

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council Statement of Decisions made at a meeting of the Executive on Wednesday, 7 June 2023

Published:

The following decisions were made by the Executive at its meeting on **Wednesday, 7 June 2023**. These decisions will come into force on **16 June 2023**. A decision by the Executive may be called-in (in accordance with Part 4 – Scrutiny Procedure Rules of the Council’s Constitution) by **15 June 2023**. Should you have any queries about any decision that has been made, contact should be made in the first instance to Democratic Services at democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk. Any declaration of interest made by any member of the Executive is shown below.

	Item	Reason for Decision:	Alternative options:	Lead officer:
5	<p>Young People's Corporate Plan</p> <p>(1) That Cabinet approve the Sandwell’s Young People’s Corporate Plan 2023-2026 as set out in the Appendix.</p>	<p>The Council’s refreshed Corporate Plan was adopted in 2021, it contained a high level of detail and was set out in a way that shows how each of the directorates work together to deliver key outcomes.</p> <p>It was recognised that in its adopted format, it may not have been easy for young people to see how the things that matter to them are prioritised and delivered. Officers spoke to both the SHAPE Forum and the Carer Leavers Forum to determine if, using the Corporate Plan as a base, they would like to set it out in a way that emphasised what matters to young people.</p>	<p>The alternative option would be that there would be no Young Person’s Corporate Plan. There would still be a Corporate Plan for the Council, which in the refresh did consult young people, however, it does not contain in depth information from consultation and co-production specifically with young people.</p>	

	Item	Reason for Decision:	Alternative options:	Lead officer:
6	<p>Corporate Plan and Performance Management Framework Refresh</p> <p>(1) That approval be given to the refreshed Corporate Plan and Corporate Performance Management Framework as set out in Appendix 1.</p> <p>(2) That the corporate plan commitments in the directorate business plans as set out in Appendix 2 be noted as the delivery vehicle for the Corporate Plan for 2023/24 onwards.</p>	<p>The Corporate Plan was developed in 2021, at a time when the borough was still responding to and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. It was important to regularly review the Corporate Plan and related Performance Management Framework to ensure that they reflected the progress made.</p> <p>The strategic outcomes in the Corporate Plan had been reviewed to ensure that they would reflect and support the council's priorities. Amendments had been made to ensure that core elements of the Improvement Plan are captured within the single Corporate Plan.</p>	<p>The alternative to the refresh of the Corporate Plan and Performance Management Framework would have been to continue with the previously agreed version of both documents that had been agreed in 2021 and early 2022. Whilst both set the strategic direction for the council and enable monitoring of performance, if no review or refresh was to take place, there would not be the recognition or allowance that priorities change over time. This would result in the council's resources and services being out of alignment with the needs of residents, the organisation's priorities and the improvement journey that the council was part way through.</p>	
7	<p>Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy and Policy on Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing</p> <p>(1) That approval be given to adopt the revised Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy as set out in Appendix A and the Policy on Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing as set out in Appendix B.</p> <p>(2) That in connection with (1) above, the Director for Housing be authorised to</p>	<p>The focus for reviewing and revising the policy was to continue to provide adaptations and housing improvements to disabled residents, offering the most cost effective and best value solutions, that was targeted at those with the greatest need.</p> <p>The revised policies would expand and maximise opportunities for improving the homes of vulnerable and disabled people. These changes were designed to promote independence and reduce/prevent demand on health and social care services and fundamentally improve quality of life. The</p>	<p>The policy could remain unchanged and Sandwell Council would have continued to deliver adaptations in the same way. The introduction of the Better Care Fund in April 2014 and the Care Act in April 2015 was leading to the creation of new integrated services centred on the home. This would potentially make grant delivery more effective, efficient and customer-focussed. There was a need to balance the preventative role of the DFG in keeping people living safely and</p>	

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	implement the new policies.	policies introduced a more customer centred approach by offering residents more bespoke and easily accessible service irrespective of tenure. The changes reflected good practice as set out in the Adult Social Care Reform White Paper 2021 and the Disabled Facilities Grant.	independently with the need for the grant to be used in more flexible and responsive ways to help reduce pressures on health and social care and improve quality of life.	
8	<p>Improvement Plan Update</p> <p>(1) That progress against the Improvement Plan up to 11 May 2023 be received;</p> <p>(2) That Cabinet receive the response to the CIPFA FM Model Re-Assessment Report;</p> <p>(3) That Cabinet receive the Improvement Plan Risk Register;</p> <p>(4) That Cabinet receive changes to the Improvement Plan;</p> <p>(5) That Cabinet receive any recommendations or comments made by Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in relation to the Improvement Plan progress;</p> <p>(6) That Cabinet recommend to Council that this report along with the March progress report, the Improvement Plan Annual Report, and an</p>	Under the Statutory Directions, the council was required to report progress against the Improvement Plan to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities every six months. The first report was submitted in December 2022. It was proposed that this report, the quarterly update received by Cabinet in March (appendix 9) and the Improvement Plan Annual Report (appendix 2) form the basis of the report to the Secretary of State along with a covering letter (appendix 10). Council are responsible for approving the report made to the Secretary of State and Cabinet would make a recommendation to Council.	The Directions issued by the Secretary of State are a statutory requirement and the council has a legal obligation to respond appropriately. Failure to do so would likely result in further intervention measures. Reviewing progress against the Improvement Plan enables senior officers and members to have oversight of delivery, and take corrective action, as necessary. Alternative methods of monitoring progress could be adopted. The current monitoring method was regularly reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose and provides Leadership Team with the oversight they require. Alternative formats for reporting to the Secretary of State could have been adopted, however the proposal to submit a covering letter along with the quarterly reports made to Cabinet made use of existing reports. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities confirmed that this was an acceptable format to them.	

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	<p>accompanying letter be submitted to the Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities to form the Council's six-monthly update on progress against the Improvement Plan.</p>			
9	<p>Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund - Wave 2.1 Funding</p> <p>(1) That approval be given to authorise acceptance of a maximum of £5.5m grant funding, from the Government's Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ) to fund proposed energy-efficiency improvements to council-owned dwellings in Sandwell.</p> <p>(2) That the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to enter into a grant funding agreement with DESNZ, subject to a satisfactory financial appraisal being completed by the Strategic Finance.</p> <p>(3) That subject to (1) and (2) above, the Director of Finance be authorised to allocate the sum in the order of £16m from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), to both match-fund and supplement proposed energy-efficiency improvements to council-owned dwellings in Sandwell.</p>	<p>This initiative supported the drive towards a greener, low-carbon economy and a need to address Climate Change priorities. It would also help to address high levels of fuel poverty in the Sandwell area.</p> <p>Acceptance of the proposals would reduce fuel poverty levels, improve living conditions for tenants in Council homes, improve EPC ratings for the properties concerned and promote the Council's reputation as being serious about climate change and the move towards a carbon-neutral economy.</p>	<p>The Council could do nothing, not accept the grant and not invest in the properties to improve the energy efficiency. This was not considered a suitable option as the Council is committed to improving the energy efficiency to EPC C or above of all council housing stock by 2030.</p> <p>If the Council declined this offer and still wished to continue with the projects, then alternative arrangements would need to be made to fund an extra £5,403,519 in addition to a proposed commitment of £15,323,935. This option was ruled out because it was important that the Council draw down funding for retrofitting. It was highly likely that all registered providers of social housing, including local authorities, would need access to grant funding in order to meet the ambitious climate change targets in housing.</p> <p>An alternative option was to complete similar works to the same addresses without SHDF Wave 2.1</p>	

	Item	Reason for Decision:	Alternative options:	Lead officer:
	<p>(4) That the Director of Housing be authorised to instruct the Council's External Improvement Programme construction partners once appointed (currently being procured), to deliver associated energy improvement works in accordance with the contractual arrangements.</p> <p>(5) That the Director of Housing be authorised 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.</p>		<p>grant funding. This would remove the requirement to comply with PAS 2035:2019 which could potentially reduce costs by up to 30% (demonstrated by the increase in costs experienced during delivery of SHDF Wave 1) and allow the Council to have more flexibility in terms of control over the method and timescale for delivery. This option had been ruled out because it was important that we draw down funding for retrofitting. If the Council wished to access Government funding for retrofit works now and in the foreseeable future, compliance with PAS 2035 with associated increased costs was likely to be the norm.</p>	