	Number of FTE Posts	Comments
Team Manager (with AMCP Status)	H	55,439	62,167	1	Creation of one New post.
Social Workers (with AMCP Status)	G	235,610	270,385	5	Creation of new posts.
Social Workers (not an AMCP)	F	319,560	365,944	8	Creation of new posts. To be based in the CSWT, Safeguarding and Hospital Team. Additional capacity to respond to LPS Demand and current C-DOL requests.



Co-ordinator (Administrator Role)	E	32,532	38,760	1	Currently funded by existing Business Support Budget
Business Support Officer Post	D	27,003	31,867	1	Currently funded by existing Business Support Budget
Total Cost		670,144	769,129		
Conversion of SCLO posts	G	(108,154)	(108,154)	2	Conversion of posts
DOLS Budget		(358,600)	(358,600)		Existing Funding
Existing Business Support funded posts.		(70,660)	(70,660)		Existing Funded posts.
Total Redirection		(537,414)	(537,414)		
Net Cost / (Saving)		£132,730	£231,709		

6.10 The Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) Role is extended significantly under the new Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act 2019. The local authority has a responsibility to ensuring that there are enough IMCA's for its local authority area regardless of the responsible body. Where there is not an Appropriate (Suitable) Person to support the cared for person the local authority has a duty to instruct an IMCA. An "Appropriate Person" can also make a request to be supported by an IMCA in certain circumstances and the responsible body must take reasonable steps to appoint an IMCA in these circumstances. The Code of Practice will give more clarity. There is no date for the issue of the Code of Practice, but we are informed it is fairly imminent.

6.11 Current Projections for IMCA costs per person are:

There are two examples to illustrate the range of projected costs based on two variables, the average time it is expected to take per case for an IMCA, and the % number of cases that could require an IMCA.



Example 1

IMCA costs to support the Cared for Person: Projected 38 hours (Average) x £35 per hour = £1,330 per case. Based on the 2020/ 21 DOL data of 1,572 Assessments completed and an assumption of (25%) this amounts to £522,690 per annum.

Example 2

If the average time taken by an IMCA to support the Cared for Person is 19 hours instead of the 38 hours in example 1 and only 15% of cases require it the cost per case is £669 and at 15% amounts to £159,000 per annum.

6.12 The provision of an IMCA to an appropriate person

The following is an example cost for the provision of an IMCA to an appropriate person which is considered to take less time on average and is less likely to occur. The Code of Practice when published is expected to further clarify our responsibilities to appropriate persons.

IMCA costs to support the Appropriate Person: Projected 17 hours (Average) x £35 per hour = £595 per case. Based on the 2020/21 DOL data of 1,572 Assessments complete and an assumption of (10%) this amounts to £93,534 annum.

The financial implications of the extension of the IMCA role remain uncertain, however the above projections indicate potential costs within the range of £253,000 to £617,000 pa. The current budget to support this activity is £99,000; indicating a potential significant pressure.

7 Consultation (Customers and other Stakeholders)

- 7.1 The DHSC has delayed the proposed LPS implementation date of 1 April 2022. However, the proposed re-structure to support the implementation of LPS would be required to be progressed to enable all the necessary HR processes, training and the regulatory framework to be in place. This is required in readiness for implementing the change of legislation. All Local Authorities are similarly preparing while awaiting the Code of Practice: Mental Capacity Act and Liberty Protection Safeguards and regulations to be issued by the DHSC.



- 7.2 Engagement sessions have been undertaken with staff and will commence with the affected staff group in line with our Human Resources processes as part of this proposal.
- 7.3 Engagement sessions have commenced with the existing providers of this service and will continue to do so prior to the finalisation of this proposal. The feedback received has informed the final proposal.
- 7.4 The consultation proposed within this document is structured by the following legal position:

The statutory instrument that underpins the duty to consult is defined in the Local Government Act 1999 (Section 3) and the Statutory Guidance issued under it. Both the Act and Guidance state that Councils are under a duty to consult.

- 7.5 Consultation will be undertaken accordingly and proportionately.
- 7.6 The consultation with the effected workforce will have to comply with the legal principles that relate to consultation, namely the Gunning principles:
- Consultation should be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage.
 - Sufficient reasons for the proposals to permit intelligent consideration.
 - Adequate time must be given for consideration and response.
 - The product of the consultation must be conscientiously considered.

8 Legal and Governance Considerations

- 8.1 The implementation of any cabinet decision should not result in the violation of any person's rights under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The consultation will ensure that any potential violation is identified and mitigated.



8.2 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) – When making a decision as to changes in service provision the local authority must comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and in particular section 149 (public sector equality duty). The protected characteristics to which the duty applies includes age as well as disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief and sex.

9 Equality Impact Assessment

9.1 When making a decision as to changes in service provision the local authority must comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and in particular section 149 (the public-sector equality duty). The protected characteristics to which the duty applies includes age as well as disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief and sex.

9.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed. It concluded that the restructure of the community social work teams would not adversely affect equality on the basis of any of the protected characteristics. Any unforeseen adverse impacts will be identified through monitoring processes and statistical / other data analysis.

10 Data Protection Impact Assessment

10.1 As a result of the recent introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations a full review of data protection requirements was carried out across the social work service and the proposals contained in this report should not result in any material changes being made to the processes implemented as a part of this work.

11 Risk Assessment

11.1 The proposals outlined will increase the Council's ability to respond to its statutory duty in making sure that people in all types of settings are looked after in a way that does not inappropriately restrict their freedom. The safeguards should ensure that in any care setting a person from the age of 16 years old will only be deprived of their liberty in a safe and correct way, and that this is only done when it is in the best interests of the person and there is no other way to look after them.



11.2 The corporate risk assessment has been complied with to identify and assess any significant risks associated with the proposal. This includes (but is not limited to) political, legislation, financial, environmental and reputation risks.

11.3 Based on the information provided, it is the officers' opinion that where significant risks have been identified, arrangements are in place to manage and mitigate these effectively. This assessment has identified that there are some "red" risks that need to be reported and detailed in the project risk assessment.

11.4 If the report is not approved, then there is a risk that the Council is not meeting its legal obligation in safeguarding adults who are being deprived of their liberty and failing to respond and effectively apply the necessary structural and operational changes to deliver safe practice that falls in line within the parameters of the law.

12 Sustainability of Proposals

12.1 The proposed structure improves the sustainability of front line registered social workers and creates new posts of Social Worker with AMCP status and Team Manager with AMCP status to respond to changes in government legislation and comply with our statutory duties.

13 Health and Wellbeing Implications (including Social Value)

13.1 By providing services which continue to be responsive to Adults who lack the mental capacity to make decisions around their care arrangements whatever the setting, the proposals outlined will have a positive impact for the cared for person and their representative in ensuring they are accordingly safeguarded.

14 Impact on any Council Managed Property or Land

14.1 The proposals outlined have no impact on Council managed property or land.

15 Conclusions and Summary of Reasons for the Recommendations

15.1 The report outlines a proposed restructure of the social work service that supports the need for change of deprivation of liberty safeguards practice so that it falls in line with the new legislation, Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS). This will move the primary focus of core deprivation of liberty assessments that protect and safeguard Adults who lack mental capacity around their care arrangements, in all settings, away



from the commissioned independent external assessors and into our social work activity and practice.

15.2 The cost of implementing the new staffing structure will be £231,709 per annum. We recognise the cost of the IMCA will be significantly higher, however this remains unknown at this stage.

15.3 The focus of restructuring the services area seeks to:

- Ensure there is the right number of registered social workers and social workers who are Approved Mental Capacity Professionals across the teams to meet the demand and potential increase of work following the introduction of the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Bill and LPS.
- Ensure the right resources are in the right places to meet the Council's statutory obligations, the expectations of elected members and the expectations of our residents both now and in the years to come.
- Deliver services that safeguard our most vulnerable residents and explore opportunities to develop inter-agency protocols with Children Trust, the NHS Trust, CCG and other Local Authorities so there is a consistent approach applied by all Responsible Bodies when applying Liberty Protection Safeguards.
- Accept the revised structure for social work service, as described in points 6.9 and 6.10 of this report, and as agreed by Rashpal Bishop, Director of Adult Social Care and Wellbeing to be implemented to respond to LPS and the additional responsibilities of the Local Authority.
- To agree to receive a further report on progress and financial implications before October 2022 and to confirm any new timescales for the introduction of LPS and its implementation once agreed by DHSC.



16 Alternative Options

- 16.1 The alternative option is to continue with the current staffing structure. However, we this is not a feasible or legally viable option for the council for the reasons stated below.
- 16.2 From a strategic perspective this would reduce the Local Authorities ability to successfully implement the forthcoming legislation and ensure the Local Authority meets its statutory obligations around safeguarding Adults who are being deprived of their liberty. This amounts to failing to meet our statutory duties enshrined in legislation.
- 16.3 From an operational perspective this would reduce the Local Authorities capacity to respond in a timely way to concerns raised around safeguarding Adults who are being deprived of their liberty leading to waiting lists for statutory assessments. It would also not allow the council to respond to the wider remit of the LPS legislation and projected increased demand.

17 Implications

<p>Resources:</p>	<p>The strategic resource implications are presented in detail within 6.9 to 6.12 of this report.</p> <p>The proposed staffing changes will generate an initial financial pressure of £132,730 pa which will be managed through the identification of efficiencies and the redirection of resources across Adult Social Care.</p> <p>The financial implications of the IMCA changes remain unclear, however initial projections indicate an annual financial pressure in the range £154,000 to £518,000. Initial costs in this area will be closely monitored and incorporated into the management of the overall Adult Social Care budget and the development of the financial strategy for future years.</p>
<p>Legal and Governance:</p>	<p>The cabinet report is to ensure compliance and in preparation for the implementation of the new legislation changes under the Mental Capacity Amendment Act 2019.</p>



Risk:	An LPS project risk assessment has been completed and will be submitted with the cabinet report.
Equality:	An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and accompanies this Cabinet Report. It concluded that the restructure of the community social work teams would not adversely affect equality on the basis of any of the protected characteristics. Any unforeseen adverse impacts will be identified through monitoring processes and statistical/ other data analysis.
Health and Wellbeing:	This cabinet report and its proposals support the Health and Wellbeing of our communities, citizens' and safeguards vulnerable adults' rights
Social Value	There are no implications for social value from this report. The workforce structures are related to professional roles that are not suitable for the consideration of young people or local traders.

18 Appendices

None

19 Background Papers

Not applicable.



Equality Impact Assessment Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS)

Please complete this template using the [Equality Impact Assessment Guidance document](#)

Date: October 2021

Title of proposal (include forward plan reference if available)	Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS)
Directorate and Service Area	Adult Social Care, Health and Well Being – Social Work & Therapy
Name and title of Lead Officer completing this EIA	Donna Patel – Interim Operational Manager / Independent Living Team
Contact Details	Donna_patel@sandwell.gov.uk 0121 569 2266
Names and titles of other officers involved in completing this EIA	Suki Sandhu, Operations Manager, Safeguarding and DoLS Team suki_sandhu@sandwell.gov.uk
Partners involved with the EIA where jointly completed	N/A
Date EIA completed	16.12.2021
Date EIA signed off or agreed by Director or Executive Director	TBC
Name of Director or Executive Director signing off EIA	Rashpal Bishop Director of Adult Social Care Rashpal_bishop@sandwell.gov.uk
Date EIA considered by Cabinet Member	Councillor Suzanne Hartwell

See [Equality Impact Assessment Guidance](#) for key prompts that must be addressed for all questions

1. The purpose of the proposal or decision required (Please provide as much information as possible)

The Equality Impact Assessment is being undertaken in respect of the proposal being put forward to Cabinet on Wednesday 23rd March 2022. This proposal is to seek approval to create several new posts and the conversion of two posts within Adult Social Care to meet the statutory requirements of the new Mental Capacity (Amendment) Bill 2019 and to implement the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS).

2. Evidence used/considered

The Council currently has statutory responsibilities under the provision of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) to complete formal Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding (DoLS) best interest assessments when a person who lacks mental capacity to consent to their care or treatment is being deprived of their liberty in a care home or hospital to keep them safe from harm.

At present the council appoints Best Interest Assessors to meet this statutory responsibility. From a date to be determined by the DHSC for 2022, when the new Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) legislation is to be implemented, this process will require Social Worker with Approved Mental Capacity Practitioner (AMCP) status to be appointed to fulfil part of this role and function for the council. LPS will become a mainstream part of care planning for all Social Workers, however due to demand and capacity this will also require additional resources to meet our statutory duties.

3. Consultation

There have been some meetings and consultation in relation to the new proposals to implement the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) but this will require more detailed discussions with staff once the proposed structure has been agreed.

There will be some impact for two members of staff who are the Social Care Lead Officers with Best Interest Assessor status supporting the current DOL's service, where posts will be converted in the new structure. It is intended that these posts will be converted into Social Worker roles with AMCP status.

4. Assess likely impact

Please give an outline of the overall impact if possible.

The cabinet approval is required to recruit more Social Work resources and Social Workers with AMCP status to support the implementation of the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) framework will support the objectives of the council's corporate plan and the statutory role and functions of Adult Social Care.

People live well and age well – making sure that when we have people in receipt care and support in care homes/hospital that we have the legal framework in place to ensure any identified restriction and controls is in place regarding deprivation of liberty.

This approach enables the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards service and Adult Social Care, to be fully compliant with the requirements of the new statutory legislation Liberty Protection Safeguard's (LPS) to be implemented in 2022, a date to be determined by the DHSC.

The proposed implementation plan in relation to staffing resources will not adversely affect any staff that are protected characteristics. Both staff members where posts are to be deleted are males and one is of BME background. Any unforeseen adverse impacts will be identified through monitoring processes and statistical / other data analysis and mitigated against.

Please complete the table below at 4a to identify the likely impact on specific protected characteristics

4a. Use the table to show:

- Where you think that the strategy, project or policy could have a negative impact on any of the equality strands (protected characteristics), that is it could disadvantage them or if there is no impact, please note the evidence and/or reasons for this.
- Where you think that the strategy, project or policy could have a positive impact on any of the groups or contribute to promoting equality, equal opportunities or improving relationships within equality characteristics.

Protected Characteristic	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact	Reason and evidence (Provide details of specific groups affected even for no impact and where negative impact has been identified what mitigating actions can we take?)
	✓	✓	✓	
Age			✓	<p>Workforce: The proposal does not change the requirements of the workforce of this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Public: The proposal does not change the services approach to supporting people of this protected characteristic.</p>
Disability			✓	<p>Workforce: The proposal does not change the requirements of the workforce of this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Public:</p>

				The proposal does not change the services approach to supporting people of this protected characteristic.
Gender reassignment			✓	<p>Workforce: No known impact</p> <p>Public: The proposal does not change the services approach to supporting people of this protected characteristic.</p>
Marriage and civil partnership			✓	<p>Workforce: No Known impact</p> <p>Public: The proposal does not change the services approach to supporting people of this protected characteristic.</p>
Pregnancy and maternity			✓	<p>Workforce: The proposal does not change the requirements of the workforce of this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Public: The proposal does not change the services approach to supporting people of this protected characteristic.</p>

<p>Race</p>			<p>✓</p>	<p>Workforce: The proposal does not change the requirements of the workforce of this protected characteristic. One member of staff whose post will be deleted is from the BME category, but this staff member will be able to convert to a Social Worker (AMCP) role on the same grade, and hence will not be disadvantaged by this process.</p> <p>Public: The proposal does not change the services approach to supporting people of this protected characteristic.</p>
<p>Religion or belief</p>			<p>✓</p>	<p>Workforce: No known impact</p> <p>Public: The proposal does not change the services approach to supporting people of this protected characteristic.</p>
<p>Sex</p>			<p>✓</p>	<p>Workforce: The proposal does not change the requirements of the workforce of this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Public: The proposal does not change the services approach to supporting people of this protected characteristic.</p>

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Sexual Orientation			✓	Workforce: No known impact Public: The proposal does not change the services approach to supporting people of this protected characteristic.
Other				

Does this EIA require a full impact assessment? Yes No ✓

If there are no adverse impacts or any issues of concern or you can adequately explain or justify them, then you do not need to go any further. You have completed the screening stage. You must, however, complete sections 7 and 9 and publish the EIA as it stands.

If you have answered yes to the above, please complete the questions below referring to the guidance document.

5. What actions can be taken to mitigate any adverse impacts?

The staff members that are implicated will be consulted with. Potential adverse impact.

6. As a result of the EIA what decision or actions are being proposed in relation to the original proposals?

N/A

7. Monitoring arrangements

The Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) process will be monitored in terms of quality and performance by the Operational Manager responsible for overseeing the Safeguarding and DOL's (Liberty Protection Safeguards) Teams. The proposed changes to staffing resources will be monitored by Human Resources and the LPS Project Team.

8. Action planning

You may wish to use the action plan template below

9. Publish the EIA

Where can I get additional information, advice and guidance?

In the first instance, please consult the accompanying guide “Equality Impact Assessment Guidance”

Practical advice, guidance and support

Help and advice on undertaking an EIA or receiving training related to equalities legislation and EIAs is available to **all managers** across the council from officers within Service Improvement. The officers within Service Improvement will also provide overview quality assurance checks on completed EIA documents.

Please contact:

Kashmir Singh - 0121 569 3828

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Report to Cabinet

23 March 2022

Subject:	Temporary Accommodation Elm Tree Primary Academy at Connor Education Centre, West Bromwich
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Children and Education Councillor Karen Simms
Director:	Director of Children and Education Michael Jarrett
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Rachel Hill, Project Officer, School Organisation and Development, Education Support Services rachel_hill@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations


- 1.1 That subject to a satisfactory financial appraisal being completed by Strategic Finance, the Director of Children and Education be authorised to award a contract for the refurbishment of part of the Connor Education Centre, Connor Road, West Bromwich to provide temporary accommodation for the new Elm Tree Primary Academy Special School, following a compliant procurement exercise, in conjunction with the Section 151 Officer, and in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Education.
- 1.2 That, subject to 1.1, the Director of Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer be authorised to enter into any legal agreements on terms agreed by the Director of Children and Education, as required, to allow building works to be completed.



2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The scheduled opening of the Elm Tree Primary Academy Special School by the Department of Education (DfE) has been delayed until September 2023. The report seeks approval to grant the Director of Children and Education, delegated authority to procure and award a contract for the refurbishment of part of the Connor Education Centre to be used as a two-form entry Primary Special School for Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder alongside other associated learning needs for one school year.
- 2.2 The temporary accommodation will enable the school to open 12 months ahead of its formal opening and admit up to 18 children to the Reception year.
- 2.3 The value of the contract sum will exceed the limit of £250,000 permitted delegated authority to Chief Officers to award a contact.
- 2.4 Capital funding of £375,000 for the refurbishment of the Connor Education Centre will be provided by the DfE. The DfE will require the council to sign a Work Funding Agreement to confirm it will accept all programme/costs risks.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people
	The recommendation in this report supports the desire of the council to focus resources on the specific needs and aspirations of the community. This contributes to the Council's Vision 2030 Ambition 1 – Raising aspirations and resilience, Ambition 3 – Young people to have skills for the future, Ambition 4 – Raising the quality of schools.



4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The DfE approved the free school application for a Primary Special School on the former Phoenix Collegiate North Campus, Friar Park Road, Wednesbury to compliment the already approved High Point Academy Secondary Special School.
- 4.2 Elm Tree Primary Academy will provide 126 spaces for children aged 5 – 11 years old with Autistic Spectrum Disorder alongside other associated learning needs. The school will be run/sponsored by the Victoria Academies Trust and this proposal will enable the school to open in September 2022. Pupils must have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan) that specifies Specialist Provision to be placed at the school. Allocation of school places are through an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment or Annual Review of a student's EHC Plan. The first cohort of pupils to be placed at the school in September 2022 has already been considered. Sandwell currently has very limited specialist places to meet the identified needs of these pupils within this age group.
- 4.3 The DfE is funding the development of a one storey building on Friar Park Road, Wednesbury. However, it failed to finalise the legal contracts to enable construction to begin this year therefore the building will not be completed for September 2022 opening.
- 4.4 It is a statutory responsibility of the council to ensure all children in Sandwell have access to a good school place. Despite the delay being the result of the DfE's actions it is the council's responsibility to ensure those 18 pupils have access to a school in September 2022.
- 4.5 Connor Education Centre is currently occupied by the council's Inclusive Learning Services and Special Education Needs Team. Several meetings have taken place between the council, DfE, Head Teacher of Elm Tree Primary Academy and members of the Victoria Academy Trust. Inclusive Learning Services and Special Education Needs team have agreed to reduce its occupation of the building for one year.
- 4.6 The school and Trust will sign a Licence to Occupy with the council. The freehold ownership of the centre will remain with the council.
- 4.7 The planned works will be limited to internal refurbishment. No structural changes will be permitted.



4.8 The refurbishment of Connor Education Centre will provide the local authority with further opportunities to extend specialist assessment, intervention and provision for pupils with SEND once Elm Tree Primary Academy has vacated the building.

4.9 Consultation (Customers and other Stakeholders)

Consultation with the Inclusive Learning Services and Special Educational Needs team, Corporate Asset Management. Officers group land and asset management group.

Letters have been sent to prospective parents and residents of Connor Road. Copies of those letters have also been sent to ward members.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 Although located in Smethwick, the existing Victoria Academy Trust shared site of Devonshire Infant and Junior Academies off Auckland Road was considered – through use of an adjacent parcel of land known as the former ‘Devonshire Gym site’. The is due to transfer to the Trust for use as an all-weather play space. The temporary specialist accommodation required for Elm Tree was cost prohibitive, for a short-term location of the school on the vacant site.

5.2 Feasibility surveys were also completed at two sites; Connor Education Centre and the former nursery/children’s centre at Ferndale Primary School. Ferndale Primary’s site was deemed unfeasible and the school’s proposed business plan for the site is more beneficial to the pupils of the school.

5.3 No other sites were identified as being suitable.

5.4 Doing nothing is not an option as the council would be in breach of statutory regulations to ensure every child has access to a good school place.



6 Implications

Resources:	<p>Financial implications:</p> <p>Following a decision by the Director of Finance, Capital Appraisals for Town Team funding have taken priority to meet tight deadlines required to draw down funding. All other capital appraisals will therefore be undertaken retrospectively. The Cabinet approval is therefore subject to a capital appraisal being completed but should not prohibit progress with the proposed project.</p> <p>Department for Education is funding £375,000 for the refurbishment. Initial costs from the council's in-house Quantity Surveyors estimate a refurbishment cost of £296,000, £50,000 for professional fees, £29,000 for contingency.</p> <p>Significant increase in cost if children had to be allocated placements outside of the borough.</p> <p>Staffing implications: Management of the project will be covered from within existing staffing resources. Inclusive Learning Services and Special Education Needs staff will reduce office space for one year working remotely and from the remaining office space.</p> <p>Land implications: A Licence to Occupy will be agreed between the council and the school/Trust. The freehold ownership will remain with the council.</p> <p>Building implications:</p> <p>No structural changes will be permitted. Only cosmetic refurbishment.</p>
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<p>Legal and Governance:</p>	<p>The Trust/School will agree to a Licence to Occupy for 12 months.</p> <p>The council shall ensure that any procurement of contracts necessary for this proposal are undertaken in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules.</p> <p>The council will be required to enter into a Works Funding Agreement with the DfE to provide surety that the Authority will complete the project.</p>
<p>Risk:</p>	<p>The Corporate Risk Management Strategy (CRMS) has been complied with – to identify and assess the significant risks associated with this decision / project. This includes (but is not limited to) political, legislation, financial, environmental and reputation risks.</p> <p>The risk is that if the school does not open on a temporary basis there will be a negative impact on children and their families if placed in a local school where their individual needs cannot be met. Unnecessary disruption to children if they have to move schools after 12 months.</p> <p>Rising prices – the Authority has experienced volatility with construction projects during the past 12 months. The DfE have confirmed that up to £25,000 contingency, included as part of the £375,000 allocation, will be made available if received tender prices exceed budget estimate.</p> <p>Upon appointment of a suitable contractor a project Risk Register will be jointly managed to reduce any delivery risks that might occur during the course of the refurbishment works.</p> <p>Following a recent decision by the Head of Finance for the need to prioritise the appraisal of capital allocations for Town Team bids above other capital projects, reports to Cabinet for approval to proceed</p>



	with procurement are subject to a satisfactory appraisal score being awarded. Based upon the delivery of similar, but much larger school capital projects, there are no risks anticipated that would result in this project failing to achieve a satisfactory appraisal score.
Equality:	An Equality Impact Assessment initial screening has been undertaken and a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this report.
Health and Wellbeing:	This proposal ensures that children can attend a school in Sandwell from September 2022 that meets their needs as planned.
Social Value	Ensuring every child has access to a school place, and that parents / carers continue to be able to indicate their individual preferences for school places.

7. Appendices

None

8. Background Papers

None



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Report to Cabinet

23 March 2022

Subject:	Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-2024 and allocation of New Burdens funding for 2022-2024
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Bob Piper Cabinet Member for Community Safety
Director:	Alice Davey Director of Borough Economy
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Maryrose Lappin Domestic Abuse Team Manager maryrose_lappin@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the 2021-24 Domestic Abuse Strategy as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.
- 1.2 That approval be given to carry forward the projected underspend of £150,000 Domestic Abuse New Burdens Funding for 2021-22 as a reserve and that it be used to partly fund the interventions in 2022-23 (£62,500) and 2023-24 (£87,500).
- 1.3 That approval be given to allocate New Burdens funding outlined in Table 1 below of £907,042 in 2022-23 and £932,042 in 2023-24 to support the delivery of the strategy, ensuring that Sandwell fully complies with the new statutory duty for the delivery of specialist support to domestic abuse victims and children in safe accommodation, subject to the confirmation of the funding allocation for 2023-24 from central government.



Table 1. Services and Interventions	2022-23 proposed allocation (Total funding available, including c/f of £62,500 from 2021-22: £907,042)	2023-24 proposed allocation (Total funding available, including c/f of £87,500 from 2021-22: £932,042)
Existing Services and Interventions:		
Provision of refuge accommodation	£305K	£305K
Community-based support for victims of Domestic Abuse	£236K	£236K
4 additional places in refuge accommodation, including Refuge Complex Needs Worker	£60K	£60k
Family Support Worker and Empowerment & Engagement Co-Ordinator posts to support victims in specialist domestic abuse safe accommodation	£70K	£70K
Co-Ordinator within SMBC Domestic Abuse Team to support implementation and programme management of NBF programme and Domestic Abuse plan	£60K	£60K
New Interventions		
Sanctuary Scheme – specialist support to victims referred for sanctuary provision	£17,872	£17,872
Floating support/resettlement support for victims' transition from refuge to community	£35,000	£35,000
Psychologically-informed therapeutic interventions for adults and children in safe accommodation	£120,440	£120,440
DA needs assessment / strategy update required under Domestic Abuse Act 2021	0	£25,000
Contingency	£2,730	£2,730
Total	£907,042	£932,042

1.4 That approval is given to award grant funding totalling up to £223,609 (£205,737 in 2022-23 and £17,872 in 2023-24) to Black Country Women's Aid (BCWA) as detailed in Table 2 below from New Burdens funding for a range of interventions which will assist in delivering the Domestic Abuse Strategy and the statutory duty for domestic abuse.



TABLE 2. Proposed grants to be awarded to Black Country Women's Aid	Grant Period	Total Grant
Family Support Worker and Empowerment & Engagement Co-Ordinator posts to support victims in specialist domestic abuse safe accommodation	10 months funding 1/04/22 - 31/1/23	£58,333
Sanctuary Scheme – specialist support to victims referred for sanctuary provision	24 months 1/04/22 – 31/03/24	£35,744 (£17,872 pa)
Floating support/resettlement support for victims' transition from refuge to community	10 months funding 1/04/22 - 31/1/23	£29,166
Psychologically-informed therapeutic interventions for adults and children in safe accommodation	10 months funding 1/04/22 - 31/1/23	£100,366
TOTAL		£223,609

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 In March 2021, Statutory Officers Group were briefed on the new statutory duty for the provision of specialist support for victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation from April 2021. This duty is part of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and requires that a safe accommodation needs assessment is undertaken which informs a safe accommodation strategy.
- 2.2 Linxs Consultancy were commissioned to undertake a domestic abuse needs assessment and develop a new domestic abuse strategy for Sandwell. Work on the needs assessment and strategy development has been overseen by a multi-agency task and finish group which reports to the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership (DASP), the statutory board responsible for domestic abuse.
- 2.3 The first phase of this work focussed on the production of a safe accommodation needs assessment which informed the safe accommodation strategy 2021-24 to comply with the timescales required by the new statutory duty. The domestic abuse safe accommodation strategy 2021-24 was approved by Cabinet in December 2021 and



published on the SMBC website by 5 January 2022 to comply with statutory requirements to publish a domestic abuse safe accommodation strategy by that date. There is no specific statutory requirement or timescale for the production of the wider Strategy, but the latter now also incorporates the safe accommodation strategy which Cabinet has already approved. The period of the wider strategy is 2021-24 to reflect the period of the safe accommodation strategy.

2.4 The Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-24 in Appendix 1 outlines the key points and recommendations from the needs assessment and how these will be addressed. The needs assessment has incorporated a range of data from partners; stakeholders feedback and feedback from domestic abuse victims-survivors.

2.5 Based on the analysis of the needs assessment, the Strategy indicates that we will focus our activity on the following three themes:

- Early intervention and enhanced survivor and whole family support;
- Joint working and partnership focus;
- Safe accommodation.

The strategy outlines a number of commitments outlining how these themes will be addressed.

2.6 In March 2021, Statutory Officers Group approved the use of New Burdens funding in 2021-22 to support delivery of the statutory duty.

2.7 Sandwell's New Burdens grant funding of £841,812 for 2021-22 was intended to cover revenue expenditure relating to the functions set out in the new statutory duty on Tier 1 Local Authorities in Part 4 of the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act, relating to the provision of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children residing within safe accommodation.

2.8 The grant was distributed to Local Authorities for the period from 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 and Government has indicated that this funding will be in place for at least a three-year period, at similar levels to the 2021-22 allocation. They have indicated that funding after that period may be allocated as part of the main grant to local authorities. In February 2022, SMBC was notified that the Sandwell allocation for 2022-23 will be £844,142.



- 2.9 A Memorandum of Understanding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG – now called the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) was signed on behalf of the Local Authority by the Interim Director of Adult Social Care and returned in March 2021.
- 2.10 Final [Statutory guidance](#) on the new duty for local authorities was issued by DLUHC on 1 October 2021. This requires that all support in safe accommodation provided under the new duty should be delivered by knowledgeable and/or experienced specialist providers, charities, and other voluntary organisations whose purpose is to provide support to victims of domestic abuse. Those specialist providers should also meet the DLUHC Quality Standards. The Act also outlines the requirement for support services to include a range of services namely: advocacy, prevention, advice, specialist support for both adults and children, counselling and therapy.
- 2.11 Table 1 below outlines the proposed investment plan for 2022-23 and 2023-24 from New Burdens funding. With the proposed reserve of £150K underspend from 2021-22 to be utilised across 2022-24, there is a total of £907,042 allocations proposed in 2022-23 and £932,042 in 2023-24.
- 2.12 The proposed programme of investment includes allocation of New Burdens Funding to: -
- the provision of refuge accommodation and community-based support for victims of domestic abuse that is currently funded by the council and will therefore support the financial savings to be achieved by the budget strategy.
 - Interventions that commenced in 2021-22 funded by the first year of New Burdens funding
 - New interventions as identified by the domestic abuse needs assessment

The proposed allocations are provided in table 1 below.

- 2.13 Any programme variations that arise will be managed to support the objectives of the New Burdens Funding and in accordance with delegations under the Constitution and Standing Financial Instructions.



Table 1. Services and Interventions	2022-23 proposed allocation (Total funding available, including c/f of £62,500 from 2021-22: £907,042)	2023-24 proposed allocation (Total funding available, including c/f of £87,500 from 2021-22: £932,042)
Existing Services and Interventions:		
Provision of refuge accommodation	£305K	£305K
Community-based support for victims of Domestic Abuse	£236K	£236K
4 additional places in refuge accommodation, including Refuge Complex Needs Worker	£60K	£60k
Family Support Worker and Empowerment & Engagement Co-Ordinator posts to support victims in specialist domestic abuse safe accommodation	£70K	£70K
Co-Ordinator within SMBC Domestic Abuse Team to support implementation and programme management of NBF programme and Domestic Abuse plan	£60K	£60K
New Interventions		
Sanctuary Scheme – specialist support to victims referred for sanctuary provision	£17,872	£17,872
Floating support/resettlement support for victims' transition from refuge to community	£35,000	£35,000
Psychologically-informed therapeutic interventions for adults and children in safe accommodation	£120,440	£120,440
DA needs assessment / strategy update required under Domestic Abuse Act 2021	0	£25,000
Contingency	£2,730	£2,730
Total	£907,042	£932,042



2.13 Adult Social Care commissions the specialist support in domestic abuse refuge accommodation in Sandwell and will commission support for the 4 additional refuge places and a complex needs worker. A procurement process will be undertaken in 2022-23 to identify the provider of specialist domestic abuse refuge accommodation and support provision



from February 2023. In line with the timescale for the procurement of refuge provision in the borough, it is proposed that the grants outlined in Table 2 below are awarded to Black Country Women’s Aid to deliver support to victims of domestic abuse as identified by the needs assessment. (These proposals are included within the overall investment plan in Table 1).

TABLE 2. Proposed grants to be awarded to Black Country Women’s Aid	Grant Period	Total Grant
Family Support Worker and Empowerment & Engagement Co-Ordinator posts to support victims in specialist domestic abuse safe accommodation	10 months funding 1/04/22 - 31/1/23	£58,333
Sanctuary Scheme – specialist support to victims referred for sanctuary provision	24 months 1/04/22 – 31/03/24	£35,744 (£17,872 pa)
Floating support/resettlement support for victims’ transition from refuge to community	10 months funding 1/04/22 - 31/1/23	£29,166
Psychologically-informed therapeutic interventions for adults and children in safe accommodation	10 months funding 1/04/22 - 31/1/23	£100,366
TOTAL		£223,609

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people - The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises children as victims of domestic abuse. The Domestic Abuse Strategy outlines work to support children and families experiencing domestic abuse. The proposed funding allocations outlined in the report will provide specialist support in safe accommodation to children who have experienced domestic abuse.
	People live well and age well - The Domestic Abuse Strategy outlines work to support all victims of domestic abuse. The proposed funding allocations outlined in the report will include provision of specialist support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation.





Strong resilient communities – The provision outlined in this report will include support to vulnerable victims and their families in safe accommodation and help them to cope and recover from domestic abuse.

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 included a new statutory duty on local authorities for the provision of specialist support for victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation from April 2021. This duty requires that a safe accommodation needs assessment is undertaken which informs a safe accommodation strategy. Work has been completed on a domestic abuse assessment which has informed the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-24 in Appendix 1. The domestic abuse safe accommodation element of this strategy was approved by Cabinet in December 2021 and published by 5 January in compliance with the statutory duty. Approval and adoption by SMBC Cabinet is now sought on the wider draft Domestic Abuse Strategy. There has been wide consultation during the development of the needs assessment and strategy, which has been overseen by a multi-agency task and finish group and approved by the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership. Members of the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership have agreed the Strategy and it is due for formal approval at the DASP meeting on 11 March.
- 4.2 Central government has awarded New Burdens funding to local authorities to support the delivery of the new statutory duty. In March 2021, Statutory Officers Group approved the use of New Burdens funding in 2021-22. The proposals outlined in this report to Cabinet proposes allocations for 2022-23 and 2023-24 to support the implementation of the strategy and the safe accommodation statutory duty.
- 4.3 Sandwell's New Burdens grant funding of £841,812 for 2021-22 was allocated to cover revenue expenditure relating to the functions set out in the new statutory duty on Tier 1 Local Authorities in Part 4 of the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act, relating to the provision of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children residing within safe accommodation.



- 4.4 The grant was distributed to Local Authorities for the period from 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 and Government has indicated that this funding will be in place for at least a three-year period, at a similar level to 2021-22. They have indicated that funding after that period may be allocated as part of the main grant to local authorities. In February 2022, SMBC was notified that the Sandwell allocation for 2022-23 will be £844,142.
- 4.5 A Memorandum of Understanding from MHCLG was signed on behalf of the Local Authority by the Interim Director of Adult Social Care and returned in March 2021.
- 4.6 Final [Statutory guidance](#) on the new duty for local authorities was issued by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) on 1 October 2021. This requires that all support in safe accommodation provided under the new duty should be delivered by knowledgeable and/or experienced specialist providers, charities, and other voluntary organisations whose purpose is to provide support to victims of domestic abuse. Those specialist providers should also meet the DLUHC Quality Standards.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Members of the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership have agreed the Strategy and it is due for formal approval at the DASP meeting on 11 March. The proposals for the use of New Burdens funding will support the delivery of that strategy and enable the commitments outlined in the strategy for safe accommodation to be delivered.
- 5.2 Black Country Women's Aid is the commissioned specialist provider of domestic abuse support services in Sandwell. They have secured the tender for the current domestic abuse refuge contract through competitive tendering. SMBC Adult Services have indicated they intend to re-tender the main domestic abuse refuge contract during 2022 and this will be subject to a separate Cabinet report.
- 5.3 As BWCA are the provider of specialist refuge accommodation in Sandwell grant, they are best placed to support the additional activity through grant funding.



6. Implications

Resources:	<p>In March 2021, Statutory Officers Group approved the use of New Burdens funding in 2021-22 to support delivery of the statutory duty for domestic abuse.</p> <p>Sandwell's New Burdens grant funding of £841,812 for 2021-22 was intended to cover revenue expenditure relating to the functions set out in the new statutory duty on Tier 1 Local Authorities in Part 4 of the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act, relating to the provision of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children residing within safe accommodation.</p> <p>The grant was distributed to Local Authorities for the period from 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 and Government has indicated that this funding will be in place for at least a three-year period at a similar level to the 2021-22 allocation. They have indicated that funding after that period may be allocated as part of the main grant to local authorities. In February 2022, SMBC was notified that the Sandwell allocation for 2022-23 will be £844,142. Proposals within this report are therefore based on the 2022-23 level of New Burdens funding allocation to Sandwell of £844,142.</p> <p>The proposed investments in Table 1 can be fully funded in 2022-23 and 2023-24 using the expected grant and the resources requested to be carried forward from the 2021-22 underspend.</p> <p>A Memorandum of Understanding from MHCLG was signed on behalf of the Local Authority by the Interim Director of Adult Social Care and returned in March 2021.</p> <p>Final Statutory guidance on the new duty for local authorities was issued by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) on 1 October 2021. This requires that all support in safe</p>
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	<p>accommodation provided under the new duty should be delivered by knowledgeable and/or experienced specialist providers, charities, and other voluntary organisations whose purpose is to provide support to victims of domestic abuse. Those specialist providers should also meet the DLUHC Quality Standards.</p> <p>SMBC currently commissions Black Country Women's Aid (BCWA) to provide both refuge support and specialist community-based support to victims of domestic abuse via existing grant agreements and a contract arrangement. BCWA meets the required DLUHC Quality Standards.</p>
<p>Legal and Governance:</p>	<p>The recommendations of the report are in line with the Council's Third Sector Funding Strategy. The intended services will be delivered in the context of the following legal and policy considerations. The recommendations outlined in this report will enable SMBC to deliver the statutory duty outlined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to provide specialist support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation.</p> <p>The Government has developed a new statutory definition of domestic abuse in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The Act also outlines statutory expectations on local authorities for the provision of specialist support to victims and children in safe accommodation. Final Statutory guidance on the new duty for local authorities was issued by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) on 1 October 2021. This requires that all support in safe accommodation provided under the new duty should be delivered by knowledgeable and/or experienced specialist providers, charities, and other voluntary organisations whose purpose is to provide support to victims of domestic abuse. Those specialist providers should also meet the DLUHC Quality Standards.</p>



The Government's Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) National Statement of Expectations was issued in 2016 and has been re-emphasised in the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act. This sets out what local areas need to put in place to ensure their response to VAWG issues is as collaborative, robust and effective as it can be so that all victims and survivors can get the help they need. The Government expects to see local strategies and services that:

- Put the victim at the centre of service delivery
- Have a clear focus on perpetrators to keep victims safe
- Take a strategic, system-wide approach to commissioning, acknowledging the gendered nature of VAWG
- Raise local awareness of the issues and involve, engage and empower communities to seek, design and deliver solutions to prevent VAWG.

The statutory power to provide grant funding is contained in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 (general power of competence). Grant funding is not subject to the requirements for competition under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

The Council is under a legal obligation to ensure that the proposed grant funding to Black Country Women's Aid complies with subsidy control regulations (previously known as European State Aid rules). A Legal view has been obtained which advises that the EU State aid rules now only apply in limited circumstances, which do not include the Grant. The new rules are contained in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), which require public authorities to consider on a case-by-case basis whether financial support could fall within the definition of "*subsidy*" and if so whether it would comply with six key principles.

Support may be considered lawful if it satisfies the principles and does not fall within a prohibited category, for example, unlimited guarantees.



	<p>Unlawful subsidy can be challenged in the courts by way of judicial review, and for this reason the decision-making process around granting subsidy is particularly important.</p> <p>The legal advice states that there are good grounds for concluding that the Grant will not fall within the definition of subsidy on the basis that it will not meet Condition 4 (i.e. it will not impact on trade and investment between the UK and EU). SMBC has obtained further evidence to strengthen such a conclusion.</p>
Risk:	<p>A risk register has been developed which addresses the potential risks associated with the decisions being sought. There are no risks identified that are significant once mitigating actions have been implemented. No red risks have been identified.</p> <p>This will be regularly reviewed, updated and reported to DASP or appropriate sub-group to ensure that risks are effectively managed.</p>
Equality:	<p>An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of Cabinet report process which has identified no adverse impacts or issues of concern for protected groups.</p>
Health and Wellbeing:	<p>The domestic abuse strategy and the objectives of the provision supported through the proposed funding allocations would aim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the safety of victims and children • To improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of victims • To improve children's safety • To regain/retain victims' stability, resilience and autonomy
Social Value	<p>The domestic abuse strategy outlines commitments to provide specialist support for victims of domestic abuse and their families. It will assist in addressing the significant issue of domestic abuse. It also aims to increase and improve the safety and wellbeing of adult and child victims, enabling them to cope and recover from the impact of domestic abuse and thus generating social value.</p>



	Black Country Women's Aid are a well-established third sector organisation whose roots are in Sandwell. They employ local people and also lever additional resources from charitable and other sources to provide support to vulnerable victims and children in Sandwell and add value to the SMBC investment.
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7. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Domestic abuse strategy 2021-2024.

8. Background Papers

Final [Statutory guidance](#) on the new duty for local authorities was issued by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) on 1 October 2021.



Sandwell Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-2024

Final Draft



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Foreword

Domestic abuse is a serious issue in Sandwell. It has a devastating impact upon the victim, children, families and the wider community. Survivors include women and men; older and younger people; LGBT+ communities; people with disabilities and people from all ethnicities and backgrounds. It is recognised that domestic abuse has a detrimental effect on the safety, security, health and wellbeing of both adults and children. Access to safe accommodation as well as specialist community-based domestic abuse support is vital to providing an opportunity for victims of domestic abuse and their families to escape their abuser and have a chance to live a life without fear. It is important that all organisations that have a role to play in addressing domestic abuse work effectively in partnership to ensure victims and their families are safe and protected. Sandwell recognise the One Chance Philosophy – that practitioners working with victims may only have one chance to engage a victim or family in appropriate support and save lives or stop years of further abuse. Victims and their families need timely and trauma-informed responses.

The Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership (DASP) and Sandwell MBC has a pivotal role in bringing together partner organisations and agencies in a coordinated and planned way to address domestic abuse. This strategy outlines how partner organisations will work together to do that. It also sets out how Sandwell MBC will work with partners to meet the new statutory requirements set out by government within the Domestic Abuse Act to provide specialist support to domestic abuse victims and their children in safe accommodation. We will work to ensure that all victims/survivors are supported to remain safe in their own home if they wish, or access alternative safe accommodation and support.

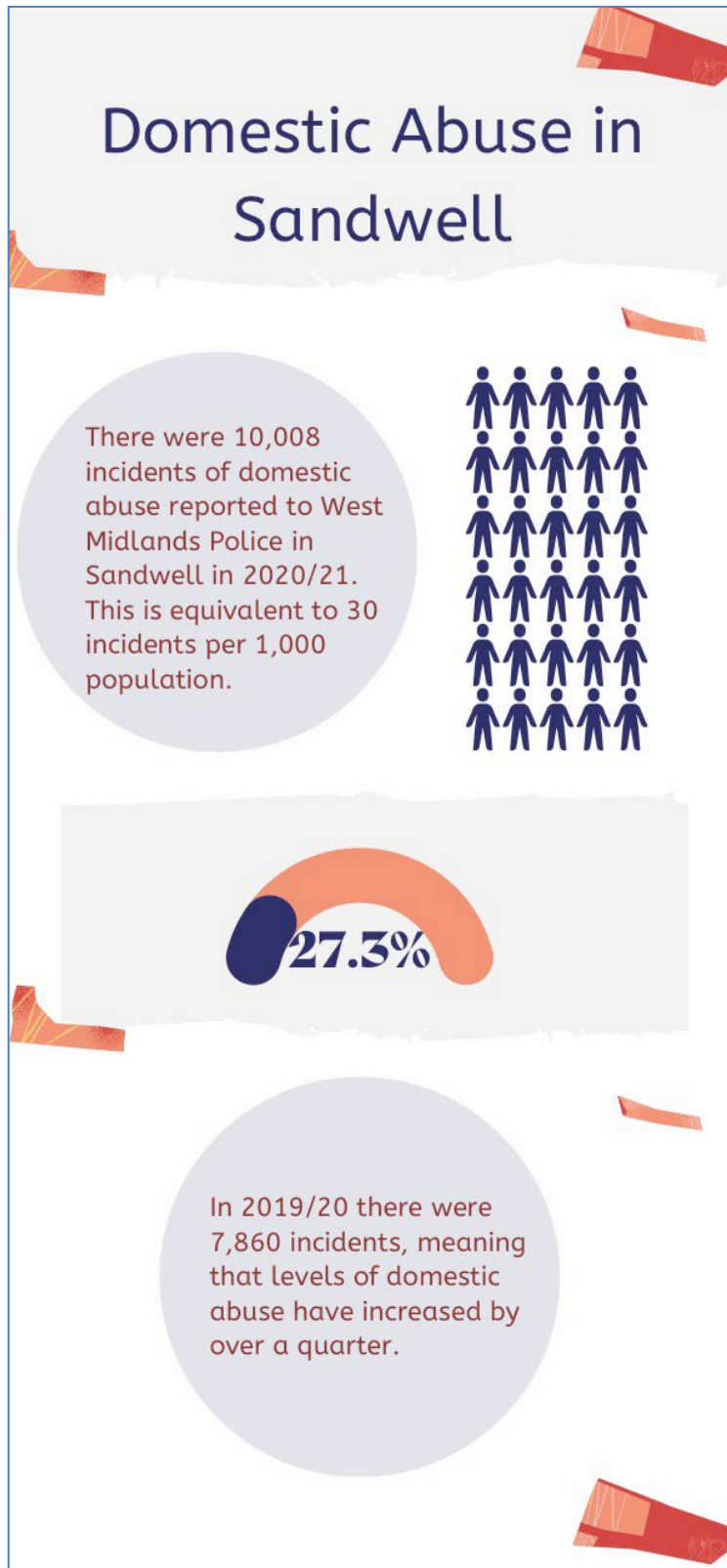
Councillor Bob Piper, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Sandwell MBC

**Alice Davey, Chair of Sandwell Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership & SMBC
Director of Borough Economy**



Executive Summary

Key Issues



- There were 10,008 incidents of domestic abuse in Sandwell reported to West Midlands Police in 2020/21 (30 incidents per 1,000 population). This represents an increase of 27.3% compared with the 7,860 incidents reported in 2019/20 (24 per 1,000 population).
- In 2020/21, Office for National Statistics data showed that there were 29 cases of domestic abuse per 1,000 population across the West Midlands as a whole. The figures for the most similar forces were 33 cases per 1,000 population for West Yorkshire, 27 per 1,000 for Greater Manchester and 24 for Merseyside. All these rates had also increased from the previous year.
- Research conducted on behalf of West Midlands Police, partly undertaken to judge the impact of the pandemic on domestic abuse levels, indicates that whilst reporting of domestic abuse has been increasing significantly year-on-year and particularly in 2020-21, they are lower than other similar forces. This research also states that we can expect to see continued increases in reporting of domestic abuse incidents in the future in the West Midlands, including for Sandwell.
- Sandwell MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) supports high risk domestic abuse cases and had a repeat case rate of 38% in 2020-21. This figure is within the national Safe Lives benchmark of 28-40% for an effective MARAC. Cases that go to MARAC are typically those with many previous incidents and that are escalating in severity. It is therefore not surprising that a significant proportion of these high-risk victims will experience a further incident, no matter how effective the MARAC. A lower than expected rate usually indicates that not all repeat victims are being identified and referred back to MARAC. All agencies should have the capacity to 'flag and tag' MARAC cases in order to identify any further incidents within a year of the last referral and re-refer the case to MARAC. A low repeat rate usually indicates that these systems are not or only partially in place.
- Sandwell Council currently commissions 38 specialist domestic abuse refuge places. The needs assessment outlined this figure is a sufficient number to meet current demand. However, there is a need to commission additional specialist support for victims and children in refuge, including children's support; access to therapeutic support and resettlement support for survivors leaving refuge.



Key things we need to do

We will focus our future work within three themes. These are:

1. Early intervention and enhanced survivor and whole family support;
 2. Joint working and partnership focus;
 3. Safe accommodation.
- To achieve progress on these themes all organisations will need to ensure that victims receive the right support first time using a One Chance Philosophy. This recognises that there may be just one chance to stop what could be years of further abuse.
 - We will also need to provide better connections between universal services and grassroots organisations to the specialist domestic abuse support service. All of these organisations have separate but distinct roles with all having a role in supporting victims and families appropriately.
 - We will develop further a Whole Family Approach seeking to achieve better co-ordination of our work with survivors, children and perpetrators.

Performance Monitoring and Key Performance Indicators

We will use a suite of performance indicators to monitor and report on the implementation of the strategy and progress towards these objectives. As a starting point, these performance indicators will include:

- The number of domestic abuse crimes and incidents reported to West Midlands Police;
- The number of high risk MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) victims and the percentage of repeat cases;



- The number of domestic abuse survivors who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Reporting will also include performance updates on funded interventions and feedback from survivors on the impact of these interventions and outcomes achieved.

Introduction

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provides the key recent context for this strategy and current national policy. The Act contains a wide range of provisions with perhaps the most fundamental being an enhanced definition of domestic abuse relating to coercive control, emotional and financial abuse and controlling behaviour. Children witnessing domestic abuse are also included within this enhanced definition. It should be noted that specialist domestic abuse services have long recognised coercive control and have responded to it accordingly, but this has now been enshrined into law.

The statutory definition now states that abusive behaviour is any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse;
- Violent or threatening behaviour;
- Controlling or coercive behaviour;
- Economic abuse;
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse.

For this definition to apply, the definition also states that both parties must be aged 16 or over and be 'personally connected'. Personally connected is further defined in the act as parties who:

- Are married to each other;
- Are civil partners of each other;



- Have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- Have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- Are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
- Have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child; or
- Are relatives.

The Act also places on a statutory basis the Domestic Abuse Disclosure Scheme commonly referred to as ‘Clare’s Law’.

The Act further outlines the requirement for support services to include a range of services namely: advocacy, prevention, advice, specialist support for both adults and children, counselling and therapy.

Other provisions include:

- Establishing in law the office of the national Domestic Abuse Commissioner;
- Providing a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Domestic Abuse Protection Order;
- Prohibiting perpetrators of abuse from cross-examining their victims in person in the civil and family courts in England and Wales;
- Creating a statutory presumption that victims of domestic abuse are eligible for special measures in the criminal, civil and family courts;
- Clarifying the circumstances in which a court may make a barring order under section 91(14) of the Children Act 1989 to prevent family proceedings that can further traumatise victims;
- Prohibiting GPs and other health professionals in general practice from charging a victim of domestic abuse for a letter to support an application for legal aid; and



- Providing for a statutory code of practice relating to the processing of domestic abuse data for immigration purposes.¹

The Act also places a duty on relevant local authorities, including Sandwell Council, to support survivors of domestic abuse and their children in refuges or other safe accommodation. Additional New Burdens funding has been provided by central government to cater for this new duty. Safe accommodation is classified as being refuge accommodation, specialist safe accommodation (i.e. dedicated specialist support to victims with relevant protected characteristics and/or complex needs), dispersed accommodation (safe self-contained and semi-independent accommodation), sanctuary schemes providing target hardening of properties along with specialist support and move-on and / or second stage accommodation. These safe accommodation types are also the only types of accommodation that would be covered by the New Burdens funding. Further to this the Act ensures that where a local authority, for reasons connected with domestic abuse, grants a new secure tenancy to a social tenant who had or has a secure lifetime or assured tenancy (other than an assured shorthold tenancy) this must be a secure lifetime tenancy.

Finally, the Act gives relevant local authorities the mandatory requirement to produce and publish a safe accommodation strategy every three years and make an annual report on their progress. It outlines the obligation to maintain a domestic abuse strategic partnership including the requirements for their membership.

The Government published its updated Violence against Women and Girls Strategy in July 2021 (the first such strategy was published in 2010 by the Coalition Government). The current strategy, produced after the enactment of the Domestic Abuse Act, covers a range of topics, along with reporting on progress made in delivering actions from the previous versions. It sets out three ambitions, namely to:

- Increase support for victims and survivors;
- Increase in the number of perpetrators brought to justice; and
- Reduce the prevalence of violence against women and girls.

In order to achieve these ambitions four thematic areas of work are outlined these being:

¹ Domestic Abuse Act 2021: Overarching Factsheet ,Home Office, 2021



- Prioritising prevention;
- Supporting victims;
- Pursuing perpetrators; and
- Strengthening the system.

It should be noted that although the strategy is entitled Tackling Violence against Women and Girls, its focus and actions does apply to all victims including men and non-binary.²

In addition to this document the Government will also be publishing a perpetrator strategy as part of its domestic abuse work, as mandated by the Domestic Abuse Act. This is due to be published within 12 months of the enactment of the Domestic Abuse Act.

Locally Sandwell has responded to the Domestic Abuse Act in a number of ways; building on our significant previous work. These include undertaking a review of the membership of the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership (and making changes in membership as a result), commissioning a domestic abuse needs assessment and developing this strategy, setting out initial investment for the New Burdens funding and assessing local provision.

Current Position in Sandwell

We have a range of services and organisations that provide support to survivors of domestic abuse and their families, aim to prevent this abuse from occurring and work with perpetrators to address their behaviour.

Of these, Black Country Women’s Aid is the most significant. They provide a range of specialist support which are commissioned by Sandwell Council or funded by a variety of external sources including the Ministry of Justice and the West Midlands Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (WMOPCC). These services include the refuge and dispersed accommodation provision, the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) community services, the children and young people’s service

² Tackling Violence against Women and Girls, HM Government, 2021



(including support provided in relation to Operation Encompass), a stalking and harassment focused service, modern slavery and a forced marriage service. They also are commissioned to provide the IRIS (Identification and Referral to Improve Safety) programme to improve the response of primary care to domestic abuse along with a dedicated IDVA located in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). These services are provided to both males and females and have recently been enhanced even further by the inception of the 'Ask Marc' domestic and sexual abuse male-specific service.

Birmingham LGBT is commissioned by WMOPCC to deliver additional specialist domestic abuse support to LGBT victims, including in Sandwell. A family intervention programme (Families Together) is also in place - Family Action are currently commissioned to deliver this intervention. In addition, a dedicated IDVA service was introduced in 2018 to cover the Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Hospitals Trust area. Two IDVAs are now based within the Emergency Departments at Sandwell and City Hospital (in Birmingham, but borders Sandwell). These IDVAs are funded jointly through the WMOPCC (allocated via the Safer Sandwell Partnership) and Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust. The IDVAs were initially managed by BCWA, but, from July 2021, have now transferred directly to the NHS Trust.

Statutory partners also provide support for survivors of domestic abuse and their families and to address perpetrators of this abuse. These partners include those represented on Sandwell's Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership such as adult social care, public health and housing within the local authority structure, Sandwell Children's Trust, West Midlands Police, health services (primary care, mental health and hospital trusts) and the Probation service. Voluntary and community organisations are also involved – a list of all DASP partners is included in Appendix 1 at the end of this strategy document.

We also have in place well developed and focused partnership activity including the Adult Safeguarding Board, Children's Safeguarding Partnership, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the dedicated Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) which aims to develop actions for higher risk victims referred by partner agencies.

Also of note is the fact that Sandwell Council's Housing Services were accredited by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) in 2019 in relation to their domestic abuse services. At the time they were only the third council in the country to receive this recognition.



At a regional level Sandwell is actively engaged with the work of the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit, including the development of good practice and identification of evidence-based approaches to inform the West Midlands response to domestic abuse and exploitation.

The COVID pandemic has had a notable impact both in terms of levels of demand but also in respect of how services have had to modify their own operational delivery and partnership working. Our local services all responded to this challenge admirably to ensure that support was still available. Enabling services to recover from these challenges and incorporate alternate models of working which have proved successful will form a part of activity during this strategy period.

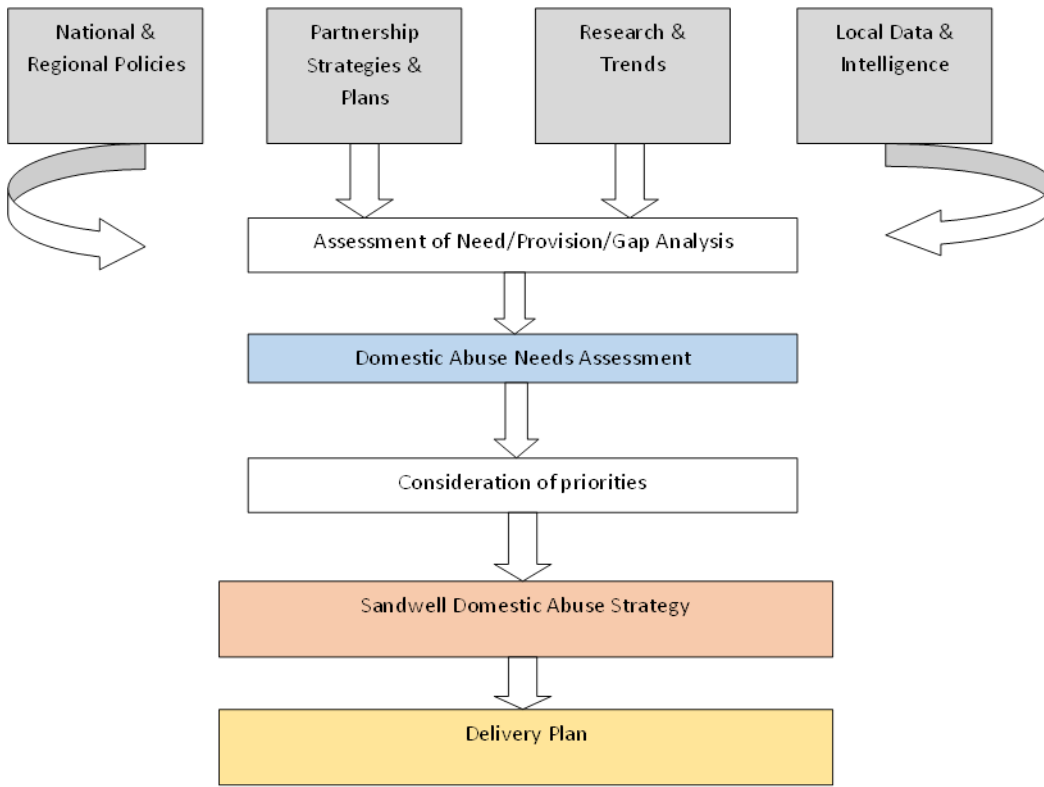
Scope

Prior to this comprehensive strategy covering all aspects of domestic abuse in Sandwell we produced a strategy focussed on safe accommodation. That safe accommodation strategy was compiled in response to the statutory duty to produce a safe accommodation strategy from the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as outlined above. The final version of the safe accommodation strategy was published in January 2022 and is incorporated into this wider domestic abuse strategy. This publication schedule has been followed in order to meet the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) deadline for production.

This strategy has been produced following a detailed domestic abuse needs assessment. The needs assessment, undertaken for us by Linxs Consultancy Limited, was compiled after a data collection and analysis programme (the safe accommodation aspect being based upon the DLUHC guidance), analysis of current services and a wide-ranging consultation programme. These consultations placed at the heart receiving the testimonies of survivors of domestic abuse and their families. We thank all those survivors who took part in this exercise, acknowledging their courage and openness in providing their experiences. Representatives from a wide variety of organisations have also provided their views and opinions.

The process followed to develop this strategy is summarised in the following process chart:





Vision

The Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership has previously agreed a vision to focus our domestic abuse work. This vision is also used for this strategy and is as follows.

Our vision is that Sandwell is a place where:

- Domestic abuse and sexual assault/abuse is not tolerated;
- Everyone can expect equality and respect in their relationships and live free from domestic abuse and sexual assault/abuse;
- The voice of victims/survivors (adults and children) are central to and fully inform our work;
- Victims/survivors and families are supported by excellent organisations working in partnership to ensure a co-ordinated community response where victims feel protected, safe and secure and recover from trauma;
- Perpetrators are held accountable for their actions and supported to change their behaviour;
- Communities are aware and are actively engaged in preventing and reducing domestic abuse/sexual assault and abuse.

Cross-cutting Objectives

To turn this vision into practice, the following three cross-cutting objectives will be used. These will drive our work over the strategy period.

- Sandwell will develop further our support for families and survivors of domestic abuse ensuring this meets the needs of all our residents regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. This will include ensuring services focus too on challenging perpetrator behaviour, making them responsible for their actions.
- Partners within Sandwell will enhance their working relationships to ensure that all play their full part in providing an ongoing duty of care to survivors and their families. All survivors should receive a consistent, trauma-informed and



supportive response to domestic abuse disclosure. In order to achieve this, professionals within our organisations will be supported to enhance their knowledge of domestic abuse issues, the availability of specialist services and how they can make a difference.

- Sandwell will continue to invest in our high quality safe accommodation offer to ensure we provide sufficient capacity to meet demand. We will strive to improve the support offered within safe accommodation still further, including the availability of therapeutic services for survivors and their children.

Performance Monitoring and Key Performance Indicators

We will use a suite of performance indicators to monitor and report on the implementation of the strategy and progress towards these objectives. As a starting point these performance indicators will include:

- The number of domestic abuse crimes and incidents reported to West Midlands Police;
- The number of high risk MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) victims and the percentage of repeat cases;
- The number of domestic abuse survivors who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Reporting will also include performance updates on funded interventions and feedback from survivors on the impact of these interventions and outcomes achieved.

Key findings from the Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment

The needs assessment contains a comprehensive analysis of the material gathered. Some of the most notable findings are outlined here; these are grouped using the chapter headings from that needs assessment. These findings have informed the thematic areas which we will focus upon throughout the strategy period.



Protection and Resettlement

- Policing data reveals that there has been a significant increase in the number of domestic abuse incidents occurring in Sandwell, with a particularly stark rise during the pandemic period. There were 10,008 episodes logged by West Midlands Police in 2020/21, 27.3% higher than in 2019/20. Information provided by Black Country Women's Aid and Victim Support also show that this growth in incidents has been reflected by rising referral rates and need for support. Data from Black Country Women's Aid in particular shows an association between lockdown and increasing non-physical forms of abuse (stalking, financial abuse, emotional abuse and coercive control) with sizeable percentage increases across these classifications when comparing quarter 1 2020/21 with quarter 4.
- There is a higher proportion of Police incidents than the relative Census population percentages for Indian, Pakistani and Black/British victims, suggesting that ethnicity is not generally a barrier to reporting in Sandwell for these communities. Lower than expected reporting rates are observable amongst the White Irish, Chinese, White/Black African and White/Asian mixed backgrounds although the population sizes and incident numbers here are relatively small. Of particular concern, however, are the statistics relating to the Bangladeshi community which represents 2.1% of the Sandwell population but just 0.7% of recorded domestic abuse incidents.
- Geographical analysis shows that the wards with the highest rates per 1,000 population are Princes End (111.8), West Bromwich Central (99.1) and Langley (93.3). However, Adult Social Care data shows that Princes End has one of the lowest numbers and rate of concluded safeguarding referrals where the perpetrator is a family member across Sandwell. One would expect relative synergy across domestic abuse related datasets, and this suggests that there may be more unmet safeguarding need in Princes End than in other parts of the Local Authority.
- Whilst the majority of incidents involve female victims, the proportion of male victims has increased year-on-year for the past three years, rising from 18.7% in 2018 to 22.0% in 2020. The Black Country Women's Aid IDVA service is available regardless of gender and sexual identity, but just 4.0% of clients are male. In



response to this gap in male provision, Black Country Women's Aid have recently introduced a Men's Assault Referral Centre in 2022. Titled "Ask Marc" it has male branding and will offer a combination of male and female IDVAs and ISVAs (Independent Sexual Violence Advisers) in recognition of the fact that some male survivors may find it difficult to speak to a male worker.

- Just 1.3% of the Black Country Women's Aid IDVA community services caseload is LGBT, but in 20% of cases there is no sexual identity recorded, meaning that the real proportion could be significantly larger. A Domestic Abuse Services Provision Mapping Study conducted by Galop and Durham University for the Domestic Abuse Commissioner has highlighted the lack of specialist domestic abuse provision for the LGBT community, especially outside of London. Birmingham LGBT launched a service in September 2021 with two LGBT IDVAs for the West Midlands, one being dedicated for LGBT victims in the Black Country. Black Country Women's Aid are looking to build a relationship to improve the access for LGBT clients into the Black Country Women's Aid community and "Ask Marc" services.
- Black Country Women's Aid IDVA community services are clearly providing a high standard of care which is highly valued by survivors. During the needs assessment process, positive reflections were provided by survivors from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, including Black and Asian (Sikh and Muslim). Black and Minority Ethnic communities are also well-represented within referral data. Nevertheless, some stakeholders feel that the generic service is not sufficiently equipped to cope with language and cultural barriers, and that this perceived gap could be addressed either through the introduction of a dedicated service or by increased partnership and commissioned joint working between Black Country Women's Aid and culturally specific grassroots organisations.
- The Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) and Emergency Department Intervention projects are making a valuable contribution to intervention and protection in Sandwell, noticeably providing a route into specialist support for older survivors and those who had previously not engaged with specialist domestic abuse provision. This programme being a national programme to improve the primary care response to domestic abuse, providing training and support for GP practices. The take-up of the IRIS programme by GP



practices in Sandwell is very high with 96% of practices being involved. However, in 2020/21 IRIS referrals in Sandwell were 64% lower than in the previous year, with the move away from face-to-face patient contact during the pandemic a key mitigating factor. There is also a compliance issue amongst some Sandwell GPs. Sandwell has more GP practices trained than either Dudley or Walsall yet has consistently returned lower numbers of referrals than either of its neighbours since inception. The most recent quarterly data available showed that just 13/45 fully trained practices (with a further 8 partially trained) made any referrals during the three-month period.

- The ownership issue is also reflected within Adult Social Care safeguarding referrals where the perpetrator of abusive behaviour is a family member. In 2020/21 just 45.4% of these cases were flagged specifically as domestic abuse. This is an issue known to the Sandwell Domestic Abuse Team and Adult Social Care. Training for Adult Social Care workers has seen the proportion of safeguarding referrals flagged as domestic abuse increase considerably compared with the two preceding years, but further improvement is needed. In particular, where the perpetrator is another family member rather than a partner or ex-partner the proportion falls further to just 29.6%.
- Black Country Women’s Aid community services data shows a paucity of referrals from multiple sectors including Housing, Adult Social Care and Mental Health. This is also noticeable within the MARAC dataset, with more than 80% of referrals coming from West Midlands Police, far in excess of the national average (65.6%) and Safelives expected range. The most recent MARAC data shows a large increase in the number of repeat cases (50.2% in quarter 4 2020/21). However this figure could be an anomaly with the percentage of MARAC repeat cases standing at 38% for 2020-21 as a whole.
- A positive experience of civil and criminal justice court processes is a key aspect of the recovery journey. Survivor testimonies show that this is not just about achieving a positive outcome, but also centres around having the opportunity to relate their experiences, concerns and to be “listened to” by senior officials.
- National research has shown the difficulty in establishing robust evaluation frameworks to ascertain the impact of perpetrator programmes, and there are



conflicting views as to whether outcomes are better when programmes are mandated or voluntary and reliant on perpetrator motivation to change. Ultimately there is a need to ensure that future perpetrator models are flexible enough to promote partner buy-in, accommodate complex needs and, crucially, embrace a family-focused approach which recognises and supports the needs of all family members whilst using the family as a key interface for assessing change.

Safe Accommodation

- The existing safe accommodation system in Sandwell is highly effective. The range of accommodation types and levels of support provided by Black Country Women's Aid (hereafter BCWA) mean that survivors are routinely accepted regardless of level of risk or complexity of presenting needs. There is also good outcome tracking for those who are declined a space in accommodation. System effectiveness has been enhanced by the appointment of a dedicated Housing IDVA and procedural changes bringing faster resettlement. The average length of stay was 122 days in safe accommodation in 2020/21, compared with 160 days in the preceding year.
- One tangible gap where the service could be enhanced concerns children's therapy and support. For the past six years an advocate funded by Children in Need has provided support for young people in refuge and community services, working with the survivor and child in parallel as the most effective engagement model. This funding period has now expired.
- Counselling is also not currently available to safe accommodation survivors unless there is a history of sexual abuse or violence. A recent short-term uplift in early 2021 through the Ministry of Justice enabled counselling to be offered to domestic abuse survivors across the domestic abuse provider's accommodation and community services. There were 95 immediate referrals, highlighting the level of unmet need.
- The experience of clients consulted who were in out of area safe accommodation was markedly more negative than those in Sandwell. There were a number of survivors who were critical of either the lack of information or communication that they had received from Housing Solutions and indeed



regional refuge staff. The time taken to achieve resettlement for out of area survivors consulted was also noticeably longer compared with those in Sandwell safe accommodation. A new systems approach to extend the immediate direct offer system to out of area presentations is yet to be fully embedded into practice.

- Sandwell Council currently commissions 38 specialist domestic abuse refuge places. The commissioning perspective is that sufficient units are currently being commissioned to meet demand. This is borne out in the needs assessment by the fact that since 2019/20 there have been less than 10 survivors per annum placed in temporary accommodation (rather than refuge) following a homeless presentation. The number of referrals declined due to no space being available in safe accommodation has also fallen significantly, with a 50% reduction when comparing 2020/21 with the previous time period.
- A first available void policy (prioritisation for local residents) has also been successful, with Sandwell residents now more likely to receive safe accommodation within the Borough. However, there has also been a surprising decline in the overall number of referrals for safe accommodation made in relation to Sandwell residents. In 2018/19, 52.0% of all referrals, and 50.0% of accepted clients came from Sandwell. By 2020/21 these figures have fallen to 33.3% and 31.3% respectively. This could be a product of the concerted levels of investment into community services (or a local consequence of the pandemic). Nevertheless, further investigation will be carried out, especially given the fact that domestic abuse homeless presentations to the Local Authority have increased in each of the last three years (with the 2020/21 figure of 276 almost twice as high as the level recorded in 2018/19).
- The demographics for the safe accommodation referral profile show that there have only been 11 referrals made for male survivors (just 1 accepted) in the past three years for safe accommodation, and all of these cases were in 2018/19. Similarly, there have been just 5 homeless presentations from male survivors in the past three years, representing a mere 0.8% of the total number of applicants.



- Demographic information relating to sexual identity shows 2% of referrals (2.2% accepted) were from LGBT survivors.
- The needs assessment examined the ethnicity profile for both the safe accommodation referral and homeless presentations datasets. The proportion of referrals and presentations for survivors from Asian, Black, Mixed and Other White backgrounds are in excess of the respective Sandwell population profile proportions, indicating that ethnicity is not an overall barrier to accessing safe accommodation locally.
- The use of temporary accommodation for domestic abuse survivors is problematic due to the lack of wraparound support, suitability assessments and safety measures in place. Domestic abuse workers provided examples where their clients had felt intensely isolated in temporary accommodation, leading to them deciding to return to the perpetrator and representing a missed opportunity to break the domestic abuse cycle.
- As part of a Sandwell Council Housing Solutions redesign, the bulk of temporary accommodation (for non-domestic abuse presentations) is to be located in specific managed units. This should ensure there is capacity in the remaining dispersed units of stock for any domestic abuse survivors still needing short-term temporary accommodation. However, the inclusion of dedicated domestic abuse support as part of their housing plan should also be considered essential.
- There is currently no dedicated Sanctuary service. However, Sandwell Council does offer a target hardening service for domestic abuse survivors delivered by Neighbourhood Officers in conjunction with the Building Surveying Team and Neighbourhood Repairs Officers. The service is tenure neutral and can also be provided to owner-occupiers, private rented accommodation and housing association properties. Between April 2019 and June 2021 there have been 84 properties 'target hardened', with works including enhanced security to entry doors, windows and gates, repaired fencing and external lighting installation. However, the tenure neutral aspect of this service appears to be not widely known, especially outside of the Local Authority. Indeed, there were two



survivors consulted who stated they had been advised by their domestic abuse support workers that they were not eligible for target hardening.

- Once a survivor leaves refuge the specialist domestic abuse provider is not commissioned to provide any continued resettlement support. This lack of an interface or continuity of care at a crucial point in a client journey was described as an issue by a number of survivors who had left, or indeed were about to leave, safe accommodation.
- There is flexibility within the safe accommodation service's commission to subsidise or offer rent-free periods for working survivors to make refuge affordable as they are not in receipt of housing benefit. Nevertheless, working survivors interviewed indicated that they had been informed by various agency representatives that they would be unable to access safe accommodation, revealing a significant procedural barrier to support.
- Respondents representing the refuge provider stated that there is a lack of collaborative working once a survivor enters safe accommodation with the statutory agencies having fulfilled their responsibilities, leaving the specialist provider responsible for all their needs moving forward.
- Other supported accommodation providers (e.g. teenage pregnancy) were consulted as part of the needs assessment. Representatives stated that they all had domestic abuse survivors to a greater or lesser extent, either historic or current. They further indicated that in many cases, domestic abuse was not recorded within the referral information, and was only discovered through later conversations between worker and client. However, the extent to which providers subsequently proactively helped survivors to obtain specialist domestic abuse support varied considerably. Indeed, current commissioning specifications for supported accommodation providers do not include mandatory domestic abuse training for staff.

Prevention and Early Intervention

- Sandwell Children's Trust data reveals that whilst the number of contacts relating to domestic abuse has increased in each of the last three full recording years,



there has been a noticeable decrease in the proportion progressing to MASH or Children's Social Care (44% in 2018/19 compared with 15% in 2019/20 and 2020/21). A Children's Trust representative indicated that this may be due to improvements in Early Help, triage and screening meaning that domestic abuse is now managed better rather than all cases escalating to MASH. However single assessment data (social worker-based assessments) for the last three years shows that the percentage completed which are linked to domestic abuse has also fallen, with a particularly large decline in the first quarter of 2021/22 (22% compared to 34% in the previous year). Further exploration and ongoing monitoring of both of these findings is required by Sandwell Children's Trust to ensure that domestic abuse is being identified and managed effectively.

- A 'dip sample' provided by Sandwell Children's Centres and the Working Together with Families Programme revealed 88 cases where domestic abuse had been identified. In the majority of these cases (77) it was known at the time of referral but only 34 accepted an offer of Black Country Women's Aid support or had already engaged with them. Case studies drawn from this sample highlighted some of the difficulties experienced by Children's Centre staff in attempting to engage their clients into domestic abuse support. However, better family outcomes for those who had engaged with Black Country Women's Aid were also evident.
- A family support model (Families Together) is in place in Sandwell working with families of low-risk victims of domestic abuse. Children are not supported. Alternative models nationally include a wider range of partners, seek to intervene with associated risk factors and work with children as well. A continuation of family support in some form was supported by many of those consulted, and indeed the current service has reported a number of successful outcomes. However, the precise model used, the partners involved and the scope of the support provided should be investigated further.
- Consultation with representatives from the Black Country Women's Aid young person 'Our Future' programme highlighted a service gap relating to young males showing signs of perpetrator behaviour. The current service has received numerous referrals for such clients but does not have the remit or capacity to support them under existing arrangements.



- It was expressed by numerous participants that there is currently a gap in relation to the scale and extent of healthy relationships work in schools and colleges. An expansion of this style of work covering appropriate behaviours and relationships should be seen as a priority.
- Sandwell has produced a variety of publicity campaigns in recent years aimed at raising awareness of domestic abuse and to encourage disclosure. Future campaigns could focus on men and LGBT communities, especially as dedicated support is being made available for these population groups.

Partnership

- Throughout the needs assessment reference was made to a wide variety of partnership arrangements that are in place in Sandwell. These relate both to statutory requirements such as the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership, MARAC and MAPPA arrangements, Domestic Homicide Review prescribed structures along with day-to-day working arrangements between service providers/support organisations and commissioners. Many stakeholders have commented that these relationships and linkages are mature and work well.
- However, despite this strong multi-agency commitment to the domestic abuse agenda in Sandwell, the needs assessment demonstrated key areas where this does not necessarily translate fully into practice in terms of a continuity and duty of care throughout a survivor's recovery journey:
 - Low referrals from certain sectors into Black Country Women's Aid Community IDVA Services and MARAC (e.g. Adult Social Care, Mental Health and Housing);
 - Lack of recognition of *domestic* abuse within safeguarding adult cases (even when abuse has been identified), especially when the perpetrator is not a partner or ex-partner;
 - A non-uniform response to disclosure (*one conversation*) which has resulted in survivors in Sandwell failing to access timely support or indeed withdrawing completely (e.g. Police and GPs);



- Partners seeing refuge as an end-point and as a discharge of duty rather than as a process and opportunity to wrap support around a survivor and secure long-term recovery;
- Lack of a robust information sharing process in some areas such as in relation to lower level risks, for example information sharing with other agencies where Police have been called out for domestic abuse incidents.

What we will do

Based on this analysis we will focus our activity upon the following three themes. These will be delivered via a range of actions and initiatives that were also contained in the needs assessment and the safe accommodation strategy which can be added to over the strategy period. The themes are:

1. Early intervention and enhanced survivor and whole family support;
2. Joint working and partnership focus;
3. Safe accommodation.

To make a start on delivering these themes we will use the recommendations drawn from the extensive consultation process and data analysis contained in the needs assessment. These recommendations have been translated into actions for each of the three themes below.

Theme 1 - Early intervention and enhanced survivor and whole family support

We will:

- Undertake further refresher IRIS training within primary care. This will have the aim of gaining greater primary care ownership of the domestic abuse agenda to ensure that all practice staff understand the broadening definition of domestic abuse and their responsibilities to support disclosures.
- Continue to promote and develop the early intervention aspect of the IRIS programme. This will include further proactive engagement work with GPs around supporting disclosures through remote appointments, exploring the possibility of using primary care venues as safe spaces for reporting domestic abuse and



expanding the training to other healthcare settings and services such as sexual health services and maternity navigators.

- Seek to reintroduce a dedicated court IDVA providing a supportive court presence for survivors and enable more expedient safety planning. As Sandwell does not have its own dedicated court, the potential development of this IDVA will engage with other regional partners.
- Work with local and regional partners to develop an integrated and flexible perpetrator intervention model which embraces a family-focused approach.
- Examine how to implement a more systematic specialist service offer for the families of survivors. This needs to be a longer-term sustainable support offer that is holistic and collaborative in focus and based on effective case management, recognising that many of the services that do provide support for children in particular are developed through short term funding regimes.
- Seek to expand healthy relationships work in schools and colleges covering appropriate behaviours and relationships.
- Ensure that training and awareness raising work with our partners will be continuous and delivered in both single and multi-agency settings in order to maximise understanding of domestic abuse, how to support disclosures and knowledge of specialist services and referral pathways. Developing further the one-chance philosophy will be a key focus.
- Review Children’s Trust data relating to domestic abuse contacts and single assessments on an ongoing basis in order to provide assurance to the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership that families experiencing domestic abuse are being identified and managed effectively.
- Utilise learning and lessons from domestic homicide and serious case reviews, including the sharing of good practice to influence and improve our services.

Theme 2 – Joint working and partnership focus

We will:

- Encourage cooperation and collaborative partnership working between Black Country Women’s Aid and grassroots organisations. There is a need to ensure in



developing this that the roles and responsibilities of each organisation are clearly delineated; this can include the grassroots organisations providing initial support as long as sufficient training has been provided.

- Encourage the development and mobilisation of the third sector to enhance the service offer for harder to reach communities.
- Ensure that policies, procedures and practice within partner agencies recognise the one-chance philosophy in order to support survivors effectively and consistently to make disclosures.
- Focus future publicity and awareness raising campaigns on men and LGBT communities, especially as dedicated support is being made available for these population groups. Challenging perpetrator behaviour will also be a part of this future programme.
- Concentrate further partnership activity upon enhancing the level of referrals from non-Police partners to IDVA services and MARAC (including from Housing, Adult Social Care and Mental Health Trust), and improving the flagging of domestic abuse within safeguarding adult cases (especially where the perpetrator is not a partner or ex-partner).
- Seek to improve the suitability and compatibility of information systems to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of data and data exchange. This will include greater recording of protected characteristics and geographic data at a small area level.
- Establish an outcome focused (victim-centred) domestic abuse system to ensure ongoing links and a mutual duty of care between services throughout the victim journey. Better information exchange will be examined as a focal point of future commissioning and support. One result of achieving this goal could comprise the introduction of a single domestic abuse monitoring system.
- Seek to enhance and strengthen the survivor voice in the future. A sustainable and meaningful engagement model will be developed to ensure that their experiences are routinely integrated into the design of services and responses.



Theme 3: Safe Accommodation

The safe accommodation strategy used these following three sub-themes as a way of focussing activity to address the recommendations from the needs assessment. These three sub-themes are:

1. Improving the survivors' recovery journey;
2. Enhancing the ability for survivors to stay in their own home;
3. Developing a more responsive and cohesive system.

The recommendations have been translated into the following actions. We have already begun work on implementing these actions and have a dedicated implementation plan to assist us in monitoring progress.

1. Improving the survivors' recovery journey

We will:

- Address the gap in relation to children's support in safe accommodation. New Burdens funding will be used for two posts in 2021/22 but longer-term planning will be undertaken to ensure sustainability.
- Develop an offer for a therapeutic resource or more psychologically informed services (e.g. a visiting clinical psychologist) that can be accessed in safe accommodation or through the resettlement period in a timely manner.
- Commission a dedicated domestic abuse service to support resettlement for survivors, preserving specialist support throughout the safe accommodation journey. The resettlement service could also be used to support other specific cohorts, such as teenage parents leaving supported accommodation and survivors who have presented as homeless who have been rapidly moved to a new permanent tenancy.
- Explore further the service offer and its marketing for male victims. There is an absolute paucity of male referrals for safe accommodation and homelessness



presentations for domestic abuse. The Black Country Women's Aid 'Ask Marc' male service which was launched in late 2021 should improve accessibility of services and provide greater awareness of the availability of dispersed safe accommodation. This should be bolstered through a combined communications initiative between Black Country Women's Aid and Sandwell Council/Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership.

- Develop a domestic abuse specialist service to provide wraparound support for any domestic abuse survivors in short-term temporary accommodation, bringing a continuity of care through to refuge and resettlement.

2. Enhancing the ability for survivors to stay in their own home

We will:

- Support survivors to stay in their own homes and provide enhanced security and feelings of safety for survivors moving to new properties by working towards the instigation of a full Sanctuary scheme. The current scheme, despite being tenure neutral, does not appear to be well known outside of Local Authority departments. A Sanctuary scheme would also bring an even more holistic service for survivors than is currently in place, combining physical security with safety planning and integrated support from a specialist domestic abuse provider.
- Undertake a review, where necessary, of policies, practice and procedures relating to the rehousing of perpetrators. This will have the aim of establishing a more robust case management system to make rehousing a more viable option.

3. Developing a more responsive and cohesive system

We will:



- Use the Sandwell Council Housing Solutions redesign and training regime to foster a culture of enhanced and open conversations with survivors to remove ambiguity from the system and promote transparency concerning processes and housing outcomes. This is due to a number of survivors feeling uncertain and insecure about the bidding and direct offer processes despite the proactive Housing IDVA role.
- Introduce additional Housing staff to maximise communications with survivors and system efficiency. This will be particularly beneficial in preserving dialogue and support for survivors in out-of-area refuges.
- Continue to develop ownership by asking all agencies with a role in recovery to systematically review their processes. It is crucial for an effective recovery journey that safe accommodation becomes a 'process' for multi-disciplinary support for survivors, rather than being seen as an end-point where other agencies' duties of care are discharged. All partners will reaffirm their commitment to developing the best outcomes for individuals.
- Raise standards and consistency of the process for accessing support and working with survivors of domestic abuse for supported accommodation providers. This will include mandating domestic abuse training within the commissioning of supported accommodation providers. This will increase staff knowledge of referral pathways and enable them to support domestic abuse disclosures more proactively.
- Use our Council's Domestic Abuse Team to co-ordinate communication work with partners to ensure there is awareness of the safe accommodation available and the nature of support offered, addressing the decline in the overall number of referrals for Sandwell residents.
- Remove the barrier preventing working survivors from entering safe accommodation. We will produce a clear position statement for all relevant agencies in Sandwell detailing how working/homeowner survivors can access safe accommodation provision.



Governance and Delivery

Progress against these thematic areas and individual actions will be overseen by the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership along with any sub-groups or short-life groups that are formed. A detailed implementation plan outlining timescales and responsibilities for implementing these actions is also available and will be updated periodically.

In keeping with requirements from the Domestic Abuse Act the progress in achieving these actions will be reviewed formally every year and reported to government as required; this process will include assessing whether any additional priorities have emerged. A new needs assessment and strategy will be produced in three years' time.

Funding

Sandwell MBC has received £841,812 New Burdens funding in 2021-22 to support the implementation of the statutory domestic abuse duty. Central government has indicated its commitment to providing funding in future years to support the implementation. At the time of publication, a 2022-23 allocation of £844,142 had been announced, but specific allocations for 2023-24 are yet to be announced. New Burdens funding will be used to respond to the areas highlighted in the domestic abuse needs assessment and will be invested in:

- The provision of holistic, specialist support to adults and children living in domestic abuse refuge in Sandwell, including support for complex needs; children & family support; and provision of psychologically-informed therapeutic interventions in refuge;
- Specialist community-based support to victims in safe accommodation outside refuge (including floating support & re-settlement of victims leaving refuge; support to victims in sanctuary and other safe accommodation);
- Officer and costs to support the implementation of the statutory duty and the New Burdens funding programme development and management.



Appendix A – Sandwell Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership membership

Organisation
Sandwell Council
Sandwell Children’s Trust
West Midlands Police
Probation Service
Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Sandwell & West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust
Black Country & West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group
Primary & Secondary Schools Head Teachers Representative
Black Country Women’s Aid
Richmond Fellowship
Cranstoun
Sandwell Victim Support
Family Action
Victims’/Survivors’ representative
Safer Sandwell Partnership Police & Crime Board
Sandwell Children Safeguarding Partnership
Sandwell Safeguarding Adults Board
Sandwell Health & Wellbeing Board
WM Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner / WM Violence Reduction Unit
Ask Marc
Birmingham LGBT



Report to Cabinet

23 March 2022

Subject:	Sandwell Community Safety Strategy 2022-26
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Bob Piper Cabinet Member for Community Safety
Director:	Alice Davey Director of Borough Economy
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Tessa Mitchell Business Manager Community Safety & Resilience tessa_mitchell@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Cabinet supports and endorses the implementation of the Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board's Community Safety Strategy 2022-26 as set out in Appendix 1, which outlines the partnership's key priorities and direction of travel over the next five years.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Sandwell's Community Safety Strategy is overseen by the multi-agency Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board (SSPPCB) who oversee the Borough's approach to community safety. The existing strategy covered 2019-21 and is now due for renewal.



- 2.2 The SSPPCB have developed and overseen a themed approach to community safety in Sandwell over the past three years which has focused around:
- The prevention of violence and exploitation
 - Reducing offending, reoffending and serious organised crime
 - Preventing crime & antisocial behaviour in our Neighbourhoods
- 2.3 The SSPPCB agreed that these priorities should remain current for the new strategy on the 15th July 2021. This was also reinforced by feedback from residents obtained over the past three years from a variety of sources including most recently, the Community Safety Strategy Consultation undertaken as part of the 2021 Safer 6 campaign. It is also reinforced through Sandwell's Annual Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment.
- 2.4 The strategy also encompasses two other significant cross cutting themes: **tackling substance misuse to save lives and reduce crime**, aligned with the Government's new Drugs Strategy and **delivering on the new Serious Violence Duty**. The Duty is a key part of the Government's programme of work to prevent and reduce serious violence; taking a multi-agency approach to understand the causes and consequences of serious violence, focused on prevention and early intervention, and informed by evidence which requires a joined up holistic approach.
- 2.5 The golden thread running through all these priorities is our commitment to protecting and supporting vulnerable victims. We will deliver these priorities through adopting a public health approach, understanding that violence is preventable and identifying the reasons why people get drawn into crime. We will also support organisations to become trauma aware, to embed such approaches into their practice and to tackle these issues through the adoption of 4 P Plans which aim to : prevent violence, abuse and exploitation; protect those affected; reduce harm and pursue those who perpetrate.
- 2.6 The new strategy builds on the work undertaken highlighting the considerable progress and achievements made over the past three years whilst also setting out the new overarching objectives to take this work forward. It has been produced by partners and each of the SSPPCB's three sub-groups is developing and will be responsible for an annual work plan which will be regularly reviewed throughout the year and updated



annually. This will ensure the flexibility to predict and respond to any emerging trends in the fast paced and ever changing arena that is community safety.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on prevention of violence and exploitation. • Reducing opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour • Multi-Agency support for children and families • Delivery of awareness and resilience building work in our schools.
	<p>People live well and age well</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on tackling substance misuse • Community Engagement
	<p>Strong resilient communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place based tasking processes using evidence to focus on specific issues across each town • Community awareness work through our ASB, Community Safety and Prevent Teams • Tackling perpetrators
	<p>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of our CCTV stock to support community safety across our estates and towns

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Background

Significant work has been undertaken over the past three years to develop a themed approach to community safety which is focused around:

- The prevention of violence and exploitation
- Reducing offending, reoffending and serious organised crime
- Preventing crime & antisocial behaviour in our Neighbourhoods



4.2 These priorities have been developed and carried over into the new strategy as follows:

Prevention of Violence & Exploitation	
P1	Increase community awareness of how to prevent crime and maintain and/or improve safety
P2	Increase stakeholder knowledge of preventing and reducing violence, abuse, exploitation and crime
P3	Refresh and develop the Prevention of Violence, Abuse and Exploitation Plans
P4	Use effective data and analysis to help developing an understanding of the threats and risks in relation to violence, abuse and exploitation

Reduce Offending, Reoffending and Serious Organised Crime	
R1	Support offending pathways
R2	Management of high-risk offenders and targeting of key cohorts to reduce rates and seriousness of offences committed
R3	Continue to strengthen and develop partnership approaches around tackling serious organised crime
R4	Confirming and being able to clearly articulate the Borough's approach to prevention and diversion as it relates to youth crime

Prevent Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in our Neighbourhoods	
T1	Increase community awareness of how to prevent crime and maintain and/or improve safety
T2	Strengthen our approaches to tackling ASB
T3	Embed and build upon our approaches to tackling hate crime
T4	To better inform tasking and resource deployment
T5	To enhance the community safety of our high rise estates

4.3 Each area will include work reflecting our commitment to protecting and supporting vulnerable victims. Each will have its own work plan overseen by the Board's three subgroups with all partners accountable in supporting delivery to achieve Sandwell's community safety vision of: ***ensuring that the communities of Sandwell feel safe, protected and confident in their homes and neighbourhoods.***



4.4 Public Consultation

A key strength of the strategy is partner and public involvement in setting the priorities. A number of consultations have been undertaken including:

- SSP Community Safety Survey (2021) - 177 responses
- Young People's Hate Crime Survey (2020) – 73 responses
- Sexual Abuse and Assault Survey (2021) – 143 responses
- Shape Survey (2019) – 876 responses
- Annual WMP Community Safety Partnership Survey 2020 – 378 responses

4.5 Findings

These consultations have been invaluable in helping to shape the strategy with some key findings are referenced on p14 of the Strategy with highlights from the 2021 Community Safety Survey including:

- 77.4% stated that they have either been the victim or witness of anti-social behaviour and crime in Sandwell
- 40% felt worried about organised crime and exploitation in Sandwell
- 24% of individuals perceived there to be an ineffective response to anti-social behaviour and crime by authorities

Respondents Top 5 Priorities :

- Drug dealing (10.7%)
- Youth disorder (9.3%)
- Burglary (7.4%)
- Violent crime (7.2%)
- Littering/fly tipping (5.8%)

Respondents' thoughts on improving safety

- 91.5% respondents asked for an increased police presence
- More CCTV (69.5%) was the second most common solution
- Well maintained estates & streets (59.9%) were third

4.6 As well as these public consultations the Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board has used considerable partner input into developing this new strategy with key local partners including: Police, Local Authority, Sandwell Children's Trust, West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority, the Clinical Commissioning Group, Probation and



Public Health alongside input from a wide number of voluntary sector organisations. It has also taken account of regional partnerships and direction including the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit and the West Midlands Community Safety Partnership.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board has a statutory requirement under the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, and subsequent legislative amendments, to develop and deliver a Partnership Plan which contains community safety priorities based on the current evidence base across the Borough of Sandwell. This strategy brings together this evidence base and sets the strategic direction for community safety across the Borough for the next five years subject to annual review.

6 Implications

Resources:	The Community Safety Strategy is a partnership plan utilising existing resources deployed in accordance with the priorities identified. When available, partners will tap into additional funding streams to enhance capacity and provision.
Legal and Governance:	Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board has a statutory requirement under the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, and subsequent legislative amendments, to develop and deliver a Partnership Plan which contains community safety priorities based on the current evidence base across the Borough of Sandwell.
Risk:	Risk implications, including any mitigating measures planned/taken, health and safety, insurance implications Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour through partnership working is central to the delivery of the Community Safety Strategy 2022-26 and Strategic Assessment 2020.



	This is business as usual and adheres to all required and existing SMBC and partners risk assessments and required mitigations.
Equality:	An EIA has been completed as part of this process with no negative implications recorded for protected groups. Tackling crime and disorder and enhancing community safety helps address disadvantage and disproportionality ensuring that the vulnerable are safeguarded and community resilience increased.
Health and Wellbeing:	Reducing and managing crime and anti-social behaviour, and protecting its victims has a positive impact on health and wellbeing. Engaging with and supporting people in relation to community safety and building resilience to prevent the most vulnerable becoming victims of crime and exploitation will also have a positive longer-term impact on their health and wellbeing.
Social Value	Engagement with local residents and strengthening civic pride. Provision of opportunities for involvement through volunteering, engagement and positive activities.

7 Appendices

Appendix 1 - Sandwell Community Safety Strategy 2022-26



community safety
strategy v28.pptx

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment



Draft CS Strategy
2022-26 EIA v1.doc

8 Background Papers

Sandwell Strategic Assessment 2020





West Midlands Police and Crime Plan 2021-23 link below:

<https://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/your-commissioner/police-crime-plan/>.





Sandwell Community Safety Strategy 2022-2026



'ensuring that the communities of Sandwell feel safe, protected and confident in their homes and neighbourhoods'



Introduction

The Sandwell Community Safety Strategy outlines our plans for 2022 – 2026, working as a partnership to ensure that the communities of Sandwell feel safe, protected and confident in their homes and neighbourhoods.

The Plan is introduced by Chief Superintendent Ian Green who is the Chair of the Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board and Councillor Bob Piper the cabinet lead for Community Safety, who help set the context for the strategy, outline key progress, challenges and ambitions for the next 5 years.

The Community Safety Partnership in Sandwell have been working hard to get a consistent, co-ordinated approach to violence, abuse, exploitation, crime and anti-social behaviour, focusing on prevention and where needed reducing offending and serious organised crime.

Throughout the strategy, you will see some of the examples of current approaches, projects and initiatives that have been implemented during the last 3 years and areas of strengths and good practice.

You will also see some of the data and figures for crime in the region. Nationally there has been a 12% increase in total recorded crime and Sandwell has followed similar trends, with some areas being higher or lower than national averages.

What is important is context, behind every figure is a story, and an individual,. We want every person in Sandwell to feel safe, protected and confident in their own homes and their neighbourhoods and some of the work we have undertaken over the last 3 years to support this ambition includes:

- Raising awareness of crime, violence and exploitation in our communities, so our communities know how to recognise such offending, can respond and seek support as required.
- Training and educating young people in schools in protective behaviours, to understand signs of abuse, violence and exploitation.
- Equipping professionals to recognise and respond to a wide range of violence, abuse, exploitation crime and anti-social behaviour,.
- Encouraging a trauma informed approach, helping individuals to recognise the impact of trauma and respond in sensitive ways
- Targeted interventions to respond to a range of forms of violence, abuse, exploitation, crime and anti-social behaviour

The plan sets out clearly our main priorities for the next five years and some key objectives to work towards, which can be summarised as:

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
Prevent Violence and Exploitation	Reduce Offending, Reoffending and Serious Organised Crime	Prevent and Reduce Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour
<p>Priority areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention of Public Place Violence • Knife Crime • Under 25 • Domestic Abuse • Sexual Assault and Abuse • Modern Slavery • Child Exploitation 	<p>Main priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing Adult Reoffending • Reducing Youth Reoffending • Serious Organised Crime • County Lines 	<p>Main priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing Hate Crime Reducing Crime Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour
<p>Cross Cutting Priority 1: Protect and Support Vulnerable Victims Cross Cutting Priority 2 Tackling Substance Misuse – saving lives and reducing crime Cross Cutting Priority 3: Serious Violence Duty</p>		

Community Safety Vision

To ensure that the communities of Sandwell feel safe, protected and confident in their homes and neighbourhoods



I am pleased to be able to update you on Sandwell's new Community Safety Strategy 2022-26. The multi-agency Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board understands that issues of crime and community safety are very complex and require an integrated partnership response. Over the past 3 years we have developed our approach around these three key themes:

- The prevention of violence and exploitation
- Reducing offending, reoffending and serious organised crime
- Preventing crime & antisocial behaviour in our Neighbourhoods

While considerable work and progress has been made across these areas there is still always more to be done and these will remain our key priorities for the next 5 year.

There are also three cross cutting priorities, which are integral to the delivery of all of these areas: our commitment to protecting and supporting vulnerable victims; tackling substance misuse to save lives and reduce crime, aligned with the Governments new Drugs Strategy and delivering on the new Serious Violence Duty, which promotes a multi-agency approach to understanding the causes and consequences of serious violence, focused on prevention and early intervention.

Over recent years we have seen the significant challenges that youth violence and exploitation in particular, are having on our communities. These issues have also been exacerbated by COVID and its restrictions on all of our lives. Despite these extraordinary challenges, the partnership has remained robust and focused on delivering activities to enhance community safety across the Borough.

We will continue to deliver these priorities by adopting a place based, public health approach, understanding that violence is preventable and identifying the reasons why people get drawn into crime. We will also support organisations to become trauma aware, to embed such approaches into their practice and to tackle these issues through the adoption of 4P Plans, which aim to: prevent violence, abuse and exploitation; protect those affected; reduce harm and pursue those who perpetrate these offences.

Delivery of these priorities will be led by the Community Safety Partnership through a number of work streams involving the right partners (including community leads and third sector organisations) to influence service delivery and improvements. This 5-year plan is focused on current and future threats and will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains fit for purpose as we tackle new emerging threat areas and complex vulnerabilities across our communities. This approach ensures the flexibility to predict and respond to any emerging trends in the fast paced and ever changing arena that is community safety.



Chief
Superintendent
Ian Green

Chair of the Safer Sandwell
Partnership Police Crime Board

Community safety is a key priority for Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council; tackling crime, ASB and exploitation to ensure our communities are and feel safe in their homes and neighbourhoods. As such it underpins much of our Corporate Plan; Big Plans for a Great Place. This Strategy builds on the work undertaken over the past 3 years and provides a direction of travel for the next 5 years

Community safety is not something that can be tackled by any single agency; it requires good and effective partnership work. In Sandwell this work is led by our Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board, working collaboratively with Sandwell's 4 other strategic boards. Much of this work is cross cutting and we have proactive and innovative partners across all sectors who are committed to reducing opportunities for crime to get a foothold in the Borough.

Involving those who live here, or come into the Borough for work or education, to help us develop our approaches has been central to developing this strategy and we have conducted a range of surveys and other interactions to understand what makes people feel safe and how we can build awareness and resilience to help achieve this.

We have good links with regional partners including the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, The Violence Reduction Unit and the West Midlands Community Safety Partnership. Our strategy recognises that crime often extends beyond geographic boundaries and through ensuring alignment with that of these regional partners we can ensure that we maximise the resources available to tackle these issues.

Over the past three years we have strengthened our approaches to Community Safety, working with partners to tackle violence and exploitation, to better support those experiencing domestic abuse, hate crime and ASB and have become a national exemplar of good practice for our modern day slavery work. These achievements are celebrated in this strategy, however there is a recognition and strong commitment to continue to address crime and disorder across the Borough.

The ambition going forward is for swifter information flow, earlier identification and support for those at risk, increased involvement and co-production with communities and a reduction in the risk of residents being victimised. The Safer Sandwell Partnership also recognises the unprecedented and significant impact across all our communities, businesses and partnerships brought about by Covid19. The impact of this will continue to impact upon us for the foreseeable future but despite the pandemic the partnership has continued to meet and progress its many and varied workstream to ensure that we continue to address these issues and work collectively to support all our residents including some who are amongst the most vulnerable in society.



**Councillor
Bob Piper**

Cabinet Member for Community
Safety, Sandwell Metropolitan
Borough Council

Community Safety Strategy - Plan on a Page

	Priority 1: Prevent Violence and Exploitation	Priority 2: Reduce Offending, Reoffending and Serious Organised Crime	Priority 3: Prevent and Reduce Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour
Priority areas include Page 202	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Prevention of Public Place Violence ✓ Domestic Abuse/ Sexual Assault and Abuse ✓ Knife Crime ✓ Violence where victims and offenders under 25. ✓ Child Exploitation ✓ Modern Slavery ✓ Preventing Extremism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reducing Adult Reoffending ✓ Reducing Youth Reoffending ✓ Serious Organised Crime ✓ County Lines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reducing Hate Crime ✓ Reducing Crime ✓ Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure robust, effective victims pathways, support and responses are in place ✓ Use data and analysis to develop an understanding of each type of violence, abuse and exploitation ✓ Understand and further embed a trauma informed approach ✓ Ensure effective training is in place to continue to educate and raise awareness of violence, abuse and exploitation ✓ Equip our young people / future adults to stay safe and make positive choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Support offending pathways ✓ Management of high-risk offenders and targeting of key cohorts to reduce rates and seriousness of offences committed ✓ Continue to strengthen and develop partnership approaches around tackling serious organised crime ✓ Confirming and being able to clearly articulate the Boroughs approach to prevention and diversion as it relates to youth crime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increase community awareness of how to prevent crime and maintain and/or improve safety ✓ Strengthen our approaches to tackling ASB ✓ Embed and build upon our approaches to tackling hate crime ✓ Better informed tasking and resource deployment ✓ Enhance community safety on our high rise estates ✓ Engage with our communities to help us work together in partnership to tackle crime and ASB
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ As part of the 'Protect' strand of the PoVE Plan ensure current victim pathways are reviewed and are working ✓ Ensure victim pathways are incorporated into training plans ✓ Ensure regional approaches in place through close working relationships with the OPCC and WMVRU. ✓ Ensure a robust dialogue and support from the data and analysis sub group from the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) ✓ Enhance data sets to measure, monitor and review all priority areas of violence, exploitation and abuse ✓ Review how effective trauma informed training has been ✓ Develop resources to support trauma informed practice in relation to violence, abuse and exploitation ✓ Develop a Prevention of Violence, Exploitation and Abuse Training Plan ✓ Develop a training data set including evaluation data ✓ Encourage and support funding bids to support priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Strengthen pathways to prevent the cycle of reoffending ✓ Embedding new commissioned services to support offenders ✓ Embed new Integrated Offender Management ✓ Review ways of working with domestic abuse perpetrators/sexual violence/abuse ✓ Strengthen and develop the organised crime response through the OCG partnership ✓ Raise awareness of serious organised crime and organised criminal gangs with partners ✓ Development of a model which will provide early identification and interventions preventing offending and reoffending – with a particular emphasis on youth offending ✓ Specific focus on understanding data in relation to over-represented children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Enhance and promote community safety and crime prevention information on the Council website ✓ Distribute community safety and crime prevention materials and resources on priority issues identified ✓ Development of a new council wide ASB Policy and new ways of working ✓ Co-produced Service Standards for anti-social behaviour ✓ Review and update the partnership Hate Crime Plan ✓ Strengthen engagement with communities ✓ Review and develop data sets and a new dash board ✓ Improve intelligence gathering ✓ We will work in partnership with Housing colleagues to deliver the CCTV / Concierge Services upgrade and expansion programme across our high-rise estate

Cross cutting priority 1: Protect and support vulnerable victims of abuse, violence, exploitation, crime and anti-social behaviour

Cross cutting priority 2: Tackling Substance Misuse – saving lives and reducing crime

Cross cutting priority 3: Serious Violence Duty

Priority 1: Prevent Violence and Exploitation

Over the past three years, we have worked to develop a holistic response to preventing, violence, abuse and exploitation which includes:

- Developing comprehensive training programmes to educate professionals on how to identify and respond to a range of violence, abuse and exploitation, including domestic abuse, modern slavery, and child exploitation
- We have developed and strengthened early interventions including a new Child Exploitation Hub who are leading the way in responding to child exploitation, with a 50% reduction in such offences reported to the police over the past 3 years
- We have undertaken targeted initiatives to address incidents of knife crime, training and educating young people, using proactive stop and searches and other knife crime initiatives. This proactive work means we have seen an increase in recorded knife crime and weapons seizures but we have intervened at the earliest juncture
- We have continued to deliver interventions throughout the pandemic and national lock downs. This included being proactive in responding to national increases in domestic abuse, ensuring effective interventions remained in place locally
- Proactive work around modern slavery, educating communities to recognise and respond to signs and concerns.
- Targeted communications to our communities to raise awareness around reporting

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What are residents telling us?

143 people responded to our Sexual Abuse and Assault Survey carried out in 2021

- 1 in 3 said they had experienced sexual abuse or assault
- 51.2% said the abuse or assault took place in West Bromwich
- When asked what would make them feel safer, respondents told us – awareness raising & education, safe spaces, visible security/police presence

How will we respond?

We have worked to increase reporting for a number of types of violence and exploitation, and need to continue with raising awareness of these crimes and training and educating professionals and our communities.

The PoVE Strategy and Plan will be completed to ensure effective plans are in place to prevent violence and exploitation occurring, protect victims and pursue offenders.

From the Sexual Abuse and Assault Survey, 51.2% said the incidents took place in West Bromwich. We have been successful in obtaining Safer Streets funding to tackle violence against women and girls and are delivering a place based project in West Bromwich..

Objectives	Strategy
Ensure robust, effective victims pathways, support and responses are in place	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As part of the 'Protect' strand of the PoVE Plan ensure current victim pathways are reviewed and are working 2. Ensure victim pathways are incorporated into training plans
Use data and analysis to develop an understanding of each type of violence, abuse and exploitation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure a robust dialogue and support from the Data and Analysis Sub Group from the VRU 2. Enhance data sets to measure, monitor and review all priority areas of violence, exploitation and abuse
Understand and further embed a trauma informed approach	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review how effective trauma informed training has been 2. Develop resources to support trauma informed practice in relation to violence, abuse and exploitation
Ensure effective training is in place to continue to educate and raise awareness of violence, abuse and exploitation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a Prevention of Violence, Exploitation and Abuse Training Plan 2. Develop a training data set including evaluation data

Priority 2: Reduce Offending, Reoffending and Serious Organised Crime

Reducing Offending, Reoffending and Serious Organised Crime was a new priority set in the 2019 strategy. Over the last 3 years we have worked to develop the new Board Sub group who oversee and develop this area of work. Some of the main highlights include:

- Development of the Black Country Reducing Reoffending Strategy. The strategy outlines the strengthened commitment of partners to work jointly, to unblock barriers and to reduce reoffending
- Further development of the 7 pathways out of offending, ensuring robust support is in place for offenders.
- Working to reduce reoffending rates for young people, which in Sandwell have reduced from 47.55% to 42.64%
- While we have seen an increase in under the influence violence crimes, our award winning Blue Light project has worked with treatment resistant drinkers and has demonstrated a 74% reduction in reoffending and 82% reduction in the cost of crime
- We have worked to get upstream in addressing organised crime groups and now have 8 mapped groups in Sandwell where the partnership is proactively intervening and disrupting their activities.
- We recognise the importance of listening to the voice of our communities and have carried out a number of consultations over the last 3 years which have all provided valuable input into this new strategy

What are residents telling us?

It is important that we listen to the voice of the community, we carried out a community safety survey in 2021, we had 177 residents responded who told us that their top concerns in relation to violence, abuse and crime are:

- Drug Dealing
- Youth Disorder
- Burglary
- Violent Crime

How will we respond?

We will continue to take a robust partnership approach and encourage communities to get involved in helping to tackle these issues.

We will also seek to increase understanding of serious organised crime across the region.

Half of acquisitive crime, burglary and robbery are caused by substance misuse. We will be ensuring our strategies are aligned to the Government’s Drug Strategy

Objectives	Strategy
Support offending pathways	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthening pathways to prevent the cycle of reoffending 2. Embedding new commissioned services to support offenders
Management of high-risk offenders and targeting of key cohorts to reduce rates and seriousness of offences committed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Embed new Integrated Offender Management 2. Review ways of working with domestic abuse perpetrators/sexual violence/abuse
Continue to strengthen and develop partnership approaches around tackling serious organised crime	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen and develop the organised crime response through the Organised Criminal Gangs (OCG) partnership 2. Raise awareness of serious organised crime and organised criminal gangs with partners
Confirming and being able to clearly articulate the Boroughs approach to prevention and diversion as it relates to youth crime	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of a model which will provide early identification and interventions preventing offending and reoffending – with a particular emphasis on youth offending 2. Specific focus on understanding data in relation to over-represented children

Priority 3: Prevent and Reduce Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

Throughout the last three years we have really focused our efforts to adopt a consistent approach to prevent and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. Some of our key achievements have included:

- Successful reintroduction of Town/Borough Tackling to bring partners together to problem solve and tackle crime and anti-social behaviour
- Ongoing service delivery throughout the Covid pandemic including increased enforcement in relation to Covid breaches
- The introduction of a dedicated ASB reporting portal to ensure reported ASB reaches the correct agency first time wherever possible
- Enhanced Reporting Metrics covering Domestic Abuse and Hate Crime enabling better drilldown in relation to figures, areas, trends and responses
- In 2019/20, Sandwell Council's ASB Team became the first Local Authority team in the country to meet the PLEDGE Standard for it's policy, practice and use of the ASB Community Trigger
- 2020/21 also saw the development of a new Noise Nuisance Triage Pilot, which made the ASB Team's 'Noise App' tool, available to selected Sandwell Locals staff to enable more timely interventions
- Boroughwide PSPOs covering Dog Fouling and Alcohol were renewed for a further 3 years along with the West Bromwich Town Centre one.

What are People telling us?

- 177 residents responded to the 2021 Community Safety Survey. We asked about personal experiences of anti-social behaviour and crime in Sandwell
- 77.4% (137) stated that they either been the victim or witness of this
 - 60 respondents had reported to the police
 - 71 of respondents said they had reported to Sandwell Council
 - 78% (43) were not satisfied with how their reports were dealt with

How will we respond?

- More than half of the people who have witnessed or experienced crime or ASB had not reported to the police. We need to continue to raise awareness of how to prevent crime and improve safety.
- It is difficult to measure data and get a true reflection on reductions in total recorded crime due to the national lock downs.
- With 78% of respondents stating they are not satisfied with how their reports were dealt with, we need to strengthen our approaches tackling these issues and engaging with our communities to develop trust and ensure positive outcomes are shared.

Objectives	Strategy
Increase community awareness of how to prevent crime and maintain and/or improve safety	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhance and promote community safety and crime prevention information on the Council website 2. Distribute community safety and crime prevention materials and resources on priority issues identified
Strengthen our approaches to tackling ASB	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of a new council wide ASB Policy and new ways of working 2. Co-produced Service Standards
Embed and build upon our approaches to tackling hate crime	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and update the partnership Hate Crime Plan 2. Strengthen engagement with communities
Better informed tasking and resource deployment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and develop data sets and a new dash board 2. Improve intelligence gathering
Enhance the community safety of our high rise estates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will work in partnership with Housing colleagues to deliver the CCTV / Concierge Services upgrade and expansion programme across our high-rise estate

Cross Cutting Priority 1: Protect and Support vulnerable victims of abuse, violence, exploitation, crime and anti-social behaviour

The main vision behind the Community Safety Strategy is to ensure that the communities of Sandwell feel safe, protected and confident in their homes and neighbourhoods.

Sandwell Council 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.

Safe and Protected in your Home

In the 2021 Community Safety Survey we asked about feelings of safety in relation to anti-social behaviour and crime, 34.4% of individuals reported feeling unsafe in their own homes, this is important as we know that abuse, violence, crime and anti-social behaviour can happen in places where we live.

Feeling safe at home and in your community is fundamental to living well and to strong community relationships. Although Sandwell's violent crime and anti-social behaviour levels are similar to the national average, residents are concerned and tell us that feeling safe is the most important thing for them and their families.

Our focus throughout this strategy will be to continue to:

- Drive home key messages of safety and support into the homes of our residents. The Sandwell Herald, Community Safety Bulletin and our website / social media feeds provide a range of safety messages and support options available for victims.
- We will promote awareness raising messages to enable people to report violence, abuse, exploitation, crime and anti-social behaviour.
- We will continue to shine a light on abuse, violence and exploitation that is hidden behind closed doors.
- We will continue to take action where concerns are reported; over the last three years the Anti-Social Behaviour team has responded to 29,638 incidents to reduce or manage ASB.
- We will continue to disrupt locations where modern slavery and exploitation occur, raising awareness and enabling communities to report any possible concerns.
- We will increase community awareness of how to prevent crime and maintain and/or improve safety

Safe and Protected in your Community

In the 2021 Community Safety Survey we asked about feelings of safety from anti-social behaviour and crime, 44.8% of people reported feeling fairly unsafe in public spaces in Sandwell such as in towns and parks

One of the ways people said that they would feel more safe would be to have a physical police presence on the streets. The Police and Crime Commissioner Simon Foster's top priority is to rebuild community policing in the West Midlands. Pledging 450 officers across the region of which 177 have already been recruited.

In addition to make our streets safer we will continue to:

- Work with the Violence Reduction Unit to increase funding into detached youth work with young people.
- Work with the Violence Reduction Unit to pilot a programme called Stepping Together that increases safety for young people on their journey to and from school
- Implement Safer Streets funding to target safety concerns in West Bromwich
- Use our PSPOs (Public Space Protection Orders) covering Dog Fouling, Alcohol, Nitrous Oxide and West Bromwich Town Centre to engage with those involved in anti social behaviour
- Expand our CCTV and concierge service across our remaining high rise estate
- Work closely with WMP on providing CCTV imaging and professional witnessing to secure convictions
- Develop our restorative justice options

Cross Cutting Priority 2: Tackling Substance Misuse – saving lives and reducing crime

The chart below, outlines the governments plan on a page to implement the strategy

What is the data telling us?

- Drug Related Deaths: Sandwell has significantly lower number of drug related deaths than the regional and national average
- Continuity of Care rates (ensuring prompt access to treatment on release from prison): remains above the national average
- Successful Completion rates across all substance types are currently lower than the national average (16.3% v 21.1%), whilst representations (indicative of relapse) are better than the national average.
- Complexity levels of clients accessing treatment is higher than the national average: 63% of presentations to service have high/very high levels of complexity compared with 51% nationally
- A high level of need and unmet need exists locally: Sandwell has a higher estimated rate of drug and alcohol users than national levels; 85% of alcohol dependent individuals and 58% of opiate/crack users are not known to treatment services (both roughly in line with national levels)
- Sandwell remains statistically significantly worse than the national average for both alcohol specific and related mortality (now ranked second worst in the country for alcohol related mortality)

Drug Strategy

The Government has launched a ten-year plan, to combat illegal drugs with ambitions across 3 key areas:

- Breaking drug supply chains
- Delivering a world class treatment & recovery service
- Achieving a generational shift in demand for drugs

How will we respond

This strategy is an ambitious strategy which sits across all areas of preventing and reducing violence, abuse, exploitation, crime and anti-social behaviour.

To ensure this has the right attention, this area of work has been set as a cross cutting priority across all community safety priorities.

We have the Sandwell Drug and Alcohol Partnership (SDAP) with multiple workstreams already in place to address many of these concerns.

We will develop a task and finish group to review the partnership approach and develop an implementation plan for the strategy as a starting point linking this into our new PoVE / RRSOC and place based work streams.

Priority	Why?	How?	Who?	What?
 Break drug supply chains	Drug supply chains are violent and exploitative, degrading neighbourhoods across the country and internationally	We will continue to roll up county lines and strengthen our response across the drug supply chain, making the UK a significantly harder place for organised crime groups to operate	Home Office and MoJ, working with international and intelligence partners, NCA, Border Force, police, courts, prison and probation	Within three years: close 2,000 more county lines, disrupt 6,400 OCG activities and deny more criminal assets
 Deliver a world-class treatment and recovery system	Drug addiction harms individuals and society: deaths have risen to record levels and almost half of acquisitive crime is linked to addiction	We will invest a further £780 million to rebuild drug treatment and recovery services, including for young people and offenders, with new commissioning standards to drive transparency and consistency	DHSC, DLLHC, DWP and MoJ working with NHSE, local authorities, treatment providers and people with lived experience	Within three years: prevent nearly 1,000 deaths, deliver 54,500 new high-quality treatment places and prevent a quarter of a million crimes
 Achieve a shift in the demand for recreational drugs	Use of recreational drugs has grown over a decade, particularly among young people, risking individual harm and fuelling dangerous markets	We will strengthen the evidence for how best to deter use of recreational drugs, ensuring that adults change their behaviour or face tough consequences, and with universal and targeted activity to prevent young people from starting to take drugs	DfE, DHSC, Home Office and MoJ, working with local authorities, police, education providers, secure facilities and youth services	Reduce overall drug use to a new historic 30-year low over the next decade

Cross Cutting Priority 3: Implementing the Serious Violence Duty

There are several asks of Community Safety Partnerships in responding to the Serious Violence Duty

What is the Serious Violence Duty?

- The Duty is a key part of the Government's programme of work to prevent and reduce serious violence; taking a multi-agency approach to understand the causes and consequences of serious violence, focused on prevention and early intervention, and informed by evidence
- This was introduced as part of the Police Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill on 9 March 2021 alongside Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVROs) and Homicide Reviews
- It is a key part of the Government's wider programme of work to prevent and reduce serious violence; taking a whole-system approach to understand causes and consequences and focus on prevention and early intervention
- The Duty requires organisations to work together to: plan; share data, intelligence and knowledge; generate evidence-based analysis of the problem and solutions to prevent and reduce serious violence in local areas
- There is sufficient flexibility for relevant organisations to work together in the most effective local partnership for any given area

How will we respond

The Serious Violence Duty will help to provide targeted responses to serious violence in Sandwell. Through initial discussions, there have already been some broad principles adopted to take this work forward, which include:

- Rather than build an additional forum, we will use existing local structures including POVE/RRSOC/ Borough Tasking / SSPPCB and build the Serious Violence Duty into these new plans
- We will adopt the World Health Organisation's definition of a public health approach, which can be summarised as follows:
 - Focussed on a defined population;
 - With and for communities
 - Not constrained by organisational or professional boundaries
 - Focussed on generating long term as well as short term solutions
 - Based on data and intelligence to identify the burden on the population, including any inequalities
 - Rooted in evidence of effectiveness to tackle the problem
 - Develop a small working group to start taking this work forward
 - Build in the three key success measures:
 - homicide rates
 - hospital admissions for knife/sharp object assault,
 - Police recorded knife crime

Objectives	
<p>Understanding local issues:</p>	<p>To identify the kinds of serious violence that occur in our area and so far as it is possible to do so, the causes of that serious violence, the partnership will work together to establish a local 'strategic needs assessment' – identifying the drivers of serious violence in the local area and the cohorts of people most affected or at risk. This will require the sharing of relevant data and intelligence held by the individual organisations subject to the duty.</p>
<p>Understanding local issues: Preparation and implementation of a strategy:</p>	<p>In order to prepare and implement a strategy to prevent and reduce serious violence, the partnership must collectively develop a strategy which should outline the multi-agency response that the partnership will take to address the drivers identified in the strategic needs assessment and the work planned to prevent and reduce serious violence in the specified local area. The strategy should set out how the proposed actions will enhance and complement existing local arrangements responding to serious violence.</p>
<p>Review:</p>	<p>The duty requires that once a strategy has been prepared it must be kept under review. The partnership should review the strategy on an annual basis. A review should specifically consider how the interventions and solutions have impacted on serious violence within their area – considering for example crime statistics and accident and emergency data. The review may highlight the need for a refreshed strategic needs assessment and strategy, for example where new and emerging crime types are identified.</p>

The Approach

Sandwell Community Safety Strategy for 2022 - 2026 sets out the approach we are taking to prevent and reduce, violence, abuse, exploitation, crime and anti-social behaviour

Public Health approach

This Means

Understanding that violence is preventable and the reasons why people get drawn into crime

We will do this by:

- ✓ Focusing on understanding the causes of violence,
- ✓ Understanding the reasons why people get drawn into a life of crime.
- ✓ Using data and evidence
- ✓ Asking the people involved "what has happened to you, to get to this point?"

Trauma Informed approach

This Means

Supporting organisations in becoming trauma aware and helping them to begin embedding trauma informed approaches into their practice

We will do this by:

- ✓ Ensuring robust training plans are in place to raise awareness of adverse childhood experiences
- ✓ Embedding trauma informed practice to reinforce the strengths and relationship-based practice many professionals already engage in.
- ✓ Supporting organisations to be trauma informed organisations
- ✓ Continuing our journey to establish consistency in the use of a trauma-informed approach

Four P approach

This Means

We will prevent violence, abuse and exploitation, protect those affected, reduce harm and pursue those who perpetrate

We will do this by:

- ✓ Maximising prevention opportunities and targeting resources to be effective
- ✓ Ensure robust, effective victims pathways, support and responses are in place
- ✓ Maximising opportunities to disrupt locations where there is violence, abuse and exploitation and use joint enforcement opportunities
- ✓ Reducing the harms caused by violence, abuse and exploitation through improved victim identification and support

Our engagement with local people and partners in developing this Community Safety Strategy has been invaluable in helping the partnership to shape our responses to ensure communities of Sandwell “feel safe, protected and confident in their homes and neighbourhoods”

Consultations carried out included:

- Annual WMP Community Safety Partnership Survey
- SSP Community Safety Survey (2021)
- Shape Survey (2020)
- Young Peoples Hate Crime Survey (2020)
- Sexual Abuse and Assault Survey (2021)
- Thank you to everyone who contributed

In the 2021 Community Safety Survey we asked about personal experiences of anti-social behaviour and crime in Sandwell

- 77.4% stated that they either been the victim or witness of this
- 60 respondents had reported to the police
- 71 of respondents said they had reported to Sandwell Council
- 78% were not satisfied with how their reports were dealt with

Review of Young People’s Experience of Hate Crime

- 73 young people responded
- 1 in 4 respondents told us that they had either been a victim or witnessed hate
- 44% told us they had not received any education on hate crime
- 38% told us they had been impacted by online hate

Sexual Abuse & Assault Survey

- 143 people responded
- 1 in 3 said they had experienced sexual abuse or assault
- 51.2% said the abuse or assault took place in West Bromwich
- When asked what would make them feel safer, respondents told us – awareness raising & education, safe spaces, visible security/police presence

In the 2021 Community Safety Survey we asked about feelings of safety from anti-social behaviour and crime

- 28.7% of people felt fairly unsafe and 5.7% very unsafe at home
- 44.8% of people reported feeling fairly unsafe in public spaces in Sandwell such as in towns and parks
- 40.3% of individuals expressed feeling very worried about becoming the victim of a crime in Sandwell
- 40% felt worried about organised crime and exploitation in Sandwell
- 24% of individuals perceived there to be an ineffective response to anti-social behaviour and crime by authorities

In the 2021 Community Safety Survey we asked about what would help you feel safer from anti-social behaviour and/or crime in Sandwell,

- 91.5% respondents asked for an increased police presence
- More CCTV (69.5%) was the second most common solution
- Well maintained estates & streets (59.9%) were third

In the Community Safety Survey we asked about priorities for the new Sandwell Community Safety Strategy

The top 5 issues highlighted were:

- Drug dealing (10.7%)
- Youth disorder (9.3%)
- Burglary (7.4%)
- Violent crime (7.2%)
- Littering/fly tipping (5.8%)

“Frankly the most violent and serious of the crimes above should always be top of the list but if you address the social issues also as a priority I'd hope that the number of serious crimes decreases”

“Difficult to pick top 5 as some of these such as DA, stalking and harassment and rape or sexual assault, forced marriage, slavery and hate crime should all be priorities but not necessarily a safety priority for the general vote as there is a smaller percentage that would experience these types of behaviours and therefore require those specific services”

Place Based Responses to Community Safety

Tipton

- ✓ 35% of children live in poverty
- ✓ Tipton is young with a higher than average proportion of young residents and lower than average proportion of older residents
- ✓ In 2020-21 overall total recorded crime increased in Tipton Town with an additional 246 offences.
- ✓ 106.6 crimes per 1000 people
- ✓ Stalking and Harassment had the highest increase with 200, (63.2%), additional offences
- ✓ Over the last 3 years, of 31 modern slavery concerns reported 61% were labour exploitation and 30% criminal exploitation with 24% of victims are Polish

Oldbury

- ✓ 26% of children live in poverty
- ✓ In 2020-21 overall total recorded crime decreased with a reduction of 311 offences.
- ✓ 80.9 crimes per 1000 people
- ✓ Over the last 3 years, of 41 modern slavery concerns reported 72% were labour exploitation and 19% criminal exploitation. 69% of victims are Romanian

Rowley Regis

- ✓ 28% of children live in poverty
- ✓ In 2020-21 overall total recorded crime has decreased with 8 less offences.
- ✓ 80.4 crimes per 1000 people
- ✓ Over the last 3 years of 26 modern slavery concerns reported 63% were labour exploitation and 24% criminal exploitation

Wednesbury

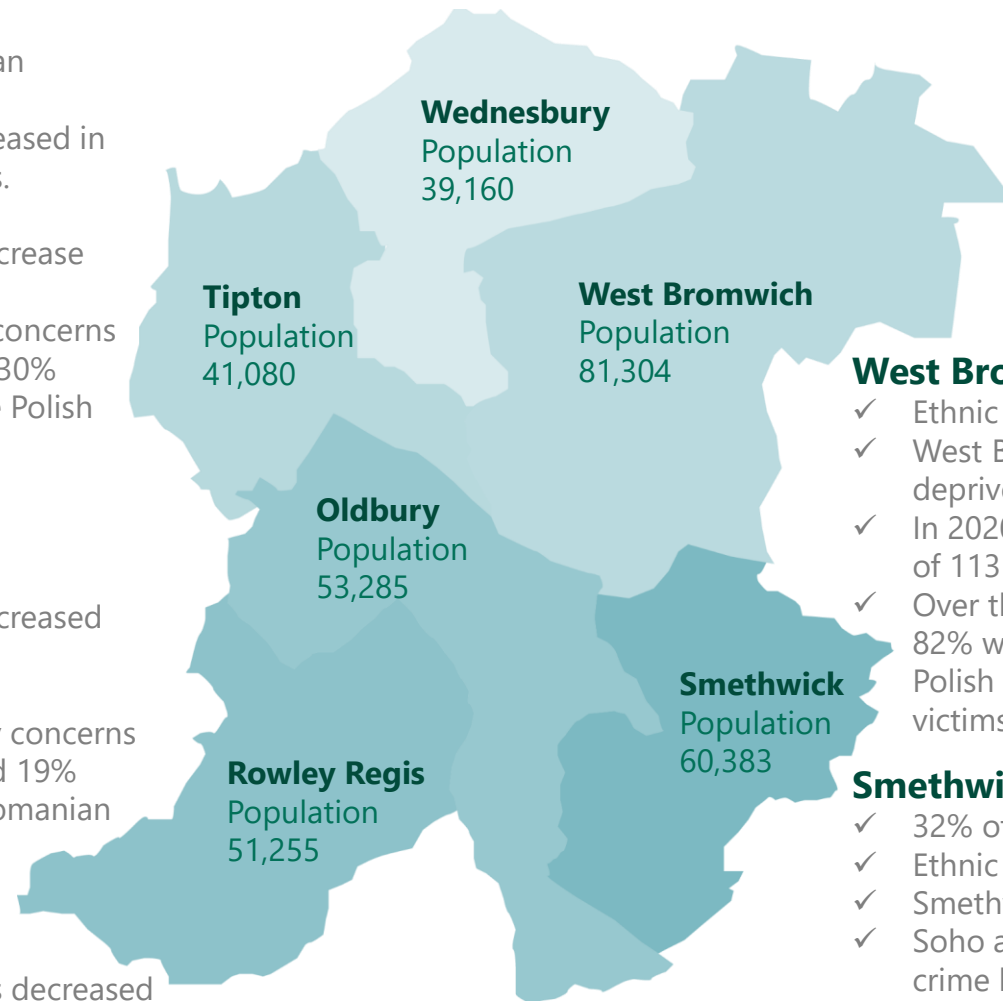
- ✓ 32% of children live in poverty
- ✓ The population is slightly older than the Sandwell average
- ✓ In 2020-21 overall total recorded crime has increased with 188 additional offences
- ✓ 92.5 crimes per 1000 people
- ✓ Over the last 3 years, of 24 modern slavery concerns reported, 62% were labour exploitation and 32% criminal exploitation. 50% of all victims were Albanians

West Bromwich

- ✓ Ethnic Minorities account for 35.5% of the population
- ✓ West Bromwich's deprivation score puts it in the 20% most deprived areas of England
- ✓ In 2020-21 there was an overall increase in total recorded crime of 113 offences.
- ✓ Over the last three years, of 98 modern slavery concerns reported 82% were labour exploitation and 10% criminal exploitation. Polish and Romanian communities had the highest incidences of victims with 27% each respectively

Smethwick

- ✓ 32% of children live in poverty
- ✓ Ethnic minorities account for 55.9% of the population.
- ✓ Smethwick has the highest proportion of young people
- ✓ Soho and Victoria had just under 50% more than the average crime levels
- ✓ In 2020-21 overall total recorded crime decreased in Smethwick with a reduction of 305 offences
- ✓ Over the last 3 years, of 101 modern slavery concerns reported 63% were labour exploitation and 28% criminal exploitation. 49% of all sexual exploitation also occurred in Smethwick. 45% of modern slavery victims are from the Indian population



Priority 1

**PREVENT
VIOLENCE
and EXPLOITATION**



PoVE

(Prevention of Violence and Exploitation)

The PoVE Sub Group is a strategic Sub Group of the Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board. It is responsible for co-ordination of the work of partners to ensure that the Safer Sandwell Partnership Community Safety Strategy and Action Plan for Prevention of Violence and Exploitation (PoVE) is effectively delivered in close co-operation with Sandwell's Health and Wellbeing, Adult Safeguarding, Children's Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse Boards.

The partnership group is responsible for directing activities and resources aimed at prevention and early help to address violence and exploitation and overseeing performance against a series of objectives, targets and performance indicators laid out in the Prevention and Violence and Exploitation Strategy & Delivery Plans.

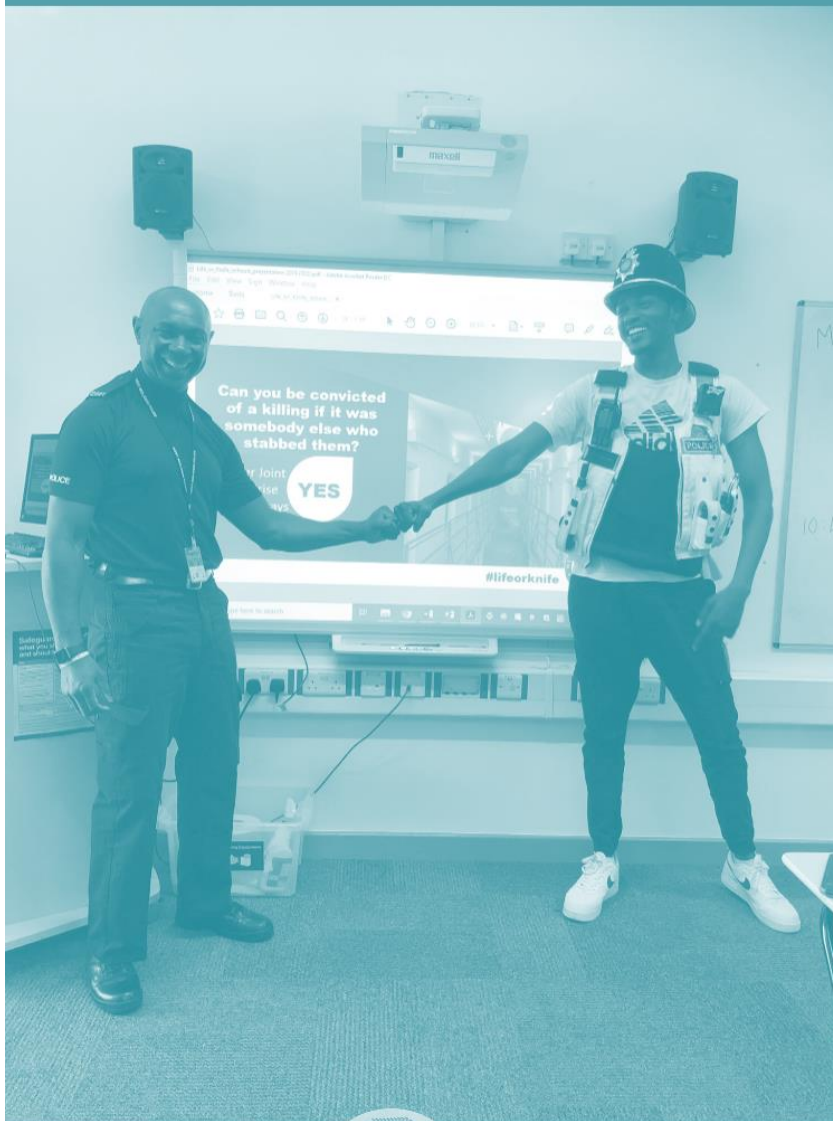
Key Prevention Priorities for PoVE include:

- Prevention of Public Place Violence
- Domestic Abuse
- Knife Crime
- Violence where victims and offenders under 25.
- Child Exploitation
- Modern Slavery

There are several cross-cutting priorities which have an additional focus including

- Addictive Behaviours
- Trauma informed practice
- Preventing radicalisation

We will prevent violence, abuse and exploitation, protect those affected, reduce harm and pursue those who perpetrate abuse, violence and exploitation



Progress

The PoVE Plan was developed with partners and is regularly reviewed at each PoVE meeting. Key achievements over the past 12 months have included:

Developing a regional approach to preventing violence, abuse and exploitation

- Embedded the VRU governance structures locally across all 4 Boards
- Agreed effective information exchange between the regional Boards and the LA / Partnership Boards.
- Aligned a range of joint priorities across the 4 regional Boards

Developing a Sandwell Prevention of Violence, Abuse and Exploitation Strategy and Plan

- The strategy and plan were both launched in April 2020 and underpin Sandwell's partnership approach to preventing and reducing violence, abuse and exploitation

Understanding the strategic landscape

- We worked with the Violence and Vulnerability Unit to undertake a Locality Review to help develop the response to violence, abuse and exploitation.
- VRU Regional Exploitation Framework – this was sent for consultation; the final framework is being pulled together and will need to be embedded across Sandwell

Other developments during the year have seen the VRU establish their 4 Boards: Domestic Abuse; Rape & Serious Sexual Offences, Human Trafficking & Modern Slavery and Criminal Exploitation & Missing. Sandwell is represented on all 4 which feed into our Prevention of Violence and Exploitation Work.

In October 2020 the VRU appointed a Community Navigator role to Sandwell to better link the VRU into local areas. The Navigator sits within the VRU and the Community Safety Team and one of her key tasks has been to co-ordinate a pilot project to reduce opportunities for violence and exploitation in one of Sandwell's Impact Areas. This developed into the Smethwick Against Violence Initiative (SAVI) which brought together a range of partners, including new groups, to develop resources and information to reduce opportunities for violence and exploitation and hate crime in this area

Local Picture

Between 2017 – 2020 Sandwell has seen a :

- 63% increase in domestic abuse reported to the police
- 55% increase in high risk domestic abuse

April 2018 - March 2021 data

- Sandwell MARAC offered support to 1973 high risk domestic abuse victims
- Black Country Women’s Aid were funded to provide specialist support to at least 5466 victims of domestic abuse and their families
- 422 victims supported through the A&E IDVA service funded through the OPCC
- Sandwell and West Birmingham CCG have now fully trained a total of 46 GP practices
- 505 victims of sexual violence and abuse supported by BCWA
- 24,118 children have been referred to MASH due to domestic abuse
- Women and girls in our community are at disproportionate risk of a wide range of crimes

Domestic Abuse

In the year ending March 2019, an estimated 2.4 million people aged 16 to 74 years reported experiencing domestic abuse. The true figure is much higher. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone but is disproportionately perpetrated by men towards women and children.

According to the ONS, figures indicate that the number of domestic abuse-related crimes in England rose by 6% in the year ending March 2021. In Sandwell we have seen a 30% increase in Domestic Abuse reports compared to data last year and a 10% increase in high risk MARAC cases. Due to the volume of referrals, an extra MARAC was held in February 2021 to deal effectively with the volume of cases being referred.

Nationally, there has been a 22% increase in calls to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline in England. We have also seen this demand locally with a 52% increase in contact with domestic abuse support services compared to last year and a 4% increase in referrals to Sandwell Children’s Trust.

Domestic abuse continues to be a priority for the Partnership and the work we have undertaken this year demonstrates how the partnership has managed increased demands, continued service delivery despite the he impact of Covid and responded to national policy changes.

In the 2019-21 strategy the following objectives in relation to domestic abuse were agreed

What We Said	What we Did
We will build on the success of the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership (DASP), giving more focus to several ‘hidden’ types of violence and exploitation	Domestic abuse continues to be a high priority, DASP is now a statutory board and leads the way in the response to DA in Sandwell.
Establish the DRIVE programme to change the behaviour of perpetrators	The DRIVE programme, funded by the OPCC was delivered in Sandwell with 53 perpetrators completing work in 2020-21.
Review arrangements for MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference)	A regional review and relaunch of MARAC took place in 2019. There has been a 10% increase in high risk cases, with extra MARAC meetings held to meet the demand

2018 – 2021 Achievements

- Completion and publication of 3 Domestic Homicide Reviews and delivery of Learning Events
- Several new groups established to tackle specific abuse including Child to Parent Abuse and Sexual Assault & Abuse.
- FGM multi-agency procedures agreed and published and promoted through a community launch event
- 2410 professionals attended domestic abuse training
- £841,000 of New Burdens Funding secured

2022 – 2026 priorities

- Production of new Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment and summary
- Development of new DA Strategy 2021-24
- Implementation of Delivery Plan for support in safe accommodation
- 3-year DA/SAA training programme to be commissioned 2022-25
- Commission bespoke community-based support for children experiencing DA

Learning

★ Coercive and controlling behaviour is a key factor in domestic abuse

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★ Abusers often use counter-allegations, including allegations of child abuse/neglect, to divert attention from their own abusive behaviour

★ Children lived in family where 20 years of DA wasn't reported or disclosed

★ Importance of encouraging adult victims to report / seek help

★ Looking for potential signs of DA in both adults and children



What we have done following these cases?

- We have actively promoted domestic abuse awareness via the annual '16 Days of Action Against Domestic Abuse' campaign, sharing regular messages on social media about different types of abuse and how to seek support, Safer 6 campaigns; Adult Safeguarding weeks as well as regular messages throughout the year
- We have developed a Learning from DHRs training module and multi-agency domestic abuse training sessions
- We have produced a domestic abuse information leaflet for friends, family and work colleagues
- We have produced information on domestic abuse victim support services in various languages
- We produced and launched 'Tina's Story' a video to promote awareness of domestic abuse and prevent further domestic homicides

Learning from Domestic Abuse Homicides

A Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) is a multi-agency review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a person to whom they were related or with whom they were, or had been, in an intimate personal relationship, or a member of the same household as themselves. Since 13 April 2011 there has been a statutory requirement for local areas to conduct a DHR following a domestic homicide that meets the criteria.

Over the last three years, 3 Domestic Abuse Homicides Reports have been published in Sandwell:

Miriam

- 'Miriam was a 26-year-old mother of three children who was killed by her ex-partner in 2015. The relationship began when she was 14 and he was 50. A key theme of the DHR was how professionals did not recognise how the relationship began, including potential CSE, and the impact of this on the family dynamics.

Eve.

- 'Eve' was a 54-year-old woman who was murdered by her long-term partner. He was jailed for a minimum of 24 years for her murder. She was a mother and grandmother who had struggled to provide a loving home to her children and step-children despite her partner's abusive and controlling behaviour. During their twenty year relationship, she experienced repeated physical, emotional and psychological abuse but did not report him to the Police for fear of his retribution on her and their family. Read her story [here](#)

AB

- AB was murdered by her partner in 2017 who then committed suicide. The review highlighted the importance of professionals and others being able to recognise coercive and controlling behaviour and know what to do and where support can be accessed for victims-survivors

Integrated management of domestic abuse serial perpetrators in Sandwell is working well, data submitted to the Home Office demonstrates a 87% reduction in repeat domestic abuse incidents and an 86% reduction in the cost of domestic abuse crime for those subject to management.

The DRIVE perpetrator programme reported a 96% reduction in repeat domestic abuse incidents and a 94% reduction in the cost of crime.

Since 2015 there have been 3384 recordable offences relating to sexual assault and abuse in Sandwell. (Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) data).

This includes adult and child victims, with the majority of victims being female. Black Country Women's Aid's (BCWA) quarterly reports indicate that after a spike in 2019/20 to 197 referrals, there has been a noticeable decrease to 153 referrals in 2020/21 which could be attributed to the COVID lockdown and victims feeling unable to report. This is backed up by the fact that the majority of referrals (41%) were self-referrals in 2018/19. This decreased dramatically to 29% in 2019/20 and reduced again to 25% in 2020/21.

Sexual Assault (88%) and Rape (56%) continues to be the primary reason for referral into BCWA's Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) service.

The Children's and Young People's Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) supported 46 victims of SAA in the last year specifically in Sandwell, 70% of which were young women and girls. Of all the referrals, 29% were from a minority background. 4% were from LGBTQ community.

The Adult SARC were only able to provide West Midlands wide data. They have supported 272 adult victims of SAA from April 20 to Mar 21. 92% of those supported were female. 45% of those were from a minority background. (significantly higher than the percentage of ethnic minority across the West Midlands of 16.5%)

Sexual Assault and Abuse

Sexual Assault and Abuse are hidden crimes that often go unreported so it is sometimes misleading to rely on police data to estimate the prevalence of the issue. It is estimated that 773,000 adults aged 16-73 experienced Sexual Assault and Abuse in the year ending March 2020.(Crime Survey England and Wales)

Nationally sexual assault and abuse disproportionately affects women and girls, with 1 in 5 females estimated to experience sexual assault and abuse from the age of 16 years old and 1 in 25 males estimated to experience sexual assault and abuse within the same age bracket (CSEW, 2018). The prevalence of sexual assault and abuse experienced by children under 16 years is estimated to encompass 7.5% of the current adult population (CSEW, 2020). To caveat this, it is important to recognise that under-reporting means the true prevalence of sexual assault, abuse and exploitation is not fully understood.

Currently only 1.4 percent of reported rape offences are prosecuted in England and Wales (Home Office 2020). The difficulties that the criminal justice process faces are starkly seen by the calls for reform and the work ongoing within government.

SAA Aims for 2022 -25

Victim Pathways - We will provide an appropriate pathway for victims to access support that is effective, robust and follows best practice. We will use victims' feedback to improve services and outcomes.

Tackling Attitudes -We will implement robust preventative measures from early childhood to adulthood

Raising Awareness - We will raise awareness of SAA across all partners and ensure that all organisations fulfil their responsibilities to address SAA and provide appropriate responses to victims

Challenging Perpetrators - We want perpetrators of sexual assault and abuse to be held accountable for their actions and supported to change their behaviours

2018-21 Achievements

- Multi-agency Sexual Assault & Abuse group established in late 2020 which reports to DASP
- SAA needs assessment produced and presented to DASP in Dec 2021
- 2022-25 Strategy drafted – key priorities
- Workshop with partners January 2022 to develop implementation plan
- FGM Clinic established

2022 - 25 priorities

- Strategy presented to DASP in March 2022 for approval
- Implementation plan 2022-25 developed by SAA group and approved by DASP
- Check With Me First campaign rolled out across frontline health professionals
- Improved training for professionals around SAA
- Work to improve referral pathways between grassroot organisations and specialist agencies

Local Picture

The Sandwell Anti-slavery Strategic Partnership continue to lead the way in responding effectively to modern slavery

SHOP (Slavery and Human Trafficking Operational Partnership) continues to lead the operational response around modern slavery

The year has seen a continued uplift in operational activity, particularly amongst those who are homeless and destitute. 20 partners are consistently at SHOP, sharing intelligence and data to effectively detect, prevent and disrupt modern slavery

Since April 2019 there have been 450 reports of modern slavery in Sandwell

- 1017 potential victims screened
- 306 safeguarding visits completed
- 149 victims referred into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM)
- 247 locations disrupted
- 56 perpetrators arrested
- Sandwell has identified more male victims of modern slavery across the West Midlands region

Modern Slavery

Sandwell’s response to modern slavery has continued to develop over the last 12 months and our four main objectives are to:

1. Ensure victim pathways are robust, effective and aligned to best practice
2. Further understand threats, risk and harm modern slavery and human trafficking poses
3. Raise awareness across agencies, businesses and communities, to address modern slavery
4. Disrupt incidents of modern slavery in Sandwell, working collaboratively to target perpetrators

Sandwell’s commitment to having designated roles focused on modern slavery and exploitation are really helping to lead the way in this work nationally as reflected in two recent reports: The Anti-Slavery Commissioner’s Annual Report and a report on modern slavery partnerships.

[It still happens here: Fighting Slavery in the 2020s Independent anti-slavery commissioner annual report 2019-2020](#)

In June 2019 leaders of the council signed a Modern Slavery Pledge, making a firm commitment to doing everything in our power to make our Borough slavery free.

In the 2019-21 strategy the following objectives in relation to exploitation and abuse were agreed

What we Said	What we Did
We will work closely with Children and Adults Safeguarding Boards and Health and Wellbeing Board to deliver a series of actions to prevent exploitation and abuse	The new Horizons Hub was developed to lead on exploitation for children. A new Exploitation Strategy was developed for children and a regional exploitation framework developed
New co-coordinator will strengthen and join up work to prevent and tackle slavery and human trafficking	The Modern Slavery Programme Manager came into post in December 2018 and developed a plan of work to tackle modern slavery
PoVE Action Plan to be strengthened around child exploitation.	PoVE Action Plans and score cards were further developed, there has been a 50% reduction in child exploitation reports to police

2018 – 2021 Achievements

- Development of Modern Slavery Delivery Plan
- Development of an effective data set to understand the modern slavery landscape across Sandwell enabling development of Town Profiles Council leaders signed a pledge to make Sandwell a Slavery Free Borough
- Embedded a new Slavery Adult Safeguarding Case Conference (SASCC)
- National Modern Slavery Conference on sexual exploitation reached over 1000 delegates
- 241 First Responders trained
- 950 have attended safeguarding briefings on modern slavery

2022 – 2026 priorities

- Review and refresh victim pathway and safeguarding responses for victims of modern slavery
- Review modern slavery training in line with Modern Slavery Training Standards Framework and refresh Modern Slavery Training Plan
- Embed a regional modern slavery dash board and implement locally
- Develop a new Modern Slavery Delivery Plan

Local Picture

Between April 2017 – March 2020 there have been:

- 90056 incidents of public safety or welfare
- 1393 incidents of violence with injury
- 105 gang related non-crimes
- A 9% increase in reported knife crime
- 764 incidents of knife crime with victims over 18
- 184 incidents of knife crime where the victim is aged 10 – 17 years
- 11 incidents of knife crime where the offender is aged 10 – 17
- 234 incidents of gun crime
- 55 markers for gangs related crimes
- A 21% increase in sexual offences
- A 98% increase in stalking and harassment
- A 42% increase in violence against the person

Prevention of Public Place Violence

Ensuring our communities feel safe, protected and confident in their neighbourhoods is a key part of our vision, and we all need to work together to achieve this.

We have launched three specific place based approaches to help respond to violence, including:

- **SAVI** (Smethwick Anti-Violence Initiative) was set up as part of a place-based pilot to prevent violence in Smethwick funded by the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit (WMVRU). SAVI is a unique alliance of organisations, each with a commitment to serving disadvantaged, excluded and isolated communities
- **West Bromwich Place Based Pilot**, funded by the VRU, is running with local providers offered the opportunity to attend a training course and engage with the train the trainer programme as part of an accredited mentoring framework. Detached youth work and intensive support to Sandwell College also funded alongside capacity for specialist mentoring and family support, including work with primary schools.
- **Safer Streets Funding Round 3 (focusing on VAWG)**
Home Office Safer Streets funding secured in October 2021 to deliver a place based project in West Bromwich focussing on the prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). The project consists of delivering messages through education working with boys to tackle attitudes and prevent perpetration, one to one mentoring for young people who are displaying sexualised behaviour, interactive theatre productions in schools, bystander training delivered to Sandwell College and some of the businesses in West Bromwich and piloting a safe space scheme in West Bromwich town centre.

Impact Areas are a focus of Tasking and plans were put in place to reduce violence using Project Guardian resources when the team arrived in Sandwell in July 2021 focusing resources in two of Sandwell's impact areas was very successful in a short space of time.

Weekly partnership risk and threat meetings were developed as an opportunity to share intelligence and respond in real time to emerging threats or risk.

2018 – 2021 Achievements

- Full dedication of the Op Guardian Task Force for 10 weeks in 2021
- Knife Arch initiatives introduced across Borough
- Partnership meetings set up to tackle breaches of Covid legislation have helped develop and strengthen working relationships across this area
- Developed and launched Community Safety Licensed Premises Safeguarding Risk Assessment
- Adopted the West Midlands Vulnerable Adults Risk Management procedures

2022 – 2026 priorities

- Delivery of the Safer Streets project
- Support the West Bromwich Town Centre PSPO to engage and work with vulnerable individuals.
- Learn from Operation Guardian and continue to work with the Guardian Task Force
- Develop approaches to public place violence as part of the serious violence duty
- Operational delivery of the stepping together programme

Local Picture

From April 2017 – March 2020

- 184 incidents of knife crime where the victim is aged 10 – 17 years
- 11 incidents of knife crime where the offender is aged 11 – 17
- During Operation Aident County Lines Intensification Week 2021 14 young people were safeguarded
- 73% of people linked to county lines activity between April 2018 and November 2020 were young people aged 25 or under
- 15 to 24 year olds attend A&E following an assault at a rate of 53 per 10,000 of the population, which is higher than any other age group
- 15 to 24 year olds also have the highest rate of inpatient hospital admissions for assault (an indicator of more serious injuries having occurred)

U25 violence and knife crime

The [VRU Strategic needs assessment](#), analysed a range of different data sources for under 25 violence. One of the recommendations they will be taking forward is to explore opportunities to reduce risks linked to children in care, missing, school exclusion and county lines. Based on the evidence of risk from this assessment and outlined below, the recommendation is to work with Sandwell Local Authority.

- Smethwick and East Sandwell have high rates of hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object
- Police recorded involvement in County Lines from Smethwick and East Sandwell
- Increase in the rate of Children in Care from 70 per 100,000 in 2016 to 109 per 100,000 in 2019
- Much of the Local Authority area showing relatively high in the Risk Index
- Schools with high three-year permanent exclusion rates

In the space of five years, knife crime has more than doubled in the West Midlands, from 1,558 incidents in the year to March 2015, to more than 3,400 in the year to March 2020, according to the Office for National Statistics. The West Midlands has the third highest rate of Knife Crime in England and Wales, with 108 reports per 100,000 population. Sandwell has more incidents in the East of the Borough (especially Smethwick) but also stands out as having above median levels of Violence Against the Person offences in most of the local authority area

Over the last 12 months, there have been a number of initiatives to prevent and reduce under 25 violence, and knife crime which include:

- Working with the Op Guardian Task Force to reduce knife crime
- Supporting Families Against Youth Crime universal support to reduce knife crime
- Community safety funded projects focused on raising awareness in schools
- Universal protective behaviours projects working with 3 local primary schools
- A project run by young volunteers for children aged 12-18 in the Polish community educating them on issues related to hate crime, discrimination, racism, xenophobia
- Funding for projects that support prevention and disruption interventions with young people who have been identified as on the cusp of being exploited and/or entering gang activity
- The Early Intervention Youth Fund project taking a tiered approach through disruption; engagement; diversion and prevention. The providers worked with Youth Offending Service, the Horizons Team, Sandwell Community school and schools across the borough

2018 – 2021 Achievements

- Created a consistent approach for reporting weapons and violent offences
- 5 year reduction plan in place to reduce children taking weapons into schools
- 3 School Liaison Officers allocated to all high schools within the 3 impact areas; overall objective to reduce under 25 violence
- NPU worked closely with the Op Guardian Task Force
- Supporting Families Against Youth Crime universal support to reduce knife crime
- Section 60 Implemented in West Bromwich Town Centre.
- Over 200 young people benefited from the EIFY funding

2022 – 2026 priorities

- Continued schools inputs around knife crime/county lines
- Continued hi-vis patrols in towns with partners
- Develop a five-year strategy to reduce children taking weapons into schools.
- Further embed the weapons and violence pathways in schools
- Delivery of the Step Together pilot in Sandwell focusing on Smethwick and Oldbury

Local Picture

During the last 3 years:

- Sandwell has seen a 50% reduction in reports to the police for child exploitation,
- 1,489 professionals completed training on child sexual exploitation
- 789 practitioners attended exploitation training
- Supporting Families Against Youth Crime programme supported young people in years 6 and 7 in transition from primary to secondary school in two of our impact areas West Bromwich and Smethwick
- Nearly 600 one to one mentoring sessions were delivered to over 120 young people
- 3,000 young people and their carers benefited from universal sessions delivered via assemblies
- 73% of all the people linked to county lines activity between April 2018 and November 2020 were young people aged 25 or under
- In the first year of the launch of the Exploitation Hub,
 - 130 young people were discussed and supported
 - 114 high risk victims received targeted support

Child Exploitation

In response to child exploitation, The West Midlands Criminal Exploitation Board has begun to coordinate partners' responses and approaches to child exploitation and developed a regional exploitation framework to support statutory safeguarding partners in developing and embedding a robust local response to exploitation.

Sandwell Children's Trust has established The Horizons Team to focus on exploitation. It operates a 'Co-Working Plus Model' to help improve practice across the Trust.

This assists with:

- Mapping locations of concern and ensuring information analysis will be more meaningful
- Young people receiving a consistent response from a centralised team that will co-work alongside social workers.
- Manages those at high risk of exploitation and MACE processes for partnership working around vulnerable young people

In the 2019-21 strategy the following objectives in relation to child exploitation were agreed

What we Said	What we Did
We will improve the response to young people at risk of gangs or exploitation	We established a working group to respond to gangs and exploitation, this was a successful piece of work and helped us to adopt early intervention approaches for young people at risk of joining gangs
Develop our approach to children who have experienced ACES	A lot of work has been completed around the trauma informed approach, robust training and now working with the VRU on this area of work
We will explore the concept of a complex safeguarding hub with partners	This work resulted in the development of the Child Exploitation Hub which brings partners together to reduce the impact of exploitation and provide targeted support

2018 – 2021 Achievements

- Early Help Exploitation Champions Group launched
- Successful Hub step downs have increased with young peoples risk levels being reduced
- Multi-agency approaches to Operation Aidant intensification weeks
- Development of Horizons Team to respond to child exploitation
- Launch of an Exploitation Strategy
- 15 schools enrolled in Sandwell Safeguarding Champions programme
- Updating of Project 12, Sandwell's PSHE programme

2022 – 2026 priorities

- Continued Schools inputs around knife crime/county lines
- Continued hi-vis patrols in towns with partners
- Develop a five-year strategy to reduce children taking weapons into schools
- Further embed the weapons and violence pathways in schools
- Continue to improve our response to knife crime
- Embed roll out of Sandwell's PSHE programme Project 12

Local Picture

- 61 individuals vulnerable to Extremism have been supported by Prevent over the last 3 years
- 7036 young people have engaged with Prevent through schools work led by the Prevent Education Officer
- Monthly Prevent Newsletter for partners distributed
- Developed Twitter page – tweeting weekly messages to the wider community
- Delivery of focussed project work to over 2000 children during 2020-21
- Pro-active Safer 6 involvement, delivering a mixture of face to face 'pop up' events with partners/communities and online awareness sessions
- Focussed work in Tipton (an area of risk) with partners
- Delivery of training sessions to foster carers and increased staff sessions for Sandwell Childrens Trust
- Effective adaptation to online delivery during COVID including adapted REWIND resources for schools
- Partner working with West Midlands VRU/SAVI including Prevent delivery during 2021 'exploitation week'

Preventing Terrorism

As a partnership we are all under the statutory Prevent Duty (2015) to work together to prevent terrorism. The Local Authority has strengthened our Prevent Team in the areas of education, community engagement and in developing an improved awareness across the Local Authority and partners through an excellent training and resource offer.

Strengthening our Prevent Offer

- Sandwell Safeguarding Champions (peer mentor scheme) launched in primary schools, secondary schools and Sandwell College
- Developed partnership work and awareness raising to support people with learning difficulties/autism where there have been concerns regarding Extremism/Radicalisation
- Prevent (online safety) information booklet created for Parents, Teachers and implemented for use in the wider community
- Completion and distribution of a Prevent 'Teachers Booklet' providing information, practices and processes to Designated Safeguarding Leads and teachers
- 'Building Resilience Against the Far-Right' pilot programme undertaken in Sandwell
- Development of Artemis, a Prevent on-line training package for professionals
- Pilot of Community 'Understanding Extremism' training launched with initial sessions delivered
- Delivery of annual CTLP briefing event for partners and seniors at Oldbury Council House and developed a series of sanitised CTLP sharing webinars for DSLs



2018 – 2021 Achievements

- In 2020 we launched a new Artemis Prevent training module. 880 professionals have completed this training
- 3844 people have attended WRAP (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent) training over the last 3 years
- 712 professionals have attended 'Understanding Extremism' training
- 950 professionals have attended safeguarding briefings on hate crime
- 89 parents / individuals attended our new online safety community training briefings
- Home Office funding secured to recruit a Prevent Community Engagement Officer in 2021-22

2022 – 2026 priorities

- Deliver Prevent Delivery Plan through Prevent Delivery Group
- HO benchmarks and tool kit fully achieved
- Develop PCEO role and engage hard to reach communities to improve awareness of Prevent
- Continue with high standard of Prevent support to schools via PEO
- Continue to develop VRU partnership working
- Regular updates to training and projects.

Priority 2

**REDUCE
OFFENDING,
REOFFENDING**



& SERIOUS



ORGANISED CRIME

RRSOC

(Reducing Offending, Re-offending and Serious Organised Crime)

The Reducing Offending, Reoffending and Serious Organised Crime Strategic Sub Group is responsible for co-ordination of the work of partners to ensure that the Safer Sandwell Partnership Community Safety Strategy and Action Plan for reducing offending, reoffending and serious organised crime is effectively delivered in Sandwell.

Key Priorities include

- Repeat Offending
- Serious Organised Crime
- County Lines

Statistics show that almost half of all crime is committed by individuals with previous convictions. Police and Probation Services use statistical and clinical risk assessments to focus resources on those most likely to reoffend. The introduction of the Reducing Offending, Reoffending and Serious Organised Crime subgroup to the SSPPCB in 2019 has strengthened partnership approaches across this area and supported the delivery of the 7 pathways out of offending.

Significant work has been taken across all these areas over the past 3 years including;

- Working to introduce creative arts into work with young people engaged with the Youth Offending Service.
- Development of an online space for Sandwell YJS called The Sandwell Hub to provide key information about services, private space for young people and their families and a media gallery to promote work
- Getting to Know' booklet has now been fully integrated into the service, allowing a creative method to be applied to those fundamental pieces of work at the start of an order
- Introduction of the Homelessness Prevention Taskforce during lockdown ensured all offenders could secure temporary accommodation and avoid homelessness. This was exceptionally successful locally whilst more stable accommodation was sought.
- Joint working with the Local Authority and Probation re co-located post to help support offenders in securing and maintaining stable tenancies.
- National review and update in relation to Integrated Offender Management, we have now identified three cohorts of offenders causing the most crime and having the most impact across Sandwell who will be jointly managed and supported away from criminal behaviour using a partnership approach. This is in line with the newly refreshed national IOM strategy.
- In June 2021 the newly formed Probation Service contracted Maximus to provide a holistic approach to supporting ETE opportunities, with a particular focus on employment. Referrals have been much higher than expected and some very positive outcomes achieved so far.

Highlights

Creative Service

First YJS in the country to achieve a Silver Arts Mark Award from the Arts Council in recognition of work undertaken by Youth Justice Partnership to make the YJS more creative. Summer Arts Programme awarded a second Platinum Award through Koestlerin for two years running

HMIP Inspection

HMIP Inspection Rating of Good for Sandwell Youth Justice Service.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

The Probation Service's Personality Disorder Team have expanded and every offender is screened. Where needs are identified offenders receive enhanced, dedicated psychology and probation intervention and support.

PCC funded posts have been established in Black Country Courts to identify and support increased numbers of referrals to receive this specialist intervention which addresses mental health issues linked to substance abuse and offending.

The Sandwell Afro-Caribbean Mental Health Foundation, have been commissioned to provide dedicated intervention and support to suitable offenders from BAME backgrounds

Black Country Reducing Reoffending Strategy

The strategy was developed 2019 – 2022 and helps to develop a model which will provide early identification and interventions with emphasis on preventing and reducing offending and reoffending, and reducing risk of harm (See Below)

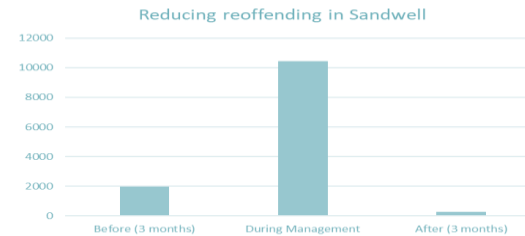
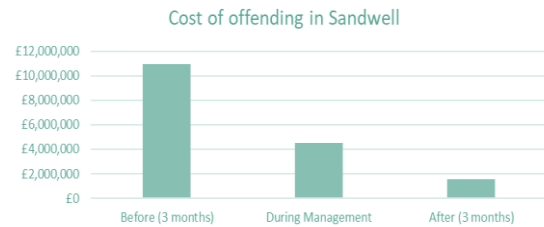


Local Picture

- Sandwell average adult reoffending rate is 29.5%
- Sandwell average youth reoffending rates is 42.64% which has reduced from 47.5%
- Sandwell has higher rates of reoffending than the Black Country trend for 18-21
- Home Office data shows there are 1165 offenders (1089 males, 68 females) committing 1978 offences between them

Repeat offending

Sandwell has the second highest volume of offenders in the West Midlands with 1165 offenders (rolling Home Office data). There have been some key indicators to show that integrated offender management is working with an 86% reduction in both offences and costs.



Significant work has been undertaken in developing the 7 pathways out of offending including accommodation, employment and training and mental health and wellbeing work. Over the next five years we will work to further embed the pathways and priority areas which are included in the chart opposite.

In the 2019-21 strategy the following objectives in relation to repeat offending were agreed

What we Said	What we Did
We will track reoffending rates for those released from custody to establish whether we are more effective in helping to transition young people from custody to the community	Reoffending rates have reduced since 2017 with adult offending dropping to 29.52% and young people to 42.64%
We will improve engagement with our young black offender cohort through bespoke mentoring support.	Task and Finish groups have been convened to understand disproportionality and this work will be taken forward into the new plan
We will evaluate the impact of the Kitchen Table Talks to establish whether there has been improved engagement with, and information to, parents	Kitchen Table Talks, piloted in Sandwell were evaluated and are now supported by the Violence Reduction Unit to be embedded across the region

Pathways and priority areas of delivery



Accommodation and support

- Stable accommodation can reduce the likelihood of reoffending by more than a fifth
- It provides building blocks to gain employment and access support services



Education, Training and Employment

- Employment reduces the risk of reoffending between a third and a half
- There is a correlation between offending and low achievement, poor literacy, numeracy and language skills



Health

- Adult offenders are disproportionately more likely to suffer from mental and physical health problems.
- 31% of adult prisoners have been found to have emotional wellbeing issues linked to their offending behaviours.



Substance Misuse

- Two thirds of adult prisoners use illegal drugs in the year prior to imprisonment
- Intoxication by alcohol is linked to 30% of sexual offences, 33% of burglaries, 50% of street and violent crimes



Finance, benefits and debt

- Having a lawful income is vital to offenders' rehabilitation
- Approximately 81% of offenders claim benefits on release from prison



Children and Families

- Maintaining a strong relationship with families and children strongly assists in helping adult offenders sustain changes and avoid reoffending
- Custody can place added strain on family relationships



Attitudes, thinking and behaviour

- Offenders are more likely to have negative social attitudes and poor self-control
- Addressing attitudes and thinking behaviour during custody can reduce reoffending by up to 14%

2018 – 2021 Achievements

- Refresh of the Black Country Reducing Offending Strategy and development of new NPS Strategy
- National and regional structural realignment of NPS
- Commissioning of services to support offending pathways undertaken
- Moved from a YOS Management Board to a Youth Justice Partnership and Youth Justice Service.
- Clear focus of becoming a more creative service
- First YJS in the country to achieve a Silver Arts Mark Award from the Arts Council

Summer Arts Programme

★ Summer Arts college in both 2019 and 2020 won platinum Koestler awards (for creative work in a criminal justice setting)

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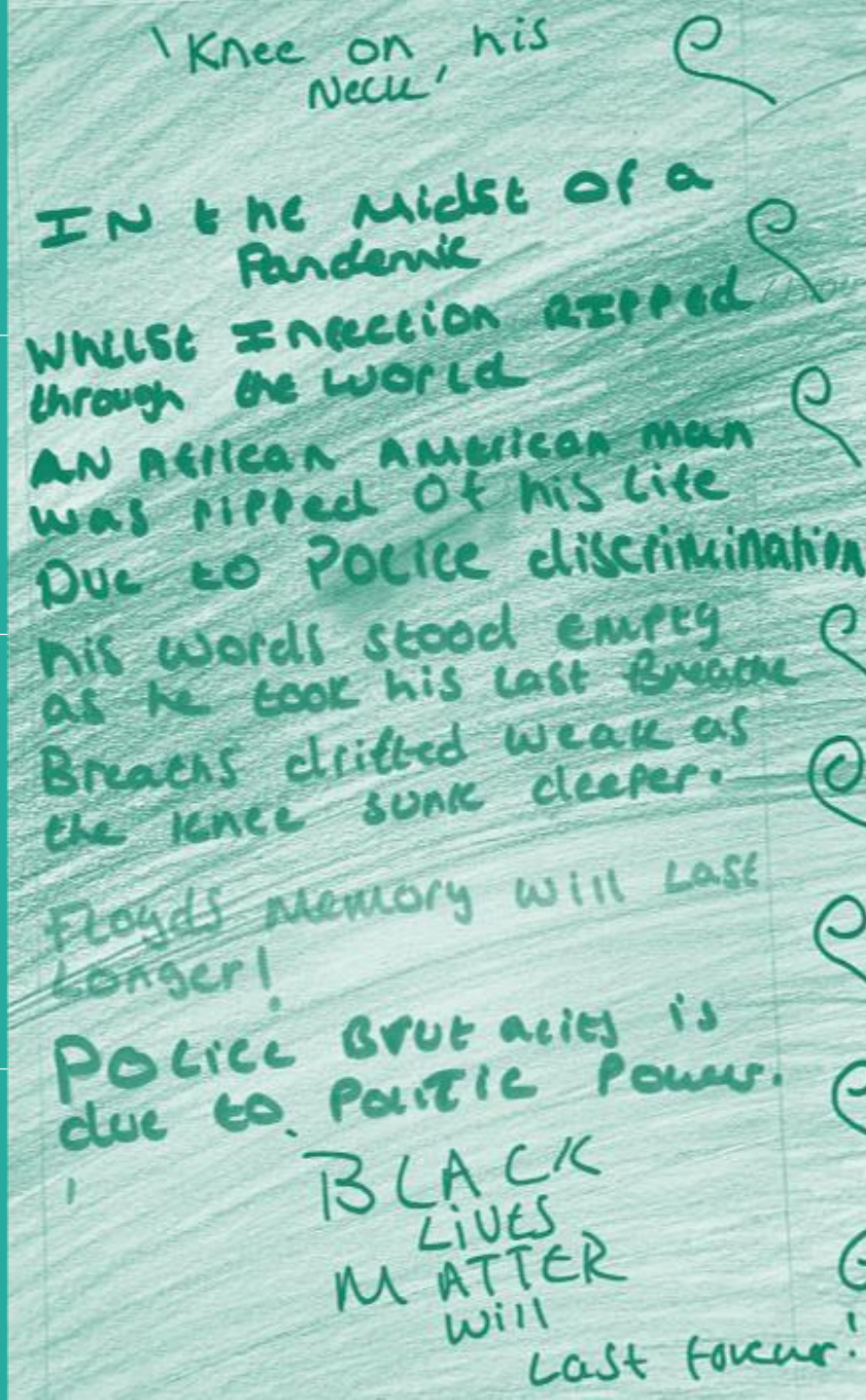
Ongoing funding

★ second year running the Summer Arts College funded by Unites

★ Special under 25's award for a portrait created by a young person, also chosen and featured in Koestler's annual art exhibition at the Southbank Centre, London

National Award

★ Bronze award for VR County Lines video



A MORE CREATIVE SERVICE

One of the priority areas of work for the Youth Justice Service was to work towards making services more creative for young people.

For the second year running they ran a summer arts college funded by Unitas. Virtual creative sessions, were run in partnership with Gazebo Theatre. The content of the sessions was planned alongside the artists who provided a list of materials that the young people would need to participate in the sessions. Alongside the technology, each young person was also provided with an arts kit containing these materials

Young people participated in several virtual workshops including: Creative Writing, Podcasts, Magic, Balloon modelling, poetry, digital illustrations, film making, music and watched a specially adapted live theatre performance.

Given that this was the first time a piece of work on this scale was being completed using a virtual approach, the success of the project could not be anticipated. However this proved to be extremely positive with 8 young people achieving at least 1 arts award with 7 young people gaining 3 arts awards each.

Given the success of the Summer Arts College, Sandwell YJS were invited by Unitas to apply for additional funding to deliver a Silver Arts award aimed at young people who had previously achieved the Bronze Arts Award.

Giving young people a safe space to explore feelings around the murder of George Floyd

Local Picture

From April 2018 – March 2021 there have been

- 8 Organised Crime gangs mapped in Sandwell
- 1393 incidents of violence with injury
- 764 incidents of knife crime with victims over 18
- 194 incidents of knife crime where the victim is aged 10 – 17 years
- 68 incidents of knife crime where offender is over 18
- 11 incidents of knife crime where the offender is aged 10 – 17
- 234 incidents of gun crime
- 55 markers for gangs related crimes
- 105 gang related non-crimes

Serious Organised Crime

Serious violence has a devastating impact on victims and their families, instils fear within communities and is extremely costly to society. Preventing and reducing organised crime has been introduced as a Sandwell priority because of the increased threat posed by organised crime and the pressure on vulnerable people who are often exploited.

Our focus in Sandwell is to enable more joined up working around protecting local people and businesses by making it hard for SOC gangs to operate effectively in Sandwell. We are doing this through ensuring enhanced collaborative working in relation to known locations of organised crime, sharing intelligence to strengthen procurement across Sandwell and strengthening partnership approaches to preventing sale of illegal counterfeit goods. All of which requires a strong partnership approach.

The government have carried out several consultations and are introducing the Serious Violence Duty. This is a key part of the Government's programme of work to prevent and reduce serious violence; taking a multi-agency approach to understand the causes and consequences of serious violence and focus on prevention and early intervention, informed by evidence. In addition to tough law enforcement we need to understand and address the causal factors that cause someone to commit violent crime in the first place. The Duty aims to ensure that agencies are focussed on their activity to reduce serious violence whilst also providing sufficient flexibility so that relevant organisations will engage and work together in effective local partnerships.

In the 2019-21 strategy the following objectives in relation to organised crime were agreed:

What we Said	What we Did
We will use tactical and operational groups to manage and monitor offenders	A new organised crime group meeting was formed to provide a multi-agency response to serious organised crime
We will use existing MAPPA, GODOC, ODOC, Deter and other mechanisms to manage offenders	These structures continue to operate and we will use data more effectively going forward

2018 – 2021 Achievements

- Funding from Home Office for SW NPU around SOC Violence
- Development of partnership Organised Crime Group to share intelligence and tackle and disrupt organised crime in Sandwell.
- Development of offender employment pathways with DWP including Community Youth Hub
- Homelessness and Complex Case Referral Pathway into accommodation services through the Local Authority

2022 – 2026 priorities

- Raise awareness of serious organised crime and organised criminal gangs with partners through the OCG
- Protect local people and businesses by making it hard for SOC gangs to operate effectively in Sandwell
- Share intelligence to strengthen procurement across Sandwell,
- Strengthen partnership approaches to preventing sale of illegal counterfeit goods

Local Picture

- For the past three years we have worked to embed a partnership approach to the County Lines intensification weeks
- In October 2021 County Lines week work included:
 - 32 people arrested
 - 11 warrants executed
 - 77 Wraps of Heroin recovered
 - 396 wraps of Crack confiscated
 - £237,000 worth of cannabis found
 - £8305 cash seized
 - 19 weapons recovered
- 73% of people linked to county lines activity between April 2018 and November 2020 were young people aged 25 or under
- The overwhelming conclusion is that young males with Black ethnicity, most often from the most deprived parts of the West Midlands, are hugely over-represented in police information about County Lines activity

County Lines

West Midlands Police data includes markers for people involved in County Lines as victims, perpetrators or suspects. This includes information on where individuals reside and a significant proportion are from inner-city Birmingham and Smethwick. 41% of people identified in this data as involved in County Lines activity – as a victim, perpetrator or suspect – were recorded as being of black ethnicity. This is significantly higher than the data for the wider West Midlands population, which has a 6% black population.

Multi-agency practitioners have also identified concerns that there are low levels of recognition and identification across the sector regarding the ways in which women and girls are exploited through County Lines drugs distribution.

Sandwell continues to work with the **Regional Strategic Criminal Exploitation and Missing Board** which through good multi-agency representation and attendance is facilitating and enabling the development of new and innovative policy and practice to improve our single and joint responses to criminal exploitation and missing including County Lines.

A regional Child Exploitation Data Framework has been created by the WM VRU analysts who have produced an interactive dashboard which sets out the various types of data collected from the Police, Local Authority Children's Services, Education and Health to start to understand what exploitation looks like across the region.

County Lines Intensification Weeks are run on an annual basis and serve as an opportunity to focus on the 4 P approach to tackling, disrupting and preventing criminal exploitation.

County Lines Rescue and Recovery project Launched in September 2021, this is funded until March 2022 and supports young people involved in County Lines and gangs across all local authority areas in the region. Through the provision of flexible support from case workers with "lived experience", young people can exit County Lines drug networks, reconnect with families and begin to build positive lifestyles away from crime.

2018 – 2021 Achievements

- County Lines Intensification Week; October's enrichment activity was focused on the 4 P approach to tackling, disrupting and preventing criminal exploitation of C/YP and vulnerable adults. 800 people across the region attended training sessions over the one week,
- During Operation Aident County Lines intensification week 2021 14 young people were safeguarded

2022 – 2026 priorities

- Strengthen and develop the organised crime response through the OCG partnership
- Raise awareness of serious organised crime and organised criminal gangs with partners
- Learn from the evaluation of the County Lines Rescue and Recovery Project



National award

Royal Society for Public Health: Health and Wellbeing Awards 2019



Ongoing funding

The team have secured funding through the Better Care Fund to expand this programme



Evaluation

Evaluation of this project shows this approach reduces offending and acute health service demand

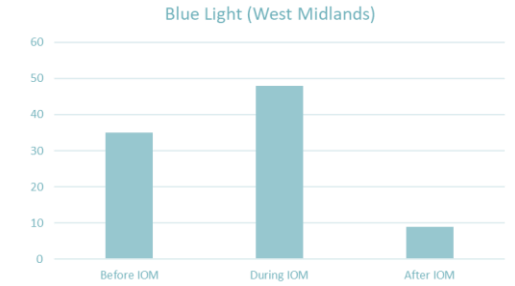
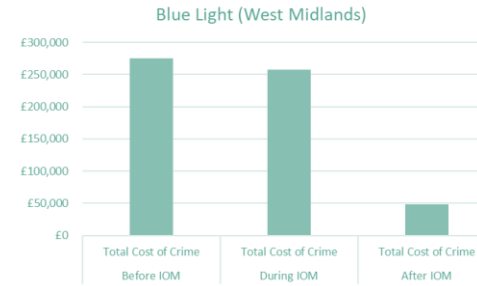


National Award

Blue Light won the Guardian Public Service Awards

Blue Light Project

We are starting to understand the landscape and now have a clear local picture to respond to treatment resistant drinkers. Data shows a 74% reduction in reoffending and 82% reduction in the cost of crime.



As a response the partnership adopted a multi-agency **'Blue Light' approach to supporting high impact, change-resistant problem drinkers** with a view to prevent and reduce alcohol dependency and transform the lives of some of the Borough's most disadvantaged and vulnerable people.

The multidisciplinary team incorporates public health, ambulance, police, probation, fire, local GP services, mental health professionals, the alcohol treatment provider and NHS professionals. These liaise together for monthly reviews to assess the progress of these clients through their interactions with them.

Feedback from the judging panel

" Focus is client centred and supports harm reduction and the social return on investment is considerable. The programme is an exemplar of integrated public health interventions to address critical public health problems and the learning is transferrable to other sectors and issues."

Feedback from a service user who was supported through Blue Light

"The Blue Light project helped me in a very big way and saved me daily physical and psychological abuse . They supported me to address my alcohol misuse, took me to my medical appointments to address my physical and mental health as well as stopped me from experiencing further abuse. I am grateful for all they have done for me. Thank you very much."

Priority 3

PREVENT and REDUCE

**CRIME and
ANTI-SOCIAL
BEHAVIOUR**

IN OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS

Intro

Preventing and reducing crime and ASB cannot be tackled by one single agency, but needs a multi-disciplined approach to provide a holistic response. By bringing partners together both strategically and operationally, there is a focus on problem solving and bringing together resources to prevent and tackle the issues at a local and boroughwide level.

This is achieved in Sandwell by partners coming together monthly through Borough Tasking and Town Tasking meetings where there is the opportunity for partnership data and intelligence to be shared so that an appropriate and proportionate response can be coordinated.

The meetings are used to discuss community and place based concerns as well as a closed element to the meetings to discuss individual cases that may involve vulnerable victims or perpetrators. At the Borough Tasking meetings, the membership focuses on the impact areas and look at issues such as Hate crime, community tensions, domestic abuse and the causes of crime in more detail.

The OPCC currently funds a number of Community Safety Analysts to provide data to inform the 7 partnerships across the West Midlands. The provision of this data is currently being reviewed as changes such as the introduction of the VRU and adoption of public health approaches to violence have come into place.

The development of new and more consistent data provision will support tasking and ensure that actions are demand led and evidence based ensuring proportionality and more appropriate use of resources.



Highlights

Hate Crime

Over the last 3 years Sandwell's response to hate crime has been strengthened by the development and delivery of the Partnership Hate Crime Plan which is monitored at Borough Tasking.

Keeping our residents safe and secure

Streamlined, evidence based, accountable and efficient deployment process for the deployment of mobile CCTV camera's managed through Town Tasking

Place Based Approaches

Joint partnership approaches involving police, CCTV team, SMBC Environmental Protection Officers (EPOs), Youth Services, SMBC ASB team, DECCA and the voluntary sector in tackling emerging ASB issues such as nuisance bikes; youth ASB and knife crime; nitrous oxide canisters and covid breaches.

Strengthening our ASB Responses and Capacity

SMBC appointed a dedicated ASB Manager in December 2018. During the last 3 years we have moved to end to end case management, significantly invested in training staff and increased our use of the 2014 ASB Powers. We also reintroduced Town Tasking Meetings, each Chaired by Town ASB Leads and local Police Sergeants.

Borough Tasking

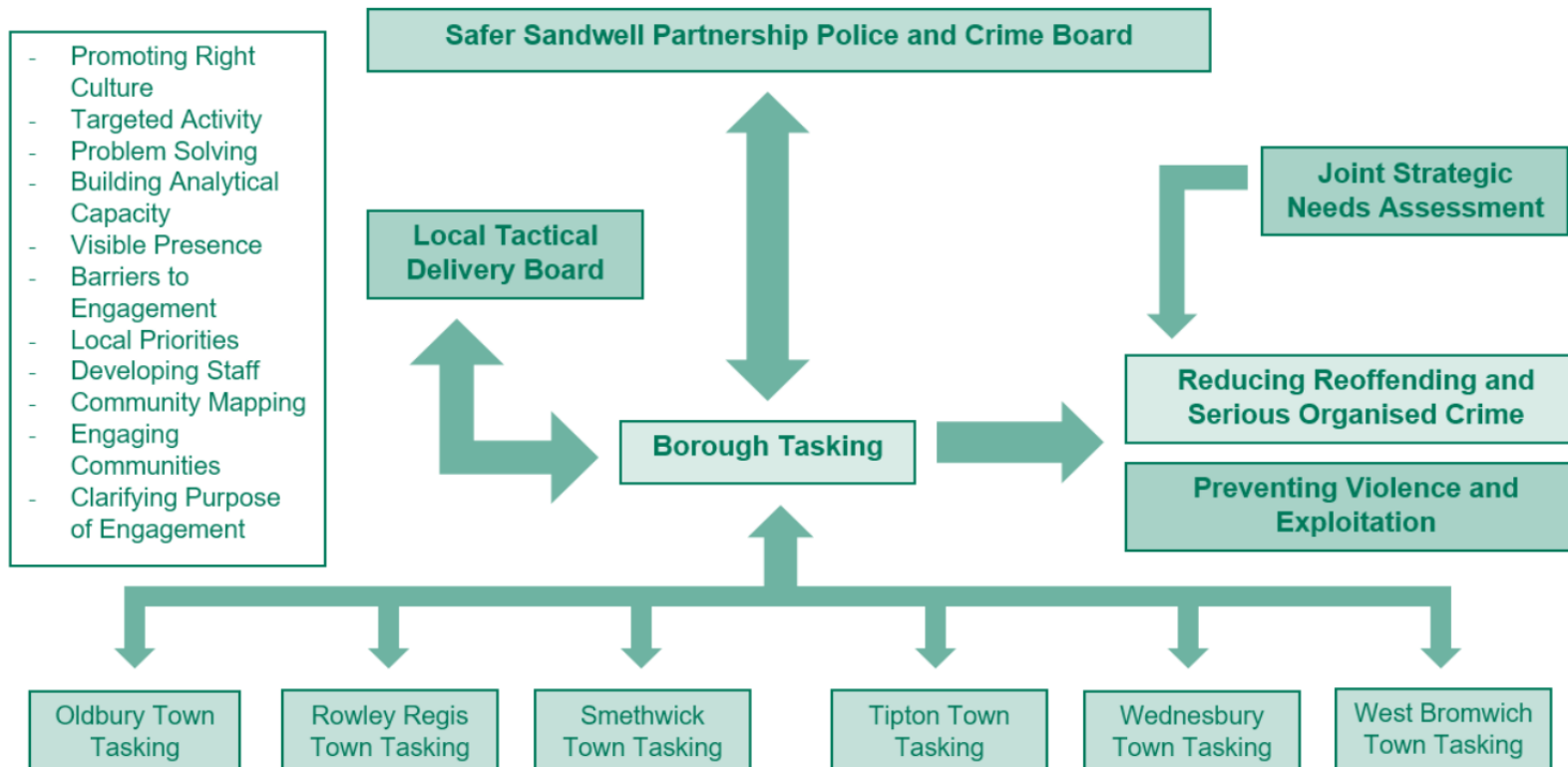
Borough Tasking is one of the Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board's (SSPPCB) sub groups connecting Town Tasking with borough wide strategic issues and decision makers. It is a single forum where partners come together and have an overview across the borough of Tasking to reduce crime, ASB and protect vulnerable communities.

This is achieved by looking through various lenses to identify new and emerging trends including exploitation, crime, ASB and community tensions. The group work together to look at root causes and problem solving, focusing on high impact areas and bringing resources together to prevent, tackle, and manage these issues.

Town Tasking

Town Tasking is the key mechanism in Sandwell by which partners work together to tackle incidents, identify trends in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) and facilitate inter-agency collaboration at a local level.

It also enables preventative and responsive actions to be taken to protect vulnerable people from threats to their safety and wellbeing. This is particularly important with emerging and increasingly sophisticated types of criminality including exploitation and organised crime. This localised approach to problem solving in Sandwell involves a multi-agency process designed to find the most effective and efficient solution for any identified problem.



The agenda focuses on (but not exclusively):

- ✓ Police Demand Impact Areas
- ✓ ASB demand areas
- ✓ Hate crime, community tensions and extremism (including overseeing the Hate Crime Plan and scorecard)
- ✓ Overview of the monthly Town Tasking meetings identifying trends and understanding the town nuances
- ✓ Spotlight on Tasking on a town basis
- ✓ CCTV deployable cameras
- ✓ Emerging trends across the borough identified by feedback from partner agencies, intelligence and shared analysis
- ✓ Deep dives into new and emerging boroughwide issues
- ✓ Identify ways of preventing, disrupting and deterring crime, ASB and exploitation by using partner powers and maximising resources
- ✓ Share best practice and successful outcomes as part of continuous improvement
- ✓ Discuss community issues escalated where a resolution has not been effective or found at Town Tasking
- ✓ Closed meeting to discuss individual cases that are escalated from Town tasking meetings where a resolution has not been found or a case has been stuck

Local Picture

- 144 Town Tasking Meetings and 36 Borough Tasking Meetings held during the last 3 years
- A robust town tasking process where local and relevant issues can be referred for discussion and action
- 100 individual cases discussed through tasking and agreed partnership approaches instigated with positive outcomes
- Remedi is funded by OPCC to provide support to all victims of hate crime
- Launch of 46 Third Party Reporting Centres across Sandwell representative of all the hate crime strands
- Article to raise awareness of hate crime included in the Sandwell Talking News, a weekly audio newspaper for visually impaired people
- A robust partnership approach to tackling Nitrous Oxide Gas Canisters issues that led to the implementation of a Boroughwide PSPO
- Focus on tackling local issues at a town level drawing on local resources including the voluntary sector

Reducing Crime and Anti-Social behaviour

Reducing Crime and Anti-Social behaviour remains a priority and we recognise that one single agency cannot tackle this alone.

We have strengthened this by making the Chairs of our Town Tasking meetings the local ASB Town Leads and the Borough Tasking meetings are chaired by the police. Our Borough Tasking group oversee and scrutinise our partnership work across the borough

Safer 6

Sandwell's annual autumn Safer 6 campaign celebrated its 12th anniversary in 2021. Safer 6 promotes a wide range of community safety initiatives and awareness raising across the six towns of Sandwell,. This is delivered by partners through a range of medias, training and events. Themed weeks included – Hate Crime; Violence against Women and Girls; Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime; Substance Misuse; Under 25 Violence and County Lines, Exploitation as well as various activities carried out in the six towns.



Support for victims of crime in Sandwell is provided by Victim Support which is a national independent charity. During 20/21 there were 6068 referrals for support and 3105 referrals so far 21/22

In the 2019-21 strategy the following objectives in relation to reducing crime and ASB were agreed:

What we Said	What we Did
We will use current intelligence and knowledge of partners and communities to identify and take prompt actions needed to keep communities safe from crime and ASB	Tasking was reviewed and strengthened to enable effective information sharing and data capture to enable place based effective interventions
We will fully embed the new tactical assessment and borough tasking model and create strong connections with town tasking and COGS	Tasking is now firmly embedded across each of Sandwell's 6 towns with a monthly Borough Tasking also established. These have run throughout the pandemic ensuring a strong local problem solving focus. .
We will renew and strengthen the contribution of partners to Tasking	Achieved through consistent agendas and enhanced data

2018 – 2021 Achievements

- Joint partnership approaches tackling emerging ASB issues such as nuisance bikes; youth ASB and knife crime; nitrous oxide canisters and covid-19 breaches
- Streamlined, evidence based, accountable and efficient deployment process for the deployment of mobile CCTV camera's
- Development of the Sandwell Commercial Centres Group tackling street dinking and street homelessness
- Developed work on hate crime
- Operation Hercules and ongoing work around car cruising

2022 – 2026 priorities

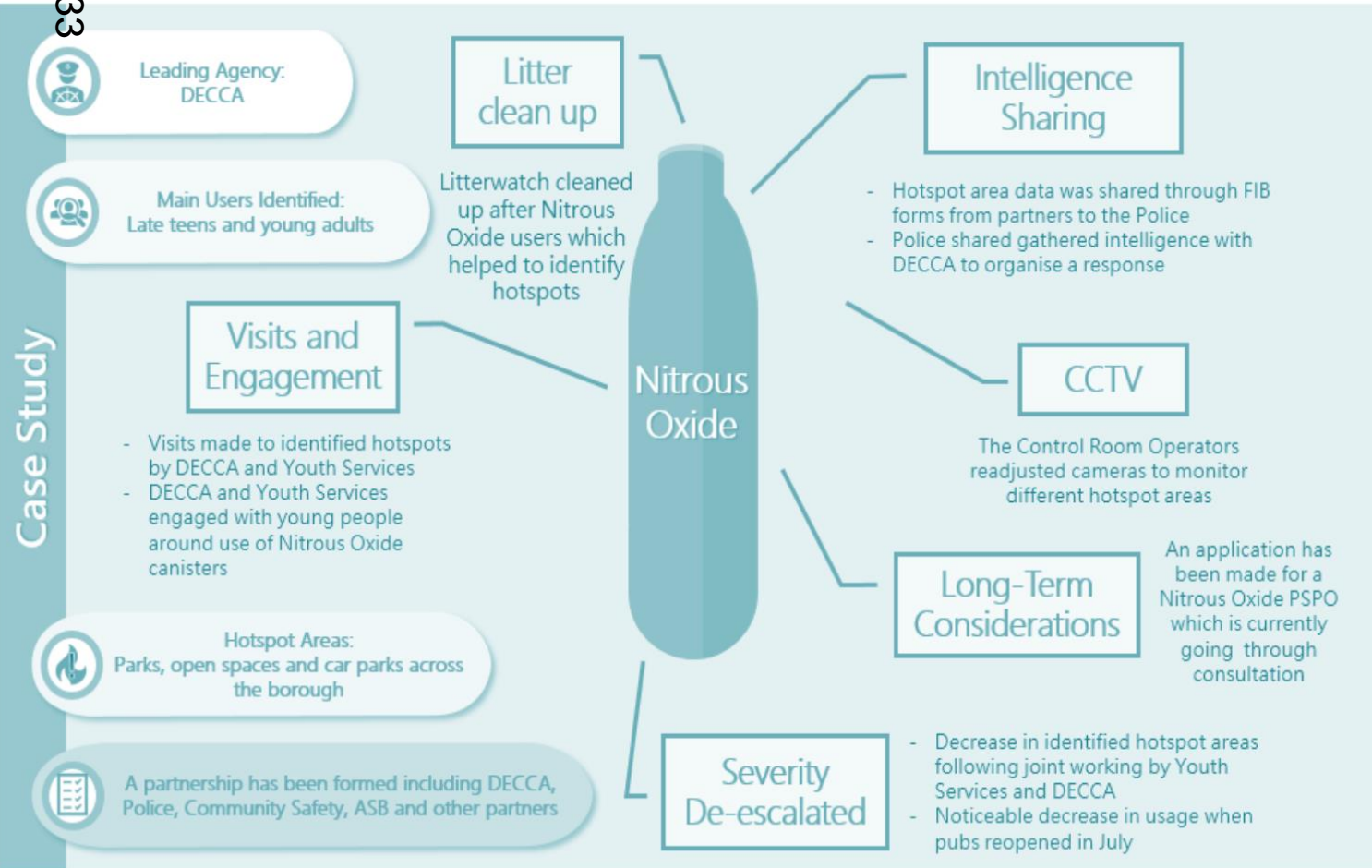
- Develop our partnership data to enable us to focus on the most pressing issues
- Review and further develop our approach to hate crime
- Strengthen our engagement with communities to encourage reporting, provide intelligence and develop solutions
- Target partnership resources at a local level to tackle emerging issues that is impacting on individuals and whole communities

CASE STUDY Borough Wide Partnership Approach to Nitrous Oxide Gas Canisters

Borough Wide Partnership Example of Successful Partnership Working

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Case Study



The litter and the associated ASB of nitrous oxide gas canisters was recognised as a borough wide issue.

- Concerns of health impact on young people
- The number of canisters discarded in public places and impact on environment
- The associated ASB – people congregating in groups and causing nuisance.

Approach

Discussed at Borough and Town Tasking meetings and agreed a Boroughwide partnership approach to tackle the issue.

Feedback from public consultation regarding proposed PSPO

Feedback from 95% of respondents demonstrated support for the proposed PSPO

The littering of discarded canisters was most commonly pointed out as the reason for why individuals were in favour of the proposed PSPO (68%). This was followed by the anti-social behaviour that was believed to be linked to the inhalation of Nitrous Oxide (22%) and worries around children coming across discarded canisters (18%)

The Community Safety Team administers and manages the annual CSF grant allocated by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPPC). Last year Sandwell was awarded £165k which was used to fund 10 projects that contribute to the Community Safety Partnerships priorities

Project 12

Project 12 (P12) is delivered in universal and targeted settings to build resilience and minimise harm. It can be used as part of PHSE lessons and all resources are online, so it can be easily accessed by anyone, and updated centrally to ensure its relevance. Grant funding was allocated to develop resources for Key Stages 2 and 3

Black Country Women's Aid – Domestic Abuse Advocates (DAA)

The grant provides one fifth of the specialist support to victims of domestic violence and abuse (DVA), categorised as medium and standard risk. The last 12 months has seen an increase in Domestic Abuse nationally during lockdown, and 402 victims have been supported by this service during this period.

TSA

Delivery of one to one mentoring sessions with young people identified by the Children's Trust Horizons Team who are at high risk of exploitation. TSA have worked successfully with 13 young people over the last 12 months using innovative ways of engaging in one to one interactions during lockdown

CSKN

Delivery of one to one mentoring and skills development to gang-entrenched young people identified by the Youth Justice Team. Two 12-week sessions were delivered to 10 young people.

A&E Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate (IDVA)

Two IDVAs working at Sandwell and City Hospital A&E departments respectively, and an Information Officer capturing data across both sites as well as contributing to MARAC research in; 241 victims have been identified and referred to the IDVA over the last 12 months

Creative Academies

Funding for a multi-media programme which focuses on engaging and re-engaging disadvantaged and vulnerable young people from Sandwell Community Schools depicting their stories and helping to divert them away from negative behaviour.

Krunch

Funded to deliver one to one mentoring sessions to 9-13 year olds who have family or peers involved in violent acts or gang affiliation, successfully delivered mentoring to 13 children this year.

Rewind

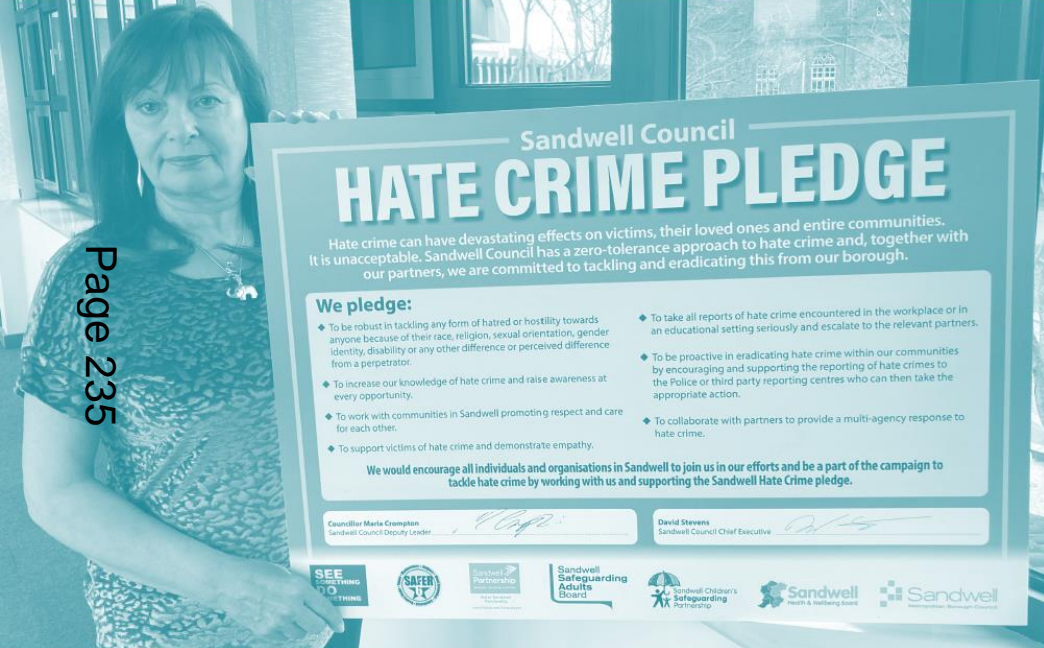
Grant funded to provide In-depth training to support practitioners in understanding all forms of extremism, including Al Qaida and Daesh inspired ideology and Far Right ideology. 9 sessions were delivered to a total of 139 delegates.

Modern Slavery

Grant funding to support Slavery Free Communities. A range of materials were sourced from the Modern Slavery Helpline in different languages, which consisted of posters, pens and keyrings. The partnership delivered a conference regarding sexual exploitation to raise awareness of sexual exploitation, over 1000 delegates attended

Albion Foundation

Delivery of positive activities to young people within the Sandwell area while working in partnership with West Midlands Police to deliver a group mentoring programme through sport..



Hate Crime

Over the last three years we have developed and delivered a Sandwell partnership Hate Crime Plan, our achievements include:

Increase awareness of hate crime and the impact that it has amongst the Sandwell workforce and communities

- Developed and launched online hate crime training
- Developed and launched a 7-minute briefing which has been shared with organisations to brief their employees and volunteers
- Developed and delivered awareness training for Sandwell MBC employees
- Delivered Hate Crime Awareness to elected members
- Delivered Hate Crime Awareness to the third sector
- Delivered various activities during hate crime week to raise awareness

Engage and raise hate crime awareness amongst young people.

- Conducted a Hate Crime Youth Survey with young people in schools,. The findings led to hate crime education being incorporated into the new RSHE school curriculum and lesson plans
- Just Youth Webpage Updated to Include Hate
- Hate Crime Awareness Training has been delivered to over 50 youth workers in Sandwell
- Delivered a Hate Crime Awareness session for SHAPE Youth Forum

Building confidence in local communities to report instances of hate crime/ incidents.

- Conducted a review of Third Party Reporting Centres (TPRCs)
- Launched 46 new TPRCs across Sandwell, representative of all strands of hate crime to increase ways to report and support for victims
- Developed a communications plan to promote messages throughout the year via social media
- Article included in the Sandwell Talking News, a weekly audio newspaper for visually impaired people, to raise awareness of hate crime, Third Party Reporting Centres and to encourage reporting

Victims supported

- Standby Me Bystander training delivered to 23 active citizens
- Victims supported through Victim Support and more recently REMEDI

[Further information on hate crime can be found here](#)

National Recognition

The programme won national recognition in 2021, winning the APSE Annual Service Award for Best Community and Neighbourhood Initiative



Supporting Families Against Youth Crime iTrust

Amazing Reach

3,000 young people and their carers benefited from universal sessions delivered via assemblies, transition evenings, events and group sessions.

Early Interventions

The programme provided early help and interventions with the aim of having a longer-term impact on the prevention of youth crime

The Supporting Families Against Youth Crime (SFAYC) programme, rebranded as iTrust was launched in April 2019, following a successful bid for funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Some of the funding paid for a small dedicated team who worked with young people, parents/carers, schools and voluntary sector organisations to deliver a menu of prevention interventions to young people in years 6 & 7 transitioning from primary to secondary school. Working in two of our police impact areas West Bromwich and Smethwick, this early help approach equipped our young people to make positive choices at this key transition period with the focus on reducing future youth crime and violence

Mentoring

Over 600 one to one mentoring sessions were delivered to over 120 young people by 12 voluntary sector organisations.

Feedback from the MCHLG included "it was particularly refreshing to see such an innovative 'home grown' approach to serious youth violence"

[Read evaluation here](#)



Links to other reports used

[Strategic Needs Assessment - West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit \(westmidlands-vru.org\)](https://www.westmidlands-vru.org/)

[Home | data.police.uk](https://data.police.uk/)

[2020 UK annual report on modern slavery \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1027878/Draft_Guidance_-_Serious_Violence_Duty.pdf)

[Police & Crime Plan - West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner \(westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/)

<https://www.westmidlands-vru.org/app/uploads/2021/06/WM-REGIONAL-STRATEGIC-EXPLOITATION-FRAMEWORK.pdf>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1027878/Draft Guidance - Serious Violence Duty.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1027878/Draft_Guidance_-_Serious_Violence_Duty.pdf)

[Corporate Plan | Sandwell Council](#)

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Equality Impact Assessment

Please complete this template using the [Equality Impact Assessment Guidance document](#)

Version 4: January 2019

Title of proposal (include forward plan reference if available)	Community Safety Strategy 2022-26
Directorate and Service Area	Borough Economy - Community Safety & Resilience
Name and title of Lead Officer completing this EIA	Tessa Mitchell – Business Manager Community Safety & Resilience
Contact Details	tessa_mitchell@sandwell.gov.uk 077721 110645
Names and titles of other officers involved in completing this EIA	Tessa Mitchell - Community Safety & Resilience Business Manager Wendy Sims - Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Programme Manager Denise Hooper - Community Safety Manager Maryrose Lappin - Domestic Abuse Team Manager Claire Martin – Youth Justice Service Manager
Partners involved with the EIA where jointly completed	(EIA shared with all SSP Theme Leads)
Date EIA completed	January 2022
Date EIA signed off or agreed by Director or Executive Director	
Name of Director or Executive Director signing off EIA	Alice Davey – Director of Borough Economy

Date EIA considered by Cabinet Member	
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See [Equality Impact Assessment Guidance](#) for key prompts that must be addressed for all questions

1. The purpose of the proposal or decision required (Please provide as much information as possible)

The Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board has a statutory requirement under the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, and subsequent legislative amendments, to develop and deliver a Partnership Plan which contains community safety priorities based on the current evidence base across the Borough of Sandwell. This strategy brings together this evidence base and sets the strategic direction for community safety across the Borough for the next 5 years subject to annual review.

At the Safer Sandwell Partnership Police & Crime Board meeting on the 15th July 2021 it was agreed that the Partnerships priorities for this new strategy would be:

- The prevention of violence and exploitation
- Reducing offending, reoffending and serious organised crime
- Preventing crime & antisocial behaviour in our Neighbourhoods

The golden thread running through all these priorities is our commitment to protecting and supporting vulnerable victims. The strategy also encompasses two other significant cross cutting themes: tackling substance misuse to save lives and reduce crime, aligned with the Governments new Drugs Strategy and delivering on the new Serious Violence Duty. The Duty is a key part of the Government’s programme of work to prevent and reduce serious violence; taking a multi-agency approach to understand the causes and consequences of serious violence, focused on prevention and early intervention, and informed by evidence which requires a joined up holistic approach.

The SSPPCB key priorities for the next 5 years are as follows:

Prevention of Violence & Exploitation	
P1	Increase community awareness of how to prevent crime and maintain and/or improve safety.

P2	Increase stakeholder knowledge of preventing and reducing violence, abuse, exploitation and crime
P3	Refresh and develop the Prevention of Violence, Abuse and Exploitation Plans
P4	Use effective data and analysis to help developing an understanding of the threats and risks in relation to violence, abuse and exploitation

	Reduce Offending, Reoffending and Serious Organised Crime
R1	Support offending pathways
R2	Management of high-risk offenders and targeting of key cohorts to reduce rates and seriousness of offences committed
R3	Continue to strengthen and develop partnership approaches around tackling serious organised crime
R4	Confirming and being able to clearly articulate the Boroughs approach to prevention and diversion as it relates to youth crime

	Prevent Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in our Neighbourhoods
T1	Increase community awareness of how to prevent crime and maintain and/or improve safety
T2	Strengthen our approaches to tackling ASB
T3	Embed and build upon our approaches to tackling hate crime
T4	To better inform tasking and resource deployment
T5	To enhance the community safety of our high rise estates

Each area will include work reflecting our commitment to protecting and supporting vulnerable victims. Each will have its own work plan overseen by the Boards 3 subgroups with all partners accountable in supporting delivery to achieve Sandwell's community safety vision of: '***ensuring that the communities of Sandwell feel safe, protected and confident in their homes and neighbourhoods***'

2. Evidence used/considered

This strategy has been co-produced with partners including statutory bodies, the voluntary sector and Sandwell residents. Evidence included to develop this strategy has included feedback from residents obtained over the past three years from a variety of sources including most recently, the Community Safety Strategy Consultation undertaken as part of the 2021 Safer 6 campaign. It is also reinforced through Sandwell's Annual Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment.

3. Consultation

A variety of public consultations have helped inform this strategy including:

- SSP Community Safety Survey (2021) 177 respondents
- Young People's Hate Crime Survey (2020) – 73 respondents
- Sexual Abuse and Assault Survey (2021) – 143 respondents
- Shape Survey (2019) – 876 respondents
- Annual WMP Community Safety Partnership Survey -

These consultations have been invaluable in helping to shape the strategy with some key findings are referenced on p14 of the Strategy with highlights from the 2021 Community Safety Survey including:

- 77.4% stated that they either been the victim or witness of anti-social behaviour and crime in Sandwell
- 40% felt worried about organised crime and exploitation in Sandwell
- 24% of individuals perceived there to be an ineffective response to anti-social behaviour and crime by authorities

Respondents Top 5 Priorities :

- Drug dealing (10.7%)
- Youth disorder (9.3%)
- Burglary (7.4%)
- Violent crime (7.2%)
- Littering/fly tipping (5.8%)

Respondents thoughts on improving safety

- 91.5% respondents asked for an increased police presence
- More CCTV (69.5%) was the second most common solution
- Well maintained estates & streets (59.9%) were third

1 in 4 respondents to the Hate Crime Survey told us that they had either been a victim or witnessed hate crime and 1 in 3 respondents to the Sexual Abuse and Assault Survey stated that they had experienced sexual abuse or

assault. While the SHAPE Survey 2019 identified as young peoples key concerns in relation to crime as :

- knife crime (46.2%)
- gangs and youth violence (37.9%)
- bullying (36.5%)

As well as these public consultations the Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board has used considerable partner input into developing this new strategy with key local partners including: Police, Local Authority, Children’s Trust, Fire and Rescue Authority, the Clinical Commissioning Group, Probation and Public Health alongside input from a wide number of voluntary sector organisations. A Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment has also been completed. Account has also been taken of regional partnerships and direction including the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit and the West Midlands Community Safety Partnership.

4. Assess likely impact

Please give an outline of the overall impact if possible.

No negative implications anticipated for protected groups. Tackling crime and disorder and enhancing community safety helps address disadvantage and disproportionality ensuring that the vulnerable are safeguarded and community resilience increased.

Please complete the table below at 4a to identify the likely impact on specific protected characteristics

4a. Use the table to show:

- Where you think that the strategy, project or policy could have a negative impact on any of the equality strands (protected characteristics), that is it could disadvantage them or if there is no impact, please note the evidence and/or reasons for this.
- Where you think that the strategy, project or policy could have a positive impact on any of the groups or contribute to promoting equality, equal opportunities or improving relationships within equality characteristics.

Protected Characteristic	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact	Reason and evidence (Provide details of specific groups affected even for no impact and where negative impact has been identified what mitigating actions can we take?)
	✓	✓	✓	
Age	✓			This strategy covers all age groups and there is no evidence that it will impact more negatively on any age group over and above another. However working with partners it will enhance safeguards for both children and vulnerable adults.
Disability	✓			There is no evidence that those with a disability would be impacted any more than any other group. Tackling exploitation and hate crime are two explicit aims of the strategy and will positively impact on some individuals within this cohort.

Gender reassignment			✓	There is no evidence that the strategy would impact more negatively on this group than on others. Victims of crime who have gender reassignment can be reluctant to seek help and support and this strategy aims to enhance opportunities to access such help and support.
Marriage and civil partnership			✓	There is no evidence that the strategy would impact more negatively on this group than on others
Pregnancy and maternity			✓	There is no evidence that the strategy would impact more negatively on this group than on others.
Race	✓			There is no evidence that the strategy would impact more negatively on one group more than on others. Victims of crime from black and minority ethnic communities often face additional barriers to reporting these and accessing services. Tackling exploitation and hate crime are two explicit aims of the strategy and will positively impact on some individuals within this cohort.

Religion or belief	✓			There is no evidence that the strategy will impact more negatively on one group more than on others. As above, tackling exploitation and hate crime are two explicit aims of the strategy and will positively impact on some individuals within this cohort.
Sex	✓			There is no evidence that this strategy would impact more negatively on one group more than on others. Tackling domestic abuse is a key partnership priority and in Sandwell victims remain predominantly although not exclusively female. However the proportion of male victims reporting to police has increased year-on-year for the past three years, rising from 18.7% in 2018 to 22.0% in 2020.
Sexual orientation	✓			There is no evidence that this strategy would impact more negatively on one group more than on others. Tackling exploitation and hate crime are two explicit aims of the strategy and will positively impact on some individuals within this cohort.
Other			✓	

Does this EIA require a full impact assessment? No

If there are no adverse impacts or any issues of concern or you can adequately explain or justify them, then you do not need to go any further. You have completed the screening stage. You must, however, complete sections 7 and 9 and publish the EIA as it stands.

If you have answered yes to the above, please complete the questions below referring to the guidance document.

5. What actions can be taken to mitigate any adverse impacts?

Not applicable.

6. As a result of the EIA what decision or actions are being proposed in relation to the original proposals?

To implement this new Strategy.

7. Monitoring arrangements

The new strategy builds on the work undertaken highlighting the considerable progress and achievements made over the past three years whilst also setting out the new overarching objectives to take this work forward. It has been produced by partners and each of the SSPPCBs three sub-groups is developing and will be responsible for an annual work plan which will be regularly reviewed throughout the year and updated annually. This ensure the flexibility to predict and respond to any emerging trends in the fast paced and ever changing arena that is community safety.

8. Action planning

You may wish to use the action plan template below.

None

9. Publish the EIA

This EIA will be published as part of the Cabinet Report and will be available on Corporate Management Information System of Sandwell Council.

Where can I get additional information, advice and guidance?

In the first instance, please consult the accompanying guide “Equality Impact Assessment Guidance”

Practical advice, guidance and support

Help and advice on undertaking an EIA or receiving training related to equalities legislation and EIAs is available to **all managers** across the council from officers within Service Improvement. The officers within Service Improvement will also provide overview quality assurance checks on completed EIA documents.

Please contact:

Kashmir Singh - 0121 569 3828

Report to Cabinet

23 March 2022

Subject:	City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement and Local Transport Capital Programme 2022/23
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Environment Councillor Ahmad Bostan
Director:	Director – Regeneration & Growth Tony McGovern Director – Borough Economy Alice Davey Director of Finance Simone Hines
Key Decision:	Yes; Type (b) - an executive decision which is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure, the making of savings or the generation of income amounting to: - £250,000 or more where the service area budget exceeds £10m; - £100,000 or more where the service area budget is less than £10m; Type (c) - an executive decision which is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough.
Contact Officer:	Strategic Planning & Transportation Manager Andy Miller andy_miller@sandwell.gov.uk Service Manager – Highways Robin Weare robin_weare@sandwell.gov.uk



1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the current position in relation to the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) for the period April 2022 to March 2027 as submitted to Government by the West Midlands Combined Authority following its approval at West Midlands Combined Authority Board on 14th January 2022, be noted.
- 1.2 That details of the resourcing, monitoring and financial implications relating to the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement programme be received.
- 1.3 That the assurance and appraisal implications for projects and block allocations included in the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement programme be noted.
- 1.4 That, subject to confirmation by Government of the overall City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement allocation to the West Midlands Combined Authority and its subsequent approval by West Midlands Combined Authority, Cabinet approves the following programme of minor works, highways, bridges and street lighting maintenance for 2022/23 to be funded through the Local Network Improvement Plan and Maintenance Block allocations as set out in the reports to West Midlands Combined Authority Board on 14th January 2022 and 18th March 2022;

Minor Works Programme	Funds 2022/23 £
Major Schemes Development	220,000
Road Safety	540,000
Decarbonising Transport	300,000
Demand Management	120,000
Traffic Calming	200,000
Major Route Signing	70,000
Named Schemes Over £250k.	347,900
Total	1,797,900



Maintenance Programme	Funds 2022/23 £
Carriageway Maintenance	3,986,300
Bridges	603,000
Street Lighting	152,000
Total	4,741,300

1.5 That once confirmation of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement is received from Government and approved by West Midlands Combined Authority Board, a further report be submitted to Cabinet setting out the details of the Sandwell projects included within the settlement.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

2.1 This report details the current position with regards to the City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement programme for the West Midlands as approved by WMCA Board on 14th January and submitted to Government for approval. It sets out the specific allocations to the Authority for 2022/23 for local network improvements and highway maintenance subject to final Government confirmation and WMCA Board approval.






2.2 The block allocations included in the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme will comprise the majority of the Council's capital programme of minor works, highway and bridge maintenance for financial year 2022/23 and the following four years of the settlement period.

2.3 Approval is sought to the programme of works outlined in the recommendations. Details of individual schemes will be reported back to the appropriate Cabinet Member(s) for approval in due course.



2.4 It had been WMCA's intention to approve the overall CRSTS programme at its Board meeting on the 18th March. However, the Government is yet to confirm the allocation, or the individual projects within it. CA Board is therefore recommended to delegate acceptance of the funding settlement, either in full or as an interim to WMCA's s151 Officer subject to the settlement remaining in line with the programme level business case it previously approved. A further report will be submitted to Cabinet setting out the details of the CRSTS settlement and the Sandwell projects it contains following the WMCA s151 sign off.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	People live well and age well: The Local Transport Settlement contributes to safe and efficient roads for local people and visitors, and to the health benefits of sustainable active travel.
	Strong resilient communities: Successful communities needs access to jobs, services and facilities to enable them to remain healthy and vibrant. The highway network is an important enabler of this.
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods: Both new and existing residential developments rely on good quality access and links to shops, services and leisure facilities in order for them to be successful. Local Transport Settlement funding is the principle method by which the network is improved and maintained.
	A strong and inclusive economy: The provision of a high quality, well maintained highway network will reduce journey times and improve journey reliability for Sandwell business who rely on it to connect to their suppliers and customers.
	A connected and accessible Sandwell: The provision of a high quality, well maintained highway network is vital to enable Sandwell residents to access jobs, education and services both within and beyond the Borough's boundaries.



4 Context and Key Issues

City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS)

- 4.1 The City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) is a five-year capital settlement to enable the city regions to achieve their ambitions in terms of transport investment. The fund is overseen by DfT and in the West Midlands it aligns with the planned publication of a new Local Transport Plan (LTP). CRSTS commences in 2022-23 with £8.9m previously allocated to the West Midlands in 2021-22 to assist with preparation and delivery of the settlement.
- 4.2 CRSTS is intended to draw under one heading a number of transport funding streams including the final year of the already allocated Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) along with the Integrated Transport Block (ITB) and Highways Maintenance Block (HMB). CRSTS will be the main source of transport capital funding for local transport schemes with a scheme cost of £50m or less. The Active Travel Fund (ATF) which covers walking a cycling investment remains separate for the time being.
- 4.3 Guidance issued by DfT in July 2021 set out that the WMCA area was given a funding range of between £780m and £1,280bn. In response to the guidance, a WMCA CRSTS investment prospects was developed and set out against Government priority outcomes of;
- Growth and Productivity
 - Levelling up
 - Decarbonisation

The WMCA formally submitted a full prospectus for £1.732bn of asks, including a significant over-programming element, to DfT on 29th September 2021. Ongoing negotiations took place between TfWM, Treasury and DfT during October 2021.

- 4.4 The Government's Budget/Spending Review 2021 indicated a WMCA provisional allocation of £1.05bn for 2022-27. As part of the announcement Government advised that areas in receipt of CRSTS would be unlikely to receive additional capital funding to support their Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP) and that the expectation would be that these projects would be included in the eventual CRSTS programme



submitted. It should be noted that the West Midlands BSIP 'ask' included around £245m of capital projects to facilitate bus priority.

4.5 In response to this WMCA/TfWM and the seven West Midlands local authorities developed a programme ask which was approved for submission at WMCA Board on 14th January. A programme level Business Case has been submitted to Government to support the 'ask' and confirmation of the allocations is expected during early March. Recent discussions with DfT and Treasury officials has indicated that the approval may consist of confirmed allocations for the first two years of the programme with indicative allocations for the remaining three.

4.6 Whilst the overall provisional settlement is disappointingly lower than the upper figure in the original indicative range, it remains a significant investment in transport infrastructure of around £200m per annum for the settlement period.

4.7 The CRSTS programme submitted by WMCA to Government includes the following projects which are either wholly or partially located in Sandwell;

- **Smethwick to Birmingham Inclusive Growth Corridor Transport Package** - Development and delivery of a package of highway and active travel measures to support housing growth and regeneration around the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital.
- **A461 Walk, Cycle and Bus Corridor, Sandwell** - Development and delivery of a package of sustainable transport measures between Castle gate in Dudley and Great Bridge.
- **Dudley Port Integrated Transport Hub, Ph 1 & 2** - Delivery of step free access between Metro and station concourse (from Ph 1). Development of remainder of Phase 1 (Station Concourse) and Phase 2 (Platform improvements).
- **A4123 Walk, Cycle and Bus Corridor** - Development and delivery of a package of sustainable transport measures along Wolverhampton Road/New Birmingham Road.
- **Black Country ULEV Charging Scheme** - Development and delivery of 1000 electric vehicle charge points throughout the Black Country.
- **Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension Sustainable Access Measures** - Delivery of pedestrian and cycle measures to aid access to the stops along the route in Sandwell and Dudley.
- **Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan Black Country Package** - Development and delivery of cycle routes in the West Midlands Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan including the Smethwick – West Bromwich – Wednesbury route.



The projects included support both the WMCA objectives and the regeneration priorities of the emerging Black Country Plan and Sandwell's Economic Recovery & Regeneration Strategy. The Government is yet to confirm the final WMCA allocation, nor the individual projects/programmes within it. However, if approved, the programme submitted in January by WMCA s represents a little over £100m of new investment on the transport network that serves Sandwell over the next five years.

- 4.8 In addition to these projects, the submitted CRSTS programme includes funding to deliver Phase 2 of the A34/A45 Sprint corridor between Walsall and Birmingham Airport/Solihull via Scott Arms, Perry Barr and Birmingham City Centre (including HS2 Station) and development funding for further metro/rapid transit routes in the Black Country. It also includes a funding ask for the expansion of the West Midlands Metro maintenance and stabling facility at Wednesbury.

Assurance, Governance and Monitoring

- 4.9 The CRSTS fund will be operated through, and be fully compliant with, the WMCA Single Assurance Framework (SAF). A business case will be required for each scheme within the programme.
- 4.10 It is proposed that the WMCA SAF will be augmented by requirements for additional transport information. This is in order to ensure compliance with the CRSTS funding objectives and to provide additional assurance over the ability to make the right interventions at the delivery pace required over the five-year programme. Each scheme will need to demonstrate as appropriate:
- *Alignment with Local Transport Plan and national CRSTS funding objectives:* Each business case will provide a specific analysis of impact against the objectives for the regional transport policy and of the funding.
 - *Direct benefits to cycling and active travel:* Specific emphasis has been placed by Government on accelerating cycling and active travel measures. These are reflected in West Midlands LTP policy and recognised as the type of measures required to help decarbonise the transport system. Each project will set out how it can, where appropriate, provide a relative advantage to pedestrians and cyclists over other modes, evidencing how it achieves this in compliance with DfT's formal LTN1/20 guidance.



- *Direct benefit to public transport and in particular bus travel:* Specific emphasis has been placed by HMG on providing priority measures to support reliable and effective bus services. These are reflected in West Midlands LTP policy and recognised as the type of measures required to help de-carbonise the transport system. Where not providing another targeted CRSTS or LTP outcome each CRSTS funded project will seek to provide a relative advantage to public transport over other modes and evidence how it achieves this, detailing where appropriate specific bus priority measures and their impact on journey time reliability and traveller experience.
- *Support measures for behaviour change, road safety and network resilience:* The CRSTS bid included specific line items for funding to support a number of joint regionwide initiatives which would improve the road safety, behaviour change and network resilience impact and outcomes of individual projects and programmes. These outcomes remain critically important, but in response to the pressures of reaching a financially balanced programme it is now proposed that each funded scheme will allocate an element of its delivery activity to achieving these outcomes. In developing each project business case the scheme promoters will liaise with the relevant TfWM teams and regional groups. Each project business case will set out what engagement has been undertaken and what specific measures will be implemented to deliver the relevant outcomes.

4.11 All the above requirements will be dealt with as part of the production of individual scheme business cases and considered as the scheme progresses through the WMCA SAF Governance.

4.12 Two key elements of the CRSTS programme will be subject to a simplified en bloc approval process which the WMCA will process through the system at the earliest opportunity following confirmation of the CRSTS grant by HMG. These include the Local Network Improvement Plans and Highway Maintenance Block which are discussed below.

4.13 The CRSTS approach and guidance from Government places considerable emphasis on public transparency over delivery, and on regional accountability for the delivery. There is clear direction that any lack of delivery pace and programme content could adversely impact funding during the latter part of the programme and in subsequent delivery periods. To help manage this a number of monitoring and governance mechanisms are proposed by WMCA:



- **Monthly Officer review** by the existing Strategic Transport Officers Group (comprising the senior Transport Directors from TfWM and the LHAs) to consider a delivery, risks and exceptions update from each delivery body.
- **Quarterly Formal reporting** by each delivery body covering spend, delivery, risk and programme updates for each scheme which it is the promoter for. This will be compiled, and a summary report formally considered by the Strategic Transport Board (Chaired by the WMCA Transport Portfolio holder and including Cabinet Members for each LHA as well a representation from the WMCA Transport Scrutiny Committee and Transport Delivery Committees). This reporting will also be shared with the Mayoral Office.
- **Annual Formal WMCA Board reporting:** An annual CRSTS progress and programme monitoring report will be prepared and submitted for consideration.

4.14 It should be noted that Government is placing considerable emphasis on the monitoring of delivery and on project and programme outcomes. The WMCA will be required to sign up to any DfT requirements arising from their national evaluation programme.

Funding Allocations to Sandwell for Local Transport and Highways Maintenance

4.15 For the last two decades, the majority of small scale local highway works such as local safety schemes, traffic calming and minor junction upgrades have been funded through a direct formula-based grant known as Integrated Transport Block (ITB). In metropolitan areas ITB has been allocated to Integrated Transport Authorities (now the WMCA) since their inception in the early 2000s, and in the West Midlands, has been re-allocated on the basis of 25% to TfWM (previously Centro) and 75% to the LAs, apportioned on a per-capita basis.

4.16 The national ITB pot has been fixed at £258m per annum since 2015 with no allowance for inflation meaning that in real terms, the spending power of ITB has seen a year on year reduction.



- 4.17 As set out in paragraph 4.2 above, the funding that was previously allocated to ITB will be absorbed into the CRSTS from April 2022. Therefore, there will no longer be a specific allocation nationally for this area of expenditure. However, as part of the West Midlands CRSTS programme, an allowance of £107.5m has been made for Local Network Improvement Plans (LNIPs). In effect, this is a replacement for ITB providing £21.5m per annum. This funding will be allocated to TfWM and the seven LAs on the same basis as had previously been used for ITB. It represents a 21% uplift on the allocations received in the period 2015/16 to 2021/22 but this does not in reality restore funding to 2015 levels when inflation is allowed for. As the figure is fixed until 2026/27, there will once again be a year on year reduction in spending power.
- 4.18 Notwithstanding that, the increase is welcomed. In Sandwell's case, the per-capita allocation amounts to £1.798m and this is proposed to be allocated to individual programme categories as set out in the recommendations. These are mostly self-explanatory. However, it should be noted that the 'Decarbonising Transport' category includes funding for small scale measures to assist walking, cycling and transport innovation such as micro-mobility. Many projects covered by the other categories will include provision for cyclists and pedestrians and those with impaired mobility. The allocation to the 'Decarbonising Transport' category is used to fund projects specifically aimed at these areas of work.
- 4.19 Every Highway Authority in England and Wales has a Statutory Duty under Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 to carry out studies into accidents arising out of the use of vehicles on roads or parts of roads, within their area and in light of those studies, take such measures as appear to be appropriate to prevent those accidents.
- 4.20 The current Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan compliments both the regional West Midlands Strategic Road Safety Strategy and the Government's latest published Road Safety Statement, which all the UN's Safe Systems approach to casualty reduction. The Safe Systems approach is a data led intervention system which supports road users and the economy whilst encouraging everyone to make safer choices. It also recognises the challenges faced in bringing safety improvements to all the varying road user groups, which often have different and sometimes opposing needs.



- 4.21 Therefore, this will be achieved by ensuring any proposed works help discharge our Traffic and Highway duties whilst aligning with both the national and regional road safety policies and strategies.
- 4.22 To help achieve this and continue the excellent results in reducing road casualties, at a local level the authority will continue to;
- Implementation data led road safety engineering and maintenance measures.
 - Develop evidence led, education, training and publicity programmes.
 - Technically analysis and approve developer led highway projects.
 - Work in partnership with other agencies to encourage relevant and necessary enforcement.
 - Work with the local community to try and encourage road user behavioural change.
- 4.23 In recognition of the importance of the LNIP funding to achieving our road safety objectives, a greater proportion of the 21% uplift on last year's ITB settlement has been allocated to the road safety and traffic calming categories within the programme.
- 4.24 Details of individual schemes will be reported to the Cabinet Member for Environment for approval as necessary. The 'Named Schemes Over £250,000' category is intended to fund larger local projects such as junction improvements. Details of such schemes will be reported individually as appropriate.
- 4.25 With regards to assurance processes, a light-touch approach is required for this to reflect the typically low complexity/low risk projects and often reactive nature of the works undertaken under this funding. A single WMCA SAF application will be processed by TfWM for the full £107.5m five-year allocation, allowing it to be released in annual grants to each constituent LHA. A signed declaration will be required by each LA s151 Officer with a simple funding agreement setting out delivery reporting requirements. This will include basic quarterly financial returns and a short annual monitoring report against a standardised format. This will set out what has been delivered supported by a small number of case studies showing how delivery aligns to Local Transport Plan and CRSTS funding objectives, as well as proposed delivery for the next period. These will be compiled to form a regional view as part of the overall CRSTS monitoring



and reporting. An annual allocation will be confirmed by the WMCA Board in-line with the overall five-year programme allocation.

- 4.26 The financial and WMCA SAF processes for the LNIP and highway maintenance funding cannot be progressed until Government confirms the CRSTS funding and any specific funding conditions, and funding cannot be released until the funding is received by the WMCA. However, WMCA has advised LAs to plan their own activity and budgets on the basis of the above assumed allocations.
- 4.27 As with ITB, Highways Maintenance Block funding will form part of CRSTS from April 2022 having previously been allocated to LHA's on a combination of needs-based formula and challenge/incentive bases. £120.4m of funding will be delivered through the local highway authorities (representing an 18% uplift on the 2021/22 figure). Each LHA will lead on procurement in line with Public Sector Procurement Guidelines. An annual monitoring report will be required (as per DfT guidance) from each LHA setting out how the funding has been spent and how the condition of the network has improved. These will be compiled to form a regional view as part of the overall CRSTS monitoring and reporting. An annual allocation will be confirmed by the WMCA Board in-line with the overall five-year programme allocation.
- 4.28 For 2022/23, the CRSTS allocation to Sandwell for maintenance is indicated as being £4.741m, subject to final confirmation from Government.
- 4.29 The allocation for highway maintenance for 22/23 constitutes the Councils primary funding to maintain carriageways, footways, bridges and streetlighting across the Borough. This funding replaces the previous highway maintenance block funding, incentive elements and pothole funding as detailed in the table below.
- 4.30 Sandwell's overall local transport allocations for 2022/23, including any additional allocations for maintenance, are shown in the table below compared to the previous five years' allocations under the old funding regime.

Sandwell Allocation	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Integrated Transport Block/Local Network Improvement Plan	1,482,000	1,480,000	1,477,000	1,476,000	1,486,000	1,797,900



Maintenance Block - Needs-based	2,853,000	2,582,000	2,582,000	2,582,000	1,781,000	N/A
Maintenance - Incentive Fund Allocation	267,000	542,000	542,000	538,000	445,000	N/A
Maintenance -Challenge Fund Allocation	1,540,000	0	0	2,134,000	0	N/A
Maintenance – Pothole Action Fund	225,000	393,000	161,000	159,000	1,780,000	N/A
Winter Damage Monies	N/A	1,400,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CRSTS Maintenance Block Funding	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4,741,300
Maintenance Total	4,885,000	4,917,000	3,285,000	5,413,000	4,006,000	4,741,300

5 Alternative Options

5.1 With regards to the Local Network Improvement Plan the proportion allocated to each of the individual block headings is broadly in line with previous years' ITB allocations. However, more of the 21% uplift on the 2021/22 figure has been allocated to the road safety and traffic calming categories to reflect member priorities. The option exists to allocate more funding to some headings and less to others. It also remains possible to alter the allocations 'in year' should circumstance require it. However, the use of this funding will be reported to, and monitored by, WMCA and should reflect the priorities outlined by Government through the CRSTS guidance and by WMCA through the Local Transport Plan.

6 Implications

Resources:	These are principally contained within the body of the report. Both the LNIP and Maintenance Block allocations are exclusively spent on works within Highways maintainable at public expense. Local Transport Settlement allocations will help deliver the aims and objectives as set out in the Highway Asset Management Policy, Strategy and Plan.
Legal and Governance:	Since the publication of Local Transport Act 2008 it is a statutory requirement of Integrated Transport Authorities (ITAs) to produce a Local Transport Plan (LTP) to develop policies relating to all aspects of transport, with close collaboration with surrounding



	<p>Authorities. The ITA function in the West Midlands is exercised by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). The overall CRSTS programme and the allocations to individual LHAs for LNIP and HMB are required to meet the aims and objectives of the LTP.</p> <p>The Sandwell minor works and maintenance programme contributes to achieving the targets and objectives, which are set out in the current local transport plan, 'Movement for Growth', which was approved by the WMCA on 10th June 2016.</p>
<p>Risk:</p>	<p>There are no direct risk implications resulting from the course of action recommended in this report.</p> <p>Individual projects within the programme will be assessed for risk in line with the Council policies as part of their approval process.</p>
<p>Equality:</p>	<p>The financial allocations outlined above form part of the overall West Midlands allocation that supports the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan known as Movement for Growth which replaced Local Transport Plan 3 in June 2016. This has been subject of a full Equality Impact Assessment carried out by the Transport for West Midlands as part of the plan's formulation. The individual projects/work packages that make up the 2022-27 CRSTS programme and Sandwell's 2022/23 programme of minor works and maintenance will be subject of individual Equality Impact Assessments as they are bought forward for approval either at WMCA Board or SMBC Cabinet.</p>
<p>Health and Wellbeing:</p>	<p>It is increasingly recognised that an appropriately managed and maintained and up to date road network is needed to support significant economic growth and the associated social well-being benefits. To maximise the benefits of economic investment programmes requires not only investment in new road infrastructure but also investment in maintaining and managing our existing infrastructure. The Local Transport Settlement will also contribute to sustaining the legacy of investment programmes that will deliver 2030 ambitions.</p>



Social Value	There are no implications for social value directly arising from this report. Any implications arising from individual projects will be reported as part of their approval process.
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7. Appendices

None

8. Background Papers

West Midlands Strategic Transport plan: Movement for Growth (2016)

Report to WMCA Board 14:01:22

Report to WMCA Board 18:03:22



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Report to Cabinet

23 March 2022

Subject:	Corporate Climate Change Action Plan
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Environment, Cllr Ahmad Bostan
Director:	Director for Regeneration and Growth, Tony McGovern
Key Decision:	No
Contact Officer:	Climate Change Programme Manager, Jo Miskin jo_miskin@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Climate Change Action Plan as set out in Appendix 5 be approved.
- 1.2 That Cabinet recommend to Council that a cross-party Member Committee on Climate Change be formally established as part of the Governance Arrangements to monitor the implementation of the draft Climate Change Action Plan.





2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Action Plan is designed to embed climate change across the council's corporate agenda and service areas to enable us to deliver the actions set out in the Climate Change Strategy and become a net zero organisation by 2030 and net zero borough by 2041.
- 2.2 Tackling climate change in Sandwell will provide many co-benefits to the borough which align with our corporate objectives around investment, regeneration, reducing poverty, and maximising job opportunities in the green sector.





2.3 Tackling climate change is a key area of council business; therefore, it is proposed that Cabinet considers annual progress reports from the Climate Change Programme Board going forward.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people</p> <p>Addressing climate change in Sandwell will ensure our borough remains resilient and sustainable for future generations. Action to reduce air pollution levels, creating safer transport options and providing access to more green spaces and job skills will ensure our young people develop in healthier environments, and have opportunities to expand and progress their skills in the green economy.</p>
	<p>People live well and age well</p> <p>There are multiple health benefits if we tackle climate change in Sandwell. Reducing carbon emissions will result in cleaner air, whilst increasing green spaces will provide cooling effects to residents during heatwaves. Climate change planning will ensure our vulnerable/elderly residents are considered and protected during extreme weather events through regular engagement, community liaison and contingency planning.</p>
	<p>Strong resilient communities</p> <p>Our mitigation and adaptation measures ensure that Sandwell will be prepared for extreme weather events and associated impacts on our residents, communities and infrastructure.</p>
	<p>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods</p> <p>Retrofitting existing homes and creating new low carbon homes will create warmer and healthier homes for our residents. We will ensure no-one is left behind by engaging all Sandwell communities in regular climate change engagement.</p>



	<p>A strong and inclusive economy</p> <p>Tackling Climate Change in Sandwell will create greener jobs in an emerging sector. We will work towards circular economy principles which will tackle both climate change and create new jobs and apprenticeships.</p>
	<p>A connected and accessible Sandwell</p> <p>Public transport and active travel will be popular choices of transportation around Sandwell in line with our Climate Change Strategy. This ambition is extended across the West Midlands with active travel choices becoming more accessible such as the metro extension reaching more neighbourhoods.</p>

4 Background

- 4.1 Climate change is now recognised as the most significant threat that we face to human health. Its impacts are already being felt by communities across the UK and we have strong evidence of how this will be felt by our residents in Sandwell. Indeed climate change adversely impacts upon the poorest communities and so we will have to go further than other areas to protect our residents.
- 4.2 At COP26 in November, further commitments were made by governments to maintain the target of ensuring the earth’s temperature rises by no more than 1.5 degrees. Sandwell can support that target by helping the borough to stay within its own carbon budget. Based on the latest data however, Sandwell (along with many other areas) is significantly at risk of *not* staying within this budget.

Sandwell’s Climate Change Strategy

- 4.3 The two most pressing issues are for us to reduce our emissions and to help the borough adapt to the impacts of climate change. Our response to these two issues is contained with the [Climate Change Strategy \(2020-2041\)](#) which details actions to tackle Climate Change in the following themes:



- Council Estate and Operations
- The Built Environment
- Transport
- Waste and Recycling
- Adaptation and Resilience
- Natural Capital

Challenges and Benefits

- 4.4 There are numerous benefits to Sandwell in tackling climate change, many of which are set out in Section 3. We will highlight these benefits when liaising with our communities, business and partners in building their support to tackle climate change.
- 4.5 Tackling climate change will present many challenges to both the council and the borough, however the Action Plan acknowledges these challenges and includes measures to address them accordingly. For example, meeting the borough's 2041 target involves behavioural change from residents, which in turn requires strong communication and the need for clear approach for how we engage with our residents.
- 4.6 A further challenge is to ensure that as the borough moves from its current state into one which is net zero, that this is a 'just transition' in which no one is left behind. The realisation of the benefits in Section 3 will be essential in this process, as will our approach to community engagement.

Corporate Climate Action Plan

- 4.7 The Action Plan provides the structure for how our Climate Change Strategy will be implemented and is designed to place climate change as a key area of activity within our corporate agenda. It also sets out the council's priorities and approach to tackle climate change over the next few years.
- 4.8 To achieve the council's 2030 target, a clear hierarchy is laid out for the council's estate and operations which are responsible for the majority of our emissions. The proposals set out in the Action Plan focus on the need to mitigate (reduce) our carbon emissions and ensure adaptation measures are implemented in order for Sandwell to become resilient to



the impacts of climate change. The Action Plan focuses on the following themes:

- Council Estate and Operations
- Transport Emissions
- Existing/New Housing Emissions
- Business Emissions
- Household Waste Emissions
- Community Engagement
- Energy
- Air Quality
- Off-setting
- Climate Change Adaptation
- Strategic Partnership
- Natural Environment

4.9 In addition, the council also have a wider influence on the borough which will support our 2041 net zero target. These are:

- Procuring goods and services – working with suppliers and contractors to encourage emission reductions associated with the goods and services they provide.
- Planning & Regeneration – where possible, we grant permission for developments which are compatible with our climate change targets.
- Council housing stock – we can directly influence c.20% of the borough's existing homes.
- Increased travel infrastructure – we can include requirements in planning processes to increase walking, cycling and EV charging infrastructure for new developments.
- Parking charges/levies – we can encourage businesses to support employees transitioning from private car use to public transportation.

Governance Arrangements

4.10 To ensure climate change is integrated across the council's service areas, a new set of arrangements are proposed to establish a director-led Programme Board, chaired by the Director for Regeneration and Growth. Each directorate will nominate a Service Manager who will be the accountable owner for specified actions (set out in the Climate



Change Strategy) to incorporate into their business planning and will be required to report into the Programme Board.

4.11 The Programme Board will be supported by the Climate Change Programme team who will provide technical advice, guidance, and monitoring progress across the council's Service Areas. It is expected that that Programme Board will report quarterly into the Members Steering Group and annually to Cabinet. Financial considerations and decisions will ultimately be made by Cabinet.

Resources

4.12 It is envisaged over the coming years that the Climate Change Programme will develop into a major workstream for the council which will have an impact on current resourcing levels. During 2022, a gap analysis will be conducted to assess the council's ability to implement the Action Plan, followed by a report on available options.

4.13 This evidence-based submission will be addressed in the financial year 2023-2024. Previous analysis in this area have detected capacity issues in the following service areas:

- Transport Planning
- Highways
- Business Growth
- Corporate and Borough-wide Energy
- Natural Capital
- Community engagement and Communications

Funding

4.14 The council will need to utilise various financial options such as community grants, government schemes and private investments to fund the scale of climate change activities required. In addition to normal routes of borrowing, we also need to consider *green finance* options, which could help to bring in important levels of inward investment to Sandwell. The range of finance options include:

- Community Municipal Bonds
- Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund



- West Midlands Combined Authority
- Public Sector Demonstrator Fund
- Parking Levies/congestion charges to raise funds for transport improvements

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The alternative is to not produce the climate change action plan which would however, be detrimental to Sandwell's efforts to achieve 2030 and 2041 targets on tackling climate change.

6 Implications

- 6.1 At this stage, the Action Plan is not a costed plan, however it is already widely understood that to reach net zero by 2030 and for the borough to reach net zero by 2041, a significant investment is needed in the both the council's and borough's assets. The Programme Board will focus its initial attention on establishing several of the initial cost implications for the council and will report back into cabinet with the relevant budget requests.

7 Appendices

Appendix 1 - Governance Arrangements

Appendix 2 - Climate Change Steering Group Terms of Reference

Appendix 3 - Notable exemplars

Appendix 4 - Sandwell MBC's Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2041

Appendix 5 – Corporate Climate Change Action Plan

8 Background Papers

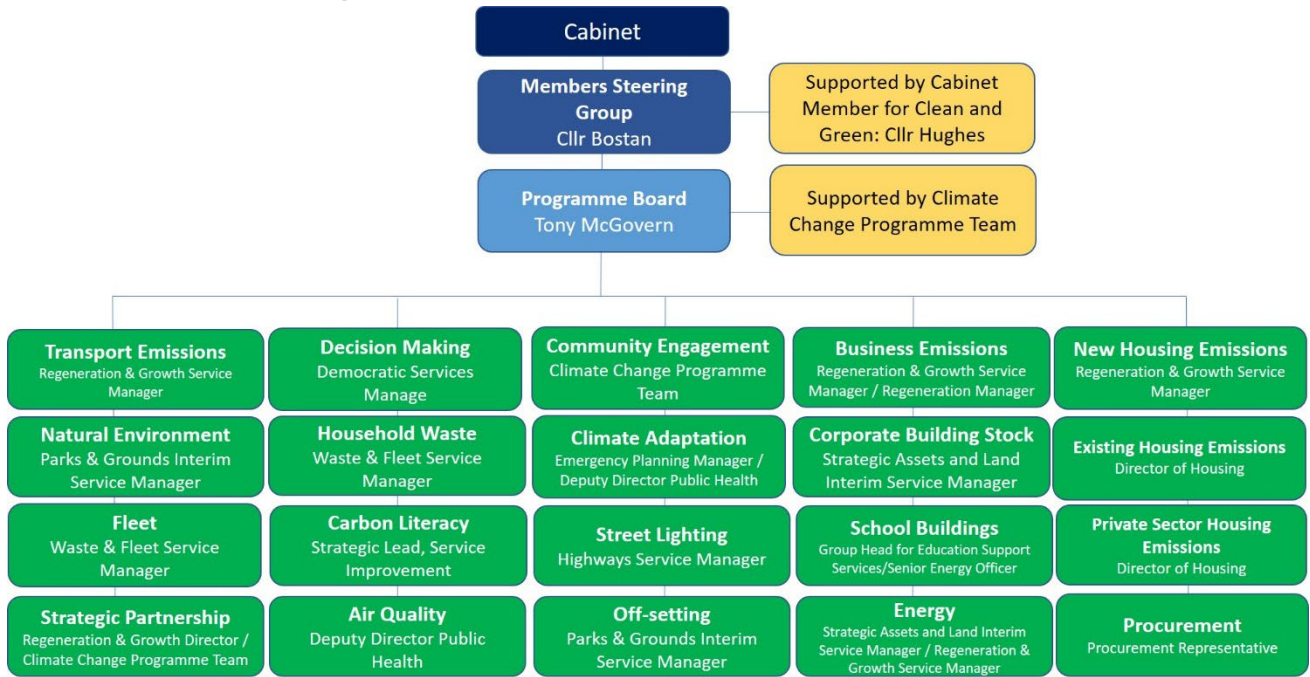
None



Appendices

Appendix 1

Governance Arrangements



Climate Change Steering Group Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the Climate Change Steering Group is to provide staff and external stakeholders with assistance and advice on the development of projects and policies concerning climate change that will enable Sandwell to become carbon neutral in 2041.

2. Background

- 2.1 Climate change represents a significant risk to the population of Sandwell and the council therefore has a moral responsibility to ensure we mitigate the risks to our population, as well as maximising any opportunities (such as reduction in excess winter mortality and the growth in the green economy). In January 2020 Sandwell Council will consult on a comprehensive Climate Change Strategy that will outline a road map for the borough to become carbon neutral in, no later than, 2041.

3. Terms of Reference

The function of this group is:

- 3.1 To champion positive and constructive actions to support the climate change agenda across the Council's operations and actions, as well as the wider borough and to work with relevant regional and national organisations.
- 3.2 To act as the Council's principle point of reference and advice for matters relating to the reduction of carbon emissions and adaptation to the effects of climate change.
- 3.3 To facilitate the implementation of the Council's Climate Change Strategy 2030, it's delivery, monitoring and review.
- 3.4 To respond and contribute to the climate change targets set regionally and nationally.

4. Membership

- 4.1 The group will be comprised of councillor and officer representatives of Council directorates in addition to external stakeholders with specialised knowledge and capabilities in relation to climate change.



5. Meetings

- 5.1 Initially, meetings will be held a monthly basis. The quantity of meetings will be subject to review following the preliminary group meetings.
- 5.2 Meetings will take place at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury. An alternative location may be chosen when appropriate.
- 5.3 The format of all meetings will include updates from a representative of the specified directorates/departments.
- 5.4 Key actions from the meetings will be recorded and issues escalated to relevant Council members as required to support delivery of projects and policies.

6. Review

- 6.1 These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually.



Appendix 3

Notable exemplars

- Waltham Forest – [Mini-Holland scheme](#)
- Nottingham City Council – [Workplace Parking Levy](#)
- City of York Council – city-wide [Passivhaus housing programme](#)
- East Dunbartonshire Council published a [Carbon Management Plan](#). This report indicates emissions from waste, fleet, business travel and street lighting.
- [Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council](#) have embedded social value in their procurement processes. As part of this, companies bidding for procurement contracts have the opportunity to set carbon reduction and environmental performance.

Appendix 4

Sandwell MBC's [Climate Change Strategy 2020 - 2041](#)



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Appendix 5

Corporate Climate Change Action Plan

2022 - 2025

Jo Miskin
Climate Change Programme Manager

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Purpose of Action Plan

The purpose of this Action Plan is to set out the council's priorities and proposed actions to meet our 2030 and 2041 targets for reaching net zero.

It lays out clearly what our priorities are, what is involved in meeting them and provides Members with an overview of our climate change work in the coming years. The report also gives Members the opportunity to examine our approach and help determine how we meet our objectives.

Critically however, this Action Plan is also designed to put climate change firmly onto the council's corporate agenda, enabling us to ultimately become a net zero organisation and one that is the borough's strongest advocate for climate change action across Sandwell.

Introduction

This Action Plan is based on the council's Climate Change Strategy (see Appendix 8) and sets out our priorities and our approach to tackling climate change over the next few years.

In terms of achieving the council's 2030 target, a clear hierarchy is laid out for our own estate and operations which are responsible for the majority of our emissions.

Key activities which move the borough towards the 2041 target are also included.

Reaching net zero by 2030 is not just about having low emissions at that point, but about being on a falling trajectory *en route* to 2030. The same is the true of the 2041 target. To stay within our carbon budget, we need to be reducing emissions immediately.

Several of the activities proposed in this plan are undoubtedly challenging both in terms of the scale of work required and the need to engage with our residents, communities and businesses and to persuade them of the urgency and degree of change required.

Few of the objectives within this report can be achieved quickly. This is the first of several action plans that need to be implemented during the next decade in pursuit of our 2030 and 2041 targets.

Whilst we know in principle in which areas we need to be active (e.g. transitioning our schools to net zero), in many cases we don't yet have a base-line of data to provide the necessary evidence of what specific actions are required, how much carbon can be reduced or how much investment is required. All of this will lead to work streams to be developed by the new governance arrangements.

Rationale for Acting

Climate change is now widely recognised as one of the largest threats to human health, our economy, and our way of life.

Despite the immense disruption that the Covid pandemic has caused, climate change remains a much larger threat to our way of life. In the second half of this century, the

impacts of climate change on human health could be similar to an *annual* global pandemic. The impacts on our economy could be similar to a global pandemic every *decade*.

To minimise the effects of climate change, the world has agreed to work together to limit the increase in global temperatures to no more than 1.5 degrees. All areas, including Sandwell, have a role to play in meeting this goal. Our corporate targets of net zero for the borough by 2041 and for Sandwell Council by 2030, are both compatible with supporting the maximum 1.5 degree temperature rise.

The proposals in this report, do not just focus on the need to reduce our emissions (mitigation), but to ensure that Sandwell is resilient to the impacts of climate change (adaptation). We know that the impacts of climate change are greater on the poorest and most vulnerable members of society and so in Sandwell, we will need to go further than other areas to protect and support our residents.

Current Situation

In order for Sandwell to be net zero by 2041, we need to stay within a defined carbon budget of **9.1million tonnes**. The modelling defines the budget period as being up to 2100.

Based on the latest data available, Sandwell produced 1.4million tonnes of carbon in 2018, which without any change in activities, sets us on a course for producing **115million tonnes** by 2100, rather than **9.1**. We will have used up our carbon budget in the next 6 to 7 years, unless we begin to make *significant* reductions in the borough's emissions.

Despite the massive shock to the economy caused by the pandemic, emissions only reduced by 5% - 7% - to reach 2041, our emissions need to decrease by 13% every year.

We won't get to *absolute zero* carbon emissions and so it is vital that we find ways to absorb some of the borough's emissions, whilst remembering that emission reductions must be our top priority, rather than seeing absorption as a way of allowing emissions to continue

Our sphere of influence/Areas we can influence

In addition to the difference we can make to emissions from our own estate and operations, we also have a wider influence on the borough in several areas which will support our 2041 target for net zero.

- Our procurement of goods and services. We can work with our contractors and suppliers and encourage them to reduce the emissions associated with the goods and services they provide (see Appendix 5)
- Planning – where we can, we only give permission for development that is compatible with our climate change objectives
- Our Housing Stock – we can directly influence c.20% of the borough's homes (see Appendix 6)
- EV charging infrastructure
- Provision of walking and cycling infrastructure

- Parking charges/Parking Levy – use levy to encourage businesses to work with their employees to help support the movement away from car journeys as well as from the most-polluting vehicles (see Appendix 7)
- Supporting low-income households to take up the incentives offered through the council’s Eco3 and LEAP schemes
- Giving companies recognition and support that are already involved in, or moving towards ‘circular economy’ principles or trading in the low-carbon and environmental goods sector
- Household waste and recycling – we can influence how much of the borough’s waste is recycled and how energy efficient the collection service is.
- Greening the borough – we can directly influence how ‘green’ Sandwell becomes
- Behavioural change – we can influence the behaviour of residents through, for example publicity campaigns
- Building a borough-wide strategic partnership of key organisations and businesses that can help support reaching the 2041 net zero target



Figure 1: Spheres of local authority influence over emissions¹⁴

Policy Context

Throughout the duration of the Climate Change Programme, the Council will also need to consider and adopt new policies and plans relating to the climate change agenda. There are already national and regional policies and initiatives in development that can support this and provide officers with the policy context needed to adopt new approaches.

- **Black Country Plan** – the emerging Black Country Plan contains many policies around both climate change, the natural environment, air quality, design and transport which will provide a strong foundation to much of the activity that will be delivered by the Climate Change Action Plan.
- **UK Environment Act 2021** – The Environment Act sets clear statutory targets in four priority areas: air quality, biodiversity, water and waste, and includes new targets to reverse species decline by the 2030. The Act also includes the transition to a circular economy, encouraging people and businesses to recycle more and reducing the volume of waste generated. It will be crucial for local authorities to adopt additional requirements the Environment Act mandates.
- **UK Climate Risk** – The recent publication of the Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) assessed 61 risks and opportunities from climate change in England including housing, the natural environment, infrastructure, businesses and health impacts. The evidence presented identified eight risk areas that require the most urgent attention in the next two years, and to address the widening gap of risks faced with the level of adaptation measures currently in place. The Climate Change Programme Team are currently exploring options to commission a localised Adaptation and Resilience Report specific to Sandwell.

Co-benefits of climate action

The need to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases is now widely understood and largely accepted. The benefits of addressing climate change however are often not stated but need to be understood and shared to help build more support for climate change action.

Addressing climate change will benefit the borough's residents, communities, businesses, infrastructure, reputation and environment. Conversely, failing to respond adequately will impact negatively upon those areas too.

Economic

Nationally and globally, economies are moving away from traditional models based upon the on-going availability of fossil fuels and other natural resources, towards low-carbon models and a circular approach. Sandwell's businesses, if supported correctly, could benefit from these economic changes, providing new opportunities for employment and the development of new technologies.

Action on climate change creates regeneration opportunities and so responding to this agenda supports our ambitions to regenerate Sandwell.

Tackling congestion on Sandwell's roads will benefit our businesses, who will see improved reliability of their logistics operations.

The need to retrofit the borough's buildings (private/commercial/public) will create new markets, skills training, apprenticeships and economic activity.

Social

Retrofitting the borough's housing stock will provide warmer and healthier homes for our residents. Homes will also be easier and cheaper to heat, bringing more people out of fuel poverty. Encouraging more people to walk and cycle more will lead to improvements in both physical and mental health. Neighbourhoods which have been enhanced with tree planting and other forms of vegetation, will improve people's local environment, their well-being and sense of local pride. Less traffic on the road network will lead to an improvement in air quality which will support residents with poor health and provide a cleaner environment for families to thrive.

Reputation

Taking positive action to tackle climate change and to benefit the borough will enhance SMBC's reputation as an organisation that acts responsibly and in the interests of its residents. A borough that is greener as a result of increased tree planting, will be more attractive not only to existing residents, but to businesses and to those considering whether to live and work in Sandwell.

Infrastructure

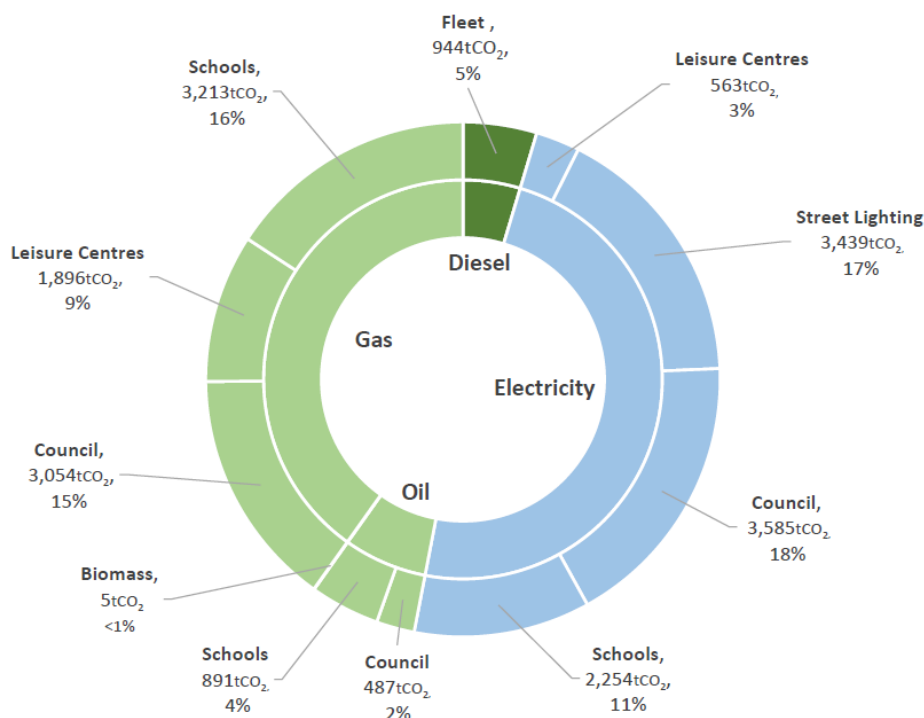
As with the rest of the UK, our facilities (leisure, health etc) and our infrastructure (transport network, energy grid, water and sewage networks) are all vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. By responding proactively to these threats improves the resilience of Sandwell and avoids the impacts of catastrophic events, such as loss of water/energy from flooding.

The following text sets out the plan for SMBC activity around climate change to meet in our 2030 and 2041 corporate targets for net zero.

Council Estate & Operations

The chart below shows the direct and indirect emissions for which we as a local authority are responsible, with our corporate buildings being the largest contributor (47%), followed by schools (31%), street lighting (17%) and fleet (5%).

Sandwell Council's Carbon Footprint



The following text sets out the steps required that will start to reduce emissions from all of these areas. As will be discussed elsewhere in this report, we will not be able to reduce our emissions to absolute zero, which means those residual emissions will have to be off-set (absorbed) through tree planting.

Corporate Building Stock (47% of emissions)

How to reduce emissions

To reduce emissions, we need to reduce the demand we make for energy from the national grid. In terms of the buildings themselves, this would include:

- insulating the walls and roofs and replacing windows
- installing low-carbon forms of heating, e.g. heat pumps
- using more efficient lighting
- use energy efficient devices and machines
- installing Solar PV
- investing in Building Energy Management Systems
- factoring energy use into considerations around assets and occupancy times

In terms of the building's occupants, this means we must change behaviour so that people:

- only use the energy they need
- recognise the need to conserve energy
- develop good environmental practices, e.g. recycling waste

What we need to do

- Decide what buildings we are intending to dispose of and retain
- Begin to produce schemes for the buildings with the highest footprint. For example, we know that for our entire building stock (including schools), 75% of emissions come from only 27% of buildings
- Develop and deliver a programme of Carbon Literacy to help staff understand how to change behaviour to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Waste in our buildings – all should have facilities for separating waste, including food waste
- Off-set the emissions we can't avoid

The capital costs of carrying out the above works on our estate will run into many of millions, some of which will need to be funded by government grants. Currently, there is no clear timetable from the government about when funding will be available, however this will of course have a significant bearing on our ability to reach 2030.

Based on very recent experience of government grants for this type of work, the timescales are not compatible with our own internal processes for getting grant applications approved. As external funding is likely to play such an important role in us reaching 2030, we may need to review our approval processes, to avoid the risk of losing out on investment opportunities.

Who is responsible

Strategic Assets and Land Interim Service Manager

Timescale – Our corporate buildings need to be net zero by 2030.

School Buildings (31% of our emissions)

Although our approach to reducing emissions from schools is very similar to that of our corporate buildings, the key difference between them is our limited ability to control how schools spend their money and use their buildings. Consequently, it will be much more challenging to reach 2030 net zero for our schools, than for our corporate buildings. Funding for school buildings is generally limited to regular maintenance and does not allow for the type of long-term investments which are required to reduce emissions.

How to reduce emissions

To reduce emissions, we need to reduce the demand we make for energy from the national grid. In terms of the buildings themselves, this would include:

- insulating the walls and roofs and replacing windows
- installing low-carbon forms of heating, e.g. heat pumps
- using more efficient lighting
- use energy efficient devices and machines

- installing Solar PV
- investing in Building Energy Management Systems
- factoring energy use into considerations around assets and occupancy times

In terms of the building's occupants, this means we must change behaviour so that people:

- only use the energy they need
- recognise the need to conserve energy
- develop good environmental practices, e.g. recycling waste

What we need to do

To understand the scale of the challenge required, a pilot study will be carried out on a cross-section of the borough's schools, looking at the measures needed to move them towards net zero. The study will provide information on the complexity of working on school buildings and will provide base-line data, from which an overall cost for the school estate can be estimated.

We will also continue to access government funding to support moving both our corporate stock and our schools to becoming low carbon.

Who is responsible

Group Head for Education Support Services/Senior Energy Officer

Timescale – Our schools need to be net zero by 2030

Street Lighting (17% of emissions)

How to reduce emissions

Around 70% of publicly owned street lighting has already been converted to run on LED bulbs, however this still leaves 6,705 street lights on the adopted highway which will need to be converted to also run on LED bulbs.

What we need to do

In order to convert the remaining street lighting to LED, a capital investment of £2,673,545 is required.

Who is responsible

Highways Service Manager

Timescale

Once the funding has been secured, the conversion to LED could be completed in 12 months.

Fleet (5% of emissions)

The council's fleet of over 500 vehicles, makes up 5% of our emissions, from the petrol and diesel required to fuel them. The fleet of vehicles operated by SERCO for household waste collection and street cleansing, does *not* sit within the council's reportable emissions.

Typically, council fleets which *do* include waste vehicles, make up around 15% of authority emissions. The availability and cost of low carbon RCVs, will present challenges to converting SERCO's fleet by 2030.

How to reduce emissions

Review the council's fleet and look at the possibilities of reducing the number of vehicles and assets. Replace existing fleet with fully electric counterparts wherever this is possible.

What we need to do

To replace the council's LCV fleet to fully electric vehicles will require in addition to the budgeted vehicle replacement cost an estimated capital investment in excess of £15m. The council will also need to invest in the charging infrastructure in Sandwell.

Who is responsible

Waste & Fleet Services Manager

Timescale

The transition to fully electric vehicles has begun. It is anticipated that all council procured vehicles under 3.5 ton will be fully electric by 2030.

Procurement

Emissions from our Procurement (the goods and services we buy) are known as our Scope 3 emissions – whilst we can influence them, we can't directly control them. We know what our Scope 1 & 2 emissions are (from electricity/gas/oil/petrol/diesel) but don't know how this compares with our Scope 3 emissions.

What we need to do

We need to undertake a detailed study which examines the goods and services which we procure and aims to provide evidence of those activities with the highest emissions so we can prioritise how we respond.

We also need to adopt procedures so that climate change is a key consideration when tendering for goods and services which require contracts. This will help to reduce emissions associated with our procurement and provide evidence of how we are working towards becoming a net zero organisation.

To support the local economy and to reduce the mileage associated with our procurement, we should also look to increase the use of our local supply chain (see Appendix 4)

How we do it

Options include including climate change as a metric when procuring goods/services which require a contract.

This can be done in two ways. For large value contracts which have the potential for a high carbon footprint, a climate change metric will be used when awarding contracts. For smaller value contracts, we will utilise the existing Social Value metric, which will enable us to also include criteria relating to climate change.

Finally, we can produce an 'ask' of *all* of our contractors and suppliers which sets out our expectations of them, in terms of how they should consider the impact of their operations.

Who is responsible

Procurement Service Manager

Timescale – Our procurement falls outside of the 2030 target and needs to be a net zero by 2041.

Decision Making

What we need to do

We need to ensure that as an organisation, we take account of the impacts of our activities upon climate change. A formal process for this enables climate change to be embedded in our decision-making processes and provides evidence that we are adopting the types of good practice that we are advocating across the borough.

How we do it

A mechanism can be put in place so that all reports that go to Members, or all 'decisions' to be taken by a Member or Director, must be able to demonstrate evidence that the impact on climate change has been considered.

Other local authorities have already put procedures in place for this to happen, with many developing 'decision-making tools' for officers to use (see Appendix 3).

Who is responsible

The process of putting a mechanism in place will be led by the Democratic Services Manager.

Timescale – implementing this is one of the most straightforward actions within the plan and should be completed within 12 months.

Carbon Literacy

Our aim to become a net zero organisation will be significantly enhanced when officers and members understand the implications of their actions upon climate change. It will support decision making processes and mean we have the required knowledge to ensure our actions are compatible with our net zero targets.

What we need to do

Recognised Carbon Literacy training already exists, and has been developed for:

- Cabinet Members
- Elected Members
- Senior Leaders
- Officers

We need to develop a programme of training to be delivered across the authority, which is targeted appropriately at all levels.

How we do it

APSE, a support organisation for local authorities, will deliver Carbon Literacy training for cabinet members and senior leaders.

Officers from HR, working with the Climate Change Programme Team, will develop a tailored programme of training to be delivered to officers, which will include formal training, e-learning and briefing sessions.

It may be appropriate to limit the formal training to H-graded officers and above, however individual directorates would have the discretion to put lower graded officers through the training if it was thought to be particularly relevant to their roles.

Subject to the availability of resources, APSE could deliver training for elected members, however, the Local Government Association may be able to do this too.

Our officer group of Climate Change Champions would also have a role in supporting the roll out of Carbon Literacy training, as many have already been trained and will already be embedded in Service Areas across the authority.

The council will also explore incentives to encourage staff to transition towards EV.

Who is responsible

HR Service Manager

Timescale

Could be 12 months to get it delivered but will depend upon final decision about which level of decision makers attend which courses.

Reducing emissions from transport

(37% of the borough's emissions)

How to reduce emissions

Transport is the largest source of emissions in Sandwell, at around 37%. We know that simply transitioning all cars to EVs will not be enough to make the reductions needed from transport emissions. We therefore need to focus on providing residents with alternative means of travel, including the infrastructure to make cycling, walking and public transport attractive and viable options.

This will require the creation of a high-quality walking and cycling network across the borough, providing linkages to key destinations, as well as the investment to make these routes attractive, such as public realm and green infrastructure.

To make bus travel a more reliable and attractive form of transport, the principle of re-allocating road space needs to be accepted. Inevitably, there are instances in which this will impact on car journeys, however the benefits from fewer cars on the road are many and varied and will have wider benefits for our communities. These include improved air quality, safer streets and better health outcomes resulting from more active forms of travel.

We also need to develop the infrastructure required to support a borough-wide network of EV charging points, including rapid and ultra-rapid.

Data on travel patterns indicates that high numbers of vehicles on Sandwell's roads are from people driving into Sandwell to work, though this is also the case for people driving out of Sandwell to work in other areas of the West Midlands. Ultimately, we need fewer car journeys made and this requires behaviour change and that involves engaging with residents and employees borough-wide, e.g. talking to schools and businesses and working with them to develop travel plans.

What we need to do

- Continue to seek funding to expand our network of walking and cycling routes
- Agree internally and subsequently with neighbouring authorities to the principle of road-space reallocation
- Work with schools and businesses to develop/implement travel plans
- Continue to work with TfWM to improve public transport
- Develop the borough's infrastructure to support Electric Vehicle charging
- Consider the introduction of a parking levy to reduce congestion from commuting and to raise revenue to support transport improvements.
- Consider the introduction of congestion charges that will help improve air quality, encourage more use of public transport and provide an income stream for improvements in transport infrastructure

Who is responsible

Highways Service Manager / Regeneration & Growth Service Manager

Timescale – emissions from transport need to be at net zero by 2041

Reducing emissions from existing homes

(30% of the borough’s emissions)

Sandwell’s 127,000 homes account for just under one third of the borough’s emissions. The mixture of tenancy and ownership of these homes presents challenges in working in this sector. Around 27,000 of these homes belong to the council which gives us the opportunity to improve a significant proportion of the borough’s dwellings. For clarification, our stock of council-owned homes does *not* fall into our 2030 target and instead into our 2041 target. Although we own the buildings, we cannot fully control how they are used by the tenants, which makes reaching net zero a much more challenging target.

Our plans for improving homes need to recognise that around 80% of the homes that will be standing in 2050, are already built, so whilst we do need to address the standard of new builds, our greatest effort should be on the existing stock.

How to reduce emissions

To reduce emissions, we need to reduce the demand made for power and heat from the national grid. In terms of the buildings themselves, this would mean:

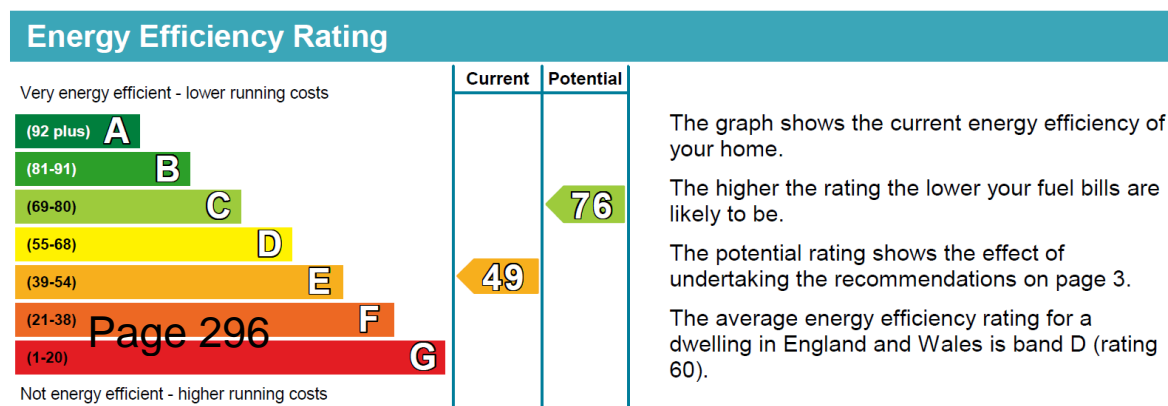
- insulating the walls and roofs and replacing windows
- installing low-carbon forms of heating, e.g. heat pumps
- using energy efficient devices and machines
- installing Solar PV

In terms of the building’s occupants, this means we must change behaviour so that people:

- only use the energy they need
- recognise the need to conserve energy
- develop good environmental practices, e.g. recycling waste

What we need to do

In line with the *Committee on Climate Change’s* recommendations, put plans in place to bring our own stock of houses up to at least EPC C rating. At the same time, develop plans for how we then move our stock towards becoming as close to net zero as possible, which would mean achieving an A rating. A score of 100 is given to a property which is carbon net zero, which as the image below shows, means achieving a rating of A is ideally required.



This may involve establishing which properties are best suited to being retrofitted and which may be better targeted with Solar PV. A feasibility and cost analysis of moving from EPC C to A would be beneficial in enabling us to plan for how we reach net zero with our own housing stock by 2041.

We also need to work with owner occupiers and the private rented sector in bringing their homes up to at least an EPC C rating, and as opportunities arise, support them to transition properties to net zero.

We are already working with the WMCA on the development of a borough-wide scheme for retrofitting homes and other buildings and should continue with this scheme

The council runs several domestic energy saving schemes for residents, and these should be promoted as widely as possible.

For many homes, the only way to reach net zero will be through installing Solar PV, to off-set any residual emissions. Tree planting is also going to be required to help off-set any other remaining emissions which cannot be avoided from the borough's homes.

Who is responsible

Asset Management and Maintenance Service Manager / Housing Management Service Manager

Timescale - emissions from transport need to be at net zero by 2041

Reducing emissions from new homes

The government's Future Homes Standards due to come into effect from 2025 means that all new homes will need to be carbon net zero ready, and so once the national grid decarbonises in around 2035, these homes should become carbon net zero. From June 2022, any new homes that haven't already received planning permission, will have to be at least 31% more energy efficient than current standards.

This does mean however, that homes can still be built in the next three years which won't adhere to net zero standards. As a council, we need to adopt the principle of building only low-carbon homes, in line with many other authorities. For homes being built by developers, the current planning guidelines make it harder for us to insist that they build only low-carbon homes, though this will change with the adoption of the Black Country Plan in 2024.

How to reduce emissions

As far as possible, we need to ensure that the new homes we build ourselves are carbon net zero ready. This should take into account not only the standards of the buildings, but also the embodied carbon in the building process and materials.

What we need to do

We are currently undertaking several pilot schemes to help inform our future approach and standards across different housing types, e.g. the inclusion of Solar PV on all homes. Ultimately, we should then look to adopt a set of building standards which are compatible with homes being carbon net zero whilst balancing their affordability.

We are also looking at several schemes for heating properties which use Air Source Heat Pumps, either for individual homes or to serve a group of homes, and again this will help to inform our future approach to providing heat.

An evaluation on our workforce is needed to help our staff develop a new set of skills which will enable them to maintain the new technologies we need to develop, e.g. solar panels.

We need to be regularly reviewing new technologies available in the market place to ensure that we are continually up-to-date in our approach as well as maximising opportunities to connect with heat networks in specific localities.

Who is responsible

Regeneration & Growth Service Manager

Timescale – the pilot schemes will be completed by 2024, after which we will be able to adopt our standards for the new builds which we complete ourselves.

Reducing emissions from businesses

(33% of the borough's emissions)

Sandwell's businesses are responsible for around 33% of the borough's emissions and so it is essential that we do everything possible to support them to decarbonise their operations and reduce their impact on the climate.

As generators of wealth and providers of jobs and skills, the borough's prosperity is dependent upon our businesses flourishing. Climate change presents several threats to businesses, and those that are unable or unwilling to respond appropriately, risk falling behind other businesses which choose to respond and adapt their operating models.

How to reduce emissions

There are a wide range of measures that need to be taken by Sandwell's businesses, and this reflects the varied nature of the goods and services our businesses provide.

Businesses whose operating models rely on high carbon production methods need to transition to low carbon approaches. Those with connections to fossil fuel industries also need to consider adapting their operations to reflect the transition to renewable sources of energy.

Businesses also need to adopt models which are compatible with a ‘circular economy’, which means materials stay in circulation for longer, reducing the need for disposal, as well as the emissions associated with producing raw materials. Sandwell already has some good examples of companies which make use of waste materials to produce new products.

What we need to do

We need to understand what local businesses are already doing to address climate change, e.g. updating their equipment, sharing logistics operations or using the local supply chain.

Businesses will need to be supported in accessing funding which can cover costs associated with insulating their premises or transitioning their fleet to EV.

Establishing a ‘Green Business Network’ enables existing businesses to showcase their low-carbon approaches and an award scheme would give them recognition and publicity, as well as encouraging peer to peer support.

A programme of training targeted at businesses to help them understand how to decarbonise is needed, along with the necessary support enabling them to develop viable plans to decarbonise their operations.

To enable businesses to develop plans to decarbonise or to adopt a ‘circular economy’ approach, we need to understand where this support will come from and assess our own ability to provide it. We should look at other local authority areas and understand the most successful models for providing the relevant business support for decarbonising.

Who is responsible

Regeneration & Growth Service Manager / Regeneration Manager

Timescale

The timescale to support businesses to decarbonise is dependent upon sufficient resources being available to work with businesses; the availability of funding and the willingness of businesses to engage on this agenda.

It may be possible to set up a Sandwell Green Business Network in this financial year.

Emissions from businesses need to have reached net zero by 2041

Reducing emissions from household waste

As the household waste collection service is not operated directly by the council, its emissions fall into the borough’s 2041 target, rather than our own 2030 target.

Reducing emissions from the collections of household waste is likely to be one of our biggest challenges due to issues of technology and finance. To replace the vehicles used

(RCVs) for collections with those that run on electricity, would be around double the cost of those that use diesel. Electric RCVs are also still in their infancy which is why their cost is so high. Replacement of Serco's fleet of around 60 RCVs is therefore going to take several years and may not be complete until around 2027/2028.

How to reduce emissions

- investigate alternative fuels that have lower emissions
- improve driving efficiency, supported by monitoring and training
- look to electrify parts of the fleet where funding/technology permits
- review energy usage across the SERCO site and implement energy saving behaviours.

What we need to do

If we are unable to reduce the emissions fast enough from Serco's fleet, then an alternative is review how we deploy the RCVs with one option being to reduce the frequency that their diesel vehicles are used. This would impact positively on the borough's air quality; improve the local environment through reduced noise of diesel vehicles and reduce the amount of congestion on our roads, which in turn supports air quality and our businesses.

Who is responsible

Waste & Fleet Service Manager

Timescale – emissions from household waste need to be at net zero by 2041.

Community Engagement

Meeting our 2041 target is dependent upon the actions of a range of partners and organisations, but the behaviour of our residents will also have a significant role. We know that changing public behaviour is one of the largest challenges for public organisations, so it is essential that we develop an effective approach to community engagement. This approach should ensure we 'leave no one behind' in our climate change work and help us to engage with all of our communities.

How to reduce emissions

The every-day and longer-term behaviour of residents impacts upon the borough's emissions. By persuading residents to change their behaviour towards more climate friendly activities, we can build momentum and create a consensus around behaviour that supports meeting our 2041 target.

What we need to do

We already have a 'road map' which sets out the principles of how to move forward with our community engagement work around climate change and this can serve as the starting point for developing a strategic approach in this area.

We need to work with our residents, explaining the risks associated with climate change and the urgency of action. We must develop a sophisticated and compelling range of messages

that we can communicate with our diverse communities. We need to talk to and find out more from our residents about how they want to be involved and how best to communicate with them

Resources will be needed for us to be taking a more proactive and interventionist approach to community engagement, building on existing links with our communities and establishing projects that enable residents to become actively engaged.

Several authorities have set up community networks, such as Decorum Borough Council, as a way to encourage participation in climate change discussions and of taking local climate action.

Our on-line presence around climate change should be enhanced so that we are providing information about what we as a council are doing, as well as giving information about what residents, community group and businesses can do.

Building on our strategic approach to community engagement, we also need to develop a Communications Strategy, taking into account not only varied ways to send out messages, but the need to adapt them to suit different audiences.

Who is responsible

Climate Change Programme Team

Timescale – community engagement supports the borough’s 2041 net zero target

Energy

How to reduce emissions

The generation of energy to provide heat and power to our homes, businesses and other buildings is a large source of emissions in Sandwell. We are already exploring two options to create ‘heat networks’ and if adopted, these could lay the foundations for further development of ‘heat networks’.

Although the National Grid has been decarbonising electricity generation in recent years, we cannot rely on this process alone to reach net zero in Sandwell.

The graph below shows just how much gas we use in the UK, mainly for space heating, and therefore the challenge involved in replacing that gas with other forms of energy. We need to significantly increase the amount of energy we generate from electricity, as so much of our heat comes from gas.

Yearly Gas and Electricity demand

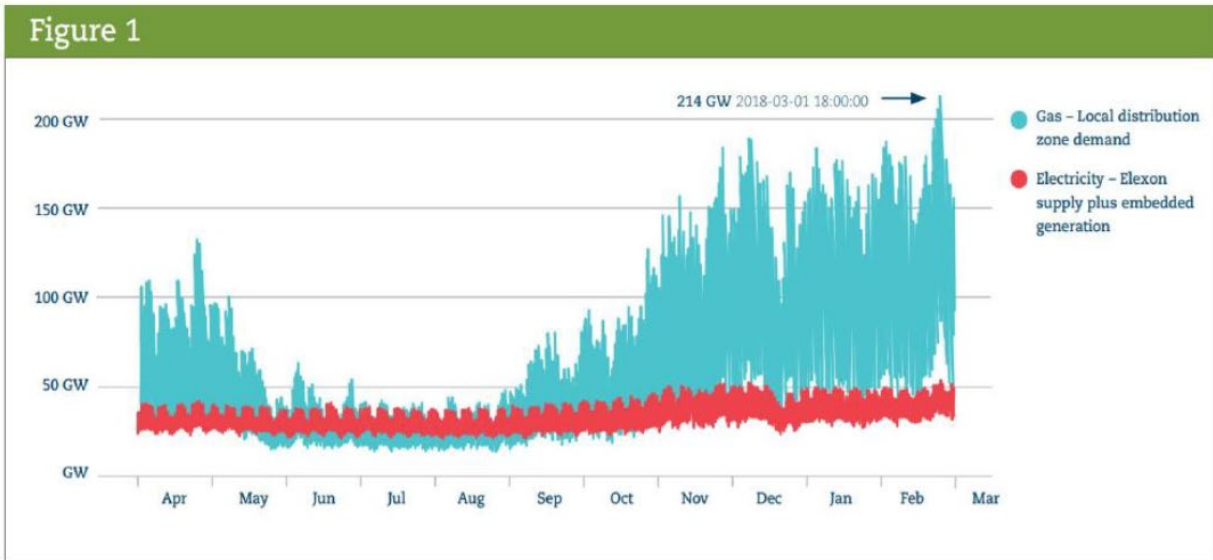


Figure 1: Britain's hourly local gas demand and electrical system supply, 2nd April 2017 - 6th March 2018.

In Sandwell there are untapped resources which *may* be able to provide sources of heat to serve heat networks:

- The canal network
- Underground aquifers
- Using ground-source heat pumps
- Heat recovery from industrial processes
- Flood water from abandoned mines
- Heat recovery from sewerage

Solar PV in Sandwell is still in its infancy, and the vast array of buildings in the borough provide potential opportunity for the installation of roof-mounted arrays:

- SMBC Corporate Buildings
- Schools
- Council Housing Stock
- Commercial and industrial businesses
- Utility Companies
- Other public sector e.g. NHS
- Partner organisations

What we need to do

It is expected that the Detailed Project Development stage of the two planned heat networks will conclude in June 2022. At that point, the council will need to decide whether and how it wants to proceed.

In the meantime, we need to assess the other sources of energy available in Sandwell and consider issues such as feasibility and scalability. We may wish to consider a study of potential opportunities for Solar PV on:

- council stock
- schools stock
- any leased buildings
- council houses.

Previously, officers have looked into the possibility of installing a wind turbine in Sandwell and this option should also be considered as part of the range of measures needed for local energy generation.

Who is responsible

Strategic Assets and Land Interim Service Manager / Regeneration & Growth Service Manager

Timescale – provision of energy across the borough sits in the 2041 target for net zero

Off-setting

In the context of this Action Plan, off-setting means absorbing any carbon emissions which we are not able to eliminate

What we need to do

It is important to state that our first priority should always be to reduce emissions as far as possible. Where we are unable to do this, e.g. due to limiting factors of a particular building or industrial process, then we must look to off-set those emissions.

In Sandwell, we have an ‘asset’ of natural capital which is already absorbing carbon emissions, e.g. our plants, trees and soils in parks and nature areas. This asset should be protected and enhanced.

Where feasible, we need to expand our natural capital, through additional tree planting, creating new green spaces and finding creative ways to introduce vegetation and soft landscaping into urban areas, such as green roofs and sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS).

How we do this

A borough-wide study exploring the opportunities for introducing more natural capital will help us to establish to what extent we can off-set in Sandwell. It is very likely however, that we will be unable to plant enough trees in Sandwell to off-set at the speed and extent required to reach our net zero targets. We will therefore need to look outside of Sandwell and explore additional opportunities for tree planting or habitat restoration, either with neighbouring authorities or further afield.

We need to take a strategic approach to our existing natural capital, to maximise opportunities for its protection and to ensure consistency in how it is managed and expanded.

Through our planning processes, we should seek to introduce as much green infrastructure as is possible into new developments. We should also look to enhance existing developments with green infrastructure, e.g. replacing hard landscaping with soft landscaping.

Who is responsible

Parks & Grounds Interim Service Manager

Timescale – off setting supports both the 2030 and 2041 net zero targets

Adapting to the impacts of climate change

The most vulnerable members of society are those can least afford to adapt to a changing climate. We are also aware of how a changing climate will make life harder for many of our residents whilst also presenting significant challenges for our businesses.

We know that the earth's temperature has already risen by around 1.2 degrees and that it's likely to rise to at least 2.4 degrees, so we need to know how this 'locked-in' climate change will affect people's health, their homes, our infrastructure and our public services.

Heat waves, including sustained periods of high internal temperatures (inside buildings), have the highest impact on the young, the elderly and the sick – in other words, those groups of people most likely to be in their homes during the day. It is thought that the over 65's are the most at risk, and as the UK's population ages, this will become an even larger demographic.

Whilst retrofitting homes to make them more energy efficient is vital to reduce their carbon footprint, this can also make homes more prone to overheating. There is a danger that well-insulated homes that require less heat, will instead start to increase their demand for energy through cooling, provided by air-conditioning machines.

Other buildings are also at risk of overheating, including schools, hospitals, offices, factories, leisure facilities, public buildings and other places of work.

Part of Sandwell adapting to a changing climate is ensuring that all aspects of daily life can continue, so we need to support all of these sectors in adapting their buildings to cope with heat.

What we need to do

To support the borough's residents, communities and businesses in adapting to a more unstable climate, we need to understand better how they will be impacted, so that we can work together to minimise these effects and increase the resilience of the borough. We may want to understand the difference between what a 1.5 and 2.4 degree rise in the earth's temperature will mean for Sandwell. Armed with this knowledge, we will be in a much stronger position to target the support needed, e.g. to vulnerable residents living in poorly ventilated apartments. This information would also help us to plan investment in our infrastructure, so that it is able to withstand the inevitable impacts of climate change. There will be costs associated with this investment, but they will be even higher if we do not prepare for the impacts of a changing climate.

Tree planting (as discussed elsewhere below is also part of our response).

Who is responsible

Emergency Planning Manager / Deputy Director Public Health

Timescale – this fits into our 2041 net zero target although there is level of urgency due to the impacts that some locked-in elements of climate change will have on our residents.

Air Quality

Air quality is an important issue in Sandwell affecting the health of many of our residents. Tackling this issue however, has many benefits, not only to public health but also to climate change. For example, reducing the number of journeys made by car can lead to improvements in air quality, to physical well-being, as well as supporting the move towards net zero.

Sandwell MBC has an Air Quality Action Plan, produced and being led by officers from Public Health, who work closely with the Climate Change Programme Team.

What we need to do

- Promote car sharing among residents and businesses in the area
- Ensure air quality considerations are included in the new Local Development Planning Framework and ensure policies seek to reduce the need to travel and promote the use of modes other than the car
- Implement Black Country Low Emission Strategy
- Provide guidance in relation to air quality for developers when submitting planning applications
- Review SMBC vehicle profile and formulate strategy for improvements reducing emissions
- Reduce fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) from domestic burning by declaring the whole of Sandwell a Smoke Control Area

- Educational campaigns on air pollution, including its causes, impacts, how to avoid it and how to help improve it.
- Engage with local communities to encourage community driven behavioural changes that will have a positive impact on local air quality
- Apply for and utilise additional funding resources that support our ambition to improve local air quality
- Increase public awareness of air quality across Sandwell through the provision of real-time air quality monitoring data
- Review and implement of electric charging and other low emission refuelling options for SMBC vehicles
- Review taxi & PHV fleet licenced by SMBC (including fleet make-up, age and emission profiles)
- Determine the most effective ways to influence and improve low and ultra-low emission vehicle use in taxi fleet.
- Engage with council employees to promote low and ultra-low emission vehicle technologies
- Promote car club/pool vehicles and sustainable modes of travel to reduce use of SMBC employees' vehicles
- Improve branding to increase attractiveness of public transport
- Improve access to information regarding transport options
- Promotion of walking and cycling
- Encourage travel plans for employers, schools & hospitals
- Provide air quality information and promote sustainable transport in schools

Who is responsible

Deputy Director Public Health

Timescale

The above actions are in the 2020-2025 AQAP

Natural Environment

The natural environment in Sandwell is our biggest, but unquantified, asset in the fight against climate change. Without our parks, nature areas, street trees and other areas, we would have to invest substantially larger sums to help Sandwell cope with the impacts of climate change. It also helps to improve air quality and residents' local environment, through making neighbourhoods greener and more attractive to live, play and work.

The UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the G7, yet the pandemic has demonstrated clearly that people value nature and actively seek it out for the physical and mental well-being. Whilst parts of the borough are well served by green space, many residents have very limited access to a local site

We won't get to absolute zero emissions in Sandwell and this is recognised in our two corporate targets of reaching carbon 'net zero' which means we balance the emissions we emit, with those we can absorb (also known as off-setting). Our best chance of being able to

off-set our residual emissions, will be through tree planting, as well of protecting our existing tree stock.

What we need to do

We need to embark on a large-scale tree planting scheme across the whole borough so that residents in every neighbourhood can benefit from living in a green environment. Tree planting is only part of the solution however as we need to maximise the opportunities for absorbing carbon. The more vegetation and natural areas we develop in Sandwell, the more we are helping to keep the borough cool, which is critical in protecting our residents as the climate warms and we experience longer and hotter heat waves.

A Tree Strategy is being developed which needs to have the protection of existing trees at its core along with the ambition of increasing the extent of tree cover in the borough. A clear Tree Strategy that makes clear the importance of the borough's trees will also support members in dealing with requests from residents to remove healthy trees.

We need to understand how close as a borough and as an organisation we may get to net zero and then assess the amount of tree planting required and compare that with the available land.

Who is responsible

Parks & Grounds Interim Service Manager

Timescale

The Tree Strategy will be produced in 2022, out of which will ultimately emerge a borough-wide plan for increasing tree cover in Sandwell, which can continue from 2023 through to 2041 and beyond.

Strategic Partnership

Sandwell MBC contributes around 1 - 1.5% of the borough's emissions, so whilst we are able to reduce these emissions, this still leaves 98% of the borough's emissions where our role is less influential.

In line with many other local authorities, we need to build a strong partnership of influential organisations from across different sectors within the borough, who together can initiative action which helps to drive down emissions.

A report has recently been commissioned which examines the approaches taken by several other local authorities, and which will report back on areas of success as well as making recommendations for how Sandwell MBC could create and sustain a partnership.

What we need to do

Once we have examined the report, we will make recommendations about how to proceed and how to resource the creation of a partnership.

Who is responsible

Regeneration & Growth Director / Climate Change Programme Team

Timescale

The partnership could be established by the end of 2023.

Resources

In the next few years, the Climate Change Programme is going to develop into a major work stream for the council. Clearly this is will have implications for our resources, and we will need to identify where there are gaps and consider the options available.

During 2022, we will identify the gaps we have in our climate change provision and then co-ordinate an evidence-based submission for addressing this in financial year 2023-2024.

We know from previous analysis of resources to support climate change, that there are capacity issues in:

- Transport Planning
- Highways
- Business Growth
- Corporate Energy
- Borough-wide energy
- Natural Capital
- Community engagement and communications – crucial for behavioural change

Financing Sandwell's Climate Change Activities

There are several finance options available to the council for funding climate activities. Green Finance is a growing area that we should consider and which opportunities to encourage external investment into Sandwell. Finance options include:

- HRA
- [Energie Sprong](#)
- Public Works Loan Board
- Community Municipal Bonds
- Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme
- Public Sector Demonstrator Fund
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement
- WMCA
- Private Investment, e.g. to fund heat networks and home retrofits.
- Parking Levy to raise funds for transport improvements.
- Congestion Charge to raise funds for transport improvements

Governance

A Programme Board

A new set of arrangements are proposed that will provide clear lines of responsibility and accountability for the role of climate change activities for both members and officers (see Appendix 1). These will ensure that we get an integrated approach to climate change, so that key figures are all aware of the importance and scope of their roles, as well as the impact on other areas, e.g. green infrastructure supports improving air quality, as well as mental/physical health and the borough's resilience to climate change. Equally, this will help to ensure the work of one department doesn't impact negatively upon the objectives of another, for example reducing the number of car journeys will reduce income streams from car parking charges.

There will be a director-led Programme Board, chaired by the Director for Regeneration and Growth, which will serve as the officer group to implement the Climate Change Strategy. Each Directorate will nominate a minimum of one Service Manager to attend and who will act as the accountable officer for a specific set of actions from the Climate Change Strategy. Service Managers will integrate these actions into their Business Plans, helping to ensure that addressing climate change becomes an integral part of council activities. They will also report into the Programme Board.

Programme Board will report quarterly into the Members Steering Group and annually to the Cabinet.

The Programme Board will be supported by the Climate Change Programme Team, whose role will involve providing technical advice, guidance, reporting and monitoring of activities in Service Areas. It will be accountable to the Members Steering Group and will provide it with performance and progress updates. Where financial decisions are needed, the Programme Board will additionally report to the Cabinet.

The Members Steering Group

The Members Steering Group will continue to be chaired by the portfolio holder for climate change and made up of cross-party representation, to ensure maximum political support for the climate change agenda (see Appendix 2). This will include the Cabinet Advisor for Clean and Green.

Conclusion

Tackling climate change in Sandwell will be both challenging, complex and take many years to deliver, with climate change affecting all areas of the borough and because our greenhouse gas emissions are continuing to rise annually when they actually need to be falling each year.

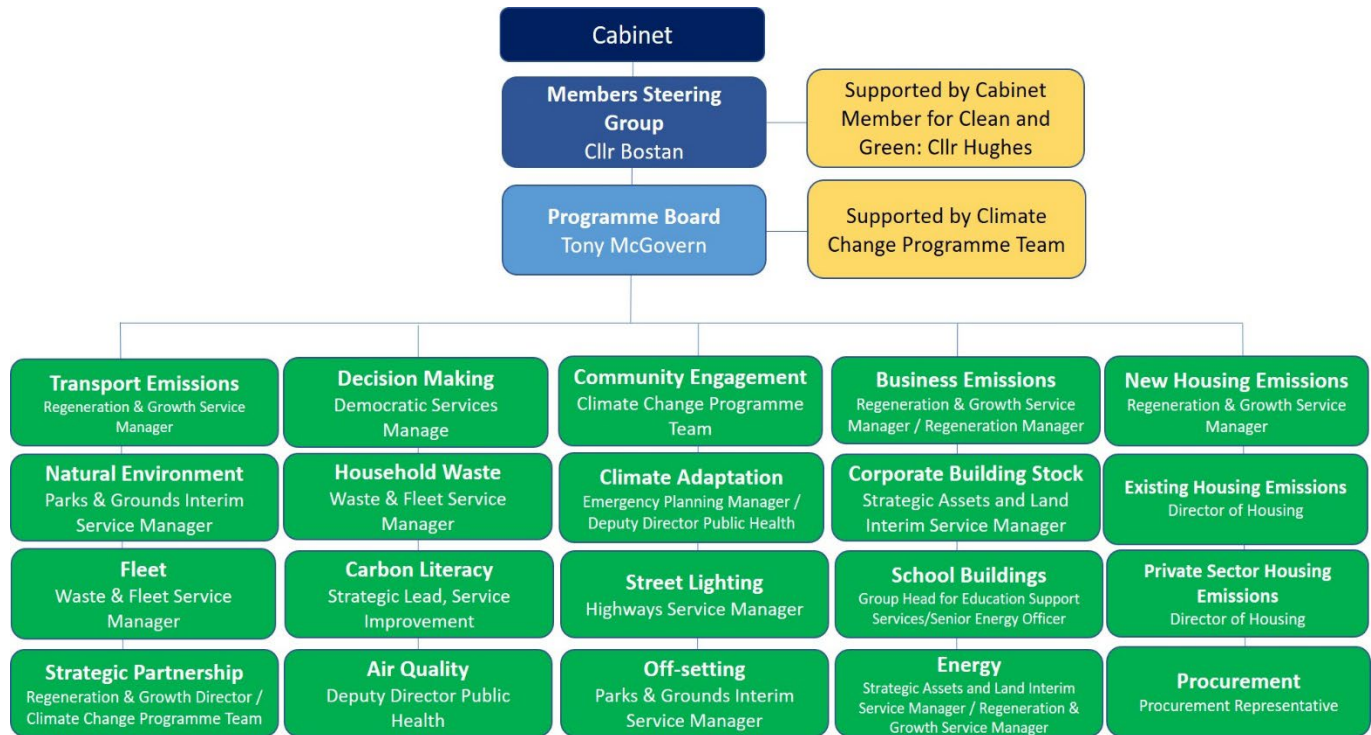
We will need to work closely with our residents, develop effective internal ways of working, build strong external partnerships and identify appropriate resources. Dealing with climate change will clearly impact upon council finances, and while we can expect more central

government support to become available, we will also need to examine and utilise a range of other sources of finance.

There are however, many co-benefits to the borough in tackling climate change which align with our own corporate objectives around poverty, opportunities, place, jobs, skills, investment and regeneration.

Appendix 1

Governance Arrangements



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Report to Cabinet

23 March 2022

Subject:	Contract for tyres and tyre related services
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Environment Councillor Ahmad Bostan
Director:	Director of Borough Economy Alice Davey
Key Decision:	Yes Above £250,000
Contact Officer:	Waste and Fleet Service Manager Gary Charlton Gary_Charlton@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given to access the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) Framework 001009 Tyres for Motor Vehicles, Plant and Related Services to conduct a further competition and put in place a call off contract for 4 years, starting 01/07/2022 and ending on 30/06/2026, at a cost of approximately £345,000 over the next 4 years funded from the annual transport budget of £1.2m.
- 1.2 That in connection with 1.1 above, the Director of Borough Economy be authorised to award contracts for the provision of Tyres and tyre related services.
- 1.3 Authorise the Director Law and Governance – Monitoring Officer to execute any documentation necessary to enable the course of action referred to in 1.1 above to proceed.
- 1.4 That any necessary exemptions be made to the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules to enable the course of action referred to in 1.1 above to proceed.





2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) will conduct a further competition on behalf of the Council, offering a quick route to market and reducing the amount of resources required when compared to conducting a full internal procurement exercise, whilst maintaining compliance with procurement regulations. This will allow resources to be deployed elsewhere as the council continues its recovery from COVID.
- 2.2 The Council will maintain the ability to fully customise the contract specification, requirements and length, to the same extent as if it were to conduct an internal procurement exercise. This will ensure the contract meets the needs of the Council for the full term of the call off contract.
- 2.3 A four-year call off contract will ensure costs are kept consistent for a good length of time and allow for accurate long-term cost projections of current and new vehicles, plant or machinery. Consistent prices allow for accurate fleet life costs.
- 2.4 The Council operates and maintains just in excess of 1,200 vehicles, plant and equipment. Of these items, 700 require tyres of various types or a tyre related service to remain compliant with legislation, operational and safe to use. These vehicles, equipment and plant require 24/7 callout coverage at locations across and outside of Sandwell borough, from the vast road network (motorways, 'A' roads and town roads) to depots and off-road locations such as Sandwell Valley, Forge Mill and various cemeteries.
- 2.5 When benchmarking the current contract expenditure to the three accessible frameworks (YPO, ESPO and CCS), the following annual savings were identified:
- ESPO - £4,225 (10%)
 - YPO - £12,820 (31%)
 - CCS - £13,038 (32%)

Although CCS has the highest savings, the framework only has 3 accessible suppliers when compared to the 7 of YPO, making the YPO framework a more competitive arena.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Strong resilient communities – Clean and Green This contract encompasses items of fleet that maintain Sandwell’s greenspaces and parks. Minimising the downtime of these items due to punctures and tyre repairs enables the sections to maintain Sandwell’s greenspaces and parks.</p> <p>Ensuring all tyres that are removed early in their service life due to punctures, cuts and damage are repaired (where possible) and returned into service, maximising their service life and reducing the number of tyres for disposal.</p>
	<p>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods – A home for Everyone This contract encompasses items of fleet that are used for housing repairs. Ensuring a consistent high-quality service will minimise downtime of these items, giving services areas and the Council the fleet, they require to deliver this objective to the residents of Sandwell.</p>

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The current contract with Direct Tyre Management was put in place following a further competition conducted by Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO). This contract has been very successful in delivering the services required and maximising value for money by ensuring tyres are used for their full-service life through methods of repair and re-use.
- 4.2 Contract monitoring will be undertaken by Fleet Services in consultation with the Corporate Procurement Services.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The Council could undertake an internal procurement exercise. This would require the allocation of resources from Procurement Services and will take additional time due to current workloads.



- 5.2 Fleet Services could undertake the replacement of tyres and tyre related services internally. This would require purchase of equipment and specialised vehicles, the procurement of a tyre supplier, the creation of new posts, recruitment for the new posts as well as training for current employees to undertake this duty.
- 5.3 The Council could make use of the direct award option available within the frameworks. This would not ensure best value for money is obtained and will not ensure a consistent level of service.

6 Implications

Resources:	The cost of the tyre and tyre related services is estimated at £86,250 per year over the next four years funded from the £1.2m Transport budget.
Legal and Governance:	The further competition through YPO will ensure the contract awarded will be in compliance with all current Public Contract Regulations, the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules.
Risk:	The corporate risk management strategy has been complied with to identify the risks associated with the recommendations being sought. No red risks have been identified. For the risks that have been identified, measures have been/ will be put in place to mitigate the risks to acceptable levels.

7 Appendices

None

8 Background Papers

None



Report to Cabinet

23 March 2022

Subject:	Vehicle & Grounds Maintenance Equipment, Spare Parts & Workshop Consumables
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Environment Councillor Ahmad Bostan
Director:	Director of Borough Economy, Alice Davey
Key Decision:	Yes Above £250,000
Contact Officer:	Waste and Fleet Service Manager Gary Charlton Gary_Charlton@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given to undertake a full internal procurement exercise and put in place a call off contract for Vehicle & Grounds Maintenance Equipment Spare Parts & Workshop Consumables.
- 1.2 That the Director of Borough Economy be authorised to award contracts for the provision of Vehicle & Grounds Maintenance Equipment Spare Parts & Workshop Consumables following a compliant tendering process and evaluation at a cost of approximately £4,080,000 over the next 4 years funded from the annual transport budget of £1.2m.
- 1.3 Authorise the Director Law and Governance – Monitoring Officer to execute any documentation necessary to enable the course of action referred to in 1.1 above to proceed.
- 1.4 That any necessary exemptions be made to the Procurement Procedure Rules to enable the course of action referred to in 1.1 and 1.2 above to proceed.









2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Procurement is required because the current contract for the supply of Vehicle & Grounds Maintenance Equipment Spare Parts & Workshop Consumables expires on the 03/07/2022.
- 2.2 The purchase of Vehicle & Grounds Maintenance Equipment Spare Parts & Workshop Consumables is essential in enabling Fleet Services to maintain and repair both internal and external fleet in line with contracts and service level agreements.
- 2.3 As a Fleet Operator, the Council has a statutory duty to ensure all of its vehicles and equipment are safe to use and do not pose a danger to the operator, service user or members of the public.
- 2.4 The Council must meet the maintenance requirement set out in its Operators Licence to operate an HGV fleet. Failure to adhere to these requirements can result in the Traffic Commissioner revoking the Operator's Licence, leaving the council unable to operate vehicles over 3.5t such as the Mobile library vehicle and highways maintenance vehicles.
- 2.5 As part of the Waste and Cleansing Service Contract, Fleet Services are the exclusive maintenance providers for Serco PLC, carrying out all maintenance and repairs to Serco's Sandwell fleet vehicles and equipment. At the time of this report, the annual income from this contract is £1,600,000.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people Vehicles supporting children's and young people's services are maintained by Fleet Services.
	People live well and age well Grounds maintenance vehicles and equipment is maintained by Fleet Services. These fleet items are key in maintaining the green spaces of Sandwell that are used for recreation and exercise.
	Strong resilient communities Vehicles supporting the Environmental Protection team are maintained by Fleet Services.
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods Vehicles supporting housing services and repairs are maintained by Fleet Services.
	A strong and inclusive economy The current contract includes companies within Sandwell and the local boroughs. The new proposed tender will aim to include local companies, giving them the opportunity to submit bids.
	A connected and accessible Sandwell Vehicles and equipment used to maintain the roads of Sandwell are maintained by Fleet Services.

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 Fleet Service repair and maintain 1200+ vehicles, equipment and plant, for Sandwell MBC and external organisations.
- 4.2 The current contract for the supply of Vehicle & Grounds Maintenance Equipment Spare Parts & Workshop Consumables expires on 03/07/2022.
- 4.3 This tendering exercise will aim to ensure a seamless change over from the current contract, minimising any disruptions to the supply of parts and consumables.
- 4.4 The tendering exercise will be carried out internally by Sandwell MBC as a stand-alone contract to be used by Fleet Services.



4.5 It is anticipated the total value of this contract over the 4-year period will be £4,080,000. This expenditure is based on the current fleet position and age.

4.6 The tender will be evaluated by 60% price, 30% quality and 10% social value, with the tender evaluation completed by Sandwell MBC.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 There are no recommended feasible alternatives. Without a contract in place, Fleet Services would have to treat each order as an individual tender and follow the relevant procurement rules dependant on order value.

6 Implications

Resources:	The Vehicle & Grounds Maintenance Equipment Spare Parts & Workshop Consumables procured through this contract will be delivered by the successful suppliers. No guarantee of expenditure is given to suppliers. It is anticipated the total value of this contract over the 4-year period will be £4,080,000 funded from the £1.2 transport budget.
Legal and Governance:	The contract will be awarded in accordance with the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015
Risk:	The corporate risk management strategy has been complied with to identify the risks associated with the recommendations being sought. No red risks have been identified. For the risks that have been identified, measures have been/ will be put in place to mitigate the risks to acceptable levels.
Equality:	There are no specific equality issues regarding the proposals contained in this report.
Health and Wellbeing:	Vehicles and equipment maintained and repaired by Fleet Services are used to provide key services, both within and external to the Council that contribute to



	the health and wellbeing of Sandwell residents. These include waste collection, street cleansing, grounds maintenance and transport.
Social Value	The Framework Agreement will adhere to the Councils social value policy by providing opportunities to meet the Councils key criteria requirements to by providing value for money in terms of generating benefits to society and the economy e.g. employment and skills, health and wellbeing, whilst minimising the impact to the environment.

7. Appendices

None

8. Background Papers

None



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Report to Cabinet

23 March 2022

Subject:	Purchase of Grounds Maintenance Plant and Machinery
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Environment Councillor Ahmad Bostan
Director:	Director of Borough Economy Alice Davey
Key Decision:	Yes Above £250,000
Contact Officer:	Gary Charlton Gary_Charlton@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations




- 1.1 That the Director of Borough Economy be authorised to award contracts to replace the council's grounds maintenance equipment at the end of its projected life expectancy at a cost of approximately £1.8m for the next 4 years.
- 1.2 That approval be given to access the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) Framework 274 and North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO) Framework Agreement to place 'call off' orders as and when required to purchase Grounds Maintenance Plant and Machinery with the call off contract from 01/10/2022 – 30/09/2026.
- 1.3 Authorise the Director Law and Governance – Monitoring Officer to execute any documentation necessary to enable the course of action referred to in 1.1 above to proceed.
- 1.4 That any necessary exemptions be made to the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules to enable the course of action referred to in 1.1 and 1.2 above to proceed.



2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Consultation has taken place with Procurement Services, Grounds, Fleet services and Bereavement services sections to determine the new course of action. Following a re-appraisal of all options it has been decided that the recommendations outlined will represent the best option for the Council.
- 2.2 Following the analysis of the pricing provided within the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) and North Eastern Purchasing Organisation (NEPO) Frameworks, and consultation with Client officers within Fleet Management, it is recommended that the ESPO and NEPO frameworks offer the most expedient, compliant and value for money procurement route for the Council rather than carrying out its own tendering process.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people Grounds maintenance equipment is used to maintain the parks and open spaces in Sandwell, this allows children and young people a place for recreation and to socialise.
	People live well and age well Grounds maintenance vehicles and equipment is maintained by Fleet Services. These fleet items are key in maintaining the green spaces of Sandwell that are used for recreation and exercise.
	Strong resilient communities Grounds maintenance equipment is used for various events in Sandwell that allow communities to build relationships. Sandwell Valley is a perfect example of this, a place that facilitates community events and shows.
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods Grounds maintenance equipment is used in a number of the councils housing stock and also, used to maintain the grounds of the high-rise accommodation buildings.
	A strong and inclusive economy The proposed contract includes local companies, giving them the opportunity to supply goods and services.





A connected and accessible Sandwell
By maintaining the parks, grounds and open spaces in Sandwell it creates better access to the borough.

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Background and main considerations

4.2 The council currently purchases a variety of equipment through ESPO 274_18 and the NEPO 214 frameworks, as not all equipment is available from one source.

4.3 These frameworks offer the Council a quick, simple and competitive route to purchase grounds maintenance plant and machinery including lawn mowers, ride on mowers, trailers, trailed mowers, mower collectors, hedge cutters, strimmer's, pole saws, blowers and chippers. The options are based on a direct award or on specialist equipment the framework would create a mini competition on behalf of the council thus saving council resources.

4.4 The council currently operates a grounds maintenance equipment replacement program which is the most efficient and cost-effective way of maintaining a fleet, each individual item procured is given a replacement/disposal date. This is fashioned on several factors which include cost of the item, useful life of the item and maintenance costs. Each item/asset that is procured is assigned a birth file, maintenance file and asset/fleet number. This is recorded electronically on the council's fleet database and paper files are created. When the predetermined life of the asset is due to expire a consultation period begins between the section that own the asset along with Fleet Services, it is then decided if the business still requires the asset or the nature of the business has changed and the asset is either no longer appropriate or required. If the asset is still required by the section then Fleet Services will order a replacement and dispose of the old asset through auction, depending on who owns the budget of the asset will depend on where the proceeds of the auction will populate.



- 4.5 The council's total expenditure is estimated at £574,004 for 2022/2023, 2023/2024 £493,370, 2024/2025 £452,385 and 2025/2026 £244,306. The expenditure will be funded on the following basis; assets procured under £10,000 will be funded from the fleet revenue budget, assets procured £10,000 and over will be funded from prudentially borrowing. The prudential borrowing is then settled over the term of the predetermined asset life from the Capital borrowing budget.
- 4.6 Following market research and consultation with Fleet services, Grounds Maintenance, Bereavement services and Procurement Services it was decided that the ESPO and NEPO frameworks still offer the most expedient, compliant and value for money procurement route for the Council rather than undertaking its own tendering process.
- 4.7 The call off contract will provide the Council with access to national framework agreements on a direct call off basis of direct award and/or mini competition, depending upon the requirement.
- 4.8 The period of the call off contract will be 48 months from the date this report has been approved.
- 4.9 Orders placed under the call off contract will be in accordance with the following principle; when the Council has a requirement for Grounds Maintenance plant or machinery it will select the contractor who is ranked number one in either framework for the item required. If this contractor is unable to supply the council due to lack of availability at the time in question, the Council will use the contractor who is ranked number two and so on.
- 4.10 Contract monitoring shall be undertaken by Fleet services, Grounds and Bereavement services in consultation with the Corporate Procurement service.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 An alternative option is for the council to conduct a full tendering process. The research that has been undertaken indicates that as this is a very limited market, it is highly unlikely a full OJEU procurement process would produce a result that is different to what is available under the ESPO and NEPO frameworks.



- 5.2 For the council to outsource the grounds maintenance operation and therefore disbanding the need to procure new equipment.

6 Implications

Resources:	The total expenditure of this contract is estimated at just under £1.8m over the four-year period.
Legal and Governance:	The contract will be awarded in accordance with the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015
Risk:	The corporate risk management strategy has been complied with to identify the risks associated with the recommendations being sought. No red risks have been identified. For the risks that have been identified, measures have been/ will be put in place to mitigate the risks to acceptable levels.
Equality:	There are no specific equality issues regarding the proposals contained in this report.
Health and Wellbeing:	Grounds maintenance equipment provides key services for the residents of Sandwell Council that contribute to the health and wellbeing of Sandwell residents. These include street cleansing, grounds maintenance and estate maintenance.
Social Value	The Framework Agreement will adhere to the Council's social value policy by providing opportunities to meet the Council's key criteria requirements by providing value for money in terms of generating benefits to society and the economy e.g. employment and skills, health and wellbeing, whilst minimising the impact to the environment.

7. Appendices

None

8. Background Papers

None



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Report to Cabinet

23 March 2022

Subject:	Revenues and Benefits Operating Model
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Maria Crompton Cabinet Member Finance and Resources
Director:	Simone Hines Director of Finance Neil Cox Director for Business Strategy and Change
Key Decision:	No
Contact Officer:	Ian Dunn Revenues and Benefits Service Manager

1 Recommendations

That Cabinet approve:

- 1.1 The Revenues and Benefits Operating Model as set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The face to face Cashiers service at Kings Square, West Bromwich, and Smethwick Council House not be reopened.
- 1.3 The Revenues and Benefits customer service at Kings Square, West Bromwich not be reopened.
- 1.4 Subject to the above, the Kings Square office in West Bromwich be closed.



2 Background and Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The majority of service requests dealt with by the Revenues and Benefits Service are now available online through MySandwell enabling customers to self-serve rather than use the costly face-to-face and telephone methods of contact.
- 2.2 The introduction of payment kiosks at Oldbury and Smethwick has further increased the number of self-serve transactions.
- 2.3 The availability of online services has significantly reduced face-to-face contact and in November 2019 the Cabinet Member for Finance, Council Sustainability and Transformation approved a reduction in opening hours at Kings Square, West Bromwich and Smethwick Council House to part-time hours.
- 2.4 In August 2021 Cabinet were briefed on the potential to close services as detailed in 1.1 to 1.3 and at that time Cabinet did not want to make any changes to the cashiers and Revenues and Benefits service provision but agreed to reconsider this in 3 months.

Cashiers service:

- 3.1 Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 no cashier or Revenues and Benefits services have been provided at Kings Square West Bromwich or Smethwick Council House.
- 3.2 Since the reopening of Oldbury Council House in June 2021 and moving to full-time opening in September 2021 the number of customers visiting Cashiers has dropped significantly compared to pre-pandemic numbers. The table below details the total number of transactions over a 6-month period for 2019 and 2021:

	June	July	August	Sept	October	Nov	Dec	Total
2019	3997	4581	4168	4242	4152	3808	2941	28,277
2021	337	322	458	523	556	620	362	3,178



- 3.3 This evidences that there has been a reduction of 25,099 transactions in the same period in 2021 compared to 2019. This equates to an 80% reduction in the number of transactions
- 3.4 In addition, the 2 payment kiosks (card and cash) located in Oldbury Council House which have been available for customers to use from 15th December 2021, took 145 transactions amounting to over £22,000. Two further card-only kiosks located outside Oldbury Council House will also be operational soon. Over 80% of the payments taken manually by a cashier could be paid at a kiosk. We therefore anticipate that the need for a customer to see a cashier will reduce further.
- 3.5 Since the introduction of the payment kiosks in December 2021, approximately 33% of transactions taken by a cashier were repeat customers paying by cheque. The kiosks can accept cheque payments and we are aiming to introduce this new functionality in the future along with the ability to accept miscellaneous payments.
- 3.6 There are 13 different payment methods available to customer and these are:
- Cash
 - Cheque/postal order
 - Debit Card
 - Credit card
 - Bank Giro
 - Online
 - Telephone payment
 - Automated telephone
 - Paypoint
 - Post Office
 - Kiosks
 - Direct Debit
 - Standing Order
- 3.7 Long periods of office closures during the pandemic has resulted in the majority of customers moving to cashless/digital/self-serve payment



methods and therefore the need to provide a face-to-face cashier service has diminished. Analysis of the value of transactions by payment method for 6 month periods from before and during the pandemic confirms this and is shown in the table below.

Payment method	1.10.19 to 31.3.20	1.10.20 to 31.3.21	Difference
Cash	£7,803,082	£333,955	£7,469,127 decrease
Post office	£2,757,376	£5,104,629	£2,347,253 increase
Debit card	£21,849,319	£24,617,061	£2,767,742 increase
PayPal	£2,146,717	£2,853,841	£707,124 increase

Revenues and Benefits service

- 4.1 Prior to March 2020, the Revenues and Benefits Service provided face-to-face and telephone customer services at 3 sites:
- Kings Square, West Bromwich (face-to-face)
 - Oldbury Council House (face-to-face)
 - Contact centre – based at Oldbury Council House
- 4.2 Officers in the customer services team had to be split over the 3 sites, and even though footfall was low at Kings Square, for security reasons at least 2 customer advisors and a supervisor had to be located there. Operating from several sites took valuable resource away from our contact centre where the daily average abandonment rate was over 25%. This indicated that customers were trying to telephone us to get the help they needed.
- 4.3 Since March 2020 the service has solely operated from the contact centre and all of the staff are based on the telephones, with customers still having the option to have a face-to-face appointment at Oldbury or a virtual meeting via Microsoft (MS) Teams. Customers can also email the team with their enquiry.
- 4.4 Since August 2021, customer services have had 38 appointments, and these have been carried out over the telephone or via MS Teams. In



many cases doing the appointments virtually is more beneficial to the customer, as when documentation/information is required they have this at hand and therefore additional/follow-up contact is not necessary.

4.5 The new operating model has led to a significant reduction in the telephone abandonment rate which is now consistently below 3% and we are now receiving fewer complaints about wait times from customers and councillors. This indicates that we are providing an improved service to our customers.




4.6 The Kings Square building is solely used by Revenues and Benefits Service and Cashiers and is also being considered under the development of the indoor market in West Bromwich.

4.7 If the recommendations in the report are approved the operating model for Revenues and Benefits from April 2022 will be as follows:

- A face to face Customer Service facility at Oldbury Council House by appointment, Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm.
- A daily Customer Advisor presence at Oldbury Council House to manage these appointments and any walk-in demand, subject to availability
- The availability of appointments to be carried out over the telephone or by Microsoft Teams
- A Customer Service Contact Centre to deal with a wide range of enquiries over the telephone or by email
- A daily Cashiers Service at Oldbury Council House supported by self-service payment kiosks at the Council House, Smethwick and Blackheath
- Provision to make payments at our partner facilities, such as the Post Office or Paypoint or over the telephone
- A comprehensive range of online facilities via My Sandwell.



5 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>People live well and age well – Revenues and Benefits provides a number of services which support low income/vulnerable households. It also provides the main source of income for the council through collection of Council Tax and Business Rates. This income is used to deliver key council services.</p>
	<p>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods– Administration of Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction and Discretionary Housing Payments provides crucial financial support to our lowest income households and prevents homelessness.</p>
	<p>A strong and inclusive economy – ensuring businesses get the business rates reliefs they are entitled to supports this priority.</p>

6 Alternative Options

- 6.1 To continue to provide a face-to-face Revenues and Benefits customer service at Kings Square West Bromwich and continue to provide a face-to-face Cashiers service at Kings Square, West Bromwich, and Smethwick Council House.
- 6.2 These were considered however based upon the reduction in demand at Oldbury Council House for cashiers since this reopened in June 2021, and the change in how residents are now accessing Revenues and Benefits' services indicates that there isn't a need or demand from residents to reopen these offices, nor would it be cost-effective to do so as we would have to recruit additional staff.

7 Implications

<p>Resources:</p>	<p>Not reopening these offices will achieve savings of £139,200 in a full year by reducing staffing levels in cashiers. This can be achieved by deleting vacancies therefore no staff would be at risk. Revenues and Benefits customer services staffing levels would not be affected.</p>
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Legal and Governance:	No implications
Risk:	No implications
Equality:	No implications
Health and Wellbeing:	No implications
Social Value	No Implications

7.1 The current structure and vacancies in cashiers are as follows:

Role/Grade	Number of staff	Vacancies
Team manager grade H	1	0
Supervisor grade F	1	0
Technical officers E	2	0
Cashiers D	7 FTE's	2.4 FTE's

7.2 The new cashier's structure would be:

Role/Grade	Number of staff
Supervisor grade F	1
Technical officers E	2
Cashiers D	3.6 FTE's

7.3 The reduction in Cashiers at Band D from 7 to 3.6 would be found by deleting the 2.4 FTE vacancies and the additional cashier Band D 1 FTE could be found from the staff who have put in an expression of interest to leave the council. This will save £79,200 p.a. The Team manager grade H has also put in for planned leavers and due to the size of the cashiers team reducing there is an opportunity to delete this position and move cashiers under another service/Team manager. This would save an additional £60k.

7.4 The on-going work to reduce cash payments across the council will provide further opportunities to look at the cashier's structure which may lead to further budget savings moving forward.



7.5 The changes above will deliver the savings target included in the budget for 2022/23 in relation to the new operating model in Revenues and Benefits.

8 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Proposed Revenues and Benefits Operating Model

9 Background Papers

Not applicable



Proposed Revenues and Benefits Operating Model

If the report recommendations are approved the operating model for Revenues and Benefits from April 2022 will be as follows:

- A face to face Customer Service facility at Oldbury Council House by appointment, Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm.
- A daily Customer Advisor presence at Oldbury Council House to manage these appointments and any walk-in demand, subject to availability
- The availability of appointments to be carried out over the telephone or by Microsoft Teams
- A Customer Service Contact Centre to deal with a wide range of enquiries over the telephone or by email
- A daily Cashiers Service at Oldbury Council House supported by self-service payment kiosks at the Council House, Smethwick and Blackheath
- Provision to make payments at our partner facilities, such as the Post Office or Paypoint or over the telephone
- A comprehensive range of online facilities via My Sandwell.

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Report to Cabinet

23 March 2022

Subject:	Revenues and Benefits Policy Framework 2022/23
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Maria Crompton - Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources
Director:	Simone Hines – Director of Finance
Key Decision:	Yes To approve Revenues and Benefits Policy Framework 2022/23
Contact Officer:	Ian Dunn ian_dunn@sandwell.gov.uk Carl Jones carl_jones@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval is given to the Revenues and Benefits policy framework for 2022-2023 as set out in the Appendices 1 to 9.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 To make recommendations for the Revenues and Benefits policy framework for 2022-23.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?



A Strong and Inclusive Economy

The policies cover a wide range of functions carried out by the Revenues and Benefits Service. These policies in particular aim to support our most vulnerable residents and local businesses.

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 The existing Revenues and Benefits Policy Framework includes:

- Corporate Debt Recovery Policy
- Council Tax Award of Discount Policy
- Council Tax Discretionary Reduction Policy
- Flood Relief Policy
- Discretionary Housing Payments Policy
- Local Welfare Provision Policy
- Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery Policy
- Non-Domestic Rate Hardship Relief Policy
- Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy
- The Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Policy

4.2 The Corporate Debt Recovery Policy has been amended to include information about vulnerable customers and how we may provide additional support. The policy also confirms the Council is working towards a single view of debt.

4.3 The Council Tax Award of Discount Policy has not been amended but it should be noted that from 1st April 2021 onwards, a 300% 'premium' has been applied for homes empty for over 10 years, generating a Council Tax charge of 400%.

4.4 The Council Tax Discretionary Reduction Policy was amended in 2020/21 for care leavers, and the policy continues to provide 100% relief to all care leavers aged 18-25. The policy has been amended to remove reference to requests for reduction for empty homes as there is no legislation for this. The Council Tax Discretionary Reduction Policy has been renamed as it was previously known as the Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy.



- 4.5 The Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery Policy has been amended to reflect the new recovery rates in accordance with the amounts stated by the Department for Work and Pensions for 2022/23.
- 4.6 The Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Policy resolution was made by Full Council in January 2022 and is therefore not included in this report.
- 4.7 There has been a change to Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy to include reference to additional reliefs including the Nursery discount, Covid additional relief fund, Local newspaper relief and Expanded retail relief. State Aid has been updated to include reference to new subsidy rules.
- 4.8 The Non-Domestic Rates Hardship Relief Policy has been amended to refer to the new subsidy rules.
- 4.9 There have been no changes to any of the other policy intentions except for some cosmetic changes.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The council is required to set out its application of areas of the legislation which allow local application of rules. The policy framework achieves this.

6 Implications

Resources:	<p>There is a direct cost to the local Council Taxpayers for any Discretionary Rate Relief granted. The Council cannot refuse any applications, which comply with its Discretionary Rate Relief policy, on the grounds of unavailable resources.</p> <p>There is a direct cost to the local Council Taxpayers of any relief granted under the provisions of Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.</p> <p>The cost of any relief granted under Section 13A (Council Tax Discretionary Reduction Policy) is borne by the local Council Taxpayers.</p>
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	<p>The cost of Discretionary Housing Payments in excess of the Government Contribution is borne by the local Council Taxpayers, unless we are able to claim part of this from the Housing Revenue Account.</p> <p>The Council Tax Award of Discounts Policy generates additional income for the council through Council Tax collection.</p>
Legal and Governance:	<p>The policy on Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 Hardship Relief complies with appropriate legislation relating to the Council's powers with regard to awarding relief. The Council cannot refuse any applications which comply with its policy, on the grounds of unavailable resources.</p> <p>The policy on Discretionary Rate Relief, complies with appropriate legislation relating to the Council's powers with regard to awarding Discretionary Rate Relief to businesses. The Council cannot refuse any applications for Discretionary Rate Relief, which comply with its policy, on the grounds of unavailable resources.</p> <p>The policy on Discretionary Housing Payments complies with appropriate legislation.</p> <p>The Section 13A Council Tax Discretionary Reduction Policy complies with appropriate legislation. The Council cannot refuse any applications for relief, which comply with its policy, on the grounds of unavailable resources.</p> <p>The Council Tax Award of Discount Policy complies with appropriate legislation to allow the Council to set locally prescribed levels of discounts for empty domestic properties.</p>
Risk:	<p>Risk assessments, where required, have been previously undertaken.</p> <p>As these policies have been in place for several years no significant risks have been identified or have occurred.</p>
Equality:	<p>Equality impact assessments (EIA) have previously been completed on all of the policies.</p>
Health and Wellbeing:	<p>A number of the policies provide additional financial support to some of our most vulnerable residents.</p>



Social Value	Sandwell's Revenues and Benefits Policy Framework is operating well and providing crucial support to vulnerable, low income households.
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7. Appendices

- Appendix 1 Corporate Debt Recovery Policy
- Appendix 2 Council Tax Award of Discount Policy
- Appendix 3 Council Tax Discretionary Reduction Policy
- Appendix 4 Flood Relief Policy
- Appendix 5 Discretionary Housing Payments Policy
- Appendix 6 Local Welfare Provision Policy
- Appendix 7 Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery Policy
- Appendix 8 Non-Domestic Rate Hardship Relief Policy
- Appendix 9 Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy

8. Background Papers

None



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Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Corporate Debt Recovery Policy

2022/23



Meeting Ambition 10

Ambition 10



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.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document details the Council's policies on the billing, collection and recovery of monies due to the Council. Sums due to the Council can be a mixture of statutory and non-statutory charges. The methods for billing and recovery of the statutory debts are tightly prescribed by statute.
- 1.2 This Policy sets out the general principles to be applied in relation to debt management across all services provided by the Council.
- 1.3 The management of income is a key business area for the Council. The Council collects income from many streams; some of this activity is governed by legislation while others by sound principles of financial management. The key to economic, efficient and effective income management is the creation and maintenance of a clear framework that sets out the approach, principles and strategy within which all activities will be conducted.
- 1.4 This policy applies to the collection of:
 - Rent
 - Council Tax
 - Non-Domestic Rates (Business Rates / NNDR)
 - Sundry Debt (Council Services)
 - Overpaid salaries and wages

1.5 This policy intends to:

- Recover all money outstanding in respect of debts owed to the Council.
- Protect the Council’s finances for the good of all residents within the Sandwell area.
- Ensure that enforcement action is taken to recover debts.
- Facilitate a coordinated approach to managing multiple debts owed to the Council.
- Ensure that the Council engages with debtors when enforcing debts in order to take the appropriate action taking into account the individual circumstances of the debtor.
- Identify, where appropriate, support which may be required to those owing money to the Council;
- Giving specific considerations to vulnerable customers where appropriate.
- Apply best practice to debt collection.
- Minimise the risk of bad debts.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPALS

- 2.1 All directorates will work together to ensure the most appropriate arrangement for recovery of debts is achieved. In cases of multiple debts, a lead officer may be appointed. The lead officer will be responsible for liaising with relevant service areas. To assist Sandwell Council is working towards a Single View of debt across all recovery areas.
- 2.2 In all cases the Council will work with the debtor taking account of their individual circumstances in order to arrive at an arrangement that is reasonable to both themselves and the Council.
- 2.3 A flexible approach will be adopted to ensure regular payments. This reduces the risk of further action and unnecessary additional costs becoming payable, it also maintains collection.
- 2.4 Where necessary when working with debtors the Council will provide additional support with the aim of maximising their income by: -

- Providing welfare advice to ensure the debtor is receiving any benefits, reductions and discounts they are entitled to.
- Promoting and referring debtors to agencies who can offer personal budgeting support / debt advice/ affordable credit.

3. PRINCIPLES OF RECOVERY ACTION

3.1 The Council will ensure that: -

- All legislative requirements and relevant Council policies will be complied with.
- All debts are demanded accurately from the debtor including where appropriate all statutory notifications.
- Where appropriate any benefits, reductions, discounts or reliefs are deducted from the amounts outstanding and that the amount required from the person is reduced as far as possible.
- Payment, methods, terms and amounts are clearly defined.
- Accurate records are maintained. This will include in the case of Council Tax:
 - Imposing penalties (in line with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992 where.
 - Information has been requested from the customer and it has not been provided within 21 days
 - The customer receives a discount or exemption to which they are no longer entitled and where they fail to inform the authority within 21 days
 - Imposing penalties (in Line with the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Detection of Fraud and Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2013 in respect of Council Tax Reduction where.
 - The customer fails to inform the authority of a change in circumstances affecting the reduction within 21 days: or
 - The customer provides false or misleading information which results in an increase payment of Council Tax Reduction
- In the event of default in payment take prompt action which helps identify payers in financial difficulty.

- Listen sympathetically to customers who prove genuine financial hardship and agree alternative payment terms.
- Referring any person identified as requiring assistance to non-fee-paying registered debt advise providers.
- Agree affordable repayment arrangements and maximise entitlement to benefit, reductions and discounts; and
- Provide advice and information to customers at every stage of the recovery process.

3.2 In all cases consideration will be given to the value of the outstanding debt and the cost of recovering that debt and where the Council believes it is uneconomical to pursue recovery the debt may be recommended for write off.

4. PRINCIPALS OF ENFORCEMENT ACTION

- 4.1 Where a debt remains outstanding for a service provision and there is no statutory obligation to provide the service, consideration will be given to terminate the service until such time that the debt is bought up to date.
- 4.2 Costs incurred are the responsibility of the customer, the aim of the policy is to minimise such costs wherever possible.
- 4.3 Payment orders made by a Court will take priority over any informal payment arrangement
- 4.4 We will utilise all methods of recovery available.
- 4.5 Enforcement agents and debt collection agencies instructed by the Council will be required to work within agreed guidelines, legislation and Codes of Practice always.

5. POLICY REVIEW

- 5.1 The policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if appropriate, to take account of operational adjustments, feedback and or changes to legislation.

5. EQUALITIES

- 5.1 This policy has been produced in line with the Council's obligation to the Public Sector Equality Duty provided by the Equality Act 2010. No adverse impact on any protected characteristic has been identified as a result of this policy.

6. VULNERABLE CUSTOMERS

- 6.1 We understand that there are members of our community that may be considered vulnerable, therefore require additional support. Being vulnerable does not mean that you will not have to pay anything that you are legally obliged to pay.

Where we identify someone as being vulnerable, consideration should be given to:

- Longer period to pay
- Holding off enforcement action for an agreed period
- Assisting with the taxpayer to claim the right benefits, reductions, discounts or any other entitlement
- Referring a taxpayer to our Welfare Rights team if appropriate and sources of independent advice services
- Agreed temporary payment arrangement with lower repayments with a review date

We are aware that a taxpayer's vulnerability status may be temporary or permanent in nature but will vary widely. In order to aide us in identifying a vulnerable person we have a list below, identifying some characteristics of a vulnerable person. However, each case must be taken on its own merit:

- Disabled Person
- People experiencing serious illness, including mental illness
- People aged under 18
- Elderly people
- People in late stages of pregnancy



Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

**Revenues and Benefits Service
Council Tax Award of Discount
Policy**

2022/23



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The level of Council Tax discounts	
Empty but furnished property	4
Empty & unfurnished property	4
Uninhabitable property	4
Long term empty property - 'Empty Homes Premium'	5
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Local Government Finance Act 1992 provides Local Authorities with the necessary powers to reduce Council Tax by awarding discounts where specific prescribed circumstances prevail.

Each Local Authority has the right to set the level of empty property discounts to be levied on Council Tax accounts in their area.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPALS/REGULATIONS

- 2.1 Section 11(A) of the Local Government Act 1992, introduced by Section 75(1) of the Local Government Act 2003 gives Local Authorities the flexibility to determine what, if any, discounts should be applied to empty properties.

- 2.2 Section 11B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, introduced by Section 12 of the Local Government Finance Act 2012, allowed for Local Authorities to charge an amount for Council Tax where properties have remained empty and unfurnished for a period of 2 years or more.

The charges were further amended by the Rating (Properties in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018. This is known as an 'Empty Homes Premium' and the charges are shown in Section 3 below.

3. PROCESS FOR SERVICES / PROVIDERS

- 3.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline the level of discount that Sandwell has resolved to apply under the regulations highlighted in Section 2 above.
- 3.2 Discounts will be applied based on information received, Council Tax accounts will be updated, and revised bills issued accordingly.

3.4 The level of Council Tax discounts

Empty but furnished property

Properties which are unoccupied but furnished:

No discount is applied which means empty furnished property has a full 100% Council Tax charge levied.

100% council tax is payable from the date a property becomes empty but furnished, regardless of any change in ownership.

This 0% discount is known as a 'Prescribed Class B' (or 'PCLB') discount

Empty & unfurnished property

Properties which are unoccupied and unfurnished:

No discount is applied which means empty & unfurnished property has a full 100% Council Tax charge levied.

100% council tax is payable from the date a property becomes empty and unfurnished, regardless of any change in ownership.

This 0% discount is known as a 'Prescribed Class C' (or 'PCLC') discount

After two years, additional premiums for long-term empty homes will apply. (See below)

Uninhabitable property

Properties which are uninhabitable:

No discount is applied which means uninhabitable property has a full 100% Council Tax charge levied.

100% council tax is payable from the date a property becomes empty and uninhabitable, regardless of any change in ownership.

This 0% discount is known as a 'Prescribed Class D' (or 'PCLD') discount

The maximum length of this discount is one year, after which, if it is empty and unfurnished, it will change to a 0% Prescribed Class C discount (100% charge)

After two years, additional premiums for long-term empty homes will apply. (See below)

Long term empty property - 'Empty Homes Premium'

Prior to 1st April 2019, properties which had been empty and unfurnished for two years or more were charged an additional 50% 'empty premium' which generated a Council Tax charge of 150%

- From 1st April 2019 onwards, a 100% 'premium' applies to homes empty over 2 years, generating a Council Tax charge of 200%.
- From 1st April 2020 onwards, a 200% 'premium' applies to homes empty for over 5 years, generating a Council Tax charge of 300%.
- From 1st April 2021 onwards, a 300% 'premium' applies to homes empty for over 10 years, generating a Council Tax charge of 400%.

The appropriate premium shall apply in all cases 2, 5 or 10 years from the date the premises first became empty.

There shall be no exceptions to the implementation of any premium.

3.5 Appeals

Liable parties can appeal under S16 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992) if they disagree with either:

- the decision to treat a property as empty and hence apply empty property charges on a particular account based upon facts of that *individual case*; and/or
- the levy of an Empty Homes Premium on a particular account based upon facts of that *individual case*

In the case of an individual appeal under S16 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, appeals should initially be made in writing to

Sandwell MBC. If still aggrieved, appeals may be made to the Valuation Tribunal Service.

However the principle itself of applying 0% discount on empty property and/or the levy of Empty Homes Premium charges in Sandwell is *not* open to general appeal as it is the resolution of the Council and as such can only be appealed via Judicial Review

4. POLICY REVIEW

- 4.1 This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

5. EQUALITIES

- 5.1 This policy has been produced in line with the Council's obligation to the Public Sector Equality Duty provided by the Equality Act 2010. No adverse impact on any protected characteristic has been identified as a result of this policy.



Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Revenues and Benefits Service
Council Tax Discretionary Reduction Policy
(Under S13a 1C of the Local Government
Finance Act 1992)

2022/23



Meeting Ambition 10



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Section 13a 1C of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 allows the Council to reduce the amount of Council Tax payable.
- 1.2 Legislation does not dictate the circumstances in which reductions apply and therefore the Council must use discretion in deciding whether or not to use these powers.
- 1.3 The Council is required to pay for any awards applied under this legislation out of its own funds and therefore awards must meet the underlying principal of offering value for money to tax payers.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPALS / REGULATIONS

- 2.1 Section 13a (1c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by section 76 of the Local Government Act 2003) gives power to a Billing Authority (the Council) as below:
 - Where a person is liable to pay Council Tax in respect of any chargeable dwelling for any day, the Billing Authority for the area in which the dwelling is situated may reduce the amount which he is liable to pay as respects the dwelling and the day to such extent as it thinks fit.
 - The power under subsection (1) above includes power to reduce an amount to nil.
 - The power under subsection (1) may be exercised in relation to particular cases or by determining a class of case in which liability is to be reduced to an extent provided by the determination.

3. PROCESS FOR SERVICES

3.1 Policy overview

The purpose of this policy is to outline the conditions that should be satisfied in order for Sandwell MBC to consider a reduction under section 13A (1c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

The policy is intended to enable the Council to provide a reduction to those people in need of help due to severe financial hardship and those most vulnerable residents.

Each case will be treated strictly on its own merits in accordance with the criteria and process laid down by the Council.

The features of the Sandwell's Section 13A (1c) policy are that:

- It is a discretionary reduction - There is no statutory right for any council taxpayer to receive a discretionary reduction.
- The operation of the reduction is for the Council to determine
- The Council may choose to vary the way in which funds are allocated according to community needs
- If the applicant is dissatisfied with any decision taken on a claim that they have made they can ask for a review/make an appeal in line with Section 3.4 of this Policy

Where the scheme relates to a Government Scheme, as referenced but not limited by Section 3.2, the features of the scheme will be as defined by Government or, where local discretion is allowed, as defined by the Council for that specific instance.

Requests for Council Tax Discretionary reduction in liability should be made by contacting the Council to discuss your circumstances. We will issue a 'Section 13A' application form where appropriate, which should then be completed and submitted to the Revenue and Benefits Service.

Criteria for using powers

Each application shall include the following information:

- The amount of reduction being requested
- The reason for the request (i.e. why is the reduction needed)
- The period of time the reduction is required (e.g. the full financial year, part of a financial year or some of that period of time)

- The steps that have been taken to meet or mitigate the Council tax liability (i.e. any other discounts or reductions awarded)

3.2 Circumstances where reduction will be considered

Exceptional Financial Hardship

In accordance with Schedule 1a of the Local Government Finance Act, the Council has a Council Tax Reduction Scheme which provides support, through a discount, to those deemed to be in need of financial help. The Scheme has been designed to take into account the financial and specific circumstances of individuals through the use of applicable amounts, premiums and income disregards.

Applications will be accepted under this part of the policy from people who have qualified for support under the Council Tax Reduction Scheme but who are still experiencing severe financial hardship. Other taxpayers may also apply; however the Council would normally expect the taxpayer to apply for Council Tax Reduction in any case where there is potential entitlement.

As part of the process of applying for additional support, the taxpayer must supply evidence to substantiate their application including but not limited to:

- Making a separate application for assistance.
- Providing full details of their income and expenditure.
- Being able to satisfy the Council that they are not able to pay their Council Tax either in part or full.
- Accepting assistance from either the Council or third parties such as the Citizen Advice (CA) or similar organisations to enable them to manage their finances more effectively including the termination of nonessential expenditure;
- Identifying potential changes in payment methods and arrangements to assist the applicant.
- Assisting the Council to minimise liability by ensuring that all discounts, exemptions and reductions are properly granted.
- Being able to demonstrate that all reasonable steps have been taken to meet their full Council Tax liability including applications for employment or additional employment, alternative lines of credit.

- Having no access to assets that could be realised and used to pay their Council Tax.
- Maximising their income through the application for other welfare benefits, cancellation of non-essential contracts and outgoings and identifying the most economical tariffs for the supply of utilities and services generally.

The Council will be responsible for assessing applications against this policy and an officer will consider the following factors in the decision-making process:

- Current household composition and specific circumstances including disability and/or caring responsibilities.
- Current financial circumstances.
- Determine what action(s) the applicant has taken or needs to take to alleviate the situation.
- Consider alternative means of support that may be available to the applicant by:
 - Re-profiling council tax debts and/or other debts.
 - Applying for a Discretionary Housing Payment for Housing Benefit (where applicable);
 - Maximising other benefits.
 - Reducing Council Tax debt by way of any applicable reductions
 - Council Tax Support (CTR)
 - Council Tax statutory exemptions
 - Council Tax discounts
 - Council Tax reductions for disabilities
 - Determining whether in the opinion of the decision maker the spending priorities of the applicant should be re-arranged.
- Requests can be made at any time, however the reduction will generally be awarded from the date the council identifies that the conditions for the discount are met or from the 1st April 2021 whichever is later.
- Where extenuating circumstances are identified, the reduction may be backdated into a previous financial year.

Crisis – subsidence, fire etc.

The Council will consider requests for reduction from council tax payers who, through no fault of their own, have experienced a crisis that has made their property uninhabitable, such as a fire, subsidence, flooding caused by burst pipes etc.

This discount no longer relates to weather related flooding, which is now covered by a specific government scheme

To be considered, the resident must remain liable to pay council tax at the property. They must have no recourse to compensation/ insurance payments, nor have recourse to any statutory exemptions or discounts.

All such requests must be made in writing detailing the **exact** circumstances of why the reduction is required and specifying when the situation is expected to be resolved.

In order to consider applications the council may need to consult with other organisations as appropriate.

Government Schemes

From time to time Government may introduce a specific scheme in response to an event such as a natural disaster (e.g. flood relief schemes).

The Council will not consider requests from taxpayers where government guidance or policy provides for a reduction in liability in specific circumstances.

Care Leavers

- The Council will consider granting a discount of up to 100% for care leavers aged from 18 to 25.
- The relief will be granted whether the resident care leaver is jointly liable with another person.
- The discount will also apply to qualifying care leavers living in Houses of Multiple Occupation; however the Council would expect

the landlord to evidence that they have reduced the rent for the care leaver accordingly. If not, any care leaver discount awarded may be removed from the landlord's Council Tax account

- This award will offer help to young people whose only support is from the Council by relieving some of the initial financial pressure felt when moving into independent accommodation and having to pay Council Tax for the first time.
- This reduction would sit alongside a number of other financial arrangements available to care leavers.
- Applications will only be considered where the following criteria is met and evidenced:
 - Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council must have been the corporate parent of the individual until they reached the age of 18. If a young person meets the qualifying status post 18 years of age, they will also be considered for this reduction.
 - A number of care leavers will be entitled to Council Tax Reduction & this must be claimed before any discretionary reduction is applied.
 - If the care leaver moves out of Sandwell and subsequently returns, they will be entitled to a reduction for any period they are liable for Council Tax in Sandwell as long as the other conditions are satisfied.

The amount and period of reduction will be as follows:

- A maximum discount of up to 100% may be awarded to any care leaver between the ages of 18 and 25 living in Sandwell.
 - A discount of 25% will be awarded if the care leaver lives with another person who is not a care leaver
 - A discount of 100% will be awarded if the care leaver lives alone, or lives with another person who is also a care leaver
- The reduction will only be applied after any other qualifying reliefs/ discounts have been awarded. If there is still an amount owing at this point discretionary relief will be awarded to ensure that nothing is payable.

- The reduction can be backdated to the 1 April of the financial year in which either an application for a discount is received or the council identifies that the conditions for the discount are met.
- The reduction can be backdated prior to that date if deemed appropriate.
- Where the liability started after the 1 April of that financial year, then reduction will be awarded from the date the liability started

Other Circumstances

The Council may consider discretionary reduction requests based on other circumstances, however the Council must be of the opinion that the circumstances relating to the request warrant further reduction in their liability for Council Tax having regard to the effect on other Council Tax payers.

No reduction will be granted where any statutory exemption or discount could be granted.

No reduction will be granted where it would conflict with any resolution, core priority or objective of the Council.

3.3 Period of Award

Reduction in liability will commence from the date of application or the date when the need for financial help arose. Any reduction allowed will generally only apply in the current financial year and hence the earliest start will be 1st April of the existing financial year in which the request was received, unless good cause can be shown as to why an application was not made sooner, or there are extenuating circumstances that warrant a backdate of the reduction into a previous year.

The reduction will end on either the last day of the current financial year or the date on which the need for the reduction was removed, whichever date is earlier.

3.4 Administration

Responsible Officers

The responsibility for making discretionary decisions will rest with the Director of Finance.

The Revenues and Benefits Service will liaise with the customer in each case to obtain sufficient evidence and information (in line with the criteria as laid out in this policy) to make a decision in their case.

Decision making process

The Council will decide every application for a reduction in liability where the customer has satisfied the required criteria as laid out in this policy.

The decision making process will involve:

Stage 1: The Revenues and Benefits Service Manager making a recommendation to the Director of Finance, having considered each case on 'its merits' against the information provided by the customer.

Stage 2: The Director of Finance will decide whether to apply the reduction to reduce the charge accordingly.

Changes of circumstances

The customer has a duty to notify the Council where a change in circumstance would affect the granting of the reduction.

Notification

The Council will notify a customer of any entitlement to a reduction within 14 days of receiving sufficient information to make a decision.

The Council will notify a customer of any changes to entitlement within 14 days of receiving sufficient information to make a decision.

The right to seek a review and appeals

Appeals against the Council's decision may be made in accordance with Section 16 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

The Council Taxpayer must in the first instance write to the Council outlining the reason for their appeal. Once received the Council will reconsider its decision and notify the Council Taxpayer accordingly.

Where the Council Taxpayer remains aggrieved, a further appeal can then be made to the Valuation Tribunal. This further appeal should be made within 2 months of the decision of the Council not to grant any reductions. Full details can be obtained from the Councils website or from the Valuation Tribunal <http://www.valuationtribunal.gov.uk>

Notification of review/re-determination of decision

The Council will aim to notify a customer of its decision within 14 days of receiving a request for a review/re-determination.

Payment of Award

All awards will be made by crediting the award value to the Council Tax account to which it applies.

If by crediting the award, the account moves to an overall credit balance, a refund of that balance will be considered in the normal manner.

Overpayment of reduction

If the council becomes aware that the information contained in an application for a reduction was incorrect, or that relevant information was not declared (either intentionally or otherwise) the Council may seek to recover the value of any award made as a result of that application.

The award will be removed from the relevant Council Tax account and any resulting balance will be subject to the normal methods of collection and recovery applicable to such accounts.

Fraud

The Council is committed to protecting public funds and ensuring funds are awarded to the people who are rightfully entitled to them.

An applicant who tries to fraudulently claim a reduction by falsely declaring their circumstances, providing a false statement or evidence in support of their application, may have committed an offence under The Fraud Act 2006.

Where the Council suspects that such a fraud may have been committed, this matter will be investigated as appropriate and may lead to criminal proceedings being instigated.

Complaints

The Council's 'Compliments and Complaints Procedure' (available on the Council's website) will be applied in the event of any complaint received about this policy.

4. POLICY REVIEW

4.1 Policy Review

The policy will be reviewed annually by the Revenue and Benefits Service, or sooner if appropriate, to take account of operational adjustments and or changes to legislation.

5. EQUALITIES

5.1 Equalities

This policy has been produced in line with the Council's obligation to the Public Sector Equality Duty provided by the Equality Act 2010. No adverse impact on any protected characteristic has been identified as a result of this policy.

However, due to the discretionary nature of decision making the Revenues and Benefits Service will randomly sample decisions made to ensure consistency.

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Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

**Revenues and Benefits Service
Flood Relief Policy**

2022/23



Meeting Ambition 10



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In a severe weather event with significant wide area impacts, local authorities may need central support to help their communities and businesses return to normal.
- 1.2 Section 13a 1c of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 allows the Council to reduce the amount of Council Tax payable and Sandwell's existing Discretionary Policy provides for assistance where flooding occurs in a one-off situation.
- 1.3 In December 2017 the government introduced a Flood Recovery Framework which provides local authorities in England with a core package of business and community recovery support.
- 1.4 The government will decide when this support will be made available as weather incidents with localised impact will not usually trigger a recovery support package. Funding might typically be deployed when facing severe weather which impacts multiple numbers of local authorities, such as those where nationwide storms take place.
- 1.5 This policy is provided to ensure the Council is prepared should a core scheme be activated and will allow suitable preparations to be made in respect of planning for flood events.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPALS / REGULATIONS

- 2.1 The core package introduced through the Flood Relief Framework comprises of the following schemes:
 - Community recovery grant
 - Business recovery grant
 - Council Tax discount scheme
 - Business Rates relief scheme
- 2.2 If the government instruct the Council that a core scheme is activated any upfront funding provided will be distributed based on the initial estimated numbers of eligible households and businesses reported by the authority.

3. Community Recovery Grant

3.1 Scheme Overview

A £500 grant will be paid to the Council for each eligible household badly affected by the relevant weather event. Authorities will be expected to pass these grants directly onto eligible households.

Funding will be paid to Council's via Section 31 grant based on the number of households estimated to be eligible.

3.2 Eligible Households

Primary residences – Households whereas a result of the relevant weather event flood water entered the habitable areas of the residence or

Flood water did not enter into the habitable areas, but the Council regards that the residence was otherwise considered unliveable for any period of time.

Second homes, empty homes and student accommodation are not eligible under the scheme.

HMO's should be considered 'one front door' except where they are separated for Council Tax purposes and blocks of flats should be treated in the same way.

4. Business Recovery Grant

4.1 Scheme Overview

A £2500 grant will be paid to the Council for each eligible business to help support recovery in the aftermath of a severe weather event. Authorities will be expected to pass these grants directly onto eligible businesses.

Funding will be paid to Council's via Section 31 grant based on the number of businesses estimated to be eligible.

The scheme covers small and medium sized businesses within flooded areas. Where larger businesses have been seriously affected this should be discussed as early as possible with the Council's MHCLG Recovery Liaison Officer and BEIS. Councils should consider any other ways in which it can help larger businesses.

4.2 Eligible Businesses

Small and medium sized businesses:

- Directly impacted by the weather event, for instance where there was flood damage to the property, equipment, and/or stock, or;
- Indirectly impacted by the weather event and as a result of flooding have directly suffered a loss of trade. This might apply where for instance there was flood damage to the property, equipment and or stock or the business has no/restricted access to premises, equipment or stock, restricted access to customers, suppliers and/or staff.

Funding should not be used to reward poor business practice or for routine expenses or costs that are recoverable elsewhere.

5. Council Tax Discount Scheme

5.1 Scheme Overview

Local authorities have discretion to reduce Council Tax liability under S13A 1C where the Flood Relief Scheme is activated following severe weather. The following discounts can be applied and will be refunded back to the Council by DLUHC:

100% discount for a minimum of 3 months or while anyone is unable to return home if longer for **primary residences** whereas a result of the relevant weather event:

- Flood water entered into the habitable areas or;

- Flood water did not enter the habitable areas but the local authority regards that the residence was otherwise considered **unliveable** for any period of time

AND

- 100% Council Tax reduction on temporary accommodation for anyone unable to return to their home, in parallel with the discount on their primary residence where applicable.

Funding will be paid to Council's via Section 31 grant and will typically be paid retrospectively considering actual spend at the end of the financial year.

5.2 Eligible Households

Primary residences – Households whereas a result of the relevant weather event flood water entered the habitable areas of the residence

Unliveable households may be determined based on the guidelines below:

- Where access to the property is severely restricted (e.g. upper floor flats with no access);
- Key services such as sewage, drainage and electricity are severely affected;
- The adverse weather has resulted in other significant damage to the property such that it would be, or would have been, advisable for residents to vacate the premises for any period of time, regardless of whether or not they actually vacate;
- Flooded gardens or garages will not usually render a household eligible but there may be exceptions where it could be demonstrated that such instances mean effectively that the property is unliveable

Residences impacted in multiple flood events can receive repeat support where it is made available by the government in respect of separate weather events.

Where the scheme is activated concurrently for two separate instances of flooding within 3 months of each other, the two discount periods would run concurrently.

6. Business Rate Relief Scheme

6.1 Scheme Overview

Where the Business Rates Relief Scheme is activated following severe weather the government will provide funding up to State Aid de minimus levels for eligible authorities to grant 100% rate relief of three months, or until the business is able to resume trading from the property if longer.

Funding will be paid to Council's via Section 31 grant and will typically be paid retrospectively in light of actual spend at the end of the financial year.

6.2 Eligible Businesses

- The hereditament was directly impacted by the relevant weather event, for instance flood damage to the property, equipment, and/or stock; or the business could not function due to lack of access to premises, equipment and/or stock as a result of the relevant weather event, and no alternatives were available

AND

- Business activity undertaken at the hereditament is adversely affected as a result; and
- The rateable value of the hereditament is less than £10 million

Hereditaments occupied by the Billing Authority are not eligible.

In considering whether the business activity has been adversely affected the Council should consider the impact of the flooding in the full context of all business activities undertaken at the hereditament. Very small or insignificant impacts should not be considered for this scheme.

The Council could decide to offer further discretionary discounts outside of this scheme.

The relief should be calculated ignoring any prior year adjustments in liabilities which fall liable on the day.

Ratepayers that occupy more than one property may be granted relief within the scheme for each of their eligible properties.

Businesses impacted in multiple flood events can receive repeat support where it is made available by the government in respect of separate weather events.

Where a new hereditament is created as a result of a splits or merger from a hereditament which for the day immediately prior to the split or merger met the criteria for the scheme, funding will be provided to allow relief to be given for the remaining balance of the three months.

If the ratepayer in a hereditament changes the relief will continue to be given.

Hereditaments empty at the time it was flooded will not qualify for a payment via this scheme. If it becomes empty after the flood, then it will receive the normal 3 or 6 months empty property rate free period or will continue to receive the balance of the flooding relief.

Where a seriously damaged property is taken out of the rating list it is not liable for business rates. Once the property returns to the rating list it may be eligible for any remaining period of flood relief.

7. Scheme Administration

7.1 Responsible Officers

The Revenues and Benefits Service will primarily oversee the award of grant payments applicable to any of the schemes and reductions in Council Tax and Business Rates as detailed in this policy.

7.2 Decision making process

The government will determine when a severe weather event has taken place and in turn when the Flood Recovery Framework applies.

Where an extended recovery period is anticipated, DLUHC Recovery Liaison Officers will take over from DLUHC Government Liaison Officers to act as a single point of contact between local authorities and central government for the duration of the recovery period.

The Council's designated Liaison Officer should be informed of any property, infrastructure or wider impacts that may be cause for concern to aid cross-government discussions around the need for particular recovery support.

7.3 Decision making process

The Council will notify a customer of any entitlement to a grant or relief within 14 days of receiving sufficient information to make a decision.

The Council will notify a customer of any changes to entitlement within 14 days of receiving sufficient information to make a decision.

7.4 Reviews and re-determination of a decision

The Council will investigate any challenges against decisions made in respect of the scheme and will aim to notify a customer of its decision within 14 days of receiving a request for a review/redetermination.

7.5 Payment of Awards

Awards payable through Community Recovery Grant or Business Recovery Grant Schemes will be made payable through the Councils electronic finance systems into customer bank accounts.

Awards payable through the Council Tax Discount and Business Rate Relief Schemes will be made by crediting the award value to the Council Tax or Business Rates account to which it applies.

7.6 Overpayment of Awards

If the council becomes aware that the basis of information received to pay a grant or relief was inaccurate or incorrect or that relevant information was not declared (either intentionally or otherwise) the Council may seek to recover the value of any award.

Awards will be removed from the relevant Council Tax or Business Rates account and any resulting balance will be subject to the normal methods of collection and recovery applicable to such accounts.

7.7 Fraud

The Council is committed to protecting public funds and ensuring funds are awarded to the people who are rightfully entitled to them.

An applicant who tries to fraudulently claim a relief by falsely declaring their circumstances, providing a false statement or evidence in support of their application, may have committed an offence under The Fraud Act 2006.

Where the Council suspects that such a fraud may have been committed, this matter will be investigated as appropriate and may lead to criminal proceedings being instigated.

7.8 Complaints

The Council's 'Compliments and Complaints Procedure' (available on the Council's website) will be applied in the event of any complaint received about this policy.

8. POLICY REVIEW

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed annually by the Revenue and Benefits Service, or sooner if appropriate, to take account of operational adjustments and or changes to legislation.

5. EQUALITIES

- 9.1 This policy has been produced in line with the Council's obligation to the Public Sector Equality Duty provided by the Equality Act 2010. No adverse impact on any protected characteristic has been identified as a result of this policy.

However, due to the discretionary nature of decision making the Revenues and Benefits Service will randomly sample decisions made to ensure consistency.

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Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Revenues and Benefits Service
Discretionary Housing Payment Policy (DHP)

2022/23



Meeting Ambition 10



POLICY STATEMENT

Sandwell MBC's objective is to treat every application for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) on its individual merits.

1. INTRODUCTION

Discretionary Housing Payments were introduced in July 2001 and the Local Authority is responsible for administration of the DHP scheme.

A DHP may be awarded where the Local Authority determines that a Housing Benefit or Universal Credit claimant requires further financial help towards their housing costs.

A DHP can be awarded to help cover:

- Shortfalls between the rental liability and payment of Housing Benefit or payment of Universal Credit (Housing element)
- One off DHP award to help towards removal costs
- One off DHP award to help with rent deposits
- One off DHP award for rent in advance.

Effective operation of the DHP scheme contributes to Sandwell Councils 2030 vision.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPALS / REGULATIONS

The Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001 (SI 2001/1167) ensures the DHP scheme covers the introduction of Universal Credit.

3. PROCESS FOR SERVICES

The purpose of this policy is to specify how Sandwell Revenues and Benefits Service will operate the scheme and to indicate some of the factors that will be considered when deciding if a DHP can be awarded. Each case will be treated strictly on its own merits and all claimants will be treated equally and fairly when the scheme is administered.

The Revenues and Benefits Service is committed to working with the local voluntary sector, social landlords and other interested parties in the Borough to maximise entitlement to all available state benefits and this will be reflected in the administration of the DHP scheme. The Revenues and Benefits Service operates within the Council's anti-poverty strategy and is committed to the equitable operation of a DHP scheme.

3.1 Statement of objectives

The Revenues and Benefits Service will consider making a DHP to all claimants who meet the qualifying criteria as specified in this policy. In administering the scheme the Revenues and Benefits Service will give consideration to the guidance produced by the Department for Work and Pensions. The Revenues and Benefits Service will treat all applications on their individual merits and will seek through the operation of this policy to:

- Alleviate poverty
- Support vulnerable young people in the transition to adult life
- Help and encourage residents to sustain and maintain housing
- Prevent and reduce homelessness
- Keep families together
- Support the vulnerable in the local community to maintain their health and wellbeing
- Support disabled people living in significantly adapted accommodation – including any adaptations made for disabled children; and foster carers, whose housing benefit is reduced because of a bedroom being used by, or kept free for, foster children
- Help claimants through personal crisis and difficult events

- Assist persons within the area who qualify for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Housing Element to move or obtain premises more suitable to their requirements
- Support people affected by welfare reform changes;

The Revenue and Benefit Service considers that the DHP scheme should be seen as short-term financial assistance. It is not and should not be considered as a way around any current or future entitlement restrictions set out within the Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Legislation.

3.2 Main Features of the DHP scheme:

- The scheme is discretionary; a claimant may be entitled if the criteria is satisfied.
- The amount that can be paid out by the Local Authority in any financial year is cash-limited by the Secretary of State.
- DHP's are not a payment of Housing Benefit / Universal Credit. However the claimant must have an entitlement to Housing Benefit / Universal Credit (Housing Element) for the weeks that a DHP is being considered for
- There is a need for financial assistance.

3.3 DHP scheme cannot cover:

The following elements of a claimant's rental charge or shortfall in Housing Benefit / Universal Credit (Housing Costs) that cannot be met by a DHP are:

- Ineligible charges: service charges that are not eligible for Housing Benefit/Housing Costs cannot be covered by a DHP.
- Sanctions and reductions in benefit.
- Suspended payments of Housing Benefit / Universal Credit Housing Costs element
- Shortfalls caused by Housing Benefit / Universal Credit Housing Costs overpayment recovery.
- Universal Credit reclaims of payments on account
- Council Tax Reduction.

3.4 What is a shortfall

A shortfall between the rental liability and payment of Housing Benefit or payment of Universal Credit (Housing element) can occur due to:

- The rent determined by the Rent Officer / Local Housing Allowance being lower than the claimant's eligible rental liability
- Under occupation charge being applied due to the size of the claimant's household
- Reduction in Local Housing Allowance rates for under 35's
- The 65 per cent taper being applied to a claimant Housing Benefit entitlement
- A non-dependant deduction being made to the claimant's eligible rent
- The Benefit Cap has been applied
- The Family Premium being removed (From April 2016)
- The limitation of dependant's addition being applied (from April 2017)
- Where the claimant can demonstrate that they are unable to meet the housing costs from their available income

3.5 How to Claim a DHP

A claim for a DHP must be made via the online claim form on www.sandwell.gov.uk. Verification of information will normally be required.

3.6 Commencement of a DHP Award

The start date of an award is determined by the Revenues and Benefits Service and can be either:

- The Monday following the date that the claim for a DHP is received by the Revenues and Benefits Service.
- The date on which entitlement to Housing Benefit/Universal Credit including housing costs element commenced.
- The date on which the need arose.

3.7 Period of a DHP Award

In all cases, the Revenues and Benefits Service will decide the length of time for which a DHP will be awarded on the basis of the evidence supplied and the circumstances of the claim.

- The minimum period for which the Revenues and Benefits Service will award a DHP is one week.

- The Revenues and Benefits Service will usually award a DHP for not less than 3 months or 13 weeks where it is to meet a shortfall.
- The Revenues and Benefits Service will not normally award a DHP for a period exceeding 12 months.
- Where a claimant is disabled, living in specially adapted accommodation the Revenues and Benefits Services recognise that it may be appropriate to make long-term DHP awards, exceeding 12 months

3.8 Award a DHP

Decisions regarding an award of DHP will be reported to the Director of Finance.

In deciding whether to award a DHP, the Revenues and Benefits Service will consider the following:

- The shortfall between Housing Benefit/Universal Credit housing costs element and the rent liability
- Any steps taken by the claimant to reduce their rental liability
- The financial and medical circumstances (including ill health and disabilities) of the claimant, their partner and any dependants and any other occupants of the claimant's home
- The income and the essential expenditure of the claimant, their partner and any dependants or any other occupants of the claimant's home
- Any savings or capital that might be held by the claimant and/or partner
- The level of indebtedness of the claimant and/or partner
- The nature of the claimant's and/or partner's circumstances
- The amount allocated up to the cash limit set by the Secretary of State at the time of the application
- Any other special circumstances brought to the attention of the Revenues and Benefits Service.

When calculating the claimant's and partner's income Disability Living Allowance (both care and mobility components), Attendance Allowance, Personal Independent Payments and Carers Allowance will be fully disregarded.

Additionally, where any claimant, partner or dependant are in receipt of any of the above benefits and the DHP application is as a result of a reduction in the Housing Benefit due to an Under Occupancy Charge (commonly known

as the bedroom tax) a DHP may be awarded equal to the bedroom tax reduction (i.e. 14% or 25% of the eligible rent).

The Revenues and Benefits Service will decide how much to award based on the individual circumstances. This may be an amount below the difference between the rent liability and the Housing Benefit/Universal credit housing costs element.

An award of a DHP does not guarantee that a further award will be made at a later date even if the claimant's circumstances have not changed.

3.9 Change in Circumstance

The claimant has a duty to notify the Revenues and Benefits Service of any change in their circumstances. They must report the change as soon as possible and not later than one month from the change occurring.

The Revenues and Benefits Service can revise a DHP award to take account of a change in circumstances at any time whether to the advantage or disadvantage of the claimant.

3.10 Payment of DHP

The Revenues and Benefits Service will decide the most appropriate person to pay based upon the circumstances of each case. This could include paying:

- The claimant
- Their partner (if resident in the household)
- An appointee
- Their landlord (or an agent of the landlord)
- Any third party to whom it might be most appropriate to make payment.

The Revenues and Benefits Service will pay an award of DHP by the most appropriate means available in each case. This could include payment by but is not restricted to:

- Electronic transfer (e.g. BACS);
- Crediting the claimant's rent account.

Where the DHP award is made on an on going basis the payment frequency will normally be aligned to the Housing Benefit/Universal Credit payment cycle.

3.11 Notification of the DHP award

The Revenues and Benefits Service will normally inform the claimant in writing of the outcome of their application within 14 days of receipt of all information. Where the application is unsuccessful, the Revenues and Benefits Service will set out the reasons why this decision was made and explain the right of review. Where the application is successful, the Revenues and Benefits Service will notify the claimant of:

- The weekly / Monthly amount of DHP that has been awarded
- The period of the award
- The requirement to report any change in circumstances

3.12 The Right to seek a review

DHP decisions are not Housing Benefit/Universal Credit decisions and are therefore not subject to the statutory dispute mechanism. All Councils are expected to set up an appropriate review process.

The Revenues and Benefits Service will operate the following policy for dealing with requests to review a refusal of a DHP award, the decision to award a reduced amount of DHP, the decision not to backdate a DHP or a decision that there has been an overpayment of a DHP.

- A claimant (or their appointee or agent) who disagrees with a DHP decision may dispute the decision. A dispute must be made in writing to the Revenues and Benefits Service within one calendar month of the written DHP decision being issued.
- Upon receipt of a dispute the DHP request will be re-considered by an officer who was not involved in the first decision and notify the claimant of the outcome in writing.
- As part of the dispute process Revenues and Benefits Services may feel it appropriate to offer the claimant an explanation of the DHP decision by telephone, at interview or in writing in order to seek to resolve the matter. Where agreement cannot be reached a re-consideration will be carried out.
- This review will be carried out by the Revenues and Benefits Service Appeals team. Their decision will be final with no other right of appeal.

- Where the claimant is still not satisfied, the decision may only be challenged via the judicial review process or by complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

3.13 DHP overpayment recovery

The Revenues and Benefits Service will seek to recover DHP's found to be overpaid.

When considering recovery of overpaid DHP's the Local Authority will also consider retrospective awards of Social Security Benefits which may affect the amount of DHP award.

The recovery will usually involve issuing an invoice to the claimant or the person to whom the award was paid. It is most unlikely that recovery of any overpayment caused by a Sandwell official error will be sought.

Under no circumstances will recovery be made from any amounts of Housing Benefit/Universal Credit due to the claimant (except if the claimant requests this method of recovery specifically in writing). The decision letter that notifies a decision that there is an overpayment will also set out the right of review.

3.14 Publicity

The Revenues and Benefits Service will publicise the scheme and will work with all interested parties to achieve this. A copy of this policy statement will be made available for inspection and will be posted on the Sandwell Council website. Information about the amount spent will not normally be made available except at the end of the financial year.

3.15 Fraud

The Revenues and Benefits Service is committed to identifying and subsequently investigating suspected fraudulent claims to benefit and DHP. Individuals who falsely declare their circumstances in order to claim DHP will have committed a criminal offence, which may lead to criminal proceedings being instigated.

3.16 Reporting

On a monthly basis a report detailing all DHP applications received, decisions made and DHP fund available is forwarded to the Director of Finance for approval.

4. POLICY REVIEW

The policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if appropriate, to take account of operational adjustments and or changes to legislation.

5. EQUALITIES

An equality assessment has been carried out on this policy in line with the Council's obligation to the Public Sector Equality Duty provided by the Equality Act 2010. No adverse impact on any protected characteristic has been identified as a result of this policy.

However, due to the discretionary nature of decision making the Revenues and Benefits Service will randomly sample decisions made to ensure consistency

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**Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Local Welfare Provision (LWP) Policy**

2022/23



Meeting Ambition 10



POLICY STATEMENT

The Local Welfare Provision (LWP) scheme is to assist and support vulnerable residents of Sandwell in meeting their day to day needs for subsistence or financial support or where they require assistance to maintain their independence within the community. This will be aligned to the Council's key principles of tackling inequality and reducing poverty.

1. INTRODUCTION

Local Welfare Provision

LWP will enable the Local Authority to provide assistance / support to vulnerable people in hardship situations. The overall intention is to use LWP to complement the existing support that the Council and its partners give to residents.

When making a decision on assistance, consideration will be given to the following priorities:

- To support vulnerable young people in the transition to adult life
- Safeguard Sandwell residents in their homes
- Help those who are trying to help themselves
- Keep families together
- Help provide stability to children
- Support the vulnerable in the local community
- Prevent homelessness for those at risk of losing their home
- Help customers through personal crisis and difficult events

- Support people affected by domestic violence

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Considerations for an award

- The scheme is purely discretionary; a resident does not have a statutory right to an award
- The process will be based on application being made and will be dependent upon a need and eligibility-based assessment.
- Awards will be made by way of vouchers or goods. Generally, no cash awards will be made

The LWP will consist of 2 key aspects of support:

Planned Support

Intended to help vulnerable people over the age of 18 (young adults aged between 16 and 18 may also be considered where they are unable to receive assistance through Section 17), live as independent a life as possible in the community. This form of support can be considered where the applicant is in receipt of benefit and is moving into independent living.

Planned support is also available to people if they are leaving accommodation in which they received significant and substantial care and supervision and they expect to be discharged within 6 weeks. Examples of such accommodation:

- hospital or another medical establishment
- care home
- hostel
- staff intensive sheltered housing
- local authority care
- Prison or detention centre

Unless there are exceptional circumstances such as someone who lives at home and receives support from their family or family members are unable to assist due to the demands of their own financial, health or general circumstances, applications from

single people living with other family members will not be awarded as they are likely to have access to assistance from other family members.

Responsive / Emergency Support

To meet a need that has arisen as a consequence of an emergency, disaster, exceptional circumstances or a pressing need that is strikingly different from the pressures generally associated with managing a low income and is the only way of preventing or mitigating serious risk to health or safety to the claimant or a member of their immediate family, which cannot be met by another source.

Forms of Support

- *Planned / Responsive support* will be the direct provision of furniture subject to meeting the eligibility criteria and the need assessment. The following items may be provided:
 - Second-hand furniture
 - White goods
- Emergency Support will be the direct provision of:
 - Food Bank Vouchers
 - Pre-payment cards for fuel and travel

3. PROCESS FOR SERVICES

Eligibility

Consideration will be given when the person or family has a reasonable need for an item or items to support or sustain independent living, subject to the availability of the items and the budget has sufficient resources to meet the need.

In cases where DWP or other Government departments have a primary responsibility to residents, The Local Authority will first advocate for residents to secure entitlements.

Individuals may receive support if they are age 18 and over and in receipt of:

- Income Support
- Income based Jobseekers Allowance; or
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance
- Pension Credit Guaranteed
- Contribution based Job Seekers Allowance*
- Contribution based Employment and Support Allowance*
- Universal Credit (means tested maximum award rate/where the award does not include an earnings disregard)

**Claims will only be considered under these circumstances where the claimant and/or their partner has no dependants*

Exclusions

Local Welfare Provision will not be awarded for any items that a government department or Council service has a statutory responsibility to provide.

The following people are excluded for support in all circumstances:

- Prisoners and people lawfully detained, including those released on temporary licence (but not those released on parole or on bail pending a court hearing)
- Members of a religious order who are fully maintained by the order

The following people are excluded from support except in very limited circumstances:

- Full-time students can only receive support for expenses arising out of a disaster
- Someone who is a 'person from abroad' (i.e. who fails or would fail the habitual residence test for the purpose of Income Support, Pension Credit, Income-based Job Seekers Allowance or Income Related Employment Support Allowance, Universal Credit) they can only receive support for expenses arising out of a disaster
- Customers who are subject to the Benefit Cap. As it deemed that they have an income in excess of more than £20,000

Benefit Sanctions

People subject to certain disallowances or sanctions to their Job Seekers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance, Income Support, Pension Credit or Universal Credit or equivalent welfare benefits will not normally be eligible for support.

However because of the nature of benefit sanctions each case will be considered on its own merits and where it is clear that failing to provide support would present significant risk to the claimant or, their immediate family or dependant which cannot be met by another source then support may be provided.

Universal Credit – Waiting period

People who have made a claim for Universal Credit (UC) and are waiting for their first payment will not normally be eligible for support through LWP.

However, because of the actual time taken for the first payment of UC to be made there may be circumstances where support through LWP is required. Each request will be considered on its own merits and where it is clear that support cannot be obtained from any other source (such as payments in advance from the Department for Work and Pensions, savings or lieu of notice pay) and failing to provide support would present significant risk to the claimant or their immediate family, support through LWP will be considered.

How to request Support

Referrals can be made via the online claim form on www.sandwell.gov.uk. Sufficient information will need to be submitted to the LWP Team to enable an assessment of eligibility and need.

Decision making process

Decision making for any request for support will be processed by the LWP Team in the Revenues and Benefits service area.

- Once all relevant data / information has been collected and the eligibility has been satisfied. An officer from the team will contact both successful and unsuccessful residents. If successful, the awards will be provided in line with the resident's needs.
- If unsuccessful the resident will be given the reasons for the decision and details of the appeals process. Also, what other options are available to them i.e. advice and information on other services.
- If the information is incomplete or further supporting evidence is required, an officer will contact the resident for the necessary information. Once all relevant data has been collected a decision will be made.

- Local Authority may request any reasonable evidence in support of an application. Such requests may be requested by phone/in person or in writing.
- Local Authority reserves the right to verify any information or evidence provided by the resident in appropriate circumstances.
- If the resident is unable to or does not provide the required evidence, the local authority will still consider the request and will take into account any other available information.

Value of Awards

Each case will be assessed on individual circumstances. The value of the items provided will be at the discretion of the Local Authority but will be based on standard prices for items including the cost of delivery and installation where appropriate.

Awards will be limited to 2 awards within any 12-month period.

Capital Limits

In order to retain consistency in the approach taken in the administration of Local Welfare Provision, there will not be a capital limit for awards made.

Outcome

Once all information to support a request has been received, the referral will be processed within 14 working days.

The LWP Team will provide written notification of an award of support to the Resident or the officer representing the individual and the supplier of goods.

Written notification will include details of:

- The support to be provided
- How, when and where the award can be accessed

To avoid unnecessary delay, residents may be asked for alternative contacts methods such as email or telephone to speed up the outcome confirmation.

Out of Hours Arrangements

Local Welfare Provision will not operate outside of normal office working hours.

Review / Reconsideration

A resident can ask for reconsideration if they can demonstrate there has been a factual error based on the decision made, an oversight on a significant piece of evidence or where new evidence has come to light, that was not provided with the original request form. In either circumstance, the resident must provide the relevant details.

Such requests must be made in writing to the LWP Team.

This review will be carried out by the Revenues and Benefits Service Appeals team. Their decision will be final with no other right of appeal.

Monitoring Arrangements

The central coordinating function sitting with the Revenue and Benefits service area will monitor the number and amount of awards / refusals in relation to planned and emergency support on a monthly basis to ensure decisions are being made fairly and consistently and in line with the Council's equality duties.

4. POLICY REVIEW

The policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if appropriate, to take account of operational adjustments and or changes to legislation.

5. EQUALITIES

This policy has been produced in line with the Council's obligation to the Public Sector Equality Duty provided by the Equality Act 2010. No adverse impact on any protected characteristic has been identified as a result of this policy.



Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery Policy

2022/23



Ambition 10



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.

1. Introduction

This policy document sets out Sandwell MBC commitment to the recovery of Housing Benefit Overpayment in accordance with the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 and the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained State Pension Age) Regulations 2006

It is essential that Sandwell MBC demonstrates that it carries out recovery of Housing Benefit Overpayments efficiently and effectively.

By doing so the Council:

- Reduces losses to Public Funds
- Provides revenue for the Council
- Helps reduce the loss from overpayments
- Deters fraud and error
- Demonstrates commitment to accuracy and provision of a quality service to customers.

2. General Principles

Overpayments are established through a review of benefit entitlement, where the original decision is superseded or in rare instances the correction of an accidental error. They are amounts of benefit that have been paid to which there is no entitlement.

Prevention of overpayments

We will endeavour to minimise the level of overpayments by:

- Paying Housing Benefit promptly;
- Continuously reviewing and improving our systems and working practices;

- Actively encouraging customers to promptly report changes in circumstances.

Identification

Accurate and prompt identification of overpayments is important in order to ensure we maximise the successful recovery of the overpayment and reduce the number of complaints and appeals.

To help identify overpayments the council will:

- Establish the cause of the overpayment and whether it is recoverable and from whom it should be recovered.
- Calculate underlying entitlement in all cases
- Ensure that every overpayment has been classified correctly,
- Notify the customer of the overpayment in accordance with current legislation
- Determine the best method of recovery.
- Not commence recovery until the individual has had the right to dispute the decision (in accordance with the timescales set out in the legislation).
- Offer help and advice to customers wishing to dispute the decision to recover the overpayment.
- In the event of being unable to recover an overpayment, promptly submit the debt for 'write-off'.

Recoverability

If the overpayment was caused by misrepresentation or failure to disclose information, then the overpayment must be recovered from the person who actually misrepresented or failed to disclose that information.

If the overpayment was caused by official error it must be recovered from the person who at the time of receiving the payments, could reasonably have been expected to know that they were being overpaid.

An overpayment can be recovered from:

- The claimant
- The partner, if they were members of the same household at the time of the overpayment was created
- The person to whom the overpayment was paid

If a deceased person has an outstanding overpayment recovery can be sought from their estate.

Recovery from on-going Benefit

Where the claimant is still entitled to Housing Benefit the overpayment should be recovered from their on-going entitlement.

The maximum deduction in 2022/23 are:

£19.25 where the overpayment resulted from fraud

£11.55 in any other case

Where the claimant's Housing Benefit includes an earnings disregard, a disregard for Charitable / Voluntary payments or a War Pension disregard, the Housing Benefit Regulations allow 50% of the statutory disregard to be added to the claw-back rate. (It does not include the additional earnings disregard)

However, a customer can request any alternative method of recovery and each request would be considered on its own merits.

Where there is no on-going Benefit entitlement

If there is no on-going benefit entitlement the overpayment will be recovered via an Invoice after 31 days of an overpayment being created. This allows the customer to request a revision, appeal or make a new claim for Housing Benefit.

The invoice will request a first payment within 14 days from the date of the invoice. If the total overpayment is less than £60.00 the invoice will request the overpayment to be paid in one instalment. If the overpayment is over £60.00 that the overpayment will be split over 12 monthly instalments.

If the debtor is unable to pay in full or the instalment amounts it is possible to make alternative arrangement which will be covered in a later paragraph.

Methods of Payment

It is essential to provide flexible and convenient methods of payment. At present the Council can accept payment by the following means:

- Direct Debit
- Online using our online payment system

- Credit / Debit card
- Payment Line
- Standing order
- Cheque
- Cash

Non-Payment

If payment or an arranged payment is not made a reminder will be issued 20 days from the date of the original Invoice along with a text reminder.

A final demand will be issued if no payment or an arranged payment is not made after 40 days from the original invoice. This will request a full payment of the Housing Benefit Overpayment within 7 days.

Arrangements

If the customer cannot pay the overpayment invoice or meet the instalment amounts in full. The customer is encouraged to contact the council immediately, as it may be possible to make a payment arrangement.

Each request will be considered on its own merits taking the amount due, personal circumstances and financial circumstances into account. The aim is to agree a realistic arrangement to collect the unpaid invoice within a reasonable time. It may be necessary to issue an Income and Expenditure form in order to obtain a clear picture of the customer's financial circumstances.

Once the arrangement is agreed a letter confirming the details will be issued to the customer.

Monitoring Arrangements

If the customer defaults on their arrangement a final notice will automatically be issued. The instalment / arrangement plan will be cancelled, and the customer will be asked to make the payment in full or alternative recovery action will be taken as stated below.

Further recovery action

Where the customer fails to make a payment on their arrangement or no payments are received against the outstanding invoice, further recovery action will be taken.

The type of action that may be taken is as follows:

- **Recovery from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Benefits.** Deductions from certain DWP Benefits will be considered
- **Recovery from Landlord payments.** Where the overpayment is recoverable from the landlord the overpayment can be deducted from their next Housing Benefit payment.
- **Council Rent account that are in credit.** If the customer is a Council tenant and has a outstanding overpayment and their rent account is in credit. The credit can be used to reduce or clear the outstanding overpayment.
- **Direct Earnings Attachment.** The Council can ask an employer to deduct any Housing Benefit Overpayment of an employee direct from their earnings.
- **Debt collecting Agency.** The Council will forward any outstanding overpayment of Housing Benefit to an agreed debt collecting agency where that customer has failed to engage, and all the above alternatives are not an option.

Change of Address “Gone Aways”

If correspondence is returned undelivered and marked “Gone away” or similar and a forwarding address is not already known every effort is made to find a new address for the customer.

The Council will make all legally allowable checks on different records and systems to trace the customer to continue the recovery action.

Unrecoverable Overpayment

In certain circumstances the Council can decide not to recover an overpayment. Examples include:

- The customer is deceased and has left no estate to recover the overpayment from
- The customer has gone away, and the Council has been unable to trace them
- Where the overpayment is uneconomical to pursue

4. POLICY REVIEW

The policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if appropriate, to take account of operational adjustments and or changes to legislation.

5. EQUALITIES

This policy has been produced in line with the Council's obligation to the Public Sector Equality Duty provided by the Equality Act 2010. No adverse impact on any protected characteristic has been identified because of this policy.

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**Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Revenues and Benefits Service
Non-Domestic Rates Hardship Relief Policy**

2022/23



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Meeting Ambition 10



POLICY STATEMENT

The objective of Sandwell MBC is to treat each and every application for Section 49 Hardship Relief on its individual merits.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Legislation

The Council is aware of its duties and powers in accordance with section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. This Policy sets out how the Council will use its powers and the criteria that must be satisfied.

Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 gives a Billing Authority the ability, if it so wishes, to reduce amounts due for Non-Domestic Rates.

An Authority may reduce or remit the amount payable, to do so it must be satisfied that:

(a) the ratepayer would sustain hardship if the authority did not do so.

and

(b) it would be reasonable to do so having regard to the interests of other persons subject to its Council Tax charges.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES / REGULATIONS

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to specify how Sandwell MBC will administer requests for relief from payment of Non-Domestic Rate and to indicate some of the factors that will be considered when deciding if relief may be granted.

Each case will be treated strictly on its merits and all applicants will be treated equally and fairly.

2.2 Statement of objectives

Sandwell MBC will consider applications for relief from payment of Non-Domestic Rate under the provisions of Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

In administering applications, Sandwell MBC will ensure that each application will be given due regard on its merits in accordance to the criteria and process laid down by the Council.

It should be noted that the test of hardship need not be confined to financial matters; all relevant factors should be considered, including the impact on the local community.

3. PROCESS FOR SERVICES

3.1 Applications

Applications will need to be made in writing by any ratepayer wishing to apply for assistance.

In all cases, evidence will be required from the ratepayer. Where this is requested, the authority would expect the required evidence to be provided within 14 days of the request unless otherwise stated by the authority.

Where no or insufficient information is provided by the ratepayer, no relief shall be granted.

3.2 Criteria for using powers

The Council will consider using its powers to reduce or remit Non-Domestic Rate liability for any Non-Domestic Rate payer.

There is a cost implication of any relief awarded which is borne locally and met from the authority's general fund. A reduction or remission of rates on the grounds of hardship should therefore be the exception rather than the rule.

The test of hardship will not be confined strictly to financial hardship. All relevant factors affecting the ability of a business to meet its liability for rates should be considered.

Each case will be considered on its own merits - however the following points should be considered for each application:

- The interests of council taxpayers in an area may go wider than direct financial interests. For example, where the employment prospects in the area would be worsened by a company going out of business, or the amenities of an area might be reduced by, for instance, the loss of the only shop in the vicinity.
- Where the granting of relief would have an adverse effect on the financial interests of council taxpayers, the case for a reduction or remission of rates payable may still, on balance, outweigh the costs to council tax payers.
- The financial position of the business ratepayer. This will need to be established by the provision of audited accounts for the three years preceding the date of the application for remission / reduction (except in the case of a new business where the previous twelve months accounts should be produced).
- The fact that a ratepayer suffers a trading loss in one year should **not** be construed as evidence that the ratepayer would suffer hardship if the rates were not remitted or reduced.
- Any other factors put forward by the ratepayer would be considered on their specific merits.

- Consideration must be given to the amount of relief that can be granted and the effect this will have on the ability of a business to continue to trade.
- Whether the business claiming the relief at the very least pays any employees the National Minimum Wage
- No more than 50% of the total number of employees must be on zero-hour contracts.
- At least 50% of employees should be living in Sandwell

Where a business is making a repeat application, this will only be considered if it can be shown that the circumstances surrounding the application have changed, the details of the application differ and the business has taken reasonable steps to improve its situation.

Where there is a national crisis/pandemic affecting a significant number of businesses and there is government funding available to assist no award will be made.

3.3 Period of relief

Relief will only be granted (as a maximum) to the end of a tax period in which the reduction or remission is requested.

3.4 Responsible Officers

Delegation of authority to reduce or remit non-domestic rates under the provisions of Section 49 has been granted to the Director of Finance for amounts up to and including £20,000. The responsibility for making decisions regarding amounts above £20,000 lies with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources.

The Revenues and Benefits Service Manager will liaise with the customer in each case to obtain sufficient detail (in line with the criteria as laid out in this policy) to make a decision in their case.

3.5 Decision making process

The Council will decide every application for relief where the customer has satisfied the required criteria as laid out in this policy.

The decision-making process will involve:

Stage 1: The Revenues and Benefits Service Manager makes a recommendation to the Director of Finance after considering each case on 'its merits' against the information provided by the customer.

Stage 2: The Director of Finance will decide whether to award a reduction or remission.

Stage 3: Where the reduction or remission is greater than £20,000, the Director of Finance will make a recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources.

3.6 Requirement to Make Payments

Ratepayers must continue to pay any amount of Non-Domestic Rates that falls due pending the outcome of the application.

The Council may apply its normal recovery procedures in cases where payments are not received.

3.7 Changes of Circumstances

The customer has a duty to notify the Council where a change in circumstance would affect the granting of relief.

The change in circumstances must be notified to the authority within 14 days of its occurrence.

The Council can revise relief to take account of a change in circumstance.

3.8 Notification

The Council will notify a customer of its decision by letter or email within 14 days of receiving sufficient information to make a decision.

3.9 Payments

All awards of relief or discount will be credited against the applicant's business rates account to reduce the amount payable.

3.10 The right to seek a review

Under the Local Government Finance Act 1988, there is no right of appeal against the Council's use of discretionary powers. However, the Council will accept a customer's request for a re-determination of its decision.

A request for a review / re-determination must be made within four weeks of receipt of notification of the decision and must set out the reasons for the request and any supporting information.

The review process will involve re-consideration of the request on its merits by the Director of Finance. The Council will consider whether the customer has provided any additional information against the required criteria that will justify a change to its decision.

3.11 Notification of review / re-determination decision

The Council will notify a customer of its decision within **28** days of receiving a request for a review or re-determination.

3.12 State Aid/Subsidy Control Regulations

State Aid guidance was withdrawn on 1 January 2021. The Brexit transition period has ended and new rules on Subsidy Control now apply. For current information and to see how this may affect your business please go to <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/state-aid>

If you believe your business will exceed the new subsidy control limits you must contact the Business Rates team via email at business_rates@sandwell.gov.uk to ask for any relief already awarded to be removed from your account

4. POLICY REVIEW

4.1 The policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if appropriate, to take account of operational adjustments and / or changes to legislation.

5. EQUALITIES

- 5.1 This policy has been produced in line with the Council's obligation to the Public Sector Equality Duty provided by the Equality Act 2010. No adverse impact on any protected characteristic has been identified as a result of this policy.

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Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Revenues and Benefits Service

**Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary
Rate Relief Policy**

2022/23

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Meeting Ambition 10



1. INTRODUCTION

Discretionary Rate Relief (DRR) allows a reduction in Non-Domestic Rates of up to 100% where certain provisions are satisfied. The decision to grant or not grant relief is a matter purely for the authority.

The Revenues and Benefits Service work closely with the Voluntary Sector Funding Team to administer this policy.

The Council recognises the important role played by the Voluntary Sector in Sandwell, not only in the area of service delivery, but also as an indicator of civic engagement and the health of the social fabric of the borough.

The regulations relating to DRR can be found in Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended).

Registered charities registered friendly societies and community amateur sports clubs automatically qualify for a mandatory reduction to their rates bill of 80%. The Council can consider granting DRR to these organisations on the remaining 20%.

DRR enables the Council to support a wide range of voluntary and community groups in Sandwell, providing a significant reduction to an organisation's running expenses.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES / REGULATIONS

The purpose of this policy is to outline the conditions that should be satisfied for Sandwell MBC to consider relief under the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and associated legislation.

3. PROCESS FOR SERVICES – RELIEFS AVAILABLE

The following reliefs are available in Sandwell under the banner of ‘Discretionary Relief’ for Business Rates:

1. Charity and Non-Profit Making Organisations ‘Top Up’
2. Reliefs made available under the Localism Act 2011:
 - (i) ‘Section 69’ Localism Relief
 - (ii) Relief for Child Care Provision
 - (iii) Shared Workspace
 - Part Occupied/Part Void Section 44A Relief
 - Discretionary Relief Introduced April 2017:
 - (i) Supporting Small Business Relief
 - Discretionary Reliefs introduced during 2021/22

The criteria for each of these reliefs is listed below, together with details on how to apply and any restrictions, where applicable

3.1 CHARITY AND NON-PROFIT MAKING ORGANISATIONS

Some charities and non-profit organisations are entitled to 80% mandatory ‘Charity’ rate relief. However Local Authorities have the option to ‘top up’ that relief to 100%. Organisations that meet the requirements of this policy and the relevant criteria who are eligible for the 80% mandatory rate relief, may receive a top up of 20%.

Sandwell needs a healthy Voluntary Sector, particularly local voluntary and community organisations. This supports citizens of the borough by providing:

- **Local community-based services** – many voluntary and community sector organisations are community based and may therefore be better able to work with harder to reach groups. This complements the Council’s town and neighbourhood-based approach to service delivery
- **Choice** – by supporting voluntary and community sector organisations the Council hopes to provide a greater choice for local people in terms of the services they can access
- **Independence** – voluntary and community sector organisations are independent bodies and are often well placed to take on a campaigning or advocacy role on behalf of local people, providing an important challenge role for the Council
- **Opportunities for people to participate** – as volunteers as well as service users
- **Specialist services** – many voluntary and community sector organisations develop specialism’s around the particular needs of a client group

3.1.1 Definition of terms

Voluntary organisation:

A formal organisation run by a management body made up of volunteers who are engaged in that activity for environmental, economic, or social good.

Community group:

A community organisation is a less formally organised body run by a management body made up of volunteers who are engaged in that activity for environmental, economic, or social good.

3.1.2 Who Can Apply?

The following organisations could apply for DRR 'Top Up':

- **Charities** (including charity shops that are ratepayers occupying premises used for charitable purposes).
- **Non profit organisations** (that are not charities but the objectives of which are 'charitable', 'philanthropic' or religious, or concerned with education, social welfare, science, literature or the fine arts' or who use the premises mainly for recreation).

Examples of these organisations include:

- Voluntary organisations
- Community groups
- Tenants and residents' groups
- Faith groups
- Housing Associations
- Co-operatives and social enterprises (that are set up to benefit of the public at large rather than its members)
- Sports organisations
- Mutules
- Grant making trusts.

3.1.3 Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for DRR, organisations must occupy the property for which they are seeking DRR and must:

- be used for the purposes of delivering the organisations' objectives to benefit citizens of Sandwell
- be based in or delivering services in Sandwell
- be non-governmental

- be value driven, for the social good
- be non party political
- not use profit that is normally reinvested into the organisation, to pay management a salary
- reinvest at least 50% of their financial surpluses for community benefit in Sandwell. Regional and national organisations will need to reinvest at least 50% of their financial surpluses that arise from their work in Sandwell for community benefit in the borough
- not be funded directly from taxation by any government department or agency in the provision of any function under any statutory duty

3.1.4 Levels of DRR

Organisations that meet the requirements of this policy and criteria, in receipt of 80% mandatory rate relief, will receive a top up of 20%. All other successful applicants will receive 100% discretionary rate relief.

3.1.5 Effective Date of DRR Award

Organisations have to apply for DRR every year. Applications can be submitted at any point during the financial year 1 April – 31 March. However, in order for DRR to be shown on the first bill of the year applications and/or confirmation of any change in circumstances need to be submitted prior to 31st January.

If an application for the **previous** financial year is received in time for it to be assessed by 30th September, any rate relief granted will be backdated to 1 April of that financial year or the date at which the premises were first occupied if this is later.

For example:

An application backdated relief for 2020/21 (covering the period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021), is received by the Council in time for it to be assessed and approved before 30 September 2021, then DRR would be backdated to 1 April 2020, or the date of occupation if later).

3.1.6 How to apply

If you are advised that an application for DRR is required by the Council it must be made using the authority's application form which is available on the

Council's website

http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/download/197/charitable_and_discretionary_relief

All applications under this policy will be considered by the Executive Director of Resources

3.1.7 Unsuccessful DRR Applications

There is no legal right of appeal against the Council's use of discretionary powers. However, the Council will accept a customer's request for a re-determination of its decision. Any further appeal must take place via judicial review.

If an application for DRR has been refused, applicants have the opportunity to request a re-determination. All requests must be made in writing, within one month of the Council's decision. Requests will be considered by a panel of 2 officers who were not involved in the original decision.

If an unsuccessful applicant decides to make a request for re-determination, they will still need to continue to pay their business rates. If the request is successful, an amended bill will be issued.

3.2 RELIEF INTRODUCED BY THE LOCALISM ACT 2011

This involves the following relief:

- i. Section 69 'Localism' Relief

(i) Section 69 'Localism Act Relief'

Section 69 of the Localism Act 2011 amends Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. The changes came into effect from 1st April 2012 and extended the existing provision relating to the granting of DRR.

From 01 April 2012 any ratepayer may apply for this relief. The costs of such relief is borne solely by council tax payers of the borough, therefore it is essential that relief is only given to those ratepayers who will bring significant benefit to the area.

The amount of relief granted is not fixed and will be dependant on the individual circumstances of each application.

To be considered the ratepayer must meet all of the following criteria:

- The ratepayer must occupy the premises
 - The ratepayer must be relocating from outside Sandwell, or where already existing within Sandwell must operate within one of Sandwell's priority sectors, namely: -
 - Diversified manufacturing: including high value-added engineering, food production, offsite construction and health products
 - Business, financial and customer services
 - Green industries; including environmental technologies, waste recycling and resource management and research investment
 - The ratepayer must provide significant investment in premises and/or capital equipment.
 - The ratepayer must provide significant new job creation and/or safeguarding of existing jobs.
 - The premises and organisation must be of significant benefit to Sandwell's residents
 - The premises and organisation must relieve the Borough of providing similar facilities.
 - The ratepayer must provide facilities to certain priority groups such as the elderly, disabled, minority groups, disadvantaged groups, or provide the residents of the borough with such services, opportunities or facilities that cannot be obtained locally or are not provided locally by another organisation
 - The ratepayer must be paying its employees at least the national minimum wage
 - Not more than 50% of the ratepayer's employees must be on zero-hour contracts
 - At least 50% of the ratepayer's employees must be living in Sandwell
- and
- The ratepayer must demonstrate that Discretionary Relief will only be required short-term and that the business /operation is financially viable in the medium/long term; and

- The ratepayer must show that the organisation will comply with all legislative requirements and operate in an ethical, sustainable, and environmentally friendly manner at all times.

Enquiries relating to this relief should be directed to the Business Rates team via email business_rates@sandwell.gov.uk

Community Benefit Clause

Any businesses benefitting from this relief must engage with the Council's Think Local Recruitment team to assist with the recruitment of any new staff.

Businesses benefitting from this relief must also consider apprenticeships or develop existing employees to gain recognised qualifications e.g. NVQ's,

The business should use www.thinksandwell.co.uk to advertise any supply opportunities resulting from the building of new premises etc.

3.3 PART OCCUPIED/PART VOID SECTION 44A RELIEF ('s44A')

General Explanation

- 3.3.1 If a property is only partly occupied, the Council has discretion to request that the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) apportions the property's rateable value between its occupied and unoccupied parts, provided it '...will remain so for a short time only'
- 3.3.2 Partially occupied rate relief (often referred to as 'Section 44A' or 's44A' Relief) is not intended to be used merely where part of a property is temporarily not used. The intention is aimed at situations where there are practical, financial or economic difficulties in occupying or vacating all of the property, or exceptional circumstances may have arisen meaning the area is incapable of occupation at that time unique to the business
- 3.3.3 The effect of the reduction under s44A would be to reduce the rates on the premises to the same level as would be payable if the unoccupied part formed a separate hereditament
- 3.3.4 The ratepayer must allow a Council Officer accompanied access to the property by appointment during normal working hours at a time and

date mutually agreed. The Council Officer may take measurements and photographs as evidence during the inspection. Full rates remain payable until the visit is concluded and a decision has been made whether or not to award the s44A Relief

- 3.3.5 Details of the inspection will be forwarded to the VOA. The VOA must then issue a certificate confirming the rateable value of the unoccupied area in order for the s44A relief to be awarded. Once the VOA has issued a certificate, relief must be awarded in accordance with it.
- 3.3.6 If awarded, relief in the Sandwell area will only normally start from the date stated on the application and will only be awarded for up to a maximum of **three months** (or **six months for an industrial hereditament**) in a financial year. In exceptional circumstances, consideration will be given to awarding relief across financial year, for example application made late in the year.
Consideration will also be given in exceptional circumstances to awarding relief for a retrospective period where the ratepayer can demonstrate good cause for not submitting the application earlier
- 3.3.7 Every application will be considered on its own merits, but the Council will have particular regard to the effect on its Collection Fund and the interests of local Council Taxpayers when considering whether it is reasonable to award the relief or not. Confirmation is required that the business claiming the relief, at the very least, pays its employees the National Minimum Wage and/or the National Living Wage, as appropriate to their age and circumstances
- 3.3.8 Following inspection of the premises but before being referred to the VOA, applications will need to be approved by the Council's Section 151 Officer.
- 3.3.9 This is a discretionary relief and full rates will remain payable on a partially occupied property if the Council chooses not to exercise its power in this respect

Decisions by the Council

- 3.3.11 Every application will be considered on its own merits however, in addition to the effect on the Collection Fund and local Council Taxpayer, when considering an application for Section 44A Relief, the following factors will be taken into account:
- The circumstances leading to the partial occupation

- Previous awards of Section 44A Relief to the same business/ organisation and the net effect on Council Taxpayers
- The intention of the business in relation to unoccupied area(s)
- The reasonableness of the ratepayer requesting an alteration of the rating assessment from the VOA
- The availability of evidence that the unoccupied area(s) will be empty for a short period only
- Full occupation being phased in over a period of time or full vacation occurring in stages over a period of time, if applicable

3.3.12 Relief will *not* normally be considered where:

- Access is refused and/or it has not been possible to verify the application
- Part occupation is likely to exceed a short time
- The area is not clearly defined
- Part occupation is seasonal or due to the nature of the business
- The premises are partially empty due to essential maintenance or upgrading
- The company is moving out of Sandwell
- There have been repeated requests on an annual basis, as this is not deemed 'temporary' relief
- There is a national crisis/pandemic affecting a significant number of businesses.
- Government funding is available to assist

Applications for Relief under this scheme

3.3.13 Applications must be in writing. A pdf application form is available via the following link

http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200308/business_rates/2954/partly_occupied_property_relief_section_44a

3.3.14 As much information as possible must be provided to the Council as detailed on the application form in order for the request to be considered. This must include a plan(s) of the premises clearly showing the unoccupied area(s) and should include measurements where possible

3.3.15 Once an application has been received an officer from the Council will contact the ratepayer to arrange a suitable date to allow accompanied access for an inspection of the premises

Amount of relief

- 3.3.16 Where Sandwell MBC agrees to the award of a Section 44A relief, notification will be sent to the VOA to seek a reduction in the rateable value
- 3.3.17 The amount of relief is calculated on a statutory basis, based on the rateable value of the empty area(s) of the property. The appropriate rateable value is provided to Sandwell MBC by the VOA England

Variation and amendment of relief under the scheme

- 3.3.18 The period of relief will end on the day on which any of the following occurs:
- There is a change to the extent of the partial occupation
 - The end of the three months/ six month relief period, or the end of the financial year, whichever is first
 - A new period of relief under a new application starts
 - The premises become fully occupied or completely unoccupied
 - The ratepayer ceases to be the person or organisation liable to pay rates in respect of the premises
 - The Council is unable to verify, following reasonable notice, that the area remains unoccupied
- 3.3.19 If there is a change in the rateable value, relief will be apportioned or removed as appropriate

Notification of Decision

- 3.3.20 The Council will notify the ratepayer of their entitlement to relief by the issue of an amended demand notice. Refusal will be communicated by the Council via telephone or visit, or via email or in writing if requested

Decision Review Process

- 3.3.21 There is no statutory right of appeal against a decision made by the Council regarding discretionary rate relief, including Section

44A applications. However, the Council recognises that ratepayers should be entitled to have a decision reviewed if they are dissatisfied with the outcome

- 3.3.22 The Council will accept a written request for a review of its decision. The request should include the reasons for requesting a review and any supporting evidence
- 3.3.23 A request for review must be made within one calendar month of the date of refusal
- 3.3.24 The ratepayer will be notified of the outcome of the review in writing.
- 3.3.25 This review process does not affect a ratepayer's legal right to seek to challenge a decision by way of Judicial Review

3.4 DISCRETIONARY RELIEFS INTRODUCED 01 APRIL 2017

This involved three separate reliefs:

- i. Public House Relief
- ii. Supporting Small Business Relief
- iii. Discretionary Relief Scheme (Revaluation)

The schemes covering Public House Relief and Discretionary Relief following the 2017 revaluation ended 31 March 2021 and hence are no longer included in this document. However, Supporting Small Business Relief remains for 2021/22

3.4.1 Supporting Small Businesses Relief ('SSBR')

Effective from 2017, this relief is to provide support over 5 years to small businesses who have lost their entitlement to Small Business Rates Relief as a result of their rateable value increasing through the 2017 revaluation.

This relief ensures small businesses do not have to pay more than £600 increase per year for 5 years, effective from 01 April 2017.

Relief is automatically applied to applicable cases

3.4.2 Supporting Small Businesses Relief ('SSBR') 2022/23

The government have announced an extension to this relief for the 2022/23 financial year.

Once full guidance has been received the policy will be updated to reflect this.

3.5 COVID 19 DISCRETIONARY RELIEFS INTRODUCED DURING 2021/22

Nursery Discounts needs adding

3.5.1.1 Expanded Retail Discount Guidance

The Government announced in the Autumn statement on 29 October 2018 that it will provide a discount of up to one third of the bill to all occupied retail properties with a rateable value of less than £51,000 for each year 2019/20 and 2020/21.

In a Written Ministerial Statement 27 January 2020 this discount was increased 50% for year 20/21 and extended it to include cinemas and live music venues. However, in response to the Coronavirus emergency, COVID-19, the Government announced in the Spring Statement 11 March 2020, that it would increase the discount to 100%, remove the rateable value limit and extend it to include the leisure and hospitality sectors.

In a further announcement 23 March 2020, the Government confirmed that some of the original exclusions for this discount were removed, so that retail, leisure and hospitality businesses that had to close as a result of the restriction measures would be eligible for the discount.

From year 2020/21 the scheme is referred to as Expanded Retail Discount. During the Budget 3 March 2021, the Chancellor announced an extension of Expanded Retail Discount for three months, at 100% uncapped relief for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021.

Then, for the period 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022, at 66% relief with a cash cap of £2 million for businesses that were required to close as at 5 January 2021, and up to £105,000 for businesses permitted to open as at 5 January 2021.

As these measures are 2020/21 and 2021/22 only, the Government is not changing legislation, however it will reimburse local authorities that use its discretionary powers, introduced by the Localism Act (under Section 47 of the Local government Finance Act 1988, as amended) to grant relief in line with eligible criteria. Central Government will reimburse local authorities for their share of the discretionary relief under the rates retention scheme.

For the discount to be granted, the Council must make a decision within 6 months of the end of the financial year.

3.5.1.2 Key Criteria for Retail Discount Financial Year 2021/22

- i) 100% discount for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021, then.
- ii) 66% discount for the period 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022, and.
 - A cash cap of £2 million for businesses that were required to close as at 5 January 2021
 - A cash cap of £105,000 for businesses that were permitted to open as at 5 January 2021 subject to:
 - The Property must be occupied
 - There is no rateable value limit
 - The Property must be used wholly or mainly as:
 - a) a shop, restaurant, café, drinking establishment, cinema or live music venue.
 - b) for assembly and leisure; or
 - c) a hotel, guest or boarding premises, or self-catering accommodation
 - The eligible ratepayer has not refused the discount. (The eligible ratepayer cannot withdraw their refusal for either all or part of the financial year).

3.5.1.3 Who can apply?

The Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities has issued guidance outlining what they consider eligible property uses to mean, including:

a) Shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas, and live music venues:

- **Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of goods to visiting members of the public:**
 - Shops (such as: florists, bakers, butchers, grocers, greengrocers, jewellers, stationers, off licences, chemists, newsagents, hardware stores, supermarkets, etc)
 - Charity shops
 - Opticians
 - Post offices
 - Furnishing shops/display rooms (such as: carpet shops, double glazing, garage doors)
 - Car/caravan show rooms
 - Second-hand car lots
 - Markets
 - Petrol stations
 - Garden centres
 - Art galleries (where art is for sale/hire)

- **Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:**
 - Hair and beauty services (such as: hairdressers, nail bars, beauty salons, tanning shops, etc)
 - Shoe repairs/key cutting
 - Travel agents
 - Ticket offices eg: for theatre
 - Dry cleaners
 - Launderettes
 - PC/TV/domestic appliance repair
 - Funeral directors
 - Photo processing
 - Tool hire
 - Care hire
 - Employment agencies
 - Estate agents and letting agents
 - Betting shops

- **Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of food and/or drink to visiting members of the public:**
 - Restaurants
 - Takeaways
 - Sandwich shops
 - Coffee shops
 - Pubs
 - Bars

- **Hereditaments which are being used as cinemas**

- **Hereditaments that are being used as live music venues:**
 - Live music venues are hereditaments wholly or mainly used for the performance of live music for the purpose of entertaining an audience. Hereditaments cannot be considered a live music venue for the purpose of business rates relief where a venue is wholly or mainly used as a nightclub or a theatre, for the purposes of the Town and Country planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).
 - Hereditaments can be a live music venue even if used for other activities, but only if those other activities (i) are merely ancillary or incidental to the performance of live music (e.g. the sale/supply of alcohol to audience members) or (ii) do not affect the fact that the primary activity for the premises is the performance of live music (e.g. because those other activities are insufficiently regular or frequent, such as a polling station or a fortnightly community event)
 - There may be circumstances in which it is difficult to tell whether an activity is a performance of live music or, instead, the playing of recorded music. Although we would expect this to be clear in most circumstances, guidance on this may be found in Chapter 16 of the statutory guidance issued in April 2018 under Section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003.

b) For assembly and leisure:

- **Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of sport, leisure and facilities to visiting members of the public (including for the viewing of such activities):**
 - Sports grounds and clubs
 - Museums and art galleries
 - Nightclubs
 - Sport and leisure facilities
 - Stately homes and historic houses
 - Theatres
 - Tourist attractions
 - Gyms
 - Wellness centres, spas, massage parlours
 - Casinos, gambling clubs and bingo halls

- **Hereditaments that are being used for the assembly of visiting members of the public:**
 - Public halls
 - Clubhouses, clubs and institutions

c) Hotels, guest & boarding premises and self-catering accommodation:

- **Hereditaments where the non-domestic part is being used for the provision of living accommodation as a business:**
 - Hotels, Guest and Boarding Houses
 - Holiday Homes
 - Caravan parks and sites

This guidance is not exhaustive, and it is for Authorities to determine whether particular properties not listed in the guidance notes are broadly similar in nature and if so, to consider them for relief. Conversely, properties that are not broadly similar in nature to those listed should not be eligible for the discount.

Ratepayers that occupy more than one property will be entitled to a discount for each of their eligible properties, subject to any cash cap applicable in year 2021/22.

3.5.1.4 Retail Discount Exclusions

The Government does not consider the following types of use to be retail use for the purposes of this discount:

- **Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:**
 - Financial services (e.g.: banks, building societies, cash points, bureaux de change, short term loan providers)
 - Medical services (e.g.: vets, dentists, doctors, osteopaths, chiropractors)
 - Professional services (e.g.: solicitors, accountants, insurance agents/financial advisors)
 - Post office sorting offices

- **Hereditaments that are not reasonably accessible to visiting members of the public**

3.5.1.5 Claiming Retail Discount

New applicants are required to complete an online application form available at through the link at :

<https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/supportforbusinesses>

Further information regarding the application process can be found on the same web page

3.1.5.6 Maximum Award

Financial Year 2020/21:

The total amount of Government funded discount available for each property under this scheme is 100% of the bill after all mandatory and discretionary reliefs have been applied but after discretionary reliefs granted under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act, for example: Hardship Relief and Discretionary Rate Relief for charity and not for profit organisations. The maximum discount awarded will not exceed the net liability.

Financial Year 2021/22:

The total amount of Government funded discount available for each property under this scheme is 100% for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021 and 66% for the period 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022 of the

bill after all mandatory and discretionary reliefs have been applied but after discretionary reliefs granted under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act , for example Hardship Relief and Discretionary rate relief for charity and not for profit organisations.

Where 100% discount during the period 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021 has been granted, a revised bill will be issued for the period 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022. The maximum discount awarded will not exceed the net liability.

3.5.1.7 Notification

Where the application is successful, a revised bill will be issued.

Where the application is not successful, the applicant will be notified accordingly

3.5.1.8 Requirement to make payment of amounts falling due

Ratepayers' must continue to pay any amount of business rate that fall due pending the outcome of an application. The Council may apply its normal recovery procedures in cases where payments are not received.

3.5.2.1 Nursery Discount

On 18 March 2020, in response to the coronavirus, the Government announced that many childcare providers would pay no business rates in 2020/21. At the Budget on 3 March 2021, the Chancellor announced that the Government would provide additional business rates support for nursery businesses in England occupying a qualifying property.

At the Budget on 3 March 2021, the Government announced that the Nursery Discount will also be extended for three months for eligible properties at 100%, uncapped, for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021. From 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022, the Nursery Discount will apply at 66% relief for eligible properties, with a cash limit of £105,000.

As these measures are 2020/21 and 2021/22 only, the Government is not changing legislation, however it will reimburse local authorities that use its

discretionary powers, introduced by the Localism Act (under Section 47 of the Local government Finance Act 1988, as amended) to grant relief in line with eligible criteria. Central Government will reimburse local authorities for their share of the discretionary relief under the rates retention scheme.

For the discount to be granted, the Council must make a decision within 6 months of the end of the financial year

3.5.2.2 Key Criteria for Nursery Discount Financial Year 2021/22

- i) 100% discount for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021, then.
- ii) 66% discount for the period 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022, and a cash cap of £105,000 *across all of their hereditaments. Where a person has a qualifying connection with another person then those persons should be treated as one person for the purposes of the cash cap. Persons shall be treated as having a qualifying connection where:*
 - a) *Both persons are companies, and*
 - i) *One is a subsidiary of the other, or*
 - ii) *Both are subsidiaries of the same company; or*
 - b) *Where only one person is a company, the other person (the ‘second person’) has such an interest in that company as would, if the second person were a company, result in its being the holding company of the other*
 - The Property must be occupied
 - There is no rateable value limit

3.5.2.3 Who can apply?

Nursery Discount will be awarded to businesses which are occupied by providers on Ofsted’s Early Years Register and which are wholly or mainly used for the provision of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

To qualify for the relief the hereditament should be wholly or mainly being used for the above qualifying purpose. In a similar way to other reliefs (such as charity relief), this is a test on use rather than occupation. Therefore, hereditaments which are occupied but not wholly or mainly used for the qualifying purpose will not qualify for the relief. For the avoidance of doubt,

hereditaments which have closed temporarily due to the government's advice on COVID-19 should be treated as occupied for the purposes of this relief.

3.5.2.4 Claiming Nursery Discount

New applicants are required to complete an online application form available at the link : <https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/supportforbusinesses>

Further information regarding the application process can be found on the same web page.

3.5.2.5 Maximum Award

Eligibility will be assessed and calculated on a daily basis

The total amount of Government funded discount available for each property under this scheme is 100% for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021 and 66% for the period 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022 of the bill after all mandatory and discretionary reliefs have been applied but after discretionary reliefs granted under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act , for example Hardship Relief and Discretionary rate relief for charity and not for profit organisations.

The maximum discount awarded will not exceed the net liability.

The amount awarded should be recalculated in the event of a change of circumstances. This could include, for example, a backdated change to the rateable value of the hereditament. This change of circumstances could arise during the year in question or during a later year.

It is the ratepayer's responsibility to inform the Council promptly of any changes that could affect their entitlement to a relief that has been awarded.

Any business that has been automatically re-awarded Nursery discount has the option to refuse the discount by emailing the council at business_rates@sandwell.gov.uk

3.5.2.6 Notification

Where the application is successful, a revised bill will be issued.

Where the application is not successful, the applicant will be notified accordingly.

3.5.2.7 Requirement to make a payment of amounts falling due

Ratepayers' must continue to pay any amount of business rate that fall due pending the outcome of an application. The Council may apply its normal recovery procedures in cases where payments are not received.

3.5.3.1 Covid Additional Relief Fund (CARF)

On the 25 March 2021 the government announced a new Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) of 1.5 billion.

In late December 2021 the Government, through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities introduced the regulations to support businesses entitled to Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund (otherwise known as CARF).

Relief will be granted to businesses using discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. This means that rather than providing a physical monetary payment, relief will be awarded through business rates accounts via our business rates systems. Revised bills will then be issued showing the amount of relief awarded. Central government will fully reimburse local authorities up to the maximum level of the allocations.

If an application for the **previous** financial year is received in time for it to be assessed by 30th September, any rate relief granted will be backdated to 1 April of that financial year or the date at which the premises were first occupied if this is later.

3.5.3.2 General Principles

This relief is payable in the 2021-22 financial year only and cannot be carried over to 2022/23.

Businesses must have been adversely affected by the pandemic and have been unable to adequately adapt to that impact.

Businesses that have received Expanded Retail relief or Nursery Discount or those which are unoccupied in 2021-22 are ineligible for CARF.

Reliefs must be awarded after mandatory and other discretionary reliefs funded by Section 31 grants have been applied.

Where a change in circumstance occurs during 2021-22 the award of relief may need to be recalculated.

3.5.3.3 Businesses Supported

Sandwell will administer this discretionary relief in the form of a direct award (to those businesses identified as meeting the eligible criteria) equal to 18% of their Business Rates liability after mandatory and other discretionary reliefs funded by Section 31 grants have been applied.

Full details of Sandwell’s Covid Additional Relief Fund (CARF) Policy can be found at

https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/download/2783/covid_additional_relie_fund_policy

3.5.3.4 Subsidy Allowances

The CARF scheme is subject to the subsidies chapter within the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). However, for CARF there is an exemption for subsidies under the value of approximately £2,243,000 per economic actor (broadly speaking, for example, a holding company and its subsidiaries). This allowance comprises 325,000 Special Drawing Rights (at current exchange rates about £343,000) for Small Amounts of Financial Assistance and a further £1,900,000 for COVID-19 related subsidy.

Therefore, to be awarded CARF you must not have claimed over the period 2019/20 to 2021/22 more than £2,243,000 from schemes which fell within the Small Amounts of Financial Assistance or COVID-19 related allowances. COVID-19 business grants you have received from local government and the 2019/20 Retail Relief should count towards this limit, but you should not count any Extended Retail Discount you have received since 1 April 2020. Further details of subsidy control can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-additional-relief-fund-carf-local-authority-guidance>

3.5.3.5 Refusing CARF relief

Sandwell will automatically award CARF relief to businesses it identifies as meeting the criteria, however, if a business exceeds the subsidy regulations, has not been affected by Covid-19 or has had a change in circumstances and is therefore not eligible for CARF relief then they must inform the council via the email address business_rates@sandwell.gov.uk

3.5.3.4 Requests for CARF relief

Businesses that have not been automatically awarded this relief and who feel are entitled can contact the Business Rates team via business_rates@sandwell.gov.uk

3.6.1 Local Newspaper Relief

From 1 April 2017 the Government provided funding to local authorities so that they can provide a discount worth £1,500 in year 2017/18 and 2018/19 for office space occupied by local newspapers. The Autumn budget 2018 extended this relief to financial year 2019/20.

In a Written Ministerial Statement 27 January 2020, the Government further extended this relief to apply in the financial years 2020/21 to 2024/25.

Please note that this relief will cease at the end of the 2024/25 financial year

3.6.2 Eligibility Criteria

This relief is administered under the local powers discount contained in Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

- The relief is available to local newspapers only
- The property must be occupied by a local newspaper and used wholly or mainly as offices for journalists and reporters
- Only one discount is available per newspaper title and per property
- Subject to subsidy limits

3.6.3 Exclusions

Exclusions to this relief are local council newspapers, online publications and local magazines

3.6.4 Applications

There is no application form for this relief. To apply please email the Business Rates team business_rates@sandwell.gov.uk giving full details of why you think your business should be considered for this relief and provide all information you think is relevant to support your application.

For the relief to be granted, the council must make a decision within 6 months of the end of the financial year

3.6.5 The Maximum Award

The total amount of government funded relief available is £1,500 for each financial year 2017/18 to 2024/25 for one local newspaper title and property

The relief will be applied against the net bill after all other reliefs

3.6.6 Notification

Where the application is successful, a revised bill will be issued.

Where the application is not successful, the applicant will be notified accordingly.

3.6.7 Requirement to make a payment of amounts falling due

Ratepayers' must continue to pay any amount of business rate that fall due pending the outcome of an application. The Council may apply its normal recovery procedures in cases where payments are not received.

3.7.1 Future Reliefs in 2022/23

Should the government introduce further Business Rates Reliefs during 2022/23 due to Covid-19 we will implement these in accordance with any legislation and/or Government guidance issued, and we will update the guidance contained in the Discretionary Relief Policy document accordingly

3.7.2 Extension of Transitional Relief

At the Autumn Statement in November 2021 the government announced that it would extend the current transitional relief scheme and the supporting small business scheme for one year to the end of the current revaluation cycle.

The scheme will restrict increases in bills to 15% for businesses with small properties (up to and including £20,000 rateable value) and 25% for medium properties (up to and including £100,000 rateable value).

Changes cannot be applied in time for the issue of annual bills for 2022/23 and therefore revised bills will be issued after 1st April 2022.

- Nursery Discount.
- Local Newspaper Relief
- Material Change in circumstances relief

DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEFS AND STATE AID/SUBSIDY CONTROL

State Aid/Subsidy Control Regulations

State Aid guidance was withdrawn on 1 January 2021. The Brexit transition period has ended and new rules on Subsidy Control now apply. For current information and to see how this may affect your business please go to <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complying-with-the-uks-international-obligations-on-subsidy-control-guidance-for-public-authorities>

If you believe your business will exceed the new subsidy control limits you must contact the Business Rates team via email at business_rates@sandwell.gov.uk to ask for any relief already awarded to be removed from your account

4. POLICY REVIEW

Policy Review

The policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if appropriate, to take account of operational adjustments, feedback and or changes to legislation.

5. EQUALITIES**Equalities**

This policy has been produced in line with the Council's obligation to the Public Sector Equality Duty provided by the Equality Act 2010. No adverse impact on any protected characteristic has been identified because of this policy.

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Report to Cabinet

23 March 2022

Subject:	Refurbishment of Thorn Close, Wednesbury
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Housing Councillor Zahoor Ahmed
Director:	Director of Housing Gillian Douglas
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Steve Greenhouse – Service Manager – Asset Management and Maintenance steve_greenhouse@sandwell.gov.uk Jonathan Rawlins – Business Manager – Asset Management and Maintenance Jonathan_rawlins@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations


- 1.1 That the Director of Housing, in consultation with the Director of Finance, be authorised to prepare tendering documentation and to procure a contractor, in accordance with The Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules, working on behalf of the Council, to deliver the refurbishment works to Thorn Close, Wednesbury.
- 1.2 That the Director of Housing be authorised to award the contract for the Refurbishment of Thorn Close, Wednesbury, as referred to in 1.1 above, to the successful contractor.
- 1.3 That the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to enter into or execute under seal any documentation in relation to the award of the contract.



2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 This report seeks approval to procure, award and enter into contract with a contractor to deliver the Refurbishment of Thorn Close, Wednesbury to continue the substantial investment in the Council's Housing Stock. The contracted works will deliver an upgrade to the 3 x 3 storey blocks of flats and maisonettes, consisting of 28 units. 4 new units of social housing will also be created on the ground floor by converting the existing rear access links and bin rooms/tenant storage areas.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods.</p> <p>This contract will provide a complete transformation of the existing buildings creating dwellings that will meet people's needs, in addition to providing 4 new affordable homes. The external walls of the blocks will receive insulated cladding that will conform with all relevant regulations. This treatment will not only improve the look of the block but will also improve energy efficiency which will assist in lowering tenants' fuel bills. The environment around the block will be modernised to provide much needed car parking as well as a more aesthetically pleasing area.</p> <p>Ambition 5: Our communities are built on mutual respect and taking care of each other, supported by all the agencies that ensure we feel safe and protected in our homes and local neighbourhoods.</p>
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4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The Council is seeking to procure, award and appoint a contractor to undertake the Refurbishment of Thorn Close, Wednesbury.
- 4.2 Thorn Close, Wednesbury is within the Wednesbury North ward.
- 4.3 On 18th October 2017 Cabinet approved the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – Housing Investment Programme report. The report set out a refreshed 10-year HRA investment plan to enable the delivery of new build projects and to continue investment into existing stock and communal spaces in our neighbourhoods.
- 4.4 One of the key aspects to the report was to maintain and where necessary upgrade our existing stock.
- 4.5 The proposed work comprises the complete refurbishment to the existing 28 units, in addition to providing an additional 4 units. The total number of properties in these blocks will therefore increase from 28 units to 32 units. The block currently comprises 12 flats on the ground floor and 16 maisonettes on the first floor.
- 4.6 The works include the upgrade of the whole external envelope which involves the construction of a new pitched roof and includes the installation of new fascia's, soffits and rainwater goods. All the external walls to be insulated and clad with a decorative mineral cement boarding, which will not only improve the thermal efficiency of dwellings but enhance the current visual aesthetics of the block. The proposed works will ensure that all properties are improved to a minimum rating of EPC-C.
- 4.6.1 Existing Individual Satellite systems will be removed and replaced with a new communal Sky Satellite TV system wired back to all properties in the block.
- 4.6.2 Access to the first-floor maisonettes is being improved by undertaking structural repairs to the external staircases and the replacement of the balustrading the style of which has been changed to include Glazed infill panels to provide better visibility.
- 4.6.3 Security will also be enhanced as the existing external lighting fixed around the block will be upgraded as part of the works being undertaken to the external façade.

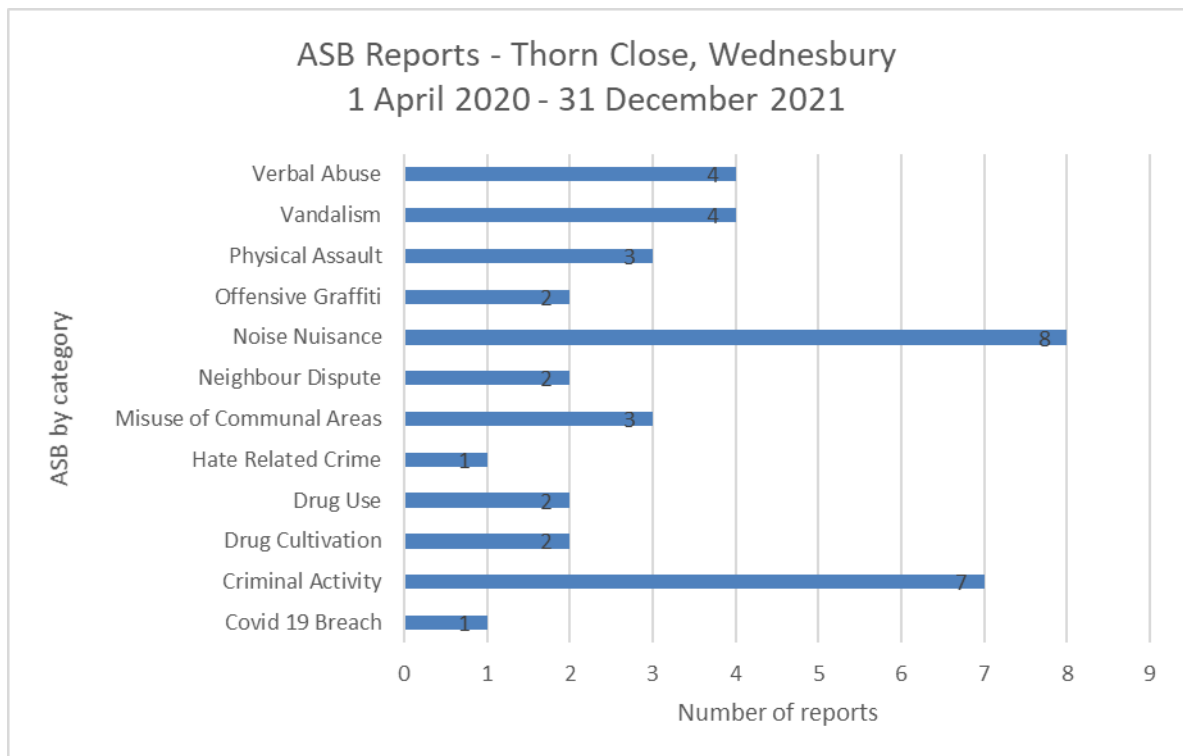


- 4.6.4 In addition, on the ground floor the existing rear access links and bin rooms/tenant storage areas are being removed and 4 new flats are being created.
- 4.6.5 Landscaping works will be undertaken formalising the existing parking provision, along with bollards to deter in appropriate parking. New areas for external bin storage have been created, new slabbing will be installed generally to existing paved areas and the existing access road and carpark areas being resurfaced. Low level fencing will be installed to delineate between public and private spaces.
- 4.7 The project aims to provide modern council owned accommodation to a high standard suitable for rent to council tenants and will provide an additional 4 new affordable homes.
- 4.8 The construction industry has experienced significant cost increases over this period. The budget estimate for this project is £3.096m and includes for fees, construction cost inflation and risk.
- 4.9 The budget estimate for the project is as detailed within Appendix 1
- 4.10 In addition to the refurbishment of the block it is recognised that we need to offer more intensive housing management and manage new lettings in to the block to ensure that ASB is minimised and the community is sustainable. The proposal is to specify a minimum number of visits that all new and existing tenants will receive in order to pick up issues at an early stage and problem solve. We will also look at enhanced caretaking for this block.
- 4.11 Environmental benefits - the refurbishment proposal will allow the negative physical attributes of the blocks to be designed out. This will offer the residents an aesthetically pleasing scheme and should also make Thorn Close easier to manage and maintain. The communal waste areas will be designed out. There is also an opportunity to involve the Police who could offer advice on physical crime prevention designs.
- 4.12 Lettings and Allocations – we will consider developing a Local Lettings Plan for Thorn Close to supplement the Council’s Allocations Policy. This will enable officers to manage risk and implement sensitive lets that take account of ASB levels in the block and the sustainability of the whole Thorn Close community.



4.13 Anti-Social Behaviour

There were 39 instances of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) that were reported between 1 April 2020 and 31 December 2021. Below is a breakdown of the types of issues that were reported during this period.



It took an average of 31 days from date reported for these incidents to be closed. 7 of the incidents were managed as ASB cases due to the severity of the incident and/or impact on the victim or location. There are currently 2 open cases that are being managed by the ASB team, these include a household who are alleged to have threatened to harm a neighbouring household and the other case involves noise nuisance. The Housing Team do not have any live incidents linked to Thorn Close.



5 Alternative Options

5.1 The alternatives are: -

Option 1

5.1.1 To not invest in our Council Housing Stock which in turn may lead to dissatisfaction from existing and potential new tenants as well as disrepair and additional burden on the Housing Revenue Account.

Option 2

5.1.2 To undertake refurbishment works to the existing 28 units, in addition to providing an additional 4 units, all as detailed within 4.6 above.

Option 3

5.1.3 To demolish the existing 28 units and construct 7 x 2 bedroomed semi-detached houses and 8 x 4 bedroomed semi-detached houses. This option has been estimated to cost approximately £5.285m and equates to an approximate expenditure of £0.352m per dwelling, all as detailed within Appendix 1. This option has been modelled for its viability by Finance using various financing options and it has been concluded that it does not represent value for money. If there is no other funding available, then the repayment period would be 51 years. By modelling the various funding options, the repayment period of the borrowing would not fall within the 40-year time period used for new build repayments on previous projects.

5.2 3 Options were explored and based on the above summary, Option 2 is recommended as the most viable option as this contributes towards the Council's aspirations of increasing Council owned affordable rented stock.

5.3 The benefit of refurbishing the site in addition to providing 4 new units is that construction of new properties would help towards providing a comprehensive approach for the redevelopment of the area and help prevent the current problems of fly tipping and anti-social behaviour.



6 Implications

Resources:	<p>The budget required for the contract is £3.096m. The HRA capital programme includes budgets for investment in existing stock. This is currently under review to ensure it continues to meet current and future needs and the resources for this project are available within unallocated budgets.</p> <p>Funding is also available from receipts generated from the sale of properties under RTB to fund the proposed 4 new flats. This will contribute £0.164m towards the project.</p> <p>Funding of £2.932 will be allocated from unallocated resources within the capital programme, along with £0.164m from unallocated 1-4-1 replacement receipts.</p>
Legal and Governance:	<p>The contract will be procured and awarded in accordance with the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules and Public Contract Regulations 2015.</p>
Risk:	No risks
Equality:	Works will be undertaken to all properties where required and as such an assessment has not been undertaken.
Health and Wellbeing:	The work will ensure the buildings remain wind and weather tight as well as improving the thermal efficiency.
Social Value	Social Value will be achieved through the inclusion of an Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) contained within the formal contract with the successful contractor. The plan will include contractual performance indicators such as work experience placements, apprenticeships in addition to school engagement and community activities.

7. Appendices

None

8. Background Papers

Cabinet Report 18 October 2017 (Minute No. 167/17)



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Report to Cabinet

23 March 2022

Subject:	Acquisition of land at Harvest Road, Rowley Regis for Council New Build
Cabinet Members:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth Councillor Iqbal Padda Cabinet Member for Housing Councillor Zahoor Ahmed
Director:	Director of Regeneration and Growth, Tony McGovern Director of Housing, Gillian Douglas
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officers:	Alan Martin, Housing Programme and Partnerships Manager Alan_martin@sandwell.gov.uk Stefan Hemming Principal Lead - Commercial Property Stefan_hemming@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given to the Director of Regeneration and Growth to agree heads of terms to acquire the site at Harvest Road, Rowley Regis from NHS Property Services.
- 1.2 That subject ton 1.1 above, the Director of Finance be authorised to allocate the sum of £292,500 from the Council’s Housing Revenue Account to purchase the site.



- 1.3 That the Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to enter into or execute under seal, if necessary, contract to complete the acquisition of the site.
- 1.4 That approval to be given to allocate the site at Harvest Road, Rowley Regis for the development of new affordable rent council housing, subject to planning permission being obtained.
- 1.5 That approval to be given to allocate funding from the Council's Housing Revenue Account to demolish the existing buildings/ structures at Harvest Road, Rowley Regis as a pre-requisite for site investigation to facilitate compliance with the Homes England funding timescales.
- 1.6 That the Director of Finance be authorised to allocate adequate resources from the Council's Housing Revenue Account, subject to being satisfied that the proposal provides value for money, to deliver the scheme and to utilise grant funding offered by Homes England, under the extended Homes England Strategic Partnership 1 Programme 2016 to 2021, to assist with the delivery of the project.
- 1.7 That subject to receiving the necessary Strategic Investment Unit appraisal approval mark of 65 or above, the Director of Regeneration and Growth, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Director of Housing, be authorised to prepare tendering documentation and subsequently procure, in accordance with any statutory regulations and the Council's Procurement and Financial Regulations, a contractor/contractors to develop, on behalf of the Council, the proposed housing scheme; to enter into or execute under seal any financial agreement in relation to the Homes England grant on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director of Finance.
- 1.8 That subject to 1.6 and 1.7 above, the Director – 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 development/partnership agreement, Homes England developer status, licence, undertaking, framework joining agreement, any consents or applications required for Planning or Highways appertaining to the delivery of the scheme and any other agreements with the procured contractor(s) and with the Homes England, as may be deemed necessary to facilitate development of the site with a housing scheme on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director of Regeneration and Growth.



- 1.9 That the Director of Regeneration and Growth in consultation with the Director of Finance and subject to confirmation of the funding rules applicable, to submit an application for funding to the WMCA/LEP and, in the event the funding bid is successful, the Director of Regeneration and Growth in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Director of Housing be authorised to accept the funding and execute under seal any financial agreement in relation to the WMCA/LEP grant on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director of Finance.
- 1.10 That following practical completion of each property at the site of Harvest Road, Rowley Regis, the Director of Housing be authorised to manage and let the properties built in accordance with the Council's housing allocation policy.
- 1.11 That the Director Finance be authorised to make any necessary adjustment required to appropriate the property for housing purposes.

2 Reasons for Recommendations




- 2.1 Following the introduction of greater flexibilities for local authorities the Council is able to develop this site with circa 8 homes (subject to planning consent), as part of the new strategic approach to provide more and better housing in the borough.
- 2.2 The opportunity to acquire this windfall site has arisen through partnership with the NHS Trust and an agreement that the site will be valued for affordable housing and disposed of to the Council as another public sector organisation.
- 2.3 The development of this site with new homes will result in the following benefits for the Council:
- increasing the numbers of authority owned stock which will ease pressure on our existing housing;
 - replacing housing stock lost through Right to Buy;
 - increasing income to the Housing Revenue Account;
 - Contributing positively to the financial position of the Council by generating New Homes Bonus and new Council Tax receipts.
 - Developing fit for purpose accommodation.
 - Increased good quality, energy efficient housing provision in the



Borough

- Increasing the levels of new build Council housing stock within the Borough contributing to target forecasts.
- Linking to the work of Think Local and Find-it-in-Sandwell approaches that will offer significant employment and training opportunities as well as additional community benefits to the local economy, including working with local supply chains and use of local labour.
- Producing positive outputs for community safety through the redevelopment of a vacant site.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people</p> <p>These new build properties will provide accommodation which better meets the needs of young families allowing / enabling for a better home educational environment</p>
	<p>People live well and age well</p> <p>The new properties will be built to the Building Regulations standard M4(2) “Accessible and Adaptable” which allows for easy adaptations of the properties and takes into consideration ease of access to the dwellings.</p>
	<p>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods</p> <p>The redevelopment of this under-utilised site with modern residential accommodation will improve the asset base of the borough by providing much needed affordable housing.</p> <p>The provision of this proposed scheme will provide Homes that meet people's needs. Sandwell's population is growing and people need quality housing that fits their individual requirements.</p> <p>The development of this site will be guided by the Local Planning Authority in accordance with approved planning and development guidance. This will seek to achieve a development of a quality that sets the highest architectural standards and which provides energy efficient buildings, in furtherance of the aims of the Environmental Policy for Sandwell.</p>





A strong and inclusive economy

The development of this scheme will support investing in businesses, people and jobs that will create wealth and tackle poverty. It will also actively promote Think Sandwell with the inclusion of apprenticeships and training opportunities within the contractual arrangements.

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The property is situated on Harvest Road, towards its junction with Dudhill Road in Rowley Regis and was previously utilised as a local Library.
- 4.2 The property benefits from planning in principle for a new build residential development of eight dwellings and the site extends to 0.19 hectares (0.471 acres).
 - 4.2.1 The Council and NHS Property Services jointly appointed Sanderson Weatherall Chartered Surveyors to provide a red book valuation of the site for disposal. Sanderson Weatherall have confirmed that the sum of £292,500 represents market value for the acquisition of the site.

5 Alternative Options

The Council does not pursue the acquisition of the property.

- 5.1 If the Council does not purchase the site the NHS will dispose of the site on the open market via auction. If this is the case it is likely that the site will be purchased for market sale property and the size of the site would not trigger the requirement for affordable housing. This would not increase the Council owned housing stock or replace properties lost through RTB and would result in the lost opportunity of acquiring land that could be used for this purpose.
- 5.2 This site would contribute to the delivery the Council's Homes England Strategic Partnership 1 Programme 2016 to 2021, to assist with achieving the delivery timetable of the programme which requires all sites to be started by December 2022.



6 Implications

<p>Resources:</p>	<p>Resources totalling £184m were allocated by Cabinet on 18th October 2017 for the period 2017 to 2027 to increase the number of homes within the HRA stock.</p> <p>The acquisition costs of the site and subsequent demolition costs will be funded from HRA reserves.</p> <p>Detailed financial modelling will be completed for this proposal based on the standard assumptions used by the Homes England for affordable housing. The financing of the scheme would be through Prudential Borrowing (which would leave the council with a debt to carry over the repayment period and beyond). When the appraisal for the development is carried out on the project it will include grant funding from the Homes England Strategic Partnership 1 Programme. This equates to £34,000 per unit.</p> <p>The rents charged on the properties will be affordable rents, which are 80% of market rent. This is in line with the recommendations approved by Cabinet on 14th November 2018 whereby all new build properties rent will be set as an affordable rent.</p>
<p>Legal and Governance:</p>	<p>There are no specific immediate legal or statutory implications arising from the proposal outlined in this report. However, on-going legal implications regarding the development of land or property will be addressed fully in accordance with legal requirements.</p> <p>Pursuant to the Localism Act 2011 (Ss 1 – 7), Local Authorities have a general power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do.</p> <p>Advice will be taken from the Council’s Procurement Strategy Officer and Legal Services to ensure that the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the council’s procurement and contract rules are complied with.</p>



	Pursuant to S.120 of the Local Government Act 1972, Councils are authorised to acquire by agreement any land (whether situated inside or outside their area) for the purposes of any of their functions under any enactment, or for the benefit, improvement or development of their area.
Risk:	<p>The Corporate Risk Management Strategy (CRMS) will continue to be complied with throughout, in identifying and assessing the significant risks associated with this strategic proposal. This includes (but is not limited to) political, legislation, financial, environmental and reputation risks. Based on the information provided it is the officers' opinion that for the initial risks that have been identified, arrangements are in place to manage and mitigate these effectively.</p> <p>The current assessment has identified not identified any "red" risks that need to be reported at this stage. Actions have been put in place to mitigate this risk.</p>
Equality:	An Equality Impact Assessment screening exercise has been carried out and a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.
Health and Wellbeing:	<p>Currently the site is vacant and under-utilised. The redevelopment of the site with modern residential accommodation will improve the asset base of the borough by providing much needed affordable, high quality, energy efficient housing.</p> <p>This will result in creating sustainable communities, create wealth, tackle poverty, improve health and wellbeing and reduce certain types of anti-social behaviour and crime.</p>
Social Value	The development of this scheme will support investing in businesses, people and jobs. It will also actively promote Think Sandwell with the inclusion of apprenticeships, training opportunities and community engagement within the contractual arrangements



7. Appendices

Appendix A - Plan

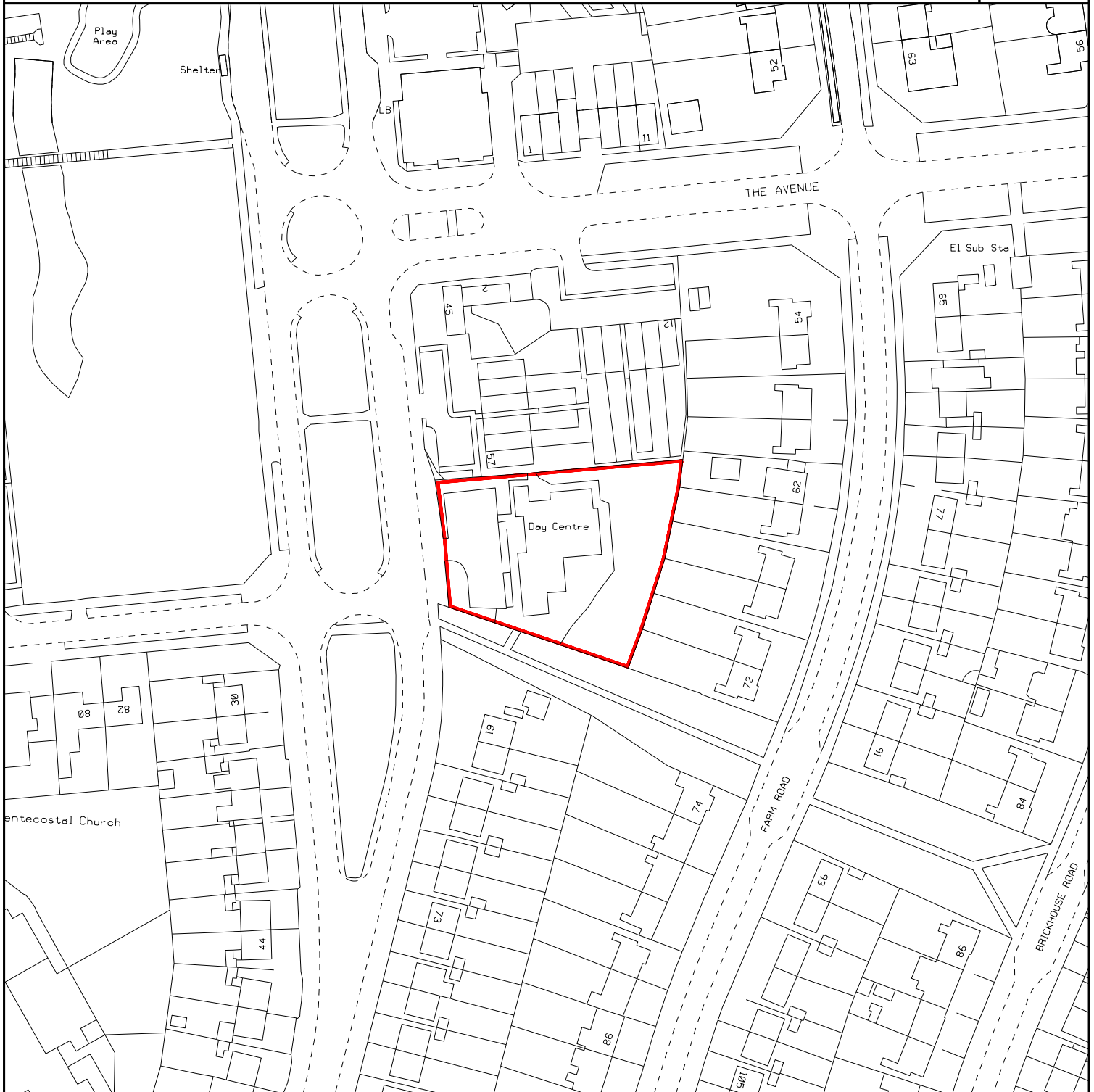
8. Background Papers


None



REGENERATION AND PLANNING

STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT



LEGEND	DESCRIPTION	SANDWELL	TERRIER
	LAND AND PREMISES OFF HARVEST ROAD ROWLEY REGIS	S09687SW	323
 Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council Page 469	AREA	SCALE	CENTROID
	1922.5 M2 2299.4 Y2	1:1250	396294/287402
	PLAN NUMBER	DRAWN	DATE
	N/A	DM	24-NOV-2021
THIS MAP IS BASED UPON ORDNANCE SURVEY MATERIAL WITH THE PERMISSION OF ORDNANCE SURVEY ON BEHALF OF THE CONTROLLER OF HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE ©CROWN COPYRIGHT UNAUTHORISED REPRODUCTION INFRINGES CROWN COPYRIGHT AND MAY LEAD TO PROSECUTION OR CIVIL PROCEEDINGS SANDWELL MBC LICENCE NO 100032119 2021			

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Report to Cabinet

23 March 2022

Subject:	Social Work Workforce - Market Supplement
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Simms, Cabinet Member for Children and Education
Director:	Director of Children and Education Michael Jarrett
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Michael Jarrett, Director of Children and Education

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given to Sandwell Children's Trust adopting the market supplement policy of £2,500 per annum for all 168 case holding social workers and funding the corresponding increase in the Contract Sum by a maximum of £432,000.
- 1.2 That in connection with 1.1 above, the additional cost of £432,000 be funded from the Council's Social Care earmarked reserve.

2. Reasons for Recommendations


- 2.1 In line with many other councils and Trusts across the country Sandwell Children's Trust faces workforce challenges regarding the recruitment and retention of social workers. Discussions with the Department for Education and regional colleagues clearly show that the demand for talented and experienced social workers outweighs the supply.



It appears highly likely that the pandemic has exacerbated this issue, with many social workers choosing to temporarily leave the profession due to burnout. Within the West Midlands, these pressures are particularly acute, with a number of neighbouring authorities experiencing the same challenges.

- 2.2 It is within this national and regional context that the Trust has promoted its new brand and taken a proactive approach to social worker recruitment and retention. Research shows that social workers are attracted to places and choose to stay due to a combination of factors: feeling safe; good management support; the culture of the organisation; having good development opportunities; and receiving competitive pay and benefits. We also know that manageable workloads and the ability to work flexibly contribute to workforce stability.
- 2.3 Whilst pay is not the sole factor to attract and retain social workers, it has always been important. Recent detailed market analysis confirms that the salary band for Children Social Workers and Children Senior Social Workers is not competitive within the region.

3. How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people and in particular for children and young people that need more support together with our safeguarding duties and the ability to build resilience across the workforce. The recommendation in this report supports the desire of the council to focus resources on the specific needs and aspirations of the community. This contributes to the Council's Vision 2030 Ambition 1 – Raising aspirations and resilience, Ambition 3 – Young people to have skills for the future, Ambition 4 – Raising the quality of schools.</p>
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4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 In 2018, the Trust, in consultation with SMBC, introduced a market supplement to be paid to social workers (including Team Managers but excluding Newly Qualified Social Workers) within the previous Care Management service. The aim of the market supplement was in direct response to a challenging situation faced by the Trust regarding the recruitment and retention of social workers in this service which focused on children in need of support, children in need of protection and children subject to court proceedings. The market supplement was set at £2,500. This amounts to £150k per annum, which continues to be included within the Trust's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which is agreed by the Council.
- 4.2 Over the past 12 months and in line with the Trust's improvement plan (endorsed by SMBC) there has been a sharper focus on reviewing and gaining a deeper understanding on how the overall system impacts on the demand for statutory children's services and how we can better deliver more efficient and effective services which drive better outcomes through timely interventions. Key areas of activity here include:
- A greater focus on prevention at every level
 - Strengthening the approach to threshold application
 - Working with partners to ensure children receive the right support at the right time by building more effective early support and intervention
 - Better alignment of services which support children and families at the onset of interventions.

This is set against a backdrop of a transformation programme aimed at improving practice and outcomes for children across the entire system, ultimately reducing the need for children entering care and remaining with their families.

- 4.3 As a result of these principles and in recognition of the breadth of care management responsibilities, the Trust undertook a realignment of social care teams to create:



- a service which brought together both the assessment services and care management services;
- newly aligned Assessment and Intervention teams
- newly aligned Child Protection and Court teams
- a locality model, whereby each locality consists of both types of teams across 3 distinct localities, with each locality being managed by a separate Head of Service.

4.4 Although the locality model is still new, feedback from Trust staff and partners strongly indicates it is best for our staff and the families we work with. However, it does not address the fact that regionally Sandwell needs to be financially attractive in a way that's both realistic and sustainable. There needs to be parity across the workforce and it needs to be addressed within existing pay structures.

4.5 It is important that parity is achieved, irrespective of any practice model or structural arrangement. This needs to be considered in a wider context of a volatile social work market nationally and recent approaches across the region has meant that the Trust and Director of Children and Education (DCS) have had to reassess the overall position on social work pay.

Key Workforce Challenges- regional and national

4.6 The Trust are operating in a difficult labour market where there is a shortage of children social workers. The 2020 Government Statistics for Children's Social Work Workforce confirmed that there were 6,113 children social worker vacancies with an agency workforce rate of 15.4%. In December 2021, The Trust's Agency Provider confirmed across the 14 West Midlands Local Authorities there were over 300 children social worker vacancies. Additionally, during 2021 as a result of the pandemic and further children social worker shortages there has been an increase in agency social worker recruitment driving up agency salaries and the attraction of permanent workers into agency working e.g. the creation of project teams, social workers being paid senior



practitioner (or Team Manager) rates and flexible working practices making neighbouring regions more accessible with higher hourly rates not subject to the West Midlands Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

- 4.7 There has been a significant impact of the pandemic on the Trust and its staffing levels. The Trust's business continuity arrangements are in place and staffing levels across the organisation are assessed. This oversight has extended to the Council with regular liaison taking place with the Director of Children and Education (DCS) throughout the pandemic.

Approach to Recruitment and Retention

- 4.8 With the support of the Council, the Trust is striving to be an employer of choice for all roles and, a place where social work can flourish, where staff are valued and are ambitious for children and young people. This principle underpins the whole approach regarding The Trust's workforce which is set out in the "**12 Reasons to work for Sandwell**" (please see appendix 1).
- 4.9 This is a comprehensive plan of people commitments and was developed to set out the Trust's recruitment and retention activity. These 12 reasons publicly commit to areas such as 'inspirational and visible leadership, a learning organisation, manageable workloads, career progression, a stable and permanent workforce and a work-life balance'. Salary makes up one part of a total reward package, which also includes benefits such as pension, annual leave allowances, flexible working, and learning and development. An attractive and affordable total reward package plays a significant role in the Trust's drive to attract and retain staff. Organisations can employ a variety of options to entice and reward their staff, each with their own opportunities and risks.
- 4.10 The 12 Reasons commitments cover both the total reward elements but also identify factors such as a clear vision and purpose, our leadership and great management, on-going development of our people and manageable work-loads, thereby creating a culture where staff want to work for the Trust and where social work practice can flourish. Other



factors that impact individual decision making include; location, brand (e.g. Ofsted rating, reputation).

4.11 As well as the 12 Reasons, the Trust has focused on taking a whole systems approach to recruitment and retention of staff. This means focusing heavily on early help and prevention. Alongside council colleagues and the voluntary sector, the Trust has been working closely with our partners to make sure they fully understand their responsibilities and the need to identify and respond to needs and intervening as early as possible, rather than families being supported by intrusive statutory services via the Trust. The impact of this is twofold: less children require statutory services because they are helped via a robust early help strategy; and, over time, if only those children who require statutory services by the Trust, then it means more families being supported in a more effective and efficient way. The partnership's Early Help strategy was launched on 17 March 2022.

5 Market Analysis

5.1 In February 2021, a comprehensive benchmarking of salaries within and outside the region was undertaken and presented to the Trust's remuneration committee. In March 2022, an updated benchmarking exercise was undertaken for the 14 West Midlands Local Authorities.

5.2 The key points identified in the benchmarking exercise are as follows:

- The Trust's Newly Qualified Social Worker salary is competitive
- The Trust's Team Manager salary is competitive
- Since February 2021, a number of West Midlands Local Authorities have introduced additional financial incentives to attract social workers (ranging from £2,000 to £10,000)

5.3 When comparing the Trust's Social Worker pay to the 14 West Midlands local authorities, **excluding** any incentives:

- The top of the Social Worker band is lower than 8 of the 14 LAs
- The top of the Senior Social Worker band is lower than 6 LAs



- 5.4 When comparing the Trust's Social Worker pay to the 14 West Midlands local authorities, including any incentives (excluding golden hellos):
- The top of the Social Worker band is lower than 8 of the 14
 - The top of the Trust's Senior Social Worker band is lower than 7
- 5.5 If the Trust were to **remove** its market supplement and the other 14 West Midlands local authorities **retain** their current incentives (excluding golden hellos), it would mean:
- The top of the Social Worker pay band is joint lowest
 - The top of the Senior Social Worker band is lower than 9

6. Options Appraisal

- 6.1. An options appraisal has been conducted and included an assessment against key criteria:
- Achieving pay parity
 - Affordability/ financial implications
 - Alignment with the new operating model
 - Market competitiveness
 - Likelihood of recruiting and retaining permanent social workers and/or stemming the flow of permanent social workers leaving the Trust
- 6.2 When considering financial implications the following assumptions have been made:
- The market supplement will apply to circa 168 permanent social workers (excluding newly qualified social workers)
 - The market supplement is a pensionable payment and is subject to National Insurance
 - The market supplement is paid monthly in 12 equal payments and reviewed annually.
- 6.3 A number of options have been considered as follows:



- i. **Maintain the current position for those Social Workers who are currently in receipt of the market supplement** – The risk here is that this would not achieve pay parity across the social worker workforce with some employees being paid more than others within the same teams. This would create a significant risk of challenge. Given the market analysis and regional pay rates this would impact on the Trust’s ability to recruit and retain permanent social workers.
- ii. **Remove the market supplement from all Social Workers that are currently in receipt of the market supplement** – Whilst this would achieve pay parity, the significant risk is that the Trust would be one of the lowest paid for Social worker roles in the region. It is highly likely that those in receipt of the supplement would choose to leave the Trust to higher paid roles elsewhere. Consequently, workloads would increase with an impact on the ability to do effective work with children, young people and families. This in turn would create more financial pressure to manage demand and child protection duties safely as the Trust would need to secure additional higher cost agency staff.
- iii. **Re-align the existing £150k budget to all ‘case holding’ social workers across the operational service** – whilst this would achieve pay parity, the risk here is that it means the social worker pay would not be as attractive for potential permanent staff.



iv. **Introduce a market supplement of £2,500** – this would achieve pay parity across the social worker establishment and whilst social workers would still not be the highest paid across the region, it does mean the Trust is more attractive, when considering pay alongside all the other benefits of working in Sandwell (please see 5.4). The risk with this option is the increased financial burden to the council which would need to be absorbed alongside other competing pressures. However, in line with other areas, the financial risks of not taking this approach are greater in that it would cost more to continue paying inflated agency worker costs.

Recommended Option, including Finances

6.4 It is recommended to introduce a £2,500 per annum Market Supplement for all 168 case holding social workers. The total annual and recurring cost of this equates to £582k (plus inflation), of which £150k is within the Contract Sum, resulting in a potential maximum additional cost of £432K per annum recurring. This is the maximum cost, assuming all 168 social workers are permanently employed, with 0% agency staff. If achieved, this would create a saving that could in the main offset the additional cost of £432k.

6.5 The Council and the Trust have agreed the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) that enables the Council to set an annual Contract Sum. The Medium-Term Financial Plan details the main areas of expenditure (staffing and care costs) and the savings plan that the Trust is committed to achieve. The Trust, along with the Council, have considered the extent to which the Trust can accommodate this additional cost without undermining the deliverability of the commitments already set out in the MTFP. The Trust has already made significant savings and has committed to achieve further savings over the medium term with clear plans in place as agreed with the council. Over the last 4 years the Trust has made efficiencies by reconfiguring Directorates, reducing headcount with services becoming more integrated.



The council, along with the Trust, has reviewed alternative options to mitigate the request for additional funding without it impacting on the wider system and how the Trust effectively supports children, young people and families and delivers the commitments already set out within the MTFP.

- 6.6 As expected the key cost area is the cost of caring for children who are in care. With oversight from the council, the Trust remains committed to continue driving forward strategies to make significant savings in this area. The Council will continue to work with the Trust through the arrangement to monitor activity and spend.
- 6.7 The Council is required to negotiate and agree the Contract Sum payable to the Trust each year as part of the budget setting process. This process was largely complete by December 2021 and at that point the costs in this report were not included as work was still ongoing to identify the potential risks and costs relating to social worker pay.
- 6.8 As part of the Local Government Finance Settlement the Council received additional Social Care grant compared to the 2021/22 allocation, and this was contributed to an earmarked reserve in anticipation of additional spend pressures likely to emerge in 2022/23 due to demand and inflationary pressures. It is proposed that this reserve is used to fund the increase in the Contract Sum of up to £432k. The actual cost may be less than this if the Trust are able to recruit more permanent social workers and reduce reliance on agency staffing, and the additional payments will be made quarterly on an open book accounting basis. The Finance Team will agree a process with the Trust for claiming this funding. The Social Care grant is an ongoing revenue grant, although it is subject to change in the future as part of any Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlements.



6.9 The Council have in place robust monitoring arrangements with the Trust through the Strategic Partnership Board, Operational Partnership Board and regular liaison between the Director of Children and Education (DCS) and Trust Chief Executive, as well as the Council's CEO and Lead Member for Children, that will enable the Council to continue to have oversight of both the delivery of the improvement plan and MTFP. The Council and Trust will use the existing mechanisms to monitor progress and look at how this additional funding can lead to decreases in costs over the medium term.

7. Implications

Resources:	<p>Introducing the Market Supplement of £2,500 would equate to £582k per annum on the assumption that all 168 social workers are permanent.</p> <p>The Council has agreed the Trust's Medium Financial Plan and Contract Sum for 2022/23. Included within this is a £150k allocated to the Market Supplement. The additional cost would equate to £432k and will be paid based on an open book accounting basis to ensure additional payments are accurate. The costs will be funded from the Council's Social Care earmarked reserve.</p>
Legal and Governance:	Potential equal pay challenge
Risk:	<p>The risk is the impact associated with any social worker potentially losing pay and the Trust not being financially competitive within the region.</p> <p>The risk of a not achieving a competitive social worker salary is fewer permanent workers joining the Trust and potentially further staff leaving the Trust for higher salaries leading to an increase in agency costs and compromising the quality of support for vulnerable children, young people and families.</p>



Equality:	An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and ensuring that case holding social workers pay is equitable is a key aspect of this Report.
Health and Wellbeing:	The Trust continues to support children and families in Sandwell, having the right number of experienced permanent social workers will ensure the quality of service improves so does the impact they have on improving the health and wellbeing of children and families.
Social Value	The Trust supports children to achieve, feel safe, be supported and access opportunities. The Trust supports care leavers to access education, employment and training. Having strong governance and oversight supports the Trust to achieve service improvement and better support children and families in Sandwell.

8. Appendices

None

9. Background Papers

None



12 reasons to work in Sandwell Children's Trust

1 A new Trust, a new beginning

- Small enough to be a tight knit unit
- Large enough to offer fantastic opportunities



2 Clear vision and purpose

- Our purpose of 'improving the lives of children and young people' is at the heart of everything we do



3 Inspirational, visible leadership and great management

- Connected leadership that truly knows the workforce, and listens, acts and cares




4 Learning Organisation

- 15 days per year professional development
- Learning placements to expand your knowledge
- Effective supervision
- High quality induction



5 Manageable case loads

- Committed to lowering cases to an average of 15-18 per worker
- Reduced caseloads for ASYEs and Advanced Practitioners



6 Excellent career progression

- Clear and supported career progression
- Grown your own scheme
- Frontline & Firstline
- Recognised ASYE and Aspire Management programmes



7 Stable and permanent workforce

- A stable, dedicated and committed workforce
- Flexible workforce with 20% agency staff



8 Competitive rewards

- Competitive salary with excellent benefits package
- Up to £6,500 relocation package
- Market force supplements considered in hard to recruit areas
- Refer a friend scheme
- Your SWE Registration paid for

9 User-friendly IT systems

- Class leading social care system
- Each social worker gets laptop and smartphone
- Committed to enhancing and improving your IT



10 Great accommodation

- Great working environment in refurbished buildings
- Committed to agile working



11 Good work-life balance

- Flexible and family friendly policies
- Opportunity for working patterns that suit you



12 Well looked after

- Range of wellbeing offers and initiatives
- Compliment and cake sessions
- A personal thankyou goes a long way




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Report to Cabinet

23 March 2022

Subject:	Sandwell’s Regeneration Strategy, Pipeline and Inclusive Recovery Action Plan for Business.
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Growth: Councillor Iqbal Padda
Director:	Director of Regeneration & Growth Tony McGovern
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officers:	Tammy Stokes, Service Manager- Growth and Spatial Planning tammy_stokes@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

That Cabinet;

- 1.1 Approve the Regeneration Strategy for Sandwell and the associated appendices, the Regeneration Pipeline (appendix A) and the Inclusive Recovery Action Plan for Business (appendix B), which taken together set out the corporate regeneration priorities for the period 2022 to 2027. The Regeneration Pipeline comprising the following number of schemes in each category:
- Transport - 23
 - Housing - 15
 - Education & Skills - 10
 - Sustainability - 5
 - Heritage Regeneration - 4
 - Employment - 3



- Town Centre – 2
- Health - 2
- HRA New build programme – 1
- Digital Connectivity Programme – 1

- 1.2 That the Inclusive Economy Deal (March 2020) is rescinded and the Regeneration Strategy for Sandwell, the Regeneration Pipeline and Inclusive Recovery Action Plan for Business, taken together become the up to date, strategic documents outlining the corporate Regeneration priorities for the period 2022 to 2027.
- 1.3 That authority be delegated to the Director of Regeneration and Growth to make any non-material amendments to the Regeneration Strategy, the Regeneration Pipeline and the Inclusive Recovery Action Plan.
- 1.4 That approval be given to create a reserve for the projected underspend of £85,000 for 2021/22 of New Burdens funding and that it be used in 2022/23 to support the delivery of the Regeneration Strategy and its appendices particularly focusing on initiatives to support business recovery.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 This report seeks approval to adopt the Regeneration Strategy for Sandwell and the associated appendices, the Regeneration Pipeline (appendix A) and the Inclusive Recovery Action Plan for Business. (appendix B).
- 2.2 Sandwell’s Regeneration Strategy (the strategy) sets out local requirements (evidence of need), constraints on activity (barriers) and opportunities (via a site pipeline) outlining the direction of travel for the Council to prioritise its resources to deliver transformational change for the Borough.
- 2.3 Following discussions with officers involved in the delivery of infrastructure from across the organisation, horizon scanning, and discussions with our partner organisations, the strategy sets out practical actions for regeneration which support our wider economic goals.



- 2.4 Alongside the Inclusive Recovery Action Plan for Business, the Regeneration Strategy presents a clear view of the Sandwell economy and our infrastructure requirements. It will enable Sandwell to shape regeneration plans to meet the needs of local people and business, setting a path towards a higher quality of life for our residents, more well-paid and fulfilling jobs, and, through these, a wealthier Sandwell.
- 2.5 The Inclusive Economic Deal (IED) was approved by Cabinet on 26th February 2020. The primary focus of the IED was to embed a new approach to regeneration in Sandwell, to ensure a focus on making Sandwell a better place to live, work and do business – improving individual and community wellbeing, living standards and employment opportunities while also encouraging sustained investment to benefit residents and businesses across our six towns. The Regeneration Strategy and its two appendices builds on the IED, reflecting new (post covid-19) economic challenges and opportunities. Therefore, it is intended to rescind the IED and replace it with the Regeneration Strategy and its appendices as the councils most up to date strategic regeneration document.
- 2.6 The approval and adoption of the strategy, pipeline and economic recovery plan will give us clarity to deliver our vision for Sandwell over the next five years and deliver the following benefits for Sandwell:
- Estimated total investment of over £1.8 billion pounds by 2027.
 - The delivery of over 4300 new homes on major regeneration sites (including the council house build programme).
 - Investment in ten education and skills facilities in the Borough totalling over £57m pounds of investment.
 - Over 4000 new learners / apprentices assisted.
 - £63m investment in new employment/ commercial floorspace which will create new jobs or safeguard existing jobs in the Borough.
 - A pipeline of 23 transport projects and investment including improvements to metro infrastructure, improved walking and cycling routes, ULEV vehicle charging points, and SPRINT delivery amongst others totalling an estimated £282m investment.
 - Town Centre investment in West Bromwich of circa £14m linked to the Towns Fund retail diversification and urban greening projects. A pipeline of other investment linked to heritage preservation (such as



the Wednesbury High Street Heritage Action Zone/ Chances Glassworks/ Soho Foundry) and climate change innovation (heat network development, the heat to energy plant in West Bromwich, and a potential battery energy storage site).




- Move towards a balance of investments across Sandwell's 6 towns including, delivery of Towns Fund projects in West Bromwich, Smethwick & Rowley Regis, and the delivery of new homes and commercial floorspace in Tipton, new transport connectivity schemes, new homes, and education infrastructure in Oldbury, and new homes, a health centre, and education infrastructure in Wednesbury.

2.7 Authority is requested for the Director of Regeneration and Growth to make any non-material amendments to the documents. This is to pick up any minor drafting changes to ensure consistency across the three documents, update graphics, and address any typographical errors.




2.8 During the fourth quarter of the 2021/22 financial year the Regeneration and Growth Directorate (Business Growth Team) received £85,000 in New Burdens funding from Central Government to support the delivery of Additional Restriction Grants. A reserve for this funding from financial year 2021/22 is requested. The reserve will be used in 2022/23 to support the delivery of the Regeneration Strategy and its appendices particularly focusing on business interventions.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?



	<p><i>Best start in life for children and young people-Education Issues.</i></p> <p>Education and skills infrastructure are crucial to sustaining the needs of a growing population. Through the strategy, pipeline and economic recovery plan we will prioritise new major education and skills facilities from primary to higher level skills.</p> <p>Regeneration plans look to increase existing skills provision and enhance learning facilities, especially in key sectors, raising skills levels that match local employment opportunities and supporting improvement in performance of our schools. This will pave the way to a more prosperous future, preparing residents for future industries, and, in time, bringing good quality and well-paying jobs to the borough.</p>
	<p><i>People live well and age well.</i></p> <p>The proposals and initiatives contained within the strategy and pipeline will encourage additional health facilities, together with regeneration which promotes healthy activity and lifestyles through high quality placemaking.</p>
	<p><i>Strong resilient communities.</i></p> <p>The strategy and pipeline of developments contribute to the vision of creating a wealthier Sandwell across all 6 Towns. We will use this framework to prioritise creating strong resilient communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an inviting place to live, with thriving communities and energy efficient housing in well planned neighbourhoods. - high quality employment space for decent jobs. - a convenient and reliable public transport and active travel network, which people prefer to private cars. - exciting, busy, and green centres where people meet throughout the day, with a thriving cultural and night-time economy.



	<p><i>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods.</i></p> <p>The strategy, pipeline and economic recovery plan will contribute to our priority for the next five years to increase the pace of change, unlocking sites and supporting market providers to deliver housing that is right for the place. We aim to improve our existing homes whilst increasing the amount of affordable housing in Sandwell, which includes a mix of private, shared ownership, and affordable rented housing tenures.</p> <p>We will build on the ambitious masterplans, visions, and developer interest to create sustainable and pleasant environments for residents and which attract new people to Sandwell. Managing these developments, and ensuring they fulfil our ambitions will ensure that they do more than deliver housing, and kickstart economic growth for the wider economy.</p>
	<p><i>A strong and inclusive economy.</i></p> <p>The strategy, pipeline contribute and economic recovery plan all work towards the vision of creating a wealthier Sandwell across all 6 Towns. We are working to build an inclusive economy in Sandwell, working with residents to improve their places and increase opportunities here. We will work with local communities to explore grass-roots regeneration here, supporting projects that emerge across the borough.</p>
	<p><i>A connected and accessible Sandwell.</i></p> <p>The strategy and pipeline outline the scope of the opportunity to connect Sandwell’s major hubs to the wider region and knit neighbourhoods together with public and active transport proposals.</p> <p>Furthermore, support the rollout and take up of full-fibre and 5G across Sandwell</p>



4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The strategy will bring together the elements of regeneration needed to build a wealthier and more sustainable Sandwell. It encompasses the different aspects of our built environment: housing; town centres, high streets, and neighbourhoods; employment sites; education and skills; transport; digital connectivity; and sustainability. These are important levers for Sandwell which can help to create the environment for inclusive growth.
- 4.2 In terms of economic context; Sandwell is the third largest Borough in the West Midlands and the most productive economy in the Black Country. However, it is also the 8th most deprived local authority in England, with major health deprivation and high Covid-19 infection rates, nationally through the pandemic. In recent years skills levels have improved but there remains a low level of skills across our communities. Sandwell has major manufacturing and logistics strength with many successful exporting businesses however we have a post-industrial environmental legacy providing a challenging environment and poor supply of land. The regeneration strategy is a tool to support economic growth through the provision of new infrastructure in Sandwell.
- 4.3 The strategy is based around four priorities (Accelerate, Amplify, Curate & Deliver) which will guide our regeneration strategy and delivery. This strategy is then divided into seven delivery themes that cover each aspect of regeneration in Sandwell. For each of the areas within regeneration that we will act on over the next five years, we have developed a specific ambition, and a set of practical actions to help achieve them: The need to meet out climate change objectives cuts across each theme;
- Housing – facilitate and deliver more new homes and more affordable homes across the borough, faster.
 - Employment – support businesses and sectors with space to grow.
 - Placemaking – work with our communities to transform our town centres, high streets, and neighbourhoods in the right way for their place and to their full potential.



- Education and Skills – deliver new learning facilities at primary, secondary and further education levels to improve education and opportunity for people of all ages
- Transport – connect Sandwell’s major hubs to the wider region and knit neighbourhoods together with public and active transport.
- Digital – support the rollout and take up of full-fibre and 5G across Sandwell.
- Sustainability – invest in transformative energy infrastructure to support the transition to net zero.

4.4 **Housing - The Issues;** the strategy highlights the growing demand for housing in Sandwell (since 2006 there has been a shortfall of nearly 5000 homes delivered in Sandwell), the growing need for larger homes, and the land and viability constraints that, whilst not unique to Sandwell, require significant public-sector investment to bring forward.

Housing – The Opportunity; West Bromwich Town Centre is a major opportunity to attract young professionals supported by a vibrant town centre supported by the West Bromwich Masterplan. The Grove Lane and Rolfe Street areas of Smethwick have the potential to support up to 1200 new homes creating a new quality residential quarter. The Smethwick to Birmingham Area Framework and Grove Lane Masterplan provides the context for this regeneration. The Friar Park development site just off Friar Park Road has the potential to deliver circa 600 new homes in the north of the Borough a masterplan for this site is in development in Partnership with the WMCA. The strategy also sets out the need to invest in retrofitting council house stock.

4.5 **Employment – The Issues;** the strategy highlights the high demand for employment land across the West Midlands and the Black Country linked to our connectivity and proximity to Birmingham. There is a particularly high demand for grade A logistics space. However, there’s insufficient land availability in Sandwell to fulfil requirements. Furthermore, the limited land that Sandwell does have remains undeveloped due to remediation and assembly costs.

Employment – The Opportunity; the strategy recommends using employment land strategically to support our local businesses and



organisations to grow. Furthermore, we are exploring the development of a council led employment land vehicle, identifying small, unattractive sites, and preparing them for development. A revolving fund, whereby the council uses a pot of money to acquire 'unviable' sites, prepare them, then resell them back to market developers, could be an effective means to prepare land and spark growth. Cabinet approvals will be sought at a later date for these specific opportunities but through the adoption of the overall strategy, it will give clear indication to the future direction of travel over the next 5 years to explore these options.

- 4.6 **Placemaking – The Issues;** the strategy highlights post Covid-19 uncertainty and the increase in internet shopping has resulted in low demand for retail units and high vacancy rates across our town centres. There are limited leisure and cultural offers across our town centres and almost no night time economy that attracts visitors, residents into our towns after daytime hours.

Placemaking – The Opportunity; the strategy recommends tailoring the solution to the needs of an area building on its local identity and strengths. It recommends prioritising bringing new businesses into town centres and high streets and supporting start-up businesses to locate in empty premises (this is set out in more detail in the Recovery Plan for Businesses). Town centres serve both an important economic and civic purpose as hubs for local businesses and the source of important services for residents. They are also centres for hosting community and cultural events. The strategy suggests the development of place visions for each town shaped by masterplans and through working in partnership with local communities and partner organisations.

- 4.7 **Education and skills – The Issues;** Pupil numbers are increasing in Sandwell aligned to the estimated increase in population (8.4% increase between 2017 and 2030). Skills levels in the Borough are improving but are still way below national averages. Low skills level and low wages contributes to higher levels of deprivation for our residents.

Education and skills – The Opportunity; Sandwell has a pipeline of new educational infrastructure. Pipeline projects include a new Learning Campus at the Midlands Metropolitan Hospital linked to training in nursing and the health sector, a small expansion to the Ron Davis Centre to



enable more residents to benefit from training programmes, the development of a digital den in Greets Green to increase the number of residents who have digital skills to enable them to access job opportunities, a multi-million pound investment in to a new education hub in Rowley Regis and a civil and mechanical engineering centre in West Bromwich. New secondary schools are being developed in West Bromwich (Shireland CBSO) and at Black Patch (Windsor MAT Academy) increasing pupil places and providing modern school facilities. There is also an emerging opportunity to explore how to link new educational facilities to town centres, cultural programmes, and council services in order to co-locate and create more vibrant places.

4.8 Transport – The Issues; Sandwell is well connected regionally and nationally but internally some communities are disconnected from their town centres and getting around some areas of Sandwell by public transport or active travel can be difficult. Car ownership is predicted to increase, and traffic nationally is predicted to grow by 46% by 2040. Transport contributes to 25% of controllable CO2 emissions and has a significant impact on our environment.

Transport – The Opportunity; there is significant investment in transport happening or proposed in Sandwell over the next five years. Wednesbury to Brierley Hill metro extension, improvements to Birchley Island, SPRINT rapid transit corridors, electric vehicle charging points, and walking and cycling infrastructure are all included within the pipeline. Promoting active travel and public transport above private car use is key to delivering CO2 reductions and improving the health of our communities.

4.9 Digital – The Issues; there are significant challenges around digital exclusion, which has been heightened during the pandemic, and low digital skills levels, which trail regional averages. 14% of Sandwell’s residents have never been online.

4.10 Digital – The Opportunity; we are on track to reach around 90% coverage for Full Fibre to the premises across Sandwell by 2024/25 with large investment programmes being delivered by BT Openreach and Virgin. Further acceleration of this and efforts to ensure equal access across the whole of the borough are crucial to supporting our large SME business base, which is dependent on reliable digital connectivity.



- 4.11 **Sustainability – The Issues;** Sandwell currently has high levels of car use, poor air quality and poor health outcomes. We have set an ambitious target to be carbon neutral by 2041, but major investment and action will need to be taken to reach the target, particularly reductions in household and transport emissions. We have many opportunities to tackle the challenges it faces
- 4.12 **Sustainability – The Opportunity;** the Council will take a proactive approach through the strategy to prioritise resources within the climate change agenda, aligning to the Council’s Climate Change Action Plan. The £115m retrofitting of all relevant Council HRA stock (27,300) by 2027 will see improvements including lost insulation, cavity wall insulation, and double or triple glazing windows, and ultimately deliver green high-quality homes. Furthermore, we are expanding sustainable energy generation in Sandwell, developing a specialism that will create jobs here and allow us to be at the heart of net zero transition in the West Midlands. Private investment such as the Enfinium energy from waste plant in West Bromwich will create 40 new jobs, diverting waste from landfill and transforming this into energy. This will lead to a net saving in carbon, and via a local heat network provide local premises with sustainable heat.
- 4.13 **The Regeneration Pipeline –** The pipeline sets out the major investment projects that the Council, its partners, and the private sector intend to deliver in Sandwell within the period 2022 to 2027. It is a five-year investment pipeline. It sets the infrastructure priorities for Sandwell Council and therefore will also establish where resources will be focused.
- 4.14 The pipeline is intended to be a live document. The pipeline will be monitored via a report submitted to Cabinet every 6 months. The report will highlight progress and risk on each project with a particular focus on those projects being led by the Council.
- 4.16 The pipeline demonstrates our determination to bring meaningful change to the borough and improve Sandwell for all. Paragraph 2.6 above sets out the overarching outcomes of the pipeline.
- 4.17 The Pipeline represents a list of strategically important regeneration projects over the next five years; inclusion of a project does not guarantee



planning consent or public funding or any other preferential treatment. The inclusion of any project on the pipeline does not negate the requirement for key decisions to be made by Cabinet. This requirement will remain. The pipeline however does set the priorities in relation to those projects council officers will focus on delivering within the next five years. The pipeline will be subject to six monthly reviews with Cabinet and re-prioritisation can take place as part of that process should any projects no longer be supported by Cabinet or be deemed deliverable. New projects will be added to the Pipeline via Cabinet decision.

4.18 **The Inclusive Recovery Action Plan for Business** – this appendix to the Regeneration Strategy sets out specific interventions that the Councils Business Growth Team within the Regeneration and Growth Directorate will focus on to support Sandwell businesses and the local economy to recover from the Covid 19 pandemic. It is intrinsically linked to its parent document, the Regeneration Strategy, as it's interventions will support change in town centres, require land to supply to support businesses to expand and attract new investment, and link in to major regeneration opportunities such as the increased potential for health and life science investment linked to the new Hospital.

4.19 The Recovery Plan for Businesses focuses on delivering 7 key objectives;

1. **Make Sandwell the home of the successful start-up, bringing new businesses into our town centres and high streets.** A high number of residents are starting new businesses but may lack the skills and information to make these successful. We want to change this through increased and tailored access to advice around starting a business, finance, recruitment and marketing.
2. **Accelerate growth in higher value businesses, tapping into the growth of the West Midlands economy, to stimulate wider investment and opportunity.** Sandwell businesses are part of West Midlands and national supply chains, creating essential components for modern engineering and manufacturing. We want to help them grow and create more good jobs by exporting more, investing in new



opportunities, embracing digital markets, and changing their business models.

3. **Deliver net zero carbon emissions in Sandwell by 2041.** Many of our companies face high demand for energy and premises that are not climate resilient. We want to support them by providing easy access to advice on how to become energy efficient & reduce costs. We also want firms to adopt models of circular economy including recycling and repurposing.
4. **Increase new inward investment & investment from existing business to create more good jobs.** With a young population and cheap land, Sandwell should be an attractive location for businesses to locate and grow, creating more jobs locally. Foreign Direct Investment is important to stimulating local jobs growth. We need to work more closely with the West Midlands Growth Company to have the employment land and investment offer ready to maximise investment from existing business and attract investment.
5. **Establish Sandwell as a growing centre of health & care innovation, using the hospital development to stimulate a new cluster, with the participation of local people.** Health & life sciences is a major priority of the WMCA but work is often focused around Birmingham. We need to work with the WMCA, NHS, education providers & businesses, looking at space, investment, skills & business support required to develop the new hospital site into a thriving health innovation cluster.
6. **Improve the amount & quality of work available, focused on raising wages & skill levels.** Employers told us that they like to recruit local people but sometimes struggle to find the skills they need. We need to work with employers to increase demand for higher level skills and create jobs with good pay



and conditions, and with education providers to train pupils and students in the skills to meet workforce demands.

7. **Make community wealth building a reality.** We want to increase our spend with local business by changing how we procure contracts & monitor social value, embedding community wealth building across the Council. We also want to encourage our businesses to increase their local spending by raising awareness of local suppliers.

4.20 **Delivery of Sandwell's Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline**

4.21 The Council will work with a wide range of partners to deliver the strategy and pipeline including; developers, investors, housing associations, construction companies, the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, the West Midlands Combined Authority, the West Midlands Growth Company, The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities, and local MP's.

4.22 There will be significant challenges in delivering the pipeline which will need to be overcome to move individual projects in to the delivery phase. Each project will have its own risk register however likely challenges include the cost of remediating contaminated land compared to development values, the commercial viability of some major mixed use schemes particularly where assets require acquisition and demolition, construction price inflation, supply chain complexities, and capacity issues. It should be noted that due to the complexity and scale of ambition, bringing forward as many schemes as possible within the five year period will be challenging.

4.23 At a programme level the delivery of the pipeline will also, importantly, require the Council to make some changes in the way that it works, for example; adopting a consistent project and programme management methodology with clear project management structures, the procurement of programme management software to provide an appropriate I.T solution to hold and interrogate project information, to provide a suitable Accountable Body function for the public funding streams such as Towns



Fund and Levelling Up Fund, and the development of a microsite to provide relevant information across all pipeline projects so that funders, investors, and local communities are informed of Sandwell's regeneration priorities.

- 4.24 The delivery of the strategy, pipeline and recovery plan will be subject to external market forces and factors of influence over the next 5 years. Changes in the global and national economy will have a direct impact. Inflation and interest rates will affect the costs of schemes and investors' appetite to make investment decisions; the UK's trade agreements with the EU and other trading blocs will affect the supply chain for certain goods; and UK immigration policies can affect the availability of certain types of labour and skills. The demand for owner occupier housing may be influenced by shifts within the banking system and availability of mortgage finance. Finally, force majeure events such as Covid-19 and the escalation of global conflicts, closer to the UK, will always have a major impact on our local economy and strategic priorities.
- 4.25 The publication of the White Paper 'Levelling up the United Kingdom' on 2nd February 2022 presents opportunities for Sandwell in terms of further investment and support. Sandwell is one of four areas in the West Midlands that has been identified as a potential Education Investment Area. There is the opportunity to be part of a West Midlands Trailblazer Devolution Deal and to access Shared Prosperity Funds via the WMCA. Additional funding is proposed to be made available to remediate brownfield land to build new homes and funding may be available for Council home retrofitting and local area energy networks. There may also be some changes to the existing economic development governance structures. The Council's Members and Officers will need to engage proactively on these issues and ensure that all opportunities for securing funding and support for this strategy, pipeline and business recovery plan are taken.
- 4.26 In summary, the Pipeline delivers the key infrastructure needed in the Borough over the next 5 years to provide new homes, new jobs, a better-connected economy, education and skills opportunities, progress on net carbon neutral commitment and the protection and enhancement of our heritage assets. The Inclusive Recovery Action Plan for Business demonstrates how the Council will support existing businesses and



facilitate the emergence of new businesses so that Sandwell continues to have a thriving economy. Businesses and local communities rely on good quality infrastructure also and so the Council needs to focus both on the delivery of the Pipeline infrastructure projects as well as proactively supporting businesses to strengthen and enhance the local economy and local communities.

4.27 Regular performance reporting in the public domain on the delivery of the strategy will be essential in accountability terms so that elected Members, businesses, stakeholders, and residents, can understand how the ambitions set out in the strategy are translated into action and delivery on the ground. Therefore, it is proposed to report back in to Cabinet at least every 6 months.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 Do nothing – this would result in a lack of overarching coordination and prioritisation of our regeneration opportunities. There would be no clear pipeline for potential funders, investors, and our communities providing a lack of clarity and potentially missed investment opportunities.

6 Implications

<p>Resources:</p>	<p>Financial, staffing, land/building implications – these will be set out as individual projects are forwarded to Cabinet as part of the key decision-making process where applicable. Separate reports to Cabinet will be brought forward at appropriate times on specific projects.</p> <p>However, the adoption of the strategy, pipeline and recovery plan will determine where officer resources are focused in relation to driving forward those projects for delivery by 2027 and delivery transformational change for Sandwell.</p> <p>During the fourth quarter of the 2021/22 financial year the Regeneration and Growth Directorate (Business Growth Team) received £85,000 in New Burdens</p>
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funding from Central Government to support the delivery of Additional Restriction Grants. A reserve for this underspend from financial year 2021/22 to be used in 2022/ 23 is requested. The funding will be used to support the delivery of the Regeneration Strategy and its appendices particularly focusing on business interventions.

Key Funding Sources:

The funding of the pipeline schemes will be a combination of private and public-sector investments.

Sandwell Council has already secured substantial public funds for investment via the Towns Fund programme (£67.5m), Department for Education Capital Investment programme, Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, and the High Street Heritage Action Zone funding.

The substantial City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) is yet to be confirmed, however, the pipeline sets out the strategic transport priorities needed to support the delivery of sustainable growth in Sandwell. The Council will continue to promote these schemes through the WMCA for funding via CRSTS.

The Council will be developing bids for submission to the Levelling Up Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund to support the delivery of this strategy. There is also substantial private investment already taking place across the Borough in housing, employment sites, energy storage, waste to energy plant and affordable housing via housing associations.

Some schemes in the Pipeline have commercial viability issues and the Council will work with developers to assist in bringing these forward where feasible.



	The Council itself will need to take decisions on borrowing and investment to allow schemes to come forward where private sector investment cannot be secured.
Legal and Governance:	<p>None – the strategy and pipeline does not replace any statutory or democratic decision-making process but provides the overarching approach to regeneration in Sandwell and sets those projects which will be prioritised for delivery.</p> <p>Project level legal and governance issues will be presented through the Cabinet process where applicable.</p>

Risk:	<p>Risk implications will be set out on a project basis.</p> <p>Global and national events impacting on the strength of the economy, alongside significant increases in inflation, are likely to impact on the deliverability of the pipeline over the next 5 years.</p>
Equality:	<p>None. The strategy, pipeline and recovery plan does not replace statutory or democratic decision-making processes. Individual projects brought forward within the pipeline will be subject to individual EIAs through the development process.</p>



<p>Health and Wellbeing:</p>	<p>Regeneration through the provision of good housing, access to educational and skills facilities, supporting the development of projects that will contribute to job creation, and investment in connectivity will support people out of poverty and improve health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The built and natural environment is a key environmental determinant of health and wellbeing. The linkages between health and the built and natural environment have long been established and the role of the environment in shaping the social, economic and environmental circumstances that determine wellbeing is increasingly recognised and understood.</p>
<p>Social Value</p>	<p>The Recovery Plan for Business seeks to improve levels of local spend through using procurement to support additional social value outcomes. Furthermore, within the Regeneration strategy and pipeline, individual projects will look to build in employment and skills creation opportunities.</p>

7. Appendices

Sandwell Regeneration Strategy
Appendix A - Project Pipeline 2022 to 2027
Appendix B – Inclusive Recovery Plan for Business.

8. Background Papers

None



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SANDWELL REGENERATION STRATEGY

March 2022-2027

March 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sandwell is growing. Over £1.8bn of investment in the next five years will fund regeneration across the six towns, improving quality of life, providing decent work, and making Sandwell a more sustainable, greener place.

Regeneration brings together the elements needed to build a wealthier and more sustainable Sandwell. It encompasses the different aspects of our built environment: housing; town centres, high streets, and neighbourhoods; employment sites; education and skills; transport; digital connectivity; and sustainability. These are important levers for Sandwell which can help to create the environment for inclusive growth.

Alongside the *Inclusive Recovery Action Plan for Businesses*, which is an appendix to this strategy, this regeneration strategy presents a clear view of the Sandwell economy and our environment. It will enable Sandwell to shape regeneration plans to meet the needs of local people and business, setting a path towards a higher quality of life here, more well-paid and fulfilling jobs, and, through these, a wealthier Sandwell.

This strategy is based on a review of our evidence and relevant regional and national plans. Officers from across the council, the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (BCLEP), and the Department for International Trade (DIT) have fed into this work,

establishing the context and refining the priorities. This is a practical plan, and together we have worked up actions that will bring us closer to our vision for Sandwell over the next five years.

This is the right time for this strategy. Major investment programmes are well underway, providing Sandwell with an opportunity to build momentum for further investment. The Black Country Plan is in currently in development, mapping out how land will be used in Sandwell over the next decade and a half. Through this work we have reviewed our regeneration activity and set priorities that are right for our place, scoping opportunities and recognising local constraints. Sandwell has:

- a shortfall for housing and employment delivery targets, and a pressing need to increase supply.
- a shortage of land and a high need for housing, employment space, and education facilities.
- a diverse mixture of towns, each with its own identity, characteristics, and constraints to economic growth.

- an urgent need to address social challenges, climate change, and prepare for the industries of the future, providing good jobs.

Over the last five years we have plotted out a route to sustainable growth across all areas of our economy. We are focused on creating an inclusive economy in Sandwell, building community wealth, and improving quality of life for everyone here. In the refreshed Corporate Plan – Big Plans for a Great Place, we identified the six outcomes needed to create a great borough; the Climate Change Strategy of the same year laid out a plan to achieve carbon neutrality by 2041. In 2021, faced with the ongoing disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, we worked closely with local businesses to develop economic growth priorities.

Addressing our constraints and achieving our aims will require consistent activity, the identification of new funding opportunities, and careful preparation to unlock regeneration potential. This will be a living document, to be regularly updated to incorporate new opportunities and projects.

Appended is a pipeline of regeneration projects that will help achieve this strategy in the next five years. This will be regularly reviewed as new opportunities emerge. Over time Sandwell can use this as an investment tool to showcase what good regeneration looks like and serve as a catalyst for additional investment.

As a council we already spend £150m every year with suppliers. Following work in 2020 to understand how much of this is with local suppliers, we are determined to increase our spend with local business by changing how we procure contracts and monitor social value, embedding community wealth building across the

Council. Details of how we will do this are set out in the Appendix: *Inclusive Recovery Action Plan for Businesses* under the priority 'Spend in Sandwell'. Increased local spend retains wealth in Sandwell and creates jobs. The positive benefits that the Aquatics Centre construction has brought to the Borough are clear, with new jobs and increased local spend. Significant investments in this £1.8bn pipeline will increase opportunities for local businesses; we will work with the Sandwell Business Ambassadors and the Sandwell Anchor Network to raise awareness of the pipeline and to prepare local suppliers for upcoming opportunities.

This plan is ambitious, but achievable, to be delivered by the Council working in partnership with the private sector and regional and national Government.



2. SANDWELL TODAY



Young & diverse population scheduled to grow faster than regional and UK averages



The third largest borough in the West Midlands



£6.5bn economy



The most productive local authority in the Black Country



Well-connected regionally and nationally



Strong base of small businesses – the supply chain capital of the UK



High rates of business start-up, +15% increase since 2018



Skills levels rising, +20% increase in NVQ4+

Sandwell is a growing economy and complex place, its major and transformative opportunities matched by considerable physical constraints and social challenges. The third largest borough in the West Midlands and on the border of Birmingham, Sandwell is one of the country's oldest industrial economies. Our population is young and growing fast: 40% of residents are under 30 years old and only 15% of residents are over the age of 65. Today, it is a manufacturing and logistics hub, a diverse and busy place shaped by its histories of industry and migration.

Like many post-industrial economies, Sandwell faces significant social challenges. The eighth most deprived local authority in England, high proportions of the local population have underlying health issues. Our borough has been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, with some of the highest infection rates in the country. Life expectancies are lower: around six years beneath the national average for men and almost five years lower for women. Skills levels are low, with 17% of residents without qualifications, and there is a high concentration of low paid roles across the workforce.

Despite these social and economic challenges, Sandwell is on a growth trajectory. This is the most productive economy in the Black Country, a centre of the UK's manufacturing and logistics industries, home to innovative, exporting businesses. This environment is dynamic and fast-changing economy – since 2018, the number of new businesses starting up in the borough has increased by 15%, 10% higher than the UK average.

Supporting our established local businesses to grow, while nurturing these new businesses are our economic priority, each requiring related but tailored actions:

- We want to become the home of the start-up, building on our proximity to Birmingham City Centre and transport connections to the rest of the conurbation make this an ideal place to start and grow a business.
- We will target our successful established businesses and support them to grow here, unlocking new products, services, and innovations that they can market to the rest of the world.

Together, these will create a more productive and inclusive economy that creates jobs and increases prosperity.

Regeneration and the Economy

Providing the facilities for this growth, an environment that maintains quality of life, and the infrastructure to support sustainability all fall within the remit of regeneration.

Raising quality of life is essential because of the social challenges residents face. Improving the built environment, greening high streets and centres, and reducing traffic, will contribute to better health outcomes for our residents, and increase pride of place. Sandwell is growing within a dynamic conurbation, connecting Birmingham to the Black Country. This growth should bring real benefits to the people who live and work here.

There is high demand for land in Sandwell, from local businesses and via inward enquiries for employment land, and a high housing need driven by a growing population. Our location and affordable housing make this an important residential centre. Housing has and continues to be a priority

for Sandwell, and we have a strong track record in unlocking strategic housing development across the borough.

The reminders of Sandwell's past are woven throughout the place, in monuments, places of worship, canals and factories. But Sandwell's industrial heritage means that brownfield plots often require major remediation. With low land values and low rents, justifying investment, from private or public sources, can be difficult. Demand is high, but constrained regeneration funding prohibits development.

Sandwell Council has set a target of reaching net zero emissions by 2041, nine years ahead of the UK target. The need for this activity is acute. A post-industrial environment, Sandwell is in the top 10% of local authorities for fuel poverty, and the poor overall quality of domestic buildings leads to high emissions. Road travel is second only to residential buildings in the number of emissions it produces – reducing emissions and promoting active travel will help to improve quality of life.



3. PROGRESS SO FAR

In the last few years Sandwell has secured millions of pounds of public and private investment. Successful bids to the Towns Fund for Smethwick, West Bromwich and Rowley Regis will support major capital investment in these three towns, while the Wednesbury High Street Heritage Action Zone has secured funding to revive the town centre in keeping with its history. Across Sandwell, investment via the City Region Sustainability Transport Settlements Fund will unlock strategic transport improvements. The Transforming Cities Fund, and other private and public sector funding streams will help us deliver major development projects in the Borough.

With the arrival of HS2 and the Wednesbury Metro extension, which will open to passengers in 2024, regional and national transport will open new opportunities for investment and regeneration. These will enhance accessibility across the Black Country and the wider conurbation and reduce journey times, while improving air quality and cutting noise.

Preparations for Sandwell's role in the Commonwealth Games are nearing completion, as is the major new regional Midland Metropolitan University Hospital. While many projects are still in development, in the last two years we have successfully provided crucial business support throughout the pandemic, collaborated with partners to increase our housing offer, participated in the regional roll out of 5G acting as the first UK testbed, and much more.

As a council we play an important role in unlocking development, improving our places, and planning for the borough as a whole. We have a nationally recognised planning service which determines 93% of Major Planning Applications on time against the national target of 60%. This shapes our places for the benefit of our residents, and in a coherent and sustainable way. Through convening partners and unlocking investment from regional and national funds we stimulate development where the market fails, helping to overcome the high cost of remediation.



Housing Developments

Sandwell has a strong track record in unlocking strategic housing development across the borough. Using both public and private sector funding, we work with developers and partners to address the housing challenges Sandwell faces.

Recent completed developments include:

The Windmill Eye Neighbourhood regeneration

A home improvement and housebuilding programme in the heart of Smethwick which raised the quality of existing houses, developed neighbourhood amenities, such as play areas and open spaces, and built 228 new homes including 93 affordable homes with a mix of private, rent, shared ownership properties.

The Galton Lock development in Smethwick

180 homes on a challenging brownfield site which required major investment in decontamination, remediation, and site assembly.

Greets Green - Goldfield Court in West Bromwich

Delivered in partnership with Housing 21, 93 extra-care apartments for people aged 55+ with 24/7 on-site care staff.

Harvills Hawthorn in West Bromwich

216 market sale homes and 17 affordable homes



Willow Gardens in Rowley Regis

90 extra Council owned and managed care housing apartments available for affordable rent.

Woods Lane in Cradley Heath, Rowley Regis

A Sandwell-led partnership which has assembled multiple parcels of land to create a viable development zone and new residential area near Cradley Heath, Rowley Regis. This has delivered 135 new affordable homes, with potential to expand further through new sources of funding.

Faced with a high level of housing need, we have focused on increasing the level of affordable housing across the borough. Over the next few years, housing development will improve this further.

- With funding from the West Midlands Combined Authority, development has started at Fountain Lane in Oldbury, preparing the ground for over 200 new homes.
- Through the Towns Fund, we will deliver a £4m regeneration project at Grove Lane in Smethwick next to the new Midland Metropolitan University Hospital, with the potential for this to be the first phase in the wider development of 800 homes. We will also provide an additional 115 homes at Rolfe Street, through doing so regenerating the canalside in Smethwick.
- In West Bromwich, the regeneration of the town centre will unlock sites for over 1,000 homes. Strategic acquisitions, made possible through the Towns Fund, will enable the diversification and transformation of the centre to build new homes and create new green spaces.
- Through private and public sector funding, we will deliver a new residential community with over 600 sustainable homes in the Friar Park Urban Village through the development of brownfield land.
- In Tipton, repurposing former industrial land has the potential to deliver over 100 homes.



Sandwell COVID-19 business support

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on our businesses, a fifth temporarily closed during the third national lockdown, but Sandwell Council has worked extensively with the private sector to provide the support it needs to survive and thrive.

Over the last two years, we have offered:

- Suspended court action for recovery of business rates
- Negotiated repayments where possible and/or agreeing to a hold in recovery action for a period where businesses are struggling
- Expanded Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief/Nursery Discount for eligible businesses
- COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund for businesses that have not been able to adequately adapt
- Additional Restrictions Grants 3 (ARG3) Scheme providing financial support for businesses severely affected by restrictions
- Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant for businesses in the Hospitality, Leisure and Accommodation sectors



**Local business support
during the global
coronavirus crisis**



Sandwell Aquatics Centre

The Sandwell Aquatics Centre will be at the centre of the Commonwealth Games in Summer 2022. The centre will host the games' swimming and diving events, open every day of the games to audiences from across the UK.

A targeted approach to development means that the investment in the centre has created substantial benefits for the local economy during the construction phase. The centre has drawn on the expertise and efforts of local sub-contractors, SMEs and residents throughout the borough.

These benefits have a substantial economic impact, generating:

- 88,541 days of local labour
- £73,123 in local spending
- 83% engagement with SMEs
- Over 30 apprenticeships



Young people from diverse communities in Sandwell have found opportunities in work and training through the Sandwell Aquatics Centre, ensuring its legacy will last long after the games have closed.



Shireland CBSO School

The Shireland CBSO School in West Bromwich is a new music school in collaboration with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) and Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust. It will be the first music school in the UK established in collaboration with an orchestra, marking a radical new approach to music education. Students will have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument, with tuition delivered in partnership with Sandwell Music Service, and participate in choirs and regularly attend CBSO concerts. At the heart of West Bromwich, this will bring new life to the town centre, encouraging the take up of the arts.

West Midlands Cycle Hire

Encouraging the rollout of active travel throughout the borough is a priority for Sandwell. The West Midlands Cycle Hire scheme will help address our challenges of high deprivation and low physical activity, by situating cycle hubs in Oldbury and West Bromwich. More than 60 hire bikes are now available at ten docking stations in the borough, including at Sandwell Hospital, Dartmouth Park, Sandwell College, and Sandwell and Dudley Port Railway Station.

Rollout of full fibre and 5G

Openreach is investing £134m on full fibre rollout to many towns and cities in the West Midlands, which will see hundreds of new roles created in the region and see communities and businesses access full fibre broadband which is ten times faster than the average home broadband connection and five times more reliable. Full fibre coverage in Sandwell has increased at a fast pace, connecting homes and businesses to best-in-class digital infrastructure and unlocking new opportunities for innovation.



4. OUR VISION

Sandwell is growing. Over £1.8bn of investment in the next five years will fund regeneration across the six towns, improving quality of life, providing decent work, and making Sandwell a more sustainable, greener place.

Our vision is to create a wealthier Sandwell, regenerating our place and using the limited amount of new land available to create

- an inviting place to live, with thriving communities and energy efficient housing in well planned neighbourhoods.
- high quality employment space for decent jobs.
- a convenient and reliable public transport and active travel network, which people prefer to private cars.
- exciting, busy, and green centres where people meet throughout the day, with a thriving cultural and night-time economy.

Looking forward to a wealthier Sandwell requires sustained investment in ambitious and transformative projects. Sandwell needs better, energy-efficient housing, improved public transport and active travel connections, and facilities for our growing businesses. We will support all our town centres to become thriving, busy communities and places to live, work and meet. Through this regeneration strategy, we will aim to bring wealth and sustainability to all our towns.

The government's Levelling Up White Paper (February 2022) has created opportunities to push forward our priorities. The West Midlands Combined Authority will be granted new funding to support the

remediation of brownfield sites. We will work with WMCA to create proposals for sites, investing in challenging sites and unlocking new and for development.

We are working to build an inclusive economy in Sandwell, working with residents to improve their places and increase opportunities. The white paper cites the power of local partnerships to transform places, using creative partnerships to find new uses for shared centres and neighbourhoods. We will work with local communities to explore grass-roots regeneration, supporting projects that emerge across the borough.

Our major economic and social challenges cannot be solved by regeneration alone. However, by delivering ambitious, well-suited, and attractive developments, we will go a long way to addressing local needs, improving the borough's profile, and creating the right conditions for growth.

In section six we set out four priorities which guide our regeneration strategy and delivery. This strategy is then divided into seven delivery themes that cover each aspect of regeneration in Sandwell. For each of the areas within regeneration that we hope to act on over the next five years, we have developed a specific ambition, and a set of practical actions to help achieve them:

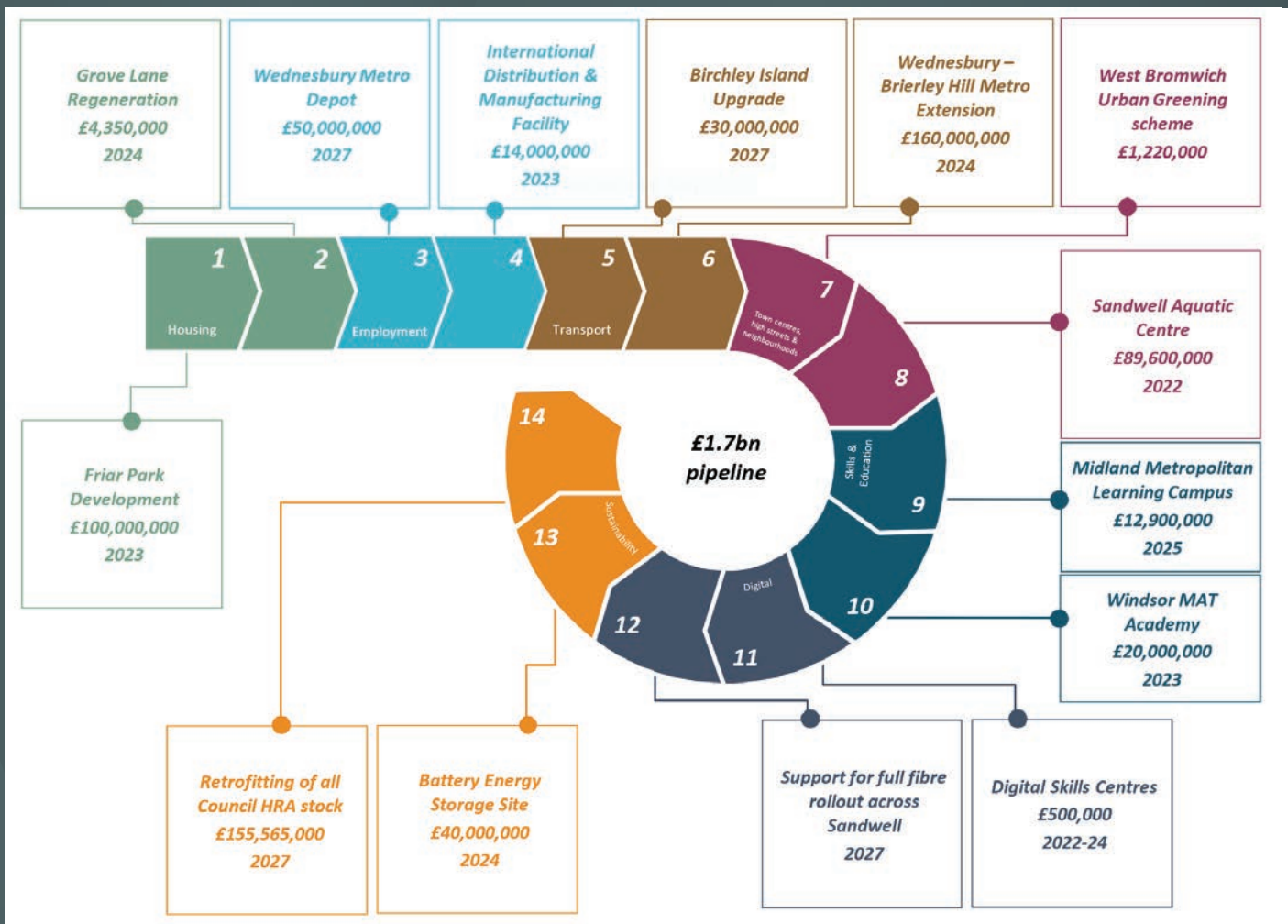
Theme	Our five-year ambition
Housing	Facilitate and deliver more new homes and more affordable housing across the borough, faster
Employment	Support businesses and sectors with space to grow
Placemaking	Work with our communities to transform our town centres, high streets, and neighbourhoods in the right way for their place and to their full potential
Education and Skills	Deliver new learning facilities at primary, secondary, and further education levels to improve education and opportunity for people of all ages
Transport	Connect Sandwell's major hubs to the wider region and knit neighbourhoods together with public and active transport
Digital	Support the rollout and take up of full-fibre and 5G across Sandwell
Sustainability	Invest in transformative energy infrastructure to support the transition to net zero

5. THE REGENERATION PIPELINE

The £1.8bn pipeline includes 66 regeneration projects being delivered across Sandwell funded by a range of public and private sector investment, to be delivered in the next five years. Five projects are already expected to be delivered this year. The pipeline will be a 'living document' with regular reviews and updates to ensure it reflects the most up to date regeneration position for Sandwell.

We have highlighted 14 of Sandwell's major development projects that make up this pipeline on page 16. It demonstrates our determination to bring meaningful change to the borough and to improve Sandwell for all residents.

- 15 housing projects to build more affordable and high-quality homes across the borough by 2026.
- Three employment projects to increase the number of high-quality jobs available to local people and increase commercial floorspace for businesses in Sandwell.
- 23 transport projects to improve connectivity in and out of Sandwell, increase highway capacity, and connect our towns via new active travel networks.
- Three town centre projects to improve the public realm and make our towns more attractive to prospective residents and businesses.
- Ten education and skills projects to increase provision in the borough.
- Digital connectivity improvements to support our residents and businesses through the upgrade to Full Fibre Connectivity.
- Five sustainability projects to generate energy in Sandwell and improve the energy efficiency of our homes, helping to achieve carbon neutrality by 2041.



An Extract of Regeneration Projects across each Theme.



Measuring Our Success

Our strategy will fund major regeneration projects across the six towns, improving quality of life, providing decent work, and making Sandwell a more sustainable, greener place.

Delivering £1.8bn of investment in the next 5 years which will achieve:

Over 4,000 new homes (incl. affordable homes)

Over 800,000 sqm of new employment, commercial & educational space created

Thousands of new jobs unlocked in construction and unlocked employment land

Thousands of new learners assisted

250 electric charging points installed

100,000 premises connected to Full Fibre broadband



6. PRIORITIES

To achieve this vision for regeneration in Sandwell, we have identified four priorities to guide our actions over the next five years. This is based on a theory of change rooted in an overall economic understanding of the area and its needs.

Priority One: Accelerate

Deliver new developments across regeneration areas promptly and to a high quality

We want to provide the development Sandwell needs to grow, encompassing quality, sustainable housing for residents and giving businesses room to expand in Sandwell.

There are major constraints to development: we must explore new mechanisms to develop at pace, using creative solutions, partnerships, and persistence. To achieve this, we will hold to the following principles:

- Develop visions for key sites, understanding their potential and planning for ambitious, sustainable, and walkable neighbourhoods.
- Collate project information and key risks and maintain a detailed project pipeline, ready for new funding opportunities.
- Work with landowners to encourage development in line with Sandwell's vision for places, using powers where available to incentivise development or take control. Identify funding opportunities for retrofit, public transport, and net zero transition, working up options for improvement.



Priority Two: Amplify

Develop our key opportunity sites efficiently, making the best and most creative use of the land available

Housing and employment land needs are high in Sandwell. Exploring opportunities for varied housing typologies on residential sites, including denser development where appropriate, will help to improve the places and address our needs. Well-planned, mixed-use developments at the heart of neighbourhoods will help to animate our town centres and ensure that scarce land achieves the maximum benefit. To achieve this, we will hold to the following principles:

- Explore opportunities to densify housing, businesses, and major regeneration schemes where appropriate and promote active / public transport connections to new homes.
- Aim for a range of typologies to appeal different groups, e.g. young professionals in well-connected urban centres such as West Bromwich, and family homes in our more sub-urban neighbourhoods.
- Identify developers capable of delivering dense development near metro stops and other public transport hubs.
- Negotiate with developers for intensive and innovative development on small plots.
- Using planning controls to encourage creative use of plots.



Priority Three: Curate

Develop each site, and each town, to its full potential, promoting clean and green environments

Sandwell has underutilised town centres. The borough is polycentric, with diverse and distinct towns, but which are disconnected. With £67.5m of Towns Fund money to transform the towns of West Bromwich, Smethwick and Rowley Regis, Sandwell has the investment to diversify these centres. In others, creative solutions and meanwhile uses can use space and attract footfall, unlocking new uses in centres faced with the decline of in-person retail. To achieve this, we will hold to the following principles:

- Use town profiles, case studies, and local agency to continue to update the understanding of each town.
- For employment land, explore new and innovative employment opportunities, covering a variety of different types of job.
- Explore meanwhile uses for complex land yet to come forward, animating centres and reducing vacancies.



Priority Four: Deliver

Use the council's position and powers to unlock sites attractive to investment and to uphold quality

- High remediation costs and low land values have created acute market failure in Sandwell. Despite high demand, this limits development. In response, the council has an important role to play in attracting funding and in direct development. Using large investments as regeneration anchors, and developing council led partnerships and vehicles will help to kickstart regeneration and establish use-cases for quality development. To achieve this, we will hold to the following principles
- Continue to use planning policy to promote quality development; use council vehicles and schemes to set exemplars.
- Use the council's own delivery capacity creatively to attract match funding, prepare, and deliver development.
- Attract further match funding to existing schemes to kickstart complementary developments.



7. HOUSING

Our five-year ambition is to facilitate and deliver more new homes and more affordable housing across the borough, faster

Sandwell has six towns and nine distinct town centres, and these act as focal points for surrounding neighbourhoods. Unlocking residential and mixed-use development in these centres is an opportunity to revitalise them as places to live and work. This requires investment and creative thinking: in West Bromwich and Smethwick, Towns Fund investment will unlock the potential for major residential-led regeneration, creating new homes in strategic and well-connected areas. In Wednesbury, we are promoting the conversion of high street units into new homes through the High Street Heritage Action Zone. In the next five years, we will target new opportunities across our towns, reviving our centres and reusing vacant space for new homes.

We have already identified a pipeline of £600 million in investment in housing over the next five years.

Our experience in delivering housing across Sandwell and our access to national and regional funding opportunities, puts us in a strong strategic position to drive development. We understand the character of our neighbourhoods and centres, what typologies will work and where we can

innovate with mixed uses. Our priority for the next five years is to increase the pace, unlocking sites and supporting market providers to deliver housing that is right for the place. We aim to improve our existing homes whilst increasing the amount of affordable housing in Sandwell, which includes a mix of private, shared ownership, social rented and affordable rented housing tenures.

Context

Housing need in Sandwell is high, and supply is not keeping up with demand. In the next ten years, Sandwell needs 14,670 homes, but the borough is set to deliver 4,982 homes in this period.¹ As in many places around the country, delivery has consistently trailed need here, and with current projections, Sandwell will have a shortfall of nearly 20,000 homes to 2039.²

However, needs here are particularly acute, and we have the highest local housing need of any Black Country local authority.

Sandwell is a popular place to live, well connected to Birmingham and with thriving communities. Much of our local demand is for affordable homes, and for large family accommodation. Size requirements for owner-

occupied homes will increase by 48% for homes with three bedrooms and 25% for homes with four or more bedrooms.³

Affordable housing needs have increased in recent years along with overall demand. The average monthly two bedroom rent in Sandwell is cheaper than regional or national averages, and housing affordability is lower than both the national and regional averages, but demand continues to rise. In 2021, Sandwell's affordable housing requirement was set at 343 dwellings per annum. We offer more social housing than the national average (28% of the 133,680 houses in Sandwell are social housing, compared to the national average of 17%), but the average wait for a house is 1 year and 9 months and overall social housing stock has declined in the past 30 years.⁴ We aim to do more to provide our residents with access to affordable accommodation.

West Bromwich town centre is a major opportunity for a different kind of development – creating a new mixed-use urban centre for the West Midlands, with excellent connections to the heart of the conurbation. This can provide 1,100 homes in the heart of Sandwell, and a green and family friendly public realm. At Grove Lane,

1. Sandwell Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, 2020.

2. The Black Country & South Staffordshire Housing Market Assessment, 2017

3. Sandwell Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, 2020.

4. South Staffordshire and Black Country Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), 2017.

Smethwick, Sandwell has a major regeneration area next to the new Midland Metropolitan University Hospital. With potential to provide 800 homes within a wider regeneration corridor to Birmingham, this can be a new, quality residential quarter in Sandwell. Rolfe Street, further into Smethwick, can provide over 100 new homes. Friar Park is a major brownfield site that can provide over 600 homes in Sandwell. With ambitious design principles, this can create a sustainable urban village.

Many of these sites have ambitious masterplans and visions, and developer interest. Each represents an opportunity to create sustainable and pleasant environments for

residents and which attract new people to Sandwell. A mix of typologies and densities on these sites will maximise the number of homes that can be delivered, encourage a mix of residents of different ages and backgrounds, and through it, benefit communities. Multi-storey homes and flats, where appropriate, can mix well with family homes and increase housing delivery.

Managing these developments, and ensuring they fulfil our ambitions will ensure that they do more than deliver housing, and kickstart economic growth for the wider economy.

The council has agency in incentivising development and attracting government funding to de-risk sites for developers. Exploring routes to kickstarting development of unattractive, smaller sites, through the Council House Build programme, portfolio approach, or joint venture, could help to incrementally increase housing across Sandwell.



Actions: How we'll make this happen

We will deliver new housing developments across regeneration areas promptly and to a high quality.

Early priorities include:

West Bromwich town centre – the comprehensive regeneration of the town centre, an ambitious scheme to remodel the retail core for new housing, modern and dynamic retail, and new workspaces and public realm. This will unlock land for over 1000 homes

Friar Park – a new urban village in Wednesbury, providing over 600 high-quality homes, open spaces and active travel links to the rest of Sandwell

Fountain Lane – unlocking over 600 new homes at the heart of Oldbury

Qualtronic Site, Tipton – over 100 new homes repurposing former industrial land in Tipton

Grove Lane – the regeneration of Grove Lane, Smethwick, creating large scale mixed-use and housing space on the industrial site

Rolfe Street – the regeneration of the Smethwick canalside, unlocking over 100 new homes in the heart of Smethwick

Hall Green Road – 223 homes in West Bromwich, generating 172 construction jobs and 22 jobs long term in the local area

We will develop housing opportunity sites efficiently, making the best and most creative use of the land available.

- Identify key sites for affordable housing and work proactively with Housing Associations and registered social landlords and other stakeholders to bring schemes forward
- Identify areas of high housing demand with potential for a denser urban housing mix
- Consider areas with potential for regeneration schemes for homes in town centres through first floor conversions
- Identify challenging brownfield land for major intervention via the West Midlands Brownfield Housing Fund
- Identify sites for dense development near transport hubs, working up an approach to commercial viability
- Engage the National Brownfield Institute in problem brownfield sites across Sandwell

Use the council's position and powers to unlock sites attractive to investment and to uphold quality

- Progress the case for a social housing programme to support the delivery of affordable housing
- Explore collaborations between the council and appropriate developers to prepare sites for development
- Target sites for council intervention for co-funding
- Scope and investigate the council's own estate, identifying areas of land where consolidation of council services or existing uses could free up small plots
- Begin housing site assemblies, using council acquisitions to drive development



8. EMPLOYMENT

Our five-year ambition is to support businesses and sectors with space to grow

Sandwell is well located, at the centre of the West Midlands and the UK. We have grown and continue to attract major industries that make high value goods here and distribute to the country and beyond. Emerging strengths in clean energy, health and social care are opportunities to innovate, linking to new anchor institutions, such as the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital in Smethwick, a £650m development and acute care provider for the region.

We have high value, innovative and exporting businesses, which have grown and continue to value our connections and character. These have very different needs, from small and flexible premises in town centres, close to public transport for start-ups, to specialist, high-cost facilities next to the strategic road network for manufacturing and logistics firms.

We have already identified £64m in employment premises investment

Context

Demand for employment land across the whole of the West Midlands is high. The Black Country is the centre of the UK's motorway network, with good connections into Birmingham, and low land costs encourage companies to locate here. Take-up of large 'big-box' space and grade A logistics space is growing rapidly in the West Midlands, increasing by around 65% in 2020 compared to the previous year. Health and social care is already a major employer in Sandwell, but the MMUH redevelopment is an opportunity to develop this further. The health innovation campus will unlock the potential of this anchor to fuel local employment growth, housing new businesses next to healthcare experts and care.

A total of 565ha of new employment land is needed across the Black Country to 2039, but supply projections point to a likely a total shortfall of 211ha. Sandwell is set to provide just a small proportion of this land, 28ha, or 7%, despite being home to the one of the largest business and resident populations in the Black Country.⁵

5. Draft Black Country Plan, 2021.

6. Black Country Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) Update, 2021.

Sandwell has an opportunity to be at the heart of the West Midlands growth offer

Sandwell is constrained by this lack of land. In some areas, land is available but remains undeveloped. Remediation and assembly costs are high – risk averse landlords may wait for public support but maintain unrealistic values.⁶ Without the prospect of large amounts of land becoming available, Sandwell must ensure the employment land it delivers supports good quality jobs.

We recognise that growth of our businesses can be constrained by a lack of readily available land. To unlock economic growth, we need to use the land we have strategically to support our

businesses and organisations to grow. We must understand their land needs, and work with them over the long-term to expand in Sandwell.

This requires more focus on developing smaller sites for existing businesses and target businesses in our growth sectors. Portfolios of smaller sites can be created and put in the pipeline: the Council's One Public Estate work and the Transforming Public Services agenda has demonstrated how land can be made available to new uses. We are working in West Bromwich and Smethwick to ensure that housing comes forward alongside employment and other uses will maximise the chances of making these centres dynamic and bustling

centres that sustain economic growth.

We are exploring the development of a council led employment land vehicle, identifying small, unattractive sites, and preparing them for development. A revolving fund, whereby the council uses a pot of money to acquire 'unviable' sites, prepare them, then resell them back to market developers, could be an effective means to prepare land and spark growth. Strategic use of our CPO powers can unlock development in areas with growth potential and unlock the wider regeneration of areas by encouraging other investors that areas are developing.



Actions: How we'll make this happen

The actions below focus on employment land and are designed to complement the actions in the Appendix, *Inclusive Recovery Action Plan for Businesses*.

We will deliver new employment developments across regeneration areas promptly and to a high quality. Early priorities include:

The Wednesbury Metro Depot – a £50m investment in major transport infrastructure, providing new jobs in Sandwell and supporting the connection of our borough to the wider conurbation

The Coneygre site in Tipton – regeneration of former industrial land, providing 230,000 sq ft of commercial space and up to 500 new jobs

The Operational Hub for the West Midlands Ambulance Service in Oldbury – providing space for a vital public service and supporting up to 500 new job

We will develop employment opportunity sites efficiently, making the best and most creative use of the land available

- Target our key businesses and understand their land needs, building on our engagement with businesses over the last few years to develop a wish-list for land requirements
- Work closely with West Midlands Growth Company to secure new investment in employment schemes
- Explore opportunities for mixed uses in major regeneration schemes, identifying plots for potential small-scale employment use, map these, and promote them on council and West Midlands websites

Use the council's position and powers to unlock sites attractive to investment and to uphold quality

- Investigate the council's own estate, identifying areas of land where consolidation of council services could make land available for new employment uses
- Explore interventions to source funding opportunities and mechanisms to prepare unviable sites for employment use in line with Sandwell's growing sectors
- Identify areas close to transport hubs for enterprise zones or strategic employment sites



9. PLACMAKING

Our five-year ambition is to work with our communities to improve town centres, high streets, and neighbourhoods in the right way for their place and to their full potential

Like many parts of the country, the role of our town centres and high streets is changing. This has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the transition to shopping online has threatened the viability of retailers and eroded town centres. The pandemic has altered work and leisure patterns, resulting demands for different types of commercial spaces. Creative approaches to planning will be required to respond to this changing demand, creating sustainable and attractive town centres in a constrained funding environment.

Retail outlets and empty commercial units are commonplace across our six towns, with a limited leisure offer or night-time economy. Town centres serve both an important economic and civic purpose as hubs for local businesses and the source of important services for residents. They are also centres for hosting community and cultural events. Recent surveys indicate that Sandwell's residents are keen to see improvements to town centres to reduce anti-social behaviour and improve pride of place, creating new meeting spaces and shared amenities.⁷

We are preparing for £67.5 million investment in capital projects in Rowley Regis, Smethwick, and West Bromwich through Towns Fund

Over the last few years, we have developed focused plans for growth and won significant investment projects for the borough. This covers a wide range of town centre improvements, including urban greening and cultural infrastructure. Now is the opportunity to go further across all of the borough, working with residents and businesses to co-create the centres they desire.

Context

Each of our urban centres provides an important focal point for the local community. However, there are too many empty commercial units across the nine local centres, with 14% of high street and retail properties vacant.⁸ Yet these challenges also provide opportunities to create more diverse, sustainable and resilient towns and high streets, which in turn deliver economic and health benefits for both businesses and residents. Re-purposing empty units on our high streets to create new space right in the heart of local communities, bringing new sites forward whilst avoiding issues around new land supply and development.

Across our towns, we have strong assets – a rich cultural heritage, strong local identities, a historic canal network and iconic parks and green spaces. 12 of Sandwell's parks have won Green Flag awards, and Sandwell Valley Country Park is one of the largest and most attractive green spaces in the West Midlands, which attracts visitors from across the West Midlands. Work is ongoing to develop a Masterplan for Sandwell Valley alongside the development of a cultural and events programme to further enhance the use of this exceptional green-space.

Sandwell has embarked on a significant programme of replacing aging leisure centres and providing new facilities for residents. The Sandwell Aquatics Centre is nearing completion (replacing the aging facilities at Smethwick and Langley), with new centres already delivered in Tipton, Wednesbury and West Bromwich. Haden Hill Leisure Centre is circa 46 years old and is the last wet facility requiring investment/ replacement as per the Sandwell Sport and Leisure Built Facility Strategy, 2018. These facilities provide opportunities for local-residents to increase participation in exercise and sport and live healthier lifestyles.

7. Sandwell Vision 2030 survey; Smethwick TIP Engagement Survey, 2020.

8. Retail & Leisure Analysis – Full Year 2020. Local Data Company: <https://www.localdatacompany.com/download-report-fy-2020>

Improving the look and sustainability of centres via enhanced public realm and urban greening projects, will create attractive and healthy town centres of the future. Several plans for centres have been developed setting out a place-based approach to how Sandwell will transform different parts of the borough, including the Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Framework and Grove Lane masterplan, the West Bromwich Masterplan, and the Rowley Regis Town Investment Plan. These approaches can be built on to guide other areas.

Looking forward, the arrival of the 11km metro extension will branch off the current West Midlands Metro line just east of the Wednesbury Great Western Street Metro stop, before heading through Tipton and Dudley on its way to Brierley Hill. There are plans for up to 16 Metro stops, with provision for two additional stops. This will create a new economic corridor, with the potential to attract investment and regeneration around the route and Metro stops.

The ambition for Sandwell to be the home of the start-up – as set out in the Appendix *Economic Recovery Plan for Businesses* - will require flexible and affordable premises across the borough. These could be located in vacant high street units. Re-purposing empty spaces for meanwhile use can be an effective way to counteract the decline of physical retail, diversifying centres and adding vibrancy that kickstarts wider regeneration. We want to explore shared space for enterprises, as part of diverse town centre offer that mixes retail, culture and business which create vibrant and safe day and night time economies.

A recent Sandwell report ranked the borough as 324 out of 325 local authorities in England for cultural engagement. This is something we are looking to change, with the Commonwealth Games in 2022 providing the opportunity to host related events, including the borough-wide Shine a Light Festival and the Live Site at Sandwell Valley. Arts Council England has named Sandwell

a priority area for a share of £75m in investment via the new Levelling Up for Culture Places fund. The West Bromwich Town Deal will catalyse a new cultural quarter in the town, centred around the Town Hall and library. Small, culture-led activity could also be part of the offer, attracting new creative organisations and building on our grassroots cultural and voluntary & community sector activity. Broadening the range of activities within our existing community buildings and increasing the range of activities and events in the Borough is part of the approach to increasing participation in cultural activity.

Whilst Sandwell sees good connectivity to regional and national networks, travel between local towns can be difficult. Congestion Management Plans by Transport for the West Midlands highlights congestion pinch points around Tipton and Oldbury town centres. Improving connectivity between towns can help spread the benefits of existing investment to other parts of the borough, connecting and creating neighbourhoods in new housing developments.

Actions: How we'll make this happen

We will support the regeneration of our town centres, high streets, and neighbourhoods.
Early priorities include:

West Bromwich town centre – major investment in the diversification of West Bromwich's town centre, creating more places for residents and visitors to meet and mix

Urban greening – new and enhance existing greenspace connecting West Bromwich town centre to Sandwell Valley

Soho Foundry and Chance Glassworks – regeneration of unique historic assets in Sandwell, reviving them for modern uses

Wednesbury High Street Heritage Action Zone – in the revival of Wednesbury's clock tower, historic buildings, and public realm

We will develop each site, and each town, to its full potential, promoting clean and green environments

- Work with local partners, including businesses and community groups, to explore ideas for local areas, using co-design and engagement to involve stakeholders and communities in the development of future Council neighbourhood plans, projects and funding bids
- Draw up a provisional programme of events that could be held in various public spaces across the borough
- Identify new and existing public spaces of all sizes – squares, streets, parks, etc. – for enlivenment and day and night-time use

We will develop efficiently, making the most creative use of land available

- Advance a meanwhile use programme for town centres and high streets, seeking guidance on best practice from specialist organisations

Use the council's position and powers to unlock sites attractive to investment and to uphold quality

- Promote Sandwell's centres as work-live-leisure-study spaces, encouraging new businesses and community organisations to locate on the high street, fostering local clusters and creating jobs
- Identify council owned buildings which could be used for public events



10. EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Our five-year ambition is to deliver new learning facilities at primary, secondary and further education levels to improve education and opportunity for people of all ages

Education and skills infrastructure is crucial to sustaining the needs of a growing population. Rising population growth here means demand for school places is high but provision has so far kept pace, as several new schools have been brought forward. However, continued population growth, increased inward migration and the opening of new housing developments in the borough, means demand could exceed pupil place projections quickly in the coming years.

Ten major education and skills facilities are in development, from primary to higher level skills

By enhancing skills infrastructure, Sandwell has an opportunity to build on recent increases in skills levels. This will pave the way to a more prosperous future, preparing residents for future industries, and, in time, bringing good quality and well-paying jobs to the borough.

Regeneration plans look to increase existing skills provision and enhance learning facilities, especially in key sectors, raising skills levels that match local employment opportunities and supporting improvement in performance of schools. The

impact of the net zero transition and increasing automation means skills provision must adapt to respond to new opportunities.

Context

Sandwell has been growing fast, and this is set to continue. The local population is estimated to increase 8% between 2017 & 2030, requiring more school places to meet anticipated demand. Sandwell sees high demand for primary school places in Sandwell, which is currently being met by the increase in provision that has occurred over the past decade. Demand for secondary places is also very high with 828 additional secondary places projected to be needed by 2024.

Regeneration plans for all parts of the borough monitor population and provision rates closely and identify potential news sites, especially around new housing developments. When published the School Organisation Plan will set out the future requirements for school places – this should be closely aligned with our planning and regeneration work, to ensure that there are adequate school places for residents. We will continue to track population growth and migration levels and scope potential sites in areas where additional school provision is likely to be needed.

Educational attainment is low with average scores at Key stage 2, 4 and GCSE all trailing regional and national averages. Sandwell's schools have the lowest Attainment 8 score in the Black Country, while 52% of secondary schools are rated average or below average for Progress 8. This continues for young people and adults. Overall skills levels are still way below national averages - 17% of residents have no formal qualification compared to 11% for England. This can impact on life chances and is reflected in wage levels; Sandwell residents earning around £5,000 less per year compared to national averages and around 25% of residents earning below the Real Living Wage. Low skills contribute to persistent high levels of deprivation and also impact employers, who report skills gaps in their workforces, which hampers long term business growth.

Sandwell has a number of specialisms, in manufacturing, construction, and logistics. There is a growing higher education offer in Sandwell. The University of Wolverhampton already works in partnership with Sandwell College (since 1998) offering foundational degrees to students. Sandwell has an opportunity to build on this and encourage collaboration with other universities in the

West Midlands. Towns Fund investment in Sandwell is set to support high quality skills and training hubs related to key growth sectors and opportunities. This includes the £2.7m Sandwell Civil and Mechanical Engineering Centre, the £12.9m Midland Met Learning Campus in Smethwick and the £9m Rowley Regis Education Hub. These new local facilities will work with business to develop skills for Sandwell's industries of the future. Accelerating the delivery of these and looking to co-locate them with growing businesses will enable Sandwell to maximise the economic benefits of regeneration with skills and jobs growth.

The opening of the Shireland CBSO School in West Bromwich, a High Street Heritage Action Zone in Wednesbury, and a Cultural Action Zone in West Bromwich present opportunities to link cultural regeneration and education and skills infrastructure in Sandwell while addressing the school placement demand. The Shireland pupils will use Sandwell Town Hall's performance space, enabled by One Public Estate work. This represents a new innovative approach to address the decline in the position of the creative arts in many schools, offering access to music education regardless of background in an area where opportunities are

desperately needed. Building on this, Sandwell will continue to explore the co-location and consolidation of services, linking new education facilities to local centres and encouraging the use of communal space by students of all ages.



Actions: How we'll make this happen

We will deliver new housing developments across regeneration areas promptly and to a high quality. Early priorities include:

The Midland Met Learning Campus – the development of new training facilities next to the major and transformative new hospital development

The Ron Davis Centre – the expansion of our successful adult education centre in Smethwick to cater to new learners

The Digital Den – a new facility to develop digital skills in West Bromwich

The Rowley Regis Education Hub – a new satellite education facility offering tailored courses attuned to local needs and learners of different ages

The Windsor MAT Academy & the CBSO secondary school at Providence Place – two new secondary schools in Smethwick and West Bromwich, providing over 1,000 new school places

The Sandwell Civil and Mechanical Engineering Centre – a new technical campus in West Bromwich delivering opportunities in engineering, advanced manufacturing, construction, and electric vehicle manufacture

We will develop each opportunity to its full potential, promoting clean and green environments

Across Sandwell, we will connect with local teams to encourage interaction between communities and education providers, exploring collaborative and additional community uses of available space

We will use the council's position and powers to unlock sites attractive to investment and to uphold quality

- Identify where connectivity could be enhanced to major education centres active via travel and public transport, ensuring accessibility for all residents



The Midland Met Learning Campus concept



The Rowley Regis Education Hub concept



The Sandwell Civil and Mechanical Engineering Centre concept

11. TRANSPORT

Our five-year ambition is to connect Sandwell's major hubs to the wider region and knit neighbourhoods together with public and active transport

Major internal and external connectivity improvements promise to make travel within the Borough more accessible and more pleasant – building on this by connecting new infrastructure to neighbourhoods via walking and cycling infrastructure will help these improvements to fulfil their promise and improve our places.

Major investment is going to transform the borough's transport offer:

- £5 million CRSTS and TCF investment in the SPRINT strategic bus network phase 1 to be delivered by 2022, and phase 2 by 2027
- £12.5 million Towns Fund investment for transport projects in Rowley Regis, Smethwick, and West Bromwich
- £66.9 million City Region Sustainable Travel Settlements (CRSTS) investment for sustainable transport projects across Sandwell
- £160 million Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) investment for a Wednesbury to Brierley Hill metro extension
- Birchley Island Upgrade, £30m to be completed by 2027

- Rowley Regis Canal Network Connectivity, £2.3m to be completed by 2024
- ULEV Charging Scheme, £1.6m to be completed by 2025

Regional connectivity improvements will also be met by the development of HS2 in Birmingham, providing even better rail access to the rest of the country. Alongside this, enhancements to local rail stations will create public realm gateways to the 2022 Commonwealth Games, which will bring further investment opportunities for the Borough.

This strategy, working in tandem with wider West Midlands strategies and funding, will bring cohesive transport infrastructure to Sandwell and ensure residents will feel the benefits of this major investment.

Context

Sandwell is well-connected regionally and nationally, with good connections to the mainline railway and road networks. The Borough is connected to five motorway junctions, and has twelve railway stations, providing easy access to the wider West Midlands and the rest of England.

Sandwell has particularly knitted to the rest of the Black Country and wider West Midlands, with strong commuting flows in and out of the area.⁹ However, Sandwell is not as well connected internally. Our town centres are disconnected and travelling within the Borough by public transport or active travel is a challenge for too many residents.

Increased car usage across the West Midlands, particularly during the pandemic, has resulted in poor air quality and congestion. 63% of all journeys in the West Midlands are by car and traffic growth in the region is predicted to grow by 46% by 2040.¹⁰ We are focused active travel improvements across the Borough, developing accessible routes and linking neighbourhoods, which have proved popular throughout the pandemic.

Sandwell was declared as an Air Quality Management area in 2005 due to the amount of NO₂ emissions entering the atmosphere, with several locations exceeding the annual mean concentration. While we have achieved significant reductions in emissions per person, transport emissions still remain high, with 98% of emissions produced by road transport.¹¹

9. ONS Census (2011)

10. WMCA Movement for Growth 2016

11. Sandwell Climate Change Strategy 2020 - 2041

12. Sport England Active Lives Survey May 2017/18

We also face high levels of deprivation. 9% of Year 6 children classed as overweight or obese and 33% of the population classed as 'inactive', compared to 25% nationally.¹² People living in deprived areas are twice as likely to be physically inactive than those living in more prosperous places. To combat this, we have made significant progress to extend active travel provision with the roll out of a cycle hire programme.

We have many opportunities to tackle our challenges. Focusing closely on public and active travel, and convenient alternatives to private car use will help us to connect our towns, improve poor air quality and resident health, and reach its carbon neutrality pledge.

We have already introduced measures to encourage active travel, working with West Midlands Cycle Hire to set up cycle hubs in the region, however, current hubs are concentrated in West Bromwich and Oldbury, meaning the rest of the borough is excluded from accessing the scheme. To reach the target Transport for the West Midlands has set to raise bike journeys in the region to 5% by 2023 (from 2% in 2011), we will need an ambitious strategy to encourage active transport.

The introduction of mini-Holland schemes can help to promote this further, improving connectivity within the Borough and getting residents more

active. The London Boroughs of Enfield, Waltham Forest and Kingston were part of the £90m mini-Holland scheme which aimed to make the boroughs as cycle-friendly as many Dutch cities, where more than 50% of journeys are made by bike. Interventions included segregated cycle lanes, traffic calming measures, redesigned town centres, and cycle hubs. The schemes also tackled challenges with the walking environment by implementing new pedestrian crossings at key locations and creating new public spaces.



Actions: How we'll make this happen

We will upgrade our transport infrastructure, supporting the growth of our key sectors and making it easier and more convenient for residents and visitors to travel around Sandwell:

Promote and ensure the delivery of major corridor and strategic improvements

The Birchley Island Upgrade – a major infrastructure improvement in Oldbury, increasing highway capacity at the centre of Sandwell

The Wednesbury Metro Extension – an extension to the midland Metro running through Sandwell, bringing high quality public transport to residents across the borough

The A4123 and A461 Multi Modal Corridors –improving capacity and increasing accessibility along our arterial routes

Accelerate Electric Vehicle transition through the Black Country Transport ULEV Strategy

ULEV charging scheme: 250 electric charging points to be delivered across the borough

Explore schemes to expand routes and incentivise active travel, building on the Commonwealth Games legacy and working with anchor institutions to promote routes

Walking and cycling infrastructure – new routes across Sandwell, knitting together neighbourhoods and town centres

Canal network improvements – towpath and accessibility improvements in Rowley Regis to unlock the potential of our urban waterways





12. DIGITAL

Our five-year ambition is to support the rollout and take up of full-fibre and 5G across Sandwell

The increasing digitalisation of our home and work lives means first-class digital infrastructure is vital to Sandwell's economic growth. In addition, the ever-expanding Internet of Things and delivery of public services via digital platforms, including healthcare, means adequate access to digital services, and the skills to use, is becoming increasingly important.

Full fibre connectivity is increasing at pace

We are on track to reach around 90% coverage for Full Fibre to the Premise across Sandwell by 2024/25. Sandwell is part of the multi-million-pound WM5G Pilot and Virgin is launching Gig 2 programme that will roll out full fibre lines to their whole current network. This will mean 85% Virgin cable coverage will be upgraded from cable to full fibre. We are working to ensure that residents and businesses have the skills and infrastructure to access digital infrastructure, through skills investment and connectivity improvements.

Context

With the fast expansion of Full Fibre networks and involvement in the WM5G pilot scheme, we are making good progress on the rollout of super-fast and full fibre digital infrastructure. However, further acceleration of this and efforts to ensure equal access across the whole of the borough are crucial to supporting our large SME business base, which is dependent on reliable digital connectivity. 94% of small business owners rate a reliable broadband connection as critical to business success.

There are also challenges around digital exclusion, which has been heightened during the pandemic, and low digital skills levels, which trail regional averages. 14% of Sandwell's residents have never been online. Sandwell residents' use of basic digital skills is the lowest in the Black Country at only 30%, well below the national average of 50%. Sandwell residents have the requisite digital skills but are not utilising them. Digital exclusion has been exposed by the pandemic

and must be addressed to ensure all residents benefit from a wealthier Sandwell. To do this Sandwell will deliver the West Bromwich Digital Den, providing centrally located, free to use digital facilities that include basic training provisions for residents.

With the delivery of full fibre digital connectivity in the UK being undertaken by market providers, Sandwell is best placed to focus on how it can continue to work with partners to ensure the acceleration and expansion of this infrastructure across the borough. This includes working with Openreach and Virgin to monitor the progress and further expand digital rollouts.

As a public service provider and partner, Sandwell will also consider how it can use digital innovation in delivery of local services to maximum potential. Smart technology and infrastructure innovation could improve service delivery across a range of service areas, including health and social care, education and environment.

Actions: How we'll make this happen

We will support the connection of Sandwell to high-speed networks. New infrastructure will soon connect tens of thousands of premises to full fibre across the borough.

Digital network providers are connecting Sandwell at a fast pace, offering fibre infrastructure across the borough

We will work to ensure the full benefits of this connectivity drives economic growth across the borough, exploring innovative use cases and supporting market providers to continue the rollout of new infrastructure.

Sandwell is part of WM5G, the UK's first region-wide 5G testbed, working to accelerate the rollout of 5G and to test, prove and scale new applications and services

13. SUSTAINABILITY

Our five-year ambition is to invest in to support the transition to net zero

We have set a target to be carbon neutral by 2041, but major investment and action will need to be taken to reach the target, particularly reductions in household and transport emissions. We have many opportunities to tackle the challenges it faces. Major projects and investment can start to improve population health, build climate resilience, and futureproof industries and jobs. Our Climate Change Strategy sets out a clear path towards net zero, with targeted actions to reduce emissions across the borough. The Economic Recovery Plan for Businesses sets out how we will work with business to support their transition to Net Zero. We are building on this, building a new greener Sandwell through our regeneration of our neighbourhoods, the development of new green technologies, and the expansion of our public and active travel network.

Sandwell currently has a £196m pipeline of projects to tackle climate change and reach the carbon neutrality by 2041 goal.

There is a strong relationship between action on climate change and the regeneration opportunities Sandwell faces.

The £115m retrofitting of all relevant Council HRA stock (27,300) by 2027 will see improvements including lost insulation, cavity wall insulation, and double or triple glazing windows, and ultimately deliver green high-quality homes. Beginning with a pilot programme in Smethwick to retrofit 275 homes in high need, this will help households out of fuel poverty, take a strong step towards reaching the carbon neutrality goal, and contribute to local employment and training through modern methods of construction, benefitting jobs at risk of automation or in declining traditional industries.

The investment into clean and local forms of energy generation will mean the Borough is well placed to lead the transition and support the Black Country's ambitious plans to develop a High Value Manufacturing City.

Context

Sandwell currently has high levels of car use, poor air quality and poor health outcomes. In 2018, Sandwell produced 1,448kt of CO₂ emissions, the highest in the Black Country, with the majority of emissions produced by transport. While Sandwell has seen a 32% reduction in CO₂ emissions between 2005 and 2017, with

significant reductions from domestic energy and industrial and commercial sources, there has only been a 5% reduction in transport emissions over the same period.¹³

Tackling the main sources of emissions will be challenging and demand a change in the way we live and work.

- 30% of greenhouse gas emissions are from residential buildings
- 30% of greenhouse gas emissions are from on-road transport
- 18% of greenhouse gas emissions are from institutional buildings and facilities
- 11% of greenhouse gas emissions are from industrial buildings and facilities

Investing in further projects and developments to support the transition to net zero is a priority for our communities to improve health outcomes and quality of life by improving home energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty. This includes the Electric Vehicle charging and active travel proposals set out in the Transport Theme and £40 million investment for a battery energy storage site in West Bromwich. We will complement this with a focus

13. Sandwell Climate Strategy 2020 - 2041

14. State of the Borough Evidence Base, 2020.

15. State of the Borough Evidence Base, 2020.

on energy, tackling fuel poverty and reducing demand on fossil fuels, through the development of the West Bromwich heat network, the exploration of a heat network around Grove Lane in Smethwick. The future investment for a waste to energy plant in West Bromwich will expand energy generation within the borough.

33% of households are low-income households (27% national average)¹⁴ and 17% of households are fuel poor, far higher than the national average of 11%.¹⁵ £155 million investment has been earmarked for Council housing retrofit. Retrofit is a West Midlands Combined Authority priority, with a target of retrofitting

50,000 homes by the end of 2022. Sandwell is preparing to retrofit its own housing stock; via the social housing decarbonisation fund, Sandwell will retrofit 275 homes in Smethwick. Sandwell has also applied to the WMCA Net Zero Neighbourhood Demonstrator to retrofit 304 homes in Tipton.

We are expanding sustainable energy generation in Sandwell, developing a specialism that will create jobs here and allow us to be at the heart of net zero transition in the West Midlands. The Enfinium energy from waste plant in West Bromwich will create 40 new jobs, diverting waste from landfill and transforming this into energy.

This will lead to a net saving in carbon, and via a local heat network provide local premises with sustainable heat.



Actions: How we'll make this happen

We will invest in our net zero transition, retrofitting homes to improve energy efficiency, encouraging sustainability in transport and business, and exploring new opportunities to develop energy generation across the borough. Early priorities include:

Retrofitting housing stock across the borough, improving their energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty, beginning with a pilot of 275 homes in Smethwick

The development of a heat network in West Bromwich and the exploration of a new network in Smethwick, reusing waste energy for heat generation

The development of the Enfinium waste to energy plant in West Bromwich, generating energy from waste for local use

The West Bromwich Battery Energy Storage Site, a £40m investment in cutting edge green technology

We will work to ensure the delivery of retrofit across Sandwell's social housing, working with regional and national authorities on ambitious schemes to reduce fuel poverty and increase sustainability

We will enhance our green spaces, planning strategically to regulate air quality

We will explore the potential for future heat networks on new developments, ensuring new growth is sustainable





14. DELIVERING THE PLAN

This is a shared plan for Sandwell, requiring collaboration between the council and strategic partners in regional government, other public sector organisations, and the private sector. Where regeneration has been most transformative, it has been guided by consistent and concerted strategic place leadership working to a clear vision for an area over a sustained period of time. We will look to do the same working with partners, business, and communities to deliver existing projects, develop future plans and drive additional investment.

Linked to the Appendix *Economic Recovery Plan for Businesses*, we will look to make community wealth building a reality as we deliver this strategy. Significant investments

from the regeneration pipeline will increase tendering opportunities for local businesses. As well as increase our own spend, we want to encourage our businesses to increase theirs by raising awareness of local suppliers.

The West Midlands is home to the largest Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA), and Sandwell MBC works with the WMCA and Black Country LEP to deliver results. Coordinating between organisations can unlock opportunities at scale, particularly in transport, connecting to the rest of the West Midlands conurbation, helping people travel in and out of Sandwell. It also requires careful alignment to ensure that developments are delivered in the most effective way possible.

We need to collaborate with our partners in WMCA, the Black Country Consortium, and national departments to prepare land. Working closely to provide proposals for the Brownfield Housing Fund will help us to achieve our shared ambitions for our place. Our location and assets put us in a viable position to grow, which is held back by the costs of bringing land forward. Setting out our ambition and articulating our goals in clear terms will help us to bring partners together to prepare and market our land.

Many of the actions in this strategy require their support – we have identified the role of each in forwarding the actions of this strategy.



Organisation	Role
Sandwell Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify development opportunities • Convene partners and lead vision and masterplan development • Work with partners to identify funding for development • Main delivery body for retrofit of council stock • Directly deliver development via Council House Build programmes / Housing Company and / or revolving fund
Developers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver major schemes in line with masterplans and identified visions • Collaborate on visioning for key centres and major development • Work with Sandwell on retrofit schemes
Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express business needs clearly to Sandwell and regional partners • Work with Sandwell to identify opportunities to expand or densify premises on existing plots • Explore opportunities for retrofit and sustainable development
Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active participation in placemaking and vision development for major centres and schemes
Regional business organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support identification of employment land opportunities and growth areas within Sandwell • Identify inward inquiries which match Sandwell business profile
Regional government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll-out regional transport schemes in line with Sandwell local priorities • Reach out with new funding opportunities, making Sandwell aware and supporting bids, e.g., brownfield

Measuring Our Success

This is a live document, and we will monitor it over the next five years to update as projects are delivered and new projects emerge. We will measure progress against clear indicators, which are set out below. Progress will be reported and monitored by Cabinet every six months.

Through delivery against this strategy, by 2027 we will have:

- Increased the number of new homes, including affordable homes
 - Remediated more brown-field land for housing and employment
 - Created new commercial, creative and educational spaces to enliven our centres and create opportunity
 - Create the employment spaces to deliver new jobs and unlock new construction jobs
- Provide new facilities for learners at every level
 - Expand our electric vehicle charging infrastructure
 - Connect premises to high speed connections across the borough

We are already focused on delivery, with the Pipeline anticipated to deliver over 4,000 new homes and circa 100 hectares of remediated land. But we need to do more. Our project pipeline is dynamic and will be regularly updated to reflect new opportunities and changes to our projects. We will regularly assess our projects against the priorities in this plan and continue to focus our resources on the interventions which have the largest effect.

Sandwell is focused on delivering success. At the outset of this strategy, we set out a clear vision for regeneration activity – to create a wealthier Sandwell. Our seven priorities, and the actions needed to achieve these, will move us towards this vision. To ensure we remain focused, we will monitor and track the progress of our actions over time, updating actions in line with our corporate management framework.

This is an exciting moment for Sandwell. The £1.8bn regeneration pipeline will transform the borough, bring new jobs and homes for our residents and creating a wealthier Sandwell.







PIPELINE PROJECTS 2022 TO 2027

March 2022

Sandwell Metropolitan
Borough Council

Category	Project	Town* ¹	Developer	Funding Source	Investment Amount* ²	Planning Ref.	Delivery	Outcomes	No. of Jobs	No. of Apprenticeships	No. of Construction Jobs* ³	No. of New Homes	New Floor-space (sq.ft)	Land remediated (ha)	Other outcomes	Delivery Stage* ⁴
Sustainability	Retrofitting of relevant Council House Stock * ⁵	Borough	Sandwell Council	HRA and Government Grant	£155,565,000.00	Permitted Development	2027	Jobs		20	400				Improvement of energy efficiency within council house stock	Delivery
Sustainability	Heat Network (Development Phase)	West Bromwich	Sandwell Council	Government (BEIS) and HRA	£390,000.00		2022	Outline Business Case							Outline Business Case - July 2022	Concept
Sustainability	Waste to Energy Plant - Enfinium	West Bromwich	Enfinium	Private Sector	£300,000,000.00	DC/17/61177	2025	Jobs	40	4	400		107,639	2	Low carbon energy + heat production	PPA
Sustainability	Battery Energy Storage Site	West Bromwich	TBC (AVON Utilities and Generation)	Private Sector	£40,000,000.00	Pre-app	2024	Jobs	20	2	264			1.343	Battery energy storage sites are a key enabler in reducing carbon emissions and storing energy from clean energy sources.	Concept
Sustainability	Grid Scale Battery Storage Facility	West Bromwich	Pivot Power (EDF Renewables)	Private Sector	£30,000,000.00	DC/20/64437	2022	Jobs	20	2				1.42	Battery energy storage sites are a key enabler in reducing carbon emissions and storing energy from clean energy sources.	Delivery
Digital	Improving Digital Connectivity	Borough	BT Openreach	Private	£30,000,000.00		2024	Full Fibre Connectivity		2	0				70,000 further premises connected - homes / businesses (100k total)	Delivery
Employment	Metro Depot	Wednesbury	Tfwm Schemes	CRSTS	£50,000,000.00		2027	Jobs		2	460					Business Case
Employment	International Distribution & Manufacturing Facility, Land off Coneygre Rd, Coneygre Ind Estate area, DY4 8XP	Tipton	Coneygree Redevelopments Ltd	Private and WMCA Rem Fund (TBC)	£40,000,000.00	DC/21/66125	2023	Commercial Floorspace	150	1	153		230,000	6.92	230,000 sq.ft of B2 and B8 uses	Business Case
Employment	Operational Hub for West Midlands Ambulance Service. Land off Shidas Lane, Oldbury, B62 2BP	Oldbury	Stoford	Assura PLC	£22,000,000.00	DC/20/65084	2022	Commercial Space	475	6	0		76,230	2.84		Delivery
Health	Sandwell Aquatic Centre	Smethwick	Sandwell Council	SMBC; BCLEP; WMCA; DCMS/OC	£89,600,000.00	DC/19/62642	2023	Jobs		16	254		161,458		5.42ha (site size)	Delivery
Health	Wednesbury Health Centre (new facility), Kings Street	Wednesbury	Sandwell Council	Prudential Borrowing	£5,000,000.00	DC/18/62165	2023	Floorspace		1	35		10,441	0.49	Practical delivery Jan 2023	Business Case

Category	Project	Town* ¹	Developer	Funding Source	Investment Amount* ²	Planning Ref.	Delivery	Outcomes	No. of Jobs	No. of Apprenticeships	No. of Construction Jobs* ³	No. of New Homes	New Floor-space (sq.ft)	Land remediated (ha)	Other outcomes	Delivery Stage* ⁴
Heritage Regeneration	Town Hall Quarter	West Bromwich	Sandwell Council	Towns Fund	£7,558,000.00		2026	Floorspace		1	15				4120 sq. m refurbished	Business Case
Heritage Regeneration	High Street Heritage Action Zone	Wednesbury	Sandwell and Historic England	HAZ - Historic England	£3,600,000.00		2024	Public Realm		1	71					Delivery
Heritage Regeneration	Chance Glassworks Regeneration	Smethwick	Chance Heritage Trust; Historic England	TBC	TBC	TBC	2027	Floorspace			0			3.08		Concept
Heritage Regeneration	Soho Foundry & Mint Historic Buildings	Smethwick	Chance Heritage Trust; Historic England	TBC	TBC	TBC	2027	Floorspace			0					Concept
Housing	Land at Hall Green Lane, West Bromwich	West Bromwich	Countryside Properties	Private	£35,700,000.00	DC/20/65059	2022	Homes inc Affordable	172	3	126	223		8.59	£21.3m GVA Economic Output / 172 FTE Supply chain jobs	Delivery
Housing	Friar Park	Wednesbury	Sandwell Council & WMCA (JV)	Private and WMCA Rem Fund	£100,000,000.00		2023	Homes inc Affordable		9	1310	630		27		Concept
Housing	Fountain Lane Development	Oldbury	Lovell Developments	Private and WMCA Rem Fund	£47,000,000.00	DC/20/64152	2022	Homes inc Affordable		4	616	234		6.02		Concept
Housing	Portway Rd, Edwin Richards Quarry, B65 9DS	Rowley Regis	St Modwen	Private and WMCA Rem Fund (TBC)	£56,000,000.00		2023	Homes inc Affordable		4	734	281		13.92		Concept
Housing	Qualtronic Site	Tipton	Future High Street Living	Private	£27,500,000.00		2024	Homes inc Affordable		3	360	137				Concept
Housing	Site of Former Kings Cinema	West Bromwich	TBC	Private	£23,000,000.00	DC/21/65989	2024	Homes	300	2	200	77		0.18		Planning Permission
Housing	Phoenix Collegiate, Friar Park	Wednesbury	Harris Lamb (agent)	Private	£17,000,000.00	DC/20/63911	2024	Homes inc Affordable		2	223	84		4.8		Planning Permission

Category	Project	Town* ¹	Developer	Funding Source	Investment Amount* ²	Planning Ref.	Delivery	Outcomes	No.of Jobs	No. of Apprenticeships	No. of Construction Jobs* ³	No. of New Homes	New Floorspace (sq.ft)	Land re-mediated (ha)	Other outcomes	Delivery Stage* ⁴
Housing	London Street	Smethwick	Met Holdings	Private	£75,000,000.00	Pre App	2024	Homes inc Affordable		8	747	382				Concept
Housing	West Bromwich Masterplan	West Bromwich	Various	Private and SMBC / WMCA	£165,000,000.00		2026	Homes inc Affordable		18	2162	1100				Concept
Housing	Rolfe Street Canalside Regeneration	Smethwick	Sandwell Council	Towns Fund	£2,000,000.00		2023	Remediation		1	26	125		1		Business Case
Housing	Grove Lane Regeneration	Smethwick	Sandwell Council	Towns Fund	£4,350,000.00		2024	Remediation		2	57	145		2		Business Case
Housing	Woods Lane (phase 2)	Rowley Regis	Keon Homes Ltd	Private (TBC)	£6,800,000.00	DC/21/66444	2023	Homes inc Affordable		1	89	34		0.72		Planning Permission
Housing	RSL delivery programme in Sandwell	Borough	Various	Homes England/ Private Sector	£70,000,000.00		2027	Affordable Homes		9	917	400				Concept
Housing	Swan Lane	West Bromwich	Green Square Accord	Homes England/ Private Sector	£29,800,000.00		2025	Affordable Homes	30	5	393	149		4.06		Business Case
Housing	Sandwell General Hospital Site	West Bromwich	Catalyst Mutual Enterprise CIC	Private	£18,750,000.00	DC/21/64894	2025	Key Worker Homes		2	236	121		0.85		PPA
HRA New Council House Build Programme	Delivery of new Council Homes across the Borough	Borough	Sandwell Council	Homes England Grant funding & RTB receipts	£50,694,045.00	Various	Various	Affordable Homes		5	664	266		10.93		Concept

Category	Project	Town* ¹	Developer	Funding Source	Investment Amount* ²	Planning Ref.	Delivery	Outcomes	No.of Jobs	No. of Apprenticeships	No. of Construction Jobs* ³	No. of New Homes	New Floorspace (sq.ft)	Land re-mediated (ha)	Other outcomes	Delivery Stage* ⁴
Education & Skills	Midland Met University Learning Campus	Smethwick	NHS Trust	Towns Fund	£12,900,000.00	DC/21/66467	2025	Skills	30	6	100		93,372.50		Jobs taken from FBC (M+E). Aiming to enroll 1280 learners. 0.67ha	Business Case
Education & Skills	Ron Davis Centre Expansion	Smethwick	Sandwell Council	Towns Fund	£358,400.00		2024	Skills		1	3		1076		1100 learners assisted	Business Case
Education & Skills	Digital Den	West Bromwich	Greets Green Community Centre	Towns Fund	£42,600.00		2022	Skills	0.5	1					100 learners assisted	Business Case
Education & Skills	Rowley Regis Education Hub	Rowley Regis	Sandwell College	Towns Fund	£9,000,000.00		2025	Skills	4	1	50		22,873		475 learners assisted	Business Case
Education & Skills	Sandwell Civil and Mechanical Engineering Centre	West Bromwich	Sandwell College	Towns Fund	£2,700,000.00		2023	Skills	14	1	50		9687		400 learners assisted	Business Case
Education & Skills	Britannia Park Community Hub and Greenspace Improvements	Rowley Regis	Sandwell Council	Towns Funds	£2,460,000.00		2024	Public Realm		1	48					Business Case
Education & Skills	Causeway Green Primary School (Replacement)	Oldbury	Sandwell Council	Land Receipt and SMBC funds	£10,000,000.00		2024	School		3	70		23,465			Concept
Education & Skills	Windsor MAT Academy Secondary School at Black Patch	Smethwick	DfE & Sandwell Council	DfE	£20,000,000.00		2023	School		3	140		72,333			On Site
Education & Skills	CBSO Providence Place - new Secondary School	West Bromwich	DfE & Sandwell Council	DfE	TBC	DC/22/66501	2023	School		0	0		27,620		900 senior school places	Business Case
Education & Skills	Elm Tree Primary Academy	Wednesbury	DfE	DfE (Free School Programme)	TBC			School		0	0				126 primary special school places	Business Case
Town Centre	Urban Greening	West Bromwich	Sandwell Council	Towns Fund	£1,220,000.00		2024	Connectivity Improvement		0	60					Business Case
Town Centre	Retail Diversification Programme	West Bromwich	Sandwell Council	Towns Fund	£13,000,000.00		2025	Assets in to public ownership		0	255					Business Case

Category	Project	Town* ¹	Developer	Funding Source	Investment Amount* ²	Planning Ref.	Delivery	Outcomes	No. of Jobs	No. of Apprenticeships	No. of Construction Jobs* ³	No. of New Homes	New Floorspace (sq.ft)	Land re-mediated (ha)	Other outcomes	Delivery Stage* ⁴
Transport	Birchley Island Upgrade (A4123 / M5 J2) - increase circulatory capacity.	Oldbury	Sandwell Council	Sandwell Council, TCF and MRN	£30,000,000.00	Permitted Development	2027	Highway Capacity Improvements		2	276					Business Case
Transport	A4123 Multi Modal Corridor	Borough	Sandwell Council	CRSTS	£12,000,000.00	Permitted Development	2027	Connectivity Improvement		1	110					Concept
Transport	A461 Multi Modal Corridor	Borough	Sandwell Council	CRSTS	£12,500,000.00	Permitted Development	2027	Connectivity Improvement		1	115					Concept
Transport	M5 J1 (Phase 1 Development only)	West Bromwich	Sandwell Council	DfT (via TfWM)	£3,000,000.00	Permitted Development	2027	Highway Capacity Improvements		0	28					Concept
Transport	ULEV Charging Scheme	Borough	Sandwell Council	CRSTS	£1,670,000.00	Permitted Development	2025	Connectivity Improvement		0	15				circa 250 electric charging points	Business Case
Transport	"Sandwell WM LCWIP West Bromwich - Cradley Heath"	Borough	Sandwell Council	TBC	£4,000,000.00	Permitted Development	2027	Connectivity Improvement		0	37					Concept
Transport	"SANDWELL WM LCWIPs Smethwick - West Bromwich - Wednesbury "	Borough	Sandwell Council	CRSTS	£5,000,000.00	Permitted Development	2027	Connectivity Improvement		0	46					Concept
Transport	WBHE Sustainable Access Measures	Tipton	Sandwell Council	CRSTS	£4,000,000.00	Permitted Development	2026	Connectivity Improvement		0	37					Business Case
Transport	Smethwick - Birmingham Inclusive Growth Corridor	Smethwick	TfWM Schemes	CRSTS	£15,000,000.00	Permitted Development	2027	Connectivity Improvement		2	138					Concept
Transport	SPRINT A34/A45 Phase 1	West Bromwich	TfWM Schemes	TCF	£5,000,000.00	Permitted Development	2022	Connectivity Improvement		0	46					Delivery
Transport	SPRINT A34/A45 Phase 2	West Bromwich	TfWM Schemes	CRSTS	£300,060.00	Permitted Development	2027	Connectivity Improvement		0	3					Business Case
Transport	Dudley Port Integrated Transport Hub (Phase 1A)	Oldbury	TfWM Schemes	CRSTS	£2,400,000.00	Permitted Development	2024	Connectivity Improvement		0	22					Business Case

Category	Project	Town* ¹	Developer	Funding Source	Investment Amount* ²	Planning Ref.	Delivery	Outcomes	No.of Jobs	No. of Apprenticeships	No. of Construction Jobs* ³	No. of New Homes	New Floorspace (sq.ft)	Land remediated (ha)	Other outcomes	Delivery Stage* ⁴
Transport	Metro Line 1 renovation	Borough	TfWM Schemes	CRSTS	£10,000,000.00	Permitted Development	2027	Connectivity Improvement		2	92					Business Case
Transport	Wednesbury - Brierley Hill Metro Extension	Borough	TfWM Schemes	TCF/ Investment programme/ prudential borrowing (Fair Box)	£160,000,000.00	Permitted Development	2027	Connectivity Improvement		8	1472					Delivery
Transport	Smethwick Walking and Cycling Infrastructure	Smethwick	Sandwell Council	Towns Funds	£3,872,800.00	Permitted Development	2025	Connectivity Improvement		1	36					Business Case
Transport	Canal Network Connectivity	Rowley Regis	Canals and River Trust	Towns Funds	£2,300,000.00	Permitted Development	2024	Connectivity Improvement		1	21					Business Case
Transport	Midland Met Hospital Canal Gateway Project	Smethwick	Canals and River Trust	Sustrans / Towns Fund	£1,500,00.00	Permitted Development	2024	Connectivity Improvement		0	14					Business Case
Transport	Rowley Regis Canal Connectivity	Rowley Regis	Canals and River Trust	Towns Fund	£2,300,000.00	Permitted Development	2024	Connectivity Improvement		0	21					Business Case
Transport	West Bromwich East Towpath Link	West Bromwich	Canals and River Trust	TBC (WMCA / DfT / Sustrans)	£3,000,000.00	Permitted Development	2025	Connectivity Improvement		0	28					Business Case
Transport	Galton Bridge & Engine Arm Aqueduct restoration	Smethwick	Canals and River Trust	National Lottery Heritage Fund	£2,000,000.00	Permitted Development	2026	Connectivity Improvement		0	18					Business Case
Transport	Blackheath Bus Interchange and Public Realm	Rowley Regis	Sandwell Council	Towns Funds/ TfWM	£3,746,000.00	Permitted Development	2025	Connectivity Improvement		0	34					Business Case
Transport	Rowley Regis Walking and Cycling Infrastructure	Rowley Regis	Sandwell Council	Towns Funds	£1,500,000.00	Permitted Development	2025	Connectivity Improvement		0	14					Business Case
Transport	West Bromwich Walking and Cycling Infrastructure	West Bromwich	Sandwell Council	Towns Funds	£1,100,000.00	Permitted Development	2025	Connectivity Improvement		0	10					Business Case
				TOTAL	£1,856,376,905.00				1255.5	171	14,321	4388	836194.5	98.163		

*1 Borough is referred to if a project crosses more than one Town.

*2 Where an investment amount has been estimated an assumption of £200,000 investment value per new house and £150,000 per apartment has been used. This represents the construction costs and ancillary spend.

*3 No. of construction jobs - where information hasn't been available, a calculation has been used to determine jobs created. This calculation is based on the Homes and Communities Agency formula for construction jobs combined with the ONS (Office of National Statistics) data on the rise of property prices in Sandwell. It categorises the construction jobs into labour coefficients based on type of project, and then takes the project value to generate an estimated labour value.

*4 The delivery stages are based on: concept (initial feasibility/ pre-business case approval), business case stage (outline or full business case has been approved), planning permission approved (PPA), delivery (implementation commenced).

*5 Average cost of retrofit of council homes to Carbon Zero (not EPC-C) has been estimated as £20,742 per property (Inside Housing Survey of 200 social landlords, November 2020). Retrofit investment figure assumes of 7,500 of the 27,300 (circa 25%) council homes would be retrofitted by 2027.

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SANDWELL'S INCLUSIVE RECOVERY ACTION PLAN FOR BUSINESS

Appendix 2 of the Sandwell Regeneration Strategy

2022 - 2027



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1. FOREWORD

For Sandwell to succeed, our businesses need to succeed, creating new jobs and opportunities in the local area.

This is an important document for us. It sets out our first plan dedicated to supporting businesses. Successful businesses are fundamental to creating jobs, generating local wealth and prosperity.

Supporting our businesses is an area where we think we can do more, faster. We want to support our businesses to play their part and to help unlock the entrepreneurial potential of our population to drive a more inclusive economy. Last year we launched the Sandwell Skills Strategy. That focuses on supporting residents to develop the skills to access jobs. This plan provides the other side of the coin, setting out our plans to support businesses to create jobs for residents.

Circumstances have changed drastically over the past eighteen months. Businesses have adapted to the most difficult trading time in living memory, and I have been pleased to hear the positive stories of local businesses who have adapted their services to meet the demand for PPE or sanitiser and other vital products. Many of these were celebrated in the Black Country Chamber's Business Heroes Awards in 2020.

But this has been a very difficult year for businesses and residents. The Council has played an important role in supporting businesses through the challenges of the pandemic. In the last 18 months, Sandwell has delivered around £85 million grants and £336 million loans – more than any other Black County Local Authority. As Government support for businesses winds down we need to manage that process, deliver major projects and make sure they lead to business investment that creates good jobs for residents, without them having to leave the borough.

The investments and infrastructure coming to Sandwell bring opportunity to level up the borough. But we know from experience that the business benefits from these investments will not happen automatically. We need to be clear about our ambition and proactive, making sure local people and businesses get the chance and have the skills needed to make the most of these opportunities.

We have focused on a small number of actions, which can really make a difference to Sandwell. This doesn't mean that it is a plan for the Council to deliver alone. Over the coming months, we will work closely with partners on implementation to quickly see results.

This is not just a strategy to support businesses through recovery but a longer-term commitment to support that recognises and harnesses the significant contribution our businesses make to increasing local wealth. We are ambitious for our businesses and our borough and focused and committed on what we want to achieve. This plan sets out how we plan to do it. Sandwell's businesses will be supported to grow, and to deliver jobs and inclusive growth for our borough and the wider region.

Signed by

Kerrie Carmichael
*(Leader of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough
Council)*

Cllr Iqbal Padda
(Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Growth)

2. INTRODUCTION

Sandwell is a great place to do business. A £6.5 billion economy, the most productive Black Country local authority with twice the number of manufacturing firms to the national average. It is home to fast growing, high employment and high turnover businesses, including East End Foods, Steel & Alloy and Hadley Industries. The borough benefits from open spaces, six interconnected towns, a tradition of locally-focused small businesses and an economy driven by private sector employment and growth.¹

But these strengths are not well known enough, and the borough is punching below its weight.

Investment is coming to Sandwell. It brings the opportunity to make real improvements to high streets, public assets, skills provision and transport to level up the borough. There is one area where we can move quicker - supporting our businesses. This includes support to meet the challenge of pandemic recovery, the net zero transition and Climate Change via emissions reductions and improved energy efficiency, and rapidly changing global and local markets and supply chains.

This means focusing on doing the things that the Council and partners can do to create the conditions for new jobs and skills, tackling inequality and keeping wealth local. The borough benefits from being part of the UK's largest Combined Authority, with the West Midlands Growth Company and the Black Country LEP's Growth Hub delivering regional business support. Other organisations like the Chamber of Commerce, SWEDA, the FSB, Sandwell College and universities work closely with our businesses.

This resource and expertise will be vital to deliver the priorities and actions set out here.

Over the past 2 years we have been listening to Sandwell businesses to understand the challenges facing businesses in Sandwell. We have used this to shape the action plan. This means doing things differently. Despite access to local business support services, across the UK it is estimated that about 40% of businesses have received formal external advice, 20% of which were from the public sector.² To maximise the impact of business support amongst those who do take it up, we need to target resources at the areas in which businesses want help and the support that they most need.

Our ambition is to accelerate business growth to create a wealthier Sandwell, gripping investment opportunities and addressing long term challenges. This plan sets out seven priorities to support businesses over the next five years, setting out the Council's commitment to a fresh approach that recognises the important contribution of business.

1. ONS Regional Gross Value Added (Balanced) by Industry, 2021; ONS Business Counts, 2020; ONS Population Estimates, 2020; ONS Annual Population Survey (2020).

2. Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, Competitiveness Advisory Board Report, May 2021.



To achieve our ambition, over our five-year plan we will...

1. Make Sandwell the home of the successful start-up, bringing new businesses into our town centres and high streets

A high number of residents are starting new businesses but may lack the skills and information to make these successful. We want to change this through increased and tailored access to advice around starting a business, finance, recruitment and marketing.

2. Accelerate growth in higher value businesses, tapping into the growth of the West Midlands economy, to stimulate wider investment and opportunity

Sandwell businesses are part of West Midlands and national supply chains, creating essential components for modern engineering and manufacturing. We want to help them grow and create more good jobs by exporting more, investing in new opportunities, embracing digital markets, and changing their business models.

3. Deliver net zero carbon emissions in Sandwell by 2041

Many of our companies face high demand for energy and premises that are not climate resilient. We want to support them by providing easy access to advice on how to become energy efficient & reduce costs. We also want firms to adopt models of circular economy including recycling and re-purposing.

4. Increase new inward investment & investment from existing business to create more good jobs

With a young population and cheap land, Sandwell should be an attractive location for businesses to locate and grow, creating more jobs locally. Foreign Direct Investment is important to stimulating local jobs growth. We need to work more closely with the West Midlands Growth Company to have the employment land and investment offer ready to maximise investment from existing business and attract investment.

5. Establish Sandwell as a growing centre of health & care innovation, using the hospital development to stimulate a new cluster, with the participation of local people

Health & life sciences is a major priority of the WMCA but work is often focused around Birmingham. We need to work with the WMCA, NHS, education providers & businesses, looking at space, investment, skills & business support required to develop the new hospital site into a thriving health innovation cluster.

6. Improve the amount & quality of work available, focused on raising wages & skill levels

Employers told us that they like to recruit local people but sometimes struggle to find the skills they need. We need to work with employers to increase demand for higher level skills and create jobs with good pay and conditions, and with education providers to train pupils and students in the skills to meet workforce demands.

7. Make community wealth building a reality

We want to increase our spend with local business by changing how we procure contracts & monitor social value, embedding community wealth building across the Council. We also want to encourage our businesses to increase their local spending by raising awareness of local suppliers.

3. SANDWELL TODAY



Figure 1: Sandwell headline economic indicators.³

Major investment coming on stream over next two years on skills, connectivity, & town centre regeneration

Close to Birmingham, Sandwell is well-connected and affordable. Significant investment in regeneration and connectivity will improve access and open up development. Major projects are underway in new housing, the 5G pilot, the metro extension, and town centre regeneration. There are new multi-million-pound developments, such as the Midlands Metropolitan University Hospital development and Sandwell Aquatic Centre, as well as £67.5 million capital investment from Government's Towns Fund, creating opportunities to grow jobs, skills and businesses.

This should provide a strong foundation for growth.

But instead, we have seen challenges such as a trend of higher value jobs and skilled residents leaving the borough permanently, and lower than expected business survival rate at 5 years.

Sandwell is home to fast growing, high employment and high turnover businesses, with manufacturers accounting for 44% of the top 50 fastest growing companies in Sandwell last year

There are 124,000 jobs in Sandwell, employed across a diverse sector base. Manufacturing accounts for 21,300 jobs, with particular subsector strengths in rubber, plastics and metals. Sandwell businesses create the materials that are used in modern machinery such as automotive and aerospace.

These strengths are important for future success. However, supply chain firms are highly dependent on existing advanced manufacturing strengths in the region. Manufacturing is vulnerable to changing trends in the industry - automation, Artificial Intelligence and the phasing out of fossil fuels within industries all bring a need for investment in innovation. Industry 4.0, the digital industrial revolution, presents an opportunity if there is support for rapid innovation, with innovation in products and processes providing an opportunity to make local businesses more competitive and raise productivity levels within the borough.

3. ONS Population Estimates, 2020; ONS Regional Gross Value Added (Balanced) by Industry, 2021; ONS Subregional Productivity: Labour Productivity Indices, 2019; ONS Business Counts, 2020; ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2019.

Sandwell is an employment hub in the West Midlands

Residents and businesses benefit from the interconnected labour market with West Midlands neighbouring local authorities. Sandwell is a net exporter of labour to Birmingham, and a net importer of labour from the rest of the Black Country. Every day 59,000 people come to Sandwell from neighbouring areas to work, and almost 62,000 Sandwell residents work outside the Borough. This is set to increase through extensions to the Metro, the Sprint Bus network and HS2. Most of the borough's economic activity is centred

on the intersection of Oldbury, West Bromwich and Smethwick - with areas on the border looking to large urban centres outside of the borough for jobs and opportunity.

To level up means we must tackle the causes of deprivation

High deprivation levels present huge, long-term challenges, which have only been made more complex by the pandemic which has exposed health inequalities. We still do not know the full impacts of the pandemic but areas such as Sandwell who were already experiencing challenges around productivity,

skills, and deprivation are likely to see existing challenges exacerbated by the pandemic.

We face long-term challenges around low wages, low skills, and deprivation. This cycle needs to change. Wages have risen 6% in the past year, but they are still below the Black Country average.⁵ More residents are employed in traditionally lower paid roles, with fewer residents in top managerial positions than comparators. The employment rate is lower than elsewhere and there have been large increases in the claimant count since the start of the pandemic.

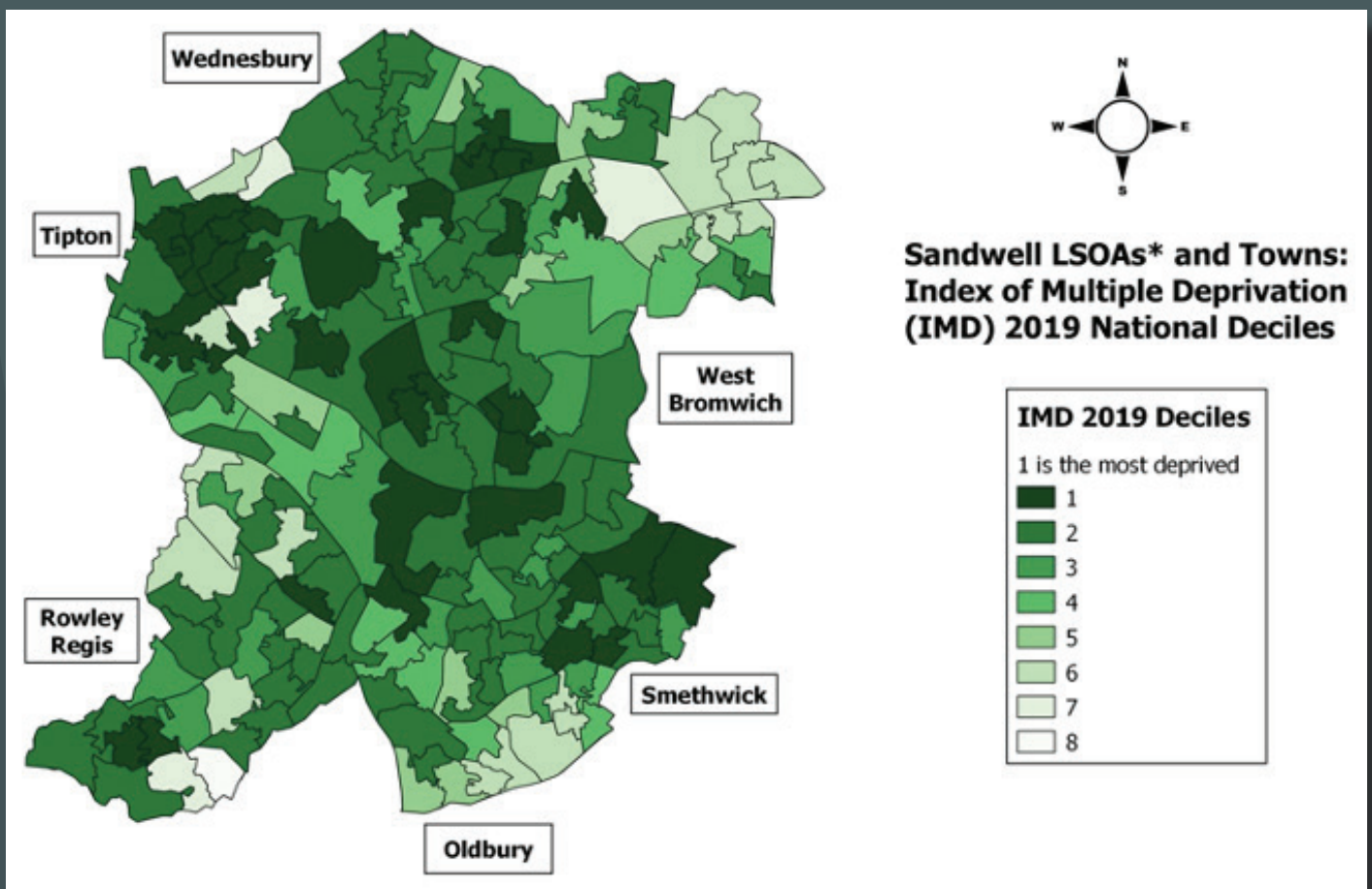


Figure 2: Deprivation levels measured across Sandwell.⁴

4. MHCLG Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019).

5. ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings – resident analysis, 2020

6. ONS Annual Population Survey, 2019.

There are signs that things may be starting to change. In the 2020 data 26% of the working age population in Sandwell were qualified to NVQ4+ qualification levels, a 20% increase from 2019, which was above the Black Country average increase of 17% and the national average increase of 7%. However, this is starting from a low base; to reach the national average requires a further 33,411 of working age residents to obtain NVQ 4+ qualifications.⁶

It will take time to shift the dial on long term challenges around deprivation. Alongside the Skills Strategy, this plan must create the foundations for more good jobs in the borough, supporting residents to develop the skills to access local jobs. ugh based in West Bromwich, building from the desi-pubs and based around the revitalised indoor market.

Sandwell's population is young & diverse but there are concerns about inequality.

40% of residents are under 30 years old and only 15% of residents are over the age of 65. This provides a supply of talent and labour, which is vital for businesses as workers retire and new jobs emerge based around changing technology and demand.⁷

Sandwell is also diverse, with almost 40% of residents identifying within an ethnic minority.⁸ Ethnic minority-led businesses make important contributions to the borough's economy (as part of an annual contribution of £25 billion to the UK economy). They tend to be more innovative, more likely to export and are more likely to be led by women. However, ethnic minority-led businesses are often more detached from mainstream business support and struggle disproportionately when accessing finance. This is particularly concerning in

the context of the pandemic where many ethnic minority-led businesses were badly impacted. This plan needs to include support for ethnic minority-led businesses, including support to improve access to finance, to help with recovery and growth but also to harness and maximise innovation and exporting strengths.⁹

Amongst Sandwell's diverse population there are acute variations in educational attainment, employment rates, professional status, and aspiration levels. Employment rates are highest among white residents, followed by Indian ethnicities and lowest amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnicities.¹⁰ Sandwell sees a higher proportion of ethnic minority residents employed as top managers and professionals than white residents, but this is still below the West Midlands average. GCSE attainment levels are highest amongst Asian pupils, followed by white pupils and lowest amongst black pupils.¹¹ The Aspire Sandwell report identified the lowest aspiration levels in white British and Irish pupils. This plan needs a tailored approach to skills and work, targeting actions where they are most needed to ensure opportunities are extended to all residents and communities.¹²



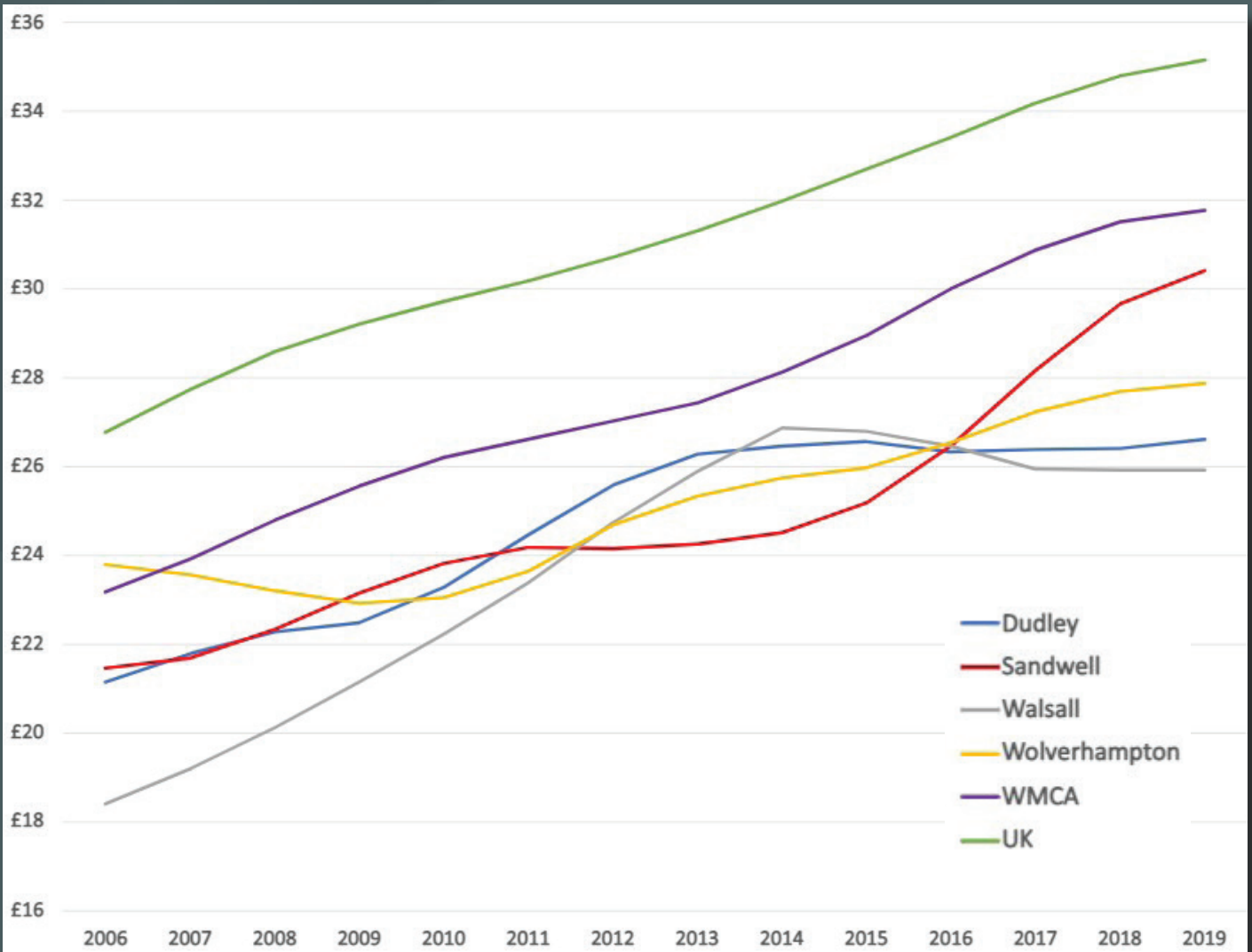


Figure 3: GVA per hour worked, compared across the Black Country, West Midlands & UK (2021)

Sandwell is closing the productivity gap

Whilst deprivation remains a significant challenge, there are positive signs in the economy. Last time we reviewed the state of the economy Sandwell was the least productive economy in the Black Country; now it is the most productive.¹³ Rapid increases in productivity are

also closing the gap with the WMCA average too. Productivity is an important driver of economic growth, as economic output can only be increased by either increasing the amount of inputs or by raising productivity. Without productivity growth, an economy can only increase its output of goods and services if more people worked or if they worked longer hours.

We cannot lose sight of the skills and wages challenges facing residents. But we must ensure that this positive trajectory for businesses continues. And we must make sure that success that we see in our businesses translates into higher wages for residents and more wealth generated and kept in Sandwell

6. ONS Annual Population Survey, 2019.

7. ONS Population Estimates, 2020.

8. ONS, Annual Population Survey, 2020.

9. Unlocking Opportunity: The Value of Ethnic Minority Firms to UK Economic Enterprise & Activity, <https://www.fsb.org.uk/resource-report/unlock.html>

10. ONS, Annual Population Survey, 2020.

11. Department for Education (2019/20)

12. Aspire Sandwell research report (2018).

13. ONS Regional Gross Value Added (Balanced) by Industry, 2021

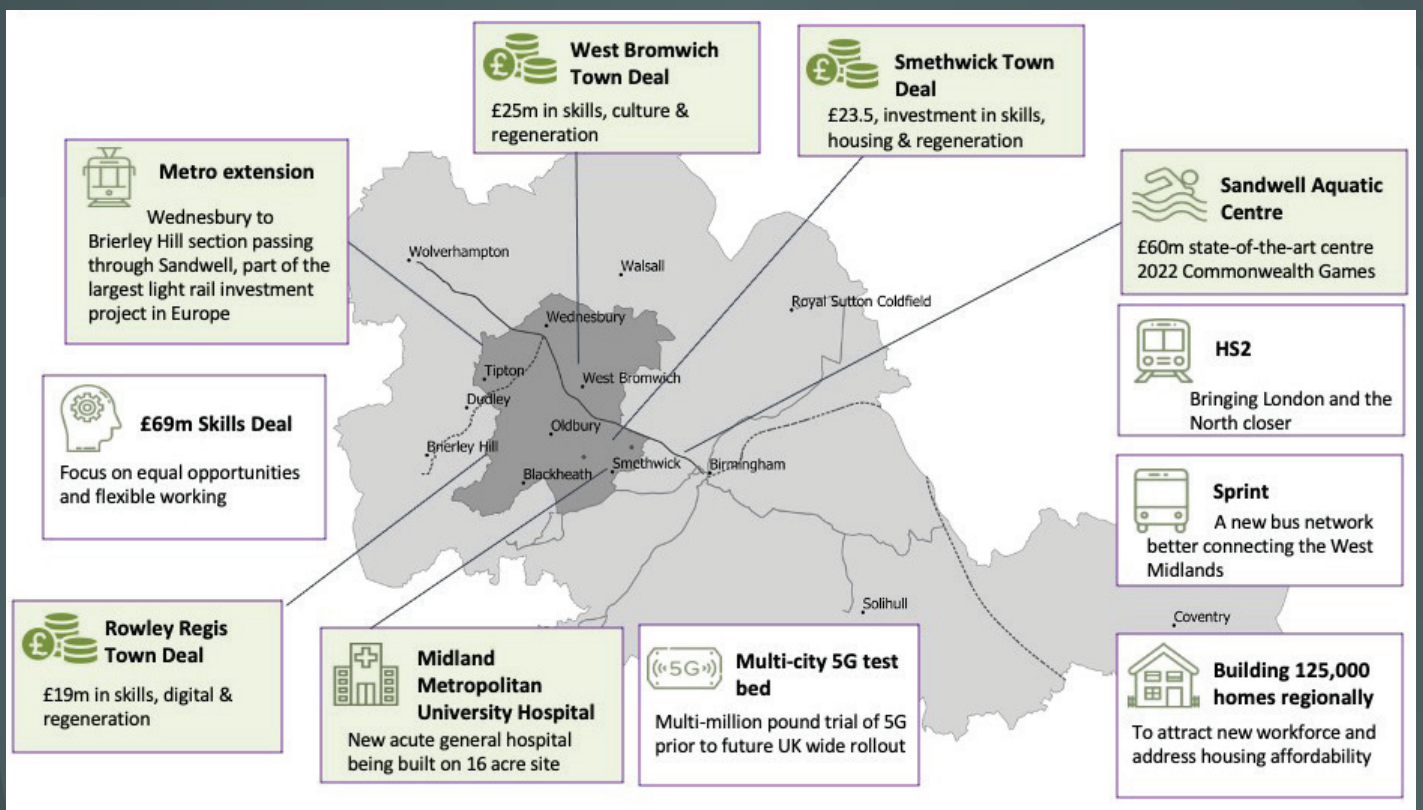
4. LISTENING TO BUSINESS

Businesses told us about their challenges...	They also had suggestions on how this could be improved...
A lack of land	Address contaminated land from industrial use & create a map of available employment land
Low skills & skills gaps including “hard to fill” gaps, in sectors such as advanced manufacturing	Joint lobbying on funding for skills & a collective approach to workforce development, looking to the success of the Sandwell Guarantee
Lack of funding for training and development	Support businesses with grants, capital & finance
Difficulty in making connections into universities and regional research & development opportunities	Sandwell needs a strong narrative about the innovative businesses that are already here. The Council could help broker connections into regional assets and development opportunities for these businesses
Difficulties recruiting from the local labour market	More training courses available locally which link to the jobs available
Lack of clarity around which organisations to engage with & how to engage, including around business support, recruitment and skills	Create a single “front door” through which businesses can access a range of support services; & more proactive and dedicated support services

5. THE AMBITION

Our ambition is to create a wealthier Sandwell, the home of the successful startup, with vibrant high streets, fast growing businesses, and more good quality jobs.

To do this we need to accelerate existing action to maximise the major investments coming on stream in skills, connectivity, and town centre regeneration. This needs to be done in a way that generates business investment, driving recovery and tackling long-term challenges to lead an economic transformation of the borough.



6. THE PRIORITIES

6.1 Start in Sandwell

We will make Sandwell the home of the successful start-up, bringing new businesses into our town centres and high streets.



10,090 new
businesses started
in Sandwell (2013 to
2019)¹⁴



+ 15% increase in the
number of start-ups since
2018 (5% UK avg.)



39% of these have
survived after 5 years
(43% UK avg.)¹⁵

Recently, Sandwell has seen a sharp rise in the number of new businesses, which increased by 15% between 2018 and 2019. This was above the Black Country average start up rate of 14% and the national average of 5%. However, survival rates for businesses after the first five years were 39%, below the Black Country (41%), and national averages (43%). This suggests a need for more support for businesses during the first five-year period in operation, with support targeted at areas where businesses report experiencing difficulty – accessing appropriate premises, finance and knowing where and who to turn to for advice.

This support will need to be tailored to reflect the business needs; it is critical that SMEs think through a financially viable business plan and we need to ensure that we reach out to all of Sandwell so that every business understands the support available. National research shows that some demographic groups have more difficulty accessing business support, including ethnic minority-led businesses, older people and women.¹⁶

14. ONS Business Counts, 2020

15. ONS Business Demographics 2018 and 2019.

16. Unlocking Opportunity: The Value of Ethnic Minority Firms to UK Economic Enterprise & Activity, <https://www.fsb.org.uk/resource-report/unlock.html>

The actions: How we'll make this happen

Immediate actions (0-6 months)

Work with SWEDA, Chamber of Commerce and others to develop a stronger enterprise start-up programme that engages with business from all parts of the local community, offering impartial one-to-one and group support to start-ups in during the first five-years.

Work with the Growth Hub's Peer Networks programme to build Sandwell's peer-to-peer networks to mentor businesses and budding entrepreneurs.

Medium-term action (6 months to 2 years)

Explore how to repurpose empty and underused property on Sandwell high streets and in Council owned buildings to create "meanwhile uses" - temporary and longer term uses for the buildings where businesses and social enterprises can use them at low or no cost.

Longer term opportunities (2 years+)

Develop a new Community Enterprise and hyper local business programme which provides grants and wrap around business support focused on first time entrepreneurs, young people, ethnic minority-led businesses and the over-50s.



6.2 Grow in Sandwell

We will accelerate growth in higher value businesses, tapping into the growth of the West Midlands economy, to stimulate wider investment and opportunity.



9,105 VAT registered businesses in Sandwell (+4% increase since 2018 & cf. 3% national avg.)



97% of these are small and micro businesses



21% of businesses closed during 3rd national lockdown (cf. to 18% of national businesses)

The number of businesses in Sandwell is rising faster than regional and national growth rates. It is home to 864 of the Black Country's strategic companies and almost half of the top 50 fastest growing businesses are in the manufacturing sector. Productivity is rising, however low wages and skills levels remains a significant issue for residents and the total number of jobs is declining (-2%) resulting in the loss of around 3,000 jobs.¹⁷

Many businesses now face challenges to become more resilient and to take advantage of new opportunities around technology and new markets. Businesses may require support to remain competitive in this changing business landscape and to create more higher skilled roles. This support is wide ranging, covering advice around exporting, investing in new opportunities, changing business models and linking with growth sectors in the wider West Midlands economy.

17. ONS Business Counts, 2020; ONS Business Demography 2018 and 2019; Black Country Consortium, State of the Sub-region, 2021.

The actions: How we'll make this happen

Immediate actions (0-6 months)

Continue to support local businesses and sole traders impacted by the pandemic with £1.54m Additional Restrictions Top Up Grants, with a further £120,000 dedicated to business support services.

Strengthen local business intelligence by working with the LEP to monitor the impact of Covid and Brexit on local businesses and employment as government support and intervention schemes are withdrawn.

Working with the Black Country Growth Hub and West Midlands Growth Company to put in place a refreshed relationship management plan for the top 50 fastest growing companies to better understand their future investment, skills, premises and recruitment plans and where public support could be helpful.

Improve information sharing with Sandwell Business Ambassadors and agree future roles for the Ambassadors as the local interface with businesses.

Medium-term action (6 months to 2 years)

Work with local and regional agencies to revitalise the post pandemic local business support function, creating a simple to access "front door" for businesses to highlight how and where public business support is available. This will be informed by LEP and local intelligence, including the segmentation-led approach the LEP is undertaking.

Make connections to 'Be the Business' to use its digital platform focused on SMEs technology uptake and 'mentoring for growth' scheme.

Facilitate Sandwell business links to West Midlands research and development institutions such as the universities, with a particular focus on electric vehicles & batteries & clean energy technologies.

Work with the Chamber of Commerce to support local businesses to navigate post-Brexit trading opportunities, including new paperwork and customs arrangements to increase the number of firms trading in new markets.

Longer term opportunities (2 years+)

Work with Make UK to set up a new manufacturing supply chain network in Sandwell.

6.3 Climate Resilient in Sandwell

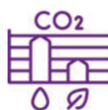
We will deliver net zero carbon emissions in Sandwell by 2041.



10% of business base are manufacturers (cf. 5% national avg.)



1,448Kt CO₂ emissions produced in Sandwell in 2018, the highest level in the Black Country



-2% reduction in emissions since 2017, below Black Country & national reduction rates¹⁸

In 2020, Sandwell Council declared a Climate Emergency and pledged to be carbon neutral by 2041. To reach this target, there will need to be a 78% reduction in carbon emissions by 2035. This means that all parts of Sandwell will need to play their part in reducing emissions. This includes businesses who currently produce around 33% of the borough's overall carbon emissions and thus have the potential to make a large contribution to overall reductions.

As a manufacturing and industrial hub, companies in Sandwell may see high demand for energy or be in premises that are not climate resilient. To change can sometimes require significant investment in time and money, which not all companies have the capacity to manage alone.

Despite the challenge, There is a big prize here, for the environment, future generations, and in creating new green jobs and cost savings for businesses. Where local businesses have received support, they reported it had been effective with reductions in energy costs. This success must be replicated with all our businesses by raising awareness of sector growth opportunities and providing easy access to advice on how to become energy efficient and reduce costs.

18. ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2019; Black Country Consortium State of the Sub-Region Report, 2021.

The actions: How we'll make this happen

Immediate actions (0-6 months)

Work with the LEP to understand data available around the size and make-up of the low carbon sector, green jobs and circular economy in Sandwell, building from the Sustainability West Midlands work.

Medium-term action (6 months to 2 years)

Work with the LEP's on the programme: 'Repowering the Black Country Prospectus', with a focus on the objectives to reconfigure supply chains to create circular economies; process optimisation within individual firms; and the creation of local zero carbon power hubs.

Publicise and signpost to regional and national grants to support businesses to develop individual decarbonisation plans and monitor Sandwell business uptake of support to identify if and where there are gaps in take up.

Longer term opportunities (2 years+)

Establish a local circular economy awards scheme working with local leading businesses to showcase good practice and opportunities. Encourage businesses to train in Carbon Literacy.



6.4 Invest in Sandwell

We will increase new inward investment & investment from existing business to create more good jobs



778 FDI projects funded in the West Midlands
in the past 5 years



823 jobs created in the Black Country as a
result of FDI, 2014-2019



25% of businesses have parent companies
outside the UK & account for 45% of employment



145 FDI projects in the West Midlands 2020/21
(9% of total UK FDI) with 4,443 jobs created by
foreign investors (+14% from 2019)¹⁹

With a young population and cheap land, Sandwell should be an attractive location for businesses to locate and grow. Yet the lack of high quality, market-ready employment land and an investment offer means the borough struggles to attract new businesses. And existing businesses tell us they struggle to find suitable grow-on space in Sandwell.

Alongside supporting existing businesses, wider economic growth requires more new companies locating to the region. Foreign direct investment is an important source of job creation. However, recently interim Black Country LEP figures for 2020/21 show a steep decline in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from previous years. This is despite that fact that the West Midlands is the most popular region for FDI outside of London and the South East, with significant benefits to regional job creation.

Working with partners, we need to better support existing firms and attract more to Sandwell with an improved employment land and investment offer that showcases the opportunity that comes from being a business in Sandwell.

¹⁹. Experian MarketIQ; ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2019; Black Country Consortium, *Driving FDI through Account Management Report*, 2021.

The actions: How we'll make this happen

Immediate actions (0-6 months)

Develop an Inward Investment Action Plan with the West Midlands Growth Company to identify a clear portfolio of investment sites and opportunities, starting with a review of the borough's investment pipeline of employment land projects.

 Complete the Asset Strategy for the Council to unlock publicly owned sites for regeneration.

 Regenerate town centres and high streets to create more attractive places for business location, starting with the Towns Fund proposals for West Bromwich, Smethwick and Rowley Regis, alongside bids to the Levelling Up Fund.

 Complete the masterplans for West Bromwich and Grove Lane to support regeneration and create more space for housing and business growth.

 Participate in West Midlands India Partnership events, enhancing and expanding economic ties between the borough and Indian businesses, boosting trade & investment, connectivity & partnerships opportunities. This includes the potential to create a partner network with businesses looking at investing in Sandwell.

Medium-term action (6 months to 2 years)

Build relationship management with the largest companies by size and employment alongside the Department of International Trade and West Midlands Growth Company to understand their plans for investment and opportunities for support, working with the LEP on the Driving FDI through account management programme.

 Identify opportunities for funding from the WMCA to bring forward brownfield land to market and provide larger premises for growing local businesses seeking expansion.

Longer term opportunities (2 years+)

Review the potential through UK Shared Prosperity Fund to develop a Supply Chain business focused enterprise zone in Sandwell, creating a new location with employment space, training, innovation support around automation and process to attract investors, start-ups and support the needs of existing businesses to move up the value chain.

6.5 Inovate in Sandwell

We will establish Sandwell as a growing centre of health & care innovation, using the hospital development to stimulate a new cluster, with the participation of local people.



£350m invested in Midlands Metropolitan
University Hospital



**Plans underway for Midlands
Met Health Campus**

in Smethwick via Towns Fund Investment



18,250 jobs in health & social care²⁰

Health and life sciences is a priority of the WMCA and there have been recent successes such as the investment in Birmingham Health Innovation Campus. 2022 will see the completion of the £350 million new Midlands Metropolitan University Hospital, a 16-acre site in Smethwick. This will create more jobs in one of our biggest employment sectors.

We need to focus on ways to maximise the benefits of this new regional asset, working with the WMCA, Black Country LEP, NHS, skills providers and businesses to identify how this becomes part of the health innovation narrative and opportunity. The creation of a new health and skills campus in Smethwick is a good start, developing innovation in training, with a collaboration that includes the University of Wolverhampton, Sandwell College, the NHS and the Council. We now need to look at the additional space, investment, skills and business support required to develop the new hospital into a thriving innovation cluster.

20. ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2019

The actions: How we'll make this happen

Immediate actions (0-6 months)

Develop the Smethwick Town's Fund business case for Sandwell's first all skills level health campus, linked to the new Midlands Metropolitan University Hospital.

Work with the Anchor Network to explore with the NHS how to maximise spend in local businesses through procurement.

Work with the LEP to develop their care skills pathways programme to deliver innovation in care training and progression through 'Skills for Care'.

Medium-term action (6 months to 2 years)

Build an innovation strategy around MMUH with the NHS, looking at how this new development can complement Birmingham's life sciences strengths.

Longer term opportunities (2 years+)

Develop a Sandwell Health & Wealth task force to better understand the health inequalities facing the population, how to create a healthier, more productive population, and how innovation in care can help shift the dial.



6.6 Good jobs in Sandwell

We will improve the amount & quality of work available, focused on raising wages & skill levels.



25% of employee jobs in Sandwell are below the real living wage (-30% since 2019)



Average skills levels are rising but **17%** of residents have no formal qualification (c.11% above England avg.)



Sandwell residents earn **c.£5k** less than the national avg.



19% are in low skill service or elementary occupations in Sandwell, slightly above that of the national average of 16%²¹

Wages are often low with a higher-than-average proportion of employee jobs earning below the Real Living Wage and a high number of jobs in traditionally low wage sectors. We need to work with employers to increase demand for high level skills and create jobs with good pay and conditions.

The Sandwell Skills strategy is focused on supporting residents to access training and skills development, looking at how to raise skill levels in young people and adults. This priority complements the Skills Strategy, ensuring that the training and skills available is responsive to employer needs, helping increase local recruitment and progression.

There are already a large number of initiatives underway in Sandwell, these need to be joined up and we need to learn what is working well and where improvements need to be made. For example, to address employer recruitment concerns we need to better align skills supply and demand. This includes better labour market intelligence and raising awareness of the opportunities available with young people, ensuring that we communicate to the next generation what opportunities will be available in Sandwell based on economic growth areas.

21. Employee jobs & Real Living Wage data - Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2020) & the Living Wage Foundation; Jobs growth, skills and occupations data - Business Register and Employment Survey (2009 - 2014).

The actions: How we'll make this happen

Immediate actions (0-6 months)

Work with the Black Country LEP, using its data analysis about the labour market, to identify skills needs and employer demand, now and in the future, including identifying inequalities in the labour market around gender, age and ethnicity.

Use the skills strategy to develop local skills and pathways to education, training and employment linked to the current & future skills demand from Sandwell businesses – reviewing where there needs to be increased focus (for example those with no formal qualifications).

Continue to deliver the Kickstart and Restart programme and build evidence as to what works well and where local improvements could be made.

Implement the Community Renewal Fund proposal around the 50 plus Hub – a new approach to supporting older residents with skills and information advice & guidance.

Medium-term action (6 months to 2 years)

Using data analysis provided by the LEP, work with the Employment & Skills Social Value Partnership to review the current employment support offer to consider if this responds to future skills needs and employer demand.

Work with the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses to develop an employer campaign to promote good work for decent and safe conditions, training and pay.

Strengthen links to the WMCA Skills and Jobs Board to develop regional support solutions to Sandwell's employment and skills challenges.

Develop a careers fair for Year 7-9 pupils to showcase the career opportunities available in the borough and highlight local success stories.

Longer term opportunities (2 years+)

Design proposals with the LEP and WMCA for a more flexible approach to pooling resource for publicly funded employment programmes to work better for Sandwell. This could include a proposal for Sandwell Guarantee 2.0 potentially for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund – this would build from the Sandwell Guarantee and provide wage incentives and job matching in regional growth sectors such as digital and environmental for young people, with emphasis on looked after children and people with disabilities.

6.7 Spend in Sandwell

We will make community wealth building a reality.



Sandwell council spends £150m every year with suppliers



c. 15% of this is spent within Sandwell, up 2% over the last three years²²

Last year we undertook a lot of work to understand how and where the council spends its money with suppliers. We want to increase our spend with local business by changing how we procure contracts and monitor social value, embedding community wealth building across the Council.

Increased local spend retains wealth in Sandwell and creates jobs. Significant investments from the Town Fund, the new hospital, and Aquatic Centre will increase tendering opportunities for local businesses. As well as increase our own spend, we want to encourage our businesses to increase theirs by raising awareness of local suppliers.



²². CLES, *Community Wealth Building in Sandwell Diagnostic Report, January 2020*

The actions: How we'll make this happen

Immediate actions (0-6 months)

Review the Community Wealth Building report recommendations, starting by embedding the Anchor Network Co-Ordinator and establish Sandwell's Anchor Network

Work with West Midland procurement leads to understand how other local authorities approach social value in procurement and monitoring

Medium-term action (6 months to 2 years)

Develop better information about local companies and suppliers, with a view to sharing this publicly on the Council website

Develop training for contract officers in all council departments on social value and monitoring impact in contracts

Upgrade the finance system and set it up to report on Community Wealth Building spend

Develop a new role for the Ambassadors around "check and challenge" to monitor business adherence to social value commitments on large contracts

Longer term opportunities (2 years+)

Embed community wealth building into council contracts, testing a new approach in the Towns Fund projects to capture social value and build in opportunities for community wealth building principles to play out in place



7. DELIVERING THE PLAN

This action plan is designed to complement and build on the existing work of the Council. It has been informed by existing strategies and reports on Skills, Community Wealth Building, the Corporate Plan and Climate Change, as well as Sandwell's Inclusive Economy Deal.

It has a specific purpose: to create a wealthier Sandwell. It sets out what Sandwell needs to do to address business challenges and opportunities and considers the resource and wider support that the borough needs to make this a reality. However, it is not a plan for the Council to deliver alone. The plan will need to be delivered with partners from local and regional organisations such as the LEP, Growth Hub, Chamber of Commerce, WMCA as well as businesses and education providers.

The plan's delivery will also be collaborative. Sandwell Council will use its role as a place leader to co-ordinate and lever in support from partner organisations to ensure the right resource and expertise for business to maximise success.

Bringing it all together: How this plan fits with our other work



Some of the partnership organisations we will work with to deliver this plan include:



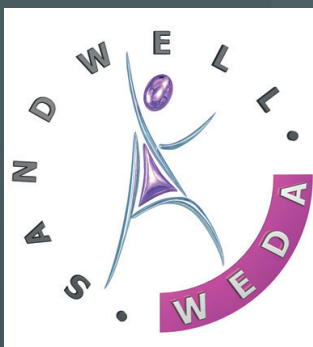
The Black Country Consortium LEP & Growth Hub provide a central place for business support in the Black Country and the evidence and analytics to help inform what we do in Sandwell.



The West Midlands Combined Authority provides additional resource and a collaborative partnership through which to make collective decisions to support business and economic growth and development across council boundaries.



The Sandwell Business Ambassadors, made up of local business people, act as a bridge between the council and wider business community to encourage greater partnership between the two that enables businesses to thrive.



Skills Work Enterprise Development Agency (SWEDA), provides advice, guidance, training & mentoring to unemployed residents looking to access further training or education, employment or self-employment opportunities.



The Black Country Chamber of Commerce provides dynamic business support services via advice service, programmes & networking events to SMEs across the Black Country.

8. MONITORING PROGRESS

To create a wealthier Sandwell we have identified four main objectives that cut cross all priority areas listed in this action plan: making Sandwell the home of the successful start-up; revitalising our high streets; accelerating growth in high value businesses; and creating good quality jobs.

Given that this action plan comes at a crucial time for businesses, as support from central Government is withdrawn and businesses transition from immediate relief through the pandemic to longer-term recovery, we want to see results that benefit our businesses. We will track and

monitor the progress of our actions, in working towards these four objectives with clear performance indicators for each. These are set out in the table opposite.



Objective	How we'll measure success:		
	In three months, we will have...	In six months, we will have...	In five years, we will have...
1. Make Sandwell the home of the successful start up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed first set of business referrals to Growth Hub's Peer Networks programme Made a connection to SWEDA, the Growth Hub & Chamber to scope enterprise support programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a plan for a new enterprise support programme, identifying resource & delivery roles with partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have increased business survival rates by over 5%, bringing them in line with the West Midlands average & surpassing national & Black Country rates Have increased business support engagement with those more likely to be outside the system, ethnic minority-led businesses & women
2. Revitalise our high streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a list of 10 potential premises for meanwhile use & identify cost of use Finalised the Grove Lane Masterplan Finalised the West Bromwich Masterplan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a Levelling Up Fund proposal to complement Towns Fund developments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have created more mixed-use high streets with increased leisure, cultural and business premises in town centres Increased footfall on local high streets & town centres Increased the amount of employment in high street areas
3. Accelerate growth in higher value businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spoken to all of Sandwell's top 50 fastest growing companies Made a connection to the West Midlands India Partnership Identified list of Sandwell's top 20 export focused companies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devised a new plan to help the top 50 fastest growing companies thrive Developed an Inward Investment Plan Developed a business case for the Midlands Met Health Campus Established a strong case for investment in Sandwell, ensuring the borough gets its fair share 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have increased the number of high value businesses Have increased the number of exporting businesses Increased share of West Midlands FDI projects
4. Create more good quality jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched the Anchor Network delivered Kickstart and Restart Increased intelligence around employment skills needs and vacancies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed the Community Wealth Building report recommendations and strengthened implementation Set a date and programme of events for first careers fair for Year 7-9 pupils to showcase the career opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased overall employment rate, to close gaps with regional average Reduced employment gaps between different ethnicities Reduced the number of jobs paying below the Real Living Wage

9. CONCLUSION

The past eighteen months have been tough on our businesses and residents. During this time, we have worked hard as a Council to support them including providing companies with tens of millions of pounds of business grant support and have been proud of the resilience and adaptability that local businesses have shown. Now, as furlough and other Government support winds to a close, we start a new chapter.

Yet despite these uncertainties we are optimistic for the future. Sandwell is seeing major investment. Three successful Towns Fund bids, plus the Midlands Metropolitan University Hospital and Commonwealth Games Aquatic Centre developments, will bring almost half a billion pounds in

capital investments to Sandwell over the next few years. These new assets, with the right co-ordination, can help support new and existing businesses, creating jobs, attracting inward investment and kickstarting growth across the borough.

We know that businesses are vital to creating jobs and wealth in Sandwell and want to ensure that they are well-placed to capitalise on this investment. That's why we have developed this action plan and are determined to do everything it takes to ensure our businesses thrive. This includes a commitment to work more collaboratively with partners to maximise the resource and expertise available to businesses.

We have listened to business. A delivery plan is in development that will identify appropriate resources and allocate responsibility for each of the actions. Work will build on the work already underway through the Skills Strategy. We will look to review progress following the first phase of delivery.

After a trying period for our businesses and residents, investment and new opportunities are needed now more than ever. Let's continue to work together to make the most of this opportunity and make this Sandwell's time to prosper.







Report to Cabinet

23rd March 2022

Subject:	Extension of Free Swimming Programme 2022/23
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Culture & Tourism, Cllr Danny Millard
Director:	Director for Borough Economy, Alice Davey
Key Decision:	Yes Spend of more than £250,000 and affecting more than two wards.
Contact Officer:	Business Manager for Sport & Leisure, Gemma Ryan gemma_ryan@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

1.1 That approval is given to the Service Manager – Tourism, Culture & Leisure to enter into an agreement with Sandwell Leisure Trust and Places Leisure to offer free swimming to: -

- a) Children and young people aged 18 years and under (exclusively Sandwell residents only) during public swimming sessions, for seven days per week, throughout school holidays only;
- b) Adults aged 60 years and over (exclusively Sandwell residents only) during public swimming sessions, for seven days per week before 1pm all year round; and
- c) Allocate a proportion of free swimming funding to primary care settings to be distributed through a social prescribing pathway for adults

for the financial year 2022/23.



- 1.2 That approval is given to the Service Manager – Tourism, Culture & Leisure to enter into an agreement with Sandwell Leisure Trust and Places Leisure to offer free swimming lessons to: -
- (a) Children and young people aged 16 years and under (exclusively Sandwell residents only) via a voucher scheme distributed through schools (identified as in receipt of benefits/low income and unable to afford lessons plus poor swimming ability in school swimming lessons); and
 - (b) primary care settings (to be distributed through a social prescribing pathway)
- for the financial year 2022/23.
- 1.3 That the Director for Finance be authorised to allocate a revenue budget of £275,000 for the free swimming offer and £150,000 for the free swimming lessons offer. This would total £425,000 for the financial year 2022/23.
- 1.4 That any necessary exemptions be made to the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules to enable the course of action referred to in recommendation 1 (above) to proceed.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

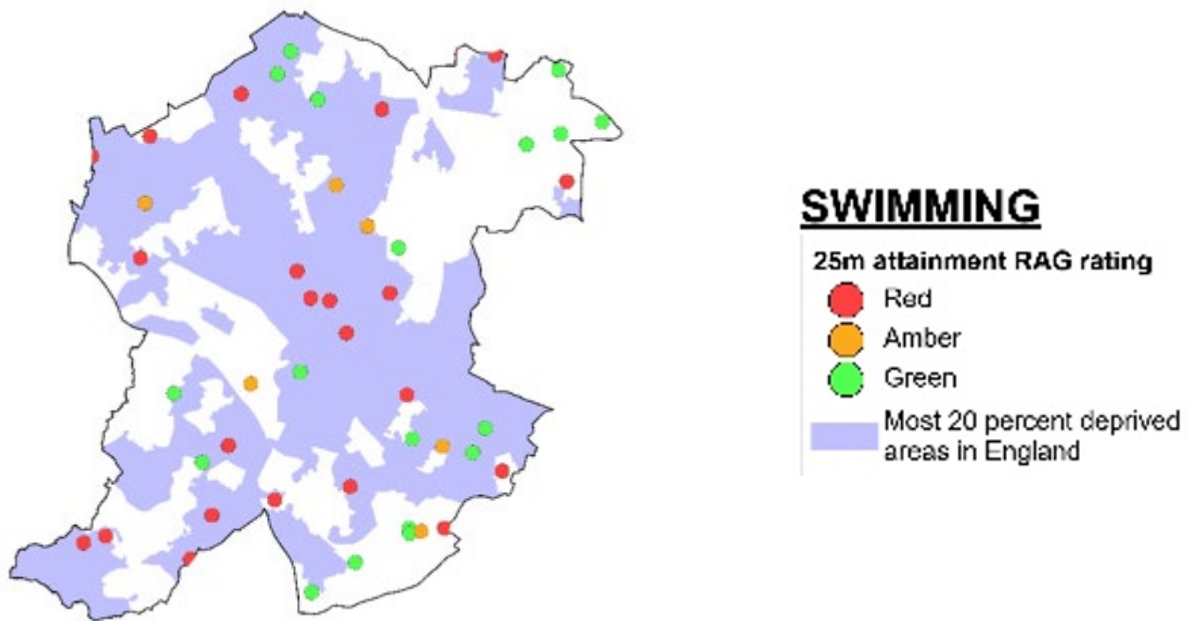
- 2.1 Participating in 30 minutes of physical activity or sport per week provides residents with significant health benefits. Being physically active reduces the likelihood of having a stroke, reduces blood pressure, reduces the likelihood of suffering from a blood clot, improves cholesterol levels, and promotes positive mental health and well-being.
- 2.2 Both leisure providers (SLT and Places Leisure) have reported a positive correlation between increased usage of young people and older people at the same time, i.e. young people are often accompanied by parents, grandparents or older carers. Suggesting that free swimming for young people encourages family visits and family interaction.
- 2.3 Increasing the age range to 18 years and under (previously 16 years and under) will widen the reach and support those young people staying on at school until 18 or moving on to further education.



2.4 Sandwell has seen a decrease in the number of children able to swim 25 metres in Year 6, falling to 54% (2021) from 57% (2020). This figure is lower than the Black Country average for 2021. The map below highlights which schools in Sandwell report lower than average year 6 swimming proficiency levels. The map seems to show that there is a larger concentration of schools reporting lower proficiency levels in West Bromwich.

Schools in Sandwell

- 25m Proficiency



(Primary School Swimming in the Black Country, Active Black Country 2021)

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people</p> <p><i>The free swimming programme provides an opportunity for young people under 18 in Sandwell to swim for free during school holidays, promoting and supporting improvements in physical and mental health.</i></p>
	<p>People live well and age well</p> <p><i>The free swimming programme provides an opportunity for residents over 60 and young people under 18 to become</i></p>



active and maintain an active lifestyle. This promotes and supports improvements in physical and mental health for local people.

4 Context and Key Issues

Background

- 4.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the continuation and expansion of the free swimming programme in Sandwell for the financial year 2022/23. The initial scheme was approved by the Cabinet on 12th June 2013 (see Minute No. 35/13), again at the meeting of Cabinet of 4th March 2015 (Minute No. 51/15), for the financial year 2015/16, again for financial year 2016/17 at the meeting of Cabinet of 22nd March 2017 (Minute No. 64/17), and further for financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20 at the meeting of Cabinet of 21st March 2018 (Minute No. 47/18). The most recent approval was via a Delegated Decision Report on 8th April 2021.
- 4.2 The free swimming in Sandwell programme allows adults, who are Sandwell residents, aged 60 and over to swim without charge during public swimming sessions, for seven days per week before 1pm, all year round.
- 4.3 The current programme also allows for children and young people, who are Sandwell residents, aged 16 years and under to swim without charge during public swimming sessions, for seven days per week, throughout school holiday periods only. We are now proposing to extend the age to include free swimming for all under 18's.
- 4.4 The programme has been available to Sandwell residents at the following leisure facilities since 2013:
- Haden Hill Leisure Centre
 - Langley Swimming Centre
 - Smethwick Swimming Centre
 - Tipton Leisure Centre
 - Wednesbury Leisure Centre (since November 2015)
 - West Bromwich Leisure Centre (since June 2014)
- 4.5 Since the initiative was launched in June 2013, 9,624 adults and 44,579 children and young people who meet the criteria have become a member



of the scheme. Since April 2015, following four extensions of the scheme by Cabinet, until the end of December 2021, there has been 214,487 swims by residents aged 16 and under (136,105 at Sandwell Leisure Trust's five sites and 78,382 at Places Leisure's one site) and 332,100 swims by residents aged 60 and over (203,863 at Sandwell Leisure Trust's five sites and 128,237 at Places Leisure's one site).

- 4.6 In addition to the free swimming offer, Public Health have identified that a further investment in swimming would be welcomed by Sandwell's elected members, directors and senior leadership team and of course welcomed by the local community and in line with the 2022 Commonwealth Games and new Sandwell Aquatics Centre.
- 4.7 The plan for this further investment would be to award Sandwell's leisure providers to offer/deliver a free-swimming lessons programme through facilities with swimming pools and to an open age range. The initial idea would be to develop a voucher scheme for the free lessons that would be mostly distributed through school settings (Primary and Secondary). It is felt that schools would be best placed to identify children, young people and families that were at most need, on benefits/low income and unable to afford lessons and also able to identify poor swimming ability through school swimming lessons.
- 4.8 Schools are required to ensure that as a minimum, by the time children are ready to leave Key Stage 2, every child is able to: swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres, use a range of strokes effectively and perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations. Sandwell schools have reported challenges in supporting children to swim proficiently and need more support.
- 4.9 Swimming is one of the most popular traditional sports in the UK and there is also a real opportunity with the 2022 Commonwealth Games swimming taking place at the new Sandwell Aquatics Centre. The new Aquatics Centre (the only new build facility developed for the games) in Sandwell is a significant asset and it's essential we take advantage of heightened interest as a result.

Public Health

- 4.8 This programme utilises funding from the Public Health Grant to facilitate a more active life in our youngest and older residents. As such, it is an important element of the local '#MoveMoreSandwell' partnership work,



which is led by the Council and delivered in collaboration with several local partner agencies.

- 4.9 Public Health are supportive of an extension to the programme, not only because of the positive health outcomes for residents as highlighted in the consultation carried out during 2019, but to ensure that there is not a rise in inactivity of residents in the next national annual Active Lives Survey.
- 4.10 The majority of the funding for the programme has been provided by Public Health since its launch in 2013.

Health & Wellbeing Benefits

- 4.11 Both leisure providers in Sandwell have reported a positive correlation between increased usage of young people and older people at the same time, i.e. young people are often accompanied by parents, grandparents or older carers. Suggesting that free swimming for young people encourages family visits and family interaction.
- 4.12 Although there has been a significant positive impact on the number of residents participating in 30 minutes of physical activity or sport, levels of inactivity are still high in the borough. Sport England's Active Lives Survey (ALS) October 2021 highlights that 42.1% of Sandwell residents are classed as inactive.
- 4.13 Participating in 30 minutes of physical activity or sport per week provides residents with significant health benefits. Being physically active reduces the likelihood of having a stroke, reduces blood pressure, reduces the likelihood of suffering from a blood clot, improves cholesterol levels, and promotes mental health & well-being.
- 4.14 Aside from the established health benefits of being more active and the importance of developing a positive relationship with activity from a young age, the ability to swim is a key life skill. Also, children who can swim confidently and competently will be better able to take advantage of the free swimming offer.

Budget

- 4.15 In order to calculate the cost for free swimming for the 2022/23 financial year, figures have been based on actual swims and costs during the 2018/19 financial year as this was the last year of full opening. This method and rationale accounts for the leisure sector returning to normal operation



by providing usual, maximum expected costs of the programme to March 2023.

- 4.16 It is therefore anticipated that the cost of reinstating the free swimming programme for the remainder of the financial year will be a maximum of £275,000. This incorporates an additional £5,943 towards the cost of free swims for 18 years and under. There will also be an additional £150,000 made available for the free swimming lesson offer. This would total £425,000 for the financial year 2022/23.

Anticipated Figures for Free Swimming for Financial Year 2022/23					
	U16 £2.65 per swim	Cost	60+ £2.35 per swim	Cost	Total
SLT	30,668	£81,271	42,771	£100,512	£181,783
	U16 £2.80 per swim		60+ £2.30 per swim		
Places Leisure	12,042	£33,718	23,285	£53,556	£87,274
Additional funding for U18					£5,943
Total					£275,000

Additional Funding for Free Swimming Lessons for Financial Year 2022/23			
3 x £25.75/month + £10 Joining Fee (covers badges/certificates)	= £87.25	x 1700 pupils	£148,325
Marketing			£1,675
Total			£150,000

Consultation

- 4.17 An evaluation of the programme was carried out during 2019 and a Summary Report was developed in consultation with SLT and Places Leisure in January 2020. As part of this evaluation, participants of the scheme were consulted with via an on-line survey which demonstrated that the programme is valued. Both operators feel that the programme is of value to their customers.
- 4.18 The Director for Borough Economy, Director of Public Health, Cabinet member for Adults, Social Care & Health and Cabinet Member for Culture



& Tourism and have been consulted on the reinstatement of this programme.

4.19 In October 2021 consultation with the Local Swimming Action Groups were held, consisting of a range of local stakeholders including local authority representatives, schools and Swim England. This has shown there is a clear demand from schools to increase swimming opportunities either through their core offer or through additional lessons. The challenge facing schools is the available pool space, preventing them from increasing the amount of pool time or number pupils they can take swimming. This is particularly important for those schools where school swimming is likely to be the only opportunity for their pupils to learn to swim.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The free swimming programme could be dis-continued. However, if the Council does not continue the programme this would have an adverse impact on the opportunities available to Sandwell residents. It would also affect the opportunity for some of our most vulnerable residents to participate in some form of physical activity.
- 5.2 The resources could be invested into other sport and physical activity programmes. However, swimming has the ability to engage and provide health benefits on a wider scale than many other activities, as demonstrated by the consultation exercise. It engages a wide range of ages and abilities and is an essential life skill.



6 Implications

Resources:	The programme will require up to a maximum of £425,000 for the period 1 st April 2022 to 31 st March 2023. The programme has been budgeted for within Public Health and agreed by the Director of Public Health.
Legal and Governance:	Sandwell Leisure Trust and Places Leisure are contracted by Sandwell Council to operate leisure facilities in Sandwell. For the free swimming programme to be delivered this can only be achieved through the use of these contractors. Therefore, an exemption from the Council's Contract Procurement Rules is required to deliver this scheme.
Risk:	N/A
Equality:	An Equality Impact Assessment Screening has been completed and a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.
Health and Wellbeing:	Participating in physical activity has significant health benefits, including reducing risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes, many cancers, mental health and general health and well-being.
Social Value:	A comprehensive and well managed swimming provision can achieve vital social value outcomes, including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved health • Improved well-being • Increased educational attainment • Reduction in crime

7. Appendices

None

8. Background Papers

None



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Report to Cabinet

23 March 2022

Subject:	Co-operative working for the provision of services from the Integrated Social Care and Health Centre
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Adults, Health & Social Care Cllr Suzanne Hartwell
Director:	Director for Adult Social Care Rashpal Bishop
Key Decision:	No
Contact Officer:	Sandwell Better Care Fund Programme Manager, Paul Moseley paul_moseley@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given to develop a Co-operative Working Agreement with Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust for the purpose of achieving shared objectives for social care and health through the delivery of integrated social care and health services.
- 1.2 That subject to 1.1 above and further consultations and detailed negotiations between the Council and Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, the Director of Adult Social Care be authorised to award and enter into a contract with Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust for health-related services under the Co-operative Working Agreement on terms to be agreed with the Director of Adult Social Care.
- 1.3 That subject to 1.2 above, any contract should include a five-year review of the partnership framework with an annual review of services.



- 1.4 That the Director of Law & Governance be authorised to execute any documents necessary and within reasonable time to give effect to the proposals in recommendation 1.1 for the provision under the Co-operative Working Agreement with Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust.
- 1.5 That any necessary exemptions be made to the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules to enable the course of action referred to in 1.2 and 1.3 above to proceed.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 SWBHT is the key provider trust for acute and community health services in Sandwell. It also currently provides public health services commissioned by the Council, which includes services jointly delivered through an existing Co-operative Working Agreement.
- 2.2 Under regulation 12(7) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, the local authority may enter into a contract without competition where the contract is with another contracting authority (public body) and establishes or implements co-operation with the aim of ensuring that the public services the authorities have to perform are provided with a view to achieving objectives they have in common and are governed solely by considerations relating to the public interest. The opportunity to use this exemption allows the flexibility to include services other than those delivering prescribed health related functions and provides an approach that will support future developments and the integration of social care and health services.
- 2.3 The arrangements proposed in this report are predicated on the fact that the public procurement rules as set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 are not designed to interfere with the freedom of public authorities to perform the public service tasks conferred on them by using



their own resources which includes the possibility of cooperation with other public authorities.

2.4 Legal advice from Bevan Brittan LLP supports the proposal for the Council to directly award a contract for services to Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust pursuant to establishing a Co-operative Working Agreement which relies on the exceptions set out in regulation 12(7) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

2.5 Under this regulation direct contracts can be awarded between contracting authorities if the following conditions are met:

- the arrangement involves only contracting authorities, there is no participation of private capital;
- the character of the agreement is that of real co-operation aimed at the joint performance of a common task, as opposed to a normal public contract
- the cooperation is governed only by considerations relating to the public interest
- The contracting authorities perform on the open market less than 20% of the activities concerned by the co-operation

2.6 The arrangement must:

- Involve only contracting authorities (broadly public bodies) i.e. not private or voluntary sector bodies
- Involve working together which may include some element of joint input into service delivery
- Concern the achievement of common objectives
- Be concerned with achievement of best value in service delivery
- Not simply involve the performance of a specified service by one party for the other in return for payment






- 2.7 The development of an approach for co-operative working between Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust and the Council at the Integrated Social Care and Health Centre will bring greater opportunities to:
- Achieve common objectives
 - Integrate care pathways
 - Improve service quality and maximise opportunities for Innovation
 - Secure value for money and make the most of resources
- 2.8 Delivering high quality services supported by a commitment to continuous improvement is a key objective of this approach. Strong performance management will be a key component of the Co-operative Working Agreement. Joint management arrangements together with co-operation around data sharing and the monitoring and evaluation of services will ensure good quality of information to assure performance and drive service quality improvement. It is proposed that this is overseen and governed by a joint management structure that will operate at both strategic and operational levels.
- 2.9 Using provisions within the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 which allow direct contract awards where there is public to public co-operation between contracting authorities, it is proposed that the Director of Adult Social Care commences negotiations to prepare to enter into a contract with Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust for the provision of designated integrated social care and health services where there are mutual objectives. This will entail the preparation of a new formal agreement that details the nature of the co-operation, and the establishment of a joint governance structure.
- 2.10 The key benefits of this approach are that it enables:
- partnership and integrated working which are key to delivering high quality services;
 - incentivisation of Key Performance Indicators;
 - clear performance management of services;



- a structure within which to add or remove services as the co-operative working evolves.
- scope to include non-health-based services.
- efficiencies in transactional costs by having a single contract with an overarching governance structure and removing the periodic procurement rounds.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>People live well and age well</p> <p>Improvement in the quality of life for people leaving hospital with short-term reablement or therapy needs, enabling them to feel confident to live well at home.</p>
	<p>Strong resilient communities</p> <p>Positive effects on the quality of life of family and carers following discharge from hospital, enabling people to feel supported and to live independently in their communities after a short period of reablement and/or therapy support.</p>
	<p>A strong and inclusive economy</p> <p>The Integrated Social Care and Health Centre will provide employment opportunities for local people whilst establishing a valuable community asset which is owned and operated by the Council.</p>

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 At its meeting on 29th March 2018, the Sandwell Health and Wellbeing Board gave its agreement and support to formally scope-up the long-term options to provide bed-based integrated social care and health provision in Sandwell. This was in response to three main strategic challenges: to help deliver sustainable progress on Delayed Transfers of Care (DToc) performance; provide more effective step-up/hospital avoidance services; and aim to commission a minimum required level of short-term, bed-based reablement and therapy provision throughout the year to smooth out seasonal variations in demand.



- 4.2 In December 2018, February 2019 and November 2019 Cabinet approved the development of an Integrated Social Care and Health Centre and the staffing model required for the service.
- 4.3 Cabinet approval was obtained in March 2020 for the Council to proceed with the completion of an Integrated Social Care and Health Centre building at the Knowle site in Rowley Regis. The facility is expected to open in July 2022.
- 4.4 The primary purpose of the Integrated Social Care and Health Centre is to provide bed-based reablement and therapy services to people who have either been discharged from hospital or for whom the Centre will provide an opportunity to avoid admission to hospital.
- 4.5 This report sets out a proposed approach to co-operative working between The Borough Council Of Sandwell and Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust for the purposes of delivering integrated, people-centred services from the Centre.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The only alternative option would be to defer to a tendering process which for the reasons set out in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.5 would not be in the best interest of the services.

6 Implications

Resources:	The capital costs of the build were agreed at the Cabinet meeting of 18 March 2020 and the ongoing revenue costs for operating Knowle will be confirmed in a future Cabinet report. The resources required to support the development of the Co-operative Working Agreement will be funded from the Better Care Fund at a current estimated cost of £10,000 plus VAT
Legal and Governance	Contracts would need to be awarded in accordance with the local authority's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules which would generally require competition for



	<p>contracts of the value in question and an exemption to the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules would be required for direct award</p> <p>Under regulation 12(7) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, the local authority may enter into a contract without competition where the contract is with another contracting authority (public body) and establishes or implements co-operation with the aim of ensuring that public services the authorities have to perform are provided with a view to achieving objectives they have in common and are governed solely by considerations relating to the public interest.</p> <p>It is considered that proposals of the nature outlined in this report are likely to fall within the scope of Regulation 12(7) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.</p>
<p>Risk:</p>	<p>A detailed assessment of risks as been undertaken and no significant risks have been identified. The risk assessment is included as Appendix A to this report. Detailed external legal advice has been taken from Bevan Brittan LLP in relation to application of regulation 12(7) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 to this proposal. Bevan Brittan LLP further advised that a Voluntary Ex Ante Transparency (VEAT) notice should not be necessary to mitigate the risk of challenge in this case. They have carried out a legal analysis of the proposals and are of the view that, on balance, it is likely that the proposed arrangements would be found to comply with regulation 12(7) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.</p>
<p>Equality:</p>	<p>An initial equality screening has been undertaken and no adverse impact on protected groups has been identified</p>



Health and Wellbeing:	This is a health and wellbeing service that will contribute to a wide range of outcomes for the population of Sandwell (see section 4).
Social Value:	The work of the co-operative agreement is jointly overseen at Board level to draw back to the social value of all programmes of work

7. Appendices

Appendix A – Risk Assessment



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Template.xlsx

Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment



EIA_Template -
Knowle.doc

8. Background Papers

Cabinet reports from December 2018, February 2019, November 2019 and March 2020.

Health and Wellbeing Board report from March 2018



Report to Cabinet

23 March 2022

Subject:	Corporate Plan Achievements 2021
Cabinet Member:	The Leader of the Council Councillor Kerrie Carmichael
Director:	Kim Bromley-Derry Interim Chief Executive
Key Decision:	No
Contact Officer:	Sarah Sprung, Senior Lead Officer sarah_sprung@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Cabinet consider the progress made in delivering the Corporate Plan during 2021.
- 1.2 That Cabinet consider the directorate actions, contained in Appendix 1, that will support delivery of the Corporate Plan on our journey ahead.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 To offer assurance of progress in delivering the Corporate Plan and to set out the proposed delivery vehicle for the strategic outcomes contained in the plan going forward.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

		The Corporate Plan “Sandwell Plan – Big Plans for a Great Place” sets out the strategic priorities for Sandwell Council that will enable us to contribute the achievement of Vision 2030. This report sets out a summary of progress that has been made against each of the strategic priorities during 2021.
		
		

4 Context and Key Issues

Background

- 4.1 Our refreshed 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 2021 to 2025. The Corporate Plan Refresh was approved by Council on 21 October 2021.
- 4.2 The refreshed plan is based on analysis of the impact that the pandemic has had on our community, the local economy and our own organisation.

Achievements

- 4.3 Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we’ve been forging ahead in delivering the Corporate Plan during 2021. Some of our key achievements this year include:
- 4.4 **Best Start in life for children and young people**
- Youth Service supported vulnerable young people and families, providing over 600+ food packs and 100+ welfare calls, delivering 1,588 youth work sessions and reaching 18,663 young people, meanwhile training 14 young people and staff as vaccine advocates.
 - Successful application to, and engagement in, DfE’s LINK programme to support joint working between community mental health professionals, schools and the voluntary sector.



4.5 People Live Well Age Well

- Resilience team led Operation Eagle planning and operation of mass Covid testing in Tipton and Smethwick to identify any new variants of concern in a target area.
- Creative use of Covid emergency funding to develop a £1.1 million programme, designed to meet increasing emotional wellbeing and mental health needs of children and young people by expanding capacity in voluntary sector.
- As part of Joined up Health and Social Care approach, Discharge to Assess Local Government Association peer review completed, and action plan developed to deliver improved performance.
- Sandwell has won two national awards for its drug and alcohol: the Royal Society of public Health Award and the Guardian Public Services Award ([LINK](#))
- Sandwell has the lowest rate of drug related deaths in the region and is in the lowest ten rates in the country ([LINK](#))
- Sandwell also achieved the highest proportion of children meeting physical activity guidelines. It has the highest rate in the region and the fourth highest in the country
- Other recent achievements include rates of smoking quitters and new birth visits with 14 days that are significantly higher than the national average

4.6 Strong Resilient Communities

- Significant progress in the delivery of full business cases for £67.5 million [Towns Fund](#) allocation.
- Progress on a variety of Carbon reduction initiatives, including securing resources from the Public-Sector Decarbonisation Fund.
- Two pilot schemes incorporating Air Source Heat Pumps on a district system and to other to individual properties and further work on other options is ongoing.
- Secured £165,000 from the OPCC Community Safety Fund and successfully delivered 12 projects to support the Safer Sandwell Partnership Police & Crime Board priorities.
- Recognised by the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Dame Sara Thornton, as an example of national good practice for our partnership work around modern day slavery, in particular the establishment of an Anti-Slavery Strategic Partnership and a Slavery and Human Trafficking Operational Partnership.



4.7 Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods

- Conversion of office block Applewood Grove completed, providing 21 high quality temporary accommodation units to homeless households and avoiding need for higher cost spot purchased units.
- Housing Partnerships achieved 111 completions in 2021/22 including the Extra Care scheme in Rowley Regis, with total completions in programme 1 to 465 units. There are 92 units in progress and a further 126 units due to start 2022/23.
- Work to refurbish high-rise block Alfred Gunn House undertaken (42 of our 54 high rises now upgraded).
- External improvements to 3,500 properties completed, including insulating with external wall insulation or cavity wall insulation to reduce fuel costs and aid decarbonisation.
- Helped raise £8.7 million in Q2 (Year-end forecast £18 million) in welfare benefits for people in hardship/on low income.
- Neighbourhood Teams began delivering home-checks to identify vulnerable tenants and completed 213 checks (to November 2021 with rollout planned across all our estates).

4.8 A Strong Inclusive Economy

- Delivery of the Sandwell Aquatics Centre for the 2022 Commonwealth Games in 2022 is on track.
- Delivered a redeveloped outdoor market during lockdown which incorporated innovative glass photovoltaic roof panels, being listed as a finalist for The Energy Awards 2021 and shortlisted for the RTPI West Midlands 2021 Awards for Planning Excellence.
- Currently relocating Wednesbury outdoor market as part of the Wednesbury Heritage Action Zone project, anticipating relocation by end of 2022. This will also incorporate new market stalls with glass photovoltaic roof panels that will provide all lighting and power requirements for the markets from solar energy.
- Employment and Skills team led a Black Country-wide partnership to successfully secure Community Renewal funding for an innovative pilot tackling employment and skills support for the over-50s.



4.9 A Connected and Accessible Sandwell

- Secured funding from Government for the first on-street public electric vehicle charge points.
- A Masterplan for West Bromwich Town Centre drafted and consulted on and is due for endorsement by Cabinet early 2022.
- Working in conjunction with Birmingham City Council, a strategy for the future of the corridor between Birmingham and Smethwick developed, which includes a detailed masterplan for the Grove Lane area of Smethwick.
- Progressing the £30 million Birchley Island transport scheme

4.10 One Council, one team

- As part of Digital Transformation, My Sandwell adoption and take-up: 154 processes now available, 219,000 MySandwell accounts with 60% activity rate, 1.5 million transactions across the platform – 80% by customers in some £115 m of payments where they gave average customer satisfaction rating 4.3/5 stars.
- Redeployment of key staff at the beginning of pandemic to ensure dynamic council response, including Food Hub, Winter Grants, Vaccine Programme, Track & Trace.
- Working from home implemented with minimal impact on service delivery.
- Permanent appointments to the Director roles in the new leadership structure.
- Local elections delivered successfully during Covid.
- Co-production of refreshed corporate plan which sets direction for the council through engagement with wide range of stakeholders.
- We were the lead Authority that successfully established, managed and operated a regional mortuary at Birmingham Airport in response to the pandemic on behalf of seven other councils.

4.11 We have delivered these key achievements at the same time as supporting our community through the pandemic. Sandwell has been nationally recognised for our community-based response: -

- Sandwell's response to COVID has included data analytics, outbreak response, contact tracing, vaccination outreach and



communications. The overall response was identified as an example of best practice by the Department of Health and Social Care ([LINK](#)).

- Sandwell as one of the first area in the UK to develop contact tracing at a local level. The service links directly into the national test and trace system and significantly improved successful engagement rates. Information on the service is in an LGA case study here ([LINK](#)). The Sandwell service pioneered local contact tracing services with almost all UK local authorities subsequently setting up a similar service. It also pioneered the use of s-gene data to aid the early identification of cases of new variants ([LINK](#))
- Our care home COVID response was a finalist in the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) award for outstanding contribution to infection prevention and control. There were hundreds of teams nominated and we were one of only seven finalists. The COVID-19 death rate in care homes remains significantly lower than the Black Country and national averages.
- Sandwell was named 'Public Health Team of 2021' by the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) for its work on reducing the health inequalities from the pandemic through the COVID Vaccination Champions project. The Council joined forces with the NHS, voluntary and faith sector organisations to support vaccination uptake in the Borough, with a particular focus on black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, which traditionally have lower vaccination uptake rates. Other council teams in the UK came to Sandwell to learn how to deliver the programme in their areas. ([LINK](#))

Looking forward

- 4.12 Looking ahead to 2022 and beyond, each directorate has identified key actions that they will deliver that will directly support the delivery of the strategic outcomes in the Corporate Plan. Appendix 1 details the directorate actions in full.
- 4.13 To ensure that we have the right breadth of commitments to deliver our Corporate Plan we have undertaken a mapping exercise to ensure we do not have any gaps in coverage.
- 4.13 The actions contained in Appendix 1 will form part of directorate business plans which will be presented to Cabinet for approval later in the year, alongside proposals for the adoption of a performance management framework. This suite of intelligence will allow us to track and monitor



our progress in delivering on the commitments contained in the Corporate Plan.

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:	<p>The work carried out during 2020 to understand the impact of the pandemic on our communities was used as evidence to inform the refresh of the Corporate Plan, this together with the conversations that took place over Summer 2021 provided an excellent evidence base for the refresh of the Plan.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment was completed as part of the Corporate Plan Refresh and presented to Council in October 2021.</p>
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.
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6 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Corporate Plan Delivery Actions

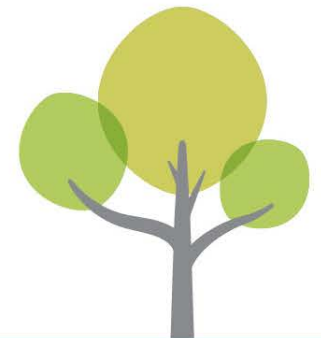
7. Background Papers

Report to Council October 2021 – Corporate Plan Refresh 2021



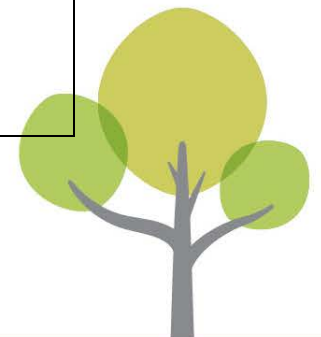


Corporate Plan Delivery Actions 2022 – 2025



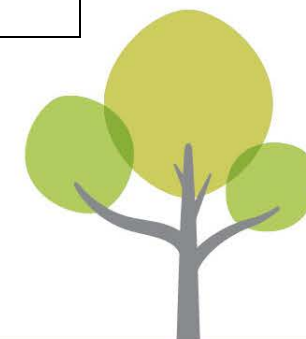
Law & Governance

Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
B2	In 2023 many healthcare services including maternity provision will transfer to the New Midland Metropolitan Hospital(MMH) in Smethwick. It is estimated this will impact by creating an additional 5000 registration events in Sandwell. Our registration service will act as a key partner creating new pathways for communication of the necessary support that meet the needs of parents in Sandwell.	Children Services Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospital Trust Best Start in Life	Commence 2023	No one gets left behind
B10	We will support school providing work experience places, continue to do exam preparation with our legal professional experience and provide careers advice to students of local schools. Stand at careers fayres for Sandwell schools	Sandwell School and Academies and connexions	Commence 2022	No one gets left behind
B13	Legal and Assurance will provide high quality advice, support and training to Sandwell Children’s Trust and assist in improving performance and providing better outcome for children in care	Sandwell Childrens Trust Courts	2022 and ongoing	No one gets left behind
E18	Apprenticeships, learning and development opportunities in Law and Governance will help people make everyday choices around not just how they are supported, but also how they choose to live their lives.	Schools and Apprenticeship team Best start in life People live well and age well	2022-2025	No one gets left behind
C5	Through our bereavement teams, we will strive to maintain and approve Green Flag status in our cemeteries and crematoria, whilst also working to enhance our existing and new cemeteries and crematoria.	Waste and cleansing partner, Serco. Our fleet services teams Friends groups Strong and resilient communities	2022	Green is everything we do



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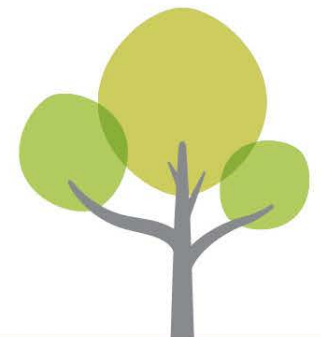
Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
C21	We will work with colleagues across the council and be a key player on the board providing strategic advice and strategy to make our communities a safer place	ASB, Housing and regeneration, neighbouring Local Authorities and the Police	Commence 2022	No one get left behind
O7	New business applications for our bereavement and coroner's teams to enable better access for our residents and other service users. Building on the benefits of increased digitalisation of our services	Black Country Coroners Service and local authority areas, ICT and service improvement teams One Council One Team	Commence 2022	No one gets left behind
O7	Upgraded business applications for our Legal and Assurance team and management of SARs and FOIs.	ICT and service improvement teams One Council One Team	Commence 2022	No one gets left behind
B9/024	Our school admission appeals service will grow their offer for the delivery of an impartial and independent admission appeals function	Borough Schools and Academies, parents, carers	Commence 2022 and ongoing	No one gets left behind
C1	Undertake a review of Town Working arrangements and governance	Neighbourhoods service, Ward Members	2022	No one gets left behind
C1 C9	We will work with elected members to strengthen our Civic and Democratic Engagement	Elected Members, Community and voluntary sector, schools & colleges	2022 and ongoing	No one gets left behind
O14/15	The holistic review of democratic governance will be completed	Elected members	2023 -24	No one gets left behind
A16/O5/O7	The Committee Management System (modern.gov) will be fully implemented and utilised effectively across the organisation and accessed by services users.	Service Users	2022/23	No one gets left behind



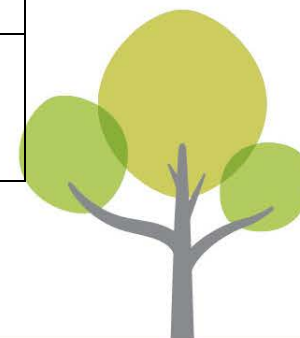


Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
H16/H20	The service will support the introduction of the new tenant scrutiny panel and development of links into corporate scrutiny functions	Neighbourhoods team, Tenant Scrutiny Panel, Elected Members	2022	No one gets left behind
O16	We will implement the Equalities Commission recommendations in order to ensure we meet our specific equalities duties and drive the equalities, diversity and inclusion agenda our organisation.	Sandwell Equalities Commission Elected Members Leadership Team Council staff Partners Stakeholders Residents	March 2023	No one gets left behind

Finance

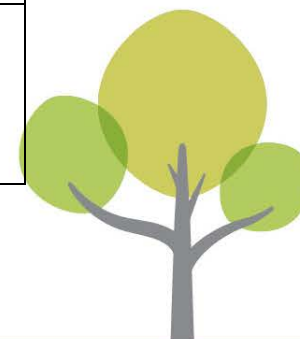


Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
O5-O7 A16	Reviewing approach to the customer journey to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor data monthly on customer contact points to understand current demand and adapt services to meet this demand Roll-out self-service kiosks in more customer facilities Continue to promote My Sandwell to increase online transactions 	Revenues and Benefits Team Business Transformation Team	31 st March 2023 but regularly review throughout the year	Doing things with the community
O7	Reduce the number of letters (we can measure bills separately under No7) sent to Council Tax, Benefit and Business Customers and use, emails, phone calls or texts wherever possible	Revenues and Benefits Team Business Transformation Team	March 2023	Doing things with the community Green
O7	Undertake quarterly campaigns to promote e-billing take-up for Council Tax and NNDR	Communications Team	First to be completed by April 2022 then quarterly throughout the year	Doing things with the community Green
O6	Undertake quarterly campaigns to increase Direct Debit take-up for Council Tax and NNDR	Communications Team	First to be completed by April 2022 then quarterly throughout the year	Doing things with the community Green
O5	Explore options for co-location and/or close working with key partners	Welfare Rights Key Third Sector partners. I think this would be better for Welfare Rights to	March 2023	Doing things with the community



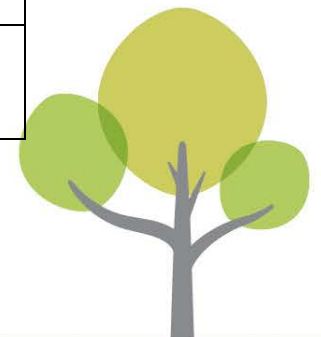
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Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
		explore the co-location as they have R&B knowledge as well as DWP benefits. Agree we should work closer with key partners		No one gets left behind
L8	Implement a comprehensive customer referral mechanism for customers requiring financial inclusion support	Welfare Rights Key Third Sector partners	September 2022	No one gets left behind
O5	Review the Council's approach to debt recovery and implement a Corporate Debt Recovery Strategy	Revenues and Benefits Manager Community Care Business Unit Housing Team	June 2022	No one gets left behind
O14	Implement Oracle Fusion and achieve transformational benefits and cashable savings	IT HR Business Transformation	October 2022	Local Investment Green
O27	Implement a Corporate Asset Management System	IT Strategic Asset Team Procurement	December 2022	Doing things with the community
O26	Have in place a Corporate Commercial Strategy and deliver at least two business streams	Leadership Team Service Managers	Commercial Strategy approved – May 2022 First business stream operational – October 2022	Doing things with the community Local investment
O14	Complete CIPFA Financial Management Review and implement first phase of Improvement Plan	Finance Team Leadership Team	Action Plan approved by April 2022 First phase of actions complete by October 2022	Local Investment



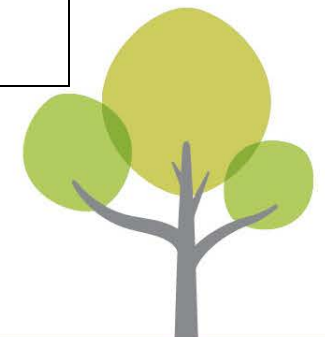
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Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
O14	Complete outstanding actions from CIPFA Financial Management Code	Finance Team Leadership Team	September 2022	Local Investment
E2	Undertake analysis on the Councils spend to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline the amount the Council spends locally Define local and regional spend Identify opportunities to aggregate spend Identify % of spend currently under a contract 	Procurement and Payments Team	April 2022 April 2022 July 2022	Local Investment
O1	Undertake a lean system review of the Councils payment processes improve current performance	Procurement and Payments Team All Directorates	September 2022	Local Investment
E2	Carry out regular engagement and training events for local suppliers	Business Growth Team	First event by April 2022 then quarterly throughout the year	Local Investment Doing things with the community
E2	Review the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and streamline procedures to make it easier for suppliers to do business with the Council whilst still ensuring that they comply with Public Contract Regulations	Legal Services Business Growth Team	June 2022	Local Investment
O17 E8	Introduce and embed a Social Value Policy as part of the Councils Contract Procedure Rules	Business Growth Team	September 2022	Local Investment
L15	Review Non-Residential Social Care Charging Policy	Director of Adult Social Care	October 2022	Doing things with the community
O1	Undertake a comprehensive Corporate Governance Training programme for officers and members	Procurement Team Finance Team Legal Team	Complete all training by September 2022	No one gets left behind



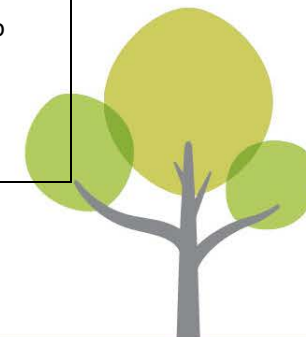
Regeneration & Growth

Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
C2	We will deliver the Towns Investment Plans in West Bromwich, Smethwick and Rowley Regis, secured through £67.5m of Town Deal funding.	Partner Organisations Town Deal Board Local Boards Ward Councillors	24 March 2022	Local Investment Doing things with the community
E6	We will deliver the agreed Town Deals in collaboration with our partners across Rowley Regis, Smethwick and West Bromwich	Partner Organisations Town Deal Board Local Boards Ward Councillors	25/26	Local Investment Doing things with the community
C7	We will deliver the operational requirements to ensure the smooth running of the Commonwealth Games and ensure a lasting legacy for Sandwell.	B2022 Organising Committee; Transport for West Midlands; West Midlands Police; West Midlands Fire Service; Wates Construction Limited	July / August 2022	Local Investment Doing things with the community
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.	B2022 Organising Committee; Active Black Country; Sport England; Black Country LEP; West Midlands Growth Company; SCVO.	March 2023	Local Investment Doing things with the community No one gets left behind

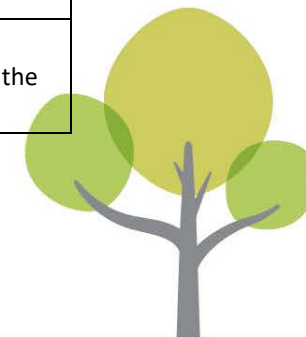


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Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
C10	We will work with partners to deliver initiatives that will help up to achieve our climate change strategy and the target of being a carbon neutral borough by 2041.	WMCA, Midlands Energy Hub, BBC LEP, SWM	Milestones to be agreed	Green in everything we do
	Produce Corporate Climate Change Action Plan to ensure we can meet our 2030 and 2041 targets for carbon neutrality	Fleet & Waste, Education, Housing, Parks & Countryside	Feb 2022	Green in everything we do
C11	We will embed climate change considerations into our decision making to enable us to become a carbon neutral council by 2030.	Law & Governance	Dec 2022	Green in everything we do
	Develop and implement council-wide programme of carbon literacy		Aug 2022 (for programme to begin)	Green in everything we do
H12	We will introduce town centre living in appropriate locations ensuring council developments maintain excellent standards in urban design.	Registered Social Landlords Housing Developers	Milestones to be agreed	Local Investment Doing things with the community
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.	Black Country Local Authorities Other Council directorates TfWM/WMCA Developers Residents	Adoption scheduled Spring 2024	Local Investment Green In Everything We Do No One Gets left Behind
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.	Other Council directorates TfWM/WMCA Land Owners Developers Residents	Sandwell Development Plan adoption scheduled Late 2024 Revised adoption scheduled early 2025 West Bromwich AAP	Local Investment Green In Everything We Do No One Gets left Behind

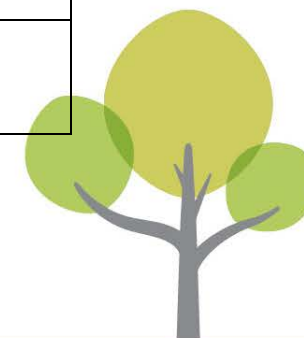


Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
H18	We will deliver a rolling programme of upgrades to our stock that improves energy efficiency and plan for the installation of alternative heating systems.	Housing directorate/Delivery partner	2030 (Milestones to be agreed)	Local Investment Green in everything we do
	Produce plans to transition the borough's homes towards becoming net zero through a programme of retrofitting	Housing directorate/delivery partner/WMCA	2041 (Milestones to be agreed)	Local Investment Green in everything we do
	We will work with partners and others to ensure Sandwell is resilient to the impacts of a climate change.	Housing/NHS Trust, WMCA/Forestry Commission	2041 (Milestones to be agreed)	No one gets left behind. Local Investment. Green in everything we do
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	Anchor Network	Milestones to be agreed	Local Investment
	Establish Anchor Network and commence delivery against priorities	Anchor Network CLES	22/23	
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.	Leader and CEO WMCA BCLEP	Milestones to be agreed	Local Investment
E4	Sustained outward looking approach to developing key local and sub regional relationships	All local and sub regional organisations	Milestones to be agreed	
E5	We will work with our health partners to deliver the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital and to maximise the significant regeneration benefits to the	NHS, Universities and Sandwell College	Ongoing	Number of learning opportunities as set out in the TF FBC

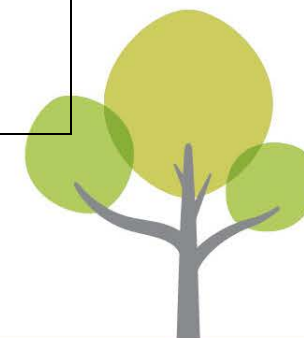


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Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
	wider surrounding area, including training, traineeships, apprenticeships and employment opportunities.			
E10	We will develop an overarching Regeneration Strategy supported by an approved Pipeline of Regeneration Projects to support economic recovery from Covid19.	Partner Organisations Cabinet Members Ward Councillors WMCA BCLEP	March 2022	Local Investment Doing things with the community
E11	We will work more closely with strategic businesses to develop shared opportunities	West Midlands Growth Company Black Country Growth Hub Federation of Small Businesses Chamber of Commerce	22/23	Local Investment Doing things with the community
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	Overlapping responsibility with Employment and Skills	Milestones to be agreed	Local Investment No one gets left behind
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	Local Businesses BC Growth Hub BCLEP WMCA BC Chamber of Commerce	2022 (Milestones to be agreed)	Local Investment No one gets left behind
E14	We will work with our partners to support the development and growth of business start-ups in Sandwell	SWEDA Chamber of Commerce Black Country Growth Hub	22/23 (Milestones to be agreed)	Local Investment Doing things with the community

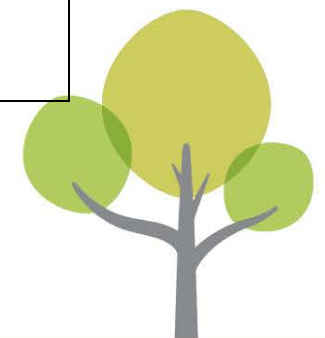


Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
		Federation of Small Businesses		
E15	We will support local businesses to reduce their carbon footprint and work towards carbon zero targets	Black Country Growth Hub BEIS BCLEP WMCA Universities	23/24 (Milestones to be agreed)	Green in Everything We Do Local Investment
E16	We will establish more business networking and support events utilising Sandwell's Business Ambassadors	Sandwell Business Ambassadors	22/23 (Milestones to be agreed)	Doing things with the community Local Investment
A1	We will work with the WMCA to ensure that our residents can access employment opportunities across the region, particularly by public transport.	TfWM West Midlands Rail Executive Public Transport Operators	Ongoing (Milestones to be agreed)	Local Investment Green in Everything We Do No One Gets left Behind
A2	We will continue to work with partners to deliver the West Midlands Metro extension connecting Wednesbury to Brierley Hill and the SPRINT scheme.	Black Country Local Authorities Other Council directorates TfWM/WMCA	WBHE – Completion late 2023 Sprint Phase 1 – Completion June 2022 Sprint Phase 2 - TBC	Local Investment Green In Everything We Do No One Gets left Behind
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.	Black Country Local Authorities Other Council directorates TfWM/WMCA	Ongoing (Milestones to be agreed)	Local Investment Green In Everything We Do No One Gets left Behind



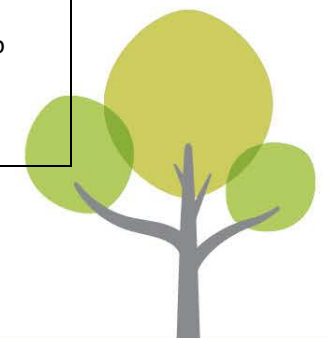
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Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
A6	We will enable people to get around in a healthy and sustainable way, supporting our health and wellbeing and our climate change strategies.	Black Country Local Authorities Other Council directorates TfWM/WMCA Developers Residents	Ongoing (Milestones to be agreed)	Local Investment Green In Everything We Do No One Gets left Behind Doing Things With the Community
A7	We will continue to implement Sandwell's Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and deliver a programme of infrastructure improvements across the borough.	Black Country Local Authorities Other Council directorates TfWM/WMCA Developers Residents	Ongoing (Milestones to be agreed)	Local Investment Green In Everything We Do No One Gets left Behind Doing Things With the Community
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.	TfWM West Midlands Rail Executive Public Transport Operators	Ongoing with regards to rail Target date for all buses to be zero emission is 2030	Local Investment Green In Everything We Do No One Gets left Behind
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.	Black Country Local Authorities Other Council directorates TfWM/WMCA Midlands Connect National Highways	Ongoing (Milestones to be agreed)	Local Investment Green In Everything We Do



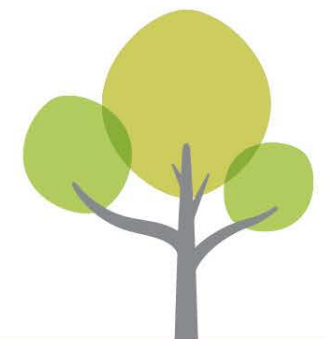
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Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
A10	We will develop and maintain relationships with Midlands Connect to profile major transport interventions in Sandwell.	Black Country Local Authorities Other Council directorates TfWM/WMCA National Highways	Ongoing (Milestones to be agreed)	Local Investment Green In Everything We Do
A11	We will continue our partnership work with the Canal and River Trust to enable us to make the best use of our waterways.	Towns Fund Board and Superboard	March 2023 (Milestones to be agreed)	Canal waterways under-developed
A14	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.	Black Country Local Authorities Other Council directorates TfWM/WMCA National Highways	Birchley Island – Delivery by 2025 (Milestones to be agreed) Metro Corridor Walking & Cycling – Delivery by late 2023 (Milestones to be agreed) Blackheath Interchange – delivery by 2025 (Milestones to be agreed)	Local Investment Green In Everything We Do
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.	TfWM West Midlands Rail Executive Network Rail Public Transport Operators	Ongoing (Milestones to be agreed)	Local Investment Green In Everything We Do No One Gets left Behind Doing Things With the Community



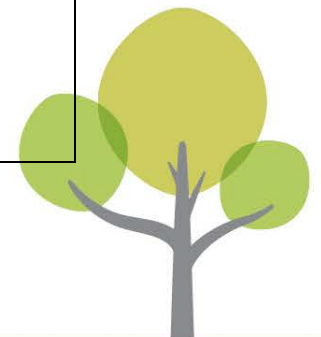
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Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
A15	We will ensure Sandwell is well placed to support the move towards electric vehicles by delivering key infrastructure requirements.	Black Country Local Authorities Other Council directorates TfWM/WMCA Developers	Ongoing but Black Country ULEV Strategy envisages roll out by 2025 (Milestones to be agreed)	Local Investment Green In Everything We Do No One Gets left Behind
A18	We will work with WM5G to ensure Sandwell maximises opportunities for 5G infrastructure	WM5G	WM5G project will be coming to an end next year. 5G rollout will continue from MNOs so delivery date is flexible in terms of infrastructure.	

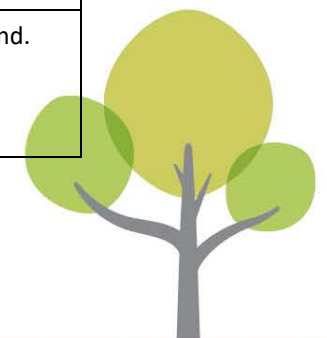


Housing

Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
H1 and H2	We will deliver much needed new homes across the borough etc. We will help keyworkers to access affordable housing etc	Registered providers, WMCA	March 2023 (Milestones to be agreed)	No one gets left behind
H3	Keep people independent in their own homes for as long as possible through best use of Disabled Facilities Grant	Adult Social Care, Children's and Education Services	March 2023 (Milestones to be agreed)	No One Gets Left Behind. Local investment.
H4	We will focus more of our ambitious house building programme on the needs of our children and young people who have complex needs or experience of care. Create the business case to bring in to use starter flats for young people in work/training. Design and deliver training and support for care leavers managing their own tenancies	Children and Education Services	March 2023 (Milestones to be agreed)	No One Gets Left Behind. Local investment.
H5 and H6	We will focus more of our council house building on the needs of people with learning disabilities, autism and mental health needs. We will develop the second council house build programme.	Specialist registered providers. WMCA, Homes England, RPs generally.	March 2023	No One Gets Left Behind. Local investment.



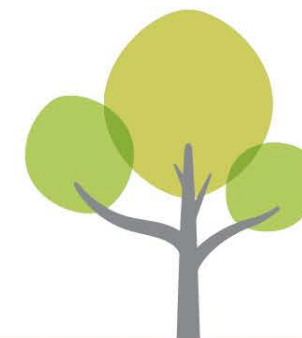
H7	We will incorporate more renewable energy measures into the design of new build homes, including MMC and heating.	WMCA	March 2023	Green in Everything We Do.
H8 and H9	Bring forward a new Homelessness Strategy focussed on increasing prevention, early intervention and rapid rehousing	West Midlands and Sandwell Homelessness Partnerships. RPs	Adopt Strategy by October 2023 with annual milestones to 2025	Doing Things with the Community. No One Gets Left Behind.
H11	Bring empty homes in to use and raise standards in the private rented sector	PRS landlords and tenants. Landlord bodies.	March 2023 and annual	No One Gets Left Behind. Local Investment.
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.	WMCA, Regeneration and Growth, DLUCH	March 2023	Local Investment.
H15 and H16	Modernise estate management based on early identification and interventions	Tenants, community groups, ASB team, Adult Social Car, Health and Children's Services.	October 2022 and annual	Doing Things with the Community.
H17	Safer homes – social housing and PRS. Proactive advice and guidance offered to landlords and tenants	Landlords and landlord bodies. Tenants. Regulators. RPs	March 2023 and ongoing	Doing Things with the Community. Local Investment.
H18 and C13	Upgrades to our stock including energy efficiency and alternative heating systems.	Regeneration and Growth directorate, WMCA	March 2023 and ongoing.	Green in Everything We Do. Local Investment.
H19	Become an official Borough of Sanctuary	National Movement, Brushstrokes, Children and Education	December 2022	No One Gets Left Behind.



H20	Increase the scope and impact of tenant engagement. Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Panel fully up and running.	Tenants, TMOs, SCIPs.	April 2022	Doing Things With the Community
O3	We will build a One Council : One Team ethos, breaking down barriers, collaborating. Identify projects where Housing can add value and contribute towards delivery of other directorates' objectives.	All other directorates	Ongoing	No one gets left behind

Public Health

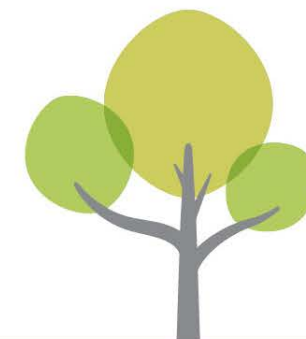
Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
L12	Drug Services (to prevent, treat and sustain recovery from substance misuse)	Strategic Drug and Alcohol Partnership	Ongoing	No one gets left behind
L12	Alcohol Services (to prevent, treat and sustain recovery from alcohol misuse)	Strategic Drug and Alcohol Partnership	Ongoing	No one gets left behind
L7, L8	Integrated sexual health services (e.g. contraception advice, distribution of condoms, HIV testing and management, STD testing)	Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust	Ongoing	No one gets left behind Doing things with the community
L5, L6, L12	Healthy eating and weight management	Aseptika Ltd (weigh2go), Wellness that works	Weigh2go- November 2021- November 2023	No one gets left behind Doing things with the community



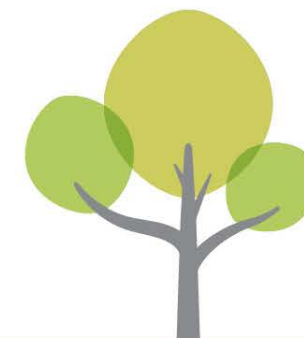
Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
L2, L3	We will support the roll out of the COVID- 19 vaccination programme	Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations, Faith Sector, Community	Ongoing	No one gets left behind Doing things with the community Local investment
L1, L3, L4, L5, L6, L8, L10	Healthy Sandwell advice and referral service	Stop Smoking provider, Weight Management Providers, GP Practices, Drug and Alcohol provider, Diabetes prevention provider, Voluntary and community sector providers	Ongoing	Local investment Doing things with communities No one gets left behind
B15, B17, L2, L4, L5, L6, L7, L8, L10, C1	Investment and support of community mental health programmes (including pre-and post-natal support groups; a parenting programme; an anti-bullying campaign)	Various internal, Voluntary Sector Organisations	June 2022	Local Investment, Doing things with the community No one gets left behind
L2, L3, L7, L8	COVID-19 outbreak and contact tracing	UKHSA	Ongoing	No-one gets left behind Doing things with the community No one gets left behind
B5, B6	Public Health support to babies and parents	Health Visiting, Best Start Teams, Inclusion Support Early Years, Speech	Ongoing	No-one gets left behind



Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
		and Language Therapy, Children's Centres, Early Years education settings		
B11, B12, B15, B16, B17	School Nursing	Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospital Trust, Sandwell Schools	Contract end March 2025 (with an optional extension of 2 years)	No-one gets left behind Doing things with the community
L1, L8	Stop smoking support (work with maternity units to facilitate referrals for pregnant women into the service)	New Smoking Cessation Provider	Ongoing	No-one gets left behind
L1, L8	Stop smoking support (community-based service offering 12 weeks of quit support)	New Smoking Cessation Provider	Ongoing	No-one gets left behind
L7, L8	Public Health marketing campaigns		Ongoing	Doing things with the community
L5, L6, L7	Inclusive cycling programme	To be determined following procurement process	April 2022- April 2024	No one gets left behind Doing things with the community
L5, L6, L7	Sandwell Stride programme (volunteer-led walking scheme) and digital app-based walking offer	Ramblers association and Go Jauntly	Sandwell Stride- October 2021- October 2024 Go Jauntly- May 2021- May 2023	Green is everything we do Doing things with the community

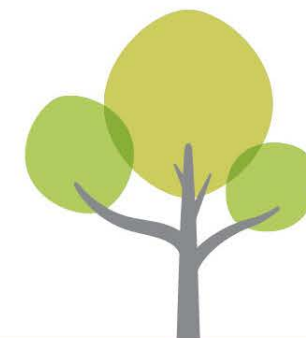


Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
L5, L6, L7	Greenspace utilisation (physical activity in parks and open spaces)	Parks, Sports and Leisure Team, Provider to be determined following re-procurement process	April 2022- April 2024	Green is everything we do Doing things with the community
L1, L2, C10, C16, C17, C19, C20	Engagement of faith sector in Public Health work	Faith Sector Partners	Ongoing	Local Investment Doing things with community No one gets left behind Green is everything we do
B15, B17, L5, L6, L7, L10	Develop the Charter Mark framework and expand into the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) (a declaration of support for, and set of commitments to, the wellbeing and mental health of everyone working in VCS)	Inclusion Support, Voluntary and Community Sector organisations	December 2022	Local Investment Doing things with the community
B11, B15	Relationship and Sex Education (targeted sessions in non-mainstream school settings and one-to-one sessions for vulnerable young people)	Brook (provider), Sandwell schools, Integrated Sexual Health Service	Contract end date March 2023.	Doing things with the community No one gets left behind



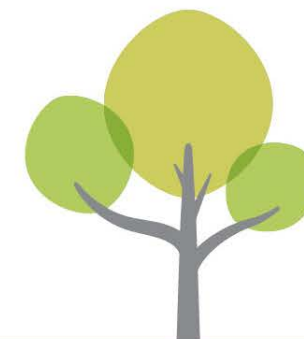
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Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
L4, L5, L6, L8, L15, L16, L17	Falls Prevention (service to improve strength and balance for older people)	Solutions4Health (provider), Healthy Sandwell and Public Health Development officers (referrals)	July 2021-July 2023 (option of +1 - July 2024)	Local Investment Doing things with the community No one gets left behind
C1, C4	Community champions programme (engaging local people to support public health messages e.g. around climate change, healthy lifestyles, addictive behaviours)	Sandwell's community and voluntary sector	Ongoing	Doing things with the community No one gets left behind Local investment
L1, A8	Air Quality (a variety of measures to improve the air quality in the borough, e.g. by encouraging use of public transport)	Planning department, including Planning Policy, Development Management, Transportation, Highways.	Ongoing	Doing things with the community No one gets left behind



Adult Social Care

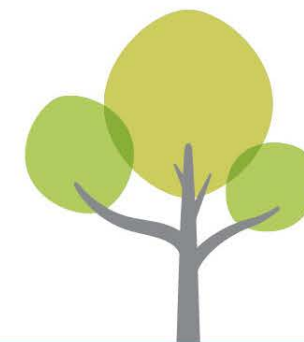
Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
L13 L17 L18	Established operating model for intermediate community Social Work Team	Community Health Services	January 2022	Local investment Doing things in the community
L13 L17 L18	Operating model for integrated hub	Acute Health	December 2021	Local investment Doing things in the community
L13 L17 L18	Knowle:- Development of operating model and recruitment of staff	Human Resources Community Health Services	February 2022	Local investment Doing things in the community
L13 L17 L18	Joint Equipment Stores site development and relocation of Community Alarms	Estates	February 2022	Local investment Doing things in the community
L13 L17 L18	Options appraisal on STAR service due to impact of Discharge 2 Access	Adult Social Care Commissioning Procurement	January 2022	Local investment Doing things in the community



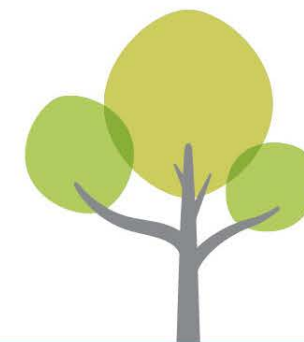
Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
L19	The draft Carers Strategy and Delivery Plan will be presented to the Health & Wellbeing Board in February 2022 which will outline the offer to carers	Commissioners Care management Carers Voluntary Community Sector Children's Trust Clinical Commissioning Groups Mental Health Trust Public and Private Sector Employers	February 2022	No one gets left behind Doing things in the community
H3 L17 L18	Willow Gardens Complete and operationally open	Estates	January 2022	Local investment Doing things in the community
H3 L17 L18	Walker Grange Plan to upgrade and develop dementia offer	Estates Housing	February 2022	Local investment Doing things in the community
L13 L14 L15	Review and option appraisal of in-house day service offer	Advocacy Adults Social Care Commissioning Finance	January 2022	Doing things in the community No one gets left behind



Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
		Health		
L16	Adult safeguarding improvements in practice and performance Immediate actions Action plan in development	Sandwell Safeguarding Adults Board	March 2022	No one gets left behind
L16	Embedding learning from Safeguarding adult reviews (SARS) and internal audits	Safeguarding Adults Partners Corporate Learning and Development Research in Practice licence.	Process has commenced March 2022	Doing things with the community No one gets left behind
L12	Twelve Month (Fixed Term) Consultant Social Work Post to aide practice in drug and alcohol dependency	Public Health Housing Blue Light Project Sandwell Safeguarding Adults Board Cranston	February 2022	Doing things with the community No one gets left behind
L7	Strength -based practice framework	Adult Social Care Commissioning Team	March 2022	Doing things with the community No one gets left behind
L17	Establish a programme of complete actions required for	Temporary Operations Manager	January 2022	Doing things with the community



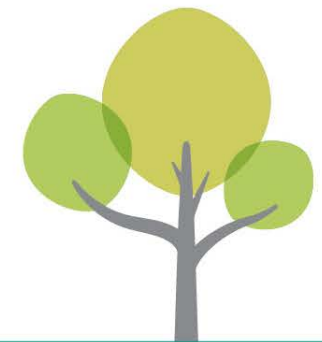
Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
	the transformation of social work and therapy			
L20	Develop a comprehensive workforce strategy for social work and therapy to improved recruitment and retention	I grade managers and workforce planning group	January 2022	Doing things with the community
L13 L17 L18	Realignment of intermediate Social Work Team with community social work teams		March-April 2022	Local investment Doing things in the community
L13 L17 L18	Knowle: Service operational		July-August 2022	Local investment Doing things in the community
L13 L17 L18	Joint Equipment Stores and Community Alarms Established working site at Daulton Way. Established substores at Knowle and community sites.	Health Therapy services	April 2022	Local investment Doing things in the community
L19	Implement agreed Carers Strategy and Delivery Plan. Review current commissioned services to ensure fit for purpose and agree revised commissioning plan	Commissioners Care Management Carers Voluntary Community Sector	June 2022	No one gets left behind Doing things in the community



Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
		Children's Trust Clinical Commissioning Group Mental Health Trust Public and Private Sector Employers		
H3 L17 L18	Walker Grange Work undertaken to implement upgrade and develop dementia offer	Estates Housing	April-May 2022	Local investment Doing things in the community
L13 L14 L15	If the in-house model is agreed, remodelling of the service would need to take place	Human Resources TEASC – Transformation Team	April-May 2022	Doing things in the community No one gets left behind
L16	Adult safeguarding improvements in practice and performance Monitor progress and review need for new actions		June 2022	No one gets left behind
L17	Implement the transformation programme identified for social work and therapy		February 2022	No one gets left behind
L7	Strengths-based practice training plan	Corporate Learning and Development Team Adult Social Care Commissioning Team	September 2022	Doing things with the community No one gets left behind

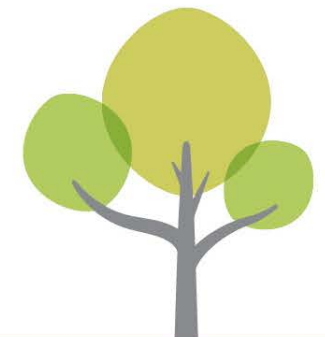


Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
		Therapy Services Day Care Service STAR Service Co-production		
L20	An approved and resourced workforce strategy for social work and therapy is in place		February 2022	Doing things in the community
L13 L17 L18	Established service and Social care operating models	Health (Clinical Commissioning Group & Acute) Commissioning	June-July 2022	Local investment Doing things in the community
L19	Review and refresh Carers Strategy	Commissioners Care management Carers Voluntary Community Sector Children's Trust Clinical Commissioning Groups Mental Health Trust	June 2024	No one gets left behind Doing things in the community



Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
		Public and Private Sector Employers		
H3 L17 L18	Willow Gardens and Walker Grange fully developed and operational		October 2022	Local investment Doing things in the community
H3 L17 L18	Review of accommodation needs and requirements for the future (accommodation strategy)	Housing Commissioning	October 2022	Local investment Doing things in the community
L13 L14 L15	New in-house operating model in operation and offer new service	Commissioning Community Social Work	October 2022	Doing things in the community No one gets left behind
L17	Review progress and refresh the transformation programme identified for social work and therapy		TBC	No one gets left behind
L20	An approved and resourced workforce strategy for social work and therapy is implemented		TBC	Doing things in the community

Business Strategy & Change





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Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s
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.			
O1	To refresh the Council's Storage Area Network (SAN)	Within service	April 2023	No-one gets left behind Green in all we do
O1	To refresh the VMWare hosting platform.	Within service	October 2022	No-one gets left behind Green in all we do
O1	To refresh the Local Area Network (LAN) switches throughout Council buildings. Phase 1 and 2	FM and all Service Areas	March 2024	No-one gets left behind Green in all we do
O1	To create a Device Refresh Policy	ICT Leadership Information Governance?	January 2023	No-one gets left behind Green in all we do
O1	Carry out a review of the ICT Strategy and produce new one for 2022-2025	ICT Leadership All Service Managers	April 2023	No-one gets left behind Green in all we do
O1	To replace Avaya telephony system to link into Microsoft 365 technology	Customer Contact Centres	Jan 2023	No-one gets left behind Green in all we do



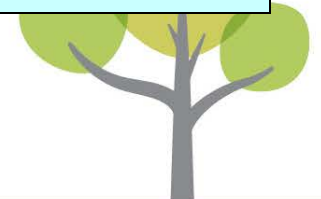
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Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s
		Service managers		
O1	Implement Oracle Fusion	Finance, HR, ICT, Leadership Team	(Milestones to be agreed)	
O5	We will 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.			
O5	Develop a Customer Access Strategy that offers a range of high-quality ways to contact the council that meets the needs of all Sandwell residents.	All employees Elected Members Sandwell Citizens	January 2023	Doing things with the Community No one gets left behind
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			
O7	Invest in our customer Contact Centre telephony systems to ensure an efficient and effective system is in place.	ICT Revenues & Benefits Adult Social Care	January 2023	Doing things with the Community No one gets left behind
O8	We will exploit the potential of new technology and 5G to deliver services more effectively and efficiently across the organisation			
O8	Deploy new Windows10 build to all users including Always On VPN.	Within service	(Milestones to be agreed)	
O8	Deploy Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) to all users.	Within service	(Milestones to be agreed)	
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.			



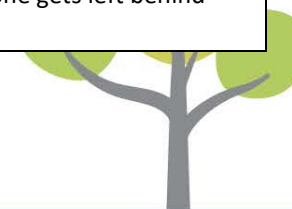
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Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s
O09	We will invest in a range of opportunities, qualifications and experiences for our workforce. We will do this through workforce development plans to ensure our workforce is an enabler for current and future service delivery.	Leadership Team Service Managers Managers	Ongoing	No-one gets left behind
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.			
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	Human Resources Leadership Team Service Managers Managers	Ongoing	No-one gets left behind
O10	Develop new workforce planning framework and methodology for deployment across the organisation - Review current position of workforce plans across the Council. Gain sign off from Senior Leadership Team to new approach and agree how this will be rolled out.	Senior Leaders Service Managers	Begin Rollout March 2022	No-one gets left behind
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.			
O11	Review the existing wellbeing provision and look for opportunities to develop further. Create the new OH suite and accessible wellbeing areas. Support and deliver the wellbeing offering by establishing a Health & Wellbeing Specialist role.	Senior Leaders Service Managers All employees External partners	April 2022	No-one gets left behind
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.			



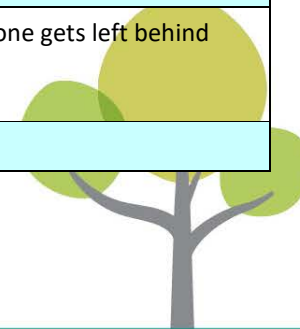
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Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s
O12	We will continue to develop and embed excellent people management practices, as identified by subject matter experts and leading recognised frameworks.	Leadership Team Service Managers External Partners	Ongoing	No-one gets left behind
O13	We will promote our successful work experience, apprenticeship, intern and graduate programmes to local people.			
O13	Develop approach to promote our successful work experience, apprenticeship, intern and graduate programmes, targeting local people to ensure that they are aware of the opportunities available.	Education, Skills and Growth Senior Leaders Service Managers Managers	New approach by April 2022??	No-one gets left behind Local investment
O14	We will build robust and effective systems which improve transparency and co-ordination around decision making and service delivery.			
O14 /O26	Develop and implement corporate planning and performance management framework to ensure delivery of Corporate Plan	Cabinet Leadership Team Service Managers Performance Leads	April 2022	All – will need to build in determining impact on these measures into PMF
O14	Establish Corporate Transformation Programme and PMO with corporate methodologies to realise savings and service benefits	Leadership Team Project managers	(Milestones to be agreed)	All – impact of projects within CT Programme
O14	Develop Corporate Data Strategy to define and deliver our approach to Business Intelligence	Information Governance Performance & Intelligence Teams	(Milestones to be agreed)	All – use of data and intelligence will inform service development and delivery
O18	We will review and refresh the organisations digital strategy and digital platforms			
O18/O6	1. Facilitate a strategic conversation on producing a digital inclusion strategy with both internal and external stakeholders			Doing things with the Community No-one gets left behind



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Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s
O18	<i>Develop Digital Strategy, maximising the opportunities for Sandwell from the WMCA digital roadmap.</i>			Doing things with the Community No-one gets left behind
O20	We will embed co-design and collaboration as the standard approach for designing our services and developing our future priorities			
O20	Co-production Network – facilitate and grow network across the council as resource to develop co-production in Sandwell	Community Partnerships Team Leadership Team Members	Ongoing (Milestones to be agreed)	Doing things with the Community Local Investment
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.			
O21	Residents Panel – establish and manage the mechanism for engagement with residents across the borough to inform decision making	Leadership Team Members Partners	May 2022 (Milestones to be agreed)	Doing things with the Community No-one gets left behind
O21	Ensure changes to services/service improvements are based on customer feedback as well as organisational drivers by engaging with our customers/residents to understand current and future needs of customers, customer groups and identify ways of meeting them.	All employees Elected Members Sandwell Residents	Links to Customer Access Strategy & above action	Doing things with the Community
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			
O23	Customer Feedback Review – implement recommendations to improve customer experience	Leadership Team Members Staff involved in managing customer feedback	(Milestones to be agreed)	No-one gets left behind
O26	We will ensure all our services provide value for money and are run as efficiently as possible.			

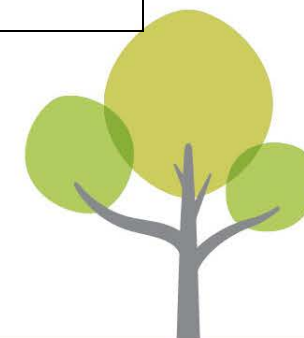


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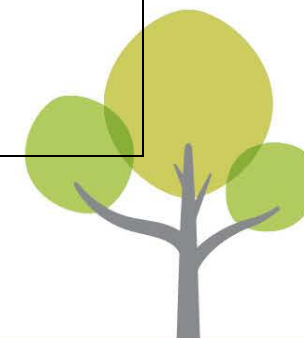
Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s
O26	Carry out a gap analysis against cyber security standards and create an improvement plan.	Resilience Team Service Areas	(Milestones to be agreed)	
O26	Carry out a gap analysis regarding BCP against real life scenarios	Resilience Team Service Areas	(Milestones to be agreed)	
C1	We will ensure our grant funding of community/voluntary sector activity supports the priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan.			
C1	Bring together governance arrangements and budgets to ensure VCS grants are aligned to corporate objectives	Leadership Team Commissioners	April 2022	All

Children's Services

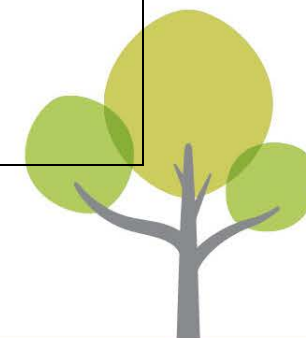
Ref. (from CP)	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
B1	Black Country Early Years Outcomes group will continue to work together to specifically focus on Communication and Language, pool resources, share good practice and strategic responses. http://blackcountryearlyoutcomes.co.uk/	Stakeholders who are actively involved in the Black Country Language Pathway	On going	No one gets left behind



B2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the work of the EYTA (above) a speech, language and communication audit was conducted and the support of children between the ages of 12-24 months was identified. A multi-agency group devised a Sandwell Speech and Language pathway that provided the framework for services and interventions that are available. 	Children's Centres, PVI, Schools, Virtual School, Sandwell Children's Trust, National Stakeholders such as ICAN.	July 2022	No one gets left behind
B3	<p>Recommission Children's Centre provision so that new contracts are in place by 1 April 2022.</p> <p>Review existing health services provided through children's centres and seek to expand in line with latest government guidance about family hubs.</p> <p>Establish a community outreach programme to improve our community reach.</p> <p>Continue to recruit volunteers from the community as part of local teams.</p>	<p>SMBC Procurement, Legal, Early Years, Public Health, Sandwell Children's Trust</p> <p>Public Health, Health Visiting, Midwifery</p> <p>The Children's Centre's providers will draw up an action plan to reach families across the borough, they will maximise opportunities working with other agencies</p> <p>Childrens Centres providers will lead on local recruitment</p>	<p>01/04/22</p> <p>30/09/22</p> <p>The outline plan will be agreed by 30/09/22</p> <p>Providers will begin recruitment from 1.4.22</p>	<p>Improving access to local services</p> <p>Improving the reach of services</p> <p>Maximising volunteering opportunities</p>
B4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the Speech and Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) Pathway across the early years sector with a strong focus on partnership working including families. To improve the outcomes for all children, particularly those vulnerable groups 	Parents, Public Health Commissioner, Children's Centre Commissioner, Early Years Quality Team, Speech and Language Therapy, Maternity and Midwifery.	<p>Implement Sept 2021</p> <p>Quarterly reviews</p>	



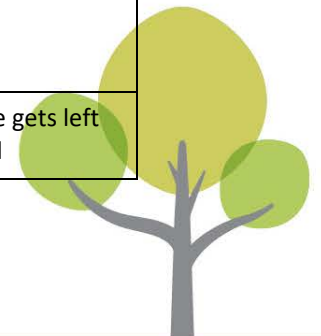
B5	<p>Ensure the Council maintains a safeguarding oversight by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing to provide support and challenge to families to ensure children continue to receive a suitable and appropriate education Ensuring EHE families are treated as part of the Sandwell learning community and continue to benefit from additional support and opportunities provided by a range of partners Improve and enhance the quality and consistency of initial consultation paperwork, progress reviews and judgements. Using self-audits to ensure that practitioners are reaching similar conclusions based on the information available/provided. <p>Implementing changes as a result of the recent review undertaken by the Children Services and Education Scrutiny Board and any changes to legislation following the Governments Education Committee review</p>	<p>Youth Service School Nurses Connexions SRES Library Service</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>No one gets left behind</p>
B6	<p>Multi agencies to continue to refer parents and practitioners to the Family Information Service website, for support to provide a consistent message across the borough. https://fis.sandwell.gov.uk/kb5/sandwell/directory/advice.page?id=wYxUKfjD0CU</p> <p>Bump to Five training sessions to be made available to expectant and new parents focussing on Speec, Language and Communication.</p> <p>WellComm Screening to be undertaken for children who are 18 months onwards and a parent's version of The Big Book of Ideas is in the development process.</p> <p>Public Health to fund a targeted project for children who are under one years of age to deliver an activity-based programme to support and boost early communication and language.</p> <p>Continue to offer half termly drop-in session for all practitioners, with targeted support around communication and language development</p>	<p>Parents and Families from Sandwell. Multi Agency Team, FIS Team EYFs Team. Practitioners from Schools, PVI, Childminders. ISEY Team. Expectant parents, EYFS Multi agency team "Sandwell Keeps Talking" Speech and language, health visitors, anti-natal support.</p> <p>Children's Centres, PVI, Child Minders Schools to screen from nursery age onwards.</p>	<p>Daily</p> <p>Monthly sessions Up until July 22 July 22 May 22 July 22</p>	<p>Doing things with the local community No one gets left behind</p>



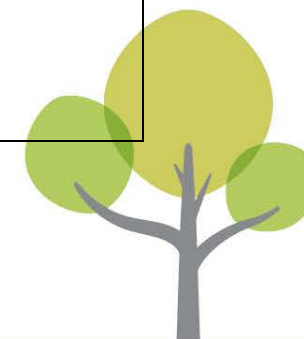
		Vol Com Parent Support Team, Places for People, Speech and Language, QTS, Practitioners from PVI, Schools, Childminders.		
B7	Early Years Multi-Agency Professionals Group will continue to meet regularly to provide a consistent, coherent strategic lead for all Early Years services.	ISEY, Health, Speech and Language, PVI	Ongoing Monthly Meetings	No one gets left behind
B8	<p>To continue to use the Early Language project with the National Literacy Trust as part of any future training and support, primarily focusing on babies and toddlers.</p> <p>To arrange further library projects through the Library service to promote communication and language skills development through Play, Talk and Read to be delivered in partnership with Children's Centres.</p> <p>To work with Sandwell's Trust and the LACE team to develop workshops supporting foster carers with young children's development, through REAL, Babbling Babies, Tots Talking.</p>	<p>Health, Speech and Language, PVI Wolverhampton LA, Walsall LA, Dudley LA Led by the National Literacy Trust</p> <p>Library Service, Children's centres</p> <p>Virtual School, Sandwell Children's Trust ICAN</p>	<p>Termly meetings</p> <p>Presently Half Termly meetings</p> <p>A timetable of delivery from now until July 22</p>	<p>No one gets left behind</p> <p>Doing things with the local community</p>
B9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue to maintain pupil place planning data, to inform forecasting and SCAP returns to the DfE. A School Organisation Plan will help to inform future decision making. <p>Develop a methodology for the projection of the expected demand for places to meet provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.</p>	Schools Multi Academy Trust Early Years Inclusion NHS	<p>Annually</p> <p>June 22</p>	No one gets left behind
B10	<p>PRIORITY:</p> <p>Increase the proportion of schools and academies rated good or better by Ofsted, particularly in the secondary sector</p>	School Improvement Team; Inclusion Team; EYFS Team; Behaviour & Attendance Team; Safeguarding Team	July 2022	<p>No one gets left behind</p> <p>Doing things with the community</p>



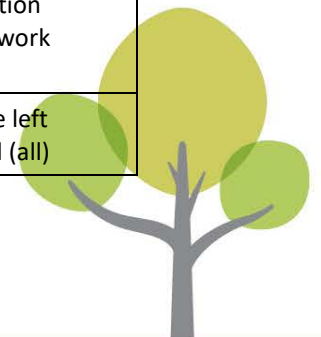
	<p>Improve pupil progress rates for all pupils, including vulnerable groups, to deliver improved GCSE and other Key Stage 4 outcomes</p> <p>Increase the proportion of pupils achieving the highest levels in all phases</p>			
B11	<p>Continue to develop and expand the role and remit of the Vulnerable Children Group (VCG) to ensure that our most vulnerable children and their families receive or can access the support they need.</p> <p>Develop learning and development across the workforce so we know what's needed, what works well, and that vulnerable children, young people and families are understood and responded to</p> <p>Encourage and support collaborative and partnership working to maintain service delivery and support the workforce</p> <p>Ensures it becomes embedded into Sandwell's early help offer.</p> <p>Leading on the Council's response to Reducing Youth Violence</p> <p>Maintain support to families who have chosen to Electively Home Educate</p> <p>Maintain welfare referrals to enable schools to seek support and guidance for families on the cusp of poor or irregular attendance</p>	<p>Families Schools & MAT's Diocesans Other Council Services SCT Health Police</p>	On-going	
B12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> training for schools and wider workforce to ensure that a Trusted Adult is available in each setting to promote and maintain positive emotional health and wellbeing work with schools and the wider workforce to ensure that the Trusted Adults in schools and settings have increased knowledge, understanding and skills required to meet the needs of those with ACEs work with schools, early years settings, and voluntary sector organisations to establish and/or review the well-being charter mark 	<p>Schools, early years settings, college, voluntary sector organisations and wider education and Children's social care workforce, public health</p>	Implementation Sept 21	Ongoing
B13	<p>The Council retains statutory responsibility for the delivery of Children's Social care functions, however these are delivered by Sandwell Children's Trust Ltd.</p>	<p>Sandwell Children's Trust, Early Help Partnership,</p>	April 2022	No one gets left behind



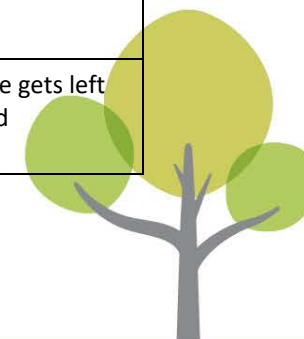
	<p>The Council will continue to provide strong oversight of children’s social care functions delivered by Sandwell Children’s Trust. The governance arrangements are now well established and robust ensuring that appropriate challenge is in place to ensure that where performance is below acceptable levels that actions are taken to remedy it.</p> <p>The Council will be working with the Trust to update the contractual KPIs that were put in place when the Trust was first established to ensure they better reflect the current context i.e. that the Trust’s improvement journey has moved on from when they were judged inadequate by Ofsted, a recent judgement of ‘good’ for the Fostering Service and assurance visits by Ofsted since 2018 make it clear that the KPIs need to support the push to ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’. The DCS will continue to chair the Children and Young People’s Strategic Commissioning Partnership and use this as a mechanism to improve joint working between not only the Council and the Trust but other statutory and non-statutory providers. Working to ensure that those children that don’t meet the threshold for statutory social care support continue to receive support through early help and preventative services.</p> <p>A contract review will take place looking back over the first four years of service delivery, the review will lead to recommendations being made on the whether the break clause should or shouldn’t be utilised.</p>	<p>Safeguarding Partnership, Corporate Parenting Board, Children and Young People’s Strategic Commissioning Partnership</p>	<p>Monthly review of progress thereafter</p>	
<p>B14</p>	<p>The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined for the first time in law the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure, as far as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for children in care and care leavers. The corporate parenting principles introduced within this legislation are important for all who exercise functions in relation to children in care and care leavers to ensure a more joined up approach. It is vital that all parts of Sandwell Council beyond those directly responsible for care and pathway planning recognise they have a key role, too. Sandwell Council continues to facilitate Corporate Parenting Board sessions with partners and young people, ensuring that our young people have a voice and are listened to. The council and its key partners are then able to effectively discharge their role and responsibility as corporate parent to all of our children in care and care leavers. Corporate Parenting Board is driven by the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020-23 and the associated action plan within this strategy. The workstreams of Sandwell’s Corporate Parenting Board are aligned to the</p>	<p>SMBC Housing, SMBC Finance, SMBC Regeneration and Growth, SMBC Borough Economy, SMBC Business Strategy and Change, SMBC Law and Governance, SCT, Health, Police, DWP, stakeholders involved with Corporate Parenting Board.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Doing things with the community</p> <p>Nobody gets left behind</p>



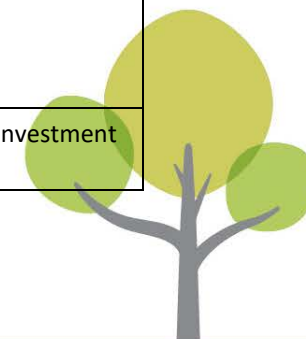
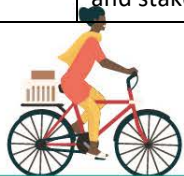
	<p>corporate parenting principles within The Children and Social Work Act 2017 and these workstreams also shape the agendas of Corporate Parenting Board meetings, the Action Plan and the Annual Report for the Board.</p> <p>Sandwell Council monitors its actions on the Corporate Parenting action plan through Leadership Team meetings where Directors monitor progress on a quarterly basis, ensuring that each action is on track and managed within the individual Directorates. Specific internal links within the Corporate Parenting Action Plan currently include links with Housing, Finance, Regeneration and Growth, Borough Economy and Business Strategy and Change. This also provides a forum where Directors are made aware of corporate parenting activity and furthermore the opportunities that may arise. The Leadership Team will directly receive regular updates from Corporate Parenting Board at these sessions allowing the council to hear the voices of our young people and to action any items as necessary.</p> <p>To continue to raise the profile of Corporate Parenting throughout Sandwell, there is also a commitment to the development of the existing Corporate Parenting training offer for Cllrs as well as the introduction of this offer for all Council Officers, this is being supported by Democratic Services colleagues.</p>			
B15	<p>Provide systems leadership across the Council, Children’s Trust, health sector, voluntary sector and police to develop a refreshed Early Help Strategy and action plan that delivers the improvements required to strengthen early help in Sandwell. Give Regional Support as (Association of Directors of Children’s Services) ADCS Sponsor for Early Help.</p>	01/04/22	SMBC, SCT, police, health, voluntary sector	No one gets left behind
B16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To deliver the requirements of the special educational needs and disability (SEND) Code of Practice and innovate our services across local area to meet needs of C/YP with SEND in Sandwell. Work collaboratively with partner agencies across Health, Children’s Trust and Adults Social Care to prepare children/young people with SEND for adulthood from an early age. To work across agencies to deliver improvements specified in the SEND Operations Board Development Plan and meet aims of the SEND Strategy 	C/YP with SEND and their families, education settings across Sandwell, Education teams across directorate, Children’s Trust, Adults Social Care, CCG / Health teams, SENDIASS and voluntary / charitable organisations	Ongoing	Specific baseline measurement identified within SEND Development Plan and Self Evaluation Framework
B17	PRIORITY	Schools / Public Health / Ed Psych / commissioned	All projects ongoing.	No one left behind (all)



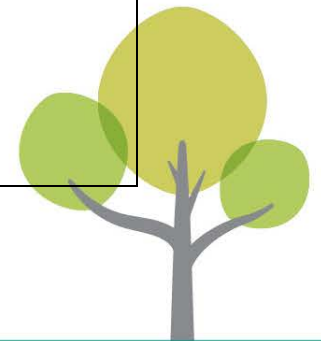
	<p>Ensure that our Looked After Children receive the additional support they need to succeed.</p> <p>Supporting schools to continue to develop and improve their RSHE provision including collaboration between schools, LA and partner groups around joint strategic aims and development of resources to support all stakeholders.</p> <p>Support the development of the LA's Strategy under <i>Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health 2017</i> and the Link Programme.</p> <p>Developing and addressing issues arising around Sexual Harassment.</p> <p>Implementation of Poverty Proofing/Reducing the Costs of the School Day in LA schools in-conjunction with Public Health.</p>	<p>services via CCG and Public Health / WM police / VRU / MASH / Sandwell Child Safeguarding Partnership / Childrens Trust. (Poverty Proofing only): Children North East.</p>	<p>Link Programme: starting in January Poverty Proofing: running January 2022 to July 2023 (to be confirmed)</p>	<p>Working with communities (all)</p> <p>Green agenda (NA) Locally funded: all except for Link Prog (nationally funded), Poverty Proofing only</p>
A16	<p>Build on the positive changes made during COVID to ensure they are sustainable and that teams continue to explore the use of emerging technologies to maintain continuous improvement and ensure we support our staff to deliver a better more accessible service.</p> <p>Continue to explore new technologies to support remote working and how we engage with our partners</p> <p>Explore how digital inclusion will enable and support the streamlining of service delivery, so they can be provided in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible to our children, young people and families</p>	<p>Staff Children & Families Schools & MAT's Other Council Services SCT Health Police</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	
A17	<p>The directorate will proactively engage with WM5G to ensure early identification of opportunities to enable teams and services to re-model and improve service delivery making it more accessible for both staff, children and families alike.</p>	<p>Staff Children & Families Schools & MAT's Other Council Services SCT Health Police</p>	<p>March 2023</p>	
C3	<p>In January 2022 Connexions will organise an event for children and young people to engage in positive careers activities.</p>	<p>Training Providers, Employers, Colleges, Universities</p>	<p>15 Jan 22</p>	<p>No one gets left behind</p>



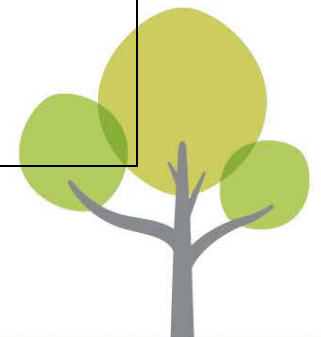
	<p>PRIORITY Through working with the SHAPE Forum, we will make sure that our towns become welcoming places for young people and that they have youth activities and facilities to give them a part in the local community (Youth facilities Review).</p>	<p>Young people Elected members Other Council Services Voluntary Sector</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>No one gets left behind</p>
E16	<p>Work with AEB deliverers to align training delivery to labour market needs. Engage residents in the AEB training offer to support them into employment.</p>	<p>Colleges Training providers WMCA Jobcentre Plus SAFL</p>	<p>Aug 21-Jul 22</p>	<p>No one left behind Doing things in the community</p>
E17	<p>Work with the Employment and Skills partnership on Sandwell's digital offer ensuring employment pathways are in place from providers</p>	<p>Voluntary and Community Sector Jobcentre Plus SAFL</p>	<p>Aug 21- Jul 22</p>	<p>No one gets left behind Doing things in the Community</p>
E18	<p>PRIORITY - Work with schools and employers to develop the skills necessary for work and to improve the opportunities for young people to access apprenticeships and permanent employment</p>	<p>Schools Employers Careers Enterprise Company</p>	<p>Sept 21 to July 22</p>	<p>No one gets left behind</p>
E19	<p>Look at the opportunities brought by the development of the combined authority to increase employment in the borough</p> <p>PRIORITY: Encourage businesses to link closely with schools to enhance the curriculum and increase employment motivation in our young people</p>	<p>Employment and Skills partnership</p>	<p>Sept 21 – Aug 22</p>	<p>No one gets left behind</p>
E20	<p>Reinstate the work experience programme within the Council.</p> <p>Determine service areas able to offer work experience opportunities.</p> <p>Offer virtual work experience opportunities where physical placements are not possible.</p>	<p>Schools Jobcentre Plus</p>	<p>Apr 22</p>	<p>No one gets left behind</p>
E21	<p>Showcase apprenticeship opportunities available within the Council to residents, jobseekers and stakeholders.</p>	<p>Schools WMCA</p>	<p>Apr 22</p>	<p>Local investment</p>



	Engage with businesses for apprenticeship levy transfer opportunities.	LEPs Chamber of Commerce		No one gets left behind
E22	<p>We will continue to engage with the business sector in Sandwell especially SME's to the increase take of apprenticeships.</p> <p>We will continue to identify and develop opportunities and increase the take up of the apprenticeship levy both within the Children Services Directorate but also across the Council.</p> <p>Provide a broader offer to young people with SEND to include different supported internship and apprenticeship models.</p>	<p>Schools WMCA LEPs Chamber of Commerce</p>	Apr 22	No one gets left behind
O2	<p>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</p> <p>We will review roles and responsibilities to ensure that we are driving efficiencies and performance as well as service improvement. This will include clarity of roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability.</p>	Workforce, HR, Finance and Business Strategy and Change Colleagues	April 2022 TBC	No One Gets Left Behind
O9	<p>We will:</p> <p>Develop a workforce strategy that will be informed by staff appraisals and business needs.</p> <p>Ensure that it is aligned to the Sandwell Plan and Vision 2030 and informed by the demographics and needs of the community.</p> <p>Ensure our staff to be highly skilled and well trained to support children and families.</p>	Workforce and Learning and Development Team	April 2022 TBC	No One Gets Left Behind
O10	<p>We will:</p> <p>Identify staff that want to progress within the organisation.</p> <p>Ensure that opportunities are provided to include shadowing others across the directorate.</p> <p>Actively encourage collaboration across the organisation.</p> <p>Ensure that we are enabling the whole of the workforce</p>	Workforce, HR and Learning and Development Team	April 2022	No One Gets Left Behind



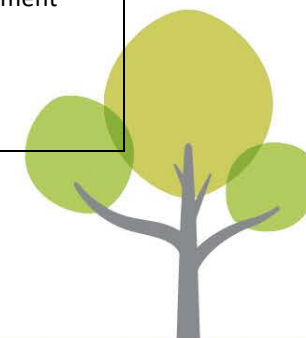
	This will be informed by the workforce development strategy which will include consultation particularly those employees that have protected characteristics.			
O11	<p>We will:</p> <p>Work with partners to identify trends and develop resources to support mental health and well-being</p> <p>Provide access and signposting to tiers of support to enable positive mental health and well-being through partnership working</p> <p>Promote council well-being resources through supervision</p>	Educational Psychologists, Public Health, schools, CCG and Health Teams, voluntary and community organisations	Sept 2021	No one gets left behind
O12	We will ensure that all managers are supported in their management role by building an environment and structure that is able to support the wider workforce. We will review and ensure that supervision is meaningful and productive	Workforce, HR and Learning and Development Team	April 2022	No One Gets Left Behind
O13	<p>Deliver engagement events to showcase the Sandwell offer.</p> <p>Utilise social media channels to raise awareness of opportunities available.</p>	Employment and Skills Partnership	Oct 21 – Sept 22	No one gets left behind
O20	<p>The restructuring of the Directorate will be used as an opportunity to reassess service needs, the relationship and interdependencies between teams and the skill set of the workforce to ensure we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build in resilience • develop stable, productive and happy teams, • promote and encourage staff development • can work effectively and efficiently within budgets • evidence improved outcomes • embed new way of workings • encourage cross council collaboration • identify opportunities to grow/invest to save <p>Develop a central business core that provides support advice and guidance across the Directorate</p>	<p>Staff</p> <p>Families</p> <p>Schools & MAT's</p> <p>Diocesans</p> <p>Other Council Services</p> <p>SCT</p> <p>Health</p> <p>Police</p>	Sept 22	No one gets left behind



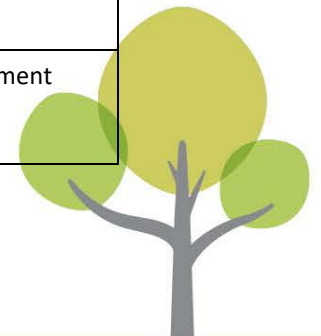
021	<p>We will ensure that our residents are listened to when reshaping our services. We will consult with our families to ensure they are aware of and understand what we do and how we do it, how they can access the services they need and where changes are required they are given the opportunity to contribute through consultation.</p> <p>We will encourage collaborative and partnership working across the council and with schools, Sandwell Children Trust and other partner agencies to ensure that the right support is available and accessible to support children and families especially those that are identified as vulnerable</p>	<p>Children & Families Schools & MAT's Diocesan's Other Council Services SCT Health Police</p>	Ongoing	Doing things with the community
022	<p>The Vulnerable Children Group will lead on and assist teams to ensure that we continue to find ways to actively engage with those harder to reach groups to ensure that their views are taken into consideration when changes are planned to service delivery.</p> <p>Teams will build on existing relationship to ensure that vulnerable group continue to engage and are given the opportunity to be heard but also become a vehicle for sharing of information</p>	<p>Staff Children & Families Schools & MAT's Other Council Services SCT Health Police</p>	ongoing	Doing things with the community

Borough Economy

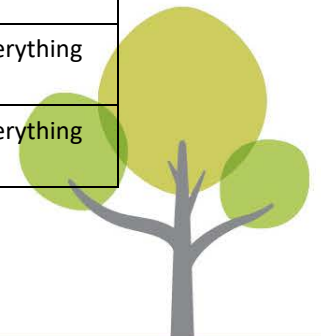
CP Ref.	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
A3	<p>Deliver the 2022/23 £16m capital programme of improvement works underway at 48 locations in the borough. These will deliver improvements to road safety, congestion, town centres, street lighting, speed reduction, bridge refurbishment, cycling, walking, major route signing,</p>	<p>Users of the Sandwell and West Midlands road network, Transport for West Midlands,</p>	<p>Multiple programmes with varying completion dates and third</p>	<p>Local investment</p>



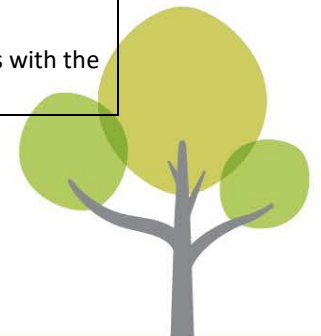
Page	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
721			party constraints	
A13	Support the delivery of the programme of works scheduled for 2022/23 of the £30m Birchey Island Major Junction Improvement.	Department for Transport, Black Country LEP, Transport for West Midlands, National Highways, Statutory Undertakers, Businesses and road users	Governed by multiple third party and statutory constraints	Local investment
A4	Deliver the capital programme for 2022/23 of annual maintenance schemes to renew or repair highway infrastructure prioritised in red risk condition (HIAMP)	Constrained by insufficient external capital grants and very limited Council funding	Constant conveyor belt of life expired assets across £2.1 billion of infrastructure across a 550 mile highway network with only a few £m per year for maintenance and renewal	Local investment
C10, C12, C14	Replace 4,000 high energy street lighting lanterns with low energy LED lighting and computer management, providing the same lighting levels	Subject to funding provision	Subject to funding provision	Local Investment
A3	Traffic management through the coordination of street works at locations across 550 miles of road network through the Highway Permit and Licencing Schemes	Utility Companies, developers, businesses, services and road users	Ongoing	Local Investment
A4	Support the control of more than 400 new developments affecting the road network ensures the quality of construction and keeps traffic moving	Developers	Ongoing	Local Investment



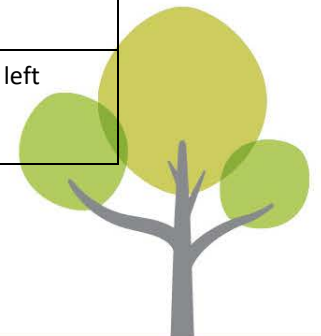
Page 722	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
A2	The management of the partnership with APCOA for the delivery of Traffic Management and Enforcement Services?	Parking contractor APCOA	Ongoing	Equitable use of the public highway
A3	Delivery of the winter operational service for the identified priority road network of 260 miles and associate communication	All road users	Ongoing	Safe use of the public highway
C16	Work with partners to support the reduction in road traffic accidents through identified highway improvements, education, campaigns and enforcement on roads throughout the Borough	TfWM, WM Police, Fire Service, Road Users	Ongoing	Safe use of the public highway
A1 A3	Strategic Plans for Road Safety, Highway Infrastructure Management, Parking and business continuity.	Multiple Stakeholders	Ongoing	Safe and equitable use of the public highway
C21	Review the current position in relation to environmental enforcement policy. Establish a cross directorate Environmental Enforcement Co-ordination Board to consider joint intelligence and expertise from across the council to tackle issues by themes and/or geographical area and increase enforcement activity.	EET Serco	March 2023	Green in everything we do.
C14	Serco to provide and deliver street cleansing transformation plan to improve standards of street cleansing across the Borough.	Serco EET Highways	ongoing	Green in everything we do.
C15	Serco to provide and develop recycling and behavioural change plan for 2022/23	Serco Waste Partnership Board	ongoing	Green in everything we do.
C14	Delivery of the Serco fleet replacement programme 2022/23	Serco	ongoing	Green in everything we do.



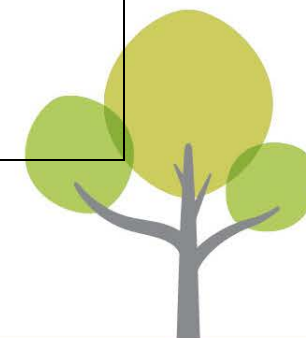
Page	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
723	Review waste client team to develop & modernise the monitoring of street cleansing and waste collection standards.	Serco Waste Partnership Board	ongoing	Green in everything we do.
O26	Delivery of income generated from chargeable garden waste Option B through spend to save proposal.	Serco Waste Partnership Board	Ongoing	Green in everything we do
O26	Implement the contract provision for a benchmark review of the baseline of waste and street cleansing specification.			
C7 C8 E3	Complete Contract Agreement in relation to the development/build and delivery of a new Discover Sandwell DMS website Commence roll-out of Project Delivery Plan (building/training/launch	Simpleview West Midlands Growth Company Internal teams across SMBC Sandwell/Black Country Cultural Partners	April 2022	Local investment Doing things with the community
C7 E3	Review/explore potential options for a fixed-term Tourism Officer role – in position for the build-up/during and post the hosting of the CWG	Simpleview West Midlands Growth Company Internal teams across SMBC Sandwell/Black Country Cultural Partners	January 2022 – April 2022	Local investment Doing things with the community
C2 E6	Development of West Bromwich Quarter (Town Hall and Central Library) Project: Submission of Phase 1 Full Business Case to DLUHC; Assurance Review (SBMC SIU process); Local and Superboard approvals	External consultancy; English Heritage; Friends Groups; Town Hall and Library users including existing tenants) Towns Fund Local Board Towns Fund Superboard DLUHC	March 2022	Local investment Doing things with the community
L4 L6	Develop a sustainable plan for the delivery of leisure services. Including; a) Resolution of Business Plan matters with SLT Resolution of contract / finance matters with Places Leisure	Sandwell Leisure Trust Places Leisure	Feb 2022	No one gets left behind Doing things with the community



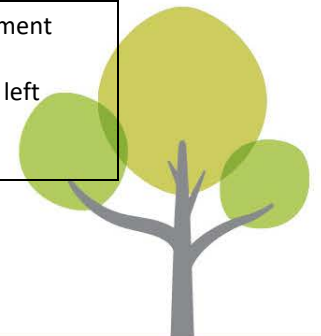
Page 724	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
L7 E4	Develop a plan for the successful operation of the new Sandwell Aquatic Centre, including; a) Legacy Mode Outcomes b) Robust Revenue Model c) Viable Management solution / operator	Sandwell Leisure Trust Swim England Sport England CWG OC Active Black Country	July 2022	No one gets left behind Doing things with the community
C7 E3	Finalise CWG Health & Wellbeing Legacy Plan	Public Health Active Black Country (CWG Cultural Programme)	March 2022	No one gets left behind Doing things with the community
C16 C21	Review existing policies in response to National Statutory Taxi and private hire vehicle standards adding greater focus on the powers to protect children and vulnerable adults.	SMBC Legal, Democratic Service, Licensing Committee	Early 2022	No one gets left behind
C5	Review the structure of the Parks & Grounds Team to deliver improvements for our parks and open spaces & supports event participation	HR, Climate Change, Public Health, Education, Events, Urban Regeneration	1st April – 2022 interim structure.	Doing things with the community
C8	Pilot a refreshed approach to events across the Borough delivering civic events, earned income events, and event support to external groups	SAG, Parks Team, Sandwell Valley Team, Community Groups, Tourism, Leisure & Culture	Jan 2022 – Dec 22 (events schedule)	Doing things with the community
C4	Complete and review the delivery of the 6-month pilot Rapid Response Solutions Team for “Hot Spot” areas of the Borough	Grounds, Waste, Enforcement, Comms	Jan 2022 (launch) – July 2022 (Evaluation)	No one gets left behind



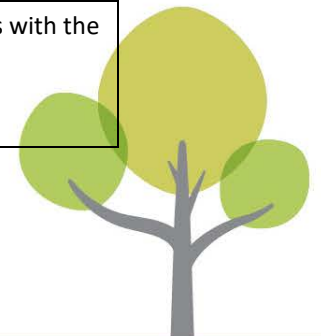
Page 725	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
	Deliver a successful programme of cultural & events activities and deliver a Live Site to maximise the community engagement and realise benefits from Commonwealth Games 2022. Establish a legacy plan.	Sandwell CWG Project Group, Events, Sandwell Valley, Grounds	April 2022 – Sept 2022	Doing things with the community
C5	Develop and deliver a long-term trees strategy for Sandwell Council	Climate Change, Urban Regeneration Landowners	Trees Strategy – Feb 2022	Doing things with the community
C9	Rebrand Sandwell Valley & develop an initial refine/relaunch of the offer for 2022/3	Events, Parks and Open Spaces. Delivery partners. Funding partners. Community Groups & residents / visitors	Initial relaunch of Sandwell Valley – Feb 2022	Doing things with the community
E16 E17 O6	Work in partnership to deliver digital skills training programmes in community venues	Sandwell Adult and Family Learning	Jan 2022 – March 2023	No one gets left behind
C15	Develop options for the introduction of a recycling service for high rise residential buildings in the Borough	SMBC Housing Directorate		Doing things with the community
L6	Work with Sandwell Leisure Trust to deliver a viable 3 year business plan			Doing things with the community
O6 O7 O8	Introduce digitalised systems and modernisation to improve accessibility for businesses and improve efficiency across regulated services and comm safety.	Council ICT, Systems Admin, Excellence Implementation Team Providers	Citizen and Consumer Protection/Environmental Protection – 2023 Community Safety Citizen and	No one gets left behind



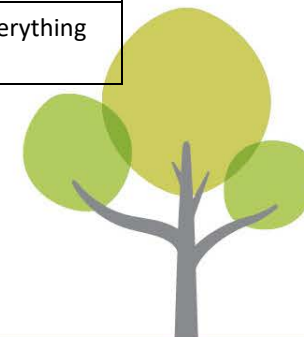
Page 726	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
			Consumer Protection/Environmental Protection – 2023 Community Safety	
C16 C20 C21 H9 H16 O3 O4 O26	Work with partner agencies to develop and build the Anti-Social Behaviour response pilot, to develop our multi-agency response to Anti-Social Behaviour	Safer Sandwell Partnership Police & Crime Board / Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council Environmental Protection / CCTV / Environmental Health / Housing / West Midlands Police	June 2022	Doing things with the community/ No one gets left behind
C16 B11	Commission bespoke community-based support for children experiencing Domestic Abuse	Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership / Safer Sandwell Partnership Police & Crime Board / SSCP / Other Partners to be confirmed	March 2023	No one gets left behind
C16	Development and Implementation of new Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-24	Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership / Safer Sandwell Partnership Police & Crime Board / SMBC Adults & Housing / Black Country Women’s Aid	March 2023 for implementation	Doing things with the community/no one gets left behind
C16 H15 H16 L16	Implementation of Delivery Plan for New Burdens Funding for support in safe accommodation	Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership Safer Sandwell Partnership Police & Crime Board Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council Adults & Housing	March 2023	Local Investment No one gets left behind



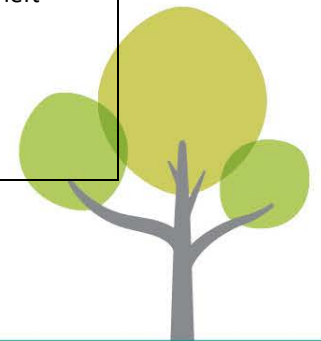
Page 727	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
		Black Country Women's Aid		
C16 L16 B11 B12	Development and implementation of new Prevention Of Violence Exploitation (PoVE) Plan and Strategy 2023-26	Safer Sandwell Partnership Police & Crime Board Prevention of Violence and Exploitation (PoVE) Reducing Re-offending & Serious Organised Crime Sub Group Community members	April 2023	Doing things with the community/no one gets left behind
C12 C14 C20 C21 O3 O4 O20 O21	Continue to develop the approach to tackle environmental crimes such as littering and fly-tipping. Utilising an intelligence led approach to identify 'hot-spots' of environmental crime and targeting deployment of resources to increase enforcement activity to ensure the streets of Sandwell are clean and free from waste.	Environmental Enforcement / Waste Partners Serco / Planning Enforcement / Anti-Social Behaviour Teams / CCTV		Doing things with the Community/ Green is everything we do
B1	Work in partnership to deliver activity in libraries that supports preschool children	Public Health Booktrust National Literacy Trust Reading Agency	Jan22 – Mar 23	No one gets left behind
L6	Programme of cultural events and activities across all libraries and museums including at Sandwell Live Site for Commonwealth Games	Big Bear Music; Arts Council England; Reading Agency; Library Friends Groups	Apr 22 – Mar 23	Doing things with the community



Page 7 of 8	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
E5	Develop new KS 1 2 and 3 programmes focussing on STEM subjects – locations to be confirmed	Local schools	For roll-out autumn 2022	No one gets left behind
C7	Implementation of Tourist Information Points in Libraries and Museums to support the hosting of the Commonwealth Games	SMBC colleagues; External: People 1 st International/West Midlands Growth Company	April 2022 – September 2022	Doing things with the community Local investment
L4	Develop partnerships with community groups, social care providers and other affinity groups to encourage a wider range of users to make use of our buildings – (sites to be identified) as meeting venues and as community spaces	Children’s trust; Adult Social Care; Dementia groups; Ideal for all; Other affinity groups	April 2022- December 2022	Doing things with the community
C7 E3	Implement CWG Health & Wellbeing Legacy Plan	Public Health Active Black County (CWG Cultural Programme)	December 2022	No one gets left behind Doing things with the community
E4	External funding bids across Borough Economy Services	Funding Agencies	April 2022 – March 2025	Doing things with the community/no one gets left behind
C12	Serco to deliver the undertaking to roll out electric street cleansing vehicles by 2030 and HGV’s by 2035. Participation in pilot projects to test other green vehicles for use on refuse collection and street cleansing.	Serco	Review March 2025 Completion March 2030	Green in everything we do.
C12	Review the Council Fleet and develop a replacement plan for Low Carbon Vehicles	All Directorates	2030	Green in everything we do.

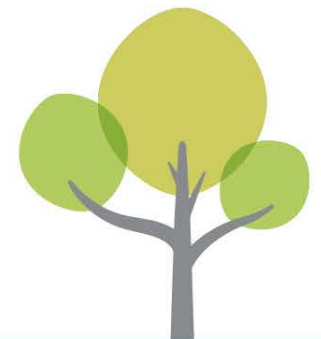


Page 799	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
	Assess and undertake feasibility study for the introduction of alternate weekly collections to increase recycling rates and encourage cultural change.	Climate Change Team Serco	March 2024	Green in everything we do.
C6	Delivery of Libraries and Archives Strategy including rollout of Library+ (a new model of delivery)	Arts Council England; Friends of Libraries Groups; Library users	April 2022 - March 2023	No one gets left behind
C2 E6	Delivery of West Bromwich Quarter (Town Hall and Central Library) Project – subject to approval from DLUHC	External consultancy; English Heritage; Friends Groups; Town Hall and Library users including existing tenants) Towns Fund Local Board Towns Fund SuperBoard DLUHC Internal: PMA	Physical construction works – July 2024 Financial completion – July 2024	Local investment Doing things with the community
C2 E4 E6 E9	Potential opportunity – aligned to a successful Phase 1 Programme and subject to Cabinet approval/external funding provision – to develop/deliver a Phase 2 / 3 programme of works (part of a wider Cultural Quarter Project/Action Zone) and aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan/West Bromwich Master Plan. There is also potential to further develop a current vacant area of land owned by Sandwell Council – and directly adjacent to Central Library – with the creation of a new Archive and Story-Telling Centre	SMBC Cabinet Internal: PMA External: WMCA / ACE External consultancy; English Heritage; Friends Groups; Town Hall and Library users including existing tenants)	From 2025	Local investment Doing things with the community
C21	Compliance activities to monitor Taxi Licence holders and those licenced and operating in Sandwell under the Gambling Act 2005, Licensing Act 2003 and The Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 are compliant with relevant legislation, licensing objectives and conditions of licence. Those licence holders found to be non-compliant will face enforcement action.	Police, Gambling Commission, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Driver Vehicle Standards Agency, Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, Disclosure Barring Service, Integrated Passenger Transport Unit	Ongoing	No one gets left behind





Page 730	Directorate Action	Other stakeholders involved / supporting to deliver (1)	Delivery Date	Fairer Sandwell Principle/s (2)
53	Continue implementation of CWG Health & Wellbeing Legacy Plan	Public Health Active Black County	December 2023	No one gets left behind Doing things with the community



By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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